

SECOND STYLE ACQUISITION:
THE LINGUISTIC SOCIALIZATION OF NEWLY ORTHODOX JEWS

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ABSTRACT

When people join a new community, change is central to their integration process. Newcomers may change how they dress, how they spend their leisure time, or how they talk. How do they learn and adopt the styles of their new community? This dissertation explores the social processes surrounding second style acquisition, focusing on linguistic style.

The analysis is based on a year of ethnographic and sociolinguistic fieldwork in a strictly Orthodox community in Philadelphia. Jews who choose to become Orthodox are called *ba'alei teshuva* (BTs), as opposed to those who are “*frum* ‘religious’ from birth” (FFBs). Through observations, interviews, analysis of recorded and observed speech, and a speech perception experiment, I show how the acquisition of language and other symbolic practices helps BTs to integrate into the Orthodox community.

Orthodox Jewish identity is constructed and maintained partly through distinctive aspects of dress, home decoration, food, music, and language. Speakers use English with thousands of loanwords from Hebrew and Yiddish. They exhibit syntactic and semantic transfer from Yiddish, as in “He wanted that everybody should be there” and “She was by me (‘at my house’) for *Shabbos* (‘Sabbath’).” And they use many other distinctive features, including final devoicing (e.g., going => goingk), a click discourse marker, and distinctive rise-fall intonation contours.

All BTs acquire at least some of these features, and some change the way they speak so much that they can, at times, pass as FFB. I discuss the factors that affect which features are more likely acquired and which speakers are more likely to acquire them: salience (based on community discourses, imitations, and a matched guise test), individual ability, language ideology, and social alignment and distinction. Using Lave and Wenger’s (1991) model of learning as legitimate peripheral participation, I show how BTs go through stages of social and cultural integration, gradually gaining increased access to roles and styles within the Orthodox community. They are assisted in their integration by interactions of linguistic socialization. And they express their liminality – between their former non-Orthodox selves and the FFB status that they can never attain – through distinctive combinations of symbolic practices.

PREFACE

What's your dissertation about?

It's about how people learn new ways of speaking their native language.

What's your dissertation about?

It's about Jews who become Orthodox as adults and how they're integrated into Orthodox communities.

What's your dissertation about?

It's about the Yiddish and Hebrew influences on the English of Orthodox Jews.

I answer this “party question” or “airplane question” in any of these ways, depending on the background and interests of the person I'm speaking to. These three answers sound like three separate dissertations (and they certainly could be), but it's true. This is a dissertation about language socialization, language contact, language acquisition and change over the lifespan, linguistic style in the context of other cultural practices, the role of ideology in individual language change, religious and cultural conversion, Orthodox Jews, *ba'alei teshuva*, Jewish linguistic distinctiveness, and the connection among English, Yiddish, Modern Hebrew, and textual Hebrew and Aramaic.

Because of the many fields and subfields represented here, I have many people to thank. Most importantly, I am grateful to the community members of “Milldale” and “Ner Tamid” for your hospitality and your openness to my research. Thank you for the time you spent as my consultants and for your commitment to *hachnasas orchim* (‘hospitality’). I will cherish the memories and the friendships. Special thanks to those who went above and beyond in helping me with my research and making me feel welcome: the people I refer to as Rabbi Fischer, Andrew, Moyshe, Shelley, Levi, and Shira.

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This dissertation is dedicated to my adorable daughter, Aliza Rose Bunin Benor, whose presence in my womb enhanced my fieldwork experiences and whose sweetness and cuteness since she was born have spurred me in my work.

TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS

For Hebrew and Yiddish words, I generally use spelling conventions common in the community. Examples include *Shabbos* and *mitzvos* (rather than the YIVO Yiddish transliteration system *shabes* and *mitsves*). There is a great deal of variation in the orthography of Jewish English, and I often had to make choices between several variants. Where phonetic detail is at issue, I use more detailed phonetic transcription, including characters from the International Phonetic Alphabet (font: SIL IPA93 – Doulos). For the reader's sake, I usually use English plurals (s, es), even if most community members would use *-im*, *-ach*, or other loan plurals.

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Chapter 1
Introduction

INTRODUCTION

Henry Higgins: It's 'aw' and 'garn' that keep her in her place, not her wretched clothes and dirty face ... If you spoke as she does, sir, instead of the way you do, why, you might be selling flowers too.

Eliza Doolittle: The rine in Spine stize minely in the pline. ... The rain in Spain stays mainly in the plain.

Henry Higgins: By George, I think she's got it!

– Alan Jay Lerner, *My Fair Lady*

Throughout our lifetime, we may join several new communities: a new school, a new workplace, a new group of friends, a new neighborhood, or a new part of the country. In the process of becoming part of these new communities, we encounter new cultural practices: ways of dressing, talking, and acting. To what extent do we take on these new practices? How do we learn them? This dissertation explores the social processes surrounding second style acquisition, with a focus on language.

Using methodologies and insights from linguistics, anthropology, and Jewish studies, I show how newcomers integrate into a community partly by taking on local linguistic styles. They are socialized to use these styles through a period of legitimate peripheral participation, and they use them to various extents to negotiate their place within the new community. I define “style” as a cluster of semiotic resources used by individuals and groups to help construct aspects of their identity. These resources might include ways of dressing, eating, speaking, walking, decorating, and child raising, to name a few examples.

The protagonists of this dissertation are *ba'alei teshuva*, or BTs, Jews who become Orthodox as adults. As BTs become more and more involved in an Orthodox community, they change the way they speak, adopting some of the Yiddish and Hebrew influences and other distinctive features of Orthodox Jewish English. They use Orthodox styles in slightly unique ways, sometimes intentionally and sometimes inadvertently.

This study is based on a year I spent observing, interviewing, and recording in an Orthodox community in Philadelphia, a large city in the Northeastern United States. I give the details of my methodology in Chapter 2, including how I, as a non-Orthodox Jewish woman, was accepted and given access to the community. In Chapters 3, 4, and

5, I paint an ethnographic picture of the Orthodox community, with special attention to BTs. Chapter 3 describes non-linguistic cultural practices, Chapter 4 focuses on the use of Hebrew, Aramaic, and Yiddish, and Chapter 5 discusses other distinctive linguistic features of Orthodox Jewish English. In Chapter 6, I present a model of second style acquisition, including which linguistic features tend to be acquired and which speakers tend to acquire them. Chapter 7 describes the progression newcomers go through in their acquisition of new linguistic styles, including the stages of socialization and the ways that newcomers distinguish themselves linguistically from veterans. Chapter 8 sums up the results and shows how this research applies to other situations of language socialization and language change throughout the lifespan. In this chapter, I discuss the theoretical underpinnings and central findings of this dissertation in the context of previous literature in the various fields, and I elaborate on the communities of my study.

STYLE

Surely, many readers will wonder why I have chosen to call this dissertation “Second Style Acquisition,” rather than “Second Dialect Acquisition.” “Style” is an umbrella term that encompasses the variation in language, as well as in other semiotic practices, that individuals and groups use to distinguish themselves (California Style Collective 1993, Eckert 2000, Irvine 2001).

In lay parlance, “style” is most frequently used to refer to embodied symbols like clothing, hair, and makeup. My use of this term emphasizes the connection between language and these and other semiotic practices. When people join new communities, they are exposed to a range of stylistic practices, of which language is only one. Previous literature has explored the connections between language and hair, makeup, clothing, and physical space, for example (e.g., Mendoza-Denton 1997, Eckert 2000, Fader 2000).

Past sociolinguistic research has defined “style” as intra-speaker variation, in contrast to inter-speaker variation according to social category (e.g., Labov 1972, Bell 1984, Labov 2001, Bell 2001). However, as Irvine (2001) and Coupland (2001) argue, this is a false dichotomy. The boundaries between dialects, registers, and named and unnamed styles are blurred. Intra-speaker variation is meaningful partly because it

borrowed from inter-speaker variation, and vice-versa. As Mendoza-Denton explains, “style” incorporates several types of linguistic entities:

Linguistic style is the implementation, at any given time, of a combination of features from the many varieties (such as California Chicano English, or Standardized British English), registers (such as baby talk), and performance genres (e.g., sermon, advice, proverb) at that speaker’s disposal (2000:238).

In situations of second style acquisition, the subject of the research is the connection between intra-speaker and inter-speaker variation. The newcomer varies her speech in relation to that of the target community. If “style” referred only to “intra-speaker variation,” what would we call the shifting of the newcomer – “dialect shifting” or “style shifting”? “Style” used as an umbrella term avoids these theoretical problems.

The term “style” also allows us to discuss very different types of adult language change under the same rubric. Situations where second style acquisition could potentially occur include a New Yorker moving to a small town in the South, a speaker of African American Vernacular English joining a middle-class European-American-dominated workplace, a gay man coming out and joining a gay friendship group, a want-to-be sportscaster in her first internship, a car mechanic-in-training at his first garage, a Christian converting to Islam, and a middle-schooler starting high school. Whether these language varieties are considered by their speakers to be dialects, registers, jargons, or something else, they all fit under the umbrella of style.

Even though I am discussing dialects based on region, ethnicity, and other social dimensions using the same term as professional jargons, it should be emphasized that there are differences between these two types of style. With a regional dialect, for example, a newcomer is likely to be surrounded by speakers of that dialect in all of his social and professional settings, and there is the possibility that he will pick up aspects of the dialect and use them at all times (perhaps tempering them when he talks to old friends or visits his old region). On the other hand, a lawyer is likely to leave her legal register at the office when she goes home for the evening (although she might throw in a “tort” or a “burden of proof” in everyday conversation). In addition, a regional dialect is likely to have complex phonological rules that a newcomer might have trouble acquiring (see

Payne 1980). A vocational register has few if any phonological features for a newcomer to acquire. Dialects and registers involve some different issues for second style acquisition.

Some styles, or stylistic repertoires, combine aspects of both dialects and registers. The speech of Orthodox Jews in America is one of these. Orthodox Jews may use some distinctly Orthodox linguistic features when they are speaking to a non-Jew, more when they are speaking to another Orthodox Jew about a Jewish topic, and the most when they are studying traditional texts in a yeshiva setting (yeshiva is an institution of higher Jewish learning, mostly for men). For some *ba'alei teshuva*, being Orthodox involves living, working, and playing in an almost completely Orthodox milieu. Service encounters and the occasional conversation with their neighbors or their estranged non-Orthodox relatives might be their only interactions with non-speakers of Orthodox Jewish English. For these BTs, we might say that Orthodox Jewish English is most similar to a regional dialect. Other BTs – more common in the Milldale community – have regular contact with non-Orthodox and non-Jews at their workplace, in the streets, and with their supportive family and friends from their pre-Orthodox days. These BTs are likely to modulate their use of Orthodox linguistic features, perhaps even completely turning them off in some settings. In that respect, Orthodox Jewish English is more similar to a register than a dialect for them. On the other hand, Orthodox Jewish English is not associated with a particular setting or activity, like the lawyer's register (although BTs might see themselves as speaking "Yeshivish" only in a yeshiva setting). And they might use just as many distinctly Orthodox features on the basketball court as around the *Shabbos* ('Sabbath') dinner table. Because of these ambiguities and complexities, Orthodox Jewish English is best discussed using the general term "style."

LANGUAGE IDEOLOGY

Throughout this dissertation, I use the word "ideology," which has been used in many ways in academic and popular discourse (see Eagleton 1991: Chapter 1). I define "ideology" in a neutral sense as "a body of ideas characteristic of a particular social group or class" (ibid. 1). I do not use the word with its pejorative senses of "false ideas" (ibid. 1) or "rigid preconceptions" (ibid. 4), and I do not intend any allusions to power or

hegemonic institutions. The linguistic and non-linguistic practices common among Orthodox Jews are influenced by several ideologies, such as the importance of maintaining distinctiveness from non-Jews and the sense of connectedness to their recent Jewish ancestors from Eastern European and to their distant ancestors, the biblical Children of Israel.

Research in linguistic anthropology has highlighted the role of ideology in how language is structured, used, and perceived (e.g., Schieffelin et al., eds, 1998, Irvine and Gal 2000, Irvine 2001, Coupland 2001, Wortham 2001). I am defining “language ideology” in Woolard’s sense of “representations, whether explicit or implicit, that construe the intersection of language and human beings in a social world” (1998:3). As Schieffelin and Doucet put it, “Language ideology is the mediated link between social structures and forms of talk, standing in dialectal relation with, and thus significantly influencing, social, discursive, and linguistic practices” (1998:286). Indexicality, the connection between linguistic resources and social meanings (Silverstein 1976), is possible because of language ideology (Ochs 1992, Irvine 2001). For example, using curse words may index a stance of toughness, and toughness may help to constitute masculinity, but these three levels are connected only because of the ideologies that associate curse words with toughness and toughness with masculinity.

Language ideology plays a major role in adults’ acquisition of new ways of speaking, as Ervin-Tripp (2001:45) suggests. If newcomers did not recognize a connection between a linguistic variant and a social category that they wanted to align themselves with, they would likely have no desire to use that variant. And newcomers’ positive or negative views about individual linguistic features influence whether they want to incorporate them into their repertoires. For example, a number of BTs avoid the Yiddish-influenced usage of “by,” as in “Are you staying by (‘with’) us?” because of the ideology that “by” represents “bad grammar.” And many BTs use certain Hebrew loanwords (words from another language used within English) because of the ideology that Hebrew is a holy language and allows speakers to connect to their ancient ancestors. This is not to say that all adult language change is intentional or influenced by ideology. Newcomers sometimes use features they view negatively, and they sometimes acquire

features that they are not even aware of. But, as is evident throughout this dissertation, ideology plays an important role in second style acquisition.

THE LINGUISTIC CONSTRUCTION OF IDENTITY

Following recent work in variationist sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology (e.g., LePage and Tabouret-Keller 1985, Ferguson 1994, Eckert 2000, Coupland 2001, Bucholtz and Hall forthcoming), I see language as constitutive, rather than reflective, of identity. Speakers do not use a particular linguistic variable merely because they are part of a social group. Rather, their use of that and other variables, in consort with multiple social and cultural practices, constitutes their belonging in that group. To the extent that they can control their speech, speakers use language to signal their membership in various groups: to align themselves with some people and distinguish themselves from others. I define identity as a person's sense of her meaning in the world and her relation to other people and groups, as well as others' perceptions of those. Identity is constructed jointly between the individual and others, partly through the use and perception of symbolic practices (see Eckert 2000).

Especially in the case of adults changing their language when they join new communities, it is unrealistic to view language as simply reflecting the speaker's "social address" (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1992). Newcomers clearly have some degree of agency in their sociolinguistic production. They change the ways they speak, using language to locate themselves within the new sociolinguistic landscape.

ALIGNMENT AND DISTINCTION

Previous literature on language and identity has tended to focus either on alignment (e.g., LePage and Tabouret-Keller 1985) or on distinction (e.g., Irvine 2001). Of course, alignment cannot exist without distinction, and vice versa, as these works imply. This dissertation shows that both alignment and distinction are vital elements in an individual's decisions (conscious and subconscious) of what practices to use when. Bucholtz and Hall also highlight these two processes "by which subjects construct and are constructed within social sameness and difference" (forthcoming:25). They refer to

alignment as “adequation,” a blend of “equation and adequacy,” in order to point out that people equate themselves with others not completely but sufficiently (ibid.).

My ethnographic focus on language ideology and practice draws attention to both alignment and distinction. I show how BTs use language to align themselves with other members of the Orthodox community and distinguish themselves from those to the right or left of them on the axis between Modern and Ultra-Orthodoxy. At the same time, BTs are distinguishing themselves from their non-Orthodox family and friends (or former friends). Irvine (2001:31) suggests that the use of the term “style” shifts the analytic emphasis from the language variety itself to the processes of distinction. I agree, but I argue that both distinction and alignment are important.

ACQUISITION OF NEW WAYS OF SPEAKING

While there is a vast body of literature on second language acquisition (see Preston 1989, Smith 1994), there have been only a few studies of people acquiring new varieties of their own language (e.g., Nordenstam 1979, Payne 1980, Trudgill 1986, Chambers 1992, Conn and Horesh 2001, Woods 2001). These works explore how children, adolescents, and adults change their language, especially their phonology, when they move to a new region. The major question these studies ask is: to what extent do newcomers acquire the new dialect they encounter? I am asking a similar question, but because of my view of linguistic style as a non-bounded entity, I phrase it differently: to what extent do newcomers use linguistic resources from the new stylistic repertoire they encounter?

One of the issues implicit or explicit in research on second dialect acquisition is the critical period for second language acquisition (see Singleton and Lengyel, eds., 1997), which has been variously argued to be between ages 6 and 14 (e.g., Penfield 1953, Scovel 1988, Bongaerts et al. 1997). After early adolescence, speakers usually do not adapt perfectly to a new language or dialect, especially phonologically. For example, Chambers (1992) shows how teenagers who moved from Canada to England changed their vowels less than preteens. However, this and other research shows that speakers still do change their language well after the critical period. Trudgill (1986) shows how adults adapt to subtle differences in vowels, and Nordenstam (1979) shows how adults

take on new morphological forms. The current study adds to our understanding of how adults change their language after the critical period.

Another issue these studies deal with is the role of salience in which features learners acquire. Trudgill (1986) says that more salient features are more likely to be acquired, barring other factors. As I show in Chapter 6, I found that, in general, salient features are more likely to be acquired. But I also found that some frequently heard non-salient features can be acquired and that some salient features are avoided because of negative ideology. Speakers' views about language, as well as their desire to align themselves with some people and distinguish themselves from others, are important factors in the acquisition of new styles.

A few other studies of dialect contact have also found social factors to be important. Woods (2001) shows how speakers' ideologies about the topic at hand affect dialect variation in her study of Southerners transplanted to New York. Prince (1987) shows how a Yiddish singer's desire to perform her local identity while conforming to some extent to the standard is manifest in her variable realization of vowels in open-class and closed-class words. And Yaeger-Dror (1993) shows how Mizrahi singers in Israel use various combinations of Mizrahi and Ashkenazic Hebrew variants depending on where they want to locate themselves along a continuum of ethnic identification.

A few of these studies make the point that lexical items in the new dialect that differ from the speaker's old dialect are likely to be acquired (Nordenstam 1979, Trudgill 1986, Chambers 1972). This is what I found, as well, among newly Orthodox Jews. I also found a phenomenon that is part of lexical acquisition, which I refer to as "overextension of lexical replacement." This is when speakers replace a word in their mind with a new word and then use the new word even when the old word would be appropriate. This phenomenon is relevant not only in situations of second style acquisition but in many cases of lexical expansion.

When I talk about adults' acquisition of new ways of speaking, I do not include the acquisition of second languages, unless they have some degree of mutual

intelligibility, such as Swedish and Norwegian (Nordenstam 1979).¹ An important difference between second language acquisition and second style acquisition is that in the latter learners can generally be understood even if they do not change their speech. Of course, there are still issues of intelligibility, but certainly not to the same extent as in second language acquisition, where the speakers of the target variety might not have any knowledge of the speaker's native language. Although there are many similarities between the two types of acquisition/socialization, second language acquisition is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

The acquisition of new styles also differs from "language crossing" (Rampton 1995, Rampton, ed., 1999), which is defined as "the use of a language or variety that, in one way or another, feels anomalously 'other' ... The key point is ... that others don't think that you truly, seriously, mean or believe in the identity that you're projecting" (Rampton 2001). There are certainly similarities between crossing and second style acquisition: newly Orthodox Jews and other adults joining new communities might go through a stage when they use language that they do not consider their own. And they might be seen, at times, as overstepping the boundaries of authentic language use. Even long-time BTs might differentiate themselves linguistically from lifelong Orthodox Jews to some extent. But, unlike the European Americans using superficial aspects of African American Vernacular English (Bucholtz 1999, Cutler 1999, but contrast Sweetland 2001) or the Anglos using elements of Caribbean Creole, Panjabi, and Asian English (Rampton 1995), BTs are becoming full members in a new community, using language to help signal their membership in it.

LANGUAGE SOCIALIZATION

Within linguistics, research on first and second language acquisition, as well as dialect acquisition, generally focuses on the cognitive. This dissertation focuses more on

¹ I make this point, keeping in mind that the boundary between a language and a dialect is fuzzy. The famous quote, attributed to Max Weinreich, points to the importance of socio-political factors in distinguishing a separate language: "A language is a dialect with an army and a navy." Intelligibility and systematic difference cannot always be used as criteria, as they both exist on continua. Any attempt to talk about a linguistic variety as a bounded entity likely runs into problems: Along the Dutch-German border, where does Dutch stop and German start? In a Basque-Spanish contact setting, how much Basque lexical and grammatical material is necessary to consider a particular utterance Basque? Where is the boundary between African American English and European American English?

the social. I agree whole-heartedly with Ochs and Schieffelin (1984) that language acquisition cannot be well understood unless it is analyzed as a process of language socialization. The language socialization research paradigm (Ochs and Schieffelin 1984, Schieffelin and Ochs, eds., 1986, Garrett and Baquedano-Lopez 2002) sees language socialization as a way that children and adult novices not only learn the language but also become competent members of a community. While most research on language socialization has focused on children, there has also been some work on adults learning second languages (Rymes 1997, Li 2000) and learning occupation-related language practices (Mertz 1998, Jacobs-Huey 1999).

This dissertation adds a new perspective to this growing body of research: a study of the language socialization of adult novices using micro-level linguistic analysis as well as ethnographic methods. I found that explicit interactions of language socialization – both those initiated by newcomers and those initiated by veterans – are common in situations of adult language socialization, including questioning, correction, and instruction. But I found that the majority of language socialization happens through interactions not marked as such. Newcomers are socialized to new styles through their legitimate peripheral participation (Lave and Wenger 1991) in a community. As they gradually gain more and more access to roles and responsibilities in the community, they are exposed to new styles and have expanding opportunities to try them out.

ORTHODOX JEWISH ENGLISH

This dissertation also joins a completely different body of literature on language, research on the speech of Orthodox Jews in America, referred to as “Orthodox Jewish English” (Gold 1985, Steinmetz 1986). This body of work deals mostly with lexical borrowing from Hebrew and Yiddish (Gold 1985, Steinmetz 1986, Weiser 1995, Benor 1999, 2000), the most salient aspect of Orthodox Jewish English. A few papers deal with phonological or syntactic features (Fader 2000, Benor 2001), and one book, about textual learning in the Orthodox community, has a chapter on intonation (Heilman 1983). But as of yet there has been no comprehensive study of the distinctive features of Orthodox Jewish English and how they are used. In Chapters 4 and 5, I address this gap in the

literature, recognizing that other distinctive features surely exist and that no linguistic description can ever be completely comprehensive.

Many people have asked me if I consider the speech of Orthodox Jews to be a register, a dialect of English, or a separate language. That is a question that cannot – and should not – be answered by a scholar. Speakers and non-speakers of a particular language variety often have opinions about whether that variety is a separate language, a separate dialect, or exactly the same as some other dialect or standard language. These views are generally related to their socio-political understanding of the group. A linguist's job is not to make any determinations about the socio-political standing of a language variety but to describe it and the ideologies surrounding it. Through my ethnographic research, I have found that some people consider the speech of Orthodox Jews – often called “Yeshivish” or “Yinglish” – to be a separate language. They mention the song “Yeshivishe Reyd,” which refers to Yeshivish as a “new language,” or the dictionary called *FrumSpeak: The First Dictionary of Yeshivish* (Weiser 1995). But others call Yeshivish a dialect or a jargon, and some do not notice or mention anything distinct about Orthodox language. Weiser says, “Yeshivish speakers are generally convinced that they are speaking English and throwing in just a word or two to foster a sense of cultural unity” (Weiser 1995:xxi). The linguist's job is to describe these diverse ideologies and show how they relate to the production and perception of Orthodox speech, not to take one side in the debate.

One of the reasons for these disparate understandings of Orthodox speech is that there is a great deal of intra-group variation, according to speaker, topic, audience, and setting. The most distinct variety, likely unintelligible to non-Jews and most non-Orthodox Jews, is the “Yeshivish” register of learned men studying Talmud (a set of rabbinic texts). On the other hand, most Orthodox Jews in America (except native Yiddish speakers) are able to speak general American English with few distinctively Orthodox features, and they generally do so when speaking to outsiders. Because of this variation, I use the label “Orthodox Jewish English” to refer to any variety of English spoken by Orthodox Jews that differs to some extent from the English spoken by non-Orthodox Jews through the use of any of a large repertoire of features influenced by Hebrew and Yiddish.

Hypothetically, non-Orthodox Jews or non-Jews could use Orthodox Jewish English, just as European Americans can use African American Vernacular English in various ways (see Bucholtz 1999, Cutler 1999, Sweetland 2002). Therefore, Orthodox Jewish English is defined not by its speakers alone but by the repertoire of distinctive features that they draw from. The linguistic features I present in Chapters 4 and 5 should be seen not as a description of a bounded language, dialect, or register, but as an inventory, or repertoire. Orthodox Jews use various combinations of features from this stylistic repertoire to construct their identity: to index their location along the various social axes of Orthodoxy by aligning themselves with some people and distinguishing themselves from others. While some of these features on their own indicate to a listener that the speaker is likely Orthodox, others do not. It is the co-occurrence (Ervin-Tripp 1972) of several features from the overall repertoire that constitutes an Orthodox style. But no one person uses every single feature, and no one feature is used by every single person (except the overall category of loanwords).

It should be emphasized that “distinctive” features are not necessarily uniquely distinctive. Many Hebrew and Yiddish loanwords are also used by non-Orthodox Jews, and several of the phonological, syntactic, and discourse features described in Chapter 5 are also used by speakers of other varieties of American English. For example, word-final /t/ release has been documented as a stylistic resource among science fiction fans (Campbell-Kibler et al. 2001), gay men (ibid., Podesva in progress), and girls who consider themselves nerds (Bucholtz 1996). In all of these communities, /t/ release indexes some variety of intelligence (Campbell-Kibler 2004). But this variable is endowed with meaning slightly differently in these groups. As I show in a study of /t/ release in another Orthodox community (Benor 2001), both men and women release /t/ more frequently when they are in positions of authority. Overall, /t/ release is much more common among men, because men are expected to be religious authorities. Released /t/ indexes authority, and authority is an aspect of Orthodox masculinity. The linguistic resource is connected to the social meaning through an intermediate level of a stance, and all three levels are held together by ideology (Ochs 1992). Partly because of this indirect connection between a linguistic resource and its social meaning, it is possible for the

same linguistic resource to be used by unrelated and disparate communities, having the same or different meanings.

Another issue that arises when we talk about distinctive language is: whose speech is the basis for comparison? In the case of second style acquisition, it is the speaker's old ways of speaking. I am interested in the features that distinguish Orthodox Jewish English from the speech BTs used before they became Orthodox. For some BTs who were involved with Jewish religious or cultural practices, this would be another variety of Jewish English, including some Hebrew and Yiddish words and perhaps another distinctive feature or two. For others, it would be what I refer to as "general American English," which I define in this case as American English with no distinctly Jewish features. Like Veatch's (1991) "Reference American," "general American English" is an abstraction necessary for the purpose of analysis. Of course, there is no social entity, let alone a homogeneous speech community, of non-Orthodox Americans. Because I do not have 2-, 5-, or 30-year-old recordings from the BTs in my study, I have no way of describing their pre-Orthodox speech. Therefore, the abstraction of "general American English" is necessary.

ORTHODOX JEWS

Orthodoxy is the branch of Judaism that follows biblical and rabbinic laws and customs most strictly. Orthodoxy in America is contrasted with Reform, Conservative, Reconstructionist, and secular Judaism. Heilman (personal communication 10/16/03) estimates that there are currently 600,000 Orthodox Jews in America, representing 9-10% of the total Jewish population.

Within Orthodoxy there are several subgroups, including what Helmreich (2000) refers to as Modern Orthodox, Strictly Orthodox, and Ultra-Orthodox. All three groups consider *halacha* ('Jewish law') to be binding, but Ultra-Orthodox Jews interpret many laws more strictly than the other groups. Modern Orthodox Jews (Heilman 1973, Heilman and Cohen 1989, Davidman 1991) are the most integrated into American society, and Ultra-Orthodox Jews are the most particularistic in their social and cultural practices. While some people do use one of these labels to refer to themselves, many people see Modern and Ultra-Orthodoxy as ends of a continuum and locate themselves

somewhere in between. Although research on non-Modern Orthodox communities often uses the term “Ultra-Orthodox” or the Hebrew word “Haredi,” I have found that these labels are rarely used in the community. More commonly heard are “Torah Judaism,” “Black Hat,” and even “*frum*,” Yiddish for ‘religious’ (although the latter is also used by some Modern Orthodox Jews).

Within Ultra-Orthodoxy there are two major streams: Hasidim and non-Hasidim. There is a good deal of ethnographic literature on Hasidim (e.g., Davidman 1991, Heilman 1992, El Or 1994, Belcove-Shalin, ed., 1995, Fader 2000, Levine 2003). Non-Hasidic Ultra-Orthodox Jews are the subject of some contemporary historical research (Silber 1992, Friedman 1992, Soloveitchik 1994), but not of ethnography, with the exception of Helmreich’s (2000) study of the yeshiva.

Non-Hasidic Ultra-Orthodox Jews are sometimes referred to as Misnagdim or Mitnagdim, meaning ‘opponents’, as they descend from the Jews who opposed Hasidism in 18th- and 19th-century Eastern Europe. In America, they are more commonly referred to as Litvish, pointing to their mostly Lithuanian origin, or Yeshivish, highlighting the centrality of institutionalized Talmud study. As Heilman (1992) explains, the Hasidic and Litvish communities have come to resemble each other on many levels in recent decades. And there is a good deal of overlap in terms of interaction and inter-group marriage. The community of this study is mostly Litvish and Ultra-Orthodox, but there are some people with Hasidic leanings or connections, a few people who define themselves as Modern Orthodox, and many who consider themselves somewhere in the middle.

BA’ALEI TESHUVA

At the turn of the 21st century, thousands of Jews who grew up non-Orthodox are deciding to become Orthodox. These Jews are referred to as *ba’alei teshuva*, or BTs. *Ba’al teshuva* (singular) is a Hebrew phrase meaning ‘one who returns’, emphasizing the “return” to the traditional Judaism that may have been practiced by the BT’s ancestors. *Ba’alei teshuva* is the masculine or unmarked plural. The feminine forms, *ba’alas teshuva* (singular) and *ba’alos teshuva* (plural) are also sometimes used. BTs are contrasted with FFBs, people who are “*frum* ‘religious’ from birth.”

In the past two decades there has been a good deal of scholarly research about *ba'alei teshuva* (Aviad 1983, Danzger 1989, Davidman 1991, Kaufman 1991, Tallen 2002). These studies, conducted from the perspectives of sociology, anthropology, religious studies, and feminist studies, deal with BTs in various stages of their integration into Orthodox communities. They tell the stories of men and women moving to Orthodox neighborhoods, taking on new forms of observance and ideologies, and changing various practices, such as dressing, eating, and studying. However, they do not explore in depth how the BTs acquire these new practices. And although most of these studies append lengthy glossaries of the Hebrew and Yiddish loanwords that the BTs use, they include little or no discussion of language.

There are also a number of popular books geared toward BTs or potential BTs, describing BTs' "journeys" to Orthodoxy (Tatz 1987, Greenberg 1997), dealing with women's issues within Orthodoxy (Aiken 1994, Heller 2001), and providing practical guides to observance and integration (Steinsaltz 1987, Friedman 1994, Becher et al. 1995). This literature, written mostly by BTs, does include discussion of taking on new practices, and a few of the books even mention BTs' "learning the lingo" or changing the way they talk. I see the current study as contributing in several ways both to the scholarly discourse about BTs and to the practical literature for BTs: through the descriptions of Orthodox linguistic and non-linguistic practices, the social stages BTs go through as they integrate into the community and take on many of these practices, and the interactions of linguistic socialization between BT apprentices and FFB or BT community veterans.

An important point of this dissertation is that language is differentially important to different BTs. The BTs in my study have various levels of desire to align themselves with FFBs. They have different strategies for integration, different ideologies about language and social categories, and different abilities to change their language. Some BTs use most of the stylistic resources of Orthodoxy, and others use very few. I found a good deal of "hyperaccommodation," where BTs take on symbolic practices to a greater extent than FFBs, sometimes yielding incorrect forms. And I have evidence of the opposite trend, where BTs – not wanting to seem inauthentic – avoid certain practices or use them in a marked way. Some BTs go through these two stages in a progression,

which I refer to as the “bungee effect”: going too far in their adoption of Orthodox practices and then bouncing back to a happy medium. This medium may be experienced as liminality, a “borderland” between their former non-Orthodox self and the FFB status they can most likely never attain.

It should be emphasized that there are many “paths” or “journeys” to becoming Orthodox.² In subsequent chapters, I talk about various stages of BTs’ integration into Orthodox communities. **Peripheral BTs** take classes and attend events in Orthodox outreach centers or communities. **Community BTs** live among other *frum* people. And **Yeshiva BTs** live among *frum* people and have spent time studying formally in a yeshiva setting. I want to emphasize upfront that these stages are by no means uniform. Not all BTs make it past the Peripheral stage, some go straight to the Yeshiva stage, and some go back and forth between stages. I justify using these stages as the norm for the analysis that follows, because the progression is sufficiently common.

Two major factors in BTs’ variable experiences are age and gender. The BTs in my sample became Orthodox at a wide range of ages, from their early teenage years to their 60s. Several BTs told me they think it is harder for older people to take on Orthodox observance and integrate into the community. Those who become Orthodox as teenagers are more similar to FFBs, one older BT said. There are usually different issues that arise for BTs of different ages. Younger BTs are more likely to have parents and siblings who disapprove of their newfound religiosity, and, therefore, to be breaking away from their support system. Older BTs might find it more difficult to change their speech, dress, and activities, because these practices have been old-hat to them for decades.

Several interviewees said that men and women have different experiences as BTs. As I argue in previous work about gender and Orthodoxy (Benor forthcoming b), religious learnedness is more valued for men than for women, so male BTs generally

² Community discourses use both of these terms. A recent BT said to a longtime BT, “I’m on the path to being *frum* (‘religious’).” Many people speak of BTs or FFBs who went “off the *derech* (‘path’).” A flyer described a visiting rabbi as having “inspired many along their spiritual journey.” A BT woman was asking a rabbi permission to participate in my study, and he asked if I’m *frum*. She reported her response: “She’s in the middle of her journey.” From the outside analyst’s perspective, the term “journey” seems more appropriate, because it allows for more agency and individual variation: the BT can decide which direction her journey will take at any given moment. Talking about “the path” or “the *derech*” suggests that the BT is going in a direction that is pre-ordained.

spend more time learning. Female BTs are expected to run an Orthodox household, which often involves raising several more children than their parents did, as well as cooking traditional Jewish foods they may not have grown up with. The laws and customs of modesty are more restrictive for women than men: women must not sing in front of non-relative men, and they must cover their elbows and knees. On the other hand, men are expected to wear a blatant symbol of their Judaism wherever they go: a *kipah* or black hat. Linguistically, men may have a harder time. They are expected to learn how to *daven* ('pray'), *leyn* ('recite Torah'), and study *Gemora* ('Talmud, a compilation of rabbinic commentary') in the original Hebrew/Aramaic. Women are expected to become proficient enough in Hebrew to understand the prayers and some biblical texts, but, aside from a few blessings, they are rarely expected to recite Hebrew aloud. These gender differences are the subject of community discourse, and they are important aspects of the process of becoming Orthodox.

ETHNOGRAPHIC METHODOLOGY IN THE STUDY OF SOCIOLINGUISTIC VARIATION

The study of sociolinguistic variation has been greatly enriched by the use of ethnography (e.g., Eckert 2000, Fought 2003), that is, participant-observation and interviews used to understand people from their own perspective, as well as the subsequent write-up of findings. Ethnographic methods allow the researcher to pinpoint categories that are locally salient and important, rather than categories imposed by the researcher's preconceived understandings (for critiques of sociolinguists' use of socioeconomic class and ethnicity, see Sankoff and Laberge 1978, Ash 2002, and Fought 2002). While some of the most frequently cited sociolinguistic studies focus on pre-established overarching categories (e.g., Labov 1966), others correlate language use with local categories that can be determined only through some amount of ethnography. Labov's (1963) foundational study of Martha's Vineyard looks at variation among "up-islanders," "down-islanders," and "summer people," taking into account the islanders' variable orientations toward island culture. Throughout the decades, sociolinguistic research has continued to work with local categories, such as mountain farmers, dairy farmers, and industrial workers among Cantabrians in Spain (Holmquist 1985), "estate" and "non-estate" classes among speakers of Guyanese Creole (Rickford 1987), "jocks,"

“burnouts,” and “in-betweens” in a midwestern high school (Eckert 1989, 2000), gang affiliations among teenagers in northern California (Mendoza-Denton 1997), and players of different card games among elderly residents of Wisconsin (Rose 2003). By getting to know the community intimately, the researcher can analyze how language is used to help construct these local categories. As Eckert argues, ethnography “yields sociolinguistic insights that cannot be obtained by other means” (2000:74).

Ethnography also allows the researcher to observe language in its natural habitat. Using only sociolinguistic interviews for data is like observing the behavior patterns of a cheetah in a zoo. The zoo researchers would certainly learn something about the cheetah’s food preferences, play habits, and sleep cycles, especially if the zoo attempted to recreate the cheetah’s natural environment. And this enclosed setting would facilitate more controlled observations and experiments than would be possible in the great wild. But the data would probably look much different if the research was conducted on the cheetah’s home turf, complete with the unique local combination of plants, animals, and climate. The researcher could observe how the cheetah interacts with its extended family and all the other nearby animals.

Similarly, interview modules designed to capture speakers’ most “natural” speech do give the researcher some idea of how the speaker may talk in her everyday life. And experiments that test speakers’ stylistic variation in the tasks of word pairs, reading passage, formal interview, and casual interview (Labov 1972) do shed light on her ability to shift in particular variables and, to some extent, on her ideologies of standardness. While these methods are crucial to our understanding of sociolinguistic variation, they do not reveal how people speak with a variety of audiences and in a variety of situations outside the interview, and they do not give us a sense of how meaning is constructed in face-to-face interactions. That is where participant-observation comes in. By joining community members in their day-to-day activities, the researcher is able to observe how people use different linguistic styles in different situations and with different interlocutors.

Ethnographic methods are also necessary to understand the connection between language and other semiotic practices, such as clothing, hair styles, and musical preferences. In addition, ethnography enables the researcher to explore ideologies within

the community – ideologies about language and other practices and their complicated connections to social categories.

Limitations of ethnographic methodology

To analyze how language is used in everyday life, the ideal data collection would include every interaction. However, this is rarely possible, for both practical and ethical reasons. It is impractical for a researcher to follow even one person around all of the time. It is possible to give a tape recorder to a consultant and instruct her to record all of her interactions (similar to the methods in Coupland 1980 and Rampton 1995), which allows the researcher to observe the audio portion of all interactions. Even with explicit instructions to record every interaction, the consultant will likely choose to turn off the tape recorder some of the time. Also, the issue of informed consent arises: if the consultant must have each of her recorded interlocutors sign a consent form, she will either not record everything or will record people without their knowledge. Even the most meticulous consultant will likely not get a signature before asking for directions or making small talk with the grocery clerk.

Recorded interactions are often quite useful, but they may not be conducive to detailed acoustic analysis. Background noise, overlapping speech, and uncontrolled microphone levels make instrumental analysis of vowels, for example, quite difficult. Just as it is easier to count the cheetah's spots and make exact calculations of its food intake when it is in captivity, it is easier to conduct acoustic analysis on speech that is collected under controlled conditions. Even so, some acoustic analysis is possible even on uncontrolled recordings.

No matter what techniques the researcher uses to capture and analyze speech, the "observer's paradox" will always be present to some extent. As Labov explains, the researcher's goal "is to observe the way people use language when they are not being observed" (1972:61). But the researcher's presence is bound to affect the speech. This paradox is likely to be most evident in speech recorded in interviews with an unfamiliar researcher. Labov reports speakers in an interview setting shifting toward the vernacular when they have side conversations with friends or relatives. However, it is likely that they still speak somewhat differently than they would if the researcher was not present.

One way to decrease the effect of the observer's paradox is to become involved in the community of research. But no matter how involved and accepted the fieldworker becomes, she will likely always affect the interactions to some extent. Even when we observe a cheetah in its natural habitat, the cheetah's behavior is different than it would be if we were not present.

COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE AND IMAGINED COMMUNITIES

In an ethnographic study, a fruitful unit of analysis is the "community of practice" (Lave and Wenger 1991, Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1992). Eckert defines this as "an aggregate of people who come together around some enterprise" (2000:25). She continues, "United by this common enterprise, people come to develop and share ways of doing things, ways of talking, beliefs, values – in short, practices – as a function of their joint engagement in activity" (ibid.). A few examples of communities of practice include a university linguistics department, a bridge club, and a classic rock cover band.

Communities of practice may be oriented toward larger entities: "imagined communities" (Anderson 1983). Although the faculty, students, and staff of the linguistics department spend much of their time engaged in the mutual enterprises of teaching, learning, researching, and administrating, they consider themselves part of the international community of linguists, their university, and the world of academia. Of course, the linguists do not personally know or come into contact with every member of these communities (hence the "imagination"), but they are connected to every one of them through ideology and practice. In Anderson's (1983) case of nationalism, some of these practices include reading a common newspaper and celebrating the same holidays. Similarly, linguistics faculty and students might attend university-wide events or international linguistics conferences and read and contribute to journals and electronic mailing lists. There are also linguistic and other stylistic practices that help people construct their identity as linguists, bridge players, or band members, and these practices are often learned and used in the local unit, the community of practice. More generally, the community of practice is the unit in which newcomers are socialized to become a member – both of the local group and of the imagined community. To study this socialization and how new practices are learned, a researcher must think practically and

look locally (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1992), keeping in mind the connections to imagined communities and the wider world.

FIELD SITES

The two communities of practice in this study are the Ner Tamid outreach center and the Shomrei Emuna Orthodox synagogue.³ Ner Tamid (Heb. ‘eternal light’) is prominently located in the downtown area, where young non-Orthodox Jews tend to live, amidst the hubbub of urban life. Shomrei Emuna (Heb. ‘keepers of the faith’) is located in the more residential “Milldale” neighborhood, about 45 minutes from downtown but still within city limits. Three rabbis from Milldale, who are members of Shomrei Emuna, run Ner Tamid, organizing social and religious events and offering regular classes. The people involved in Shomrei Emuna and Ner Tamid represent communities of practice because their members are engaged together in common enterprises: praying, learning, celebrating holidays, and experiencing and spreading Orthodox ways of life.

The main imagined community that these groups are connected to is the international Orthodox Jewish community, centered in North America and Israel but also located in Europe, Latin America, South Africa, and elsewhere. There are several institutions, conferences, periodicals, and publishing companies that cater to the large English-speaking sector of this imagined community. These include the O.U. (the Orthodox Union, which grants official approval to kosher foods, among other things), the Aguda (Agudath Israel or Agudas Yisroel, an Ultra-Orthodox policy organization), the *Jewish Press*, an Orthodox weekly published in New York, *Yated Ne’eman*, an English-language Israel-based Orthodox newspaper, and the *Jewish Observer*, a monthly magazine published by the Aguda. Orthodox Jews from around the world might spend time at a yeshiva in Israel or elsewhere. A number of non-local guest lecturers – from around North America, as well as Israel, England, and South Africa, for example – come to teach at Ner Tamid and Shomrei Emuna. Although members of the Ner Tamid and Milldale communities obviously do not know all other Orthodox Jews, they are

³ The names of institutions, locations, and individuals are pseudonyms. To further safeguard individuals’ privacy, I change some potentially identifying details, and I sometimes use two names for the same person.

connected to them through these institutions, through common ideology, and through shared religious and cultural practices.

The intermediate level between the communities of practice and the international imagined community is the Orthodox community of the metropolitan area, Philadelphia. Shomrei Emuna and Ner Tamid sometimes have joint events with other local groups, and when Shomrei Emuna dedicated its new Torah, several rabbis from other area synagogues attended. Why did I choose Philadelphia as the location of my research? I wanted to find a relatively small but vibrant Orthodox community with a large percentage of *ba'alei teshuva*. The communities in New York and Los Angeles seemed too big (overwhelming for the researcher), the San Francisco Bay area too small (not enough potential participants), and Lakewood too FFB (not a high enough percentage of BTs).

All of the people, institutions, and locations in this dissertation are given pseudonyms, with the exception of Philadelphia. I considered concealing the identity of this city, as some other studies have (such as “Lake City” and “Lakeville” in Sklare and Greenblum 1967 and “Sprawl City” and “Dudley Meadows” in Heilman 1973). But I chose not to use a pseudonym, because the location of this Orthodox community is important. Readers familiar with Orthodoxy would be eager to know that the research is not taking place in a small community like Palo Alto, California, or a very large community like Monsey, New York. It is relevant that Philadelphia is only one to two hours by car from Baltimore, Maryland, and Lakewood, New Jersey, homes to much larger Ultra-Orthodox communities, and only a bit further from Brooklyn and Monsey, New York, two of the centers of Ultra-Orthodoxy. Orthodox Jews in Philadelphia are connected through family, friends, or organizations to these other communities, and many of the children move there or elsewhere when they get married.

There are at least six separate neighborhoods in the Philadelphia area where Orthodox Jews tend to live. I chose to focus on “Milldale,” because, of the neighborhoods that include many BTs, it is probably the most strictly Orthodox. Other communities do include some Jews who would be described as Ultra-Orthodox, but they also include more Modern Orthodox Jews. I had already done some research in communities of Modern Orthodox Jews (Benor 1998, 2000), as well as Chabad Hasidic Jews (Benor 2001, forthcoming), and I was eager to learn about a different branch of

Orthodoxy. So I was pleased to find the non-Hasidic (Ultra-) Orthodox community of Shomrei Emuna in Milldale with its strong ties to the Ner Tamid center.

Milldale is a middle-class residential and commercial area of Philadelphia. The houses are mostly semi-detached single-family homes with small front and back yards. The Orthodox community includes people of different socio-economic classes, who might not normally live in the same neighborhood: doctors, contractors, lawyers, cleaners, teachers, butchers, business people, and scientists. While some of the women are stay-at-home moms, more of them have part- or full-time professions.

To give the reader a sense of how the Milldale Orthodox community sees itself, I quote from some of its promotional materials (translations are mine, and italics are as in original):

[Milldale] is an affordable, friendly, safe neighborhood located in ... Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Besides having all of the features that a *frum* ('religious') person wants, such as schools, *shuls* ('synagogues'), kosher markets, kosher restaurants, Torah ('traditional Jewish texts') learning classes, and a large *eruv* ('boundary that allows Jews to carry outside the home on the Sabbath'), the most outstanding feature of Milldale is the affordability of the housing market.

Truly, the real beauty of this Philadelphia Jewish community is in the people who live here. The sense of caring for each other and sharing each other's *simchas* ('joyous occasions') as well as helping when a family needs an act of *chesed* ('kindness') can only be appreciated by living here.

Our community now has approximately 450 families. Most of these families have children and send them to Hebrew Day School.

It should be emphasized that the Orthodox Jews of Milldale are not isolated from the rest of Milldale. They share streets, duplexes, and apartment buildings with non-Orthodox Jews and non-Jews of various ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Milldale is quite diverse; the local public schools serve students from dozens of different countries.

Most of the Orthodox Jews in Milldale are of Eastern European origin, but some have ancestors in Germany or the Middle East. While there are a few immigrants from Russia, Iran, Israel, and elsewhere, most community members are American-born, from first- to fourth-generation descendents of immigrants. About half of the Shomrei Emuna community are BTs, from the Philadelphia area or elsewhere. Among the FFBs, several

grew up in Philadelphia, but many came from smaller Orthodox communities, such as Minneapolis and New Haven, or from larger ones, such as Monsey, New York, or Boro Park, Brooklyn.

THE PROTAGONISTS

This study looks at BTs as they are socialized into Orthodoxy through the Ner Tamid and Shomrei Emuna communities of practice. Many non-Orthodox Jews begin their journey to Orthodoxy by taking classes and attending social events at Ner Tamid. They visit Milldale periodically, upon invitation from the rabbis and others who live there. Some are so attracted to the Orthodox lifestyle that they eventually move to Milldale and become members of Shomrei Emuna. A number of BTs also spend a few months or a year in Israel, studying at one of the several yeshivas there that are geared toward BTs. Of course, not all Jews who enter Ner Tamid follow this trajectory. My study includes data from individuals on various paths and at various stages, but the focus is on BTs who have spent time at Ner Tamid or similar outreach centers and now live or plan to live in Milldale or some other Orthodox community. In this section, I introduce some of the protagonists by summarizing their “journeys” to Orthodoxy.

Rivka-Bracha Rosenbaum

Rivka-Bracha grew up as “Rebecca” in a rural part of Maryland. She had little Jewish education, and her family celebrated both Christmas and Chanukah. As a teenager, she dabbled a bit in Christianity. Soon after she moved to Philadelphia in her early twenties, a relative convinced her that she should choose one religion, and she chose Judaism. She decided to learn more about it, so she started attending classes at Ner Tamid. Based on an FFB rabbi’s persistent invitations, she spent *Shabbos* with his family in Milldale and, soon after, with other families in the neighborhood. She went on a Ner Tamid trip to the Ultra-Orthodox neighborhoods of Brooklyn. And she attended a weekend seminar sponsored by another Orthodox outreach organization.

Within less than a year, she was hooked. She decided to spend several months studying in a BT yeshiva in Israel, and, when she returned, she moved to Milldale to live as an Orthodox Jew. She is now fully observant of *halacha* (‘Jewish law’), wears long

skirts and modest long-sleeved shirts, and works for an Orthodox social service agency. When she felt ready to get married, she visited a *shadchan* ('matchmaker') in New York, where she knew she wanted to live. Now she is married to a young BT who is studying in a yeshiva in Brooklyn. Rivka-Bracha has been involved with Orthodoxy for only a few years, but she has reached a high level of integration into Orthodoxy: she is a Yeshiva BT, one who has spent time studying in a yeshiva and lives in an Orthodox community.

Andrew Marantz

Andrew grew up in a Reform Jewish family outside of New York City. They attended *Shabbos* services every Friday night at their temple, and they celebrated some of the holidays. They would visit relatives in Brooklyn, and Andrew says he was always attracted to the Ultra-Orthodox community they would pass in Boro Park along the way.

In his mid-twenties, Andrew moved to Philadelphia to start a new job. He lived a few blocks from Ner Tamid, and he used to pass it on his way to and from work. He decided one day to stop in and see what it was all about. Rabbi Fischer, himself a long-time BT, greeted him and told him about the classes they offer there. Andrew attended one that sounded interesting about reincarnation and the soul, and he became excited about studying traditional Jewish texts. He began to study Torah a few times a week on his own or with a partner or teacher, and then he started learning *Gemora* ('Talmud, a compilation of rabbinic commentary') regularly. He spent a few *Shabboses* in Milldale, but mostly he stayed local and attended services and meals at Ner Tamid.

A year later, he followed the laws of *Shabbos* and *kashrus* ('kosher food laws'), and he wore *tzitzis* ('ritual fringed torso undergarment') every day and a black velvet *kipah* ('skullcap') (as opposed to the colorful knit *kipah* common among Modern Orthodox Jews) outside of work. Now he lives in Israel with his new wife – also a BT – and he studies full-time in a yeshiva. During my year of fieldwork, Andrew transformed from a Peripheral BT, one who is only marginally involved with an Orthodox community, to a Yeshiva BT, one who has spent time studying in a yeshiva and now lives among Orthodox Jews.

Levi and Shira Light

One day about ten years ago, Lawrence and Charity Light were outside doing some home improvements on their house in a suburb of Philadelphia. A Jehovah's Witness passed by and engaged Lawrence in conversation. He tried to argue with the missionary but did not know the biblical texts well enough. This conversation interested him in his own background, and he began to take classes at Ner Tamid. His wife, Charity, was Catholic but also became interested in Judaism. Encouraged by Lawrence's childhood friend, who had become Orthodox and moved to Monsey, New York, the Lights decided to become Orthodox. Charity converted to Judaism and changed her name to Shira, and Lawrence began using his Hebrew name, Levi, although they both still use their English names at work and for official purposes. They had a second wedding, since a marriage between a Jew and a non-Jew has no legal standing according to *halacha*.

Within a few years, Levi and Shira moved to Milldale and became active in the synagogue, Shomrei Emuna. Levi was elected president of the board, a job often given to BTs with some leadership experience. And Shira took on several organizational roles, including chair of the hospitality committee and coordinator of the large *seuda* ('festive meal') for the rowdy holiday of Purim. Now the Lights have three children between the ages of two and six, and they are proud to be raising their children as FFBs. On most Friday nights they have overnight guests: BTs and potential BTs from Ner Tamid or elsewhere who want to have a meaningful *Shabbos* experience. The Lights are Community BTs, BTs who have made the commitment to observe *halacha* and live in an Orthodox community.

Variation among BTs and FFBs

These and other BTs have diverse backgrounds, various ways of becoming involved with Orthodoxy, and different means for expressing their Orthodox identity. To give some examples of the diversity I encountered, I present a chart of the eight Orthodox men whose study sessions I recorded and analyzed, including information on how long they have been involved with Orthodoxy, what type of community they live in, and some visual symbols that vary among Orthodox men:

Table 1-1: Variation among eight Orthodox men (five BTs and three FFBs)

	Andrew	Joseph	David	Jacob	Fischer	Weisman	Nussbaum	Avrum
Years Orthodox	1.5	5	7	10	30+	FFB	FFB	FFB (modern)
BT Type	Periph.	Yeshiva	Yeshiva	Comm.	Yeshiva	-----	-----	-----
Years-Yeshiva	0	2	1.5	weeks	5	? years	8	4
Community they live in	non Orth	Modern Orth	mixed Orth	Ultra Orth	Ultra Orth	Ultra Orth	Ultra Orth	non Orth
Kipah	black	black	black	black	black	black	black	knit
Beard	no	no	short	long	long	no	long	no
Black hat	no	no	on <i>Shabbos</i>	yes	yes	yes	yes	no

For example, David spent time studying at Ner Tamid when he was first learning about Orthodoxy, and then he spent a year and a half studying in a yeshiva in Israel. Now he works for a similar Orthodox outreach center, helping non-Orthodox Jews to become Orthodox. He has a short beard and wears a black *kipah*, and on *Shabbos* he wears a black hat over that. He has a weekly study session with Joseph, who was his *chavrusa* (‘study partner’) in Israel. Joseph, like David, considers himself somewhere in between Modern and Ultra-Orthodox, and he expresses this by wearing a black *kipah* but no black hat and no beard. Jacob and Rabbi Fischer live in the Ultra-Orthodox neighborhood of Milldale, and they wear dark suits, black hats, and long beards. Jacob only studied for a few weeks in a yeshiva, but he studies with a *chavrusa* a few times a week. Rabbi Fischer spent five years in various yeshivas, surrounded by people who grew up Orthodox.

The FFBs exhibit as much variation as the BTs. Avrum grew up Modern Orthodox and still identifies as such, so he wears a knit *kipah*, is clean-shaven, and never wears a black hat. Rabbi Nussbaum and Dr. Weisman are both FFBs who live in Milldale and wear black hats, but Nussbaum identifies as closer to the Ultra-Orthodox pole than Weisman does. They exhibit these differences in their facial hair – Nussbaum has a long bushy beard, and Weisman is clean-shaven.

How does all of this variation in study histories, residential decisions, and bodily presentation relate to language? The next seven chapters explain. Based on recorded and observed speech from over 100 Orthodox Jews, I present qualitative and quantitative

analysis of loanword use and other distinctive features of Orthodox Jewish English, and then I discuss whether and how BTs acquire these features.

SUMMARY

In short, this study highlights the importance of language and other symbolic practices to the integration of BTs into Orthodox communities. It analyzes the linguistic and social processes a newcomer goes through in acquiring new styles. And it presents the most comprehensive inventory yet of distinctive features of Orthodox Jewish English, showing how they are used and how they are connected to ideologies and to non-linguistic practices.

As its title promises, this dissertation presents several principles of second style acquisition:

1. Newcomers index their membership in a community partly through semiotic practices like language.
2. Newcomers acquire styles through a process of increasing participation in a community of practice.
3. Language ideology plays a major role in second style acquisition, as newcomers learn to make connections between linguistic resources and types of people – and as they intentionally use certain linguistic features and avoid others.
4. Newcomers use language to align themselves with some and distinguish themselves from others, locating themselves along various social axes.
5. Different stylistic resources are acquired differentially. Factors include salience, frequency, systematic difference, and positive and negative ideology.
6. Different speakers acquire stylistic resources differentially. Factors include linguistic skill, desire to integrate, language ideologies, exposure, and interactions with community members.

Before I elaborate on these principles in Chapters 6 and 7, I present data on the linguistic and non-linguistic practices of BTs and FFBs.

Chapter 2

“Now you look like a lady”: Methodology

INTRODUCTION

“Ki va moed, ki va moed.” I have this song in my head because tonight I went to a Carlebach/learning BT Sukkos [(‘Holiday of Booths’)] party at [Ner Tamid]. I didn’t even plan to. I woke up this morning thinking I would just work on my grant application, but I ended up starting my fieldwork! Oops, and WOW. That was amazing. It went better than I ever could have possibly imagined. They were so nice to me, so welcoming, even interested in my topic.

-- Fieldnotes, October 4, 2001: [Ner Tamid] Center, 4:30pm to 10:30pm

Wow. I just got back from 26 hours with the Hollanders. It was very nice, and I learned so much. I learned from watching Huvi Hollander interact with BTs and with her children, from listening to her children talk, from going to shul [(‘synagogue’)], from watching Rabbi H interact with people, and from reading the newspaper. If only I could have recorded!!!!

-- Fieldnotes, November 16-17, 2001: Shabbos by the Hollanders [‘Sabbath’ – Friday evening to Saturday evening at the Hollanders’ home in Milldale]

In October 2001 I visited the Ner Tamid Center for Jewish Studies in search of BTs. I had four major research questions in mind:

1. What role does language play in BTs’ construction of their new Orthodox identity?
2. How much do BTs change the way they speak?
3. What are the common stages of acquiring Orthodox styles?
4. What are the social circumstances surrounding the learning of language and other symbolic practices?

To gather the data that I would need to answer these questions, I planned a three-tiered methodology: a year of ethnographic observations and interviews, recordings of community members’ speech, and a “matched guise” test of speech perceptions. In this chapter, I describe these methodologies, as well as some of the difficulties I encountered.

ETHNOGRAPHIC METHODOLOGY

Ethnography is the study of people, their culture, and their social organization through participant-observation and interviews and the subsequent written presentation of

selected aspects to an audience. The researcher spends a significant amount of time “hanging out” in the community, getting to know people, observing events, asking questions informally, and conducting interviews. This is what I did during my year of fieldwork at Ner Tamid and in Milldale.

I spent the first few months of my fieldwork attending lectures, prayer services, concerts, and social events at the Ner Tamid Center. I recorded classes, social interactions before and after class, and one-on-one study sessions. I interviewed the rabbis who teach there and some of the non-Orthodox Jews and BTs who attend their classes. Gradually, I began to spend more of my time in Milldale, where the Ner Tamid rabbis and several alumni live. From April to November I did fieldwork mostly in Milldale, “hanging out” with people in their homes, celebrating *Shabbos* and holidays, and attending classes and services at Shomrei Emuna, the main synagogue.

In addition to these main centers of my fieldwork, I also visited a few other synagogues in the Milldale area, the *mikveh* ‘ritual bath’, and three schools that Milldale Orthodox children attend. I ate several meals at the two kosher restaurants (one pizza and one Chinese food), bought books, gifts, and wine at the two Judaica shops, and shopped at a few of the supermarkets with large kosher sections. I perused the bulletin board at the synagogue, read the community newsletters, and leafed through several Orthodox newspapers and magazines. I made a research trip to Israel to experience some of the yeshivas and other BT hotspots there. And I made brief visits to Orthodox communities in Monsey, Brooklyn, and Mexico City. Overall, I spent about 500 hours at the field sites, observing and participating in classes, festive meals, prayer services, and social events and interviewing – formally and informally – members of the communities.

Outsiders coming in: The BT and the non-Orthodox ethnographer

To some extent, my ethnographic observations simulated the three-phase “journey” that many BTs take: attending classes and events at an outreach center like Ner Tamid, studying in an intensive BT training program or yeshiva, and becoming part of a tight-knit Orthodox community like the one in Milldale. I started by attending a social event at Ner Tamid. Then I attended some classes and prayer services there and started to get to know the rabbis and other students. On my third visit there, one of the regular

teachers, Rabbi Hollander, invited me and a few other students to spend *Shabbos* – from before sunset Friday to after sunset Saturday – at his home in the Milldale community. I spent a *Shabbos* there, along with a Ner Tamid student in her 60s and a few other guests, and I started to meet people in the “neighborhood,” as the residents affectionately call it. I continued to attend classes and other events at Ner Tamid and gradually became more involved, gaining increased access to roles and responsibilities there (see Chapter 7 for details about newcomers’ legitimate peripheral participation in the Orthodox community). The rabbis at Ner Tamid asked me once to collect tickets at the door and once to set up for a concert, roles they often give to newcomers (both to make them feel welcome and to fill a need for man-hours). After a few months of classes at Ner Tamid, I started attending classes at Milldale’s Shomrei Emuna synagogue. I got to know several families in Milldale and took up their invitations to spend *Shabbos* and holidays with them. I danced at weddings, comforted mourners, and celebrated at birth festivities.

In the middle of my time in Milldale, I visited *Erets Yisroel*, the holy land of Israel. I spent a week studying in one of the women’s yeshivas where three of the BTs in my study had studied. While in Israel, I also visited other yeshivas, met with a number of rabbis and *rebbetzins* (‘rabbi’s wives’), and spent *Shabbos* with a few BTs at an outreach-oriented youth hostel in the mystical city of Tsfat.

According to my observations and interviews, as well as previous literature, the path that BTs take to Orthodox life is often quite similar to the path of my research. Although each BT has different experiences (see Greenberg 1997 for several “journey” narratives), those who end up living in an Orthodox community often have some interactions with a *kiruv* (‘outreach’) organization like Chabad Lubavitch, Aish Hatorah, or the Modern Orthodox newcomer-oriented prayer services described by Davidman (1991), and many spend time in a BT yeshiva in Israel (Aviad 1983) or in the US (Davidman 1991).

Because I was a non-Orthodox Jew encountering Orthodox communities, and because I followed a progression similar to that of BTs, I shared a number of experiences with BTs. In some cases I was able to use my experiences and reactions as data. For example, when an FFB referred to me with the Orthodox pronunciation of my name,

S ϕ r ϕ ⁴ BEn-?or – even though I introduced myself as SEr ϕ BEnor, I made a note in my Names file. Some BTs in my study had started to refer to themselves by their Hebrew names after covert pressure like this from community members. And when an FFB corrected my plural of *shadchan* (‘matchmaker’) from *shadchans* to *shadchonim*, I added that to my growing list of corrections of non-Orthodox Jews or BTs.

During services at the synagogue I realized that some of the same things making me feel like an outsider also affected newcomers and even long-time BTs. Because of my Jewish educational background, I was usually able to follow along in the *siddur* (‘prayer book’). But there were occasions, especially on holidays, when I was confused: Which *musaf* (‘additional service’) is it- *yom tov* (‘holiday’) or *shalosh regalim* (‘the three pilgrimage holidays’)? Is it the regular *birkat hakohanim* (‘priestly benediction’) or a special one for *shvii shel pesach* (‘the seventh day of Passover’)? I knew I was supposed to keep my feet together during the *amidah* (‘standing silent prayer’), but that made me feel unsteady, so I moved my toes a few inches apart. And I was one of the few women wearing a hat rather than a *sheytel* (‘wig’). These things all made me feel like I stuck out in the women’s section of the synagogue. But I looked around and realized that several of the women around me were BTs, and most of them did not have the benefit of learning Hebrew and liturgy extensively in their childhood. After the rabbi’s *dvar torah* (‘sermon’) that day, I turned to the recent BT next to me and asked, “Did you understand what he was talking about?” “Hardly at all,” she said with an uneasy laugh. I was not the only one feeling like a sore thumb.

Another experience I shared with BTs was being shamed by young children. One day when I was staying overnight with an Orthodox family, I took a shower and left my hat off for my hair to dry. The father was not at home, so I did not need to worry about a man seeing my hair. But the 5-year-old girl, Rina, asked, “Why aren’t you wearing your hat?” Her mom told her, “It’s OK.” Later, as I was leaving the house, Rina reminded me not to forget my hat. She asked if she could put it on for me. She did, and she tucked my hair behind my ears and under the hat. “Now you look like a lady,” she said with a smile. I felt ashamed, belittled, and grateful, all at the same time. And I realized that this five-

⁴ [ϕ] = “u” in “bus”

year-old, who often interacts with BT guests, would probably help many women to “look like a lady” according to Orthodox standards.

Other ethnographers of Orthodox Jews have had similar experiences of being shamed. Tamar El-Or (1994) tells of her second visit to a Hasidic community, when a 5-year-old girl asked her sister in Yiddish if Tamar was a *pritse* (‘loose woman, prostitute’). The girl’s mother explained that the comment referred to her long, uncovered hair, never seen among married Ultra-Orthodox women. From then on, El-Or always covered her hair when she visited the community.

Based on interviews and observations, I know that BTs also endure comments and shaming from children. When Jacob was starting to become more religious, he used to drive a few hours to spend *Shabbos* with an Orthodox family. He would arrive in his street clothes and then change into his suit in time for *Shabbos*. One day he happened to arrive in a suit, and the 13-year-old son said, “He’s a regular guy.” To this FFB boy, regular guys wear suits, and not just on *Shabbos*. Jacob said this comment had a big impact on him and coaxed him toward his eventual decision to wear suits every day. Similarly, when Leonard was first becoming involved in the Orthodox community, he sometimes wore a *kipah* (‘skullcap’) and sometimes did not. One day when he was not wearing it, a 3-year-old girl asked, “Why aren’t you wearing a *kipah*?” Since that little girl’s question, he has always worn his *kipah* in the community to avoid uncomfortable situations like this.

Another example of shaming happened in the linguistic realm. Hank is a successful professional in his 50s, who has only recently become observant. He has trouble with the /x/ sound in Hebrew and Yiddish loanwords, and his /x/ usually sounds more like [h] or [k]. Zev, the 11-year-old son of a rabbi, often makes fun of Hank’s pronunciation. One evening, in a very public setting, Hank asked someone, “Can you pass me a *humash* (‘Pentateuch’)?” Zev interjected obnoxiously, “~~XXX~~*Umash*.⁵ It’s not *humash*; it’s *XUmash*.” Hank responded with a smile, but based on my own feelings in similar situations, I imagine he felt somewhat belittled and annoyed.

These examples show how BTs and I elicited similar reactions from long-time community members. I also found that we sometimes made similar hypercorrective

⁵ “x” is the linguistic symbol for the Yiddish “ch” sound.

mistakes (mistakes that occur when someone tries too hard to speak and act correctly). One sweltering June day, I went to visit a BT woman in her home in a mixed Modern-Ultra-Orthodox community near Milldale. Although as a pregnant woman I felt 10 degrees hotter than most people, I decided out of respect to wear knee-high stockings with my sandals. When she greeted me, I was surprised to see her toes uncovered in her sandals. Later on I asked about this, and she said that she made a conscious decision only to wear socks when she goes to more “*shtark*” (‘intense’ [Ultra-Orthodox]) communities like Milldale or New York. It was interactions like these that taught me about the nuances of distinctiveness within the Orthodox community and allowed me to relax my dress codes and feel more comfortable on hot days.

Fader (2000) reports a similar interaction, in which she felt uncomfortable wearing only a bathing suit in an all-women’s pool in a Hasidic vacation area. Because she was accustomed to dressing modestly when doing ethnographic fieldwork in the community, the Hasidic women had to urge her to remove her bathrobe. Heilman begins *Defenders of the Faith* (1992) with a description of immersing himself in a *mikveh* (‘ritual bath’) teeming with Ultra-Orthodox Jews. He says he drew irritated looks when he spent too long in the water. And, after he got out, someone even corrected him when he audibly said the blessing for putting on the *tzitzis* (‘fringed undergarment’), informing him that he only needed to say it the first time he put it on in the morning.

BTs have similar experiences with hypercorrection and sometimes feedback from community members, as I describe in detail in Chapter 7. Both BTs and FFBs talk about BTs *shuckling* (‘swaying back and forth’) harder when they pray, wearing sleeves longer than necessary, and following every stringency they know of in Jewish law. There is a joke about this: “How many BTs does it take to screw in a lightbulb?” “You mean you can do that?” This plays on a sense of BTs’ fear that they might make a mistake if they are not overly rigid in their observance. The same joke might be made about a fieldworker in a strict religious community.

While my own interactions helped me to understand the experiences that many BTs have, I also kept in mind that our experiences were different in a number of ways. Many Jews in the process of becoming Orthodox are not sure where in the Jewish landscape they will end up and how they will get there, but I knew all along that I would

not remain in the community. My masquerading as Orthodox-like was merely a temporary measure, necessary to do my research, while their use of Orthodox clothing, language, and other practices is actually an attempt to integrate into the community. They might at times feel like they are masquerading, and they might be seen as such, but they are actually trying to pass as Orthodox and be accepted.

Unlike BTs, I did not completely take on the system of laws required of Orthodox Jews, nor did I come to believe in some of the central tenets of Orthodoxy. Because of this, I did not feel like a hypocrite when I wore a skirt in Milldale but changed into pants as soon as I got home – or when I grabbed a Dunkin’ Donut⁶ on the way to meet someone at the kosher pizza place. BTs in their early stages do similar things, but once they take on full-time observance they often have trouble negotiating their new practices in the presence of non-Orthodox family and friends. I never had to deal with these issues, which are commonly discussed among BTs. I also never experienced the same intensity of integration as many transitioning BTs do, since I did not move to an Orthodox community or even spend every *Shabbos* there. Finally, I entered the Orthodox community with a relatively strong knowledge of Jewish texts and of traditional observance and culture, both from my childhood (non-Orthodox) Jewish education and from my previous research in Orthodox communities. Many BTs begin their journey with little or no Jewish education and have a completely different experience learning to be part of an Orthodox community.

Lynn Davidman, a non-Orthodox ethnographer who did research among BT women in Lubavitch and Modern Orthodox settings, had a similar approach to her own fieldwork experiences:

I used myself as an instrument, realizing that my reactions to the setting were a valuable clue to what the other women might be experiencing. I also strove, however, to pay attention to what made their experiences distinct from mine. They, after all, were involved in a process of ‘conversion,’ while I was there to study this process (1991:53).

⁶ Although Dunkin’ Donuts are not made with non-kosher products, they do not have *hashgacha*, the rabbinic approval necessary for Orthodox Jews to eat them.

No matter how deeply involved an ethnographer becomes in the community, her experiences will always be somewhat different. As James Clifford says, “The ability of the fieldworker to inhabit indigenous minds is always in doubt. Indeed this is a permanent, unresolved problem of ethnographic method” (1988:47). Even people who research their very own communities, like Samuel Heilman in *Synagogue Life* (1973) – studying the Modern Orthodox congregation of which he was an active member – will experience the field differently from their informants, just by nature of their role as ethnographer.

Insider/Outsider

Since the publication of Malinowski’s diaries in 1967, ethnographic writing has included a good deal of reflexivity, in which the author discusses how she accessed the community, how she was perceived, how she was affected by her research, and how she may have affected the community (see Ruby, ed., 1982, Clifford 1986). Information like this is useful in sociolinguistic studies, as it gives the reader a sense of how much access the researcher had to the community and how her presence may have affected the speech she observed. In this section, I discuss how I as a non-Orthodox Jew was viewed by the Orthodox community and how I negotiated my self-representation to find a balance between access and honesty.

In the view of some Orthodox Jews, especially BTs who grew up secular, non-Orthodox Jews are equivalent to non-religious Jews. In actuality, there are many active non-Orthodox Jews who participate in many of the same religious rituals that Orthodox Jews do, but sometimes in modified ways. I am one of those Jews. I grew up attending a Jewish day school and joining my family in *Shabbat* (‘Sabbath’, Modern Hebrew pronunciation) and holiday celebrations. At the time of this writing, I am an active member of a Reconstructionist⁷ *minyan* (‘prayer group’), which is part of a Conservative⁸ synagogue. Judaism pervades many aspects of my life, from how I spend my Saturdays to how I celebrate life-cycle events, from the art on my walls to the CDs

⁷ Reconstructionism is an offshoot of the Conservative movement that views religious tradition as folkways of the Jewish civilization, rather than as binding commandments. As its founder, Mordechai Kaplan, said, the past has a “vote but not a veto.”

and books on my shelves, from the toys I choose for my baby to the topics I choose for my academic research.

Throughout my fieldwork, I encountered several Orthodox Jews – BTs and FFBs – who were not sure what to make of me: a non-Orthodox woman with a strong knowledge of Judaism, good Jewish language skills, and the ability to take part comfortably in prayer and meal rituals. Once I was looking through a Hebrew book about holy places in Israel with a young girl, and I was reading some of the place names to her in Hebrew. Her FFB mother was listening, and she said “I’m very impressed. How do you know so much?” She was surprised that a non-Orthodox Jew would have such knowledge of Hebrew. Similarly, a BT woman was amazed when I mentioned that I handed out a brochure explaining the rituals at my wedding. “You had a traditional wedding?” she asked. “Well, with modifications,” I answered. I didn’t mention that we had both men’s and women’s *tishes* (‘pre-wedding celebrations with singing and speeches’, lit. ‘table’), while Orthodox Jews just have one for men, and that the seven circles, which the bride traditionally walks around the groom, were divided equally between my groom and me, a new egalitarian tradition which this BT had criticized moments before.

Although some BTs were not sure how to categorize me, they assumed they understood the trajectory of my future. They expected me to become more observant throughout my study. I also expected myself to become more “observant,” but only in the ethnographic sense, not in terms of my religious observance. Early on in my fieldwork, one woman was reading the part of the consent form that said, “There are no apparent risks,” and she commented, “Risk- the only risk is that [you]’ll become religious.” Another BT mentioned a well known teacher who has written Orthodox books and told me, with a smile, that he “got into it doing what you’re doing” – research on the community. Most of the other ethnographers who have researched Orthodox Jews report similar expectations that they would become Orthodox (e.g., Davidman 1991, El-Or 1994, and Fader 2000).

⁸ The Conservative movement of Judaism is less stringent than Orthodoxy in its interpretation of Jewish law.

There was one incident about half way through my fieldwork in which a community member embarrassed me publicly because I was not becoming observant. This shaming may not have been intentional, because it happened on Purim, the one day of the year when Jewish men are commanded to get drunk. At a Purim *seuda* ('festive meal'), in front of at least 20 other people, a man who was very helpful throughout my study said something like this (not recorded but noted later that evening):

If Sarah really wants to learn about the community, she must do it all herself – be *shomer Shabbos* ('keep the Sabbath'), *shomer kashrus* ('keep kosher'), follow the laws of family purity... You're a *bas yisroel* ('Jewish woman'), like your *bubby* ('grandma') and her *bubby* and her *bubby*, and your *zeidy* ('grandpa') and his *zeidy* and his *zeidy*. An outsider can't understand... My blessing to her is that she should become *frum* ('religious, Orthodox'). I know it's hard... but I think she should become frum. When she's done she can decide whether or not to continue doing these things...

Despite my embarrassment, I responded graciously with the post-blessing Hebrew word of agreement, "Amen." He was probably right that I would understand BTs better if I took on all the laws they did in the same ways they did. But that extra bit of ethnographic depth was not important enough for me to renounce my religious life, even if it was just for a year.

My "amen" was the only appropriate response, both to the Purim blessing and to people's predictions throughout my fieldwork that I would become Orthodox. I would have alienated many people if I had announced, "Actually I have absolutely no interest in becoming frum. I am very happy with my current religiosity. This project is a purely intellectual pursuit." I felt that displaying a lack of openness toward Orthodoxy, and even too much interest in non-traditional forms of Jewish observance, might have reduced my ethnographic access to individuals and institutions. Because of this, I remained silent about the Jewish aspects of my personal life. When people asked about my Jewish affiliations, I told them "I'm Conservative," not wanting to get into details about Reconstructionism. I did not contradict the Purim blessing by explaining how I do

observe *Shabbos* and other commandments, just in non-traditional ways.⁹ And although I felt close to several community members, I did not invite any of them to my home or to my baby's *Simchat Bat* (birth 'celebration for a daughter'). I was uncomfortable with the idea of them seeing my Judaism: my innovative, egalitarian rituals, in which tradition has "a vote but not a veto."

Like other non-Orthodox ethnographers of Orthodoxy, I avoided conflicts by maintaining separate Jewish lives. On the *Shabbatot* (Israeli Hebrew – and Modern and non-Orthodox – pronunciation and plural of *Shabbos*) I spent at home, I lit candles after sunset, talked on the phone, drove to synagogue, and played violin in my congregation's accompanying ensemble, wearing a *tallis* ('prayer shawl' traditionally worn by men). I usually avoided doing any kind of "work" related to my dissertation. On the *Shabbosim* (Ashkenazic/Ultra-Orthodox pronunciation and plural of *Shabbos*) I spent in Milldale, I arrived a half hour before their early candle-lighting, walked up to a mile to synagogue – even when I was very pregnant – and muttered the prayers under my breath along with the others in the women's section, covering my hair according to the standards for married Orthodox women. And, ironically, I spent the entire *Shabbos* "working," that is, observing and remembering details, to be written down only after *havdala* ('end-of-*Shabbos* ceremony', lit. 'separation').

I tried to avoid bringing my liberal Judaism into my fieldwork, and I rarely brought the Orthodox traditions I was learning about into my own Jewish life (except for the delicious *challah* recipe). However, on the *Shabbatot* I spent in my own community, I sometimes found it hard to shed the role of ethnographer. I laughed about the contrast to my fieldwork experiences when the woman leading services at my Reconstructionist *minyán* sang this song, which longs for a time of complete gender equality:

And then, and then, both men and women will be gentle.
And then, and then, both women and men will be strong....

⁹ For *Shabbos* and most holidays, I follow the spirit of the law that prohibits work. For me, this means not doing what I do the rest of the week: working at my computer and reading academic writing. However, I like to spend *Shabbos* listening to music, calling friends and family, cooking, and driving to synagogue or other leisure destinations, all of which are forbidden by traditional Jewish law. Because these activities on *Shabbos* are considered "work" by Orthodox standards, the members of my research community would consider me to be "*mechalel Shabbos*" ('desecrating the Sabbath').

And after the Purim *shpil* ('play') at my *minyan*, I rushed home to my computer to add one of the songs to my dissertation fieldnotes:

We don't need to *daven* ('pray')
from behind a *shtender* ('lectern')
but we must
alternate by gender!

The differences that I had noticed between Orthodoxy and liberal egalitarian Judaism were made explicit in this parody, in which one of the leaders of the *minyan* made fun of the *minyan*'s focus on non-hierarchical prayer and gender equality by contrasting it to the traditional Jewish worship I observed every time I went to Shomrei Emuna or other Orthodox synagogues.

By reading these details of my Jewishness, the reader should understand that I was both insider and outsider with respect to my fieldwork community. Like them, I was Jewish, but I had a much different way of expressing my Jewishness. I chose not to offer many details of my own religious observance or share my amusement at the contrasts with Orthodox friends. But every time I visited Orthodox communities, I made decisions about self-representation – in dress, language, and self-reports – that would affect how people viewed me. A major challenge throughout my year of fieldwork was trying to remain honest in my self-representation without offending people or losing access to their institutions, homes, and lives.

Balancing access with honesty

On my first day of fieldwork at Ner Tamid, I wore a long skirt and a modest long-sleeve shirt, in accordance with the Orthodox laws of female modesty. A man who had recently started to become observant asked if I was Orthodox, and I said "I'm Conservative." He said, "You don't look Conservative. Did you dress that way just to come here?" I realized then that wearing long skirts and high necklines was not just a matter of being respectful – it also had practical and ethical implications. Throughout my fieldwork, I often tweaked my self-representation in an effort to walk the tightrope between access and honesty.

I could have gone to Brooklyn and spent thousands of dollars on an Orthodox wardrobe (including a *sheytel* ‘wig’, several modest tailored suits for *Shabbos* and special occasions, and some housecoats and snoods for casual lounging). But I decided to wear my own long skirts and hats – and not just for financial reasons. I did not want people to think I was an imposter, pretending to be an Ultra-Orthodox Jew when they know I am not. I also did not want to offend people by wearing short sleeves or going to synagogue with no head covering. So I compromised and dressed like some Modern Orthodox women I know, choosing not to sew up the slit in one of my long skirts and not to tuck most of my hair under my hat, even after the 5-year-old girl shamed me into doing that. These details of appearance allowed me to distinguish myself from many of the community members and still remain respectful.

Another area in which I maintained distinctiveness was my language. I did use many elements of Orthodox Jewish English, pronouncing most Hebrew loanwords according to the Ashkenazic norms common in the community. But when I used liturgical Hebrew aloud, such as reading a Bible quote in class or saying the blessing over the candles, I generally used the American Modern Hebrew pronunciation that I grew up with. For example, when someone loses a relative, he spends seven days “sitting *shiva*” – mourning at home as friends stop by to console him. When visitors leave a *shiva* house, they say a Hebrew sentence, which Milldale Orthodox Jews would pronounce [hamókom y↔náxém esxém]... (‘May God comfort you’). I pronounced this phrase with Modern Hebrew stress and phonology: [hamakóm y↔naxém etxém]... This was partly because I felt uncomfortable using the Ashkenazic pronunciation (for fear of mistakes), but also because I wanted to distinguish myself linguistically and highlight my non-Orthodox background.

I will not pretend that I never slipped from that tightrope between access and honesty. My attempts at modest but non-imposter dress were sometimes misinterpreted. For example, the first time I met one Milldale woman in her home, I was wearing a skirt but no hat. And when she saw me a few months later at the synagogue, I was wearing a hat, as I always did there. She assumed I had become “observant” in the time that had elapsed. In situations like this, I tried to respond in an ambiguous way, as I did in the

following exchange. One day I asked Michelle for the e-mail address of a rabbi I had met, who runs a yeshiva in Israel. She gave me the information, and I said:

Sarah: Thanks. I want to ask him some questions. I'm thinking of going to Israel this spring to check out the yeshivas.

Michelle: For your dissertation or for learning?

Sarah: For my dissertation, but it'll have the secondary effect of adding to my learning.

It was true; I learned a good deal from attending classes in Israel and in Philadelphia. But it was not the same response I gave to non-Orthodox friends or even to the Israeli taxi driver who drove me to the yeshiva in Jerusalem that spring.

I gave similarly ambiguous answers to community members who asked if my fieldwork was affecting my observance. I told them that I have been observing *Shabbos* and certain *mitzvos* ('commandments') more, which was true in a non-traditional sense. And I made sure to mention that I have enjoyed baking my own *challah*, using a delicious doughy recipe I got from a *rebbetzin* ('rabbi's wife'). This was one of many compromises in my self-presentation that enabled me to remain mostly honest while maintaining access to the community.

In keeping with contemporary American human subjects standards, my motives in the community were never covert. Any time I met new people, I told them that I was doing research about how *ba'alei teshuva* are integrated into Orthodox communities. I did not initially mention that my focus was language, so as not to make them self-conscious about their speech. If they asked for details, I added that I was interested in how BTs learn the culture of the Orthodox community, especially the speech styles. By the end of the year, many community members had participated in the matched guise test, and almost everyone knew that my research focus was language.

GATHERING SPEECH SAMPLES

The ethnographic methodology described above allowed me to spend hundreds of hours observing Orthodox language – how people spoke to family, friends, acquaintances, strangers, and an insider/outsider researcher (me). On most days, my fieldnotes include in-depth sections about language. I remembered many linguistic

details, such as BTs’ hypercorrective mistakes, brief exchanges between BTs and FFBs, BTs’ use of loanwords with one interlocutor and the English equivalents with another, use of periphrastic and directly integrated loan verbs, and use of English and source-language morphology on loan nouns.

In addition to observations, I gathered over 90 hours of speech on mini-disc or cassette.¹⁰ This corpus includes dozens of classes and lectures at Ner Tamid, in Milldale, and elsewhere, several men’s one-on-one study sessions, a few hours of informal social interactions, and many interviews with me. I was present during all of the recorded interactions, except for a few of the study sessions.

Table 2-1: Recorded speech samples: Number of speakers in each category

How long they have been actively involved with Orthodox institutions	Number of females for whom I have recorded speech samples	Number of males for whom I have recorded speech samples
A: 0-2 years (BT)	10	10
B: 3-5 years (BT)	6	3
C: 6+ years (BT)	10	10
D: all their lives (FFB)	9	11
Total	35	34

The purpose of making notes on language use and analyzing recorded speech was to clarify which Orthodox Jews use which linguistic features and in what contexts. I expected variation according to the length of time people have been Orthodox, as well as gender, age, and other factors. Based on the recorded and observed speech of 101 speakers (24 BT women, 28 BT men, 27 FFB women, and 22 FFB men), I compiled a large Excel spreadsheet, where I noted which speakers used which linguistic features, with some data on audience and context. I noted individuals’ uses of over 400 loanwords, and I noted when people used English words that could have been loanwords (such as ‘synagogue’ or ‘Passover’ rather than *shul* or *Peysach*). And I noted the use of dozens of phonological, syntactic, and other features of Orthodox Jewish English. The

¹⁰ Equipment included a Marantz MiniDisc 650 recorder with a Shure SM11 lavalier microphone and a Shure SM63 table microphone, as well as an Aiwa TP-VS470 cassette recorder with an Audio-Technica ATR35s lavalier microphone.

linguistic features are enumerated in Chapters 4 and 5, and quantitative and qualitative results appear in relevant sections throughout the dissertation.

INTERVIEWS

I conducted interviews with 100 Orthodox Jews, 60 of which were recorded. Most interviews were individual, but some were in pairs and a few were in small groups, such as the group interviews with 6-10 BT women and 4 BT men currently in yeshiva. The interviews were conducted in the interviewee’s home or office or in a semi-public place like Ner Tamid. Family members, colleagues, and others sometimes walked by and interacted with us. Interviews ranged in length from 10 to 90 minutes. The breakdown of people interviewed is presented in Table 2-2. The FFB category (D) includes a few children and teenagers, but the BTs were all adults.

Table 2-2: Recorded and unrecorded interviews: Number of speakers in each category¹¹

How long they have been actively involved with Orthodox institutions	Number of females interviewed, (number of those that are recorded)	Number of males interviewed, (number of those that are recorded)
A: 0-2 years (BT)	11 (9)	8 (7)
B: 3-5 years (BT)	8 (5)	5 (3)
C: 6+ years (BT)	15 (10)	13 (9)
D: all their lives (FFB)	25 (8)	15 (9)
Total	59 (32)	41 (28)

The interviews had a few goals: to help me understand the process of becoming *ba'al teshuva*, as well as individual BTs’ and FFBs’ views about Orthodox language, and to gather additional samples of speech. The interviews were guided by my questions but were open-ended. Some interviews were more like “hanging out,” but most included at least some of the following questions:

¹¹ The number of people recorded in each category does not coincide exactly with the numbers in Table 2-1, because some of the recordings were of classroom or social interactions, rather than interviews.

Questions for BTs:

1. When did you first become interested in Orthodoxy? Tell me about the process.
2. What have you changed since you have become *frum* ('Orthodox')?
3. Do you want people to think you are FFB? Is that possible?
4. Can people tell you are BT? How?
5. Can you tell who is BT? How?
6. Do Orthodox Jews speak differently than non-Orthodox Jews and non-Jews?
What are some specific differences?
7. Have you changed the way you talk?
8. What advice would you give a new BT?

Questions for FFBs:

1. What do you see as your role in helping BTs integrate into the community?
2. Can you tell who is a BT? How?
3. Do Orthodox Jews speak differently than non-Orthodox Jews and non-Jews?
What are some specific differences?
4. Do BTs change their language? How do they learn to change it?

Often after the first question, whether it was about their childhood or about their first interest in Orthodoxy, BTs would launch into a long narrative about their "journey" to religiosity. As Greenberg's (1997) collection of BT narratives demonstrates, this has become a common speech act, rehearsed and edited over and over during social gatherings, usually with other BTs. These narratives are similar to gays' and lesbians' coming out stories (e.g., Liang 1997, Wood 1997), in that they are an important part of the speaker's socialization into their new community and have somewhat standardized formal elements. Although BT narratives have not been analyzed from a discourse perspective, there seem to be some (optional) common elements: an event or events that led to a desire to explore Orthodoxy, a moment or moments of realization, relationships with Orthodox Jews that helped with integration, a journey metaphor, pre-Orthodox life events that prefigured the current state of religiosity, and discussion of how the BTs' new observance affected relationships with family and friends. An analysis of BT narratives would be a fruitful topic for future research, especially in the light of previous literature on narrative (e.g., Labov and Waletzky 1967, Linde 1993) and religious conversion narratives (e.g., Stromberg 1993).

Like Davidman (1991), I found that some BTs appreciated the opportunity to tell their stories in such detail. One BT was disappointed when he realized that our second meeting, months after the first, was only to do the matched guise test; he was hoping it

would be a follow-up interview about where he is in his “journey.” One BT actually requested to be interviewed, after he saw me setting up an interview with someone else. Even FFBs seemed to enjoy the interviews. One woman had planned to tidy up in her office during the interview but, as she pointed out at the end, found our discussion so interesting that she did no cleaning at all. There were also people who did not agree to be interviewed, or did so reluctantly, as I explain in the “Mixed reactions” section below.

MATCHED GUISE TEST

During the interviews I asked BTs and FFBs general questions about Orthodox language, and they sometimes offered opinions on individual linguistic features, like Yiddish-influenced grammar and phrases like *baruch hashem* (‘bless God’). Since I wanted to explore in more depth how people perceive individual linguistic features, I conducted a sociolinguistic experiment called a “matched guise test.” Based on experimental research about bilingualism by Lambert and his colleagues (1960), the matched guise test has been used to test stereotypes listeners have about different languages and dialects (see Giles and Coupland 1991 for a useful survey of these studies). For example, Lambert (1967) recorded several English and French Canadians speaking in two guises: French and English. He played excerpts from their speech and asked English and French Canadian respondents to rate the speakers on several qualities, including intelligence, sincerity, and ambition. The respondents, not aware that they were hearing the same speaker in both English and French, were essentially evaluating the languages in question, rather than the speakers themselves. Overall, Lambert found that both English and French Canadian respondents had more positive images of the speakers in their English guises.

I modified this experiment to determine whether people associated certain linguistic features with Orthodoxy and with BTs or FFBs. I enlisted several Orthodox and non-Orthodox “actors” who have no connection to Ner Tamid or Milldale but are familiar with Orthodox Jewish English. I created scripts for the speakers and coached them on how to say their lines in two different guises. The scripts were based on utterances I observed in my fieldwork but were tailored to ensure a controlled experiment. Examples included the following:

Phonology: /x/ (ch) in Hebrew loanwords

1. Where were you for *kol hamoed*? (expect lower FFB rating)
2. Where were you for *chol hamoed* ('down time between the holiest days of a long holiday')?

Morphology: Hebrew loanword plurals

1. How many *bal tshuvot* do you think there are? (expect lower FFB rating)
2. How many *ba'alei teshuva* do you think there are?

Discourse/lexicon: (mild) obscenity

1. This is really bad! (expect higher Orthodox rating)
2. This totally sucks!

Discourse/syntax: connective "so"

1. Since they were here early, so they can start now. (expect higher Orthodox rating)
2. Since they were here early, they can start now.

Phonology: /t/ release (t^h = released and aspirated /t/, where it is normally glottalized or flapped)

1. Alright t^h . We're gonna skip the first section, but t^h uh, we'll go back to it t^h . (expect higher Orthodox rating)
2. Alright. We're gonna skip the first section, but, uh, we'll go back to it.

Test question pair (expect same ratings):

1. Oh, I love that picture!
2. Oh, I love that picture!

The samples were recorded on mini-disc, and then I selected the best takes for each feature. I copied the samples onto cassette in two quasi-random orders (making sure that the similar sentences were not too close together). After conducting a pilot version of the experiment for several BTs, FFBs, and non-Orthodox Jews in the New York area, I tweaked it to maximize its usefulness. I conducted this experiment among 64 people in Philadelphia: 29 BTs, 28 FFBs, and 7 non-Orthodox Jews,¹² ranging in age from 10 to 68. All respondents were Jewish and native speakers of American English. They received the following directions:

¹² This small sample of non-Orthodox Jews was included to see how the BTs might have responded before they became involved with Orthodox communities. The seven non-Orthodox Jews were selected to participate in the experiment because they attended events at Ner Tamid. I did not include Jews who were strongly affiliated with non-Orthodox synagogues. Because the group is so small, the results are not reported here.

You will now hear a tape with 45 excerpts of conversation by Jewish speakers. Some of the speakers are ba'alei teshuva, some grew up Orthodox, and some are not Orthodox. For each excerpt, please answer questions a and b by circling the number of the best answer.

Excerpt #1:

- a) Do you think the speaker is Orthodox?
1. Definitely Not. 2. Probably Not. 3. Can't Tell. 4. Probably. 5. Definitely.
- b) Do you think the speaker grew up Orthodox?
1. Definitely Not. 2. Probably Not. 3. Can't Tell. 4. Probably. 5. Definitely.

(etc.)

After the respondents answered these questions for all 45 excerpts, I discussed their reactions with them. The written responses, as well as the post-test discussions, were very useful in helping me understand attitudes about language, Orthodoxy, and *ba'alei teshuva*, as well as how specific linguistic features are viewed.

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

Data collection

The ideal methodology for an exploration of how newcomers learn new linguistic styles would be to record community members in many different settings and analyze the recordings quantitatively and qualitatively, as well as to record several newcomers throughout time with the goal of longitudinal analysis. I chose to pursue a modified version of this methodology, for a number of reasons, including the study's timing, too many intra-speaker variables to standardize recording contexts, and religious prohibitions against recording on *Shabbos* and holidays. In this section, I explain these issues and describe the compromises I made in my methodology to accommodate them.

My original research plan included recording BTs near the beginning of the year and again near the end of the year, with the goal of quantitative longitudinal comparison. In October 2001 I recorded several BTs' conversations before, during, and after classes at Ner Tamid, with the hope of comparing them to conversations several months down the road. However, two problems of timing put a damper on this idea. The time a BT takes

to become religiously observant and move to an Orthodox community is often longer than the time a graduate student should spend on fieldwork. In the course of a year it was impossible to follow even one BT from her first exposures to Orthodoxy to relative integration into a community.

The other timing problem was a fluke. During the duration of my fieldwork, I found very few people at the beginning of the BT process. A year or two prior to my study, at least 11 people between the ages of 22 and 40 began to attend classes and social events at Ner Tamid regularly. Now, most of them are completely observant, and over half of them live in Orthodox communities (3 in yeshivas, 3 in Milldale, and a few in Orthodox communities in other cities). Similarly, in the early to mid-1990s, there was a wave of young people who started attending classes at Ner Tamid. Now, at least eight of them live in Milldale, are active members of Shomrei Emuna, and are raising families with strict Orthodox observance. During my study, only a handful of people *began* to attend classes at Ner Tamid or visit Milldale regularly, and the only one of those who now considers herself a BT has moved to another state. In short, potential BTs seem to come to Ner Tamid in waves, and the timing of my fieldwork seemed to be in the calm between these waves.

Even if I had arrived a year earlier and extended my fieldwork to two years, I would have had trouble obtaining comparable inter- and intra-speaker language samples. For the linguistic variables under analysis, especially the use of loanwords and Yiddish calque influences, there is a great deal of variation according to audience, speech act, and topic. Therefore, in order to ensure that two recordings were comparable, I would need to control for these factors. This would be impractical, because any attempt to control audience, speech act, and topic would lead to an artificial conversation. In addition, most people who were attending classes at Ner Tamid have moved on to Milldale or other Orthodox communities. Theoretically, I could have invited Mark and Yakov back to Ner Tamid to have another friendly conversation after a class, catching up after Yakov's long vacation. And I could have asked Marissa to meet with Rabbi Hollander to discuss the topic of his October 24th lecture. But the ensuing conversations would have been stilted and unnatural.

I began to search for a context that would be conducive to comparative analysis. One option might be the festive meal, where four to over twenty people gather in a home to celebrate, eat, and drink. On *Shabbos* and other holidays, Orthodox families make use of their long dining room tables with the protective plastic coverings and invite guests to join them for Friday-night dinner, Saturday lunch, and sometimes also *shaloshudes* (the ‘third meal’ of *Shabbos*, just before sundown Saturday). Although these meals would be a fertile source for comparison, I never recorded any, because of the religious prohibitions against using electricity on *Shabbos* and holidays.

There are festive meals on other days, such as at weddings and birth celebrations. And people gather for meals at restaurants. But these large settings are not acoustically conducive to recording and subsequent linguistic analysis. Unfortunately for the sociolinguist, Orthodox Jews rarely gather for home-based festive meals on days when recording is allowed. BTs who spend every *Shabbos* with community members generally eat in their own homes during the week. As one BT said in an interview, “Most religious people, their real social life is on *Shabbos*.”

I did spend many *Shabboses* and holidays observing Orthodox Jews and taking part in the rituals and festive meals. After these 26-hour (at least) excursions, I relived the events at my computer. I was able to recall more than I expected, including many details of language use. After the first *Shabbos* I spent in Milldale, for example, I wrote over 10 single-spaced pages of notes, including 1.5 about language. Although I was able to record ethnographic and linguistic details of events that happened on *Shabbos* and holidays, I was not able to use them for the type of quantitative sociolinguistic comparison I had hoped.

The one context I did find useful for comparative analysis was the one-on-one study session, referred to as the *chavrusa* (lit. ‘fellowship’). I recorded eight men – BTs at various stages, as well as FFBs – studying *Gemora* (‘Talmud, a compilation of rabbinic commentary’), some more than once. Because the contexts of these *chavrusas* are so similar, I was able to compare the language use. The results of this analysis can be found in Chapters 4 and 5.

Unfortunately, this quantitative study was limited to men who study *Gemora*. I did not find a comparable context in which to analyze women’s speech, as no women in

this community study Gemora. Some women attend classes, but they are usually lectures without much discussion from the students. Because of the limited nature of the quantitative linguistic analysis, a great deal of the data in the chapters that follow is qualitative. Based on observations, interviews, and recorded interactions, I show that BTs do change their speech as they integrate into the Orthodox community.

Loshon hora ('gossip', lit. 'evil tongue')

Among Orthodox Jews today there is a massive campaign against *loshon hora*, or gossip about other Jews. Theoretically, the prohibition against talking about other people could have inhibited my fieldwork. People could have been offended by questions like "Can you tell who's BT?" and been reluctant to recount anecdotes from their experiences with others. In general, this was not a problem. I was surprised that some people, unsolicited, offered names of BTs they thought seemed more or less BT-like. The rules about *loshon hora* affected my research only in two minor ways: some people's discomfort with the matched guise test and my written presentation of personal data.

While most community members I approached seemed happy to participate in the matched guise test, some felt uncomfortable about it. One BT woman reluctantly started to listen to the tape, saying, "I'm just going to say 'Can't tell' for all of them." After she circled "Can't tell" for the first three, I suggested that she stop the test. I asked about her discomfort, and she said, "You can't judge. People who grow up in a close knit [FFB] family you can tell. You can sense their *yichus* ('good lineage'). But even if I could tell, I wouldn't tell you what I think." Her hesitation was not that it is impossible to make a judgment based on a short speech sample (although she did recall having made incorrect assumptions in the past) but that reporting her judgment to me would be *loshon hora*.

A few other people, BTs and FFBs, women and men, commented during or after the matched guise test that they felt uncomfortable making assumptions about people's religiosity. One recent BT wrote, "I think it is very judgmental to try to [determine whether a speaker is Orthodox]. The only being that can tell [how religious someone is] is G-d."¹³ An FFB man, referring to the questions on the matched guise test that ask

¹³ "G-d" is a common Orthodox way of writing "God," based on the prohibition against discarding God's name.

whether the speaker grew up Orthodox, asked, “Is this testing prejudice?” This comment assumes that judging whether speakers are BT or FFB is making a value judgment. Unlike other matched guise tests, I did not ask respondents to judge whether the speakers are “intelligent,” “friendly,” or “tall.” I only asked whether they are Orthodox and FFB. Some people’s reluctance to make judgments like these stems from the prohibitions against *loshon hora*. But it also hints at the prejudice against BTs that lurks under the surface, even in outreach-oriented Orthodox communities.

Since there are stories about Jews throughout the chapters that follow, this whole book may be perceived by some as *loshon hora*. I have taken a few precautions to avoid this characterization. I use pseudonyms for all individuals and institutions, and I try not to report any information that would definitely identify people. When discussing linguistic “mistakes” and other potentially embarrassing things, I use even more ambiguous appellations, like “a BT woman.” And any time there is a chance that an anecdote might be perceived as involving *loshon hora*, I try not to report it. An example is a person who, quite jokingly, commented, “Sometimes I think [So-and-So] is really not Orthodox” based on “things she said.” The “things she said” and the informant’s reactions to them would have enhanced my reports about Orthodox ideology, but including them might have revealed the identities of the speaker and the referee to each other and to other community members.

Another feature of my methodology that may help to preserve confidentiality and avoid *loshon hora* is the use of data from outside of the Ner Tamid and Milldale communities. On my brief research visits to Israel, Monsey, and elsewhere, I observed and interviewed several BTs and FFBs. Therefore, readers familiar with the communities should not assume they know all of the “characters” in this dissertation. Precautions like these are ones that any contemporary ethnographer would take to maintain the confidentiality of her consultants. But they may be even more important in a community where *loshon hora*, or gossip, is considered a sin. There is a fine line between reportage and *loshon hora*; I hope this dissertation is perceived as remaining on the right side.

Observer's paradox

As I explain in Chapter 1, sociolinguists recognize that their presence affects the language they observe. In the Orthodox community, audience is an important variable in which variants people use. FFBs grow up using Hebrew or Yiddish loanwords with their family and friends and the English equivalents with outsiders. BTs also learn to shift styles like this, although some of them, especially in the early stages of integration, do use insider speech when talking to outsiders. Based on some people's speech to me, it was clear that I was not considered a complete insider.

One evening early on in my fieldwork, I observed a class at Ner Tamid. I heard Marissa, a recent BT, use the Hebrew word *Hashem* ('God') several times. When I interviewed her informally after class, she used the word "God" several times. But when an FFB rabbi walked by, she – still talking to me – used *Hashem* instead. Even though she knew that I had enough knowledge of Orthodoxy to use several loanwords, she used the outsider-directed variant when speaking to me. But she considered it more appropriate to use the loanword when the veteran community member was within earshot.

One young FFB man works with many non-Orthodox Jews and is accustomed to switching styles. He first introduced himself to me with his English name, Mark, but he later used the name he goes by among community members, Moyshe. Throughout my year of fieldwork, I had many conversations with Moyshe, and he used many Hebrew and Yiddish loanwords, as well as other Orthodox features. He had observed me using many loanwords myself, and I rarely asked about the meanings of words. Even so, he sometimes used obviously outsider language when talking to me. He once told me that the rabbi was about to lecture, "as he always does between *mincha* and *maariv*, the afternoon and evening services." I said, "[Moyshe], I know what *mincha* and *maariv* are." Moyshe responded with a smile, "I know, I was just playing with you." However, I do not think he was consciously teasing me. I think he was putting on his outsider voice when speaking to me, a relative outsider.

Another time, I was surprised to hear Moyshe say [h ɤ sId],¹⁴ rather than [x ɤ sId] ('Hasid'). I thought maybe I had misheard him, so I asked, "Did you just say [h ɤ sId]?" He responded, "I don't know if you can do the /x/ sound." This response surprised me, considering that I had been using /x/ in conversations with Moyshe for months. And it confirmed that he thought of me as a relative outsider, someone who might not even be able to produce a basic sound of Hebrew/Yiddish/Jewish English speech.

These two exchanges with Moyshe were anomalous in my interactions with Orthodox Jews. I heard BTs and FFBs use many aspects of Orthodox language in my presence, often even in direct speech to me. Some people used language so full of Orthodox features that I assumed they had not de-Judaified their speech for my benefit.

Many people started using outsider speech to me and then gradually used more Orthodox features when they realized my knowledge level and linguistic abilities. For example, when FFB Rabbi Nussbaum first met me, he used very few Orthodox features, and he even said, "Talmud," which he calls "Gemora" when speaking to insiders. In the next conversation we had, he used "with" when he could have used the Yiddish-influenced Orthodox "by": "Who will you be staying with?" (rather than "Who will you be staying by?"). But during our interview a few months later, he used several aspects of Orthodox speech, including some untranslated loanwords (as well as some translated ones and some English words), and even one "by": "by the bus station."

I had a similar experience when I was interviewing an FFB woman who did not know me well. Near the beginning of her interview, she said "studying" (rather than "learning") and "classes" (rather than "*shiurim*"). But as soon as I asked a question using the word "shiurim," she answered with "shiurim" and began using more loanwords. Sometimes the test of my language ability was made explicit, as with the FFB woman who said a Hebrew loanword and asked if I knew what it meant. When I said "Yes," she said, "I'm just speaking like I normally would because it seems like you know a lot."

These examples show that, in speech to me, many community members did use an outsider variety with fewer Orthodox features. At times, I witnessed the opposite trend; people who knew I was focusing on language sometimes "performed" Orthodox

¹⁴ [ɤ] = "u" in "bus"
[ɪ] = "i" in "fish"

language for my benefit. A BT once greeted me with “*Sholom aleichem*” (‘peace to you’, a traditional Hebrew/Yiddish greeting), rendered in the scratchy voice of an old man. And another wrote in an e-mail to me, near the end of my pregnancy:

Are you ready for a whole new lifestyle? Too bad, you’ve got 3 weeks to get ready! B”H (I had to throw that in there for you) the birth will be easy, and so will childrearing the next....well the rest of your life.

B”H is short for *b’ezeras hashem* (‘with God’s help’), a phrase appended to the statement of a future event. Clearly, if he had written a similar e-mail to a (non-linguist) Orthodox Jew he would not have included the metalinguistic comment. But I do not know whether he would have used the B”H.

Another trend I noticed was that some people changed their speech styles as soon as the tape recorder was turned on for the interview. One BT used many loanwords when talking to me informally or to her friends when I was present. Even in our first phone conversation, before she even knew if I was Orthodox, she used words like *shtark* (‘intense’), *matsliach* (‘successful’), and *kedáy* (‘worthwhile’). But during the interview she used very few loans. She could have said *tsnius*, *frum*, and *loshon hora*, but she chose instead to say “modesty,” “Orthodox,” and “gossip.” She translated *shiurim* (‘classes’) and *gashmius* (‘materialism’) into English, and one time she even corrected herself mid-word: “*ga-* materialism.” After the interview, I asked her about this, and she said she was not consciously purging her speech of Hebrew and Yiddish influences. We decided together that she was using a more formal interview style, rather than an outsider style.

Another long-time BT changed her speech drastically when the tape recorder was on. Before and after the interview, she used many loanwords and many “click” discourse markers. During the interview she used very few clicks and several English words that she normally says in Hebrew or Yiddish. Once she even cut herself off from saying *shul* and said “synagogue” instead. I later asked her about that, and she said that it was probably because she knows my project is in English. Based on experiences like these, I was glad I was not basing my linguistic analysis solely on interview speech.

Gender issues

In ethnographic work on Orthodox Jews, it is almost inevitable that researchers will spend more time with community members of their own gender. Some researchers make this issue explicit and state that they are presenting only the women's side of the story (e.g., Kaufman 1991, Davidman 1991, El-Or 1994, Levine 2003). But some male researchers purport to paint a portrait of an entire Orthodox community even though they had very little access to women's lives. The title of Helmreich's (2000) book, for example, would be more accurate as *The World of the Yeshiva: An Intimate Portrait of Orthodox Men*. Heilman (1992) makes several statements about how he assumes women feel (e.g., about not participating in the rebbe's *tish*) without presenting any evidence that he observed their reactions or interviewed them extensively. Some research gives both sides, such as Aviad (1983), who bases her research mostly on surveys and interviews; Greenberg (1997), who presents not an analysis but merely a presentation of interviews with male and female BTs; and Koskoff (1995), who looks at the use of music among Lubavitcher men and women.

In my ethnographic observations and interviews, I believe I achieved a relative gender balance. As Table 2-2 above states, I interviewed 59 women and 41 men. At Ner Tamid, I probably spent more time with men, because there were more men who attended classes and events. But in Milldale, I spent more time with women, because the norm there is for men to attend synagogue or study sessions while women stay at home with the children. Overall, I spent a good deal of time "hanging out" with both male and female BTs, and the people I feel closest to include both men and women. Among FFBs, I did get to know more women, but I was pleasantly surprised that a few FFB men allowed me to spend some time with them. The recorded speech I gathered is skewed toward men. This is because, as discussed above, I recorded male study sessions, as well as classes taught by men. The few recordings I have of women's interactions were useful mostly for qualitative analysis.

Of course, there were barriers to my observing men's lives, especially the physical barrier called the *mechitzah*, which separates the men from the women in the synagogue and at communal celebrations with dancing. I was never able to witness the Torah reading up close, and I never had the joy of experiencing the communion Heilman (1992) describes in dancing in an all-men's circle. There was also the figurative

mechitzah that prevented me from observing at men's yeshivas. While I spent a week studying and observing at a BT women's yeshiva in Israel, I was unable to gain access to a comparable one for men, except to interview people in the office area. I did visit two men's yeshivas briefly. But when I peered into the large, noisy study halls from the outside, all I could see was a sea of black and white – both their clothing and the pages of the rabbinic texts. I am sure that these literal and figurative mechitzahs obscured interesting interactions that would have been relevant to my analysis of BTs' acquisition of Orthodox styles.

The ideal scenario for ethnographic research on Orthodox Jews would be for a co-ed team to fan out into the community with identical research goals and meet regularly to share findings and construct a joint analysis. While this was not possible in the present study, I did include both men and women in the research in a significant way, unlike most previous studies of Orthodox Jews. This is because the Ner Tamid and Milldale communities are not nearly as insular as some of the other Orthodox groups studied, partly due to their emphasis on outreach toward potential BTs, both men and women.

Mixed reactions to my research

In general, reaction to my research was positive. People thought it was an important topic of inquiry, and they were eager to learn what I found. Most of those who attended classes at Ner Tamid and Shomrei Emuna were willing to be recorded during class, and most of the people I asked were happy to be interviewed. On the other hand, a few community members were hesitant to be part of the study.

One woman told me right before our interview that she feels uncomfortable whenever I am around, because she thinks of me as spy-like. I offered to cancel the interview and not include her in the study. But she said she wanted to help me, so she signed the consent form and we did an abbreviated interview. Another woman asked to withdraw from the study after a few months, saying she feels weird being a research subject and would rather just be my friend. A few months later, she agreed to be part of the study again, and I asked her several interview questions surrounding the matched guise test.

A third woman signed a consent form the first day I met her and subsequently allowed me to interview her and record her informal interactions on several occasions. Then one day she told me she no longer wanted to be part of the study. She explained that she talked to her rabbi in Israel, who put her in touch with an important rabbi in Lakewood, who asked her where I, the researcher, am in my observance. When she told him that I am “in the middle of [my] journey” (i.e., not quite Orthodox yet), the rabbi *paskened* (‘made a religious ruling’) that she should ask not to be interviewed any more. Sadly, I agreed. The very next day, this woman asked me for a ride to the home of a seamstress, where she was going to get her wedding dress altered. I said, “I don’t know if that would be a good idea, because you don’t want to be part of my study any more, and I would be observing you.” She replied, “It doesn’t have anything to do with Judaism. The dress woman isn’t even Jewish.” Satisfied that she knew my research was not limited to interviews, I agreed to give her a ride. I was pleased to have the opportunity to observe her interacting with a non-Jew.

Interestingly, all three of the people who expressed discomfort about my research were women, as were the few others who refused to sign consent forms or take part in the matched guise test. I am not sure why I did not find similar reactions among men. In fact, some of my most enthusiastic interviewees were men, and several pairs of men were happy to allow me to record their study sessions.

Some people were uncomfortable with the tape recorder on, and this was one reason I chose not to pursue a methodology involving frequent recording of everyday speech. But one FFB woman allayed her young son and daughter’s discomfort with the tape recorder by quoting *Pirkey Avos* (‘Sayings of the Fathers’), a rabbinic text (explanations in parentheses are mine):

You know what it says in *Pirkey Avos*? It says *ozen shoma’as*, there’s always an ear listening. Cause *Hashem* (‘God’)’s always listening. You don’t have to worry about a microphone, cause after 120 years (the length of a full life, based on Moses’ lifespan), when a person goes up to *shomayim* (‘heaven’), they hear everything they said their whole lifetime. So you always have to be careful what you say, because you’re always being recorded, right?

This approval was suitable for the children, who proceeded to shout gleefully into the microphone. If only there was a rabbinic injunction to speak “naturally” in the presence of a tape recorder...

Defining categories

Ethnography is likely to show that local social categories can be fluid and even problematic: reality is rarely as orderly as a researcher might want it to be. Within the Orthodox community, many people use the term “*ba'al teshuva*,” or BT, to refer to a person who did not grow up Orthodox but chose to take on Orthodoxy. However, several people complained that they found this term problematic. “*Ba'al teshuva*” literally means ‘one who returns’ or ‘one who repents’, and community members report that it originally referred to an Orthodox person who faltered in his religious observance and then repented and recommitted himself to an Orthodox lifestyle. Even those who have been Orthodox all their lives are expected to “do *teshuva*” regularly, repenting for any sins and intensifying their level of observance. One FFB woman was complaining about the ambiguity of the term, and I asked her, “Do you consider yourself a *ba'al teshuva*?” She responded, “All of us are!”

Even people who point to the ambiguity of the term still recognize that some people grew up Orthodox and others did not. But the boundary between these categories is not as thick as I expected. How was I to categorize the woman who grew up Orthodox, shed her observance in high school, and reclaimed it several years later? Although she is a *ba'al teshuva* according to the original meaning of the word, I categorized her as FFB for purposes of comparison, as she was raised in an Orthodox milieu, surrounded by Orthodox language and culture. And the woman who grew up in a non-Orthodox home but attended a Modern Orthodox middle school and high school? Even though many community members assume she is FFB, I considered her a BT, since she was not exposed to Orthodoxy from infancy and she did make a conscious decision to take on strict Orthodox observance. And what about the several community members who grew up Modern Orthodox and chose to affiliate as non-Modern or Ultra-Orthodox as adults? I considered them FFBs.

In addition to the issue of ambiguous labels, some people prefer not to be boxed in to a specific category, even if they are by their peers. This was particularly evident when I asked people to check a category on the questionnaire accompanying the matched guise test. One man who is considered a BT wrote, “Have been observant all my life – but shomer shabbas since age 23. ... Family always kosher, always went to shul, but not shomer shabbas – right wing conservative.” Despite his wishes, I categorized him as a BT, since he did not grow up in an Orthodox community. Another man wrote that he grew up Orthodox and is still Orthodox and not BT. So one would assume that he is FFB. But he does not wear a *kipah* (‘skullcap’) and, according to his reports, does not observe *Shabbos* or *kashrus* (‘dietary laws’) fully. He just happens to go to an Orthodox synagogue when he goes, as he did infrequently as a child. I categorized him as non-Orthodox.

A final issue of categorization involved converts. A few of the Orthodox Jews in my study had converted from other religions. Since there were not enough of them to form their own category, I grouped them with *ba’alei teshuva* for purposes of analysis.

Chapter 3

“He Has *Tzitzis* Hanging out of his Ponytail”: Ethnography of Orthodox Cultural Practices

INTRODUCTION

Sarah: What have you changed about yourself since becoming Orthodox?

Devora: Everything!

Becoming Orthodox entails taking on new beliefs and a complex system of law that governs most aspects of life (see scholarly works by Aviad 1983, Danzger 1989, Davidman 1991, Kaufman 1991, and Tallen 2002; and works geared toward BTs by Steinsaltz 1982, Tatz 1987, and Greenberg 1997). But when potential BTs spend time in an Orthodox community, they learn that being *frum* ('religious') involves much more than faith and observance. Distinct cultural practices in dress, food, language, and activities are also important markers of Orthodox identity. As BTs integrate into the community, they do take on Orthodox practices, but they often use these practices slightly differently than most FFBs, those who are *frum* from birth. They distinguish themselves from the non-Orthodox Jews and non-Jews they grew up with, but they assert their BT-ness by preserving elements of their previous selves.

In this chapter, I describe several cultural practices common among Orthodox Jews, and I discuss the extent to which BTs acquire them.¹⁵ To give the reader a sense of the community, I begin by describing one evening I spent in Milldale, touching on some of the *Shabbos* ('Sabbath') rituals, head coverings, food traditions, and norms of gender participation.

SNAPSHOT OF THE MILLDALE ORTHODOX COMMUNITY

Since Orthodox Jews do not drive on *Shabbos*, they either live within walking distance of a synagogue or regularly spend *Shabbos* with people who do. Within about a mile radius of Shomrei Emuna, the main synagogue of Milldale, hundreds of Orthodox Jews inhabit single-family, semi-detached houses, many of which are identical in layout. During my fieldwork, I spent several *Shabboses* and holidays on one block of Parker Street, about a 15-minute walk from the *shul* ('synagogue'), where 25 of the 28 families are Orthodox Jews.

¹⁵ For a detailed description of Orthodox linguistic practices and ideologies, see Chapters 4 and 5. And for a discussion of how BTs take on Orthodox language styles in slightly distinct ways, see Chapter 7.

One Friday in the late afternoon, I arrived at the Greenbaums' near the middle of this block. Wearing a long skirt, long sleeves, high collar, and hat, I opened my bag and took out my thank you gift, a bottle of kosher wine. Mrs. Greenbaum showed me to the basement, where I would be sleeping, and suggested that I dim the lights so there would be enough light to walk around but enough darkness to sleep. Mrs. Greenbaum and I lit the *Shabbos* candles, as the six of her daughters who were still living at home – ranging in age from 5 to 20 – showered and dressed for *Shabbos*. Mrs. Greenbaum changed into her nicely tailored skirt suit and replaced her cloth head covering with a *sheytel* ('wig').

We took out the lawn chairs and sat on the front lawn to wait for Rabbi Greenbaum to return from *shul*. "Good *Shabbos*," we greeted other women walking by, some with baby strollers.¹⁶ Two little girls in skirts and pony tails, around 7 years old, came over from three houses down the road, looking for their friend Chavi Greenbaum. While one girl went into the house to find Chavi, Mrs. Greenbaum asked the other how her mother – due to give birth in 3 weeks – was doing. She was on bed rest, and members of the community were taking shifts watching her children and bringing over fully cooked meals. When Chavi and her friend came out, they saw another friend across the street (who, although also in second grade, was the niece of one of the other girls). Mrs. Greenbaum and I walked them across and chatted with two women who were wearing long skirts and *sheytels* and trying to keep track of five young children.

Rabbi Greenbaum, wearing a black suit, black hat, and bushy grey beard, returned from *shul* with two other guests, a middle-aged man in a black hat and a young man in a small knit *kipah* ('skullcap'). "Good *Shabbos*," they greeted me, without handshakes, as physical contact is forbidden between men and women, except for a husband and wife. We went back to the Greenbaum home and sat down at the long table, covered with a white table cloth and plastic covering and set with china and silverware from a few different sets. The dinner rituals began with Rabbi Greenbaum singing the Hebrew blessing over the wine and all family members and guests sipping from tiny silver wine cups. The parents blessed each of their children by laying their hands on their heads and muttering Hebrew words. One-by-one, each of us went to the kitchen sink and poured

¹⁶ Pushing strollers and carrying certain objects are allowed on *Shabbos*, because this community created an *eruv*, a barrier made mostly with string, encircling the homes and the *shul*.

water three times over each hand and said a blessing. We returned to the table, Rabbi Greenbaum said a blessing over the two home-baked *challahs*, and the meal began.

The first course was a loaf of homemade *gefilte* fish. Then came the chicken soup. Then the main course: chicken and brisket with side dishes of spinach *kugel* (like quiche without the cheese and crust), potato *kugel*, mushroom *farfel* (oily noodle bits), carrots, and a coleslaw-like salad. Rabbi Greenbaum and the two male guests sang a few Hebrew songs, while the women cleared the dishes and brought out dessert. We ate little squares of chocolate cake and vanilla ice cream that was labeled “*parve*,” meaning it does not include dairy products (in accordance with the laws of *kashrus*, since the meal included meat products). Reading along in little booklets, we all *bentshed* (‘said Grace After Meals’) – men in a chant, women in a whisper.

I thanked my hosts and walked half a mile to the Hollanders’ home to join their *Shabbos* celebration, already in progress. On the way there, I enjoyed peering into people’s windows. It was clear which of the homes belonged to Orthodox families: there were men in black suits, women with covered hair, a large family table, a living room lined with bookshelves of *seforim* (‘Hebrew/Aramaic holy books’), and multiple children.

I knew I was approaching the Hollander home, because I could hear the singing through the open door. There were at least 30 people sitting around or near the large table. The men and boys were singing Hebrew songs loudly, in beautiful harmonies, and banging on the table. The women were mouthing the words to the songs, clapping, or helping to serve little cakes and *cholent*. *Cholent* (a Yiddish word deriving from French *chaud lent* ‘heat slowly’) is a *Shabbos* stew made with meat, beans, barley, onions, carrots, and other ingredients. Following the laws of cooking allowed on *Shabbos*, the preparer begins cooking the *cholent* before sundown on Friday and lets it simmer until midday Saturday, when it is served with lunch. Every Friday night, the Hollanders have a post-dinner party, which they call “midnight *cholent*,” where they serve their uniquely spicy *cholent*, along with a selection of beer and schnapps.

After two or three songs, Rabbi Hollander announced it was time for another *dvar torah* (‘sermon’, lit. ‘word of Torah’). He asked a young man in a black velvet *kipah* if he wanted to give one. The man agreed and discussed a moral lesson from that week’s Torah portion, using many Hebrew and Yiddish words. Next Rabbi Hollander selected a

middle-aged man with a colorful knit *kipah*. This man talked about how observing *Shabbos* these past few months has been important to him. I joined a few of the women in the kitchen and heard an older woman asking Mrs. Hollander which *hechshers* ('symbols that the product is kosher') she accepts. A younger woman was telling 14-year-old Freidala Hollander about the man she recently met through a matchmaker. I thanked my hosts and walked back to the Greenbaums'. I knew I had to get up early to go to *shul* the next morning.

This Friday evening was typical of my experiences in the Milldale community, and most of the events and images recounted here are typical of Orthodox Jews around the world (see Heilman 1992, El Or 1994, Belcove-Shalin, ed., 1995, Fader 2000, Helmreich 2000). However, there is a good deal of variation within Orthodoxy. One woman in her 60s, who became Orthodox a few years after her son and daughter did, told me, "I feel like any Orthodox community is a carbon copy of another Orthodox community – on the surface." To an outsider or newcomer, the long skirts, black hats, large dinner tables, and shelves of *seforim* ('holy books') may look the same in any Orthodox community. But once the observer spends more time in the Orthodox world, the variations between and within communities shine through.

Modern Orthodox men do not necessarily have beards and tend to wear colorful knit *kipahs* rather than black velvet *kipahs* and black hats. Modern Orthodox women wear hats or no hair coverings, rather than wigs, and often sing along with the men. Orthodox Jews from the Middle East have different hand-washing rituals, and Jews of German origin wait less time between eating meat and milk. And in some neighborhoods of Brooklyn, a *dvar torah* ('sermon') over dinner would be completely in Yiddish. While a comprehensive account of intra-Orthodox variation is beyond the scope of this dissertation, some aspects will be discussed. The description that follows focuses on the strictly Orthodox Jews I met in Milldale.

ORTHODOX PRACTICES

First and foremost, strictly or Ultra-Orthodox Jews differ from non-Orthodox and non-Jews in their system of beliefs and their stringent observance of Jewish law. Common Ultra-Orthodox beliefs include an omniscient and omnipotent God who

rewards, punishes, and answers prayers; the imminent coming of the *Moshiach* ('Messiah'); and the divine inspiration and lawmaking capacity of certain rabbis. A complex system of Jewish law, called *halacha* (lit. 'way, path'), governs many aspects of daily living, such as which foods are eaten together, when prayers are recited three times daily, which "work" is prohibited on *Shabbos* and holidays, and what time of the month husband and wife are permitted to have physical contact. In addition to beliefs and laws, Ultra-Orthodox Jews use symbolic practices like dress, activities, and language to indicate their membership in the Orthodox community. The remainder of this chapter describes several of these practices. Some of them have functional purposes, such as the use of plastic table coverings and the prominence of Hebrew and Aramaic holy books. Others may have aesthetic explanations, such as the choices of art and music. But, to some extent, all of them serve to construct and reinforce Orthodox identity and community.

Dress

On a Saturday morning in Milldale, standing in the women's section of the *shul* ('synagogue'), one would notice tailored suits of all colors with long skirts and high necklines. Even on a humid summer day, no elbows would be showing. A quick peek through the lace curtain of the *mechitzah* ('barrier between the men's and women's sections') would find a sea of black and white on the men's side – dark suits, white collar shirts, dark ties, black hats, and, among married men, body-length white *tallises* ('prayer shawls') with black stripes (while non-Orthodox men begin to wear a *tallis* at age 13, Orthodox Eastern-European-origin men wait until they get married).

When it is not *Shabbos*, some men still wear dark suits, and others (mostly BTs) are more casual, wearing collar shirts and dark pants. Very few can be seen in jeans, T-shirts, or sweats. Young men who go to yeshiva generally wear white collar shirts and dark pants, even when home on vacation. Pre-yeshiva boys tend to wear plaid or striped collar shirts of various colors. Starting at age three, all males wear *tzitzis*, a thin off-white garment worn under the shirt with four fringe tassels hanging down. Some men tuck the fringes into their pants, others let them show a bit by attaching them to their belt loops, and still others let them hang down their thighs conspicuously.

On weekdays, women wear long dresses or skirts and blouses, always with long sleeves, sometimes pushed up to just below the elbows. Some women are careful to cover their sternum; others leave the top few buttons open. At home, it is common to find a woman wearing a night-gown-like house dress. Girls tend to wear casual shirts or sweaters and skirts, sometimes made of denim. It is rare to see sandals (without socks or tights) or bare feet among Orthodox Jews in Milldale.

These sartorial practices stem both from the laws of *tsnius* ('traditional Jewish modesty') and from the desire to be conservative (and distinctly Orthodox) in dress. In addition, certain details, such as not baring any part of the foot or the sternum, are used to distinguish Ultra-Orthodox Jews. See Fader (2000) for an in-depth discussion of the symbolic meanings of clothing in a Hasidic Ultra-Orthodox community and how they relate to language and gender.

The laws and norms regarding dress are discussed widely in the community. Even many non-Orthodox Jews have some sense that it is important to dress respectfully in the presence of Orthodox Jews. The community also makes some effort to ensure that people dress modestly. For my first meeting with a rabbi at Ner Tamid, on an unusually hot autumn day, I wore a long skirt and a short-sleeve shirt. After discussing my research and approving my presence, the rabbi suggested that I wear long sleeves when I visit Milldale. From then on, I wore long sleeves on most of my visits to Ner Tamid, Milldale, and other places where I would see Orthodox Jews. Similarly, when Devora was going to spend her first *Shabbos* in Milldale, an Orthodox friend suggested that she wear a skirt. Since then, she has always worn skirts when visiting the Orthodox community. And the wedding invitation of two young people who did not grow up Orthodox added an extra line to the traditional text of the English side: "Please dress according to Orthodox tradition."

During their early interactions with Orthodoxy, potential BTs often continue to wear their regular clothing. At Ner Tamid events it is common to see men in T-shirts and women in pants. But people who spend time in Milldale often begin to try on Orthodox styles. And BTs who move to Milldale or a yeshiva community always change their dress to conform to Orthodox norms, to some extent.

Esther's first experiences with Orthodoxy were in classes at an outreach center similar to Ner Tamid, and she often changed into a skirt before going there (just as I did during my year of fieldwork). But the first time she spent a *Shabbos* with an Orthodox family, she decided she wanted to "dress *frum* ('religious')" on a regular basis. Esther's transition was more sudden than most people's. Several women told me that they were at first reluctant to make a major change in their dress. Barbara, a woman in her 60s who became Orthodox during my year of fieldwork, wore pants to Ner Tamid classes for several months. When she visited Milldale for the first time, she wore modest skirt outfits. A few months later, she saw me one evening at Ner Tamid wearing a skirt and said, "I should wear skirts too." By the end of the year, she was wearing skirts at Ner Tamid and, according to her report, everywhere else too.

For men, wearing and displaying *tzitzis* are an important part of becoming Orthodox. When Andrew decided to become Orthodox, he started wearing *tzitzis* all the time, but with the fringes tucked in. One *Shabbos*, a few months into my fieldwork, I noticed that he had the fringes out but tucked into his pants pockets. On a *Shabbos* two months later, he wore the fringes completely out. That night, after *Shabbos*, there was a concert. Andrew went home to change out of his suit, and when he returned to Ner Tamid in casual clothes, the *tzitzis* were not showing at all. At that point he wore his *tzitzis* out only on *Shabbos*. A few months later, Andrew went to study and live in a yeshiva community in the New York area. In response to my e-mail question, he reported that he wore his *tzitzis* "Always out (except when I'm lazy)! If the whole point of *tzitzis* [sic.] is to remind us of the mitzvas [(‘commandments’)], what is the point of wearing them in." I did not remind him that he used to wear them tucked in. This is common among BTs – a gradual implementation of symbolic practices and then a sense that it could not be otherwise.

While following the laws about modest dress, some BTs attempt to maintain stylish tendencies from their pre-BT days. Michelle says she can often spot a BT by her dress, which she considers "a little hipper." She continues, "A lot of the FFBs, they do their shopping in Brooklyn, in Monsey, in Lakewood. I do my shopping here and hope that I can find something modest." This is not only for the sake of convenience but also because she finds that a lot of the clothes manufactured for Orthodox women are not

made in the contemporary styles she prefers. This means that she makes more visits to the tailor to lengthen skirts or to shorten slits, while the clothing sold in the Orthodox stores never needs to be modified to meet the standards of modesty.

Some BTs even question the stringencies Ultra-Orthodox Jews have applied to the laws of dress. One newly Orthodox woman continues to sleep in pants and wear sandals without socks, and it bothers her that some community members have criticized those practices. She reports having asked one FFB woman, “Do you think 10,000 years ago they wore socks in the desert?” When her response was “yes,” the BT was still not convinced and continued to wear sandals. Similarly, a long-time BT man has not taken on the view that Orthodox Jews should always look distinguished and conservative in dress. Although he wears dark suits on *Shabbos*, he continues to sport sweats or jeans during the week.

Many FFBs recognize that BTs differentiate themselves in dress, sometimes consciously, sometimes not. Rabbi Nussbaum, who wears his own *tzitzis* tucked in, says he can often tell who is BT by the way they wear their *tzitzis* conspicuously in four hanging tassels.

Somebody who was always *frum* [i.e., an FFB] will generally not wear the *tzitzis* on four corners, but they’ll actually bring the two from one side together and put the two from the other side together. Also, they’ll generally- they’ll take the *tzitzis* and they’ll put it under their belt. It will come from under their belt as opposed to on top of their belt.

I did not think it was appropriate to stare at men’s belts trying to make sense of the semiotics of *tzitzis*, so I cannot comment on this. However, Rabbi Nussbaum’s statement highlights the detail that BTs need to learn if they want to dress like the natives. It also points out that BTs are not expected to learn all of the details; they are expected to have a slightly different style. And for some BTs, having a slightly different style is the desired state.

In short, BTs conform to many of the norms of Orthodox dress, especially those mandated by *halacha* (‘Jewish law’), but also continue some of their previous practices. In an Ultra-Orthodox community, a woman wearing a fashionable skirt outfit with sandals or a man wearing a sweatshirt or a brown blazer is more likely to be a BT.

Hair, head coverings

One of the most recognizable symbols of Orthodoxy is a *kipah* ('skullcap'), otherwise known as a *yarmulke* or, in Hasidic circles, a *kopl*. Small groups of non-Orthodox Jews also wear a *kipah* all the time, some just when praying, studying Judaism, or eating, and others only in synagogue. Within the Orthodox community, head coverings are used to construct subtle differences in religious identity. In the Milldale Ultra-Orthodox community, most men wear large black *kipahs*, usually made of velvet, sometimes made of other material. Most men also wear black hats on *Shabbos*, some also during the week when they go outside. Modern Orthodox Jews, such as Avrum, an FFB who goes to Ner Tamid regularly, tend to wear colored knit *kipahs*.

Underneath their *kipahs*, Orthodox men's hair is usually short and neatly trimmed, due to the desire to appear conservative. Most have beards, some short, some bushy. Those who do not have beards have noticeable sideburns, in accordance with hair cutting laws. Some parents choose not to cut their boys' hair until they turn three. Then they have a ceremonial haircut called an *opshern*. From age three, boys usually have short *peyos* ('sidelocks'). Some keep their *peyos* until they get married, and others cut them when they go to yeshiva. A few adult community members have *peyos*, usually a sign that they have spent some time in Hasidic communities.

For women, hair styles and head coverings are equally important symbols. In her introduction to a volume of short essays about head covering by Orthodox women, Schreiber states, "Hair covering has become, for many women, more an issue of who one wants to associate with than actual law" (2003:12). Girls and unmarried young women generally have long hair, often tied back in a pony tail, and married women are required to cover their hair. In this community, the most common choice of coverings on *Shabbos* is a *sheytel* ('wig'), usually shoulder-length, straight, curled under, with bangs. When it is not *Shabbos*, women are seen sometimes in a *sheytel* but sometimes with all of their hair tucked into a flimsy hat or wearing the less formal snood, a cloth covering like a thick hair net. Young girls usually have medium-length or long hair with bangs, perhaps approximating the style of their mothers' *sheytels*.

BTs in Milldale also generally conform to the norms regarding hair and hair covering. At the beginning of my fieldwork, Mark had recently taken on Orthodox

observance. He wore a colored knit *kipah* or a small black suede one, sometimes with a baseball cap on top of it. Several months later, he was wearing a large black velvet *kipah*, sometimes with a black hat over it. At the beginning of the year he was also beardless, and by the end he had a short, well-kept full beard. He started growing the beard during the *omer*, an annual period when shaving is prohibited, and, rather than shave it off at the end, he decided just to trim it. He reports that his current style is quite different from his long-haired hippy look from a few years ago.

An Orthodox Jew with unconventional hair styles is almost always assumed to be BT. Jacob told me of an experience he had when he was first becoming Orthodox and still had long hair. He and another friend, who had a very long pony tail, were invited to spend *Shabbos* with the Schwartzes. At *shul*, a friend of Mr. Schwartz criticized him for having these two young men over, “especially the one with the really long pony tail.” Mr. Schwartz replied, “There’s more *yiras shomayim* (‘fear of heaven’) in his pony tail than in his [pointing to the man leading services] white socks.” Similarly, when Jacob was studying at a BT yeshiva, the administration liked to introduce him to visitors and say, “He has *tzitzis* hanging out of his ponytail,” meaning that on the inside he is very religious, even though he may look unconventional. Now, Jacob has short hair, a bushy beard, and short *peyos*.

For married female BTs, hair covering is a topic of much discussion and deliberation. Even BTs who are very committed to Orthodoxy and really wish to fit in to the community sometimes feel uncomfortable with the *sheytel* (‘wig’). A few months before Devora was to be married, she told me that she was looking forward to covering her hair with a hat or a “fall” (a half wig that is worn with a hat or kerchief). She was reluctant to wear a *sheytel*, “Because I’m not going to stick one that looks like a mop on my head.” She did eventually get a nice-looking *sheytel*, and she wears that for *Shabbos* and special occasions, using various hats and kerchiefs, sometimes with a fall, the rest of the time.

Some women are able to maintain elements of their pre-Orthodox style in their *sheytels*, although custom-made human-hair *sheytels* are very expensive. One BT woman wears her *sheytel* curly and styled, and another keeps hers long with no bangs, usually

tied back with a barrette. These *sheytels* stand out in contrast to the recognizable Ultra-Orthodox style of most FFB wigs, and they can sometimes be mistaken for real hair.

While most Milldale women wear their *sheytels* on *Shabbos* and often wear other head coverings during the week, Marissa does the opposite. When she got married, about a year after she became Orthodox, she bought a stylish blond *sheytel*. She wears this for special events, such as when she and her husband were honored as Ner Tamid students of the year. She also wears the *sheytel* every day to work, where most of her colleagues assume it is her own hair. But on *Shabbos* she puts her hair up and covers it with a hat. She would prefer to wear the *sheytel* only on rare occasions, but she feels that hats would be inappropriate at her workplace.

BTs also distinguish themselves through details in hats and *kipahs*. One day I noticed that Paula, an artistic grandmother who became Orthodox about ten years ago, had a small embroidered butterfly on the side of her beret, which was otherwise indistinguishable from the hats that many other women wear. That same day, her husband wore the same type of black velvet *kipah* that other men wear, but with the slightest bit of blue trim. Although it is possible that some FFBs also distinguish themselves like this with details of their appearance, I have never noticed it or heard about it.

Whether or not BTs intentionally distinguish themselves, head wear is often a giveaway of religious background. A few FFB interviewees mentioned that BTs – both men and women – can sometimes be spotted “a mile away” by the way they wear their hat: either too far forward, too far back, too much hair showing, not enough hair showing, or just awkward. Rabbi Nussbaum, claiming he can tell if a man is BT, said:

Another giveaway will be wearing a black hat, I’ll just say, inappropriately, either the way they’re wearing it, or they’ll wear it but without a jacket: so they’re wearing sneakers, a T-shirt and a black hat. That’s a giveaway. Small things like that.

When perceptions matter, small things can make a big difference.

Home decoration

When a newcomer first enters an Orthodox home in Milldale, she likely notices two focal points of the decor: a large dining room table and prominently displayed bookshelves filled with religious books. These functional and symbolic pieces are common because large festive meals and text study are two centerpieces of Orthodox life.

Since Orthodox Jews often have several children (eight or ten is not uncommon, and a few families in Milldale have twelve or thirteen), family members alone can fill up a table and a half. But families of all sizes tend to have guests most *Shabboses* and holidays. On any given Friday night, Shira and Levi Light and their three young children might invite a local couple over for dinner, in addition to the single woman from downtown spending the night in the guest room. Then they might have a different couple and their two children for lunch the next day. It is no wonder that large tables are the norm. Once I even saw an advertisement on the synagogue bulletin board: “Free – large dining room table – 60 x 40 plus 2 extension leaves.” The next week, the ad was gone.

Tables in Orthodox homes also have another distinctive feature: a table cloth with a plastic protective covering. This is the case not just in families with young children who might draw on the table or spill on the table cloth. And it is the case not just during messy meals but all of the time, even on a Tuesday night when the table is covered with piles of mail and newspapers. Of the dozens of dining room tables I saw in Milldale, I only noticed one without a plastic covering, at the home of an FFB family with grown children. While plastic coverings serve a functional purpose and are certainly not unique to Orthodox homes, they seem to have become a marker of Orthodox identity.

Orthodox Jews own dozens or hundreds of *seforim*, books of biblical and rabbinic literature written in Hebrew and Aramaic. Most families choose to display these books prominently in the living room or dining room, even though they could store them in the basement or other less public rooms. For example, one FFB family has a few shelves of *seforim* visible from the dining room table. Also included in these shelves are a few children’s books. In the study (which is also a guest room), there are many more *seforim*, but there are also secular books: a full set of Encyclopaedia Britannica, a children’s encyclopedia, and the Advanced Placement English literature review book (several of the children are avid readers). There are only seven Orthodox English books, including

Halachos of Muktz'a ('laws of *Shabbos* untouchable items') and the collected works of Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch.

I mentioned to one BT woman, who has three shelves of *seforim* in her small living room, that I have often noticed centrally located bookshelves in Orthodox homes, and she said, "Isn't that *halacha* ('Jewish law') – to display them prominently?" According to a rabbi in the community, it is not *halacha* but merely a widespread custom. It allows Orthodox Jews to construct their identity as lovers of Jewish texts.

Another distinctive feature of Orthodox homes is the collections of Jewish-themed art and Jewish ritual objects. Non-Orthodox Jewish homes often have a similarly large assortment of Judaica, but they are also likely to have secular art, including modern pieces and trinkets from around the world. Aside from a few pictures of flowers, I rarely saw secular art in Milldale and other Orthodox communities. There is no law against secular art; its scarcity in the community merely highlights the importance of Jewish symbols.

Common types of paintings and prints in Milldale include a man with a beard and black hat praying at the Western Wall in Jerusalem, a micrography (tiny words used to create an image) depiction of a biblical scene, and a lit Chanukah *menorah* ('candelabrum'). Liturgical selections are sometimes made into art: I saw several decorated versions of *Birkas Habayis* ('prayer for the house'), *Eyshes Chayil* (hymn of praise sung to the woman of the house on Friday night), the prayer for lighting the candles, and quotes from *Pirkei Avos* ('Ethics of the Fathers'). I also saw many photos of famous rabbis, of both local and international fame, and a few old photos of great-grandparents from the "old world" (Eastern Europe).

When Jews become Orthodox, they often take on many of these home decoration practices. BT homes usually include large tables with plastic covers, prominently displayed bookshelves, and Jewish-themed art. But, as we might expect, there are some differences. For practical reasons, BTs usually have different books than FFBs. They rely heavily on English books to learn about Orthodox observance and *hashkafa* ('weltanschauung, worldview'), and they often use prayer books with English translations and explanations. Some also keep secular books from their pre-Orthodox days, but they often store them in less conspicuous parts of the house.

One BT family chooses to keep most of their books in the study, rather than in the living room. The room is lined with book shelves, most of which contain *seforim*. Prominently displayed books include several volumes of Aramaic-English editions of the Talmud, an entire set of an all-Aramaic Talmud, *Mikraos Gedolos*, the *Mishna Torah*, a few dictionaries, and a number of English Orthodox books by Aryeh Kaplan, Lawrence Kelemen, and others popular among BTs. But a closer look finds that there are a number of secular books stored on the bottom shelves, which are partially concealed by grated doors. Through the grates I saw *Influence: the Psychology of Persuasion*, *The Closing of the American Mind*, and *Men Are from Mars, Women are from Venus*. Rather than discard these books or store them in a more private area, this family chose to keep them in the same room as their *seforim* – but in a less prominent location.

BTs in Milldale generally do have Jewish-themed art and pictures of famous bearded rabbis, but, as with books, they also sometimes keep art they collected before they became Orthodox. In some of the BT homes, I noticed that the walls of the main level were covered with Jewish-themed art but the basement featured secular paintings, often modern or abstract. As we might expect, BTs avoid displaying art that could be considered offensive. One BT mentioned that he still has a Caribbean-themed painting of a woman in a bikini from his pre-BT days. He plans to sell it on eBay eventually, but for now he keeps it hidden in the basement.

Samantha has a poster that she bought in Berlin, where she visited during the fall of the Berlin Wall, before she became Orthodox. An FFB once told her that it is not appropriate to have art from Germany, because of the Holocaust. But she considers this poster such an important part of her past – and likes the fact that she got it in Germany at that exciting time – that she keeps it on her wall. Cecile enjoys modern art and wishes that she could find more Jewish-themed art that she likes. For now, she keeps one modern secular piece and a few Jewish pieces prominently displayed. Next time she goes to Israel, she plans to look for some Jewish art that fits in more with her aesthetic sensibilities. BTs are constantly making decisions about what elements of their old selves to display publicly and what elements of Orthodoxy to incorporate into their lives. Art is just one resource they can use to arrive at a sense of individual equilibrium.

An element of home decoration that really distinguishes BTs from FFBs is the keeping of pets. I only saw four pets – three dogs and one cat – during my study, and they were all in BT homes. Moyshe, a young FFB, said that he assumes a family is BT when he sees they have a pet. Pets are frowned upon by some Orthodox Jews and are considered to be *goyish* ('non-Jewish'). There are some restrictions about caring for animals on *Shabbos*, but it is possible to keep a pet and still obey Jewish law completely. Therefore, some BTs feel OK about having pets even if they recognize that it is not a common Orthodox practice. Ironically, some even use their pets to help construct their own Jewish/Orthodox identity – by giving them Hebrew or Yiddish names.

“Learning” (Jewish text study)

Within the Orthodox community, there is a major emphasis on learning biblical and rabbinic principles through oral presentations and text study (see El-Or 1994 on women’s study groups and Heilman 1983 on men’s study groups). In synagogue, the rabbi usually gives a *dvar torah* ('sermon'), which connects the weekly portion of the Bible to moral lessons about contemporary life. At *Shabbos* and holiday meals, the man of the house often gives a *dvar torah* as well. Sometimes guests (usually male) and even children are asked to do the same. As one BT told me, “They say when you have a meal, if you don’t have words of Torah, it’s like eating *treyf* ('not kosher')... That’s why you always have a *dvar torah* when you sit at the meal. It sanctifies the meal.”

The synagogue in Milldale offers three *shiurim* ('lectures, classes') every day and an additional eight once a week. Most are for men only, but a few are co-ed and one is for women only. The schools teach general studies part of the day and *limudei kodesh* ('holy studies') the rest of the day. This includes Laws and Customs, Hebrew language, *Chumash* ('Torah/Pentateuch'), and *Navi* ('Book of Prophets') for boys and girls, and *Mishnayos* ('Mishna') and *Gemora* ('Talmud') for boys.

Men spend much of their leisure time in a daily or weekly *chavrusa* ('learning pair'), in which they explicate the *Gemora* and other rabbinic texts. This act of studying these traditional texts is referred to as “learning,” based on a usage of the Yiddish cognate *lern-en*. Although women sometimes attend classes, they rarely study in *chavrusa*.

When they do, it is mostly about laws pertaining to women, and they usually do not delve into the Hebrew/Aramaic original.

The importance of learning for Orthodox males is illustrated by two speeches I heard at a *bris* ('baby boy's circumcision celebration'). The father thanked everyone for coming and said that he hopes his son will have "a bright future in learning. [(Smiling)] He should *shtayg* away." *Shtayg* is a Yiddish word meaning 'ascend, advance', and it is usually used in relation to learning. After the father's speech, one of his learning partners stood up and made some comments, mentioning the *nachas* ('pride') the parents should get from this boy, especially in his learning.

"Learning" is a practice that *ba'alei teshuva* need time to get used to. It takes a good deal of knowledge, skill, and/or preparation to be able to present a solid *dvar torah* or explicate a rabbinic text written in Hebrew or Aramaic. To acquire these skills, BTs attend regular classes at Ner Tamid and Shomrei Emuna. BT males in Milldale tend to set aside regular times for learning, as FFB males do, but it often takes years before they are competent enough to study Gemora without the help of a teacher. Some BTs spend months or years in yeshivas in Israel or elsewhere acquiring the skills to understand these texts. One recent BT, Yisrael (formerly Will), said there is nothing he would rather do on vacation than learn. He spent his 10-day vacation at a men's BT yeshiva in the New York area. Some people, like Andrew, even quit their jobs to learn full-time.

At Ner Tamid events, and at meals where several BTs are in attendance, the rabbis often ask a relative newcomer – someone who has been attending classes and events for a year or so – to prepare and present a *dvar torah*. This is seen as a milestone, indicating the rabbi's confidence that the BT has learned enough to participate in this speech act. Usually this ritual is limited to male participation, but the rabbis at Ner Tamid sometimes ask women to give *dvar torahs*, as well.

Once someone joins an Orthodox community like Milldale, he feels even more pressure to be knowledgeable about Torah. One BT, Michael, never spent time in yeshiva but nonetheless felt a need to demonstrate learnedness in the speeches he made during his two-year term as president of the synagogue:

I felt a sense of responsibility when I spoke to have some words of Torah in what I said. So if I were addressing the congregation, I would have

some ... relevant statement that maybe referred to this week's *parsha* ('Torah portion') or to something I just learned, just to tie it into the thought that I was doing.

Once again, this is an instance of a BT using a common Orthodox practice – Torah learning – to assist his integration into the community. But because Michael did not have many years of experience studying texts in the original Hebrew/Aramaic, the quotes he included in his speeches were usually in translation. This always served as a reminder to the audience that he did not grow up Orthodox.

Similarly, some BTs who do not spend significant time in yeshiva still have regular learning sessions. But while FFBs and other BTs are explicating pages of Gemora, they are focusing on Torah or even English books about *halacha* ('Jewish law').

Leisure activities

While men spend much of their leisure time reading ancient texts, they also read contemporary books and periodicals on religious topics. The most popular Orthodox newspapers in Milldale are the English-language weeklies *The Jewish Press*, *HaModia* ('the informer'), and *Yated Ne'eman* ('foothold of the faithful'), as well as the monthly magazine *The Jewish Observer*. I often saw one or more of these periodicals on coffee tables in Milldale, and I even noticed children reading them on *Shabbos*.

For socialization, women and teenagers often spend time chatting at each others' houses or on the phone. Although men and older boys express some interest in professional sports, and the primary school does have an 8th-grade basketball league, professional and amateur sports are not a locus of major activity. One of the main social events is parties with food and drink, but not for just any occasion as is common in the secular world. Parties are generally planned to celebrate *Shabbos* and holidays and the *simchas* ('happy occasions') of lifecycle events: the *bris* ('circumcision ceremony'), the *bar mitzvah* ('coming-of-age ceremony for 13-year-old boys'), and the many events surrounding a marriage – the *l'chayim* and *vort* ('toast' and 'speech' upon engagement), the *ufruf* (when the groom is 'called up' to the Torah the *Shabbos* before the wedding), the *Shabbos kallah* (*Shabbos* celebration for the 'bride'), the *chasuna* ('wedding') itself, and the *sheva brachos* ('seven blessings' – daily post-wedding week celebrations). The

parties to honor these occasions range from a small informal meal to a lavish party in a formal catering hall.

The Orthodox relationship to American popular culture is tenuous. I hardly ever heard community members talking about movies, and I only saw a few televisions in Milldale; if a family does own a TV, it is usually kept in the basement, not in the more public spaces of the home. One FFB family borrowed their neighbor's TV to watch their son's wedding video. And one BT family borrowed the TV-VCR from Ner Tamid so that the children could watch some borrowed educational videos. Of course, there are exceptions, like the FFB man who told me he grew up on the Brady Bunch and had a crush on Marsha, or the FFB woman who, when we set our interview for 7:30pm, said, "Right after 'Jeopardy'."

To what extent do BTs conform to Orthodox norms in leisure activities? Most of those that I observed and interviewed have given up much of their previous interest in movies, sit-coms, and secular night life. One woman has taken the change in leisure activities to an extreme: she no longer plays secular games. She said she recently saw the game "Life" when babysitting, and it bothered her that it was "filled with secular values," like the accrual of money. Another recent BT, who still enjoys popular culture and has a sizable collection of recent films on video, said, "I'm nervous to say I went to the movies." She wonders how community members would view her if they knew she hasn't given up secular activities.

Because most BTs grew up deeply immersed in popular culture, references to TV shows and movies often serve as an identifier of a non-Orthodox childhood. Levi made a reference to a "Saturday Night Live" skit and then said, "But that's from a past life." By adding the last part, he pointed out that he no longer watches "Saturday Night Live." But the fact that he made the comment at all was a conscious choice to highlight the fact that he is a *ba'al teshuva*. When BTs are together, they sometimes use mutually understood cultural references for bonding purposes. For example, telling me about her interactions with her BT friends, Michelle said, "It's not that we sit there and discuss major things from our past that aren't appropriate to discuss, but we'll talk about a movie here and there. We'll talk about stuff, or we'll say 'Oh, remember this?'"

Rabbi Hollander, a widely admired FFB teacher in his 40s, often alludes to American culture in his popular lectures, such as a comedy routine by Bill Cosby or an episode of “I Love Lucy.” Although he may not be up on more recent phenomena like “Conan O’Brien,” “Friends,” or “Survivor,” these references still allow him to connect to non-Orthodox students and draw them into the conversation. With an FFB crowd, he likely would not make the same references, both because there would be less comprehension and because some people might take offense. The one time I heard him speaking to an audience that included several FFBs, as well as several BTs, he joked, “And then we go to the *chasuna* (‘wedding’), have a great time, dance to some rock and roll [pause] *chas v’sholom* (‘God forbid’)” [(laughs from the crowd)]. This line made the BTs laugh, but it also reinforced the fact that the secular culture of their childhood is looked down upon in their new community.

Music

As Rabbi Hollander’s remark points out, music heard in the home and at parties is rarely “secular.”¹⁷ Orthodox music is usually about religious themes and is sung either in Hebrew or in Jewish English, the latter geared mostly to BTs. Because of the prohibition for a man to hear a woman sing, music is sung by men or boys. The musical style is often synthesizer-based American pop with some Eastern European klezmer influences. Almost every time I went to Ner Tamid, there was a tape playing. Except for the time one of the BT rabbis was in a Louis Armstrong mood, the chosen selections were Orthodox singers like Shlomo Carlebach and Mordechai Ben-David. Often at the Hollander home, I enjoyed watching three-year-old Mendy dancing and singing along to Orthodox music. And when the FFB Silverberg boys – home from Yeshiva on a 2-week break – spent a day building the family’s *sukkah* (‘outdoor booth for the autumn Feast of Tabernacles’), the stereo was blaring with Hebrew tunes for hours.

BTs generally become fans of Orthodox music, buying albums and singing along and dancing at weddings and other *simchas* (‘happy events’). In a speech about the

¹⁷ But see Helmreich (2000:207-8) for an anecdote about a yeshiva *bochur* (‘male student’) who listened to Simon and Garfunkel and his roommate who defended him to the yeshiva authority by saying, “He plays these former *yeshivaleit* (‘yeshiva students’), Shimon and Garfinkel (Judaized versions of their names). They made a couple of Yiddische zachen (‘Jewish things/songs’).”

accomplishments of Ner Tamid, Samuel – a BT who became *frum* in his 40s – said “*Ba’alei teshuva* go from listening to the Grateful Dead to Mordechai Ben-David.” The Grateful Dead hold sort of a mythic place in the Orthodox community, as many former Deadheads are attracted to the BT lifestyle. One FFB says that he knows someone is BT if he is wearing a Grateful Dead shirt. For many newly Orthodox Jews, the Dead – with all of the associated culture – have become a symbol of their pre-BT days. In his long-haired youth, Zev used to follow the Dead around the US. Now he does not even know where his Dead tapes are, and he listens only to Jewish music.

Some BTs do maintain contact with their previous musical loves. Yael, who used to spend much of her spare time drumming in a hard-rock band, still has some albums from her favorite group, Rush, and she does listen to them from time to time. Levi, a long-time BT, is familiar with the Orthodox music scene. But he is also proud of his former Deadhead identity and does not want to give it up completely. Although he has changed his e-mail address from LeviBear@google.com (a nickname given to him by a BT friend: his Hebrew name plus a Grateful Dead reference) to Teshuvah@google.com (‘repentance’), he still has Grateful Dead teddy bear stickers on his windshield and even plans to get new ones for his next car. He does occasionally listen to his old records, but not when his young children are around. He wants to wait until they are older to introduce them to the Grateful Dead.

One talented BT family in Milldale satisfied their desire to perform while maintaining observance of *kol isha*, the law against men hearing women sing. The mother and two daughters started an all-women’s band that performs only for all-female audiences. Their songs are influenced by American musical genres like the blues and show tunes, but they all have Orthodox themes, like preparing for *Shabbos* and “men in *tzitzis*.” The older daughter referred to the group as “a BT band,” saying that FFBs would never sing songs like these.

One of the few times I heard Orthodox Jews in this community listening to non-Orthodox music was in the Kramers’ van on the way to New York for a wedding. The Kramer parents both became BTs in their 20s, so their children have grown up as FFBs. For part of the trip, they listened to a tape they had brought of Peretz Bernstein, an Orthodox singer. But when the tape ended, they turned on the radio and listened to

classic rock for a while. When “American Pie” started, the children got excited. They sang along for the chorus and some of the verses. But just as the singer was about to say, “The three men I admire most, the Father, Son and the Holy Ghost,” the mother turned the volume all the way down. One of the sons asked why, and she answered, “It’s words you don’t want stuck in your head.” The older daughter said, “Probably something about Yoshke,” the Yiddish diminutive form of ‘Jesus’. After “American Pie” was over, the mother put in an Orthodox tape, which happened to start with “*Ani ma’amin*,” a song stating a “full belief” that the *Moshiach* (‘Messiah’) will come. I laughed to myself about the ironic contrast.

The Kramers are unusual in that the children are allowed to listen to rock and roll and even watch television. Most Orthodox children would not know any of the words to “American Pie.” But the Kramers are typical in that the children sing along with the Orthodox tapes and that the parents filter out references to Christian imagery. Of course, parents who grew up Orthodox would likely not know “American Pie” well enough to anticipate the line about the trinity, but they would also not find themselves listening to the classic rock station in the first place.

Twenty years ago, when the Orthodox recording industry was much smaller, it was more common for FFBs to listen to secular music. One older BT said she thought a few FFBs seemed like BTs because of their knowledge of rock and roll. But she recognizes that these FFBs grew up at a time when Orthodoxy was less strict (see Chapter 7 on Orthodoxy’s shift to the right).

Food

At the Ner Tamid outreach center, there is a framed poster: a large black and white photograph of a bagel with lox and cream cheese. The caption reads, “Is this the culmination of 3500 years of Jewish heritage?” expressing the common Orthodox disdain for cultural Judaism devoid of any religious content. But even in this religious community, food is an important marker of Jewish identity.

A visitor who attends several meals at Orthodox homes and institutions might be surprised at how similar the dishes are. Meals, especially on *Shabbos*, often include a combination of Eastern European classics and American standards: *gefilte* fish, chicken

soup, chicken and/or beef, mushroom *farfel* (oily noodle bits), salads, *kugels* (quiche-like food made with eggs and noodles, potato, or spinach), and cakes, cookies, or frozen desserts. Of course, the laws of *kashrus* are observed, requiring the separation of dairy and meat products and the utensils that touch them. In addition, special ritual foods are served on certain holidays, including wine for every festive meal, *challah* (egg bread) on *Shabbos* and holidays, apples and honey for *Rosh Hashana*, cheesecake or other dairy food for *Shavuot*, and *matzah* (unleavened bread), *charoses* (mortar-like mix of fruit and nuts) and romaine lettuce for *Pesach* (Passover).¹⁸

While it is rare to find FFBs who are vegetarians or who experiment with world cuisine, BTs often come into the community with different values about food. A few FFBs and BTs say they can tell when they are in a BT home by the food they are served. If sushi, Indian spices, or fake crab are involved, or if dinner includes no meat, it is clearly a BT home, according to Moyshe. Another FFB stresses that it is a *mitzvah* ('commandment') to eat meat and says he is surprised that some BTs do not give up their vegetarianism when they take on Orthodoxy. An FFB woman said that she is tipped off that people are BT when they discuss certain foods. "They talk about burritos and tacos. Do I know about this? Burritos and tacos? No, I know about gefilte fish." Manhattan, Los Angeles, and other large Orthodox communities with many upper-middle-class members include kosher Japanese, Indian, and expensive Italian and French restaurants (although, surprisingly, no Mexican ones that I could find), partly on the influence of the BTs who are accustomed to a diverse gourmet menu and do not want to give it up after becoming Orthodox. However, the Philadelphia Orthodox community seems to be too small to support so many establishments. The three kosher restaurants in Milldale are a *milchik* ('dairy') pizza place that also has Israeli and Eastern European specialties, a grill serving American *fleyshik* ('meat') favorites, and a *fleyshik* Chinese restaurant.

A few BTs have expressed negative opinions about what they see as oily, heavy meals that lack variety and take too long to make. The Orthodox outreach professionals know that food could be a sticking point. One event geared toward non-Orthodox Jews

¹⁸ These special foods are also common among non-Orthodox Jews, and even the Eastern European specialties are eaten outside of the Orthodox world.

(potential BTs) advertised “delectable international cuisine,” a selling point that likely would not draw too many FFBs.

One strategy BTs use in adapting Orthodox cooking is to add their own worldly touches to Eastern European standards. At one *Shabbos* lunch, the Kramers served a unique recipe of *gefilte* fish. A BT guest asked what makes the *gefilte* fish so good, and Mrs. Kramer responded, “Curry and turmeric,” words that would rarely be heard in an FFB home. Another BT woman adds a secret distinctive ingredient (tasted like nutmeg to me) to her *challah*. Of course, many BTs do stick to the meat and potatoes (Eastern European style) and even take informal cooking lessons with long-time community members. That is the best way to learn to make a *kugel* that is both fluffy and large enough to serve 15 people.

*Names*¹⁹

The names that people choose for their children – and for themselves – are very important in the construction of Orthodox identity. Most Orthodox names come from Hebrew, especially from biblical characters. The patriarchs and matriarchs are common sources. But rather than use the English translations like most non-Orthodox and some Modern Orthodox Jews do – Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah [liy ך] – Ultra-Orthodox Jews use the Ashkenazic Hebrew versions: Avrum, Yitzchak, Yakov, Sara [sar ך], Rivka, Rochel [◆ ךx↔l], and Leah/Layah [ley ך]. Among Ashkenazic Jews, it is common to name children after deceased relatives. Non-Orthodox Jews often give their children English and Hebrew names, such as naming Harry (Chayim in Hebrew) after his grandfather Chayim, or Hannah (Chana in Hebrew) after her great-grandmother Chana. But Orthodox Jews usually use just one name, such as Chayim or Chana.

It is not enough that a name be biblical for it to be common in the Orthodox community. It should also be the name of a Jewish character. Even though Adam, Seth, Noah, and Ruth are popular names among non-Orthodox Jews, they are rarely heard in the Orthodox community. Adam, Seth, and Noah existed before Abraham became the first Jew, and Ruth was a Moabite woman who married into a Jewish family and

“converted” to Judaism. An exception is the name Chava (‘Eve’), which is sometimes used in the Orthodox community. In addition to biblical characters, some boys’ and girls’ names are taken from Hebrew words relating to nature and positive qualities: Tzvi (‘deer’), Dov (‘bear’), Menachem (‘comforter’), Tzipora (‘bird’), Shoshana (‘rose’), Ahuva (‘beloved’), and Chaya (‘alive’). Some of these Hebrew names are translations of Yiddish names, like Hershl (‘deer’), Feygel (‘bird’), and Reyzel (‘rose’). For example, one woman wanted to name her daughter after her great-grandmother Sheyndel (‘pretty’), but she was uncomfortable using such a Yiddish-sounding name. After getting a rabbi’s permission, she named her daughter with the Hebrew name Yaffa, which also means ‘pretty’. Some Orthodox Jews, especially those living in more insular communities, still use non-Hebrew Yiddish names, such as Sheyndy, Goldy, Hindy, and Mendy.

Among children, and even some adults, most Orthodox names are used with the Jewish English diminutive/hypocoristic suffix [i], while the Yiddish version was usually [↔l(↔)] (although this is also used on occasion). Examples include Rivky [rɪfki] for Rivka/Rivkele, Rochy [♦ ϕ xi] for Rochel/Rochele, Avrumy [avr ϕ mi] for Avrohom/Avremele, Yitzzy [yɪtsi] for Yitzchak/Itzikl, Yanky [yaNki] for Yakov/Yankele, and Chami [x ϕ mi] for Nechama/Nechamke. Hypocoristics are used not just among relatives or close friends but even among strangers. I once went into an FFB yeshiva to deliver a package and asked a few of the teenage boys if they knew Zalman Felder. They said they did not, but one boy went up to another boy and asked, “Do you know Zalmy Felder?” Even though he did not know him, he still used the hypocoristic form of his name.

Another Orthodox naming practice is to use double names. Whereas many Americans have a middle name that they rarely use, Orthodox Jews are often referred to as Sara-Layah, Chaya-Miriam, or Shmuel-Yisroel. I once met a long-time BT named Yakov-Tzvi and asked him what his first name was. Mimicking a Lenny Bruce comedy routine, he replied, “You need two names to be *frum* (‘religious’). Yakov, Dov, Tzvi – not *frum*. Yakov-Tzvi – *frum*.”

¹⁹ Even the names in this section are pseudonyms, similar to the ones used by actual people.

Of course, there is variation, even among Ultra-Orthodox Jews. A prominent rabbi advises parents to give their children only one name, such as “Chaya” rather than “Chaya-Sara.” And one FFB feels it is important for Jews to have secular English names in addition to their Hebrew ones, so he gave each of his five children two names. Some Orthodox Jews are partial to Yiddish names like Kreyndl and Frumky, and others consider them old-fashioned.

Newcomers to the Orthodox community face the decision of whether to continue going by their given name or to introduce themselves with a more Orthodox-sounding name. Many do take on a Hebrew name, either the one that was given to them at birth or one they chose during the BT process. Charity, a woman who grew up Catholic, changed her name to Shira when she converted to Orthodox Judaism and her husband became a BT. Donna started going by her Hebrew name, Devora, when she went to Israel to spend a few months in a yeshiva. When she returned and moved to Milldale, the community quickly got used to her new name. About a year after becoming Orthodox, Will decided he would like to be referred to by his Hebrew name, Yisrael. Within weeks, several of his BT friends were accustomed enough to calling him Yisrael that they no longer marked it as a new name. When I saw him a few months later, I accidentally addressed him as Will. He said, “Didn’t I tell you I changed my name to Yisrael?”

Not all BTs feel comfortable changing their names. One woman tried going by her Yiddish name for a while, but she felt she was giving up too much of who she is and eventually switched back to her English name. Andrew chooses to go by his English name, but when he is called to the Torah in synagogue, he is called by his Hebrew name, Aryeh, a practice common among Jews of most denominations.

While many BTs were given a Hebrew name at birth, they rarely have two Hebrew names. Rivka-Bracha had always gone by Rebecca until she became Orthodox. Then she started going by Rebecca-Bracha. When someone introduced herself as Rebecca in the presence of Rebecca-Bracha and Max, Max said “Another Rebecca,” nodding toward Rebecca-Bracha. She corrected him: “I’m Rebecca-Bracha.” Eventually, she even Judaified the pronunciation and went by “Rivka-Bracha.”

BTs are faced with the name decision not just because Orthodox Jews tend to have Hebrew names, but because FFBs ask new BTs what their Hebrew names are and

often refer to them that way. Long before Will had decided to go by “Yisrael,” some of the rabbis referred to him with this name, honoring him once as he gave a *dvar torah* by calling him “Reb Yisrael” (Reb means ‘teacher’ or ‘rabbi’). Similarly, although Marissa and Mark usually introduce themselves with their English names, many community members address them and refer to them with their Hebrew names, Menucha and Simcha. For example, Rabbi Hollander was entering Mark’s phone number into his cell phone, and he used Simcha, rather than Mark. Even I was not immune to name Judaization – although I always introduced myself as [sE ♦ ϕ], several FFBs pronounced my name the Hebrew way, [sá ♦ ϕ] or [s ϕ ♦ ϕ].

The pressure for new BTs to use Hebrew names comes not only from FFBs but also from their peers, their fellow BTs. Rivka-Bracha always referred to Marissa as “Menucha,” even though she often heard her introduce herself to others as Marissa. And when Mark/Simcha was entering Mitch/Mordechai’s phone number into his cell phone, he asked, “How do you spell Mordechai?” An onlooker started to spell it, but Mitch said, “My English name is Mitchell, if that makes it easier.” Another BT said with a smile, “Use Mordechai.”

BTs also face pressure from another side, their previous non-Orthodox community. Joan’s childhood friend made fun of her for choosing the name Yocheved-Chaya, which is too long and too “guttural” for his taste. Even so, she continues to use her new Orthodox name. To deal with conflicting pressures like this, some BTs choose to use different names for different audiences. Will/Yisrael still goes by Will at work, because he thinks it would be “too hard” to change there. When Boruch signed his name as “Barry” on the consent form, I was surprised, as I had never heard anyone refer to him that way in Milldale. He said that he grew up as Barry and still uses it in his law practice. Similarly, Yossi showed me his business card, and it said, “Joe the Handyman.” I asked, “Why not Yossi?” “Because I give my card to all kinds of people,” he said.

When deciding what to name their children, BTs almost always choose Hebrew names with Ashkenazic Hebrew pronunciations. The newsletter of one BT yeshiva has a “*mazel tov*” (‘congratulations’) section that lists the marriages of current and former students and the births of their children. Most of the brides, grooms, and parents have Jewish names, but some do not. However, all of the babies have Hebrew names. One

BT couple pointed out that the names they chose for their children are hard for their non-religious and non-Jewish relatives to pronounce, especially the ones with the [x] sound. Luckily for the grandparents, they use common nicknames that do not include [x].

Hebrew names are such a strong marker of Orthodox identity that an Orthodox person who becomes secular is likely to change his name. Once I telephoned an Orthodox family in which the oldest son is no longer observant. A voice unfamiliar to me answered the phone, saying, “This is Jack.” I figured out that this must be the oldest son, whose parents and siblings still call him Yechiel.²⁰

Another aspect of names is the use of titles. In the Milldale Orthodox community I heard many more people introduced and referred to as “Mr.,” “Mrs.,” “Rabbi,” “Rebbetzin,” and “Dr.” than is common in most urban communities. For example, I had only heard people refer to Joseph Ilikov as “Dr. Ilikov” until I visited him at his office and heard him called “Joseph.” And a BT woman lived with a family for several months and still called the middle-aged parents Rabbi and Mrs. Fefer. It seems that titles are more commonly used for people with advanced degrees or rabbinic ordination and for older married people. First names are usually used when the speaker, hearer, and referee all have a similar status in the community. Children are expected to refer to adults with their titles, even close family friends. As a young married graduate student, I was usually referred to as Sarah, but sometimes people introduced me to young children as Mrs. Benor.

Some rabbis garner so much respect that they are not only referred to as Rabbi X but are addressed in the third person. In yeshivas, students generally address their rabbis this way, as in “How does the *rav* (‘rabbi’) hold on that?” (rather than “What is your opinion about that?”). An FFB woman told me that in her Beys Yakov primary school the students addressed the teachers this way: “Does the *morah* (‘teacher’) want our homework now?” This same woman reports that she addresses a few rabbis in the third person at the yeshiva where she works. I heard this practice a few times from members

of the Milldale community – including BTs – speaking to a respected rabbi in a classroom setting.

Marriage and children

Within the Orthodox community, marriage is highly valued. It is extremely rare for FFBs to be single after their mid-20s. This is illustrated by an advertisement from the *Orthodox Jewish Observer* (Oct 2000, p. 16) (underline is mine):

Fresh Start Training Program
Division of Agudath Israel of America
Sponsored by the New York State Department of Labor
Free Computer Course
For Women Coping On Their Own (Widowed, Divorced, Separated)
30 Hours of Instruction – Day Classes

The Ultra-Orthodox organization sponsoring this course assumes that “women coping on their own” are limited to those who have once been married. It does not include women who have never been married and certainly not women who identify as lesbians. Homosexual activity is forbidden in Orthodoxy, and those who identify as homosexual usually leave the fold. Of course, the organization that placed this ad might assume that women who have never been married have careers and can cope on their own. But while it is common for Orthodox women to have careers, it is not considered acceptable for them to remain single.

Because of the laws of *negiya* (‘touching members of the opposite sex’) and the standards of gender separation, there is little social mixing between young men and women. The norm is for Orthodox men and women in their early 20s to be set up by a professional *shadchan* (‘matchmaker’) or a mutual acquaintance (see more on this in Levine 2003). The couple ultimately makes the final decision, but it is not considered acceptable for couples to initiate courting independent of a third party. Because physical

²⁰ In Milldale, there are not many FFB children who become secular. Those who do are referred to as “kids at risk.” The existence of these individuals leads to the question: do they change symbolic practices like language as they integrate into the secular world? This question is beyond the scope of this study, but see Levine (2003) for some insight into it. She describes a group of Orthodox questioners and formerly Orthodox Jews sitting around smoking, disobeying the laws of *negiya* (‘touching members of the opposite sex’), and talking about secular philosophy. Some of them are still dressed in *frum* styles, and some are wearing tank tops or combat boots. Some are using curse words, and some are Orthodox speech styles.

contact and even being alone together are prohibited before marriage, a potential couple meets for dates in public places.

BTs seem happy to participate in the matchmaking system. As soon as they become involved in an Orthodox community, they often feel pressure to pursue marriage prospects. Rabbis and families who help the BTs integrate into the community recommend potential matches or matchmakers. Once they are set up, BTs tend to have more dates and telephone conversations than FFBS before deciding to get married. Even so, the courting period is relatively short. It is not uncommon for a couple to become engaged a month after meeting and be married three months later.

The Ner Tamid outreach center helps single people in all life stages find each other with its social events, lectures about relationships, and officially advertised “matchmaking services,” offered by the wife of one of the staff members. When I started my fieldwork at Ner Tamid, there were twelve regulars who were interested in getting married in the near future, four of whom had previously been married and divorced. By the time of this writing two years later, ten of them had found other BTs and gotten married in Orthodox ceremonies. Except for one couple that came to Ner Tamid together, all of the spouses came from other Orthodox communities – in New York, New Jersey, and as far away as California.

One reason that outreach organizations like Ner Tamid are so eager to help people find their “*bashert*” (‘predestined match’) is that marriage helps to solidify a BT’s observance. A man who works for a BT yeshiva sums it up nicely:

You really don’t know where someone is [in religious observance] until they marry and walk out. And that’s one of the greatest things about seeing them marry is that you know they’re locking in. Once they’ve married, it’s harder for a person to just drop it and to walk away, because you’ve got a commitment to another person who’s also seriously holding a certain level in Judaism. So ... it’s like a graduation day for us when we see a wedding. We know the students have really locked in. And there are rare exceptions to that, but that is a good outward sign that they’re really committed.

BTs tend to marry other BTs, for a number of reasons. From the BT perspective, it is nice to be able to share the common experiences, such as having a secular

background and continuing to deal with non-Orthodox family and friends. From the FFB perspective, there are at least three problems with a “mixed” (FFB and BT) marriage. One is a fear of recidivism: that the BT might change his mind and decide to drop his observance. Another is the potential confusion that children of a BT parent might face when interacting with their non-Orthodox grandparents. A third issue is the *yichus*, or lineage, of the BT (see Levine 2003). Some FFBs attach great importance to the lineage of a potential spouse. For example, when Rabbi Hollander’s FFB son gave a *dvar torah* (‘sermon’) at his *sheva brachos* (‘post-wedding week celebration’), he spent several minutes praising his bride’s FFB father for being a *godol hador* (‘important man of the generation’) and a *talmid chacham* (‘learned scholar’). A woman who became Orthodox in her 20s may have a good pedigree according to secular American norms, but she is missing an important element of having *yichus*: a father who is a well respected Orthodox rabbi. In addition, some FFBs are bothered by the prospect that their grandchildren will be descended from a couple (their other grandparents) who presumably did not observe *taharas hamishpacha*, the laws of family purity.

Although the dozens of couples I encountered during my fieldwork were mostly both BTs or both FFBs, there were at least seven exceptions. The FFBs who marry BTs are usually somewhat more independent-minded, have spent too much time not finding success on the FFB matchmaking scene, or have previously been married and divorced. When a BT marries an FFB, it is often considered a sign of successful integration into the Orthodox community. One divorced BT woman in Israel was elated when a matchmaker set her up with an FFB.

Whether or not they marry an FFB, BTs often feel more assimilated into the community when they get married. As one *rebbetzin* (‘rabbi’s wife’) said, once they are married, “they’re not just guests by people” (‘at others’ homes’) meaning they are now expected to host their own *Shabbos* dinners. Of course, single people can also host dinners, but this is a rare occurrence in the Orthodox community. Single people and even couples in their first year of marriage are usually invited to join families for *Shabbos* and holiday meals. Heilman highlights the significance of marriage in his study of a modern Orthodox community: “Only the married members seem to be full-fledged members of the Kehillat Kodesh community” (1973:56).

I learned about the prestige attached to marriage first-hand when I visited the large Ultra-Orthodox community of Monsey, New York, three months before my baby was due. The woman I was staying with was calling her friends to help me arrange interviews. She expressed her endorsement by telling her friends, “She’s a very nice lady. She’s married, and she left her husband for 2 days to visit Monsey.” Once she even said, “She’s married, and she’s expecting.” I was reminded then that being married added to my legitimacy in the Orthodox community and that being pregnant multiplied it (El-Or 1994 reports being accepted in a Hasidic community because she was married with children). At age 27, if I had not been married and at least on the way to motherhood, I would have been seen as flouting the norms of the community.

The norm is not only to marry young but also to have many children. Although some Orthodox rabbis permit the use of birth control in certain circumstances, others do not. Children are considered to be a blessing, and BTs often have just as many children as FFBs. However, since many BTs do not become Orthodox until their 30s or even later, they miss out on valuable childbearing years. One BT said that she can often tell who is BT by their age and the number of children they have. If a woman is 20 and has kids, she is probably FFB. If she is 30 with one kid, she is probably BT.

Having children often makes a BT feel more integrated into the Orthodox community. When I was pregnant during my fieldwork, I had more in common with community members and, therefore, more mutual topics of conversation. Since at least seven other women were due within a few months of me, my visits to the community included many pregnancy- and baby-related discussions.

Several BTs expressed joy in the fact that they have children who are *Frum* From Birth and whose friends and classmates are children of FFBs. This often has an equalizing effect on the parents. Shira’s involvement with the parent-teacher organization of her children’s school allows her to interact with FFB mothers on equal footing, even though she had no knowledge of Judaism until about ten years ago. Rochel, a learned FFB *rebbetzin* (‘rabbi’s wife’) who teaches classes on women’s observance, often comes over to chat with Shira while the kids play together. Although they have very different backgrounds, they somehow seem on a par when they are standing together

in Shira's living room, each holding a baby and keeping an eye on the toddlers at their feet.

Similar to the yeshiva staff member's explanation above, having children also serves to solidify a BT's observance. One BT told me that she has changed for the better since she had children, because she feels the need to serve as a role model for them. Even if a BT was previously flawless in her halachic observance, having children may help to improve her *midos* ('character traits').

Eventually, BTs learn from their own children. The kids come home from school using Hebrew loanwords the parents are not familiar with or ask for help on homework the parents do not understand. The BT parents are likely to look up words or seek help from more knowledgeable friends. While this adds to the parents' knowledge of Orthodoxy, it is also somewhat demoralizing. At the same time, the child's knowledge and performance makes BT parents feel more integrated. Bracha-Sara said she really felt assimilated into Orthodoxy one day when she was driving her four children home from school in a huge station wagon and one of her sons said, "I'm shmoiling!" (made-up word: 'boiling' with initial Yiddish cluster). She recalls thinking, "Here I am driving my 'yeshiva-mobile', and my kid is making up Yiddish-sounding words. I've made it into the mainstream."

Other practices

This is by no means an exhaustive list of practices that distinguish Orthodox Jews from non-Orthodox and non-Jews. Of course, there are many linguistic practices, which are discussed in detail in Chapters 4 and 5. Other practices include the strong emphasis on *hachnasas orchim* ('hospitality') and the prominence of the Jewish calendar in conceptions of time. BTs do tend to take on these practices, as well. One practice that BTs tend not to pick up is avoiding eye contact with members of the opposite sex. In my conversations with a number of FFB men, especially young *yeshiva bochurs* ('unmarried students'), I noticed that they often (but not always) avoided looking me directly in the eye. However, I never noticed a BT man avoiding eye contact with me. This practice, and body habitus in general, are important and deserve further research.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have presented an ethnographic portrait of the Milldale Orthodox community. Some of the practices discussed here are dictated by Ultra-Orthodox interpretation of *halacha*, Jewish law. Women must cover their elbows and knees, and hair if they are married, and men must cover their heads. Food must be eaten according to the laws of *kashrus*, and music must not be sung by women in the presence of men. But there are also several ideologies that influence Orthodox practices. For example, the reverence for the recent Eastern European Jewish past influences the foods, the connection to the biblical Children of Israel influences the names, and the high value attached to Jewish textual learning influences the prominence of books in home decoration. These ideologies are maintained partly through discourses about them and partly through the use of these semiotic practices.

This chapter has shown that BTs take on the cultural practices of their new community, but often in slightly distinct ways. In some cases, BTs' distinctness is due to a lack of skill, as in studying from English books. But in many cases, BTs purposely distinguish themselves in order to preserve some elements of their previous self. They do this by maintaining stylish dress, modern art, and world cuisine, even while following many other Orthodox traditions. One BT keeps two decals on his car: the bumper sticker that says "Moshiach ['Messiah'] is coming!" and the Grateful Dead teddy bear stickers on his windshield. Another BT cooks her Eastern European gefilte fish with curry and turmeric, Indian spices rarely used in Orthodox homes. A third wears his black hat with trendy sunglasses. Through symbolic practices, BTs are able to construct themselves as Orthodox Jews. And by using semiotic combinations that might seem unusual to an FFB, they are also able to construct themselves as *ba'alei teshuva*.

Chapter 4:

Hebrew, Aramaic, and Yiddish and their Lexical Influences on Orthodox Jewish English

INTRODUCTION

In the hallowed halls of *yeshivos* ('yeshivas') far and wide
Our young men have discovered a new way to verbalize.
With Yiddish, English, Hebrew – it's a mixture of all three,
And a dash of Aramaic – a linguistic potpourri!

That's called: *yeshivishe reid* ('yeshiva speech'), *yeshivishe shprach*
('yeshiva language'):

Takeh ('really'), *eppis* ('something'), *gradeh* ('in reality'), a *gevaldike zach* ('remarkable thing').

It's called: *yeshivishe reid*, *yeshivishe shprach*:

It's the tawk of the town, *mamish* ('really') *tog un nacht* ('day and night').

-- "Yeshivishe Reid" by the Orthodox band "Journeys"

The major language of communication in Milldale's Orthodox community is some variety of English, used in multiglossia with Hebrew, Aramaic, and Yiddish (see Fishman 1985 for a model of multiglossia in Jewish language communities, using Ferguson's [1959] notion of diglossia). Elements of these Jewish languages are transferred into English speech. In this chapter, I describe the functions of each of these Jewish languages, as well as the ideologies surrounding them. Loanwords are discussed in this chapter, along with their pragmatic, morphosyntactic, and phonological issues, and other distinctive features are discussed in Chapter 5. I also present data on the extent to which BTs acquire Orthodox linguistic patterns.

In his research on Yiddish, Max Weinreich (1980:352) makes a useful distinction between different types of Hebrew: the Whole Hebrew/Aramaic Element (WHE) and the Merged Hebrew/Aramaic Element (MHE). WHE is the Hebrew and Aramaic that Jews read or recite while praying, learning, or participating in other rituals. The MHE is the body of loanwords integrated into the spoken language. This dichotomy is similar to the distinction between code switching and borrowing made in research on language contact (e.g., Poplack, Sankoff, and Miller 1988).

As in other situations of language contact, it is usually possible to label a particular non-English lexical item as "WHE" or "MHE" using criteria of frequency and phonological and morphosyntactic integration. However, there are ambiguities, and, as Myers-Scotton (1993) points out, borrowing and code switching exist on a continuum.

For example, in text study sessions, a speaker often reads a passage of a Hebrew or Aramaic text and then uses a phrase from the text in his subsequent discussion. This phrase could be considered either WHE or MHE. The same is true of whole phrases used in everyday life, such as “*Gam zu l’tova*” (‘this too is for good’), said upon hearing (slightly) negative news. One rabbi uses this phrase as a pun. One young girl had a spot on her skirt, and when I told her, she said, “I know, I sat on gum.” Rabbi Hollander joked, “You know what I say about that? *Gum zu l’tóva*,” which also means ‘This gum is for good’. This could be considered a code switch to Hebrew (WHE) or a borrowing of Hebrew lexical material into English (MHE). Despite these ambiguities, the distinction between WHE and MHE is important for our discussion of how Hebrew, Aramaic, and Yiddish are used and how they impact the spoken English of Orthodox Jews.

WHOLE HEBREW (TEXTUAL)

The Whole Hebrew Element is central to the lives of Orthodox Jews. On a given day, Orthodox men recite several blessings surrounding their morning dressing, washing, and breakfast, say the morning prayer service, and study biblical or rabbinic texts, all in the WHE. Women recite most of the same blessings, and they may say the same prayer services, but they do not study the same texts. However, many women regularly recite psalms in the original Hebrew, especially when they know of people in need of healing. On Saturday, Monday, Thursday, and certain holidays, those who attend synagogue hear a public reading of the weekly Torah portion, with an additional biblical reading on Saturday (all recited by men). At festive meals on *Shabbos* and holidays, families sing Hebrew songs around the table. If there are no non-relative men present, women may sing aloud. Otherwise, they might follow along as the men sing. Even young children know hundreds of Hebrew songs by heart.

Because of these regular uses of Hebrew, most community members are able to read Hebrew and understand at least some of what they are reading. Children are taught the Hebrew alphabet in kindergarten, around the same time they learn the English alphabet. Both boys and girls study the Bible and rabbinic commentaries in their original Hebrew, and boys also study works of Jewish law written in Hebrew.

One reason that traditional Jews continue to use Hebrew when praying or reading the Bible is that it is considered *loshon kodesh*, the ‘holy language’. Rabbinic literature predicts the ultimate reward for using *loshon kodesh*: “The good news is that whoever speaks in the sacred tongue has a place in the world to come” (*Talmud Yerushalmi, Shekalim* 3, quoted in Schiff 1996:145). One rabbi at Ner Tamid, in teaching the biblical story of the Tower of Babel, explained that Hebrew is the only objective language, because it “is the language with which God created the world.” Hebrew words describe the very essence of the objects they refer to, he said, while all other languages are subjective. To read the Bible or pray only in translation would be to live a life that is that much less holy.

WHOLE ARAMAIC (TEXTUAL)

Aramaic, a close Semitic cousin of Hebrew, was the lingua franca among Jews when parts of the Bible and the Gemora were codified. Millenia later, dozens of volumes of rabbinic literature – as well as several prayers and songs – in Aramaic are still part of the Jewish canon. On *Shabbos*, Passover, and in every daily prayer service, Aramaic makes brief appearances. Boys learn Aramaic in elementary or middle school through their studies of Gemora. Since most men study Gemora regularly, they must have some working knowledge of Aramaic. Women can rarely understand Aramaic, but they are able to read the prayers and songs smoothly.

Hebrew and Aramaic are considered the most important non-native languages for Orthodox Jews to know. Jacob, a long-time BT, illustrated this fact when he was reading Gemora with Rabbi Nussbaum, an FFB. As Jacob struggled through the Hebrew and Aramaic, trying various pronunciations and translations, Rabbi Nussbaum helped by responding with “yes” or – more often – “no.” When Jacob reached a French word in Rashi’s Hebrew commentary (the Bible commentator Rashi lived in France), he said, “This is in- *b’laaz* (a Hebrew acronym for what follows), *b’loshon am zar* (‘in the language of a foreign people’), in Old French.” After he tried twice to pronounce it, he said blithely, “I don’t know that French word. Sorry.” Rather than “apologizing” insincerely for not knowing a Hebrew or Aramaic word, he almost always tried multiple pronunciations and translations before finally giving up, dejected.

For *ba'alei teshuva* who are integrating into Orthodox communities, learning to recite Whole Hebrew and, to some extent, Aramaic is very important. Even women – and men who do not lead prayers, recite from the Torah, or study with a partner – are still expected to recite Hebrew or Aramaic in public: in the songs sung around a *Shabbos* table, the blessings said while lighting candles, or the lines of comfort said when leaving a house of mourning. A person's rendering of Whole Hebrew and Aramaic is often a sign of his religious background. As one FFB put it, "When a man is a *chazen* ('cantor', i.e., 'leads services'), you can pretty much tell" whether he grew up Orthodox. This is because of the comfort with which the Hebrew/Aramaic is used, as well as how it is phonologically rendered (more on this below).

WHOLE YIDDISH (SPOKEN)

Unlike some more insular Yeshivish and, especially, Hasidic communities (Glinert 1999, Isaacs 1999, Isaacs and Glinert, eds., 1999, Fader 2000), most Orthodox Jews in Milldale are not fluent in Yiddish. The only people who use Yiddish as an everyday language are some older speakers who grew up with it. Several of the men in the community learned Yiddish when they studied in yeshiva and might speak it on occasion to an elderly person. To my knowledge, none of the young people raised in Milldale today has a working knowledge of Yiddish.

Even so, Yiddish is maintained for a few ritualistic functions, such as in some songs and in the "auctions" of the Torah honors. One evening at Ner Tamid, on the holiday of *Simchas Torah* ('joy of Torah'), I heard Yiddish used for both of these. The song was about how Torah and learning are important, and it was all in very simple Yiddish: "*Toyre iz a gute zakh, a gute zakh, a gute zakh...*" ('Torah is a good thing, a good thing, a good thing'). Rabbi Fischer was leading the service, and he started off the auction for the third *aliyah*, the honor of saying the blessings before and after a portion of chanted Torah. He started at \$18, the numerical value of *chai*, Hebrew for 'life'. Several BTs in the crowd bid on the *aliyah*, and it went up to \$80. When nobody else bid, Rabbi Fischer ended the auction: "Eighty dollars *ershtn mol* ('first time'), eighty dollars *tsveytn mol* ('second time'), eighty dollars *dritn mol* ('third time'), sold – eighty dollars."

In addition to ritualistic uses of Yiddish, I heard several whole phrases, even among people who are not fluent in Yiddish:

- *Ikh hob fargesn* ('I forgot')
- *A dank* ('thank you')
- *Zay gezunt* ('goodbye')
- *Zorg zikh nisht* ('don't worry')
- *Zol zayn shtil* ('[you] should be quiet')
- *Lomir geyn* ('let's go')
- *Tshepe nisht* ('don't make an annoyance, bother')

As with Hebrew, the boundaries between code switching into Yiddish and borrowing from Yiddish are blurred. Should the phrases above be considered loan phrases or short code switches into Yiddish? I would argue that for speakers who are not fluent in Yiddish, they must be borrowings. But for bilinguals they could be seen as code switches.

Another example of the fine line between code switching and borrowing is the following sentence: "*Harav* ('the rabbi') Yakov Schwartz is *mechubad* ('honored') with the *letste* ('last') *bracha* ('blessing')." This utterance, which was how the master of ceremonies at a wedding introduced a rabbi who was to chant the last of the seven blessings, is almost a full Yiddish sentence. In American Yiddish, which has lost some of the case and gender marking, the sentence would be "*Harav Yakov Schwartz iz mechubad mit de letste bracha.*"²¹ The only differences between this and the sentence above are "mit" vs. "with" and "de" vs. "the" (*iz* and "is" are pronounced the same). Perhaps this is Yiddish used for the ritualistic purpose of calling someone up to say a blessing. Or perhaps it is merely an English sentence with several Yiddish/Hebrew loanwords: *harav*, *mechubad*, *letste*, and *bracha*.

In Milldale, Yiddish is not associated with men as it is in some communities in New York and elsewhere (see Fader 2000 and Bogoch 1999). Jacob, a Milldale BT, used to visit Brooklyn frequently. An elderly man there would speak only Yiddish to him, even though he always responded in English. But he spoke English to Jacob's wife. Clearly this man could speak English, but he insisted on using Yiddish with Jacob

because of his view that men should converse in Yiddish. This type of interaction would be quite unlikely in Milldale.

While some people look to Yiddish with reverence, others disdain it as old-fashioned. This is evident, for example, in some FFBs' preference for Hebrew over Yiddish names and in some BTs' comments about Yiddish. One FFB woman told me that she does not like Yiddish names like Bryna and Frumky.²² She told me about someone she knew who "named her daughter [Shprintza], *nebach* ('what a pity')." Ironically, in the act of criticizing the old-fashioned Yiddish name her friend chose, this woman used an old-fashioned Yiddish word.

Similarly, a recent BT said:

Yiddish is a strange language. In Europe that was how everyone spoke, but our language is English. Yiddish doesn't seem alive to me, so I don't know why we need it... I want to learn Hebrew, *loshon kodesh*. "*Nebach*" ('pity') is not religious. It's purely cultural.

This BT claims that the religious aspects of Orthodox linguistic practice are more important than the cultural ones. But she herself uses non-Semitic Yiddish words like *frum* ('religious'), *shul* ('synagogue'), and *hey mish* ('home-like, esp. regarding religious families'), and even some of the same Yiddish syntactic influences she criticizes. Conflicting ideologies about Yiddish exist in the Orthodox community, even within individuals.

MODERN ISRAELI HEBREW (SPOKEN)

In addition to these languages that flourished in the recent or distant past, Orthodox Jews are sometimes exposed to the Hebrew of contemporary Israel, referred to both as Modern Hebrew and as Israeli Hebrew. Some spend time studying in Israel, some visit for brief vacations, and some make *aliyah* – move there permanently. Even those who have no connection to Israel have some interactions with Israelis in the U.S. There are a few Israeli families in Milldale, and there are some Israeli *aniyim* ('poor people') who go door-to-door asking for donations in Israeli Hebrew. I did not hear

²¹ In Standard Yiddish grammar and orthography, it would be: "*Harav Yakov Shvarts iz mekhubed mit der letster brokhe.*"

much Israeli Hebrew spoken, but I know that many community members have some speaking ability.

Community members recognize that Modern Hebrew is different from the language of the traditional texts. The rabbi who said that *loshon kodesh* is the only objective language contrasted “*loshon kodesh*, Classical Hebrew,” with Modern Hebrew, which is “very, very subjective.” Even so, there is a sense that the two Hebrews are similar enough that living in Israel will help advance one’s comprehension of rabbinic literature.

ORTHODOX JEWISH ENGLISH

While Textual Hebrew, Aramaic, Yiddish, and Israeli Hebrew are sometimes heard in the Orthodox community, the mostly commonly heard language is what scholars refer to as Orthodox Jewish English (Steinmetz 1981, 1986; Gold 1985, 1986). This is a variety of English with influences at all levels from the languages discussed above. Inside and outside the Orthodox community, there is a discourse about Orthodox language, referred to as Yeshivish, Yinglish, or a jargon.²³

When I told community members that my research focus was Orthodox language, several asked if I had heard the song “Yeshivishe Reid,” which is sung by a popular Orthodox band (and quoted at the beginning of this chapter). Others mentioned the dictionary by Chaim Weiser, called *FrumSpeak: The First Dictionary of Yeshivish*. Women told me that their brothers or sons speak Yeshivish, men said they sometimes use Yeshivish, and BTs complained that they did not understand more Yeshivish. People told me that they associate a distinctly Orthodox speech variety with men, with yeshiva students, and with New Yorkers. People compared it to a medical jargon, to the specialized terminology of lawyers, and to African American English. One rabbi said in a class, “I don’t understand the people in the ’hood, and they wouldn’t understand my English, especially when I use a lot of Yiddish words... We have Yeshivish, and the people in the ’hood have Hoodish.”

²² These are pseudonyms, similar names to the names she mentioned.

²³ The use of the word “jargon” for a Jewish variety of a local language is not new. 19th-century opponents of Yiddish and Ladino, as well as writers who fondly wrote in Yiddish and Ladino, used variants of the word “jargon” to refer to those languages.

As with Yiddish, there are conflicting ideologies surrounding Orthodox varieties of English. A common reaction to questions about Orthodox language was smiles and laughter. In making fun of Yeshivish, people expressed both a fondness for this distinctively Jewish language variety and an embarrassment about the use of “bad grammar.” Like speakers of other non-standard dialects, Orthodox Jews talk of their distinctive features as incorrect, even as they recognize that there are grammatical and ungrammatical ways of using them. These paradoxical views came to light, for example, when I asked people about the periphrastic phrase “to be *mekarev* somebody” (‘bring closer [to religiosity]’). One man said, “It’s not grammatically correct, but it’s Yeshivish.” Another said that the non-periphrastic version, “He *mekareved* me” (which is common among BTs) does not sound right, just minutes after telling me that Orthodox speech is “slang, so there are no rules.”

What distinctive linguistic features do people associate with Orthodox speech? The rest of this chapter and the next chapter discuss dozens of features, who uses what, and how community members view them. In my discussions of variation, I talk about BTs in three different categories: Peripheral, Community, and Yeshiva (my terminology). Peripheral BTs are involved with Orthodox institutions and have taken on several aspects of religious observance. Community BTs live in an Orthodox community but have not spent significant time studying in a yeshiva. Yeshiva BTs have studied in a yeshiva and live in an Orthodox community. The main finding is that BTs do acquire the Orthodox patterns of loanword use but with slight differences – some intentional, some not. Even long-time Yeshiva BTs sometimes make mistakes or use language in slightly distinctive ways.

LEXICON – LOANWORDS FROM HEBREW, ARAMAIC, AND YIDDISH

The English speech of Orthodox Jews in America includes many loanwords from Textual Hebrew, Aramaic, Yiddish, and Israeli Hebrew. In earlier work (Benor 2000), I showed how most words derive not just from one of these languages but from a combination of them. Many of the loanwords that derive originally from Textual Hebrew, Aramaic, or Israeli Hebrew are highly influenced by Yiddish in phonology,

semantics, and morphology. Textual Hebrew and Aramaic contribute to the maintenance of many words, and Israeli Hebrew also provides some pronunciation norms. And many of the loanwords used in Jewish English derive from the non-Semitic components of Yiddish, especially Germanic and Slavic. Therefore, the terms “loan” and “loanword” will be used here to refer to lexical material used within English that derives from any combination of Hebrew, Aramaic, and Yiddish.

How many loanwords are there in Orthodox Jewish English? I estimate 2000-2500. Three different dictionaries each list about 1000 entries. Weiser’s (1995) lexicon includes mostly words overheard in Orthodox yeshivas, overlapping very little with Eisenberg and Scolnic’s (2001) list. I estimate that about 400 of Eisenberg and Scolnic’s entries are loanwords used by Orthodox Jews; the others are English words with specialized usages, personal names, or loanwords used mostly by non-Orthodox Jews (such as *havurah* ‘Jewish fellowship group’ and *masorti* ‘traditional’). Steinmetz (1986) lists about 1200 loanwords he culled from the Jewish English press and Jewish English literature. Some of those were used almost solely by the immigrant generation and their children, such as *grine* (‘greenhorn’) and *shikyngl* (‘errand boy’), and others overlap with Weiser’s and Eisenberg and Scolnic’s entries. I estimate that about 400 of his unique entries are used by contemporary Orthodox Jews. I observed another 100 or so loanwords used in the Orthodox community that are not listed in any of the three dictionaries, such as *maymen* (‘believer’), *maysen* (‘tithe: tenth of one’s income, given to charity’), and *mish-mash* (‘mix’), just to name a few from the M section. In addition, there are likely several hundred more loans that the lexicographers and I did not hear or read.

Loanwords are used to refer to concepts and referents that have no simple English equivalent, such as *blech* (‘metal stove-covering that facilitates cooking on the Sabbath’) and *dafka* (‘specifically, really, to make a point of’), and they are used even when an English equivalent does exist, as is the case with *chap* [xap] (‘understand’), *vid* (‘Jew’), *licht* (‘candles’), and *sakána* (‘danger’). The following quote, from the rabbi at Shomrei Emuna during a class on Passover, is an example of how loanwords are integrated into English sentences (loans are italicized; other distinctive features are underlined):

The *mitzvah* ('commandment') of the *matzah* ('unleavened bread') by ('at') the seder should be- We're *machmir* ('strict'), it's a *chumra* ('stringency') to have *shmura mishas haksira* ('matzah that is watched from the time of the harvest'), that the wheat (released /t/) that is harvested for *Pesach* ('Passover') should be already watched from the time...

Another example is the following excerpt from a flyer I found on the Shomrei Emuna bulletin board in Milldale. It advertises a *gemach* (three Hebrew letters: *gimel-mem-chet*, an acronym for *gemilut chasadim*, 'acts of kindness'), a free lending service common in Orthodox communities. In Milldale, there are *gemachs* for wedding dresses, medical equipment, and toys, for example. The flyer read (italics and translations are mine):

Are you planning a *Kiddush* ('reception with wine'), *L'chaim* ('reception with alcohol'), or *Bris* ('circumcision party')? Do you know a *Choson V'Kallah* ('groom and bride') who need *Sheva Brochos* ('post-wedding week celebrations')? Let our new *G'mach* ('lending service') – “*Simchas Rivka Aviva*” ('happiness of Rebecca Aviva') help you... May we share many *simchos* ('celebrations') together.”

Semantic fields represented by loanwords

Several semantic fields are well represented by loanwords in Orthodox Jewish English. Examples include:

Religious garments

- tallis ('prayer shawl for married men')
- tefillin ('leather phylacteries for men')
- tzitzis ('ritual four-cornered undergarment for men or its fringes')
- kipa/yarmulke ('skull cap for men')
- sheytel ('wig for married women')

Festivities

- seuda ('festive meal')
- kumzits ('celebration with singing, sometimes around a campfire' lit. 'come-sit')
- lebedik ('lively')
- freilach ('joyous')
- shiker ('drunk')

Sabbath rituals

- kiddush ('blessing over wine', 'celebration with wine')
- mishne lechem ('two [challah] breads')
- zmiros ('songs sung during a Sabbath meal')
- shaloshudos ('third meal of Sabbath', lit. 'three meals')
- melave malka ('post-Sabbath party' lit. 'accompanying the queen')

Dietary laws

- kashrus ('dietary laws')
- treyf ('not kosher')
- hechsher ('sign of rabbinic approval')
- hashgacha ('rabbinic oversight')
- kasher ('render kosher')

Food

- cholent/tsholent ('slow-cooking Sabbath mixture of vegetables, beans, barley, and beef', lit. 'heat slowly')
- kneidlach ('matzah balls')
- farfel ('oily noodle bits')
- hamentashen ('filled pastries for Purim')
- chazerai ('junk food' lit. 'pig stuff')

Engagement

- shiduch ('potential match, set-up')
- shadchan ('matchmaker')
- red ('arrange/pronounce an engagement')
- chossen ('engaged man, groom')
- kallah ('engaged woman, bride')

Weddings

- chasuna ('wedding')
- kabalas ponim ('bridal reception before the wedding ceremony' lit. 'receiving faces')
- chuppah ('wedding canopy, ceremony')
- mesader kidushin ('matrimonial master of ceremonies')
- yichud ('post-ceremony period of seclusion for the bride and groom')

Birth

- bris ('circumcision ceremony')
- shalom zachar ('Friday-night celebration for a male')
- pidyon ben ('"ransoming" ceremony for a first-born boy')
- b'sha'a tova ('in a good hour': said to a pregnant woman)
- mazel tov ('congratulations')

Death

- to be nifter ('to die')

- levaya ('funeral')
- hesped ('eulogy')
- olav hasholom ('may he rest in peace')
- zichrono livrocha ('may his memory be blessed')

Mourning

- aveylus ('mourning')
- shiva ('seven-day period of mourning and comfort')
- shloshim ('thirty-day period of mourning')
- menachem-ovel ('comforting the mourner')
- almona ('widow')

Male leadership

- rebbe/rebbeyim ('teacher(s)' [Among Hasidim: 'grand leader'])
- rav/rabanim ('rabbi(s)')
- rosh yeshiva ('head of an institution of Orthodox learning')
- a choshuve man ('important man')
- godol ('luminary, influential [male] leader')

Female leadership

- tzedeykes ('righteous woman')
- rebbetzin ('rabbi's wife')
- morah ('female teacher')
- yenta ('gossiping woman')
- sheytel macher ('wig maker')

Jewishness, religiosity

- Yid ('Jew')
- Yiddishkeit ('Jewishness, religiosity')
- Chasidish ('Hasidic')
- frum ('religious')
- kiruv ('bringing people closer to religiosity')

God

- Hashem (lit. 'the name')
- Hakodesh Baruch Hu (lit. 'the holy one, blessed be he')
- Ribono Shel Olam (lit. 'lord of the world')
- Kaveyochel (lit. 'if it were possible')
- Borey (lit. 'creator')

Synagogue

- ezras nashim ('women's section')
- bimah ('stage, dais')
- shtender ('lectern')

- aron [kodesh] ('[holy] ark' where the Torahs are kept)
- mechitza ('partition between men's and women's sections')

Learnedness

- talmid chacham ('wise scholar of rabbinic texts')
- masmid ('talented learner')
- shtayg ('ascend [in learning]')
- seychel ('intelligence, common sense')
- chidush ('innovative point')

Explicating rabbinic texts

- raya ('proof')
- stira ('contradiction')
- nafka mina ('practical difference')
- chazer ('review')
- taytsh ('translate')

Jewish law

- halacha ('Jewish law' lit. 'way, path')
- asur ('forbidden')
- mutar ('allowed')
- machmir ('strict in observance')
- chumra ('stringency')

Values

- midos ('[good] personal attributes')
- hachnasas orchim ('hospitality', lit. 'bringing in guests')
- gashmius ('materialism')
- hishtadlus ('trying hard')
- tsnius(dik) ('modest')

In addition to these words that are used for specific referents, there are a number of loanwords and constructions used in phatic communication (language used to establish or maintain social contact, rather than to convey specific meaning):

Greeting	Occasion
Good Shabbos	On Shabbos
Good voch, Shavua tov	After Shabbos Saturday night ('good week')
Good Yontif/Yomtov	On holidays ('good holiday')
Sholom aleichem	After not having seen someone in a while ('peace be upon you') (mostly men)
Aleichem sholom	Response to "Sholom aleichem" (mostly men)

Up to this point, it may seem that all loanwords in Orthodox Jewish English are used for specific religious or cultural reference. However, this is not the case. For example, there are several words for silliness or nonsense, including:

- leytanus ('clowning around')
- shtus ('nonsense')
- shtik ('routines, pranks')
- meshugas ('craziness')
- narishkeit ('stupidity, silliness')

There are also several loan adverbs, including:

- mamish ('really')
- takeh ('indeed, actually')
- kimat ('almost')
- bichlal ('entirely, in general')
- avade ('certainly')

Another area in which loanwords are common is child-directed speech (see Fader [2000: Chapter 4] for description of a more elaborate baby talk register common among Hasidim). Mothers, older sisters, and female relatives and friends call young children *bubby* or *bubbale* [bɔbal↔] / [bYbal↔] ('little doll'), *kinderlach* ('children') or *shefelach* ('little sheep'). Children are instructed to "go *shlofy*" [ʃlɔfi] / [ʃLYfi] ('go to sleep'), and if they disobey they might receive a *patsh* ('[gentle, playful] smack'). Some body parts are often referred to with loanwords, especially in child-directed speech: *tuches* ('rear end'), *kepi* ('little head'), *pupik* ('belly button'), and *hentelach* ('little hands').

Several kinship terms are loanwords from Yiddish or Israeli Hebrew. Grandma and grandpa are usually *bubby* and *zeydy*, and aunts are sometimes *tanty*. Children call their mothers *Mommy* (which can be seen both as English and as Yiddish *mame* with the Jewish English [-i] ending), *Ma* (short for Mommy), or *Ima* (Israeli Hebrew); and they call their fathers *Tati* (Yiddish *tate* with the Jewish English [-i] ending), *Ta* (short for Tati), or *Aba* (Israeli Hebrew). Some children use different kinship terms at different points in their life, but generally Mommy and Tati are used among people closer to the

Ultra-Orthodox side of the spectrum, and Ima and Aba are used in families that are more Modern Orthodox or have a strong connection (experiential or emotional) to Israel. A common practice in Orthodox communities is for spouses to call each other “Mommy” and “Tati” or “Ima” and “Aba,” even when the children are not around.

Ideology about loanwords

Loanwords are probably the most salient feature of Orthodox Jewish English. Newcomers talk about the fact that they have learned many new words, and Orthodox Jews who work in *kiruv* (‘outreach’) debate how many Hebrew/Yiddish words they should use when speaking to newcomers and how often they should translate. On the matched guise test, some respondents marked “can’t tell” for many of the stimuli but “probably Orthodox” for most of those that included Hebrew loanwords. This indicates that they associate the use of loanwords with Orthodoxy. Of course, other Jews use Hebrew and Yiddish loanwords, especially non-Orthodox Jews who are involved in religious practice. In responding to the matched guise test, a few BTs mentioned that some of the speakers could be Reform or Conservative rabbis or non-Orthodox students in a college class. Even so, most Orthodox Jews assume that people who use many loans are Orthodox.

The use of loanwords also indicates proficiency in Hebrew and knowledge about Judaism. One *Shabbos* evening at Ner Tamid, the outreach center, Marissa was asked to give a *dvar torah*, a speech about the weekly Torah portion. She spoke for several minutes about the biblical Yosef (‘Joseph’), citing a commentary that his problems were punishments for specific acts of *láshon hára* (‘gossip’). She used a number of loanwords, translating some of them and allowing one of the staff members to translate others, such as *tsadikim* (‘righteous people’). After she returned to her table, Sandra, a non-Orthodox woman who sometimes attended events at Ner Tamid, congratulated her on a wonderful *dvar torah*. She asked Marissa if she prepared by reading the texts in Hebrew, and Marissa said, “No, English.” Sandra was surprised: “But you know words like *tsadikim*.” To Sandra, as well as other Orthodox and non-Orthodox Jews, the use of loanwords indexes learnedness.

A common Orthodox ideology is that it is important for Orthodox Jews to use loanwords, rather than their English equivalents. Steinmetz cites the following statement by an educator writing in the Orthodox press: “Although students should know how to refer to these items in English, the norm should be *Motzaei Shabbos* – not Saturday night; *daven* – not pray; *bentsch* – not recite Grace After Meals; *Yom Tov* – not holiday” (Steinmetz 1986:84). I observed a few instances of Orthodox Jews correcting newcomers’ non-use of loanwords. For example, Amira saw a picture of a recently married woman wearing a *sheytel* and asked Rabbi Fischer, “Is that a wig?” Rabbi Fischer answered, “A *sheytel*.” In the following exchange between two recent BTs, Mitch invites Andrew to help him think of the loanword for ‘tradition’:

Mitch: There’s a [click] saying: if you do an *aveyra* (‘sin’) three times, it becomes *halach-* (‘law’) it becomes, uh, um, not tradition, that Hebrew for tradition-
 Andrew: *Mínchag* (‘tradition’, should be pronounced *min(h)ag*).
 Mitch: Your *mínhag*! It becomes your *mínag*...

For Mitch, using the Hebrew word *minhag* was more important than finishing his sentence quickly.

Another way Orthodox Jews exhibit the importance of loanwords is in their reading habits. Rabbi Tovin was reading Bible passages aloud to a class in English translation, and he rendered the English personal names in the Hebrew original, with mostly Ashkenazic pronunciation. Where the text read “David” [deyvId], Rabbi Tovin said [dʁvId], and where the text said “Ishmael” [íΣmaEl], he said [yiΣmó↔]. He sometimes translated his Hebrew versions to make sure students understood, as in “[yIΣayá], or Isaiah.”

I observed a similar practice in Mrs. Passo’s lectures about *taharas mishpacha* (‘family purity, menstrual laws’) to Miriam, a BT who was about to be married, and me. Mrs. Passo read passages from a book on the subject, and when she came to a word that was written in English, she usually changed it to Hebrew. Examples include *Hashem* for ‘God’, *Tisha B’Av* for ‘the Ninth of Av’, and *Har Sínay* for Mount Sinai (which would be pronounced [saynay] in English). Some of Mrs. Passo’s translation into Hebrew may have been for comprehension purposes, as Miriam might have been more familiar with

Tisha B'Av than its English translation. But in general, Miriam would have understood the English better. Mrs. Passo's use of loanwords indicated her view that it is important to use loanwords.

Even so, she recognized that Miriam valued comprehension over the Jewishness of language. In the same class, Mrs. Passo used an obscure loan phrase: "Let's start with the *ona benoni* [(‘in-between time’)]." Miriam asked for clarification, reminding Mrs. Passo that she does not know Hebrew. Mrs. Passo translated the phrase and then used it again a few minutes later. Miriam was having trouble remembering all of the new phrases, so she repeated her request for English, insisting, "I *mamish* (‘really’) don't know Hebrew." Mrs. Passo continued the lesson using only the English translations of phrases like *ona benoni*. She realized that Miriam's comprehension and ability to follow the letter of the law were more important than her acquisition of obscure loanwords.

One of the reasons Orthodox Jews place an importance on the use of loanwords is the holiness of Hebrew, *loshon kodesh*. People talk about the *emes* (‘truth’) inherent in *loshon kodesh*, the language in which God created the world. Some feel a closer connection to God and the Jewish people when they use this ancient language. Another reason is the sense of community it fosters. BTs talk about incorporating loanwords into their everyday speech because that is what Orthodox Jews do.

Some loanwords are used because of what I call the *l'havdil* factor, based on Max Weinreich's research on Yiddish. He says, "In principle, the distance between Jewishness and the [non-Jewish] culture of the environment was signified by the expression *lehavdl* ‘to discern’" (1966:2205).²⁴ He points out that in Yiddish, certain Hebrew or Romance loanwords are used to distinguish Jewish from non-Jewish referents. An example of this in Yiddish is the use of *bentshn* ‘to bless’, a derivative of Latin *benedicere*, rather than the expected Middle High German *sëgenen* (‘to bless’). As Weinreich explains, *sëgenen* was avoided because it still carried connotations of its Latin etymon *signare* (‘to bless by) making the sign of the cross’ (1953:508-9).

The *l'havdil* factor affects the lexical choices made by Orthodox Jews in America. Words like *neshama* (‘soul’) and *malach* (‘angel’) are preferred over their English

²⁴ See Benor (forthcoming a) on a similar discerning phrase in Judeo-Spanish, as well as the use of different component languages to distinguish between Jewish and non-Jewish referents.

equivalents,²⁵ which are associated with Christianity. One rabbi who works at an Orthodox outreach organization told me about the lexical practices of one of their most popular lecturers. He said this man uses very few loanwords when teaching non-Orthodox or newly Orthodox Jews. But he insists on using *Tanach* instead of ‘Bible’, including a translation the first time he says it. His justification for using this loanword is that he thinks people associate the word “Bible” with Christian preachers, especially Southerners who would say [ba:b↔l]. He was not worried that his audience would think he was including the New Testament in his discussion; he merely wanted to avoid the Christian connotations of the English word.

Similarly, Alexa, a recent BT was telling me that she was disappointed in her primary Jewish education at a non-Orthodox Jewish school. She said, “They teach Bible, not *Tanach*.” Although her non-Orthodox Bible classes taught the same books as an Orthodox *Tanach* class – the Pentateuch, the Prophets, and the Writings – they did so in a way Alexa disapproved of. She expects a traditional Jewish school to teach the Bible as a holy text that permeates everyday life, and she expects that school to refer to the subject with the Hebrew loanword *Tanach*.

Words associated with Jesus are often avoided. A common name for Jesus is *Yoshka*, a diminutive Yiddish form of his Hebrew name *Yeshu*. Some Orthodox Jews refer to “Christmas” as *kratsmach*, a Yiddish phrase meaning ‘scratch me’, although non-Yiddish speakers tend not to know the literal meaning. An article in the Ultra-Orthodox magazine *The Jewish Observer* bemoans the Christmasization of the Jewish holiday Chanukah, which happens to occur in December. The author avoids the word Christmas all together:

I’m feeling a bit confused these days. Shopping days, holiday season, gifts for everyone on your list – those were things I associated with their holiday. You know the one that comes on December 25. The non-Jewish one. The one, in fact, that represented the beginning of a new religion. (Chani Atergut Kurtz, November 2001, p. 38: “We Wish You a Merry... Chanuka?”)

²⁵ However, “soul,” and “angel” are sometimes heard, both by BTs and FFBs.

Even so, words associated with Christianity are not completely avoided in the Orthodox community. One way that people use words like these is to mark them as non-Jewish through humor. For example, a Modern Orthodox FFB said that a retreat was “right before (sarcastic tone) The Holy Christmas.” Later he called December 24 “*Erev* Christmas,” where *erev* is Hebrew for ‘the night before [usually a Jewish holiday]’.

Variation in loanword use

The estimate of 2000-2500 loanwords in Orthodox Jewish English does not imply that every Orthodox Jew in America uses all of these words, even in an entire lifetime. There is a great deal of inter-speaker variation in loanword use according to age, gender, learnedness, and religious background. And individuals use more or fewer loanwords depending on the topic, setting, and audience.

Older people and those with more exposure to Yiddish are more likely to use the Whole Yiddish phrases discussed above. They are also more likely to use some loanwords that are not from the Semitic component of Yiddish, such as *eyniklach* (‘grandchildren’), *greps* (‘burp’), or *in mitn drinen* (‘in the middle of things, suddenly’). Young children know and use many loanwords, especially those related to rituals in which they take part, like *bracha* (‘blessing’), *chasuna* (‘wedding’), and *negl vaser* (‘water poured over the finger nails in the morning’) – even young children are expected to say blessings, celebrate at weddings, and participate in morning ablutions. Children discuss certain religious concepts using loanwords, like *tsnius* (‘modest(y)’), *midos* (‘[good] personal qualities’), and *muktza* (‘item that is untouchable on *Shabbos*’). And they are certainly familiar with the Yiddish loanwords directed at them in child-directed speech. But just as most children do not talk about advanced concepts like materialism and *weltanschauung*, Orthodox Jews do not discuss *gashmius* and *hashkafa* until they are old enough to understand them. It is often not until children study about certain concepts in school that they learn the loanwords associated with them. This makes for an interesting contrast between FFB children, using many loanwords in their every day speech, and BT adults, who learn words like *gashmius* and *hashkafa* early on in their Orthodox education but might never pick up some of the words that FFB children use on a day-to-day basis.

In my research on a different Orthodox group, a Chabad Lubavitch Hasidic community in California (Benor forthcoming b), I found that boys and young men used more loanwords than girls and young women, especially words associated with learning. The same is true in this non-Hasidic Orthodox community. Since women do not study Gemora, they generally do not use loans like *kal v'chomer* ('all the more so, *a fortiori*'), *tayn* ('claim'), and *svora* ('justification'). Men, on the other hand, use words like these regularly in their learning sessions, and they sometimes transfer them to every day speech, as Weiser (1995) demonstrates. Those men who are less involved with learning are less likely to use some of these words.

In addition to words associated with learning, there are several other words that I heard only or mostly from men. An example is *shkoyach* or *yasher koach* ('good job', 'thank you', lit. 'strength to you'), which I often heard men use to congratulate a speaker after his *shiur* ('lecture') or *dvar torah* ('sermon'). I never heard women use these terms, even though I observed several women in classroom settings and at meals with a *dvar torah*. Some women thanked or praised the speaker, but they used words like "thank you" or "nice job" rather than *shkoyach*. Men also use these terms to congratulate other men who "daven for the *amud*" ('lead services'), *leyn* ('read Torah'), or have an *aliyah* ('say the blessings for the Torah reading'). Other words I heard much more from men than from women include *dafka* ('specifically [no accurate translation]'), *takeh* ('really, actually [intensifier]'), and the greeting *sholom aleichem* ('peace upon you'). On the other hand, I rarely heard men or boys use loanwords that are common in child-directed speech (see above). Those words are more frequently used by women and girls, who generally devote more time to child care.

The use of loanwords varies greatly according to setting, topic, and audience. Two men learning Gemora together use many loans, and the same men fixing a car use fewer. A mother and daughter use several loanwords when talking about the laws of *taharas mishpacha* ('family purity'), but they use fewer when talking about potential *shiduchim* ('matches'). When Orthodox Jews speak to outsiders or newcomers, they generally use fewer loanwords and often translate those they use. For example, the word *frum* ('Orthodox, religious') is commonly used in the Orthodox community. I heard BTs and FFBs use this word frequently in conversations with me and with each other. I also

heard a few instances of “Orthodox” and “religious,” but only in conversations with me or other outsiders. Similarly, Orthodox Jews talk about *Hashem* (‘God’) frequently, but they generally use the word “God” when speaking to outsiders. An exception is the phrases “God willing,” “God forbid,” and “thank God,” which are sometimes used even in in-group conversation. However, some people, especially FFBs, tend to prefer the Hebrew and Yiddish equivalents of these phrases.

The use of loanwords also varies according to the gender of the audience. One FFB rabbi gives many classes to single-sex and mixed audiences. I observed his co-ed class, which was attended mostly by young men but also by a few young women and older men, and his all women’s class, which was attended by mostly older women. The women’s class included fewer loanwords and more translation. Another FFB rabbi was teaching a class at Ner Tamid and regularly complimented students for insightful comments. He praised Marissa’s question with “Beautiful!” and Mike’s with “*Mamish* (‘really’) an excellent thought!” Both Marissa and Mike had been involved with Orthodoxy for a similar amount of time, but the rabbi seems to have considered it more appropriate to use a loanword with a man than a woman.

BTs’ pragmatic mistakes

BTs do pick up loanwords and use them in their everyday speech. However, especially in the early stages of integration into Orthodox communities, they sometimes use them with incorrect pragmatics. BTs’ pragmatic mistakes include using one loanword in place of another, using a loanword with the pragmatics of its English correlate, and overextending the pragmatics of a loanword. A Peripheral BT once said to me at the end of our conversation, “And we’ll see you, uh, *baruch Hashem* (‘blessed be God’), on the seventh.” A more experienced speaker of Orthodox Jewish English would have used *mirtsehem* (‘God willing’) instead of *baruch Hashem* when discussing this future event. This BT expressed his discomfort with the use of these loanwords by using a filled pause, “uh,” just before the slot where *mirtsehem* should have been used. An example of using a loanword with English pragmatics is: “Such a *nebach* (‘pity’).” The speaker used *nebach*, which should be an interjection, as a noun, like its English correlate, “pity.”

Overextending the pragmatics of loanwords is common for anyone learning a new dialect or language. I especially noticed this in religious phrases like *kaynahora* ('no evil eye') and *chas v'sholom* ('God forbid'). A Yeshiva BT woman used *bli ayin hara* (a Hebrew version of *kaynahora*) several times in the space of a few minutes, mostly in slots where FFBs would not use it, such as, "Rabbi Passo knows so much, *bli ayin hara*" and (when her daughter said she could not count past 100) "You could count to 200, *bli ayin hara*." In contrast, FFBs generally used anti-evil-eye phrases only when mentioning someone's age or talking about how many children they have.

A recent Yeshiva BT and I were talking about the singles scene at Ner Tamid, and she said, "If worse comes to worst, if they don't become religious, *chas v'sholom*, then you know at least they'll still marry inside [the Jewish people]." As Matisoff explains, *chas v'sholom* is used in Yiddish when discussing "cases where genuine danger is involved" (1979:42). Like many Orthodox Jews, this BT does consider it a tragedy when a non-Orthodox Jew chooses not to become religious. Even so, I never heard an FFB use *chas v'sholom* in this way. Rabbi Hollander used this phrase in a felicitous manner in a lecture:²⁶

When, *chas v'sholom*, God forbid, somebody we love passes away or, who knows what, a bomb goes off in a pizza shop and kills 30 Jews, and the event is astounding beyond words, and you can't imagine why it would happen, and what does *Hashem* ('God') want from us, and yet you have to have the *koyach*, the strength, to be able to be a *maymen* ('believer'), to still trust God with that.

In order to test whether people associate pragmatic mistakes with BTs, I included the following two stimuli on the matched guise test:

Pragmatic Mistake stimuli on matched guise test:

A: I'll see you next *Shabbos*, *mirtse Hashem* ('God willing').

B: I'll see you next *Shabbos*, *baruch Hashem* ('blessed be God').

As I explain in detail in Chapter 2, the two excerpts were uttered by the same "actor" and differed only by the feature in question. They were included with 43 other utterances on

²⁶ Notice that Rabbi Hollander translates several times, partly for emphasis and partly because some of his students have little knowledge of Hebrew and Yiddish.

a tape in a quasi-random order, and 57 Orthodox respondents (29 BTs and 28 FFBs) answered questions about each utterance. The pragmatic mistake utterances elicited the largest difference in responses of all of the features tested. For the question “Do you think the speaker grew up Orthodox?” FFBs were much more likely than BTs to rate A higher than B:

Table 4-1: Percent of matched guise test respondents who ranked A higher than B: Pragmatic Mistake

BT respondents	FFB respondents
21	68

Chi-square = 12.87, $p \leq 0.001$

Clearly, FFBs and some BTs associate pragmatic mistakes in the use of loanwords with BTs. As I explain in Chapter 7, there is a discourse about these mistakes.

For many BTs, pragmatic mistakes are not limited to the first few months of being Orthodox. Even some BTs who have spent time in yeshiva still sometimes make mistakes or – intentionally or not – use loanwords more frequently than FFBs. We see similar patterns in the morphosyntactic and phonological integration of loanwords.

Integration of loan words

The morphosyntactic and phonological variables discussed below are unique to Hebrew, Aramaic, and, to some extent, Yiddish loanwords. As BTs learn new loanwords, they also acquire a grammar of borrowings, with its own (variable) internal constraints on morphosyntax and phonology. This grammar is influenced by the grammars of English, Yiddish, Ashkenazic Hebrew and Israeli Hebrew. Often, the various realizations of a variable come from two or more different languages. For example, the holiday of Tabernacles is *Shavuót* in Israeli Hebrew, and *Shvúes* in Yiddish / Ashkenazic Hebrew, and both are used by Orthodox Jews in America. But *Sh↔vúes* is used as well, representing both an influence from English phonotactics and a desire to conform to the grammatical rules of textual Hebrew. And possible plurals of *tallis* or *talit* (‘men’s prayer shawl’) include *talitót* (Israeli Hebrew), *taléysim* (Yiddish / Ashkenazic Hebrew), and *tállises* (English). For some of the words, the combinations of variants might be seen as lexical alternation. People say “Shabbát” (Israeli) or, more

commonly, “Shábbos” (Ashkenazic) – lexical alternates based on the combination of two phonological variables (stress and s~t). But “Shábbat” and “Shabbós,” other possible combinations, are rarely heard. On the other hand, the variables discussed below permeate the loanword lexicon. In general, the resulting lexical forms should be seen as representing variation within the loanword grammar.

MORPHOSYNTAX OF LOANWORDS

Among loanwords from Hebrew, Aramaic, and Yiddish, there are issues surrounding the morphological integration of several parts of speech. Nouns can be pluralized with suffixes from English or from the source language. Yiddish adjectives can be used with or without the Yiddish adjective suffix. And borrowed verbs can be integrated directly into the morphosyntax of English or via periphrastic constructions.

Nouns

In many situations of language contact, borrowed nouns are pluralized with morphology from the target language. Although this is sometimes the case with Yiddish and Hebrew nouns in Orthodox Jewish English, the more common practice is to use plural morphology from the source language. For example, I never heard anyone say *seyfers* (‘holy books’), but the source-language plural, *sforim*, is quite common. And I heard only one person (a recent BT woman) say *goys* (‘non-Jews’) and *ravs* (‘rabbis’); the preferred plurals are *goyim* (‘non-Jews’) and *rabanim* (‘rabbis’).

With Semitic-origin loans, the source-language plural morphology involves not only the appending of a suffix (-*im*/-*ey*/-*os*) but also changes in stress and vowels within the base morpheme. *Shíur* (‘lecture’) is pluralized as *shiúrim*, *nes* (‘miracle’) becomes *nisim*, and *nisóyon* (‘test’) becomes *nisyónos*. Because the Hebrew pluralization system is morpho-phonologically complex and includes several lexical anomalies, it is clear that many lexical items are borrowed in both their singular and plural forms, rather than in their singular forms along with a plural morpheme. The same holds true for non-Semitic-origin words borrowed from Yiddish, as in *kind-kinderlach* (‘little children’), *hant-hentelach* (‘little hands’) and *yid-yidn* (‘Jews’).

While all groups of Orthodox Jews – BTs and FFBs, men and women – exhibit some target-language plural formation, there are some trends in the variation. Based on my observations, recordings, and interviews (excluding study sessions), I did a small-scale study of variation among all of the participants who used at least one plural form.²⁷ For each lexical item that the speaker pluralized, I noted whether the morphology was from the source languages (Hebrew and/or Yiddish) or the target language (English):

Table 4-2: Plural morphology of loan nouns: Women

Women	FFB women (13 people)	Total BTs (14 people)	Peripheral (1 person)	Community (7 people)	Yeshiva (6 people)
% of plurals fm source language: average of individuals' ratios	72 (N=22)	51 (N=48)	50 (N=2)	46 (N=20)	48 (N=26)

The p values for the differences among groups do not approach the level of significance (Wilcoxon).²⁸

Table 4-3: Plural morphology of loan nouns: Men

Men	FFB men (9 people)	Total BTs (20 people)	Peripheral (6 people)	Community (6 people)	Yeshiva (8 people)
% of plurals fm source language: average of individuals' ratios	85 (N=23)	48 (N=59)	36 (N=12)	42 (N=13)	61 (N=34)

The p values for the differences among groups do not approach the level of significance (Wilcoxon).

²⁷ The analysis was done according to types of lexical items, rather than individual tokens. If a speaker used plurals from both source and target languages for an individual lexical item, that lexical item was excluded from analysis. (Twelve people used two different plurals for at least one word: 1 FFB woman, 1 FFB man, 6 BT women, and 4 BT men. Although the numbers are quite small, it seems that BTs may have more variation than FFBs in the plurals of individual lexical items.) I also excluded misanalyses of the word *ba'alei teshuva* as singular. *Ba'al teshuva* is singular, and *ba'alei teshuva* is plural. Several BT men and women and FFB women, even those who used source-language plurals for most other loans, used *ba'alei teshuva* as a singular noun and pluralized it as *ba'alei teshuvav*. This may be because people want to make sure that newcomers understand this word or simply because they do not understand the Hebrew morphology. The total number of plurals analyzed was 152, and some speakers had only one token.

²⁸ "Wilcoxon" indicates the test for statistical significance: a non-parametric Wilcoxon rank-sum test. When "Wilcoxon" is not indicated, significance was determined using a Chi-square test. While the differences in Tables 4-2, 4-3, and 4-4 are not statistically significant, they likely would be if there were more tokens for each speaker. There were several speakers for whom I had only one token. Even when these speakers' ratios are weighted less than others', the differences are still not significant. This is due to the standard deviations, which are similar for all groups, as there were speakers who had 0% and speakers who had 100% in most groups. If the sample included more tokens from each speaker, the differences would likely be significant.

FFB men exhibit a higher rate of source-language plurals than FFB women. And FFBs have a higher rate than BTs, both among men and among women. Among BT men, there is a progression based on integration: Yeshiva BTs have the highest rate, then Community BTs, then Peripheral BTs. BT women do not exhibit a similar trend, but the Peripheral group would likely have a lower rate if it included more tokens or more than one speaker.

When we look at pluralization in the study domain, we see a similar trend but with slightly higher percentages (the data here include all tokens):

Table 4-4: Men’s pluralization in the study domain

Men	FFB men (3 people)	BT men (5 people)
% of plurals fm source language: average of individuals’ ratios	100 (N=15)	84 (N=42)

The p values for the differences between the groups do not approach the level of significance (Wilcoxon).

The two BTs who have less than 100% are Yeshiva BTs who have only recently returned from their time in yeshiva.

There are two reasons for the higher frequency of source-language plurals in the study domain. One is that some of the plurals are found in the text, such as *rabanam* (‘rabbis’) and *amos* (‘measurements’). It would be strange to discuss a word that is commonly pluralized in the text with its English plural morphology. The other reason is that speakers are expected to speak in a more learned way in the study domain, and source-language plurals are considered more learned.

In studies of sociolinguistic variation, it is important to examine the linguistic variables that might interact with the social ones. In this case, an important linguistic factor is the type of plural morpheme that words take in the source language. Hebrew loanwords can take several plural morphemes, most commonly *-im* for masculine words and *-os* for feminine ones. In Hebrew loanwords that end in a vowel ([o], [a], [ɔ], or [↔]) and take the feminine plural suffix *-os*, the main or only difference between the

Hebrew plural suffix and the English plural suffix is the voicing of the final consonant.²⁹ For example, *menora* ('candelabrum') takes a source-language plural of [m↔nor ϕs] and a target-language plural of [m↔nor ϕz]. It is possible that Orthodox Jewish English prefers English plural morphology in vowel-final feminine loan nouns but source-language plural morphology in other loan nouns.

This idea is corroborated by Weiser's (1995) dictionary of Yeshivish. In the introduction, he explains, "Most Yeshivish nouns create their plural forms by affixing a terminal "s" as in English. When a noun deviates from this rule, we have provided the plural form." A quick survey of count (not mass) nouns shows that Weiser's dictionary rarely provides plural forms for vowel-final feminine Hebrew loanwords but usually provides them for masculine ones or feminine ones that do not end in a vowel. For instance, the plurals are provided for *iluy-iluyim* ('genius'), *makom-mekoimos* ('place'), and *reshus-reshuyos* ('permission, domain') but not for *avla* ('[a] wrong, injustice'), *kula* ('[a] leniency'), and *shayla* ('question') – feminine words that end in vowels. There are several exceptions; no plural is provided for *bukki* ('expert') (I have heard *b'kiyim*), but *mida* ('[good] personal attribute') is presented with its plural *midos*, and *halacha* ('law') is listed with a note that its plural is usually *halachos*. My speech samples include several tokens of *midos* but not one of *midaz* and tokens of both *halachaz* and *halachos*. Weiser's dictionary suggests that "English plurals" are more acceptable in vowel-final feminine Hebrew nouns.

With this in mind, we can take another look at the data quantified in Tables 4-2, 4-3, and 4-4. FFBs are much more likely than BTs to conform to the pluralization pattern in Weiser's dictionary. The data include a total of 28 English plurals used by BTs that do not fit into the *-os* category. Examples include *dvar torahs* ('sermons' cf. Hebrew *divrey Torah*), *shiurs* ('lessons' cf. Hebrew *shiurim*), and *minhags* ('traditions' cf. Hebrew *minhagim*). In contrast, FFBs used a total of three English plurals in this category (excluding tokens of *ba'al teshuvahs*): *kneydels* ('matzah balls' cf. Yiddish *kneydlach*) – said by a husband and wife – and *yeshiva bochurs* ('single male students' cf. Yiddish *yeshiva bochurim*) and *yovels* ('periods of 50 years' cf. several plural options in Hebrew

²⁹ Another difference is the vowel before the *-s/-z*. Before the English plural [z], it is usually [ϕ], but before the Hebrew/Yiddish plural [s], it is more likely to be an [e]- or [o]-colored schwa.

and Yiddish) – both said by the same teenage girl. All of the other words that do not end in vowels were pluralized by FFBs from the source language. For example, Figure 4-1 presents all 13 plurals used by Rabbi Passo, an FFB known for his learnedness:

Figure 4-1: FFB Rabbi Passo’s plurals

Source-language plurals	<i>sforim</i> (‘holy books’), <i>poyskim</i> (‘lawmakers’), <i>rabanan</i> (‘rabbis’ Aramaic), <i>rabanim</i> (‘rabbis’ Hebrew), <i>minhagim</i> (‘customs’), <i>meyvinim</i> (‘mavens’), <i>heterim</i> (‘exemptions’), <i>prakim</i> (‘chapters’), <i>amos</i> (‘measurements’)
Target-language plurals	<i>shaylaz</i> (‘questions’), <i>halachaz</i> (‘laws’)
Both	<i>matzas~matzaz</i> (‘flat bread’)

In plural formation, most of the male Yeshiva BTs (who spent time in yeshiva and now live in an Orthodox community) pattern with the FFBs. For example, both Rabbi Roseman and Rabbi Fischer, long-time BTs, used the English -az suffix in several vowel-final feminine Hebrew loanwords, and they used source-language plurals in all other words, just like Rabbi Passo:

Figure 4-2: Two Yeshiva BTs’ plurals

	Rabbi Roseman	Rabbi Fischer
Source-language plurals	<i>sefirot</i> (‘emanations of the divine presence’), <i>yechudim</i> (‘unifications’), <i>yamim tovim</i> (‘holidays’)	<i>sukos</i> (‘booths’), <i>mitzvot</i> (‘commandments’), <i>mishnayis</i> (‘Mishna chapters’), <i>nisim</i> (‘miracles’), <i>shiurim</i> (‘lectures’), <i>drachim</i> (‘paths’)
Target-language plurals	<i>aravaz</i> (‘willows’), <i>halachaz</i> (‘laws’), <i>mitzvaz</i> (‘commandments’)	<i>chanukiaz</i> (‘candelabras’), <i>menoraz</i> (‘candelabras’), <i>hashkafaz</i> (‘outlooks’), <i>kallaz</i> (‘brides’)
Both	<i>melachas~melachaz</i> (‘acts of work’),	

Community members recognize that BTs are more likely than FFBs to use English plurals. The matched guise test included one set of stimuli that differed in plural morphology:

Pluralization stimuli on matched guise test:

A: How many *ba'al teshuv*as do you think there are?

B: How many *ba'alei teshuva* do you think there are?

Overall, respondents tended to consider B more likely to be FFB (average difference: 0.37 points). The scores for this feature are significantly different (Wilcoxon: $p=0.0099$) from the responses to the dummy questions (which averaged -0.05).

Some BTs and FFBs believe it is important to use source-language plural morphology. One recent BT said to me, “People who’ve been *ba'al teshuv*as for a number of years – I know it’s not *ba'al teshuv*as – there’s another way of saying it – *ba'al teshuvim*?” She considered her English pluralization to be insufficient and tried to use a Hebrew plural even when she did not know that the correct form was *ba'alei teshuva*. I even observed an FFB correcting someone (me) for using an English plural. In casual speech, I used the word *shadchans*, and she overtly corrected me to the Hebrew plural, *shadchonim*. This could be because she believes the English plural is incorrect and/or because she wanted to counsel me on how to use the form more common in the community. I observed the same woman doing what seemed to be the latter in other situations, such as with a BT who used an Israeli Hebrew pronunciation where the Ashkenazic one is preferred in the community.

Another aspect of pluralization for which there is a discourse of correctness is the plurals that differ between Yiddish and Israeli Hebrew:

Figure 4-3: Differences in plural morphology: Yiddish vs. Israeli Hebrew

	Yiddish	Israeli Hebrew	Ultra-Orthodox Jewish English
Shabbos ('Sabbath')	shabosim	shabatot	shabosim
tallis ('men's prayer shawl')	taleysim	talitot	taleysim
bris ('circumcision')	brisen	britot	brisen
simcha ('happy occasion')	simches	smachot	simches
yomtov ('holiday')	yomtoyvim	yamim tovim	yomtovim~yamim tovim

Community members are generally aware of the Israeli Hebrew plurals, especially *shabatot* and *talitot*, and I heard several people talk about them as more correct than the Yiddish forms. Even so, it is rare to hear the Israeli plurals of these words in the Ultra-Orthodox³⁰ community, with the exception of *yamim tovim*. The Yiddish, and even English, plurals are much more common.

Another area of loan noun morphology is the order of words in a noun phrase. This is an issue for contact between Hebrew, in which modifiers follow their modified nouns, and English, in which modifiers precede their modified nouns. Several Hebrew noun phrases are borrowed intact, including:

taharas mishpacha
purity-construct-suffix family (N+N)
'family purity'

refua shleyma
healing complete (N+ADJ)
'complete healing'

shomer Shabbos
keeper/keeping Sabbath (N/V+N)
'Sabbath keeper/keeping'

If the components of these phrases had been borrowed separately into English and combined into noun phrases, the results might have been **mishpacha tahara*, **shleyma refua*, and **Shabbos shomer* (*=unattested form). But these forms are never heard in Jewish English.

Other noun phrases involving loans take English word order, sometimes based on a Yiddish model. Like English, Yiddish places the modifier before the modified. In both Yiddish and Orthodox Jewish English, when a Hebrew modifier appears with a target-language noun, they appear in the target-language order. For example, Yiddish has the phrase *mame loshn* ('mother tongue'), while Hebrew would say *l'shon em*. And Jewish English speakers would say, "beautiful *kallah*" ('beautiful bride'), while Hebrew would use *kala y'feiya*. In both Yiddish and Jewish English, when two Hebrew words are

³⁰ As I explain in previous work (Benor 1998, 2000), Modern Orthodox Jews have a great deal of variation in their plural formation. While their plurals are also influenced by Yiddish, they are more likely than Ultra-Orthodox Jews to use the Israeli Hebrew plurals.

borrowed independently and combined, they take target-language word order, as in *yeshiva bochur* (‘unmarried male yeshiva student’, cf. Hebrew *bachur yeshiva*), *choshuve rav* (‘important rabbi’, cf. Hebrew *rav chashuv*), and *choshuve inyan* (‘important matter’, cf. Hebrew *inyan chashuv*).

Adjectives

With adjectives borrowed from Yiddish (and Hebrew, under the influence of Yiddish), the main sociolinguistic variable is the presence or absence of the Yiddish pre-nominal adjective suffix. In Yiddish, adjectives take a suffix (*-e*, *-er*, or *-n/em*) based on the case, gender, and number of the following noun:

Figure 4-4: Yiddish prenominal adjective suffixes: ‘the pretty woman/man/child(ren)’

Case	Fem. singular	Masc. singular	Neuter singular	Plural
Nominative	<i>di sheyne froy</i>	<i>der sheyner man</i>	<i>dos sheyne kind</i>	<i>di sheyne kinder</i>
Accusative	<i>di sheyne froy</i>	<i>dem sheyner man</i>	<i>dos sheyne kind</i>	<i>di sheyne kinder</i>
Dative	<i>der sheyner froy</i>	<i>dem sheynem man</i>	<i>dem sheynem kind</i>	<i>di sheyne kinder</i>

When these same words do not precede a noun, there is no suffix: *di kinder zaynen sheyn* (‘the children are pretty’).

In Yiddish loanwords in Orthodox Jewish English, this adjective suffix is included, but it is regularized to [E] or, more commonly, [↔]. Because contemporary English does not have grammatical gender or overt case marking, the distinctions marked by the *-e*, *-er*, and *-n/-em* suffixes in Yiddish are lost. Even when an adjective precedes a clearly “masculine” noun, as in “a *goyishe* guy” (‘a non-Jewish guy’), the suffix is only *-e*, rather than *-er*. When the entire noun phrase is made up of Yiddish loanwords, the suffix is still only *-e*, as in “an *alte zeyde*” (‘an old grandfather’) (cf. Yiddish *an alter zeyde*). The only exception to this regularization that I ever noticed in Orthodox Jewish English is in names of Hasidic groups. The adjective suffix in these phrases is usually invariant *-er*, without regard to gender or number, as in the *Lubavitcher Rebbe* (‘Lubavitch rabbi’), a *Belzer nigun* (‘melody from the Belz group’), and *Bobover Chassidim* (‘Hasidim from Bobov’).

The variation I observed in this feature is the presence or absence of the *-e* suffix. Orthodox Jewish English allows this suffix only in pre-nominal adjectives borrowed from

Yiddish. Examples from one BT rabbi include “a *ruchniesdike* (‘spiritual’) demonstration,” “a very *choshuve* (‘important’) person,” “a *yeshivish* community,” and “a *Litvak* (‘Lithuanian Jew’) with a *chasidish* (‘Hasidic’) flare.” The suffix is disallowed when the adjective does not occur prenominal, and it is disallowed on adverbs and on loan adjectives that were not adjectives in Yiddish.

I heard several mistakes in this feature from *ba’alei teshuva* at various stages of integration. I heard a long-time Community BT woman and a long-time Community BT man use the suffix when the adjective was not in prenominal position: “He’s so *yeshivish* looking” and “Somebody who’s more *yeshivish*.” One Peripheral BT woman used the suffix with an adverb in a one-word imitation of Orthodox speech (when I asked her how Orthodox speech differs): “*Mamish*.” Many Yiddish loan adjectives end with *-ish*, the Yiddish suffix that transforms a noun into an adjective, and this speaker must have analyzed the *ish* of *mamish* as this suffix. Another mistake was a Peripheral BT man’s use of “a *tsniuse* thing.” He added the *-e* suffix to *tsnius* (‘modesty’), a loan noun that has also come to be used as an adjective (‘modest’), even by learned FFBs. It is understandable that a BT trying to learn the language would append the Yiddish adjective suffix to this adjective that derives from Yiddish. But I never heard a similar mistake from an FFB.

For some FFBs, the A-*e* +N construction is very productive. One FFB rabbi used it many times in phrases like: “your *chometsdike* (‘including leavened products’) one,” “*peysedike* (‘appropriate for Passover use’) stuff,” and “a *shvache* (‘weak’) army.” Weiser’s (1995) example sentences include many instances of Yiddish adjectives, and the prenominal ones have the suffix while the non-prenominal ones do not. An example is a sentence under the entry for *shprach* (‘language’): “He wrote with an *achroinische* (‘like the later rabbis’) *shprach* to make his *sefer* (‘book’) sound more *lomdish* (‘learned’)” (Weiser 1995:88). The prenominal adjective *achroinish* has the *-e* suffix but the adjective at the end of the sentence, *lomdish*, does not.

To determine community members’ awareness of this feature as a BT mistake, I included the following excerpts on the matched guise test:

Adjective suffix Mistake stimuli on matched guise test:

A: It would be different with somebody who's more *yeshivishe*.

B: It would be different with somebody who's more *yeshivish*.

Table 4-5: Percent of matched guise test respondents who ranked A higher than B: Adjective suffix Mistake

BT respondents	FFB respondents
17	36

Not significant

Table 4-6: Percent of matched guise test respondents who ranked B higher than A: Adjective suffix Mistake

BT respondents	FFB respondents
45	18

Chi-square = 4.80, $p \leq 0.05$

As I expected, FFBs tended to rate B as more likely FFB than the ungrammatical A (average FFB difference in score: 0.46). BTs, on the other hand, tended to rate A as more likely FFB than B (average BT difference in score: -0.34). The BTs' and FFBs' scores are significantly different (Wilcoxon: $p=0.0126$). To put it another way, sentence A was considered to be a mistake by more FFBs and considered to be correct by more BTs. The responses suggest that BTs' use of the adjective suffix in a non-prenominal position is a hypercorrection, that they are using it in an attempt to sound more FFB. One long-time BT woman heard excerpt A and said, "That sounds like my next-door neighbor, Rabbi Frank, who grew up Orthodox." It is highly unlikely that Rabbi Frank would ever use the adjective suffix in this way, but the 13 BTs who ranked A higher than B might.

Verbs

Like nouns, Hebrew loan verbs are incorporated into the morphosyntax of English in various ways. Some are integrated directly, and others are used in a periphrastic construction. Orthodox Jewish English generally follows the pattern of Yiddish, where verbs originating from nouns and adjectives are integrated directly and verbs borrowed in their present-tense verbal form are integrated periphrastically (see Benor ms for details). In addition, Non-Semitic-origin Yiddish verbs are almost always integrated directly into English.

A. Directly integrated Hebrew-origin verbs (stemming from nouns or adjectives):

1. “That’s what you use to *kasher* (‘render kosher’) the sink.” (*kasher* is from an agentive noun template CaCCen: *kashren* ‘one who renders kosher’)
 2. “He said he *paskens* (‘make a legal decision’) by him (‘according to his opinion’).” (*pasken* is from an agentive noun template CaCCen)
 3. “He’s *tayning* (‘claim’) that it should be similar to the case of the *seyfa* (‘latter part’).” (*tayn* is from the noun *tayna* ‘claim’)
- B. Directly integrated non-Semitic-origin Yiddish verbs
1. “He spent the entire Pesach (‘Passover’) in Milwaukee and “*fihtred tischen*” (‘led celebrations’) throughout” (from an article about the Bobover Rebbe in *The Jewish Observer*, 10/00).
 2. “It’s important to eat properly and not *fres* (‘pig out’).”
 3. “If I didn’t love you so much, I wouldn’t *tshepe* (‘bother’) you.”
- C. Periphrastically integrated Hebrew-origin verbs:
1. “We should all be zoche (‘merit’) to witness the coming of the *Moshiach* (‘Messiah’) speedily in our days.”
 2. [Introducing Rebbetzin Markovich to give a lecture:] “There’s no reason to be maarich (‘long-winded, take a long time’); we’ll let Rebbetzin Markovich be maarich.”
 3. “They’re pretty makpid (‘strict, meticulous’) on everything.”

The periphrastic integration involves using an English verb, almost always “to be,” with a Hebrew present-tense masculine verb form, usually in the *pi’el* or *pa’al* constructions. Because this construction is borrowed from Yiddish, it sounds strange to non-Orthodox ears. This is especially true when the verb phrase includes an object:

- D. Periphrastically integrated Hebrew-origin verbs that take objects:
1. “You have to be *boydek* (‘check’) them.”
 2. “You’re not *oyver* (‘transgress’) any *isurim* (‘prohibitions’).”
 3. “That’s another way we’re *mekayem* (‘fulfill’) the *mitzvah* (‘commandment’).”

This construction is very common in Orthodox Jewish English. An example from the Orthodox press is the use of three periphrastic verbs in one article (italics in original, translations mine):

...gratitude that the *Ribbono Shel Olam* (‘Master of the World, i.e., God’) was *mezakeh* (‘favored’) us with changing their views of Torah *Yidden* (‘Jews’) in some small way. ... we were privileged to be *mekadesh* (‘sanctify’) *Shem Shamayim* (‘Name of the Heavens, i.e., God’). ... May we be *zocheh* (‘merit’), very soon, to bring home all the multitudes of

Yidden... (Debby Friedman, “*Kiddush Hashem? That’s Easy!*” *The Jewish Observer*, December 2001, 44-6.)

As with most other Orthodox linguistic features, some BTs (14 among those I observed) add periphrastic verbs to their repertoire. Because Hebrew loan verbs can be integrated periphrastically or directly, I was able to do a small study of the variation in verb integration. When I looked at all Hebrew loan verbs I heard that are periphrastically integrated in Yiddish, I found that BTs integrate them periphrastically a majority of the time, but not as frequently as FFBs:

Table 4-7: Integration of Hebrew loan verbs: Percent periphrastic / direct+periphrastic

	FFBs (10 people)	BTs (21 people)
Average of individuals’ ratios	84 (N=35)	59 (N=42)

The p values for the differences between the groups do not approach the level of significance (Wilcoxon).³¹

In general, BTs were more likely than FFBs to use direct integration. For example, Freddy said, “You *bateled* (‘cancel’) it,” just minutes after Rabbi Passo used the same verb in a periphrastic construction: “You were *mevatel* (‘cancel’) it.” And Miriam talked about the man “who *mekareved* (‘attract to religiosity’) me,” while FFBs tend to talk about their work “being *mekarev*” non-Orthodox Jews.

My data include a total of five instances of FFBs using directly integrated Hebrew loanwords. Three were in situations where the FFB was teaching BTs who – they might have worried – would possibly have trouble understanding the periphrastic construction. The other two times were surprising: Rabbi Greenbaum said to me, “We don’t want to *mechalel* (‘desecrate’) *Shabbos*,” and Rabbi Passo said in a sermon to a mixed crowd, “only to *mechanech* (‘educate’) them. It is possible that they used these direct integrations to ensure comprehension and would have used periphrastics if they had been speaking to FFBs. The use of direct, as opposed to periphrastic, integration seems to be influenced to some extent by audience.

³¹ Like the values in Tables 4-2, 4-3, and 4-4, these differences would likely be significant with more tokens for each speaker.

If we take a closer look at the verbs that are integrated periphrastically, we see that there are two different types: intransitive and transitive. The Hebrew word in an intransitive periphrastic phrase can be analyzed as an adjective or as a gerund, as in sentence C3 above, but the Hebrew word in a transitive one must be analyzed as a verb, as in D3 above. If we look at how people translate periphrastic verbs, we see that intransitive ones are often thought of as adjectives or gerunds. For example, Rabbi Hollander (FFB), who often translates his own loanwords in his lectures, said, “If you’re *mekane* (‘envy’), if you’re jealous...” And Levi (BT) used the phrase “to be *zoyche*” (‘to merit’) in his interview with me and then explained, “*Zoyche* means ‘deserving’.” On the other hand, transitive periphrastic verbs cannot be analyzed as adjectives. Rabbi Passo (FFB) said in a class, “The *pasuk* (‘verse’) is *meshabeyach*, praises, the wine for being red...” It is clear that he considers the phrase “be *meshabeyach*” to be another way to say the verb ‘praise’.

The vast majority of periphrastic verbs in my data are intransitive. I only heard seven people use verbs with a direct object (2 Yeshiva BT women, 1 Yeshiva BT man, 1 FFB woman, and 3 FFB men). Among the people who used verbs with direct objects, five of them used only set Hebrew phrases, interspersed with English function words:

1. “He’s *mechalel* (‘desecrate’) *Shabbos*” (a common phrase, used in my data by a BT woman and an FFB woman)
2. “Being *shomer* (‘minding, guarding’) my *dibur* (‘speech’)” (used by a BT woman, telling me what she has changed about her speech)
3. “Don’t be *mevatel* my *zman* (‘time’)” (used by an FFB man).
4. “It might be *meorer* (‘arouse’) the *tayva* (‘lust’)” (used by an FFB man, explaining why he would not hold hands with his future wife in public).

There were only two people in my Milldale sample who used periphrastic verbs with direct objects outside of set Hebrew phrases: Rabbi Fischer, a BT who has spent several years in Yeshiva, and the FFB Rabbi Passo. These rabbis, especially Rabbi Passo, use the periphrastic construction productively, as in these examples:

Rabbi Fischer (BT) (total verbs [types] used in periphrastic constructions: 5):

1. “He was *mekarev* (‘attract to religiosity’) her.”
2. “May *Hashem* (‘God’) be *mevarech* (‘bless’) you with *bracha* (‘blessing’) and *hatslacha* (‘success’).”

Rabbi Passo (FFB) (total verbs [types] used in periphrastic constructions: 16):

1. “We also are *mevatel* (‘nullify’) it.”
2. “I am *mispalel* (‘pray’) that...”

Several community members expressed a belief that directly integrated verbs are incorrect. I asked two FFB men, one FFB woman, and one BT man if “he *mekareved* (‘attract to religiosity’) me” was correct. They all answered in the negative. On the matched guise test, I included a pair of stimuli with the word *mekarev*:

Verb Integration stimuli on matched guise test:

A: Periphrastic integration: “Weren’t they the ones who were *mekarev* her sister?”

B: Direct integration: “Weren’t they the ones who *mekareved* her sister?”

On average, all groups except FFB men considered the periphrastic integration more likely to be said by an FFB than the direct integration.³²

Table 4-8: Average difference in score (A-B) for the Verb Integration utterances

BT Women	BT Men	FFB Women	FFB Men
0.29	0.53	0.47	-0.18

There were even a few people who marked these excerpts with a difference of 3 points, which was rare throughout the matched guise test. I believe that if the test were repeated with clearer stimuli for the verb integration variable, all groups would show an even larger difference, especially FFB men. I also predict that FFBs would mark a larger difference than BTs, reflecting their different views of how loan verbs like *mekarev* should be integrated into English speech.

³² None of the groups’ responses is significantly different from their responses to the dummy questions. BT men’s and FFB women’s scores come close (Wilcoxon: $p=0.066$ and 0.0723). In addition, the percentage of respondents in each group who rated A as more likely FFB were quite similar (21.4% BT women, 33.3% BT men, 35.3% FFB women, 27.3% FFB men). Several people said that this speaker spoke too fast and asked for clarification or repetition. Because of these difficulties, the results for these stimuli should be taken with a grain of salt. One FFB woman heard B first and misheard it as A. I know this, because I was administering the test to three people at the same time: this woman, her husband, and their daughter. After excerpt B, the man asked me to reply it. The woman repeated the sentence, but using “who were *mekarev*” instead of “who *mekareved*.” This incident is evidence that for this woman, the unmarked form is A. It is also evidence that excerpt B is not very clear.

Non-content morphemes

Orthodox Jewish English includes almost no borrowing of non-content morphemes. But every once in a while, there is a nonce borrowing, usually used for humorous effect. The FFB Rabbi Hollander once introduced Fred as “Fred-eynu” (‘our Fred’) to show affection at his *ufruf* reception (pre-wedding party). “Fred-eynu” uses the Hebrew first-person plural possessive suffix in quite an unusual way. More common is the borrowing of the Yiddish hypocoristic/diminutive suffix, $-l\leftrightarrow$ or $-\leftrightarrow l\leftrightarrow$ appended to names. This is usually used with Hebrew- or Yiddish-origin names, such as *Rivkale* or *Mendele*, but I once heard someone say “Bonnele” to show affection for a woman named Bonnie (pseudonym).

Most hypocoristic names in Orthodox Jewish English are formed with the [i] suffix, as in Moyshi (Moyshe), Huvi (Ahuva), Shimmy (Shimon), Hindi (Hinde), and Yossi (Yosef). This suffix is influenced by three factors: the English hypocoristic [i], as in Jenny and Billy, the Israeli Hebrew hypocoristic [i], as in Yossi and Benny, and the phonological change ($\leftrightarrow > i _ \#$) in Jewish English words of Yiddish-origin, as in *zeydy* (‘grandpa’ cf. *zeyde*), *bubby* (‘grandma’ cf. *bobe*), *pastrami* (cf. *pstrome*), and *tshatshki* (‘trinket’ cf. *tshatshke*). Gold (1986:126) and Steinmetz (1981:8) debate the nature of the [i] suffix in Jewish English. Gold says that the suffix represents a phonological change ($\leftrightarrow > i _ \#$), and Steinmetz maintains that it is morphological ($[\leftrightarrow]l\leftrightarrow > i _ \#$). I argue that the suffix represents both a phonological and a morpho-phonological change (see also Benor 1998). In nouns like *pastrami* it is purely phonological, but in personal names it is a combination of this phonological change and the (American/Israeli) hypocoristic suffix. The [i] suffix is also used as a diminutive in child-directed speech in words like *keppy* (‘head’) and *shlofy* (‘sleep’) (see also Fader 2000:257), as it is in general English child-directed speech.

Another distinctive use of morphology in the Orthodox community is to Yiddishize English words, generally for humorous effect. One woman told me about a faux Yiddish word that has been making its way around the Ultra-Orthodox neighborhoods of Monsey, New York: *oombelievish* ‘unbelievable’. This appends the Yiddish negating prefix *-um* and the Yiddish adjective suffix *-ish* to an English word. Another woman reports that her children Yiddishize English words by starting them with

the Yiddish cluster *shm-*, as in *shmoiling* ('boiling') and *shmeasy* ('easy'). This *shm-* is not reduplicative and does not have the pragmatic effect of dismissal, as in Jewish English "Money, shmoney; as long as you're healthy." It is used merely for comic and Judaizing effect.

PHONOLOGY: WHOLE HEBREW ELEMENT AND MERGED HEBREW ELEMENT

Contemporary American Jews generally pronounce Hebrew with the same phonemic inventory as their English speech, with one addition: the phoneme [x] (ch) for the Hebrew and Yiddish letters *khaf* and *h ēt*. American Jews who grew up with a strong Jewish education, even in non-Orthodox institutions, tend to use the [x] phoneme in their Hebrew reading (Whole Hebrew Element) and in their Hebrew and Yiddish loanwords (Merged Hebrew Element). However, Jews who grew up with little or no Jewish education usually have trouble with this phoneme and render it as [h] or [k]. The BTs in my study fall into both categories. One Yeshiva BT uses many loanwords and some Yiddish semantic influences, but I never heard her use [x]. She said *humra* (cf. *chumra* 'stringency'), *happing* (cf. *chapping* 'grasping'), *hasuna* (cf. *chasuna* 'wedding'), *tikel* (cf. *tichel* 'women's head-covering kerchief'), *shadkan* (cf. *shadchan* 'matchmaker'), and *baruk Hashem* (cf. *baruch Hashem* 'bless God'). In general, her phonological realization of /x/ seems to be as follows:

/x/ => [h] / #_
/x/ => [k] elsewhere

Even some BTs who use /x/ regularly sometimes substitute [h] or [k] for /x/, especially in the word "Chanukah." I heard one interesting combination of phonological variants by a BT woman: [hanIkE]. My impression is that most Orthodox Jews realize the final vowel of this word as [ɤ] and that only those most influenced by Yiddish use [E]. This BT's pronunciation combines the Yiddish realization [xanIkE] with the American realization [hanIk ɤ].

Many community members hold strong views on this variable. An FFB woman said that when she hears someone pronounce /x/ as [k] that is "always a dead giveaway" that the person did not grow up Orthodox. "No matter how well they dress the part, that

gives them away.” This variable was included on the matched guise test in the following stimuli:

Realization of /x/ stimuli on matched guise test:

A: And where were you for *chol hamoed* (‘down time between the holiest days of a long holiday’)?

B: And where were you for *kol hamoed*?

As expected, both BTs and FFBs rated the speaker of B as less likely Orthodox and less likely FFB. For the FFB question, both groups noted differences that were higher than for any other pair of stimuli (BTs: 1.34, FFBs: 2.14). FFBs rated the two sentences as even more distinct than BTs, and the difference in average scores is significant (Wilcoxon: $p=0.0165$). A higher percentage of FFBs considered this speaker to sound like she did not grow up Orthodox:

Table 4-9: Percent of matched guise test respondents who ranked A higher than B: Realization of /x/

BT respondents	FFB respondents
69	93

Chi-square = 5.22, $p \leq 0.025$

In addition to associating [h] and [k] with BTs, community members believe these pronunciations are incorrect. I noticed a few instances of correction, where a BT or an FFB corrected a recent BT for saying [h] or [k]: *humash* (cf. *chumash* ‘Bible: Five Books of Moses’) and *kol hamoed* (cf. *chol hamoed* ‘down time between the holiest days of a long holiday’). BTs recognize that the [x] variant is more accepted, and they often hypercorrect, using [x] for phonemes that should be [h] or [k]. I heard *minchag* (cf. *minhag* ‘custom’), *medayech* (cf. *medayek* ‘exacting’), *tachara* (cf. *tahara* ‘purity’), and several instances of *chalacha* (cf. *halacha* ‘law’). In trying to speak Orthodox Jewish English correctly, these BTs make hypercorrective mistakes.

In general, Orthodox Jews use [x] even when speaking to outsiders. This may be because they consider [k] and [h] to be wrong or because they would not even think to accommodate on this variable. The only exception I noticed was in a conversation I had toward the end of my fieldwork year, in which the FFB Moyshe pronounced *Chasid* as [h∅sId] (see details in the “Observer’s paradox” section of Chapter 2 above). Other than

this incident, all of the times I heard FFBs and BTs use /x/ with newcomers or even non-Jews (at least those who normally use [x]), they used the [x] variant.

Aside from [x], there are several other sociolinguistic variables in the phonology of Whole and Merged Hebrew. There are two major streams of influence, Ashkenazic and Israeli Hebrew pronunciation norms. The main differences between these systems are enumerated in Figure 4-5:

Figure 4-5: Some phonological differences between Israeli and Ashkenazic Hebrew

	Israeli	Ashkenazic
Realization of biblical /T/	[t]	[s]
Stress	generally ultimate	generally penultimate
Stressed /o/	[o]	[oy] ~ [øy]
The <i>kamats</i> vowel	[a]	[o] ~ [ø]
The <i>tseré</i> vowel	[E]	[e]/[ey]
Word-initial /C↔C/ sequence	[CC](orthography: [C↔C])	[CC]

The Ashkenazic system was used by Yiddish-speaking Jews in Eastern Europe, and the Israeli system is based on some Sephardic norms with some influence from Ashkenazic phonology.

Most American Hebrew schools used the Ashkenazic system until the birth of the State of Israel in the mid-20th century. Gradually, most non-Orthodox schools and some Zionist Modern Orthodox schools switched to the Israeli pronunciation norms, either based on a policy change or because of the influx of Israeli-born Hebrew teachers.³³ Today, most non-Orthodox and Modern Orthodox schools teach Israeli Hebrew pronunciation, and other Orthodox schools generally teach the Ashkenazic system. This difference stems from non-Orthodox and Modern Orthodox Jews' closer connections to Israel and Ultra-Orthodox Jews' stronger reverence for the recent Eastern European past.³⁴

³³ I was surprised to find that there has been no definitive research on the switch from Ashkenazic to Israeli pronunciation in American Jewish schools. This would make an excellent dissertation topic in the history of Jewish education.

³⁴ These are generalizations. There are certainly non-Orthodox and Modern Orthodox Yiddishists, as well as many Ultra-Orthodox Zionists.

Yeshiva BT Rabbi Fischer and Community BTs Levi and Jacob. Most of the FFB men I observed used [oy] at least some of the time: Rabbi Hollander, Rabbi Passo, Rabbi Nussbaum, Moyshe, a 21-year-old, and an 11-year-old. In contrast, I have several tokens of the FFB wives of Rabbi Hollander, Rabbi Passo, and Rabbi Nussbaum using [o] and none of them using [oy]. Examples of Rabbi Hollander’s [oy] vowels are: *riboyne shel oylam* (‘Master of the World, i.e., God’), *zoynche* (‘merit’), and *avoydas Hashem* (‘serving God’). And examples of Mrs. Hollander’s [o] vowels are *bikur cholim* (‘visiting the sick’), *kolel* (‘men’s Talmud study collective’), and *besoros tovov* (‘good news’). Mrs. Hollander always said *Torah*, Rabbi Hollander said both *Torah* and *Toyrach*, and their 21-year-old Yeshiva student son said only *Toyrach*.

I did a small study of this and other variables in the “learning” setting. I recorded eight men – 3 FFBs and 5 BTs at various stages – studying Talmud in pairs or small groups. The sessions were 42-57 minutes long.

Table 4-10: Participants in variation study of Talmud sessions (reprinted from Table 1-1)

	Andrew	Joseph	David	Jacob	Fischer	Weisman	Nussbaum	Avrum
Years Orthodox	1.5	5	7	10	30+	FFB	FFB	FFB (modern)
BT Type	Periph.	Yeshiva	Yeshiva	Comm.	Yeshiva	-----	-----	-----
Years-Yeshiva	0	2	1.5	weeks	5	? years	8	4
Community they live in	non Orth	modern Orth	mixed Orth	Ultra Orth	Ultra Orth	Ultra Orth	Ultra Orth	non Orth
Kipah	black	black	black	black	black	black	black	knit
Beard	no	no	short	long	long	no	long	no
Black hat	no	no	on <i>Shabbos</i>	yes	yes	yes	yes	no

As Table 4-10 shows, the people whose study sessions I recorded and analyzed for phonological variation have different strategies for expressing their Orthodoxy. Avrum is an FFB who grew up Modern Orthodox and still identifies as such, so he wears a knit *kipah* (‘skullcap’) and no beard or black hat. David identifies as somewhere between Modern and Ultra-Orthodox, and he wears a black *kipah*, a short beard, and a black hat only on *Shabbos*. Rabbi Nussbaum and Dr. Weisman are both FFBs who live in Milldale and wear black *kipahs* and black hats, but Nussbaum identifies as closer to the Ultra-Orthodox pole than Weisman does. They exhibit these differences in their facial hair – Nussbaum has a long bushy beard, and Weisman is clean-shaven.

These Orthodox men also locate themselves along the Modern to Ultra-Orthodox spectrum through phonology. The only people who sometimes use [oy] are Jacob, Fischer, and Nussbaum, the three people who have long beards:

Table 4-11: Hebrew/Aramaic /o/ => Yiddish [oy] ~ Israeli Hebrew [o]

	Andrew	Joseph	David	Jacob	Fischer ³⁵	Weisman	Nussbaum	Avrum
% [oy]	0	0	0	24	8	0	78	0
N	10	10	16	17	24	9	37	5

The other men use only the [o] variant of this vowel, because the [oy] variant is so closely associated with Ultra-Orthodoxy or with FFBs. Avrum and Weisman grew up in less Ultra-Orthodox settings, and they continue to use the [o] vowel they learned in their childhood, even though they have been exposed to [oy] in synagogue, yeshiva, and the community. Andrew, Joseph, and David grew up using the [o] variant in Reform or Conservative Hebrew school. When they became involved with Orthodox communities, they were exposed to both the [o] and [oy] variants. Unlike Jacob and Fischer, they chose not to adopt the [oy], because they associate it with Ultra-Orthodoxy and with FFBs.

David never used [oy] in his learning session or in other conversations, except when he was doing an imitation of Yeshivish speech for humorous effect. In this brief performance, he used a scratchy voice, a periphrastic verb, and the word *oylam* ('audience'). He associates [oy] with Ultra-Orthodoxy, and he does not identify with that group. Similarly, I never heard Joseph use [oy] in his social conversations or his study sessions. When I asked Joseph if he ever uses [oy] in words like *Toyrah*, he said, "No, [oy] is already like the next level. ... People who say *Toyrah* are really uh- either *ba'alei teshuva* who are really trying hard to look really *Yeshivish*, or [FFBs who have] a *Chasidish* or ... very religious upbringing. Like most guys at YU wouldn't say *Toyrah*. They would say *Torah*." YU is Yeshiva University, an institution that leans toward the Modern side of the spectrum because of its focus on secular subjects in addition to religious learning. Although some people who attend YU wear black hats and beards,

³⁵ Rabbi Fischer has such a low rate of [oy] likely because he's teaching a small group of BTs. I have observed him use a higher rate of [oy] with other audiences.

they do not identify with Ultra-Orthodoxy enough to shun secular studies. And, according to Joseph, they tend not to use the Ultra-Orthodox-sounding [oy] vowel. Joseph wishes to identify more with the YU crowd than the *Chasidish* crowd, so he uses [o] rather than [oy].

Another BT, Rabbi Roseman, said he made a conscious decision to say [o] rather than [oy] because he had heard other BTs “overpronouncing” [oy], thereby drawing attention to the fact that they did not grow up Orthodox. An FFB woman whose parents are BTs echoes his comments: “My mother tries to do the [oy] but sounds fake; my [FFB] sister does it and sounds good.” In fact, this variable has become somewhat of a shibboleth for religious background, although certainly not to the same extent as /x/. A number of FFBs and some long-time BTs mentioned that BTs do not or cannot pronounce the [oy] variant. 18 of the 57 Orthodox respondents on the matched guise test ranked A as more likely FFB than B:

[o]~[oy] stimuli on matched guise test:

A: They tend to do it *moytsey Shabbos* (‘Saturday night’) or *ro(y)sh choydesh* (‘first day of the Jewish month’).

B: They tend to do it *motsey Shabbos* or *rosh chodesh*.

On average, FFBs noticed a significantly larger difference than BTs (Wilcoxon: $p=0.015$), and, surprisingly, a few BT men marked a difference in the opposite direction.³⁶

³⁶ None of the BT men marked A as more likely FFB than B, and four BT men marked B as more likely FFB than A. Two of those use [oy] themselves, based on my observations and their self-reports. It is likely that they misheard the excerpts, because they both made comments about using [oy] as an important aspect of integrating into the community and sounding more like FFBs. The other two who marked B as more likely FFB than A also marked several other stimuli in the unexpected direction, leading me to believe that they have less understanding of Orthodox speech. Still, it is surprising that other BT men did not mark A as more likely FFB than A. One BT said he had trouble deciding whether the matched guise speakers were FFB, except “the guy who said *moytsi Shabbos*. *Frum* (‘religious’) all the way. You can tell from the way he said it.” This respondent marked both A and B as “5,” definitely FFB. In his test, he heard A as the 2nd excerpt and B as the 26th excerpt. It is likely that when he heard B he thought he was hearing A again and just wrote the same answer. I noticed this a few times: respondents tried to be consistent in their answers when they thought they were hearing a previous excerpt again. I attempted to mitigate this problem by telling respondents before the test: “Some of the speakers speak more than once, and you might notice that some of the excerpts are similar. Just judge each excerpt on its own merit.” Even so, some respondents made comments about hearing the same excerpt twice and trying to mark the same answer both times. This remains an interesting problem with a matched guise methodology that uses speech samples that differ only by the variable in question.

Table 4-12: Percent of matched guise test respondents who ranked A higher than B: [o]~[oy]

BTs	FFBs	BT women	BT men	FFB women	FFB men
14	50	29	0	53	46

Difference between BTs and FFBs: Chi-square = 8.64, $p \leq 0.01$

While someone who uses the [oy] variant of this vowel is often assumed to be FFB, not all FFBs are expected to use it. As one FFB man said, “Just because they say *choylam* (‘the Hebrew name of this vowel’) instead of *cholam* doesn’t mean [they’re FFB]... it depends how they learned.” As Table 4-11 shows, this is true. FFBs Weisman and Avrum do not use [oy] at all. Among FFBs there is also intra-speaker variation according to audience. One FFB introduces himself to newcomers with his English name, Michael, rather than the name he normally goes by, Moyshi. His main reason is that he does not like when BTs “mispronounce” his name as “Moshi.”

Another FFB, Rabbi Nussbaum, uses a much higher frequency of [oy] in his learning session with an FFB than in his learning session with a BT:

Table 4-13: Rabbi Nussbaum’s style shifting: [oy]

	% /o/=>[oy]	N
With Weisman (FFB)	78	37
With Jacob (BT)	7	14

Ironically, Rabbi Nussbaum is not shifting to the actual frequencies of his interlocutors. Weisman uses only [o], and Jacob uses [oy] some of the time:

Table 4-14: Rabbi Nussbaum’s interlocutors’ variation

Speaker:	% /o/=>[oy]	N
Weisman	0	9
Jacob	24	17

Rabbi Nussbaum has had ample opportunity to observe his interlocutors’ speech, as he has been studying with Jacob for 4 years and with Weisman for over 20 years. He might even be aware that Weisman rarely if ever uses [oy] and that Jacob often does. But he also knows that [oy] is associated with FFBs and that Weisman is FFB and Jacob is not.

Nussbaum is accommodating not to the actual speech patterns of his interlocutors, but to his classifications of them, based on his understanding of what speech to FFBs and speech to BTs should be.

Biblical /T/: [t]~[s]

Among (non-Modern) Orthodox Jews in America, the normal pronunciation of biblical <T> – represented by the grapheme *thaf* (without a *dagesh*) – is [s]. Data from the same study sessions as discussed above show that most of the speakers use 100% [s]:

Table 4-15: Hebrew/Aramaic /T/ => Yiddish [s] ~ Israeli Hebrew [t]

	Andrew	Joseph	David	Jacob	Fischer	Weisman	Nussbaum	Avrum
% [s]	36	100	100	100	100	100	100	63
N	22	22	13	15	23	10	25	19

The BTs who grew up going to Hebrew school or Jewish day school (everyone except Jacob, who grew up secular) learned to read <T> as [t]. And when they became involved with Orthodox Jews, they were exposed to [s]. Joseph, David, and Rabbi Fischer all made conscious decisions to switch completely to [s]. Andrew and Avrum are the only ones in this group who sometimes use [t]. Avrum went to a Modern Orthodox yeshiva where [t] is the norm and a yeshiva in Israel where both [t] and [s] are used. Andrew grew up using [t] and at this point in his integration has begun to switch to the Orthodox [s]. It is likely that a diachronic analysis of his speech will show a complete switch to [s] during his subsequent studies in an Ultra-Orthodox yeshiva.

Even in Andrew and Avrum’s study session, there is a sense that [s] is the way that <T> should be pronounced. Once Avrum was teaching Andrew the Aramaic word *hasam* (‘there’), and he said, “*Hatam* or *hasam*. They’d never say *hatam*. It’s *hasam*.” “They” refers to Orthodox Jews learning in a yeshiva. Interestingly, he never says this about a Hebrew word, and both he and Andrew often use [t] in Hebrew words, especially in suffixes like *-ot* (feminine plural) and *-tam* (third-person plural possessive). But apparently Avrum finds it more appropriate to use [s], the Ashkenazic variant, with Aramaic words. In fact, an analysis of the language of origin of Andrew and Avrum’s

words shows that for both of them [s] is more common in Aramaic words and [t] is more common in Hebrew words:

Table 4-16: Avrum and Andrew's % /T/ => [s] according to source language

	Hebrew	N	Aramaic	N
Avrum	36	11	100	8
Andrew	28	18	75	4

This effect of the language of origin on the realization of biblical /T/ is due to the associations the speakers have with Hebrew and Aramaic. Hebrew is associated with Israeli Hebrew, in which [t] is the norm, and Aramaic is associated with Ultra-Orthodox Talmud study, in which [s] is the norm.

Even outside of the learning context, there is a sense that Orthodox Jews should say [s]. Just as Mrs. Passo translated English words into Hebrew when reading aloud, she used [s] when reading <T>s that were written as <t>, as in *taharas* for *taharat* ('purity') and *mitzvos* for *mitzvoṯ* ('commandments'). Mrs. Passo even corrected someone covertly for using [t]. The BT said, "At the *kotel* ('Western Wall')," and Mrs. Passo responded, "Right, at the *koṣel*." This is an interesting correction, because one might expect the Israeli [t] to be appropriate in *kotel*, a site that is located in Israel. But it is also a holy site highly charged with religious significance, making the [s] variant appropriate as well. I also observed similar variation in Orthodox Jews' pronunciation of the holy Israeli city of Safed: *Tsfat* and *Tsfas* were both used.

Another example of correction from [t] to [s] happened in this exchange between a BT and Mrs. Kotler. The BT said, "I always forget what you say before *Yom Kipur* ('Day of Atonement'). *Gmar chatimá tová?*" Mrs. Kotler answered kindly, "Right, *gmar chasíma tóva*." Like Mrs. Passo in the excerpt above, Mrs. Kotler affirmed the BT by saying "Right" and then proceeded to correct her. Mrs. Kotler's rendering of the pre-Yom Kipur greeting changed not only the [t] to [s] but also the ultimate stress to penultimate.

BTs in the (non-modern) Orthodox community are expected to use the [s] variant. But community members – BTs and FFBs – often accommodate to [t] when speaking to non-Orthodox Jews, Israelis, and non-Ashkenazic Jews. A common word in which this

variable appears is *Shábbos~Shabbát* ('Sabbath').³⁷ I once heard a woman who normally says "Good *Shabbos*" say "*Shabbat Shalom*" to a Sephardic girl who had spent time in Israel. One FFB teaches at an Orthodox preschool and at a Conservative Hebrew school. She says she often has to think about the words she uses and how she pronounces them. "My nursery kids are my *kinderlach* ('children' < Yiddish) and they have a *Shabbos* party." The Conservative Hebrew school students are "*yeladim* ('children' < Hebrew) with a *Shabbat* party. ... It's one *Torah* with a different flavor." Yiddish words and Ashkenazic phonology are associated with Orthodox Jews, and Hebrew words and Israeli phonology are associated with Conservative Jews.

At Ner Tamid, the outreach and education center, it is common for speakers to translate for the benefit of non-Orthodox and newly Orthodox Jews. One rabbi translated "*Masechet Bráches*," the section of the Mishna about blessings, as "Tractate *Brachót*." While part of this translation was from Hebrew to English, as usual, the other part was from Ashkenazic Hebrew to Modern Hebrew, from penultimate stress and [s] to ultimate stress and [t]. The rabbi apparently thought that some non-Orthodox audience members would understand the latter better than the former.

Stress: Ultimate vs. penultimate

With the [o]~[oy] and [s]~[t] variables, I never heard anyone talking overtly about one variant being more correct than another. But I heard a number of people say that Israeli Hebrew ultimate stress is more correct than Ashkenazic penultimate stress. One BT rabbi said that, technically, "Shábbos is a total mispronunciation." The [s] is valid, he said, but the stress should be on the last syllable, Shabbós. In a class on Biblical Hebrew, the teacher corrected students for using penultimate stress. And an FFB woman said that her Orthodox primary school taught "the correct *havará* ('accent, stress') but with Ashkenazis pronunciation," meaning [s] rather than [t] for <T>.

This ideology of correctness does not hold up in practice. Ironically, all three of the people just mentioned used mostly penultimate stress, even when espousing the correctness of ultimate stress. The BT rabbi talked about the *kedúsha* of Hebrew and

³⁷ These forms combine the s~t variable and the stress variable described below. Because one rarely hears intermediate forms, like *Shábbat* or *Shabbós*, this alternation might be seen as variation between two

how *bá'alei teshúva* sometimes make language mistakes. The Hebrew teacher said *Rúveyn* ('Reuben') just minutes after correcting a student for using that same form rather than *R↔uvE≅n*. And the FFB woman said that even now when she reads *p↔sY≅kIm* ('verses') aloud she uses the "correct rules of *dI≅kdYk* ('grammar')."

One reason for this discrepancy between ideology and practice is that the view that ultimate stress is correct applies more to the Whole Hebrew Element (reciting textual Hebrew) than the Merged Hebrew Element (loanwords). When I heard community members read *pesúkim* ('verses') or *tefilos* ('prayers'), I often heard ultimate stress, even if they stress those loanwords penultimately. Another reason for the discrepancy is that using penultimate stress in loanwords conforms better to the stress pattern of English. A third reason is a competing ideology that Orthodox Jews should use penultimate stress. This ideology manifests in corrections I heard of BTs using ultimate stress and people's comments that they can identify a BT when they hear him using ultimate stress.

Although I never heard anyone articulate reasons for this competing ideology, I believe that it is due to a reverence for the recent Eastern European past and a sense that it is important for Orthodox Jews to speak distinctly. Penultimate stress is so prevalent in the Orthodox community that even some of the Israeli Hebrew borrowings are rendered in Ashkenazic phonology, such as *kípa* ('skullcap'). I even heard someone say "the *máts↔v*" for the contemporary political 'situation' in Israel. This Israeli Hebrew borrowing, using ultimate stress (*matsáv*), is common among Modern and non-Orthodox Jews. One Israeli Hebrew borrowing maintains its ultimate stress because of a potential semantic ambiguity: *aliyáh* ('immigration to Israel, lit. going up') is contrasted with *alíyah* ("going up" to say the blessings over the Torah reading').

In general, BTs tend to use Ashkenazic stress. For some loanwords, no change is necessary, as most non-Orthodox Jews use penultimate stress in *Rosh Hashána* ('Jewish New Year'), *shíva* ('seven-day period of mourning and comfort'), *chállah* ('egg bread'), and *bar mítzvah* ('Boys' coming of age ceremony at 13'). But for other loanwords and for Whole Hebrew, some BTs are accustomed to ultimate stress. Perhaps because of the community's conflicting ideologies about stress, some BTs maintain ultimate stress in certain words, like Rabbi Roseman's and Will's *Yom Kipur* ('Day of Atonement') and

lexical items, *Shábbos* and *Shabbát*.

Shelley's *shiúr* ('lecture'), and BTs who grew up reading Hebrew sometimes maintain ultimate stress in their Whole Hebrew.

Schwa

Another variable for which there are conflicting ideologies is the presence or absence of [↔] in a Hebrew/Aramaic word-initial /C↔C/ cluster, as in *k↔li~kli* ('vessel'). The CC variant represents a historical change in the development of Hebrew and Yiddish. Around the 11th century, Ashkenazic Hebrew /↔/ was deleted in /#C↔C/, except after nasals. As Weigel (1999) demonstrates, this deletion occurred on analogy with the Slavic phonological process of *yer* deletion. The change in Hebrew and the Hebrew loanwords in Yiddish yielded a number of initial consonant clusters that are disallowed in most Germanic languages, such as [gz], [dv], and [xs]. Even so, Jews in Germanic lands speaking a Germanic language continued to use clusters like these, both in Whole and Merged Hebrew. Israeli Hebrew, for which Yiddish has been argued to be the main substratum (Wexler 1990), continued to render the /↔/ as zero.

Despite the agreement in /↔/ deletion between Ashkenazic and Israeli Hebrew norms, some American Hebrew schools teach students to pronounce the /↔/, based on influences from the orthography (/↔/ is represented by the vocalizing grapheme “:” under the grapheme of the preceding consonant) and perhaps with some input from Sephardic Hebrew pronunciation, which renders this vowel as [E]. Finally, the phonotactics of English play a role, as they disallow clusters like [gz], [dv], and [xs], just as German does. Figure 4-6 summarizes the factors in the realization of this variable in Jewish English:

Figure 4-6: Factors in the realization of biblical /#C↔C/

	#C↔C	#CC
--	------	-----

Yiddish, Ashkenazic Hebrew		yes
Israeli Hebrew		yes
Sephardic Hebrew	yes (↔=>E)	
Orthography	yes	
English phonotactics	some environments	some environments

These factors have led to an interesting pattern of variation among Orthodox Jews. My analysis of this variable in Gemora learning sessions found a range from 38% to 100% deletion, with FFBs generally deleting more frequently:

Table 4-17: Hebrew/Aramaic /#C↔C/ => [CC] ~ [C↔C]

	Andrew	Joseph	David	Jacob	Fischer	Weisman	Nussbaum	Avrum
% /↔/ deleted	47	43	64	38	81	100	84	63
N	30	7	22	8	16	10	32	52

The highest rates of deletion are from the two FFBs who live in Milldale, Nussbaum and Weisman, and the longest-time Yeshiva BT, Fischer. The lowest rates are from the two most recent BTs, Andrew and Joseph, as well as Jacob, who never spent significant time in yeshiva.

When we take a closer look at these data, we see that the phonotactics of English play an important role. Among both BTs and FFBs, [↔] is more frequently maintained between consonants that are not allowed to cluster, as in *besamim* ('spices') and *pegima* ('flaw'). One BT, Joseph, never uses a cluster disallowed by English grammar; his seven tokens of schwa line up completely according to English phonology. All of the other speakers, however, sometimes do delete the schwa, leaving foreign-sounding clusters like [kn], [pΣ], and [zv] in *kneset* ('assembly'), *pshita* ('simple'), and *Zvida* (name of a rabbi). In the study session data, there are no true tokens of [↔] not being deleted in environments where English would allow deletion.³⁸ But I observed this a good deal in everyday speech, in words like *sh↔ma* (a prayer starting with the word 'hear'), *s↔fira*

³⁸ There are a few tokens of *b↔raysa* in which the [↔] is not deleted. I included this word in the analysis, because many speakers say *braysa*, even though the Hebrew vowel is *kamats* [◌], not *shva* [↔]. We find the same deletion of a *kamats* in *sh↔vuos* ~ *shvuos*.

(‘counting’), and *b↔li neder* (‘without a vow’) (English allows the clusters [Σm], [sf], and [bl]). The word *t↔shuva* (‘repentance’) came up many times in my fieldwork, used both on its own and in the phrase *ba’al teshuva*. I heard it pronounced both as [tΣuv ∅] and as [t↔Σuv ∅], sometimes by the same person. The [↔] in [t↔Σuv ∅] breaks up what would otherwise be an affricate [tΣ]. These tokens are evidence that English phonotactics are not the only factor here; orthography and/or perceived grammar must have some effect. Once I heard an FFB rabbi giving a *dvar torah* at his home over *Shabbos* lunch. He sometimes paused to let his children fill in words. When he said, “to do *t↔*” a few of his children responded “-*shuva!*” Even if this rabbi sometimes says [tΣuv ∅], this exchange demonstrates that the schwa is part of his underlying representation of this word.

To gauge how much people associate /↔/ deletion with FFBs, I included stimuli with this variable on the matched guise test:

Schwa stimuli on matched guise test:

A: There’s a bunch of *sforim* (‘holy books’) over there. See if you can find a *tanach* (‘Bible’).

B: There’s a bunch of *seforim* over there. See if you can find a *tanach*.

BTs thought that A was more likely to be FFB (average difference between A and B: 0.55, significantly different from dummy questions – Wilcoxon: $p=0.0256$), but FFBs’ responses (average difference: 0.21) were not significantly different from the dummy questions. The difference in responses between BTs and FFBs is not significant. Two comments about these stimuli illustrate the conflicting ideologies about /↔/ and help to explain these mixed results. One BT said, “*Sforim* sounded Orthodox and *seforim* sounded like he just learned the word yesterday.” Another BT said he marked the one with *seforim* as definitely FFB because that is the way an FFB rabbi he knows says it. “He’s very *makpid* (‘careful, exacting’)” to use the “correct” form, he said. While there is a sense that FFBs are more likely to use [CC], there is also a sense that [C↔C] is more correct and FFBs would be more likely to use the correct form.

If FFBs tailor their use of this variable to different audiences, I would expect them to use [C↔C] more when speaking to non-Orthodox Jews and BTs, either because they

recognize that BTs use this form more or because they think it makes comprehension easier. I did not notice any audience-based intra-speaker variation in /↔/, except in Rabbi Nussbaum’s study sessions with Weisman and Jacob. He deleted much more when speaking to Weisman, the FFB:

Table 4-18: Rabbi Nussbaum’s schwa absence in study sessions with Weisman and Jacob

	% /↔/=>0	N
with Weisman (FFB)	84	32
with Jacob (BT)	13	8

Unlike the [oy] variable, this pattern parallels Weisman and Jacob’s actual usage:

Table 4-19: Weisman and Jacob’s variation in schwa absence:

	% /↔/=>0	N
Weisman	100	10
Jacob	38	8

In short, the presence or absence of [↔] in word-initial /C↔C/ is a complicated variable with several factors and conflicting ideologies. The data on usage are just as complicated, but there is a trend for FFBs to delete [↔] more than BTs.

Syllabification and rhotacization of /orV/

When people pronounce stressed Hebrew /o/ as [o], rather than [oy], another variable arises: how it is pronounced before a non-coda [r] – more specifically, /orV/, as in *Torah* or *mora* (‘teacher’). American English rhotacizes [o] in this environment, blending the [r] into the preceding [o], as in “flora” and “chorus.” Many FFBs and some BTs syllabify [orV] differently, rounding the [o] and inserting a back glide [w] between [o] and [r]. This variant exists in English only where there is a word boundary, like “tow-run.” A minimal pair in English that demonstrates the variation is “forum” vs. “foerum.”

Since this variable occurs only in eight³⁹ words in my data – *Torah* (‘Torah’), *Devora* (girl’s name ‘Deborah’), *mora* (‘teacher’), *mesora* (‘traditional text’), *besoros* (‘news’), *borey* (‘creator’), *menora* (‘candelabrum’), and *shoresh* (‘[lexical] root’) – I did

³⁹ Words like *keyna hora* (‘no evil eye’) and *Gemora* (‘Talmud’) are not included, because the [o] in these words is from a different Hebrew vowel and is often pronounced as [ø].

not analyze it quantitatively. My impression is that FFBs are much more likely to insert the [w], while BTs are much more likely to rhotacize the [o]. I noticed five BTs using the non-rhotic variant, including one man who was still in the process of becoming Orthodox. It is possible that these BTs grew up with the non-rhotic variant, as some non-Orthodox Jews do.

While I did not include a pair of stimuli on the matched guise to test this variable, the sentences from a morphological variable included the word *Torah*. These sentences were uttered by a non-Orthodox “actor,” who rhotacized the [o] in both tokens. For the single sentence, “We heard a very similar *dvar torah* (‘sermon’) last night,” there was a significant difference in BTs’ and FFBs’ responses (Wilcoxon: $p=0.0069$). Respondents were asked to rate on a scale of 1-5 how likely the speaker was FFB. A response of 3 would be completely neutral. The average of BTs’ responses was 2.9, almost the same as “can’t tell,” and the average of FFBs’ responses was 2.4, closer to “probably not Orthodox” than “can’t tell.” Their responses differed so much probably because FFBs tended to notice the rhotacization of the [o] more than BTs. In fact, a few FFBs and one long-time BT (Rabbi Fischer) mentioned the way this speaker said *Torah*. A number of FFBs brought up this variable spontaneously before the matched guise test when we were talking about whether they can tell if someone is BT or FFB. Even an 11-year-old said she can tell on the phone that someone is BT when they say *Torah*, rather than *Towrah*, and *Devora*, rather than *Devowra*. In contrast, I rarely heard BTs mention the *Torah~Towrah* distinction; it is one phonological variable that seems to remain below their radar.

Other phonological variables

Two other vocalic variables are important for BTs integrating into the Orthodox community, the Hebrew/Aramaic vowels *kamats* and *tsere*. In Israeli Hebrew these vowels are [a] and [E], respectively, while in Ashkenazic Hebrew they are [□]~[o] and [e]~[ey]. In Orthodox Jewish English, *kamats* is usually [ɤ], which is between the Israeli and Ashkenazic vowels but still contrasts with [a], and *tsere* is usually [e]~[ey].

BTs who grew up with some Hebrew school or Jewish day school education usually enter the Orthodox community pronouncing these vowels as [a] and [E] in most

words.⁴⁰ While these variables do not occur much in the Merged Hebrew Element (*Pesach~Peysach* ‘Passover’ is an important exception), they come up a great deal in the Whole Hebrew Element. BTs often make a conscious decision to change to the Ashkenazic Orthodox pronunciations of these vowels. I did not observe any instances of correction or other metalinguistic discourse about these variables. However, on the sign at Ner Tamid with the response line from the most common prayer, the *Kaddish*, the *kamatses* are rendered as <o> and the *tseres* are rendered as <ay> (meaning [ey]) (underlines are mine to highlight the variables in question): “Omayn. Y’hay sh’mayh rabo m’vorach l’olam ul-ol’may ol’ma-yo.” Newcomers who do not already know this line can use the sign to join in the group response. And newcomers who do already know this line but with different phonology can use the sign to accommodate to the community norms. At Ner Tamid, BTs are expected to take on the Orthodox pronunciations of *kamats* and *tseres*, at least in their communal Whole Hebrew.

PHONOLOGY OF NON-SEMITIC YIDDISH LOANWORDS

In addition to words of Hebrew and Aramaic origin, Yiddish loanwords in Jewish English also come from Germanic, Slavic, and Romance languages. Aside from the [x], the only other phonological variable I have noticed in these words is the vowel /Y/, which also occurs in Hebrew and Aramaic words. Yiddish loanwords like *kugel* (‘noodle or potato pudding’) and *frum* (‘religious’) in Orthodox Jewish English take [Y] (the vowel in “push” and “hood”), not [ϕ] (“from”) or [u] (“food”). I observed a few BTs using [ϕ] or [u] instead of [Y], especially in the common word *frum*. One FFB man noticed this tendency, saying that some BTs say “[kug↔l] as opposed to [kYg↔l] or [kig↔l]. [Kig↔l] tastes better than [kug↔l].” [Kig↔l] is the Galitsianer or Central/Southern Yiddish pronunciation, and [kYg↔l] is the Litvak or North Eastern Yiddish pronunciation. Ironically, the different regions actually have different *kugel*-making traditions, so in effect [kig↔l] is very sweet and [kYg↔l] is slightly sweet and peppery. [KYg↔l] has become the common pronunciation among American Jews, but some with

⁴⁰ There are some exceptions, like *kúsher*, which non-Orthodox Jews rarely pronounce *káshér*. However, even this word is subject to variation in the Orthodox community. FFBs are more likely than BTs to pronounce it [k ϕ ≅ Σ ↔ r].

strong ties to Central/Southern Eastern Europe, especially Ultra-Orthodox Jews, still say [kig↔l]. While this FFB might have been expressing a preference for sweet *kugel*, he was also pointing out that someone who did not grow up with *kugel* in the home is less likely to make delicious [kYgel] and less likely to pronounce it “correctly.”

CONCLUSION

The Whole Hebrew Element and the Merged Hebrew (and Yiddish) Element of Orthodox Jewish English are important parts of Orthodox life in America. Speakers use loanwords to identify as part of the community. And they use subtle variation in morphology and phonology to locate themselves along the spectrum between Modern Orthodox and Ultra-Orthodox. This linguistic variation is socially meaningful because of the ideologies surrounding particular variables and larger styles of speech. Hebrew loanwords are associated with Orthodox Jews because of their reverence for Hebrew as the holy tongue and their desire to distinguish themselves from non-Orthodox and non-Jews. Ashkenazic variants are associated with Ultra-Orthodox Jews because of that group’s closer connection to and stronger reverence for the recent Eastern European past. Israeli Hebrew variants are associated with Modern Orthodox Jews because of their stronger connection to Zionism and the State of Israel. And source-language morphology is more closely connected with FFBs than BTs because of their longer and more intense exposure to the source languages.

Like FFBs, BTs use loanwords and subtle variation in their morphological and phonological integration to locate themselves along the spectrum of Orthodoxy. But with a few exceptions, they tend not to sound just like FFBs. This is because of several factors, including various levels of desire to integrate, ideologies of correctness and authenticity, and linguistic awareness and ability. These factors are discussed in detail in Chapter 6. But first, Chapter 5 examines the other distinctive linguistic features of Orthodox Jewish English.

Chapter 5

“This Is Not What to Record”: Other Distinctive Features of Orthodox Jewish English

INTRODUCTION

In addition to loanwords, Yiddish and – to a lesser extent – Hebrew, also influence Orthodox Jewish English at many levels: phonology, syntax, semantics, prosody, and discourse. These influences originated in situations of direct language contact, but they have pervaded the language so much that even people with no speaking ability in Yiddish or Hebrew still use them. For example, the quote in the title of this chapter was from a recent BT who has had little contact with Yiddish (she said it when I asked if I could record her conversation with a friend about *shiduch* (‘set-up’) dates). “What to [verb]” is a direct translation of the Yiddish construction “*vos tsu* [verb].” In addition, Orthodox Jewish English has other distinctive features that do not stem from language contact.

The social meaning of linguistic variables is closely connected with language ideology. As I describe below, Orthodox Jews and those who have contact with them hold views about particular linguistic variables. They also hold views about Orthodox language in general; the most common aspects people mentioned were the Hebrew and Yiddish words, distinct intonation patterns, and less cursing, slang, and gossip. Many people also see FFB Orthodox Jews, especially those in more Yeshivish communities, as having worse English grammar and vocabulary, speaking faster, and sounding like they are from New York no matter where they are from. In these characterizations, value judgments are implicit, or in some cases explicit. One BT told me that he heard a famous rabbi say about his male FFB yeshiva students, “My students can’t speak in three languages,” Hebrew, Yiddish, and English. Sometimes, ideologies conflict. One FFB said that Orthodox speech is “less polished,” and one BT said it is “more refined.”

In this chapter, I describe the features that distinguish Orthodox speech from general American English, and I discuss the variation and ideologies surrounding them. The data in this chapter come mostly from my observations and recordings of 24 BT women, 28 BT men, 27 FFB women, and 22 FFB men. For many of the features, it is impossible to conduct a quantitative study of variation that satisfies Labov’s (1972) “accountability principle.” As Lavendera (1978) argues, syntactic and lexical variants may have slight semantic differences, and it is difficult to tease apart semantic and social motivations. Even for those variables that have semantically equivalent variants, such as

the phonological variables, I do not have recorded speech samples to analyze from all speakers. Therefore, instead of conducting a quantitative analysis on each variable, the question I ask is whether or not each speaker uses it. The inclusion of quantitative data in this chapter is intended to give the reader a sense of how widespread the features might be. The data on variation according to religious background and gender are merely suggestive, and they call for a larger-scale survey of Orthodox Jewish English.

The Yiddish-influenced features described here are not unique to Orthodox Jews. Yiddish-speaking immigrants and some of their children who grew up in a Yiddish milieu are likely to use final devoicing and sentences like “I want that you should come,” “I’m staying by them,” and “She’s working here already 27 years.” Some phrases are even common among American Jews who are two or three generations removed from Yiddish, such as the parting words “Be well” and the use of “already” to connote impatience (as in “Enough already!” and “Alright already!”). The latter has even become common outside of the Jewish community, perhaps because of the influence of Jewish comedians.

Aside from the Yiddish influences, several of the other features described in this chapter also occur in other varieties of American English. It would not be surprising to hear a non-Orthodox Jew or non-Jew using some word-final /t/ release, final devoicing, hesitation clicks, or the if-clause “would,” for example. But if all four of those features were used by one speaker, that speaker would be assumed by those in the know to be using an Orthodox speech style. For features like these, some BTs may only have to make a quantitative change: releasing /t/ or using “would” more frequently. But other features, like aspects of loanword phonology and some Yiddish influences in syntax, are foreign to the native grammar of those speakers who did not grow up Orthodox. BTs who incorporate these features into their repertoire are making a qualitative change.

To what extent do BTs acquire the features described below as they integrate into Orthodox communities? Most features are acquired by at least some BTs. But some of the features that are heard less frequently or are more systematically distributed throughout the grammar are rarely or never acquired. And, like with loanwords, BTs sometimes make mistakes in their acquisition of these features, or they use them with slight differences from FFBs.

PHONOLOGY

The three distinctive phonological features I noticed among Orthodox Jews are the non-raising of pre-nasal /θ/, word-final devoicing, and frequent release and aspiration of /t/ where English tends to glottalize or flap it. The data come from (non-acoustic) analysis of recordings, as well as from my observations of speech in the Orthodox community.

Non-raising of pre-nasal /θ/

While various dialects of general American English raise /θ/ in different environments, all urban dialects raise /θ/ before front nasal codas.⁴¹ As Jochnowitz (1968) reports, some Lubavitch Hasidic Orthodox Jews in the 1960s were not following the same pattern as their non-Orthodox fellow New Yorkers. They often did not raise and tense pre-nasal /θ/, pronouncing “camp” and “man” with the same vowel as in words like “have” and “pad.” I found the same to be true among many Orthodox Jews today, both among the Lubavitch Hasidic Jews of my previous research (Benor 2001:14) and among the non-Hasidic Orthodox Jews of the current study.

In Philadelphia I noticed the non-raising of pre-nasal /θ/ among four FFB women, six FFB girls, and one FFB boy. All of these adults have lived in the New York area at some point, but a few of the children have lived only in Philadelphia. In the California Lubavitch community of my previous research, I noticed the non-raised variant among several locally born FFB children – male and female. While large-scale survey data and acoustic analysis of quantitative variation are necessary to confirm this, it seems that the non-raising of pre-nasal /θ/ is centered in New York and is in the process of radiating out to other communities. It also appears that women and girls may have a higher frequency of non-raising than men and boys.

Both in my recordings and in my non-recorded observations, I never heard a BT use a non-raised /θ/ before a front nasal coda. There are a few possible reasons for this. One is that this feature is systematically distributed throughout the grammar, and second

style acquirers are less likely to change the grammar of their native language than to add features to the surface of it. Another explanation is that non-raising is not very common among FFB adults in Philadelphia, so BTs have not been as exposed to it as to other features. Partly because it is not so common, it ranks low in salience. Although /θ/ was not tested on the matched guise test, I never heard anyone discuss or imitate it. Future research, however, might find that this feature is more salient in New York and is sometimes acquired by BTs there.

Word-final devoicing

In Orthodox Jewish English, word-final voiced consonants are sometimes devoiced after vowels or sonorants ([l], [r], [n], [N]). While this pattern also exists in other varieties of American English, sometimes because of contact with German (Rose 2003), in this case it most likely represents an influence from Yiddish. According to *The Language and Culture Atlas of Ashkenazic Jewry*, in Central Yiddish (concentrated in Poland), “all plosives and fricatives are voiceless in word-final position” (Herzog et al. 1992:38). Words in which I heard devoicing in Orthodox Jewish English include “cold,” “round,” “killed,” “concerned,” “liars,” “big,” “thing,” “wrong,” and many words with the -ing suffix, such as “eating,” “shining,” and “harvesting.” The devoicing of word-final [N] involves the addition of [g], which Thomas (1932) observed in the speech of New York Jews, and then the loss of voicing, yielding [Nk].

According to my analysis of recordings and notes from observations, word-final devoicing is most common among men, especially FFBs. I noticed four FFB men and two Yeshiva BTs devoice final consonants multiple times (but never 100%). In addition, I heard one token each from one FFB woman, one FFB man, one Yeshiva BT woman, one Yeshiva BT man, and one Peripheral BT man. It is possible that for each of these speakers the one token was a fluke, and I cannot definitively determine whether they devoice on a regular basis. But it should be emphasized that at least two BTs, both of

⁴¹ That is, in words like “candle” and “ran.” Some dialects raise /θ/ before /m/ and /n/ but not /N/ or raise /θ/ before a coda nasal (as in “candle”) but not before a non-coda nasal (as in “family”). See data on New York, Philadelphia, and the Northern Cities in Labov (1966:295-301) and Labov, Yaeger, and Steiner (1972:47ff).

whom have spent time in yeshiva and currently live in Orthodox communities, devoiced word-final consonants frequently.

Final devoicing is one of the least salient features of Orthodox Jewish English. I never heard anyone discuss it, I heard only one non-Orthodox Jew (a friend who is talented when it comes to linguistic observation and imitation) imitate it, and very few people noticed it on the matched guise test. The stimuli for devoicing were:

Devoicing stimuli on matched guise test:

A: Do you know where he was goingk?

B: Do you know where he was going?

The average difference in scores for these stimuli hovered around zero, meaning that people considered A and B to sound just as Orthodox and just as FFB. There were no significant differences among the various groups.

Release and aspiration of /t/

The other phonological feature I have observed is not a Yiddish influence. In general American English, the /t/ phoneme is usually glottalized word-finally and between vowels or liquids and syllabic /n/ (as in “btton” and “cttain”), and it is usually flapped intervocally (as in “bttom” and “possttibility”). In the Orthodox community, it is common to hear /t/ released and aspirated in all of these environments. According to my previous study (reported in Benor 2001, forthcoming b) and my impressions in the current study, males exhibit much higher rates of release. As I explain (ibid.), this is because /t/ release is associated with authority and learnedness – speakers release /t/ frequently when they are in situations of authority – and men are expected to be more authoritative and learned than women.

Although I did not conduct an analysis of /t/ variation in Milldale, my impression is that BTs release /t/ quite often but not as frequently as FFBs. I observed 13 BTs – six women and seven men – who used at least some /t/ release. However, since word-final and inter-vocalic /t/ are also sometimes released by the general American public, especially among those who wish to convey an intelligent persona (Bucholtz 1996, Campbell-Kibler et al. 2001), I cannot make any claims about BTs acquiring this feature.

While I can be relatively confident that BTs did not use many Hebrew loanwords or Yiddish calque influences in their pre-BT days, it is impossible for me to know how often they released their /t/s. For a few of the BTs in my study, I assume that their /t/ release was an aspect of their intelligent, nerdy, or urban styles before they became Orthodox. But it is also possible that they and others increased the frequency of their /t/ release once they joined a community where this variant is more common.

The release of word-final /t/ is somewhat associated with Orthodox Jews. On the matched guise test, I included the following sentences (t^h = release/aspiration, ? = glottal stop, P = flap):

Word-Final /t/ Release stimuli on matched guise test:

- A: All right^h. We're gonna skip the first section, but^h uh, we'll go back to it^h.
- B: All righ?. We're gonna skip the first section, buP uh, we'll go back to i?.

For the question “Do you think the speaker is Orthodox?” FFB women considered A to sound more Orthodox than B (significantly different from dummy questions – Wilcoxon: p=0.0397). BTs and, especially, FFB men showed no significant difference in their responses for A and B:

Table 5-1: Percent of matched guise test respondents who ranked A higher than B: Word-Final /t/ Release

BT-f	BT-m	FFB-f	FFB-m
29	27	41	9

SYNTACTIC/SEMANTIC/PRAGMATIC INFLUENCES FROM YIDDISH

Orthodox Jewish English includes several influences from Yiddish in syntax and in the semantic and pragmatic properties of certain words. This is not surprising, as Yiddish and English are both Germanic languages and they share many lexical items that sound similar or identical. This transfer could be considered a special type of borrowing, as Uriel Weinreich points out: “An adjustment in the content of signs with a considerable degree of homophony is a borderline case between the alternatives of (1) word transfer and (2) semantic extension” (1974:49). Some speakers are aware of these two options; a

few community members told me that “by” and “learn” are Yiddish words, and the orthography sometimes even renders them as “*bei*” and “*lern.*” However, many speakers think of “by” and “learn” as just as English as the rest of this sentence. Keeping in mind the ambiguity that Weinreich points out, I will refer to these cases as semantic extension or transfer. Another term I use is “calque,” which Crystal defines as “a type of borrowing, where the morphemic constituents of the borrowed word or phrase are translated item by item into equivalent morphemes in the new language” (1998:51).

In this section, I describe syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic transfer from Yiddish and Hebrew, as well as other distinctive features that are not due to Yiddish or Hebrew influence. I analyze them linguistically and present data on who uses them and on ideologies surrounding them. Most of these features are acquired by at least some BTs, as Figure 5-1 shows (see explanations and examples of all of these features below):

Figure 5-1: Use of syntactic/semantic/pragmatic features among BTs and FFBs

Distinctive feature	Very common among BTs (6+ BTs)	Somewhat common among BTs (3-5 BTs)	Rare among BTs (1-2 BTs)	Only heard among FFBs
Phrasal verbs	yes			
Should		yes		
Would	yes			
Could (not Yiddish influence)		yes		
By	yes			
To		yes		
To Kramer (=to the Kramers' house)			yes	
Hold	yes			
Bring		yes		
Learn	yes			
Be well		yes		
Connective so (not Yiddish infl.)	yes			
Present perfect		yes		
Already		yes		
Adverbial phrase placement			yes	
For sure	yes			
Fronting			yes	
Non-inversion of “should” questions				yes
Narrative verb first (sequentiality)			yes	
Preposition dropping		yes		
Object dropping			yes	
Sentence, no?				yes
What to			yes	
One with the other				yes

Trace pronoun				yes
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The features that are most commonly acquired by BTs are lexically based: the more frequent use of a phrase or the transfer of a semantic shade from Yiddish. Yiddish influences that affect the grammar on a more systematic level, such as fronting and object dropping, tend to be acquired less frequently. One exception is the use of “would” in if-clauses; this is common among BTs likely because it is becoming more widespread in general American English. The other exception is the connective “so” from Israeli Hebrew. BTs also tend to acquire the features that are more frequently heard among FFBs, such as “by,” “so,” and “for sure,” while less frequent features are also more rare among BTs, such as fronting, object dropping, and trace pronouns.

In general, FFBs are more likely than BTs to use Yiddish grammatical influences. This is partly because FFBs are more likely than BTs to speak Yiddish or to have Yiddish-speaking parents. But even some FFBs who are just as far removed from Yiddish as BTs use some of these grammatical features – such as the FFB girls’ non-inversion of “Should I” questions and the rabbis’ use of narrative verb-first in lectures. Why is this? Because these features have become part of Orthodox speech styles.

Phrasal verbs

A common area of calque transfer from Yiddish is phrasal verbs, a well known feature of Germanic languages (see McArthur and Atkins 1974 for a lexicon of English ones). Some English phrasal verbs convey aspectual meaning, such as the perfective “she ate up all the food,” and some have become completely opaque, such as “he might get laid off.” Yiddish has a very similar batch of phrasal verbs. Some match their English cognate material semantically (e.g., *gey avek* ‘go away’ and *es op* ‘eat up’), and others do not (e.g., *zog oys* ‘reveal, disclose’, lit. ‘say-out’ and *entfer op* ‘counter, retort’, lit. ‘answer-up’). Among Orthodox Jews in America, some of the latter category are transferred into English. This parallels other situations in which two Germanic languages are in contact. As Haugen describes, English phrasal verbs have been calqued into American Norwegian (1969:474), American Yiddish (ibid. 473), and Pennsylvania German (ibid. 364). Phrasal verbs are even transferred from Germanic languages to

languages in which phrasal verbs are not common, as Rottet (2000) describes in English-Welsh and English-Louisiana French contact.

Figure 5-2 presents some of the Yiddish-influenced phrasal verbs I heard among Orthodox Jews. Bolded entries are also included in Weiser’s (1995) lexicon with the same meaning. I assume that none of these phrasal verbs is used in the same way in general American English, as I have never heard them used this way outside of the Orthodox community and they do not appear with the same meaning in the Random House Dictionary of the English Language (2nd edition, 1987, unabridged).

Figure 5-2: Phrasal Verbs in Orthodox Jewish English (**bold** = also in Weiser 1995)

Phrasal verb	Meaning	Cognate phrasal verb in Yiddish, meaning	Who uses it in my data
answer up	‘counter, retort’	<i>entfer op</i> ‘counter, retort’	1 Yeshiva BT man
bring down	‘cite, mention, declare to future generations based on past wisdom’	<i>brengr arop</i> ‘bring from afar’ (but it may have had similar connotations in Gemora language)	1 BT woman 3 BT men 1 FFB woman 2 FFB men
fall out	‘land [on a date]’	<i>fal oys</i> ‘land [on a date]’	1 FFB man
give over	‘communicate, impart’	<i>geb iber</i> ‘communicate, impart’	4 BT men 1 FFB woman 3 FFB men
learn out	‘deduce’	<i>lern op</i> ‘deduce’ ⁴²	2 BT men 2 FFB men
leave over	‘leave behind’	<i>loz iber</i> ‘leave behind’	1 FFB man
read over	‘read (perfective)’ (not ‘peruse’)	<i>leyen iber</i> ‘read (perfective)’	1 BT man 1 FFB woman
say over	‘recapitulate, recount’	<i>zog iber</i> ‘repeat’	1 FFB man
speak out	‘say aloud, utter’ (not ‘protest or speak one’s mind’)	<i>red oys</i> ‘utter, reprimand’ or <i>red aroys</i> ‘pronounce’	1 BT man 1 FFB man
tell over	‘recount, retell, tell [a story]’	<i>dertseyl iber</i> ‘retell’	1 BT man 2 FFB men

An example of two of these phrasal verbs used in one sentence is from an FFB man teaching a class about the *seder* (‘Passover ceremony’): “If you have children by the

⁴² The cognate of “learn out,” *lern oys*, exists in Yiddish but with a different meaning: ‘learn completely’. The English cognate phrase for *lern op* would be *learn up*, but this is not used likely because of its perfective aspect. The *out* in *learn out* includes a sense of ‘derivation’.

seder, it's a time to go ahead and focus on the children, to tell them over about *emuna* ('faith'), trust and belief in *Hashem* ('God'), and to give over the *seder*."

A total of ten BTs – one woman and nine men – used at least one of these phrasal verbs, as did six FFBs – two women and four men.⁴³ It is not surprising that more men than women used phrasal verbs, since most of the tokens in my data came from the study domain, in which I observed mostly men.

While BTs do commonly acquire phrasal verbs, they sometimes use them in unique ways, which might be considered mistakes. Six men used what I refer to as “nonce phrasal verbs,” ones that only occur once in my data and do not have a clear Yiddish cognate model. While the verbs in Figure 5-2 are of Germanic origin, some of the nonce phrasal verbs include Romance material, such as “list out,” “derive out,” and “contemplate over.” It is clear that some of these verbs are formed on analogy with those that derive from Yiddish, such as “derive out” based on “learn out” and “say out” based on “speak out.” Others seem to be formed on analogy with English phrasal verbs, such as “contemplate over” based on “think over.” It seems that others are simply mistakes; the speaker meant to say one preposition and said another instead: “What do we take out from this?” instead of “take away” and “come down with an idea” instead of “come up with an idea.” Two of the men who use nonce phrasal verbs are FFBs who use several true Yiddish-influenced phrasal verbs. The other four are BTs at various stages of integration. One Peripheral BT said “teach over.” When someone asked, “Why are [the lectures about] euthanasia and *Noach* on the same tape?” he answered, “Maybe he teaches over from *Noach* about euthanasia.” The more appropriate phrasal verb in this slot would be “learn out,” and it seems that this BT combines “teach” with “tell over” to fill that slot.

I included two stimuli on the matched guise test to determine whether people recognize phrasal verbs as a feature of Orthodox Jewish English:

⁴³ As a reminder, the data in this chapter come from my observations and recordings of 24 BT women, 28 BT men, 27 FFB women, and 22 FFB men. However, this is not to say that only 1/24 of BT women and 9/28 of BT men use phrasal verbs. It is quite likely that several other speakers used phrasal verbs when I was not observing or recording them.

Phrasal Verb stimuli on matched guise test:

A: I heard him tell over that story last year.

B: I heard him tell that story last year.

BTs considered A to sound slightly more Orthodox than B, but FFBs did not. In fact, this feature elicited the largest difference in this direction between BTs and FFBs of any feature tested on the matched guise test (average of 0.45 points). The percentages of BTs and FFBs who considered this feature to be Orthodox are significantly different:

Table 5-2: Percent of matched guise test respondents who ranked A higher than B: Phrasal Verb

BT respondents	FFB respondents
45	14

Chi-square = 6.34, $p \leq 0.025$

This result is not surprising. The lexical material is all English, and there is no discourse about phrasal verbs, as there is about “by.” In fact, phrasal verbs are not usually eliminated or translated for outsiders or newcomers. For example, in introducing a video to an audience filled with non-Orthodox Jews and recent BTs, a rabbi used very few loans but said “give over” twice. Because attention is rarely drawn to phrasal verbs, FFBs would not be likely to notice them. BTs, on the other hand, grow up speaking general American English and are only exposed to these phrasal verbs when they enter the community. Therefore, they more easily recognize them as distinctly Orthodox features.

Modals

Another area of Yiddish influence is in the use of the English modals “should” and “would.” I heard community members use “should” on the model of Yiddish syntax: “that N should V.” For example, an FFB man said, “I would want that a zeydi should have a beard,” a direct translation of Yiddish *...az a zeydi zol hobn...* (cf. English “...a grandfather to have...”). A BT woman said, “I want that you should take her number,” a direct translation of Yiddish *...az du zolst nemen...* (cf. English “...you to take...”). Two BT men used the construction: “My wife had dropped him off at *shul*, that he should come in and get me” and “I do it that they should see that... there’s a different way.” I

heard the Yiddish-influenced “should” from the same number of BTs as FFBs: one BT woman (Yeshiva) and one FFB woman; three BT men (one Yeshiva and two Community) and three FFB men. Although the numbers are small, it is clear that this feature is sometimes acquired by newcomers.

Another Yiddish influence is the use of “would” in the if-clause of present and past conditionals, like in (1) and (2):

(1)	If someone would ask me...
Standard English	If someone asked me...
Yiddish	<i>Oyb emetser volt mir gefregt...</i>
Gloss of Yiddish	If someone would me asked
(2)	If you would have seen it...
Standard English	If you had seen it...
Yiddish	<i>Oyb du volst es (gehat) gezen...</i>
Gloss of Yiddish	If you would it (had) seen...

Constructions like these are very common in the Orthodox community, even among Modern Orthodox Jews (Benor 1998).

This feature may reflect two sources of influence: Yiddish and non-standard American speech. Sentences like (1) and (2) are becoming more common in general American English. However, since these constructions are used even by Orthodox Jews whose speech is otherwise quite standard, they more likely reflect Yiddish influence. The possibility of non-standard American influence complicates the analysis of BT speech. I heard the non-standard / Yiddish-influenced “would” from about the same number of BTs as FFBs: 7 BT women (mostly Yeshiva) and 4 BT men (of all stages); 7 FFB women and 3 FFB men. It is likely that at least some of these BTs acquired this feature after becoming Orthodox. But I cannot be sure, since some non-Orthodox Jews and non-Jews also use it.

Another distinctive modal in Orthodox Jewish English is the use of “could” to indicate ability in the present tense (not conditional, not past habitual). An example is from a 6-year-old girl who had just drawn a rainbow and was showing me the picture: “I could (‘can’) draw a rainbow.” In general American English, “could” would not be used once the rainbow had already been drawn. I have never heard of this usage in other

American dialects, and there is no Yiddish correlate; it seems to have arisen independently in Orthodox Jewish English. There is a dramatic age and gender split in the use of “could.” I heard it from four FFB children and adolescents – one boy and three girls between 10 and 18. I only heard it from one adult FFB woman, and I never heard it from an adult man. Three BT women used it; it is likely that they picked it up from their children or their friends’ children. It is possible that the variation in the distinctive “could” represents age grading, where people use it when they are young but will use it less or not at all when they enter a new life stage. Or it could be a change in progress; twenty years from now it could be just as common among adults as children. If it is age grading, it is interesting that BT adults sometimes use it. This could be an example of BT adults acquiring a feature that is not common among FFB adults. Either way, this is a feature to monitor, with special attention to age and gender variation.

Prepositions

In Orthodox Jewish English, a number of prepositions are used with the syntax, semantics, or pragmatics of their Yiddish cognates or semantic correlates. “For” and “of” are used in set expressions:

1. for (‘before’): “*daven for* the *amud*” – from Yiddish *daven farn amud* (‘lead services, lit. pray before the lectern’) – very common, especially among men
2. of (‘at’): “only *of simchas*” – from Yiddish *nor af simkhes* (‘[we should see each other] only at happy events’) – not very common

Other Yiddish-influenced prepositions, “by” and “to,” are used productively and quite frequently. “By” is influenced by Yiddish *bay*, and it is similar to German *bei*, Israeli Hebrew *etsel* (which is influenced by *bay*), and, for some of its functions, French *chez*. Weinreich (1968) translates Yiddish *bay* as (numbers added): “(1) at, beside, near, by; (2) with, at the house of; (3) on (the person of); (4) in the mind of; (5) about, around; (6) on (coincidence); (7) in the eyes of.” Over half of these uses are transferred to Orthodox Jewish English. Example sentences were observed in the Ner Tamid or Milldale communities:

Figure 5-3: Uses of Yiddish-influenced “by”

- (1) at [a location/structure]: “by the *mikvah* (‘ritual bath’),” “by the table” “by the restaurant,” “by the bus station”
- (2a) at the house of: “Are you eating by Rabbi Fischer?” “I’ll stay by them.”
- (2b) with, among: “By Chabad, it’s different,” “Things they’ve seen by their parents,” “By us, monarchy, unity did not mean individuals losing their individuality.”
- (4) according to the opinion of, in the mind of: “Who’s Reb Yehuda holding by?” “I *parken* (‘rule halachically’) by him.”
- (6) at [an event, time of year], on (coincidence): “If you have children by the *seder* (‘Passover ceremony’),” “by the rehearsal,” “by *Pesach* (‘Passover’)”

The syntax of “by” in Orthodox Jewish English does not parallel Yiddish exactly. For example, I heard the following sentences: “It depends whose seder you’re by,” “Who’s Reb Yehuda holding by?” and “That’s the family you’re eating by.” In Yiddish, prepositions require adjacent complements, so the last sentence would be rendered as either one of the following:

Ot iz di mishpokhe bay vemen du est.
 There is the family by whom you eat

Ot iz di mishpokhe vos du est bay zey.
 There is the family complementizer you eat by them

The Yiddish-influenced “by” is quite common among Orthodox Jews of all ages, genders, and religiosities. I observed 15 BTs (six women, nine men) using “by,” including Yeshiva, Community, and event recent Peripheral BTs. The most common usage of “by” among BTs, especially less integrated ones, was usage (2a) in Figure 5-3, as in “I stay by one of the rabbis” or “I spent *Shabbos* by them.” I heard all of the other usages from long-time or well integrated BTs, both male and female.

Some BTs go through intermediate steps, which might be considered mistakes, in their acquisition of “by.” For example, one Peripheral BT never used the Yiddish-influenced “by” in my presence, but he did say: “I ate at a family there.” He uses “at” with the syntax of “by,” while Standard English would use “with” or “at the home of.” It is likely that this BT was consciously avoiding the Yiddish-influenced “by” but was still influenced by the constructions in the community. Another intermediate step I heard is

using “by” in the place of “at,” as in one Community BT’s statement: “He spent a *Shabbos* by my house.” Most FFBs would say, “He spent a *Shabbos* by me.”⁴⁴ A second instance of this “mistake” involved an amusing exchange between Steve – a Peripheral BT – and me:

Steve: I’m staying by Joanna’s brother(’)s.
Sarah: Her brothers live together?
Steve: No. Apostrophe “s.”

Because I knew that Joanna had two brothers, I interpreted Steve’s “brother’s” as a plural word. This would have been the only grammatical analysis of this sentence for most native speakers of Orthodox Jewish English, but Steve used “by” as a lexical replacement for “at,” treating it with the same pragmatics and syntax.

Within the Orthodox community, there is a great deal of discussion about the Yiddish-influenced “by.” Several BTs and a few FFBs mentioned it to me as an Orthodox feature – for most of them, one to be avoided. “By” is considered “incorrect English” and “inaccurate.” This discourse is so strong that some BTs avoid “by” all together. There were a number of long-time Yeshiva BTs – men and women – who used several other Yiddish influences but never used “by” in my presence. I believe that this is due to negative ideology; one BT said, “I’m a BT fifteen years, and I don’t say that.” Ironically, in telling me she does not use the Yiddish grammatical influence in “by,” she used another Orthodox grammatical feature: the present tense where Standard English uses the present perfect (I’ve been a BT for fifteen years). This BT currently lives in Israel, so this construction could be an influence from Israeli Hebrew.

Ideology does not always match up completely with practice. Another BT said she tries not to say “by,” because “I want my children to speak English.” Despite her desire to avoid “by,” I heard her use it in conversations with FFBs, even the same day she made that statement. Similarly, an FFB woman says she corrects her children when they say “by.” But she herself used “by” in conversation with me.

⁴⁴ There are exceptions. I heard one token of “by someone’s house” from an FFB, which may have been an influence from BT speech.

While this feature is definitely salient among BTs and some FFBs, there are some FFBs who do not notice it. I mentioned “by” to one FFB man, and he said, “That’s normal.” I included utterances with “by” on the matched guise test:

“By” stimuli on matched guise test:

A: Yeah, we ran into them the other day by the circus.

B: Yeah, we ran into them the other day at the circus.

Because of the inclusion of “circus” in the stimuli,⁴⁵ both BTs and FFBs tended to give this speaker low scores for both A and B. The average difference in response (A-B) for “Do you think the speaker is Orthodox?” was 0.39, which is almost significantly different from the dummy questions (Wilcoxon: $p=0.0715$). But there was no significant difference between BT and FFB responses. I expect that without the confounding variable BTs would notice the Yiddish-influenced “by” at a slightly higher rate than FFBs.

The other Yiddish-influenced preposition commonly heard among Orthodox Jews is “to.” Examples include “going to them for lunch” and “going to Rabbi Hollander.” Yiddish allows the cognate preposition, *tsu*, in constructions like these, while Standard American English would render them as “going to their house for lunch” and “going to Rabbi Hollander’s (house).” This influence from Yiddish is not very salient to most Orthodox Jews, even BTs. This may be because the same preposition is used in the same slot in Standard English; the only difference is the mention of a person as opposed to a person’s house. In some sentences, the only difference between Standard and Orthodox English is an apostrophe – inaudible, of course: “I’m going to the Hollanders(’) for lunch.”

I found several pieces of evidence that “to” is not considered bad grammar to the same extent as “by.” For example, I was discussing Orthodox speech with an FFB man, and he told me that “by” is an Orthodox feature. He said, “Instead of saying, ‘He went to

⁴⁵ I decided to test meaning (6) of “by” to avoid the ambiguity of (1) and (2a), examples of which could also mean “near” (see Figure 5-3). To avoid confounding variables, I had to think of an event that would not be considered Jewish (such as “the *seder*” or the “Uncle Moishy concert”) or anathema to Ultra-Orthodoxy (such as “the movie” or “the Folk Life Festival”) and that would not have a loan-word correlate, such as “the wedding” (*chasuna*) or “the party” (*simcha*). I had recently heard an Orthodox woman say she took her children to the circus, so I decided to use that. This was an unfortunate choice, as several respondents made comments about Orthodox Jews not going to the circus.

him' saying, 'He went by him' [is Orthodox].” In characterizing one feature as Orthodox, he revealed that he does not consider another feature to be Orthodox. Similarly, a BT man said, “I’ve been by- I’ve gone to dozens of families.” This self-correction shows that he was trying to avoid the Yiddish-influenced “by” but did not have a problem using the Yiddish-influenced “to.” And an FFB woman who recorded some excerpts on the matched guise test expressed different views about these two features. She said she hates “by” and never uses it. But, she said, “going to them for lunch” sounds more natural than “going to their place for lunch.”

Some Orthodox Jews – BTs and FFBs – do notice “to,” and the matched guise results show that:

“To” stimuli on matched guise test:

A: Yeah, I’m going to them for lunch.

B: Yeah, I’m going to their place for lunch.

The average difference in responses between A and B for the “Orthodox” question was 0.51 points, significantly larger than the dummy question (Wilcoxon: $p=0.0057$) but not as large as some other features. There was no significant difference between BTs’ and FFBs’ responses.

Several BTs do use the Yiddish-influenced “to.” This is expected, since this feature ranks somewhere in the middle for salience and there is no negative discourse about it. Surprisingly, I heard no FFB men use “to.” This may be because I heard more women inviting people over (“You should come to us for *Shabbos*”) and discussing previous gatherings (“They came to us last week,” “I went to Rivka”).

In conjunction with the Yiddish-influenced “by” and “to,” I heard several Orthodox Jews use a singular last name without a definite article to indicate a family. “You should go to Kramer” means ‘to the Kramers’ house’, and “We’ll get a meal by Shifrin” means ‘at the Shifrins’ house’. I heard this from a few FFBs, including children, as well as from one BT woman.

Semantic/pragmatic influence in other words

There are also several individual words in Orthodox Jewish English whose semantics or pragmatics are borrowed from their Yiddish cognates, including “hold,” “bring,” and “learn.” These words are all quite common in the community, and many BTs do acquire them.

I have identified five distinctive meanings of “hold” or “hold by” in Orthodox Jewish English, all of which are influenced by Yiddish *halt*:

- (1) hold/*halt* (‘be located in one’s religious observance’): “Who am I to judge where they’re holding religiously?” “Where are you holding?”
- (2) hold/*halt* (‘be located in a text’): “Where are we holding?” “We’re holding here.”
- (3) hold/*halt* (‘opine, practice’): “He holds that if it goes out, you don’t have to relight it.” “The *shul* holds like that.” “He holds like Reb Yochanan.”
- (4) hold by/*halt bay* (‘accept, believe in’): “We don’t hold by the *eruv*.” “If you hold by Reb Aron,…”
- (5) hold by/*halt bay* (‘be on the verge of’): “With all that handshaking, I guess they’re holding by an agreement” (Weiser 1995:37).

With the exception of meaning (5), which I never heard in Milldale, I heard BTs use all of these “holds.” Twelve BTs – three women and nine men – used the Yiddish-influenced “hold” at least once. I heard only two FFB men and zero FFB women use it. The religious background difference may be because I heard more BTs talking about their or others’ path to religious observance (meaning 1), and the gender difference may be because meanings 2, 3, and 4 are more common in the study domain.

There is a discourse about “hold,” especially among BTs. A few BTs mentioned this as an Orthodox feature, and one BT recalled her confusing introduction to this word. She said an Orthodox man once asked her, “Where are you holding?,” meaning ‘where do you stand in your path to religious observance’. She gave the man a confused look. It was not until a few months later that she realized that her ignorance had answered his question, i.e., she had not yet been in the community long enough to know that phrase or to be very religious. Another BT demonstrated indirectly that she considers “hold” to be non-normative. She said to me, “I don’t know where you’re holding.” When I said, “What?” she clarified, “I don’t know where you are [religiously].”

In contrast, I never heard an FFB talking about “hold” as an Orthodox feature. Although some do notice it, as the matched guise data show, there is a difference between BTs and FFBs.

“Hold” stimuli on matched guise test:
 A: OK, so where are we holding?
 B: OK, so where did we leave off?

For the question “Do you think the speaker is Orthodox?” BTs marked a larger difference than FFBs. Both groups’ responses are significantly different from the dummy questions (Wilcoxon: $p=0.0010$ for BTs and 0.0323 for FFBs).

Table 5-3: Percent of matched guise test respondents who ranked A higher than B: Hold

BT respondents	FFB respondents
69	43

Chi-square = 3.94, $p \leq 0.05$

Other words whose semantics or pragmatics are influenced by Yiddish include:

- bring (‘cite as part of an argument’ < *brenng*): “examples brought by Rav Hirsh”
- learn (‘study traditional texts’ < *lern*): “Are we going to learn next week?”
- be well (‘take care’, used to end a conversation < *zay gezunt*): “OK, be well.”

These calques tend to go unnoticed by FFBs, as they use all English lexical material. But some of them are discussed among BTs; for example, one Peripheral BT used “Be well” in her imitation of *frum* speech. A Yeshiva BT stopped himself from saying the Yiddish-influenced “learn” when telling a story to two Peripheral BTs: “And I don’t suspect that this man’s been lear- studying in yeshiva for the last, you know, thirty to forty years.” However, there seems to be no negative value attached to these Yiddish-influenced words; they are not seen as bad grammar. BTs do pick them up fairly frequently.

A Hebrew influence: Connective “so”

Orthodox Jewish English uses the connective “so” in environments where general American English disallows it: “If I see someone who’s using the wrong language, so I’ll realize that they’re just becoming *frum* (‘religious’)” and “Since we don’t have a Temple

nowadays, so we don't do that." In general American English, the result clause can start with "so" only if the cause clause is a full sentence. When the cause clause begins with "When," "Since," "Because," or "If," (so) the use of "so" at the beginning of the result clause is ungrammatical in non-Orthodox English. This feature seems to be an influence from Israeli Hebrew, in which sentences like the following are quite common:

Im at ohevet oto, az tagidi lo.
 If you like him, so tell him

It is not an influence from Yiddish, because Yiddish word order requires a verb in the first slot of the second clause, where the "so" is in these constructions.

The extra connective "so" has become fairly common among Orthodox Jews – both those who have spent time in Israel and those who have not. I noticed seven FFBs and six BTs (all Yeshiva BTs) using it. The matched guise test included utterances to test this feature:

Connective "so" stimuli on matched guise test:
 A: Since they were here early, so they can start now.
 B: Since they were here early, they can start now.

The results indicate that this feature is not very salient. For the question about whether the speaker is Orthodox, the difference in responses between A and B approached 0. The percentages of BTs and FFBs who rated A higher than B were very small and were not significantly different.

Table 5-4: Percent of matched guise test respondents who ranked A higher than B: Connective "so"

BT respondents	FFB respondents
21	18

Not significant (Chi-square)

I rarely heard people talk about this feature. But one FFB rabbi who took the matched guise test said he considers the "so" to be an Orthodox feature and noted that BTs pick it up quickly. He is right that several BTs use the connective "so," but I never heard a recent or Peripheral BT use it. One recent Yeshiva BT who does use many other linguistic features does not use the connective "so." But she does use "so" frequently as

a discourse marker at the beginning of sentences, as in: “OK, so the sister’s not here, but her husband’s here” and “So he’s helping someone now.” It is possible that she used “so” like this even before she became Orthodox, as it has recently become more common in general American English. But it is also possible that she uses “so” frequently as a discourse marker in emulation of the Orthodox connective “so.” If this is the case, it is an example of a BT trying to use a feature of Orthodox Jewish English but succeeding only partially. She has increased the frequency of her use of “so” but has not acquired the correct syntax.

Tense

I heard a few men and women use the present where general American English would use the present perfect: “I’m a BT fifteen years, and I don’t say that” (‘I have been a BT’) and “I know someone who’s already frum for 20 years” (‘who’s been religious’). This could be an influence both from Yiddish and from Israeli Hebrew. Since I only heard a few BTs use this construction, I was surprised to read it in an e-mail from a Peripheral BT who just started studying in a yeshiva in the New York area: “I’m still struggling with the vocabulary, but I remind myself that it takes time, and I’m only here a little over a week” (‘I’ve only been here’).

This construction is often used with the word “already,” since, in Yiddish, *shoyn* (‘already’) with a present-tense verb indicates the present perfect:⁴⁶

Ikh voyn do shoyn akht yor.
I live here already eight years
‘I have lived here (for) eight years.’

In addition, I noticed several speakers – BTs and FFBs, men and women – using “already” in other environments where Yiddish would but general American English would not. For example, one FFB rabbi used the following sentences in lectures, all of which would likely not use “already” in general American English:

1. It’s water that has been treaded for many years already.

⁴⁶ In addition, Israeli Hebrew uses *kvar* (‘already’) in a similar way, exhibiting strong influence from Yiddish. But it is also quite common to hear Hebrew present perfect sentences without *kvar*.

2. They've got svelt, and ... that was already like a big thing already.
3. It's already considered conquered already.

Even Yiddish would likely not use *shoy*n twice in the last two sentences. It seems to me that the frequent use of “already” has become a marker of Orthodox identity. Therefore, it is not surprising that a few BTs do acquire this feature, as in a BT woman’s “I came to it with more already” and a BT man’s “/oy/ is already like the next level.”

Word order

Yiddish influence is also evident in Orthodox Jewish English word order. The following sentences place an adverbial phrase between a verb and its object, which is grammatical in Yiddish but not in general American English:

1. You'll be stuck studying all day Torah. (FFB man)
2. I was able to pick up pretty well the lingo. (BT man)

The adverbial phrase “for sure” is also sometimes used in slots where general American English would likely not use it:

1. A biblical name for sure has a Hebrew root. (BT man)
2. If I were to go [to] a meeting at the *yeshiva*, I would for sure put stockings on. (BT woman)
3. If it's warping, it's for sure *kosher*. (FFB man)
4. You think he's for sure Orthodox? (FFB girl)

General American English would likely use “definitely” in the slot where “for sure” is or would place “for sure” at the end of each of these sentences. Sentences 2, 3, and 4 are emulative of Yiddish word order, as the adverbial phrase directly follows the main verb.

In addition, I observed a few instances of fronting, also called topicalization or Y-movement (Prince 1981), which was associated with Jews and New Yorkers a generation ago (Hudson-Edwards 1980):

1. 180 days worth of party he has there. (FFB man)
2. This word I didn't know. (“This” is not stressed, and “this word” is not used in contrast to anything). (BT man)

Although I did not observe the fronting of an indefinite object in Milldale (e.g., “In a hotel she lives!”), I have heard this in other Orthodox communities, perhaps due to more intensive contact with Yiddish.

Another distinctive aspect of Orthodox word order is not inverting the subject and verb in questions that begin with “Should I...?” I heard five FFB girls ask questions like “I should tell you what got him interested?” and “I should show you something?” One FFB father corrected his daughters when they said, “I should...?” His wife told me that they picked up this construction in the bungalow colony in the Catskill mountains where they – and many other Orthodox Jews – spend their summers, and they have been trying to get rid of it ever since. It is possible that this feature is more common in the New York area and is spreading to the younger generation in Philadelphia. This is a syntactic feature that BTs do not pick up, perhaps because it is heard mostly or only from younger people.

A final Yiddish influence on word order is heard mainly in learning settings, specifically during a *shiur* (‘lecture’): beginning a narrative-internal sentence with a verb to indicate sequentiality or effect: “Says the rabbi...” (rather than “So the rabbi says...”). This is a direct transfer from Yiddish, which is normally verb-second but uses verb-first sentences with the same pragmatic effect. One BT rabbi uses verb-first twice in the following excerpt from a lecture:

We said before that that um the *mitzvah* is from sunset till ... the feet leave the marketplace. Asks the Gemora, how much time is that? In other words, how much time is that till the feet leave the marketplace? How much time? Said Raba...

In general American English, the underlined portions would likely be “Then the *Gemora* asks” and “Raba said.” I noticed three rabbis using this construction in lectures, one FFB and two Yeshiva BTs.

Other

Another Yiddish influence common in the English of Orthodox Jews is not using a preposition with statements of time (***) indicates omitted preposition):

1. Her bus gets in *** 10:15. (FFB woman)
2. I'm already *frum* ('religious') *** 20 years. (BT woman)
3. *** *Chol hamoed* ('down time between the holiest days of a long holiday') I'm not going to work, *bli neder* ('without a vow'). (FFB woman)
4. Next year *** *Tisha b'Av* ('Ninth of Av holiday'), we will have another one. (FFB man)
5. What are you doing *** *Sukkos* ('Feast of Tabernacles')? (BT man)

General American English prefers prepositions in these sentences. Of course, there are other expressions of time that do not take a preposition, such as "I'll see you Wednesday" or "Next Christmas we'll get a tree." But even other people who discuss plans for the Jewish holidays in 3, 4, and 5 – religious non-Orthodox Jews – would say, "During *chol hamoed*," "on *Tisha b'Av*," and "for *Sukkos*."

Nobody mentioned the omission of prepositions as an aspect of Orthodox speech, but a few people did mention two other features: object dropping, which Clyne et al. (2002) report in the English of Australian Jews, and the construction I refer to as "Sentence, no?" I heard object dropping from an FFB boy – on Purim: "I've got some vodka. You want?" and from a BT man: "He looked for Jewish kids. ... And he found!" I heard "Sentence, no?" from an FFB woman. She made a declarative statement and added "no" at the end with rising intonation, transforming it into a question: "There are Jewish ways of talking, no?" These two constructions are common in Yiddish.

All of the people quoted in this section are native English speakers, and very few of them have any speaking ability in Yiddish. An FFB man who learned Yiddish in yeshiva as a teenager has even more influences from Yiddish, such as in "He gave him what to eat" (< Yiddish *vos tsu esn*, cf. "something to eat") and "They're not synchronized one with the other" (< Yiddish *eyner mitn andern*, cf. "with each other"). He also sometimes uses a resumptive pronoun, where general American English has only a trace:

1. nylon vessels that we would *kasher* ('render kosher') them during the year
2. many things that we wouldn't buy them
3. There's grime that's caught there that you can't get it out.

These influences may be because he has a greater proficiency in Yiddish than most of the Milldale community, and/or because they are one aspect of how he constructs himself as

a Yeshivish Orthodox Jew, more strict in observance and more learned than some of his fellow community members.

DISCOURSE MARKERS IN THE STUDY DOMAIN

When Orthodox men “learn” Gemora – either in pairs or in classroom settings – they use a distinct style of Orthodox Jewish English, referred to as “Yeshivish” (see Chapter 4). This style includes many Hebrew, Aramaic, and Yiddish loanwords, semantic influences from Yiddish, and frequent word-final /t/ release. These features are also found in speech outside the study domain but at lower frequencies. In addition, there are a few linguistic features that occur almost solely in the study domain: the verb first construction discussed above, several discourse markers, and chanting intonation.

Some discourse markers are used as signposts for transitions between discussion of the text and reading various parts of the Gemora’s page. When the speaker is about to return to the text of the Gemora after reading a commentary, he might say, “*Zogt di Gemora...*” (Yiddish ‘The Gemora says...’). When he is about to return to the text after a discussion, he might say “*Vayter*” (‘further’) or “*Zogt di Gemora vayter*” (‘The Gemora continues’). When he is about to read Rashi’s commentary on the text, which is published on the same page, he might say, “*Zogt Rashi*” (‘and Rashi says’). A quotative used in study sessions is “like this,” a calque of Yiddish *azoy*. This is used to introduce a rabbi’s quote, as in: “The Rambam says like this. He says: [text]” and “He answers like this: [text].”

Yeshivish also includes the frequent use of five English words or phrases that are likely not influenced by Yiddish: “inside,” “outside,” “in other words,” “over here,” and “over there.” Learning partners use “inside” and “outside” to negotiate whether they will read and translate the text (“Let’s go inside”; “Why don’t you read inside”) or discuss it (“We’ll talk outside”; “Can you tell me outside what we just talked about please?”). “In other words” has the same discourse function as in general American English – to introduce an alternative way of saying what was just said – but it is used with great frequency. For example, one FFB rabbi used it 17 times in his 46-minute study session. Phonologically, “in other words” is often reduced, sometimes even to [n ɔ dz].

The phrases “over here” and “over there” likely originated as deictics, indicating locations on the page of the Gemora. They are sometimes still used this way, as in “As it says over here, [text].” But they are also used when no text is present – to indicate a case or situation that one is not discussing, as in “You’ll have to look at the *halacha* (‘law’) and see what the *halacha* is over there” or to indicate a location that is not present, as in the two instances in the following excerpt from an FFB rabbi:

In other words, the fire is dancing on that spot over there on the range. That’s enough. I don’t think that it has to be a *medura* (‘fire’). It doesn’t have to be a torch over there.

Sometimes these phrases seem to have no deictic function and serve merely to index the speaker’s Orthodox or learned identity:

So the first thing is to make sure it doesn’t spread. After making sure it doesn’t spread, then you can focus on the actual building itself. So that’s an interesting lesson over there.

The phrases are sometimes used outside of the study domain; I noticed two FFB men using them in informal conversation.

Because “over here” and “over there” are so frequent and are used with different pragmatics from general American English, they are salient to some BTs. Mark, a Peripheral BT, mentioned this feature in the following exchange: Stuart was relating a past experience to Mark and said, “I looked in and saw people singing.” Mark said, “If you wanted to say that in Yeshivish, you’d say you looked in over there and saw people singing.” Then he turned to me and said, “That was for you.” While Mark would not have made this comment if the researcher interested in language had not been there, it demonstrates that he considers “over there” to be Yeshivish. In fact, BT men noticed “over here” significantly more than BT women (Chi-square = 7.81, $p \leq 0.01$) and than all FFBs combined (Chi-square = 12.86, $p \leq 0.001$):

“Over here” stimuli on matched guise test:

A: There’s a very interesting question over here.

B: There’s a very interesting question.

Table 5-5: Percent of matched guise test respondents who ranked A higher than B:
Over here

BT-f	BT-m	FFB-f	FFB-m
21	73	12	27

Yeshivish also includes two particles that express praise: “Oh!” and “Pshhhh!” In a classroom setting or a learning pair where one member is more advanced than another, the teacher will use these particles to inform the student that he said the correct answer or made a good point. “Oh!” ([?o?]) is said very quickly on relatively high tone, without rising or falling intonation. It is often used where general American English would use “Right!” or “You got it!” “Pshhhh!” ([pʃ::]) is an unvoiced consonant cluster, in which the [ʃ] is held for an entire second or even longer. The teacher usually uses it to praise the student’s interpretation of the text. “Oh!” is a borrowing from Yiddish, and “Pshhhh!” is a borrowing from Israeli Hebrew. I heard both of them several times in classes and one-on-one study sessions.

BTs in the study domain do tend to use these discourse markers. Of course, they are highly influenced by their teachers in this regard. One BT used the Yiddish markers like “*Zogt di gemora*” frequently, because his FFB study partner instructed him to do so. And another used “inside” and “outside” in imitation of his partner. Those BTs who become teachers use these markers and teach them to their students. And when their students make an impressive point, they sometimes praise them with “Oh!” or “Pshhhh!”

PROSODY

Orthodox Jewish English has several unique aspects of intonation: rise-fall chanting in the reading and translation of Gemora, rise-fall chanting in classroom discussion, especially in if-then sentences, the high-falling pitch boundary, and the rise-fall dismissive contour. These contours are salient in the Orthodox community, and BTs do tend to incorporate them into their speech.

The Gemora is not punctuated, and readers use the rises and falls of the chants to delineate sentences and subordinate clauses (Weinreich 1956, Heilman 1981, 1983). For example, the following phrase from Rabbi Nussbaum’s study session includes rise-fall

chanting with a high-mid contour on the last word (Double underline indicates high tone, dotted underline indicates mid tone):

Kagon she'oyrach shtey hashuros min hamizrach u'mayriv
The length of the two rows was from east to west

Kagon she is rendered in spoken intonation, *oy* is given a high tone, and the rest of the phrase until *mayriv* is chanted in a monotone, about a major third below the pitch of *oy*. Since *mayriv* is right before the phrase boundary, it is given a high-mid contour. When he finishes reading the sentence a few minutes later, he ends it on a pitch even lower than the mid tone of *riv*. When the speakers translate the Hebrew or Aramaic text into English, they often imitate the intonation they just used. In this case, Rabbi Nussbaum translates the phrase with spoken intonation until “east to west,” which he chants with the same rise-fall contour as “*hamizrach u'mayriv*.”

As Weinreich (1956) points out, chants like this, “deprived of their singing voice quality, are easily transferred by scholars from the reading of the Talmud to oral discussions about it, and thence to ordinary conversation, especially pilpulistic [‘hair-splitting’] arguments on intellectual subjects” (Weinreich 1956:640). Rise-fall chanting is especially common in if-then sentences that are intended as important points, such as the following:

He says that had they not been rushed out of Egypt, they would have made their matzas in Egypt itself.

Rabbi Roseman, teaching a class about Passover, renders the first three words in spoken intonation and chants the rest of the sentence. “Had,” “E,” and “self” are all given high tones (“self” also has a slight fall), while the rest of the words are chanted in a low monotone. Another example is from Rabbi Hollander, adopting the voice of the biblical Rebecca:

If you don't want me to have children, fine, but if you're going to make a miracle, ... then why am I having a trouble(d) pregnancy?

Rabbi Hollander chants the first phrase, giving “if” a high tone and the rest a low tone, and then he returns to spoken intonation with “fine.”

Although I never heard chanting intonation used outside of the study domain (except in imitations and performances of Orthodox speech), I often heard a remnant of it, which Weinreich calls the “rise-fall” contour (1956:633-4). Although the entire sentence does involve a rise and a fall in pitch, the distinctive aspect of the intonation is what I refer to as a high-falling pitch boundary. As Wennerstrom explains, “pitch boundaries are the pitch configurations at the ends of phrases, accompanied by a lengthening of the final syllables” (2001:20). Following Pierrehumbert and Hirschberg (1990), Wennerstrom describes several pitch boundaries and their discourse functions, including high-rising, low-rising, and partially falling ones. The high-falling pitch boundary is not mentioned, because it is not a part of general American English. However, this pitch boundary is quite common in the Orthodox community; I heard it from several men and women, BTs and FFBs.

This pitch boundary begins on the last stressed syllable of the phrase. If that syllable is phrase-ultimate (see 1 to 3 below), then the entire high-falling contour falls on it. If there are unstressed syllables following the stressed syllable (see 3 below), then the stressed syllable is high and the following ones are lower. This contour occurs at the end of introductory phrases and embedded clauses. Weinreich explains that it is used at a “dramatized transition” between phrases (1956:635). Since this pitch boundary does not occur sentence-finally, the pitch drops to a middle level rather than falling to the bottom of the speaker’s range (curly underline indicates high-falling pitch boundary):

1. If he’s just starting out, maybe you could...
2. Years back, they would have maybe just had one video... So now, they make it a point to make ... two videos.
3. The Yeshiva, which is on [Harris] Road, is ...

Sometimes, especially in women’s speech, the rise in pitch happens over several words, or even the whole phrase, and the fall in pitch happens only on the last stressed syllable (curly underline indicates rise; **curly underline** indicates rise fall):

4. As I was becoming *frum*, I got more interested in it.

5. If you're going to the store, get me some milk.

This longer rise-fall contour seems to have a different pragmatic effect. Whereas the contour in 1-3 simply indicates a (dramatized) phrase boundary in the sentence, the contour in 4 and 5 seems to indicate a laid-back or even dismissive stance.

A different rise-fall contour that definitely indexes dismissiveness is used with the word “whatever.” Blake et al. (1999) analyze several different intonation contours in the discourse marker “whatever,” such as the high-falling “whatever” that indicates ‘it doesn’t make a difference’. Their list of “whatever” contours does not include the rise-fall “whatever” that I have heard only in the Orthodox community, both among Modern Orthodox Jews and in Milldale. This Orthodox “whatever” is rarely used on its own as a response, like those described by Blake et al. Rather, it appears either sentence-internally or initially and indicates a dismissive attitude toward a previous statement (often one’s own, as in 1) or toward the present statement (2):

1. Somehow it just leaks out [that someone is a BT]. Whatever, it’s not the worst thing.
2. He was, whatever, not that *frum*.

Although I did not conduct a systematic study of variation in intonation, I noted when I thought I heard speakers using the various rise-fall contours, both in study sessions and in everyday speech. I calculated the percents of BTs whom I observed for at least three hours who used these contours in my presence. The results of this informal method of data collection show that BTs do tend to acquire Orthodox intonation contours. The more integrated a BT is, the more likely she or he is to use chanting intonation, high-falling pitch boundaries, or rise-fall dismissive intonation:

Table 5-6: Percentage of BTs who used Orthodox rise-fall contours

Peripheral (out of 8 BTs)	Community (out of 10 BTs)	Yeshiva (out of 11 BTs)
0	40	82

None of the Peripheral BTs used distinctive intonation, almost half of the Community BTs did, and almost all of the Yeshiva BTs did. Clearly, intonation is an aspect of Orthodox speech that is gradually acquired by newcomers.

This acquisition is not surprising, considering that intonation is among the most salient features of Orthodox Jewish English. Several BTs, FFBs, and non-Orthodox Jews mentioned “tonality,” “the lilt” or the “sing-song quality” when I told them I was researching Orthodox language. Imitations of Orthodox speech often involved chanting or other manipulations of intonation. And one FFB in New York said that he can always “spot a *frummie*” who calls into a radio talk show, based mostly on his or her intonation.

An accompaniment to chanting intonation is thumb waving. The speaker makes a thumb-up hand shape and waves the thumb up and down in an approximate horizontal figure eight. The upward and downward movements accompany the rise and fall of the intonation. I saw four FFB men wave their thumbs like this spontaneously, both in learning settings and in informal conversation, but I saw more people – FFBs, BTs, and non-Orthodox Jews – do it metalinguistically when I mentioned my research focus on Orthodox language.

Another aspect of prosody associated with Orthodox Jews is fast speech rate. Non-Orthodox Jews, BTs, and FFBs said that Orthodox Jews, especially FFBs, speak more quickly. One FFB said, “We think quickly” and noted that his non-Orthodox relatives talk more slowly. Because of methodological issues,⁴⁷ I did not analyze speech rate quantitatively. But I do have a number of mentions in my fieldnotes of Orthodox Jews (one FFB yeshiva boy, one FFB rabbi, one FFB woman, and one BT woman) talking so fast at times that I had trouble understanding them.

I am not the only one who struggled to follow fast speech. There is an ideology that Orthodox speech – especially among young men in yeshiva – is more slurred and harder to understand. One BT told me about people she met from a yeshiva community: “You don’t understand half the things they’re saying, they talk so fast.” And an FFB mother said that her boys came home from yeshiva speaking in a more “slurred” way, annoying her and her husband. She says, “It’s become the style today for yeshiva boys to

mumble. This has definitely been an issue for us.” Speech rate, along with intonation, is a salient aspect of Orthodox speech that deserves further research.

THE CLICK HESITATION MARKER

In the spoken Hebrew of contemporary Israel, there is a click hesitation marker that expresses slight negative affect. This click is a palatal implosive, formed with the lips slightly open and unrounded. It likely derives from the ‘no’ click that is widespread in the Arab and Mediterranean world. However, the ‘no’ click is made with lip rounding and forms its own unit of meaning. The hesitation click is used for self-repair, to express a negative reaction to the previous or current statement, and as a general hesitation marker. The click is phonetically and pragmatically similar to the practice called “suck-teeth” or “kiss-teeth” in African diaspora communities (Rickford and Rickford 1999[1976], Cutler 2003, Patrick and Figueroa 2004).

The hesitation click is common in Orthodox Jewish English in America. I argue that it is the result of language contact, likely borrowed by Americans who spend time in Israeli yeshivas and bring it back to America with them. The click seems to be a very “contagious” linguistic feature, as even those who have never spent time in Israel use it in their everyday speech. Today it is extremely common in Orthodox communities. Aside from loanwords, this was the feature that I heard from the most speakers: 22 BTs and 13 FFBs. It is difficult to quantify this feature in a controlled way, because it is used less in interview speech than in everyday conversation.⁴⁸ However, my impression is that women and young people use clicks more than men and older people.

The click rates very low in salience. There is no discourse about the click, and it certainly does not have a name as it does in African diaspora communities. Nobody ever

⁴⁷ There is a great deal of inter- and intra-speaker variation in speech rate. A comparison of Orthodox with non-Orthodox speech rate should measure many speakers in each group in various social settings and should control for gender, religious background, and other factors.

mentioned the click spontaneously, and when I brought it up by imitating it, people did not generally know what I was referring to. The responses to the click stimuli on the matched guise test reflect its low salience:

Click stimuli on matched guise test:

A: But sometimes it's more- [click] I don't know how to explain it.

B: But sometimes it's more- [brief pause] I don't know how to explain it.

Neither BTs' nor FFBs' responses are significantly different from the dummy question. And while BTs' scores are slightly higher than FFBs', the difference is not significant.

Only one respondent – an FFB rabbi – made a comment about the click stimuli on the matched guise test. He said that he associates the click with Orthodox Jews but not necessarily with FFBs, because BTs tend to pick it up quickly. Although I never heard a hesitation click from a Peripheral BT, I heard many from Community and Yeshiva BTs, even those who have only been Orthodox for a year or two. I also found myself picking up this contagious click and using it even outside of the Orthodox community.

SUBTRACTIVE FEATURES

Orthodox speech styles differ from general American English not only in additional features like loanwords, distinctive intonation patterns, and Yiddish semantic influence but also in features that are avoided. Because of religious and cultural norms, it is very uncommon to hear curse words, sexual innuendoes, or public discussion of other taboo matters. Also, people sometimes avoid talking negatively about others because of the religious prohibition against *loshon hora* ('gossip', lit. 'evil tongue'). When I ask recent BTs if they have changed the way they talk, they tend to discuss these subtractive features before any additive ones, probably because they are the subject of prescriptive – and proscriptive – discourse in the community.

⁴⁸ One woman used no clicks in the recorded interview but several before and after the tape recorder was on. And several interviewees began to use clicks only several minutes into an interview. Perhaps this is because the click is more common in informal speech and speakers use it more when they feel comfortable with the format of the interview. Or perhaps there are discourse reasons for this pattern; clicks seem to be more frequent in heated discussion than in the question-answer and narrative formats that are common at the beginnings of interviews. Another issue with analyzing the click is that some non-Orthodox Americans use a similar click as a hesitation marker or to express disapproval (tsk, tsk, tsk). However, I have never

Loshon hora ('gossip')

The discourse against *loshon hora* is extremely widespread. Because of a major campaign by the Chofetz Chaim Foundation, named after a rabbi who wrote about the importance of avoiding *loshon hora*, there are signs (the words "loshon hora" with a red slash through them), bumper stickers ("Put the brakes on loshon hora"), and classes devoted to this issue in Orthodox communities around the country. I noticed the signs, which are modeled after No Smoking signs, at Ner Tamid and at the homes of a few BTs. One BT told me that he has this sign on his desk at his workplace and even tells his non-Jewish co-workers not to gossip by saying, "Shhh! *Loshon hora*." I even heard a children's chant: "*Loshon hora, lamed hey*. You belong in pre-1-A!" *Lamed* and *hey* are the initials of the Hebrew words *loshon* and *hora*, and "pre-1-A" is the designation for the kindergarten class. *Loshon hora* is so proscribed that even a kindergartener should know not to use it.

Loshon hora is seen as inhibiting the coming of the Messiah, as a well known rabbi explains on a poster from the Chofetz Chaim Foundation (orthography is as in the original; translations are mine):

"To be me'karev ('bring close') the Geulah ('redemption, Messiah') and spare us from pain, the best suggestion, as we know from the Chofetz Chaim, is to study the halachos ('laws') of *loshon hora*, to acquaint ourselves with the seriousness of the aveirah ('sin'), to be careful with people in our attitudes, to curb *sinas chinam* ('baseless hatred'), to promote *Ahavas Yisrael* ('love of Israel'), and mainly to keep away from talking *loshon hora* and *r'chilus* ('gossip')." – The Novominsker Rebbe, HaRav Yaakov Perlow, <shlit"a> (Hebrew letters – acronym: 'May he live many good years, Amen')

According to videotaped lectures shown to many community members – both in Milldale and at Ner Tamid – *loshon hora* is the greatest sin, because it allows *Soton* ('Satan') to speak badly of us in the heavenly tribunal. These videos define *loshon hora* as any communication that will harm another Jew. There is debate about whether gossip about non-Jews is acceptable.

heard it used outside of the Jewish community for self-repair (some non-Orthodox Jews with ties to Israel also use it).

With the discourse about *loshon hora* so present in the Orthodox community, some people are quite vigilant about avoiding gossip. For example, in telling a story about a woman who had a nose ring, an FFB woman avoided mentioning her name or her relationship to others present. Another woman told me that when her BT daughter recounts one of her children's actions that might be considered misbehavior, she refuses to say which child she is talking about. Some people even had a problem with classifying speakers as BT or FFB on the matched guise test, citing the prohibition against *loshon hora*. Despite the vigilance, *loshon hora* is certainly not absent from the community. I heard a number of conversations about other Jews that might be considered negative. And some people were happy to volunteer their views on other community members. Even so, I never heard anything as mean as some of El-Or's consultants' criticisms of "Hannah," which El-Or (1994) reports in her ethnography of Ultra-Orthodox women in Israel.

Obscenity

Curse words are considered unacceptable in the Orthodox community. One FFB rabbi said that he was flying across the country and was offered free headphones. He used them to watch reruns of "I Love Lucy," but he stopped watching the feature film – which must have been edited for airplane use – after realizing that it included offensive language. The stigma against obscenity is nicely illustrated in the following description of "Rabbi Avrohom Yaakov Hakohein Pam" in *The Jewish Observer*⁴⁹ (orthography is as in original; translations are mine):

A favorite topic [for his lectures] was *nekiyus hadibur* ('verbal hygiene'), encouraging his *talmidim* ('students') to speak in a fine way. He would express himself in a style I've never heard from other *gedolim* ('important men') of his stature. [He said,] "Words like 'crazy' or 'stupid' should never pass your lips." ...

Bachurim ('boys') in the *Beis Hamidrash* ('study hall') had a discussion regarding the English word for *Gehinnom* ('hell'). Is it proper to use the word?

They resolved to ask Rabbi Pam. The following conversation ensued.

"*Rebbe* ('rabbi'), there are some words that are not really 'dirty' words, but they are sometimes used as curse words...."

⁴⁹ "A Rebbe for Our Generation," by Rabbi Yisroel Reisman, *The Jewish Observer*, Dec. 2001, 14-21.

“What do you mean?”

“Well, um, you know, there are some words that have an innocent meaning, but some people consider them ‘*nivul peh*’ (‘obscenity’).”

“Like what?”

“(Hesitantly)... words that crude people use... but they don’t really mean anything bad...”

“Oh, I see; you mean words like *fress!* (‘gorge oneself, eat like a pig’)

The *bachur* (‘boy’) had his answer (14-15).

As the author implies, Rabbi Pam’s is an extreme approach to obscenity; he may not have even been familiar with the word “hell.” But the fact that the author avoided writing the word “hell” points to the stigma against obscenity.

During my fieldwork in Milldale, I never heard “hell,” “bullshit,” or “fuck up,” but I did hear stand-ins: “heck” (BT woman, FFB boy, FFB man: “What the heck does that mean?”), “bologna” (FFB woman: “That’s bologna.”), and “fudge up” (BT woman: “I thought if you told them what to say it would fudge up my answer”). There were some questionable words that I heard only from BTs, words like “screw up” and “sucks,” which have sexual connotations that are not immediately evident. I heard two Community BT men use “screw” (“Someone screwed with [the air conditioning]”; “They screwed up”), and one of them told me that his wife corrects him when he says this.

In addition, the two times that I heard the word “shit” were from BTs. One was from a recent BT who let it slip when she realized she was late; only one other BT and I were present. The other was in the context of a joke. I was hanging out at Ner Tamid with a few other non-Orthodox Jews, recent BTs, and Yakov-Tzvi, a long-time BT who works in outreach in another city. One of the recent BTs said he was about to go on a *shidach* (‘set-up’) date, and Yakov-Tzvi responded with a joke: “Why do they call it a *shidach*? Because you get there and say “Shit. *Ach*” (meaning you are not pleased with your date; the Yiddish particle *ach* expresses disapproval).

Yakov-Tzvi is quite comfortable being Orthodox and considers himself an “FFT” – *Frum From Teshuva*, a BT who has been Orthodox so long that he has relaxed in his strict observance of some community norms (see Chapter 7). By telling a joke with the word “shit,” Yakov-Tzvi was performing this FFT identity. But even he would not use the phrase “fucked up” in his imitation of deadheads at a concert, using “f-ed [Eft] up” instead: “Yeah, man, we didn’t get tickets, but we were standing right outside. You

could hear a lot of the music from out there, because it was real loud. We got so f-ed up, man.” An FFB would likely not do this imitation in the first place and would even more likely not say “f-ed up.” The same is true for a less seasoned BT who might worry about the reaction to his treading near the boundary between decency and obscenity. But even the FFT who used the word “shit” did not consider it appropriate to say “fuck” in this Orthodox setting.

I tested BTs’ and FFBs’ reactions to mild obscenity on the matched guise test. I knew it would be extremely offensive to include a word like “shit” or even “hell” as a stimulus, so I tested the word “suck”:

“Sucks” stimuli on matched guise test:

A: This is really bad.

B: This totally sucks.

This feature tied with the [x]~[k] variable for the most dramatic responses. The average difference Orthodox Jews noticed between A and B was 0.91 points. 13 respondents noted a difference of two or three points (four is the largest possible difference).

Table 5-7: Percent of matched guise test respondents who ranked A higher than B: Sucks

Question:	BT respondents	FFB respondents	Significance (Chi square)
Do you think the speaker is Orthodox?	55	75	Not Sign.
FFB?	69	54	Not Sign.

A few respondents mentioned that B could be Modern Orthodox. Indeed, in my research among Modern Orthodox Jews, I did hear “sucks,” “screwed over,” and other words that are considered obscene among Jews closer to the Ultra-Orthodox side of the spectrum.

While most respondents were familiar with the slang use of “sucks,” a few FFBs asked me to replay that stimulus and seemed unaware of the word. One FFB man repeated “This totally sucks” when his wife asked for clarification, apparently not knowing the obscene connotations. Their daughter giggled and did not repeat the word. In discussions with me after the matched guise test, most respondents avoided saying “sucks,” referring to it instead as the “curse word” or “bad word.” A few BTs did say it,

which is not surprising considering their responses on the matched guise test (BTs ranked the “sucks” stimulus more likely to be BT at a slightly greater rate than FFBs did).

Because of the prohibition against saying God’s name in vain (one of the Ten Commandments), Orthodox Jews are even expected not to say things like “Oh my God” and “What in God’s name is going on here?” However, for some BTs, these phrases are so ingrained in their verbal repertoire that they have trouble avoiding them. “Gosh” is sometimes used as a substitute for “God,” and one FFB girl told me that when she hears people say “Oh gosh” she assumes they are BT.

Slang

Related to the issue of obscenity is the use of slang. Some slang words are not as commonly heard among Orthodox Jews as among their non-Orthodox and non-Jewish neighbors. There is no prohibition against words like “dude” and “oh man.” But the norm in the Orthodox community is for these words not to be used – except among BTs. For example, Levine (2003:80) describes a BT who blends into the Orthodox community socially and visually, but when he uses slang like “cool” and “a real trip” he betrays his secular upbringing. Similarly, when a recent BT woman gave a *dvar torah* (‘sermon’) at Ner Tamid, she used some slang: “kick ‘em in the butt” and “Potifara had the hots for Yosef.” The audience laughed for a while, because of the incongruity of this colloquial language embedded in a religious speech act. Later that *Shabbos*, when the FFB Rabbi Hollander was giving a *dvar torah*, he made joking references to these phrases but did not actually say them.

For some BTs, maintaining some slang in their active vocabulary is one way they maintain part of their previous self. I observed several BTs who use many additive linguistic features, like loanwords, Yiddish semantic influences, and distinctive intonation, but do not subtract some of the slang words and borderline foul language that are rare among FFBs. They might not be as likely to use words like “dude” and “screw up” in front of FFBs, but they do not avoid them all together. The combination of slang with Orthodox linguistic features allows these BTs to maintain aspects of their pre-Orthodox identity and construct themselves not only as Orthodox Jews but also as BTs. This is similar to some of the non-linguistic practices described in Chapter 3, such as

wearing a black hat with sunglasses or cooking gefilte fish with curry and turmeric. As one BT pointed out, “If someone said ‘Just keepin’ it real, *mamish*,’ I would know they’re definitely BT.”

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have presented an inventory of features that distinguish the speech of American Orthodox Jews from their non-Jewish neighbors. As in any speech community, these features are used with various frequencies by various people in various settings. This stylistic variation allows speakers to index their membership in the community and their multi-layered identity within it. Each variable, especially a more salient one, has some meaning on its own. If an Orthodox Jew heard someone use a Yiddish semantic influence, a rise-fall intonation contour, or loanwords like *freilach* (‘festive’), *blech* (‘metal stove covering’), and *dafka* (‘specifically’), she would likely assume the speaker to be Orthodox. But, as Eckert (2000) emphasizes, “most variables take on interpretable social meaning only in the context of the broader linguistic styles to which they contribute” (2000:213). These features, and especially the less salient ones like final devoicing, the connective “so,” and the hesitation click, are interpreted as Orthodox because they are used in conjunction with other features. It is the co-occurrence of sociolinguistic variables (Ervin-Tripp 1972) that allows speakers to construct their identity linguistically.

When variables co-occur in a particular discourse setting, they crystallize into a register. In the Orthodox community, several linguistic variables used in the traditional text-study domain coalesce into the register called “Yeshivish”: many Hebrew and Aramaic words, especially those that appear in the text at hand, discourse markers associated with learning, frequent word-final /t/ release, chanting intonation and high-falling pitch boundaries, phrasal verbs, and other Yiddish semantic influences. However, as Irvine (2001) points out, the boundaries of a register are not always fixed. It is impossible to determine where the Yeshivish register ends and non-Yeshivish Orthodox Jewish English begins. Weiser’s (1995) dictionary is evidence of this; most of the example sentences are from everyday speech, even if the words and loan constructions are used most commonly in text-study settings.

Chapter 6

“Trying Hard to Look Really Yeshivish”:

Saliency, Ideology, and Other Factors in the Acquisition of New Styles

INTRODUCTION

As Chapters 4 and 5 show, BTs acquire some features more than others. This chapter explores the reasons for this. Table 6-1 presents the percentages of BTs who use various linguistic features,⁵⁰ from the pool of the 29 BTs I observed for at least three hours:

Table 6-1: Percentage of 29 BTs who use linguistic features

	% who used them at least once
Loanwords	100
Semantic	76
Click	52
Intonation	45
Devoicing	10
/θ/ non-raising	0

All BTs acquired at least some loanwords, most acquired some semantic features, and many acquired the click. Fewer acquired distinctive intonation, very few acquired final devoicing, and not one BT in my study acquired the non-raising of pre-coda-nasal /θ/.

Implicational scale

When we look at individual speakers' use of these features, an implicational scale emerges. Rickford explains that “implicational scales depict hierarchical co-occurrence patterns in the acquisition or use of linguistic variables by individuals or groups, such that x implies y but not the reverse” (2002:143). Based on my observations and recordings of 43 community members (14 BT women, 15 BT men, 9 FFB women, and 5 FFB men), I assigned points for each feature used.

⁵⁰ Although some of the data in Chapters 4 and 5 comply with Labov's (1972) principle of accountability, the data here are based on mere presence of linguistic features in recorded and observed speech. See Bell (2001) on why qualitative analysis is important in situations where quantitative analysis is impossible. In studies of second style acquisition, this methodology serves the most important purpose, which is to determine whether the newcomers acquired certain linguistic features. Of course it would be preferable to gather more information about frequency of use. And my methodology certainly missed the use of some features, as I was not always recording and I observed people for different amounts of time. But as I explain in Chapter 2, the common sociolinguistic methodology of analyzing sociolinguistic interviews or even comparing randomly selected speech excerpts from different speakers was not feasible in this study. This is because of my status as a relative outsider and because of the high rates of style shifting in the Orthodox community – according to audience, topic, and other contextual factors.

Although there was a great deal of variation in the length of time I spent with each speaker and the settings in which I observed them, I needed some way to normalize the data for the comparative analysis. Based on my observations, I decided that three hours (the minimum observation time for a speaker to be included in this analysis) was enough time for a speaker to use at least 16 loanwords, two of any particular semantic feature, three clicks, one distinctive intonation contour, two tokens of final devoicing, and one token of non-raised pre-nasal /θ/. Therefore, I assigned points as follows:

Figure 6-1: Points assigned for Orthodox features

1. Loanwords (types): 0 = none, 1 = 1 to 7, 2 = 8 to 15, 3 = 16+
2. Each semantic/syntactic feature (tokens): 0 = none, 0.5 = 1, 1 = 2+
3. Click hesitation marker (tokens): 0 = none 1 = 1-2, 2 = 3+
4. High-falling pitch boundary or rise-fall intonation (tokens): 0 = none, 1 = 1+
5. Word-final devoicing (tokens): 0 = none, 1 = 1 to 2, 2 = 2+
6. Non-raised pre-coda-nasal /ae/ (tokens): 0 = none, 1 = 1+

Admittedly, these data are dirty, as speakers undoubtedly used features when I was not observing them. And, since the data are based not only on recordings but also on my observations, there is the possibility that my expectations biased my notes on linguistic features. However, I believe that the numbers presented here are representative of the individuals' actual speech.

Table 6-2: Implicational scale – BT men's use of linguistic features

Integration	Peripheral ⁵¹						Community					Yeshiva			
	Hank	Leo-nard	Will	Stuart	Mitch	Mike	Samuel	Mark	Fred	Andrew	Levi	David	Kal-man	Jacob	Yakov
Loanwords	1	1	2	2	3	2	2	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	3
Semantic	0	0	0	2	1	1	0	1	1	1	3	0	3	5	7
Click	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	1	0	1
Intonation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Devoicing	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
θ not raised	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total points	1	1	2	4	4	4	2	4	5	5	9	5	8	9	12

⁵¹ These stages of integration – Peripheral, Community, and Yeshiva – are introduced in Chapter 1 and elaborated on in Chapter 7.

Table 6-3: Implicational scale – BT women’s use of linguistic features

Integration	Peripheral		Community					Yeshiva						
	Barbara	Rhoda	Sarah	Ma-rissa	Paula	Shira	Shel-ley	Miriam	Cecile	chelle	lorie	Dina	Devora	Rivka-Bracha
Pseudonym														
Loanwords	1	1	1	2	2	2	3	3	2	2	1	1	3	3
Semantic	0	1	1	0.5	0	2	2	2	1	1.5	3	4	5	8
Click	0	0	1	0	2	1	2	1	1	2	2	2	2	2
Intonation	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	1
Devoicing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
⊕ not raised	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total points	1	2	3	3.5	4	5	7	6	5	6.5	7	8	11	14

As Tables 6-2 and 6-3 show, the use of one feature generally implies the use of a feature above it. For example, if BTs used semantic features, they definitely used loanwords. If they used the click, they almost definitely used semantic features and loanwords. If they used intonation, they most likely used the click, semantic features, and loanwords. And if they used devoicing, they may have used intonation and almost definitely used features above it. This implicational scale suggests that speakers incorporate these features into their active repertoires mostly in the order in Table 6-1.

Why are certain features acquired before others? The previous literature on dialect contact suggests several answers. Although Trudgill (1986), Prince (1987), and Chambers (1992) focus mostly on phonology, their collective findings are quite similar to mine. Trudgill argues that more salient features are more likely to be acquired, and he enumerates some factors that can interfere with the acquisition of salient features, including socio-psychological factors and phonotactic constraints. Prince demonstrates the importance of conflicting social and individual pressures – accommodating linguistically to the dominant group and maintaining one’s individuality – and she shows how these pressures correlate with salience. And Chambers finds that lexical replacements are acquired before phonological replacements and that various individuals acquire features at various rates.

I organize these findings, combined with the present analysis, into four distinct but related factors that affect who acquires which features, including (1) salience, (2) linguistic ability, (3) language ideology, and (4) individuals’ desires to locate themselves along various social axes. These major factors can be subdivided into several factors that influence which linguistic features are more likely to be acquired and several factors that

influence which speakers are more likely to acquire linguistic features. The remainder of this chapter discusses these factors and synthesizes them into a model of second style acquisition.

SALIENCE

Previous research has shown that salience plays an important role in several types of style shifting, including “self-conscious speech,” imitations, and accommodation. Features that are more salient are more likely to be highlighted in catch phrases, imitated, and accommodated to (Rickford and McNair-Knox 1994, Preston 1996, Schilling-Estes 1998, Coupland 2001, Evans 2002). When speakers take on a new language, dialect, or style, salience also has a large effect on which features are acquired. Trudgill (1986) demonstrates this in his research on adults’ acquisition of new dialects. Guy (ms) discusses the importance of salience in first language acquisition, second language acquisition, and approximations of the standard variety by non-standard speakers. He also shows how salience positively affects syntactic change: features that are more salient (i.e., more different from what the speakers are used to) are more quickly acquired. In BTs’ acquisition of Orthodox language styles, I found that salience does, indeed, play a major role. But I also found that some salient features are avoided and that some non-salient features are acquired.

I define salience as noticeability; the more that people notice a feature, the more salient it is. For a feature to be salient for some people, it does not have to be salient for everyone. In fact, some features are salient to one group but not another, and other features are salient only to certain individuals. On the other hand, there are also features that are salient to everyone in the community. One way of determining whether a feature is salient is listening to what community members have to say about it. If a feature is a common topic of discussion, then it is clearly salient. When I mentioned that I was interested in Orthodox language, several people – FFBs, BTs, and non-Orthodox Jews – mentioned the use of certain Hebrew and Yiddish phrases, like *baruch hashem* and *mamish*, the sing-song quality, the fast speech rate, and the “bad” grammar.

People are not always able to pinpoint what makes someone sound different, even if they can hear it. It is certainly possible that a feature is noticed even in the absence of

metalinguistic discourse. Another test for salience, used by Trudgill (1983) in his research on British pop singers using American phonology, is imitations. If a non-group member uses a feature in an imitation of the group’s speech, then that feature is considered salient. Although I did not have a corpus of Beatles’ songs in Orthodox Jewish English, I did observe a few instances of BTs or non-Orthodox Jews imitating Orthodox speech. Features that were common in these imitations were rise-fall intonation, the Yiddish-influenced “by,” and the use of loanwords with Ashkenazic phonology.

However, someone might find a variable salient but not be able (or willing) to imitate it. Therefore, I think it is important for explorations of salience to use experimental methods. It is for this reason that I constructed the matched guise test referred to in previous chapters. I selected a large sample of linguistic features that I noticed as part of Orthodox speech, and I created pairs of stimuli to test their salience.

Matched guise test to determine salience

If BTs do acquire more salient features, then we will expect BTs’ responses on the matched guise test to correlate with their use of those features. Table 6-4 shows how 10 BT women and 10 BT men (the overlap between those who took the matched guise test and those I observed for at least three hours) fare. If the speaker rated the stimulus with the Orthodox feature higher than its non-Orthodox correlate, I considered that feature salient for that speaker.

Table 6-4: Relation between salience (features noticed on matched guise test) and use of linguistic features for 20 BTs

Feature	A Percent noticers (out of 20 BTs)	B Acquirers among noticers	C Non- acquirers among noticers	D Acquirers among non- noticers
hold	70	5/14	9/14	2/6
phrasal verbs	50	4/10	6/10	2/10
to person	40	1/8	7/8	1/12
click	35	4/7	3/7	9/13
connective “so”	25	2/5	3/5	2/15
final devoicing	5	0/1	1/1	1/19

Using the matched guise test alone as a measure of salience for individuals, we see that salience does not determine acquisition. If it did, then Column B would be 100% and Columns C and D would be 0. Instead, the picture is much more complicated. In Column B, only one of the values is over 50%. In Column D, the numbers are low, but not 0.

There are at least four possible explanations for these discrepancies: 1) Some speakers may have actually used features when I was not observing them. 2) The matched guise test may not be a perfect test of salience, because of fatigue in the 96-question test and because of some respondents' unwillingness to categorize people. 3) Some features can be acquired even if they are not salient. 4) Attitudinal factors sometimes trump salience. Factors 1 and 2 are methodological issues and certainly play a role. To demonstrate the importance of factors 3 and 4, I now present data on five linguistic features: devoicing, click, the connective "so," loanwords, and semantic features.

One non-salient feature is final devoicing. Only one woman noticed it on the matched guise test, and a male BT was the only person in this group to acquire it. This meets the expectation: a non-salient feature is not acquired by most BTs. On the other hand, two non-salient features are acquired by several people.

The click was noticed by 4 men and 3 women, but it was acquired by 4 men and 9 women, most of whom did not notice it. I never heard anyone imitate the click, and it is not the subject of community discourse. I only heard one BT mention it, and he (successfully) avoids using it. Outside of the 20-person sample presented here, I heard several other BTs and FFBs use the click for a total of 13 BT women, 9 BT men, 9 FFB women, and 5 FFB men. This is a not-so-salient feature that is commonly acquired. It could be that the click is non-salient because it is essentially extra-grammatical and non-lexical. However, we see the same thing with a syntactic feature.

The extra connective "so" (as in "When I listen to the songs, so it brings back memories") ranks low in salience, but it ranks fairly high in acquisition by BTs. Including people outside of this sample, 6 BTs and 7 FFBs used this "so." But only two of the BTs who used the "so" noticed it on the guise test, and I never heard anyone talk about it or imitate it.

When we look at salient features, we see that some are acquired. The use of loanwords was the most salient feature by all measures. For example, on the matched guise test, some respondents marked “can’t tell” for many of the stimuli but “probably Orthodox” for most of those that included Hebrew loanwords. And all BTs acquired at least some loanwords. On the other hand, some of the salient semantic features were not acquired. As Table 6-4 shows, 70% of the respondents noticed the Yiddish-influenced “hold” (as in “He holds like Rabi Yehuda” or “Where are you holding [religiously]?”), but 9 of the 14 who noticed “hold” did not use it in the speech samples I collected. Similarly, many BTs talk about the Yiddish-influenced “by,” (“staying by them”), but not all of them use it. These discrepancies are due to language ideology. There is a discourse about features like “by” and “hold” as “bad grammar,” and some BTs avoid using them, even when they are integrating into the community in other ways. As I explain below, ideology affects the use of several features, including loanwords, loanword phonology, and semantic influences from Yiddish. In short, salience influences but does not determine the acquisition of new features.

Explanations for salience

In the exploration of salience, the question arises: why are some features more salient to newcomers than others? Two explanations are contrast and frequency. Trudgill (1986:14) discusses the importance of contrast in his analysis of British pop singers’ imitations of American English. It seems obvious that the more different two variants are, the more likely users of one will notice the other as different. The question is how to quantify this difference. On what axes would we compare a phonological variable with a semantic variable? How can we say that the Yiddish-influenced “hold” involves more contrast than the placement of an adverbial phrase? In general, it is problematic to compare phonological, lexical, semantic, syntactic, and discourse variables with each other in terms of the overall contrast among their variants.⁵² However, it is possible to compare certain variables along an axis that they share. Since

word-final devoicing (e.g., [rd] ~ [rt]) and loanword use (e.g., Passover ~ Peysach) both involve phonetic distance, we can say that the latter has greater phonetic contrast. We can generalize that the use of loanwords involves more contrast than most of the variables: certainly more than phonological variables, the hesitation click, and some of the semantic variables that do not involve lexical alternation (e.g., “by the school” = ‘at the school’ ~ ‘near the school’).

Another important factor in how salient a feature is is how much exposure a speaker receives. This is not surprising, as a speaker would have no reason to notice a feature if she was never exposed to it, either in actual speech or in metalinguistic discourse. A quick look at the presence of linguistic features in two recorded speech samples of FFBs shows that the frequency of those features correlates to some extent with the frequency of BTs’ acquisition in Table 6-1.

In my 74-minute interview with Huvi Hollander, in which we talked about her background, BTs’ integration into Orthodox communities, and Orthodox language, she used the following features:

- 153 tokens of loanwords, 56 types
- 10 tokens of semantic/syntactic features, 5 types (1 token each of “by,” “to,” “would,” “could” and 6 tokens of “learn”)
- 4 hesitation clicks
- 1 quasi-chanting intonation contour, but only in a metalinguistic conversation about Orthodox intonation
- no devoicing or /θ/ non-raising

In Rabbi Nussbaum’s 46-minute Gemora session with Dr. Weisman (with me as a ratified overhearer), in which they read, translated, and discussed a rabbinic text about the laws surrounding planting and gleaning in adjoining fields, Rabbi Nussbaum used the following features:

- 195 tokens of loanwords, 69 types (including 113 tokens and 32 types borrowed from the text at hand)

⁵² I am not even convinced that it is acceptable to compare certain phonological variables with each other. I agree with Trudgill (1986:14) that the alternation or deletion of phonemes, such as [-IN] ~ [-In] or [r] ~ 0, involves more contrast than the gradient raising or lowering of [θ]. But how would the use of different allophones, such as [tH], [ʔ], and [P] for word-final /t/, compare with the use of a monophthong vs. a diphthong? I believe that it is impossible to compare the difference between the variants in these variables.

- many chanting intonation contours and high-falling pitch boundaries⁵³
- 13 tokens of semantic/syntactic features, 10 types (3 of “so,” 1 of fronting, 1 of “learn,” 1 of “by,” 2 of “bring,” 1 of “hold,” 1 of “know from,” 1 of “already,” 1 of verb first, 1 of other word order)
- 1 token of devoicing
- no clicks or /θ/ non-raising

These two conversations are characteristic examples of Orthodox speech. The differences between them – fewer loanwords, less distinctive intonation, more clicks, and less devoicing for Mrs. Hollander – correlate with the differences in the speakers’ genders, their primary audiences (an outsider woman, an FFB man), and the speech events (interview, Gemora study session). As these conversations suggest, loanwords are extremely frequent, especially in Jewish-topic conversations; semantic/syntactic features are somewhat frequent; clicks are not so frequent in interviews but more frequent among women than men; distinctive intonation is frequent in a text-study setting but infrequent elsewhere; devoicing is very infrequent, and /θ/ non-raising is absent from the speech of many community members. These frequencies correlate with the order in which BTs tend to acquire these features (Tables 6-1, 6-2, 6-3).

Continuum of salience: Indicators, markers, and stereotypes

It is clear that different linguistic variables have different standings in the community. Some have reached the status of stereotypes, which Labov defines as “socially marked forms, prominently labeled by society, ... referred to and talked about by members of the speech community” (1972:314). These include chanting intonation, the Yiddish-influenced “by,” and certain loanwords. Some other features of Orthodox Jewish English are indicators, which Labov defines as elements that are below the level of conscious or subconscious evaluation and vary across social categories but not within individuals’ speech (ibid.). These probably include final devoicing, the non-raised prenasal /θ/, and the if-clause “would.” Although it is possible that future research will find

⁵³ These contours are not conducive to quantitative analysis, since Nussbaum chants most of his reading and translation and some of his discussion about the text. When several contours are used consecutively, it is difficult to determine where one contour ends and the next begins.

BTs did. And BTs noticed some of the semantic influences from Yiddish (e.g., phrasal verbs, “hold”) more than FFBs did. These discrepancies are due to differences in the speakers’ contrastive analysis. The use of [k] in place of [x] in a loanword is more marked to an FFB than to a BT with little Hebrew background, because it is different from what the FFB is accustomed to, while the BT is not accustomed to anything in that slot. And the use of *baruch hashem* instead of *mirtse hashem* is more marked to an FFB than to a BT for the same reason. The use of phrasal verbs or the Yiddish-influenced “hold” are not marked to an FFB, but they are different from what a BT is accustomed to. It is not surprising that these features are salient to one group and not to the other.

Even within each group there is a great deal of individual variation in what people consider salient. For some FFBs “hold” is a salient feature, and for some BTs /x/ => [k] is quite salient. These individual differences may be due to metalinguistic conversations – perhaps they only noticed a feature after someone (a veteran community member, a non-Orthodox relative, or maybe even a linguistic researcher) mentioned it to them. Or perhaps they noticed it on their own; some community members noticed more features simply because they are especially linguistically adept.

INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES IN LINGUISTIC SKILL

The fact that some people noticed more features than others is likely due in part to differential linguistic skill. There were a number of community members who scored extremely high on the matched guise test overall. The top-scoring BTs included Shelley, who has a masters in applied linguistics and had a lot to say about several linguistic features, and Rochel, Zev,⁵⁴ and Rabbi Fischer, three BTs who have at times passed as FFB, partly because of their successful acquisition of Orthodox language patterns. The top-scoring FFBs include Rabbi and Mrs. Steinberg, both children of BTs who grew up discussing and joking about Orthodox linguistic features. All of these top scorers were particularly interested in my research.

⁵⁴ Rochel and Zev are not included in Figures 6-2 and 6-3, because I spent less than three hours with each of them. During my short visits with them, however, I noticed them use several linguistic features, and they and others told me that they have at times passed as FFBs.

The diverse linguistic abilities of individuals are an important factor in both the perception and production of new styles. Just as people can be more or less adept at learning second languages, people (probably the same ones) can be more or less adept at learning second styles. Those who are very skilled linguistically may use those skills to adapt their language to the speech of their new community, like Rochel, Zev, and Rabbi Fischer. On the other hand, they might apply their skills more to observation and avoid certain linguistic features, like Shelley. Those who are not as adept at learning new styles might bemoan the fact and might devote time and effort to linguistic observation and practice in an attempt to integrate linguistically. Or they might not mind that they do not sound like “natives,” and they might even be proud to maintain some of their pre-Orthodox linguistic habits. In the Conclusion below, I describe Rivka-Bracha, a linguistically skilled BT who does adapt linguistically to the community, and Samuel, a proud BT who has not easily acquired Orthodox Jewish English and has little desire to do so.

Linguistic skill can also affect second style acquisition on the level of individual variables. Among the BTs who grew up without the /x/ phoneme in their productive inventory, most have no trouble acquiring it. Others, however, still realize /x/ as [k] or [h] even after several years of affiliation with Orthodoxy. Those in the latter group are also less likely to recognize *kol hamoed* as a BT realization of *chol hamoed*. Similarly, many BTs were not exposed during childhood to the *Towrah* variant of *Torah*, in which the /o/ vowel is not rhotacized. Most of those speakers maintain the rhotic variant, but some notice and acquire the non-rhotic variant, which is more common among FFBs. It is likely that these differences in phonological production and perception are due to distinct linguistic abilities.

Individual ability may be realized differently with different types of linguistic variables. It is possible that newcomers are more likely to acquire features that do not require a systematic change in grammar. For example, the use of a loanword rather than its English equivalent or the use of a hesitation click do not affect the grammar in a systematic way, but several less commonly acquired features do, including final devoicing, non-raised pre-nasal /θ/, and syntactic fronting. On the other hand, some systematic changes are commonly acquired, such as distinguishing between the

phonemes /h/ and /x/ and deleting an underlying Hebrew schwa, resulting in consonant clusters disallowed in general American English. These exceptions might be explained by the fact that they are not changes for many BTs, as they exist in the Whole and Merged Hebrew of many non-Orthodox Jews. But among people who did not grow up with these system-level linguistic features, some acquire them and some do not. I believe this is due to differences in ability.

Trudgill points to the importance of individual differences in his discussion of Nordenstam's (1979) study of Swedish women living in Norway:

Much of her data suggests quite strongly that, while there are constraints and regularities in linguistic accommodation, there is also, as in child language acquisition and in second-language learning, plenty of room for individual strategies (Trudgill 1986:27-8).

Chambers also discusses individual differences in his description of "early and late acquirers" (1992:687-690). But because his focus is mostly on children and adolescents, he relates individual differences in the acquisition of a new dialect to whether the exposure was after the critical period. My data, like Nordenstam's, show that there is variation even among adults, all of whom are exposed to the new variety only after the critical period.

It is possible that age has an effect on linguistic adaptability even well past the critical period. The BTs in my sample became Orthodox at different ages, ranging from mid-teens to mid-50s, with most doing so in their 20s. It seems that some of those who joined the community later in life have incorporated fewer aspects of Orthodox Jewish English than many of those who joined in their youth. Since I met only a few people who were older than 40 when they became Orthodox, I cannot make any claims about trends. But my data suggest that the end of the critical period may not be a one-time drop in a speaker's ability to learn new styles, but rather a gradual decline that continues throughout a speaker's lifetime. This is a potentially fruitful path of inquiry that calls for further research.

LANGUAGE IDEOLOGY

Even if a speaker considers a linguistic feature salient and has the ability to incorporate it into her speech, she still might not do so. Her ideology about that feature might impede her use of it. For example, Shelley uses several aspects of Orthodox Jewish English, including many Hebrew words, several clicks, and a few semantic features. But I never heard her use “by.” She spontaneously mentioned “the over-use of the word ‘by’” as a distinctive feature of *frum* speech, and she even speculated that it is a Yiddishism. Her non-use of a feature that she is well aware of represents a conscious avoidance of what she considers incorrect speech. Similarly, Marissa did not use two of the features that she found salient (“hold” and “to”), according to her responses on the guise test and comments to me. This is because she considers these features to be strange and wants to maintain some of her previous identity.

We see the same trends when we look at Hebrew loanwords. For example, Andrew chooses not to say “*Baruch hashem*” (‘praise God’) as a response to “How are you?” – a practice that is common in the community. He thinks it trivializes praise for God to use this phrase in mundane situations, and he prefers to reserve it for when he is especially thankful. And Joseph never uses the Yiddish [oy] variant of the /o/ vowel in Hebrew words, because he associates it with FFBs from a Hasidic background or BTs who are “trying hard to look really Yeshivish.” For these BTs, ideologies about what is correct, appropriate, and authentic have an important effect on their language use.

Why do people have different ideologies about individual features? Formal education plays an important role. When we look at the [o]~[oy] and [t]~[s] variables in Hebrew words (Chapter 4), we see that the variants people learned in school are often what they choose to use. Similarly, the presence or absence of [↔] in Hebrew /#C↔C/ can be influenced by whether speakers – BT and FFB – learned the [C↔C] variant as correct in their *dikduk* (Hebrew ‘grammar’) lessons. BTs often switch variants when they join an Orthodox community. The variants they choose to use may be influenced by instruction they receive in synagogues, outreach centers, and yeshivas.

But formal education is not the full story. Outside of school there are discourses about certain features as incorrect or inappropriate. These are sometimes based on Standard English grammar, as in “by” and other syntactic/semantic variables. And they

are sometimes based on ideologies of connectedness to the biblical Children of Israel and to the recent Eastern European past, as in people's sense that it is important to use Hebrew words or Ashkenazic phonology. Different community members hold different views about these variables and about the ideologies that affect them. And for BTs entering the community, the people they choose to spend time with and emulate have an important effect on their language use.

Ideology, however, does not always match practice. Just because a person has a negative view of a particular feature does not mean he will never use it. For example, Marissa said she does not like the Yiddish-influenced "by." And I did hear her use "at" several times when she could have used "by." But I also heard her use "by" a few times in conversations with FFBs. Similarly, Shelley said she thinks it is important to pronounce Hebrew the Israeli way, rather than the Yiddish way. So she pronounces *chidush* ('innovation') as [xidúΣ] rather than [xI≡dIΣ]" and *chatima* ('inscription' [in the Book of Life]) as [xatimá] rather than [xsímϕ]. But she also uses many Yiddish pronunciations, especially in common words like "*Shábbos*" and "*kósher*" (not *Shabbát* and *kashér*). Ideology plays a major role in the language use of Marissa and Shelley, but the speech they are exposed to in their everyday lives also plays a role.

Language ideology does not only have an impeding effect; it can also expedite a newcomer's adoption of linguistic features. If a BT considers a loanword to be religiously important, she is more likely to use it. When I asked Miriam, a long-time Yeshiva BT, what she has changed about her language, she focused on the theological. She feels that learning Hebrew words and phrases is a BT's key to understanding and acquiring the belief system of Orthodox Judaism. She decided early on to start using phrases like *baruch hashem* ('thank God'), even though she did not yet feel the presence of God in her everyday life. Soon, she says, she did develop that sense, in part because of her language use. This is similar to what Harding (2000) describes in the language of Falwellian Fundamentalist Christians. She found that newcomers – herself included – would acquire the beliefs after taking on the religious language of the community.

In short, ideologies of correctness and importance play a major role in second style acquisition. BTs are less likely to acquire features that they consider incorrect or inauthentic and more likely to acquire features that have high value for social and

religious integration. Attitudinal factors also play a role in speakers' overall desire to use language associated with particular groups, as previous literature on dialect contact has pointed out (e.g., Prince 1987 and Yaeger-Dror 1993). The profiles of the BTs below demonstrate the importance of language ideology in the overall acquisition of new styles.

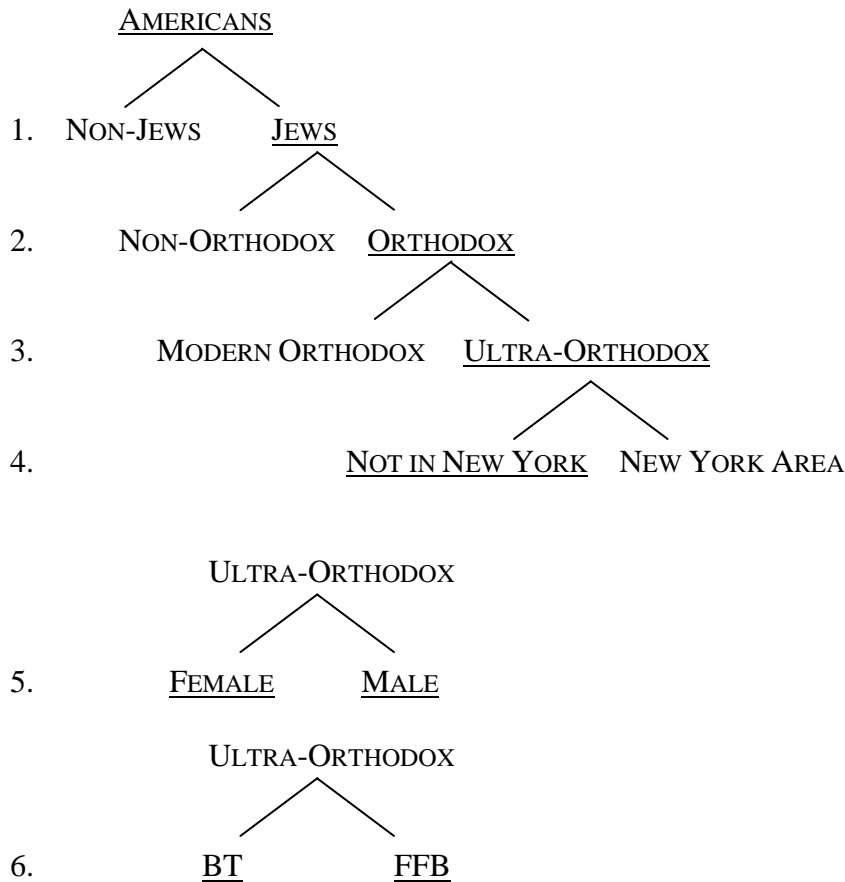
LOCATING ONESELF WITHIN THE SOCIOLINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE

Another way that ideology affects second style acquisition is in the perception of the connection between language and social categories. As newcomers integrate into their new community, they use language to align themselves with some individuals or groups and distinguish themselves from others. They are able to do this only because of the ideology that certain groups speak in certain ways.

Recursively represented oppositions within Orthodoxy

Within the Orthodox community, people expect certain oppositions, like Orthodox vs. non-Orthodox and FFB vs. BT, to be expressed by differences in language, in addition to dress, religious observance, and other symbolic practices. As Irvine and Gal (2000) explain, distinctions in language are often perceived in a recursive way. They define recursivity as “the projection of an opposition, salient at some level of relationship, onto some other level” (Irvine & Gal 2000:38). Within the Orthodox community, several oppositions are thought of in this way (underlined groups are represented in the Milldale community):

Figure 6-3: Recursivity in ideology about symbolic practices



The poles on the right side are expected to be more distinct, and – for some practices – more closely associated with Eastern Europe. Ultra-Orthodox Jews are expected to have more Yiddish influence in their English speech than Modern Orthodox Jews, those in the New York area more than those in other communities, men more than women, and FFBs more than BTs. Within both their Whole Hebrew (code switching into Hebrew and Aramaic for liturgical purposes) and their Merged Hebrew (loanwords integrated into their English speech), the poles on the right are expected to use more phonological elements of Ashkenazic (Eastern European) Hebrew, as opposed to Israeli Hebrew.

One of the oppositions, between Modern and Ultra-Orthodox, is seen more as a continuum than as distinct categories. People talk about others as “more Modern” or “more Yeshivish” (Yeshivish refers to non-Hasidic Ultra-Orthodox Jews). Fader reports

a similar continuum in ideologies of symbolic practices in her discussion of Hasidic Orthodox Jews' use of the term "modern":

The use of modern as a marker of difference focuses on activities or objects which blur the borders separating Jews from gentiles. This is particularly relevant for and evident in the presentation of bodies and exposure of minds. It is, thus, particularly around issues of modest dress and access to certain types of media, literature or other forms of knowledge that different kinds of Jews may be located on a continuum which spans modern to the most *frim*, religious (Fader 2000:32).

Similarly, in Helmreich's (2000) discussion of yeshiva life, he divides Orthodox Jews into three categories: "Modern Orthodox," "Strictly Orthodox," and "Ultra-Orthodox." But he qualifies these classifications:

Since we are speaking of a continuum rather than of totally separate categories, it is to be expected that there will be crossing over and a blurring of distinctions among all three groups as well as differing interpretations of what constitutes Strictly or Modern Orthodox and who is a centrist and who an extremist (55).

All Orthodox Jews have a sense of where they stand along this continuum between Modern and Ultra-Orthodox. For many, their location changes over time. BTs begin far removed from the left pole of the continuum. As they join the ranks of Orthodoxy, they learn that they necessarily locate themselves along the continuum – whether they want to or not – through their social interactions and semiotic practices. They use many of the linguistic resources described in Chapter 5, as well as the variation in loanword integration described in Chapter 4, to perform not only their identity as Orthodox Jews, but also their identity within Orthodoxy.

There is an ideology that BTs are less distinct from non-Orthodox Jews than FFBs are. This is often true: sometimes intentionally and sometimes inadvertently, many BTs use fewer Yiddish influences and maintain aspects of their pre-Orthodox dress, music, and activities. The consequence of this is that BTs are often associated with the other groups on the left-hand poles: Modern Orthodox Jews, non-New Yorkers, and – for male BTs, as I explain below – women. Several respondents to the matched guise test pointed out that some of the speech samples that they ranked low for Orthodoxy or for FFB-ness

(and therefore more likely to be BTs) could be Modern Orthodox. A few people told me that they ranked the speakers who sounded like they were not from New York as less likely to be Orthodox and less likely to be FFB.

Of course, nobody connected BT men's voices with women. But other conversations pointed to a feminizing discourse about BT men. For example, in this conversation with Devora, I mentioned that I had recorded a *chavrusa* ('learning session') at Ner Tamid. Devora, a recent BT, incorrectly assumed that both of the male learning partners were BTs.

- Devora: You recorded their *chavrusa*?
- Sarah: Mm-hm, 'cause I'm interested in how people learn.
- Devora: What were they learning?
- Sarah: They were learning ... *Gemora*.
- Devora: Oh, they were learning a *Gemora*. That's always fun to-
- Sarah: Yeah.
- Devora: It's a shame that- You should try to- they won't let you, because you're a woman, probably, but, go into like a, you know-
- Sarah: A *yeshiva*.
- Devora: See how the real people-
- Sarah: I'd love to. ...
- Devora: [The people you recorded at Ner Tamid are] *ba'al teshuva* ... you know. And they never studied at a um-. So I don't know how much you can go by the way they learned. You know? They might learn like women. ... I don't know how advanced they are, you know. Cause they're um *ba'al teshuva*, you know what I mean? ...
- Sarah: Well, [Avrum]'s not. He's FFB.
- Devora: Oh, I don't know who he is.
- Sarah: Oh OK.
- Devora: So, then they were learning right.

In addition to a discourse of BTs as feminine ("They might learn like women"), Devora's comments point to the common notion that FFBs ("the real people") are more authentic Orthodox Jews than BTs are.

BTs' self-representation

As BTs integrate into Orthodox communities, they have several options for self-representation. In addition to the Modern-Ultra continuum, they can use symbolic

practices to locate themselves along the other axes. They can choose to identify with New Yorkers by living or visiting there, associating with New York networks, or using New York-influenced language; or they can maintain a primarily locally oriented existence. Both men and women can choose – to some extent – where to locate themselves along the gender continuum within Orthodoxy. Because gender oppositions are seen as connected to religious oppositions, Orthodox masculinity involves the self-presentation as more distinct from non-Orthodox Jews. Men who are more Ultra-Orthodox (and perhaps more masculine according to Orthodox standards) cut their hair short, wear dark suits with black hats, and excel in Gemora study, public prayer leading, and Torah chanting. Women who are more Ultra-Orthodox (and perhaps more feminine according to Orthodox standards) wear modest dresses and long-ish *sheytels* (‘wigs’) and devote themselves to their household responsibilities. A BT man who keeps his ponytail, does not study on a regular basis, and does not take a public role in synagogue rituals may be seen as less masculine (and more BT). And a BT woman who keeps a short hair style, studies advanced texts, and is not interested in domestic affairs may be seen as less feminine (and perhaps more BT).⁵⁵ Language is also important in the construction of gender: the use of linguistic features associated with text study (such as Aramaic loanwords, chanting intonation, phrasal verbs, discourse markers like “over here,” and the authoritative /t/ release) is considered more learned and, therefore, more masculine (see Benor forthcoming b). BT men who use features like these in everyday conversation are seen as more learned and more masculine. And BT women who use them (although I have never met one) would be seen as more learned and less feminine.

Similarly, BTs can choose where to locate themselves along the BT-FFB continuum. In this respect, different people have different goals. Some wish to pass as FFB and consider it the ultimate success when people assume they are. Others relish their identities as BTs and use social networks and unique combinations of symbolic practices to perform their BT-ness. As Michelle, a Yeshiva BT, says:

I think there are two different kinds [of BTs]. There are the kind that really try to fit in and to sort of just become immersed in the community

⁵⁵ See Levine (2003) for an example of an FFB girl who wishes she was a boy so she could study texts more intensively.

so that they don't look like *ba'alei teshuva* anymore, and then there are the kind that are like, "We're *ba'alei teshuva*, we're proud of it, and we'll refer to our past sometimes and we'll laugh at the stuff we don't know or be upset at the stuff we don't know, whatever it is, but we'll acknowledge there's a difference."

Rabbi Nussbaum, an FFB man, also describes these two types of BTs:

I've seen the whole gamut. I've seen them basically maintain pretty much everything from before. In other words, they hold on to the dog, they hold on to the English first name. They hold on to the way of dress. They just put on *tzitzis* and a *yarmulke*, but they basically dress the same. They'll use expletives – mild ones, but expletives – in their speech. They haven't really cleaned up their act in that sense. To the other extreme where they go overboard and wild, radical, extremists, fanatical. That's the other extreme.

Most people at Shomrei Emuna, he says, are somewhere in the middle.

That was my understanding, as well. Throughout my fieldwork in Ner Tamid and Milldale, I met very few BTs who want to pass as FFB. Those who do usually move to larger communities, especially in the New York area. Many of the BTs in Milldale are proud of the fact that they are BTs. When I mentioned my research topic, it was common for people to tell me immediately that they were BTs. One woman enthusiastically proclaimed – several times – that she is "very BT," meaning fervent in her newly found observance. One man has the word "teshuva" as part of his e-mail address, and another man is thinking of starting a magazine for BTs. A third man said:

Some people try to hide their backgrounds. I want to fit in, but I'm not going to hide who I am. You are who you are. You can learn ('study Jewish texts') for many years, but you didn't grow up going to yeshiva, so you'll always have that difference. Everyone has their own *tafkid* ('role').

A middle-aged woman, who became BT when she was a teenager, told me she sometimes feels uncomfortable when people assume she is FFB:

I've gone to places where everybody was frum from birth and I looked frum from birth and I could talk frum from birth and my family looked frum from birth. And then you sit around with a group of frum from birth women and they're talking about *ba'alei teshuva*. Little would they know

that [they're talking to a *ba'al teshuva*]. If I'm not close to them, so they wouldn't necessarily know that.

She told me she was once in a vacation area frequented by New York Orthodox Jews. She said she “almost felt like an imposter” the entire month she was there.

Clearly, passing as FFB is not a goal for these BTs. On the other hand, some of them have reported feeling happy on the occasions when they did pass. One woman, whose father is a Conservative rabbi, smiled when she told me about an FFB friend who thought she was FFB. She mentioned that her father was a rabbi, and the friend thought she meant an Orthodox rabbi. Other BTs, like one who has had trouble learning Hebrew, lament that people recognize them as BTs as soon as they talk.

Symbolic practices like language are important in how BTs construct themselves and where others locate them along the BT-FFB axis. By becoming completely comfortable with Orthodox law and custom, by associating with FFBs, and by successfully incorporating many of their symbolic practices into their repertoires, BTs are seen as more FFB-like, sometimes even as FFB. By maintaining some of their pre-Orthodox practices, by not fully taking on some of the Orthodox ones, or by being overly zealous in their observance of law or custom, BTs are seen as more BT-like.

Alignment and distinction

As BTs locate themselves along the various axes in Figure 6-3, they are engaged in both alignment and distinction. They are aligning themselves with Orthodoxy and distinguishing themselves from their non-Orthodox family and friends. They are aligning themselves with Modern or Ultra-Orthodox Jews (or, more likely, somewhere in the middle) and distinguishing themselves from those to the left and right of the spectrum. And they are doing the same along the other axes.

In any situation of second style acquisition, both alignment and distinction must play some role. Even if there are few social distinctions within their new community, newcomers are necessarily aligning themselves with their new community and distinguishing themselves from others. In addition, even in situations where all newcomers eventually become masters, there is bound to be a period of adjustment, in which the newcomers both align themselves with and distinguish themselves from the

veterans. The distinguishing may be inadvertent, and the newcomer might not even know that others perceive her as different. Or it may be intentional, representing the newcomer's hesitance to become a full community member.

Prince (1987) discusses the simultaneous processes of alignment and distinction in slightly different terms: "social" and "individual" pressures. Her data come from a corpus of folksongs performed by Yiddish folksinger Sarah Gorby, a native speaker of the Bessarabian dialect who assimilates to some extent to Standard Yiddish pronunciation. The "social" pressure is assimilation to Standard Yiddish, and the "individual" pressure is maintenance of Bessarabian variants. Prince shows how Gorby increases in the "individual" Bessarabian variants in more salient positions (open-class, or content, words) and increases in the "social" Standard variants in less salient positions (closed-class, or function, words). She has assimilated to some extent to the Standard, but she is consciously maintaining aspects of her individuality. Through her vowels, she is both aligning herself with and distinguishing herself from the standard and the local.

These dual trends of alignment and distinction are important not just in second style acquisition but also in sociolinguistic variation at large. Sociolinguists who approach speakers as actively using language to construct their identity have tended to focus on either alignment or distinctiveness, but not both. For example, LePage and Tarbouret-Keller (1985) see variation in language use as a series of "acts of identity," and Irvine (2001) sees linguistic style as distinctiveness. Of course, alignment is implied in a situation of distinction, and distinction is implied in a situation of alignment. But I would like to argue that in any situation of sociolinguistic variation, both alignment and distinction are important. Bucholtz and Hall (2003, forthcoming) have argued for a similar dual focus. It should be emphasized that alignment and distinction are not necessarily conflicting processes. As mentioned above, a speaker can align and distinguish herself at the same time: align herself with one group while distinguishing herself from another. And she can align herself with one group or role one minute and with another group or role soon after, even within the same conversation.

CONCLUSION: MODEL OF SECOND STYLE ACQUISITION

This chapter has presented an analysis of the factors involved in which linguistic features are acquired and which speakers acquire them. A linguistic feature is more likely and more quickly acquired if it is (1) salient, (2) commonly heard, (3) not systematically different from the speaker's grammar, (4) seen as valuable for social integration, and (5) not stigmatized as inauthentic or bad grammar. Table 6-5 shows how these factors correlate with the acquisition of a sample of features. The values, on a scale of 0-3, were determined as follows:⁵⁶ (1) matched guise results, discourse, imitations, (2) FFBS' use of the features, (3) how much the feature affects the grammatical system, (4) and (5) discourses among BTs, (6) sum of columns 1-5, and (7) % of 29 BTs who used the feature when I was observing or recording them.

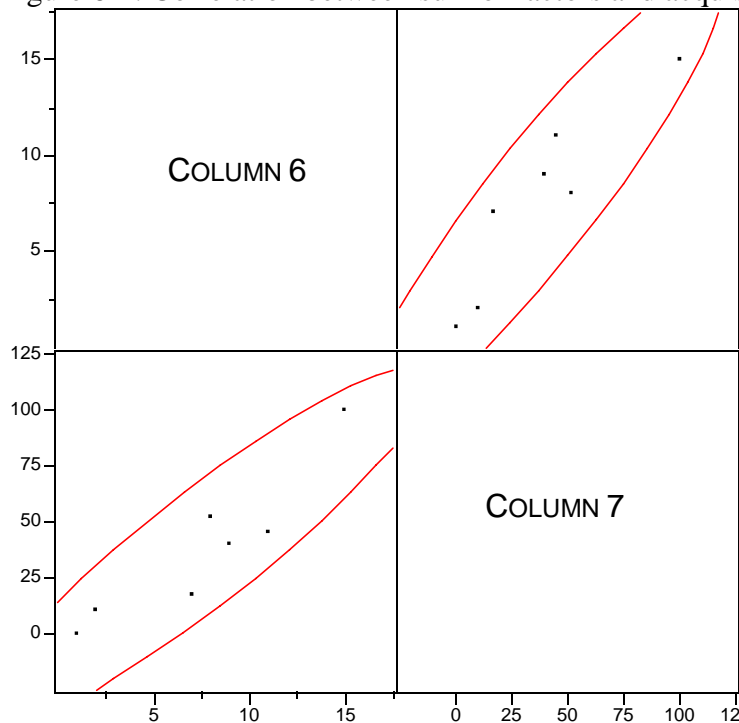
Table 6-5: Relation between factors and acquisition of features

Feature	(1) salient	(2) common	(3) no systematic difference	(4) socially valuable	(5) not stigmatized	(6) likelihood of acquisition	(7) actual rate of acquisition
loanwords	3	3	3	3	3	15	100
intonation	3	2	2	2	2	11	45
by	3	2	2	1	1	9	40
click	1	2	3	0	2	8	52
so	1	2	1	0	3	7	17
devoicing	0	1	1	n/a	n/a	2	10
/θ/ not raised	0	1	0	n/a	n/a	1	0

This model of adults' acquisition of new features does correlate with the data. The values in columns (6) and (7) are significantly correlated. According to a Spearman's Rho test, the p value for their correlation is approximately 0.0068. The scatter plot is presented in Figure 6-4.

⁵⁶ Of course, these values are all somewhat subjective, and there is the danger of bias.

Figure 6-4: Correlation between sum of factors and acquisition of features



Loanwords have the highest score for columns (1) through (5), and they are the first and most commonly acquired aspect of Orthodox Jewish English. This preference for lexical accommodation has been noted in the previous literature on dialect contact (e.g., Chambers 1992, Nordenstam 1979, Trudgill 1986). The non-raising of pre-nasal / Θ / has the lowest score for (1) through (3), and (4) and (5) are not applicable because of the low salience. This feature was, as expected, not acquired by any of the BTs in my sample.

This proposed model could be tested in any situation of second style acquisition. A few questions have yet to be answered: How can one quantify the factors in an objective way? Are factors (1)-(5) weighted differently? Do other situations of acquisition involve additional factors? How do these factors work differently for different speakers?

With regard to the last question, I have enumerated some (non-quantifiable) factors that influence how different speakers acquire Orthodox Jewish English to different extents: (a) desire to locate themselves along various social axes, (b) language ideology, (c) linguistic ability (perhaps affected by age), and (d) Jewish background and

education. To illustrate the interplay of these different factors, I end this chapter with profiles of two very different BTs.

Profiles of two BTs

Rivka-Bracha grew up known as Rebecca and had little exposure to Judaism. Two years ago, she started attending Orthodox classes. Since then, she has spent several months studying in a yeshiva in Israel, moved to an Orthodox community, and married another Orthodox Jew. In the past two years, she has changed the way she talks so much, that an FFB woman cast her as the “*Yiddishe bubby* from Boro Park” (‘Jewish grandmother’ from a very Orthodox neighborhood) in the women’s Purim *shpil* (‘play’). She now uses Yiddish-influenced syntax, as in “You want that I should come?” and “This is not what to record.” She uses several clicks, some word-final /t/ release, and some rise-fall intonation. Her Hebrew loanwords are rendered in Yiddish phonology – *Tsfas*, rather than *Tsfat* (Safed, city in Israel), and *Shvúos* rather than *Shavuót* (‘Feast of Tabernacles’) – and with Hebrew morphology – *gerim* (‘converts’) and *hashkafos* (‘worldviews’) rather than *gers* and *hashkafas*. She uses the Yiddish adjective suffix like FFBs do: “a *Chasidische rebbe*” and “the *Yiddishe* statue of liberty.” She talks a lot about *Hashem* (‘God’), and she often says *baruch Hashem* (‘bless God’), especially in response to “How are you?” She uses many Hebrew and Yiddish loanwords, including the stereotypical Orthodox intensifier *mamish*, and I rarely heard her use an English word when a loanword was common, as in *chas v’sholom* (‘God forbid’), *mirtsehem* (‘God willing’), *goy* (‘non-Jew’), and *bracha* (‘blessing’).

When I asked Rivka-Bracha what she has changed since becoming Orthodox, the first thing she mentioned was her language: “I don’t speak the good king’s English any more. I speak this Yinglish, Yeshivish stuff, which is fine by me.” She went on to tell a story about standing with a BT friend and listening to an FFB mother use some Yiddish-influenced speech. The friend criticized the language, but Rivka-Bracha said it sounded fine to her. She knows features like “by them” are not standard, but she uses them because that’s what *frum* people do. She says that she has learned the language just by spending time in the Orthodox community and that now she sometimes even thinks in

Yeshivish. She considers herself Yeshivish, in contrast to Modern Orthodox, and she uses language to locate herself along that Orthodox spectrum.

Samuel, a BT in his 60s who grew up affiliated with Conservative Judaism, has a very different ideology about language. He and his wife moved to the Orthodox neighborhood about 8 years ago, just when they were becoming religious. Within four years he was asked to be on the board of the synagogue because of his business experience. His wife, Paula, became very involved with synagogue committees. Socially, Samuel and Paula are extremely well integrated into the Orthodox community. They have close friendships with FFBs and other BTs, and they often host non-Orthodox Jews visiting the community. In terms of language, Samuel has not made too many changes. He does use a number of Hebrew and Yiddish loanwords, like *kehíla* ('congregation'), *kávod* ('honor'), *tsníus* ('modesty'), and *dáven* ('pray'). But he uses no semantic features, no clicks, no distinctive intonation, and no phonological features within English. Within his loanwords, he sometimes uses phonology, morphology, and pragmatics that FFBs would consider strange or even incorrect: [frømkayt] instead of [frYmkayt]; [bØl] *tshuva* instead of [bal] *tshuva*; "a *ba'alei teshuva*," where *ba'alei teshuva* is already plural; "they *mekareved* us," rather than the periphrastic "they were *mekarev* us"; and "people that are very *chesed*," instead of "very involved in *chesed*" (*chesed* is a noun, meaning 'righteousness').

Samuel knows that his language identifies him as a BT, and he feels fine about that. He told me about a famous rabbi he admires, who rarely uses Hebrew and Yiddish words in public presentations. Samuel said, "I don't see any reason that you have to load your language up with things like that... Being able to communicate what the thoughts are behind it is what's important." In general he considered my research focus on language to be misguided. When I asked a follow-up question about language, he said, "Not to cast a damper on what you're doing, I don't really consider that to be really relevant." He went on to tell me what is important for a BT: "that you have a sensitivity to people and that you have a connection to God and that you live a life that's...connected to a value system."

Chapter 7

“We’re going to sound so FFB!” Stages in BTs’ Acquisition of Orthodox Speech

INTRODUCTION

Several years ago, I was teaching Yiddish at a Chabad center in California. My three students were all Community or Yeshiva BTs, and after the first day of class, one student said to another, “Chava, we’re going to sound so FFB!” It was then that I realized how important language is for some BTs as they integrate into Orthodox communities. In the Milldale community of the current study, Yiddish is not as central as it is in the Chabad Lubavitch movement. On the other hand, Yiddish and Hebrew influences on English are quite important. As the previous chapters show, BTs do acquire many of these distinctive linguistic features. But as the quote suggests, they do not acquire them right away. This chapter discusses the stages BTs go through in acquiring Orthodox language.

To aid my analysis, I turn to Lave and Wenger’s (1991) practice-based model of learning. Using data on the socialization of midwives, tailors, quartermasters, butchers, and recovering alcoholics, Lave and Wenger show how the learning of new practices is a complex process of “legitimate peripheral participation.” The learners, or “apprentices,” observe the “masters” and other apprentices, and they gradually gain increased access to roles and responsibilities. Through this increased access, they are able to try out the new practices and sometimes get feedback from the masters and other apprentices.

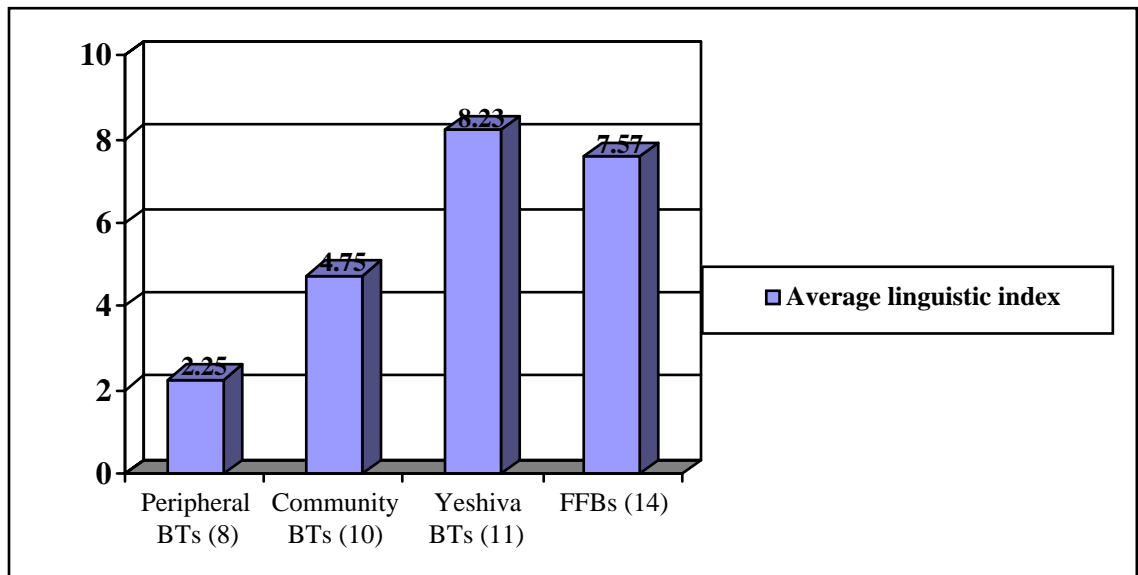
In the two communities of practice in my research, the Ner Tamid Center and the Shomrei Emuna synagogue in Milldale, the apprentices are the BTs, and the masters are the FFBs and long-time BTs.⁵⁷ In the sections that follow, I show how BTs in the various stages of social and religious integration gain increased access to roles, responsibilities, and symbolic practices. They are able to try out the new styles they are exposed to, aided in part by various interactions of socialization. Sometimes they hyperaccommodate to community norms, and sometimes they use Orthodox practices in a way that highlights their pre-Orthodox identity.

⁵⁷ See Chapter 8 for a comparison of the apprenticeships described by Lave and Wenger (1991) and those of BTs.

PROGRESSION OF LINGUISTIC PRODUCTION AND PERCEPTION

In Chapter 1, I introduced three stages of religious and social integration that BTs go through: Peripheral, Community, and Yeshiva. A quantitative analysis of overall use of distinctive Orthodox features shows that these stages correlate nicely with linguistic performance. Using the point system in Figure 6-1,⁵⁸ I totaled the scores for each speaker to arrive at a linguistic index (Total points in Figures 6-2 and 6-3 for BTs). In general, Peripheral BTs had the lowest indices, Community BTs were in the middle, and Yeshiva BTs had the highest indices.

Figure 7-1: Average linguistic index for BTs at various stages and FFBs



When the scores are broken down by gender, the BTs' increasing pattern remains:

⁵⁸ I did not record FFBs as much as BTs, and in my observation notes I was consciously less likely to note their use of loanwords. Therefore, I used a different scale for assigning points to FFBs for loanword use: 1 = 1-2, 2 = 3-6, 3 = 7+. Other scales were the same, as I feel that I noted the other features for FFBs as consistently as I did for BTs.

Figure 7-2: Average linguistic index for BTs and FFBs according to gender

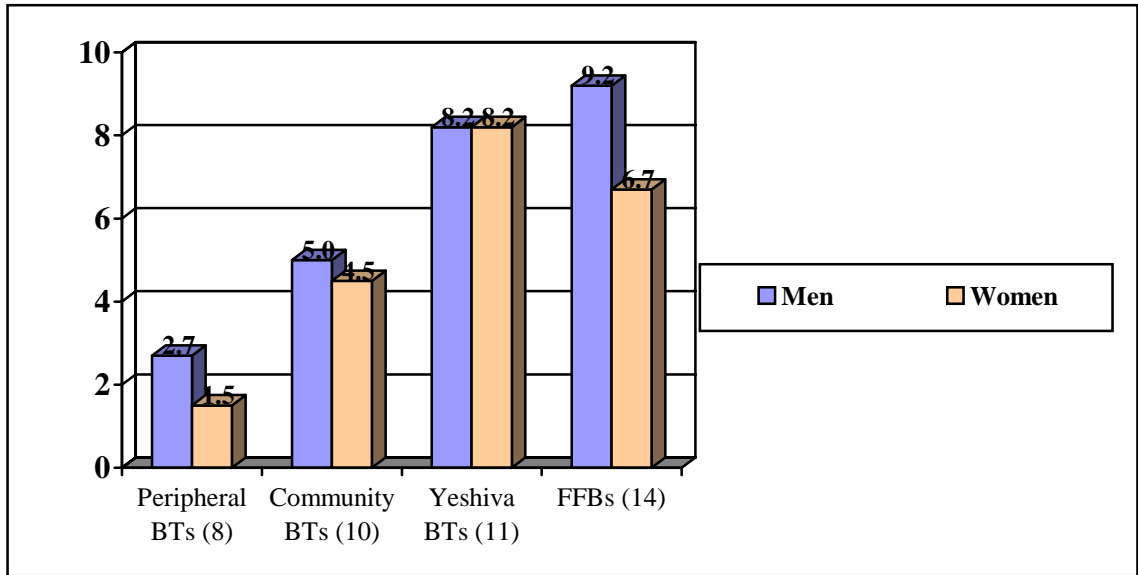


Figure 7-2 shows that Yeshiva BT women use more distinctive linguistic features than FFB women. This is because two Yeshiva BT women who have been Orthodox for less than two years – Devora and Rivka-Bracha – have scores well above the average for both groups: 11 and 14, respectively (see individual scores in Tables 6-2 and 6-3). Both of these young women embraced Orthodoxy with great intensity at Ner Tamid and in Milldale, and, after spending time in Yeshivas in Israel, they have integrated religiously, socially, and culturally into the community. For both of them, using Orthodox language has been an important part of their integration process, and one might say that they are hyperaccommodating (see below) quantitatively to Orthodox linguistic norms. On the other end of the spectrum, we find quantitative outliers as well. For example, Samuel has a score of 2, which is lower than even the average for Peripheral BT men. His low score is balanced out in the Community BT men category by Levi’s high score of 9. As is explained in the previous chapter, these individuals’ disparate scores stem from their different ideologies about language and Orthodoxy, among other factors.

As BTs integrate, their comprehension increases as well. Shelley, a Community BT, said that soon after moving to an Orthodox community she was given an audio tape of a lecture by a rabbi from the Chofetz Chaim Heritage Foundation that was intended for FFBs and knowledgeable BTs. She says, “I had no idea what he was talking about, because there was so much lingo thrown in.” She put the tape aside for over a year, and

then, “About a month or two ago I took the tape out just for the heck of it and it was totally different. I really enjoyed listening to the tape, because I understood what he was talking about – because I got the lingo.”

The fact that BTs’ production and perception of Orthodox speech can change so much within a few years is related to their increasing access to symbolic practices as they transition from Peripheral to Community (to Yeshiva). The next section describes this progression.

PROGRESSION OF INTEGRATION

Each BT has a different path to Orthodoxy (see Greenberg 1997, Tatz 1987 for several stories of BT “journeys,” as people call their transitions from non-Orthodox to Orthodox). While the events and factors that lead people to observance are diverse, almost all BTs spend at least some time as Peripheral BTs, most move to an Orthodox community, and some (usually as an intermediate stage) spend time in a yeshiva.

Interested Potential BTs

Many Jews have become Peripheral BTs with the help of the Ner Tamid center, which the director sees as “the first step in the learning process.” Through educational, religious, and social programming, Ner Tamid provides traditional Jewish experiences to potential BTs in the hope that they “will go on to higher learning” in a yeshiva or seminary (a name sometimes used for a women’s yeshiva), the director says. After potential BTs attend some events at Ner Tamid, the rabbis who teach there invite them to spend *Shabbos* and holidays with their families in Milldale. Throughout these early exposures, they are what I call Interested Potential BTs. When they begin to observe the laws and customs of Orthodoxy in their everyday lives, they enter the category of Peripheral BTs.

Peripheral BTs

Peripheral BTs are only marginally affiliated with Orthodoxy and have diverse levels of observance. Some keep strictly kosher; others still eat some foods in non-kosher restaurants. Some observe all of the laws of *Shabbos* and spend every *Shabbos*

with other Orthodox Jews; others observe completely when spending *Shabbos* in Milldale but are not as strict in their own homes. Some BT men wear a *kipah* ('skullcap') all the time, some do so in private and at Orthodox events, and others make use of the basket of *kipahs* at the entrance to Ner Tamid. What Peripheral BTs have in common is that they have all increased their observance of Orthodox laws and customs and currently identify as Orthodox Jews.

Once people have attended several classes and events at Ner Tamid, they are given some new roles and responsibilities and, thereby, increased access to Orthodox Jews and their symbolic practices. They are asked to sell tickets for a concert, stuff envelopes with a rabbi, or (usually women) prepare salads with a *rebbetzin* ('rabbi's wife'). When they reach a certain level of learning, they are asked to give a *dvar torah* ('sermon') at a *Shabbos* meal (more often men). Through these activities, they interact more with longtime BTs and even some FFBs, and they obtain more exposure to the language, dress, food, and other practices of Orthodoxy. The ticket seller has access to people's names on the sign-up sheet and is able to observe people's dress and greetings from up close as they enter the room. The envelope stuffer chats with a rabbi while listening to the Hebrew and Jewish English songs of Mordechai Ben-David. The salad preparer hangs out with a *rebbetzin* and learns how to squeeze a lemon without violating the laws of *Shabbos*. And the *dvar torah* preparer spends time with the Torah portion, rabbinic commentaries, and perhaps an experienced helper.

Community BTs

Eventually, most BTs decide to move to an Orthodox community, becoming what I refer to as Community BTs. Making the major commitment to live among Orthodox Jews⁵⁹ is considered an important step in the BT "journey." For their annual banquet, Ner Tamid chooses one or two people to honor as students or alumni of the year. These are often people who have moved to Milldale or other Orthodox enclaves. As the banquet program from 1998 states, the alumni of the year "attend Young Israel

⁵⁹ For those who already live within walking distance of a synagogue, like the New Yorkers Davidman (1994) describes in a Modern Orthodox community, a physical relocation is not necessary. The correlate step for them might be officially joining a synagogue.

[synagogue]... They observe the Sabbath, keep kosher and love being Jewish.” These newcomers were rewarded for taking the step of becoming Community BTs.

By the time BTs decide to move to an Orthodox community, they have usually taken on most if not all of *halacha* (‘Jewish law’). And in their first few months in Milldale, they put themselves in situations where they can learn more about laws, customs, and symbolic practices. A BT man might attend a class or study session with a rabbi at Shomrei Emuna, and a BT woman might attend a class or get an informal *challah* baking lesson with his wife. And soon after their move, BTs are expected to become active in the community of practice centered around the synagogue. Even relatively new members of Shomrei Emuna are asked to be on committees, organize events, and host visitors. So many of the administrative duties of the synagogue fall to BTs that the board of officers has been nicknamed the “BT board.” The past two presidents have both been BTs who had been living in Milldale only for a few years. Through these new roles and responsibilities, newcomers are able to observe and try out more and more of the symbolic practices of Orthodoxy.

Yeshiva BTs

Several of the BTs in Milldale followed this path – Ner Tamid or a similar outreach center and then a move to Milldale. But a number of BTs took an additional step, spending time in a yeshiva. These (usually younger) BTs live and study for months or years in a yeshiva far from their home, sometimes interrupting or ending a career. They study traditional texts of Judaism (mostly Gemora for men, mostly Bible for women), and they learn the intricate laws and customs of traditional Judaism in a formal setting. They are also exposed to Orthodox language in an intense way, and they are able to try out new words and constructions with their teachers and peers. When they return to a non-yeshiva Orthodox community, they are assumed to have more knowledge and solidified observance. One rabbi talks about Yeshiva BTs as “mainstream *ba’alei teshuva*”: “They’ve now fit in. They speak the language, they know how to learn, they’ve gone to yeshiva. They have it. They know what’s going on.” Attending yeshiva is not a necessary step in the path to Orthodoxy; I met plenty of long-time Community BTs who never felt they could take time off to attend yeshiva but are still very integrated

religiously, socially, and culturally. Even so, yeshiva is seen as a useful and important institution of socialization.

Variation in progression through the stages

As BTs progress through these stages of integration, their experiences vary according to individual preferences, Jewish background, life stage, and gender. Some Interested Potential BTs get very excited about Orthodoxy early in their exposure to it, and they take on observances and practices as quickly as they can. These people might transform from Interested Potential BTs to Yeshiva BTs within a year or two. On the other hand, I met a number of Interested Potential BTs who had been attending classes and events at Ner Tamid for years but had not started to observe *halacha*. And I met a few Peripheral BTs who had been observing some of the laws for five or more years but had still not made the residential or academic leaps to the next categories.⁶⁰

BTs who have had a good deal of Jewish education may go through the stages faster than those who begin the process with no knowledge of Jewish laws, customs, holidays, life cycle events, and traditional texts, because those in the latter category have much more to learn. On the other hand, those who have been active in a non-Orthodox community may find some of the gender separation and other aspects of Orthodoxy restrictive, and they might take longer to accept them.

People become Orthodox at various ages and life stages. Some are married, and they take on the laws and customs with or without their spouses (one partner's interest in Orthodoxy may be associated with marital problems). Some are parents, and they have to deal with their children's reactions to their newfound religiosity. Some are parents of BTs, and they become Orthodox in part because of their children's urging. Single BTs, especially those over age 30, are expected to begin the matchmaking process soon after becoming Orthodox. Several BTs at Ner Tamid transformed from Peripheral to Community BTs as soon as they got married to another BT. Differences in age and life

⁶⁰ Some of the participants in my study fit into different categories at different points during the year. I considered them to be in the category they were in for the majority of my observations. Those who were currently in Yeshiva but had not yet moved to an Orthodox community were considered Community BTs.

stage may affect how long a BT spends and the experiences she has in any particular phase of integration.

Gender is a very important factor in the experience of BTs. In keeping with Orthodox practice, BT men are encouraged to spend more time studying traditional texts, and BT women are encouraged to spend more time cooking and helping with young children. Accordingly, there are gender differences in the roles and activities that BTs participate in as they gain increasing access to the community. At a *Shabbos* dinner, it is more common to find female guests serving and clearing plates. While women do attend classes and sometimes participate in one-on-one study sessions, men are more likely to make study a priority. Gender differences are present to some extent at the Ner Tamid outreach center, but they become much more pronounced when BTs shift their presence to a residential Orthodox community like Milldale. These differences in activities have a major impact on language: men tend to get more exposure to and practice in the language of text study, and women tend to get more exposure to and practice in the language of informal socialization and child rearing.

PROGRESSION OF EXPOSURE TO LINGUISTIC STYLES

The different linguistic practices that Peripheral and Community BTs have access to are evident in the different classes and other events those BTs encounter. Most Peripheral BTs attend classes only at Ner Tamid, and most Community BTs attend classes only in Milldale. In the pages that follow, I present comparisons of classes, videos, and schedules in Ner Tamid and in Milldale.

Classes and services

In the classes at Ner Tamid, the teachers – both BTs and FFBs – use a good deal of Orthodox linguistic features. I heard several distinct intonation patterns and frequent /t/ release. I heard a few phrasal verbs and a few other Yiddish influences in semantics and syntax. And I heard many loanwords, most of which were translated. Once a BT starts attending services and classes in Milldale, he encounters a different scene. In his *divrei torah* (‘sermons’) at Shomrei Emuna, Rabbi Passo uses many Orthodox semantic, syntactic, and phonological features and translates very few of his hundreds of

loanwords. At services one day, I overheard one man on the other side of the *mechitza* ('partition separating men from women') say, "What does that mean?" when the rabbi used a relatively obscure loanword. Someone translated in a whisper. Afterwards, I asked the recent BT next to me if she understood the rabbi's sermon. She responded, "Hardly at all."

In one lecture at Shomrei Emuna, Rabbi Passo used several dozen loanwords and only translated five of them. He used the Yiddish-influenced "by," the trace pronoun, "already," the extra connective "so," a phrasal verb, a verb-first sentence, and the discourse marker "over there." He used some chanting intonation, some word-final devoicing, and a great deal of /t/ release. BTs who attended Rabbi Passo's class were expected to have more knowledge of Hebrew and of Orthodox Jewish English. After one of Rabbi Passo's classes, a BT asked me, not knowing that my research was focusing on language, "Did you understand what he said tonight? He used a lot of Yeshivish."

Rabbi Passo recognizes that recent BTs have less knowledge of Hebrew, Aramaic, and Yiddish. Although his lecture included many untranslated advanced loanwords, he used English words when discussing an issue of special interest to BTs. In his discussion of plates that may be used for Passover, he said, "[People] become religious, they become *frum*" and receive an expensive set of china from the "*alte bubbe*" ('old grandmother'). In cases like these, he says, "we are lenient sometimes to allow them to go ahead and ... use it." Although he does use one untranslated loan phrase in this discussion, *alte bubbe*, he translates one of the most common loanwords, *frum*, and he uses the English "lenient" rather than its common Hebrew equivalent *meykil*. In general, however, Rabbi Passo's class would have been unintelligible to most Peripheral BTs.

The differences between the classes at Ner Tamid and Shomrei Emuna could be due to the teachers' different styles. However, a second comparison shows that even the same speaker uses different language when speaking to recent and advanced BTs.

Videos

A New York-based organization, the Chofetz Chaim Heritage Foundation, produces videos of lectures about *loshon hora* ('gossip') to be shown around the

mournful holiday of Tisha B'Av, which commemorates the destruction of the Temple. Each year the Foundation makes two versions of a lecture by the respected Rabbi Stern (a pseudonym): one for people with advanced knowledge and linguistic ability (FFBs and long-time BTs) and one for relative newcomers (new BTs and non-Orthodox Jews). The former is shown in Milldale, and the latter is shown at Ner Tamid. I had a unique opportunity to attend both showings and compare the two lectures. The differences are staggering:

Table 7-1: Linguistic differences between Rabbi Stern's two videotaped lectures

	Lecture 1: meant for knowledgeable Orthodox Jews, shown in Milldale	Lecture 2: meant for non-Orthodox and BTs, shown at Ner Tamid
words used just in Hebrew/Yiddish (that could also be English) (types)	42	13 (but 6 of those are later translated or used only in English)
words used just in English (that could also be H/Y) (types)	7 (but 4 are used another time in Hebrew)	32
translated loanwords (types)	14	37
periphrastic verbs (types)	5	1
Yiddish semantic influences (types)	5	3
Rabbinic quotes	many	a few
extra connective "so"	several	none
over there	several	none
hypercorrection in English grammar	none	one: "between you and I"
B.C.E.	without hesitation	B.C. (new contour:) E.

Comparing Rabbi Stern's two lectures, which were almost identical in content, we see that for the FFB audience he used over three times as many loanwords, less than a quarter as many English words that could be loans, less than half as many translations, and more periphrastic verbs. The FFB lecture also included many exact citations of rabbinic quotes, a number of "if... so..." sentences, and several instances of "over there." The BT lecture includes a hypercorrection in English grammar, which is so common in America that even presidents use it: "between you and I." It is interesting that Rabbi Stern uses this hypercorrection only in his lecture to BTs, who may have more English education than he. Both lectures include the Jewish abbreviation "B.C.E.," which stands

for “Before the Common Era” and is used by Jews in place of “B.C.” (Before Christ). However, in the second lecture he uses this phrase with a break in intonation contours, as if he was considering saying only B.C. for this not-necessarily-Orthodox audience but decided to say B.C.E. instead.

Table 7-2 gives some examples of words and phrases used in Hebrew in one video and in English in the other:

Table 7-2: Loanwords and their English correlates used in the two videos

Lecture 1 (Milldale)	Lecture 2 (Ner Tamid)
we lost the <i>bayis</i>	The Temple was destroyed
the <i>arichus hagolus</i>	the Jewish people have been in exile
<i>tsadikim, gedolim</i>	great man
<i>Dovid Hamelech</i>	King David
<i>darshn</i>	expound or sermonize
acts of <i>chesed</i> and <i>rachmones</i>	acts of kindness and mercy
<i>maysim tovim</i>	good deeds
<i>Soton</i> is <i>mekatreg</i> (periphrastic)	prosecuted by the <i>Soton</i> (‘Satan’)
the <i>kapora</i> process	expiation of our suffering
<i>shchina</i>	divine presence
<i>Chaza”l</i> (an acronym for <i>chochmeynu zichronam livracha</i>)	famous sages

I was the only person who attended both video showings that year. But there are a number of people who have attended Ner Tamid video showings in the past and now attend video showings in Milldale. As BTs progressively become more involved in the Milldale community, perhaps eventually moving there, they are exposed to more and more Jewish speech.

Schedules

The language differences between Ner Tamid and Milldale are evident even in writing. I compared two schedules for the month of June, one prepared by Ner Tamid and one by Shomrei Emuna. The Ner Tamid schedule is mailed to anyone who has signed up for past events there, and the Shomrei Emuna schedule is made available at the synagogue. Table 7-3 shows the differences between the two schedules:

Table 7-3: Comparison of schedules

	Shomrei Emuna	Ner Tamid
Hebrew/Yiddish loanwords in Latin characters	24	5
English words that could be Hebrew/Yiddish	7	12
Yiddish semantic influences	1	1
BS”D	Hebrew letters, top right	none
words or abbreviations in Hebrew characters	13	0

Like the two lectures, the one available to Community BTs has many more loanwords and fewer English words that are often loans in Orthodox Jewish English. Like written Orthodox materials in general, both schedules have few semantic influences.

There are four referents that appear on both schedules, in Hebrew or Yiddish on the Shomrei Emuna one and in English on the Ner Tamid one:

Table 7-4: Comparison of schedules: Loanwords

Shomrei Emuna	Ner Tamid
shiur	class
parsha	portion
Chumash	Bible
davening	prayer, services

In addition, the Shomrei Emuna schedule uses the Ashkenazic form “*Shabbos*,” while the Ner Tamid one uses the Israeli or Sephardic version, “*Shabbat*” (see Chapter 4 on how non-Orthodox Jews and recent BTs are more likely to use the Israeli [t] than the Ashkenazic [s]).

Both schedules have some Hebrew letters, but they use them in quite different ways. The Shomrei Emuna schedule presents over a dozen words and phrases in Hebrew characters, including the date, the announcement of the new month, the names of the services and other events, and “mazel tov.” In the Ner Tamid schedule, there are only four Hebrew letters, used as eye catchers – *alef*, *beys*, *gimel*, and *daled* (the first four letters of the alphabet) in a large colorful font. Only the Shomrei Emuna schedule has the Hebrew letters BS”D (*b’sa’ada d’shamaya* ‘with heaven’s help’) in the top right corner,

an abbreviation found on most documents written by Orthodox Jews, acknowledging the role of God even in mundane activities like writing notes.

Informal conversation

These differences in the Ner Tamid and Milldale communities can be found not only in institutional settings. When Peripheral BT Will chatted with Rabbi Hollander after his class at Ner Tamid, he heard few untranslated loanwords. But when Will went to Rabbi Hollander's house to attend his son and new daughter-in-law's *sheva brachos* ('post-wedding week celebrations'), he heard him use many more untranslated loans, including several periphrastic verbs. Similarly, when Yeshiva BT Devora spent *Shabbos* dinner with Mrs. Hollander in Milldale, along with several recent or not-quite BTs, she heard her use few loans. But when Devora spent a Thursday evening with Mrs. Hollander, preparing for *Shabbos* dinner, she heard her use many loans and even a few Yiddish phrases: "*Ikh hob fargesn*" ('I forgot'), "*Zay gezunt,*" ('goodbye, be well'), and "*Zorg zikh nisht*" ('don't worry').

Orthodox Jews tend to use few loanwords in their first encounters with a newcomer who might be non-Orthodox or BT. I called an FFB man and introduced myself as a researcher, asking if he could do a survey at 10pm. He said "I have a study session." I said, "You have a *chavrusa* at 10?" He said, "Yes, a *chavrusa* by phone." Before he knew my knowledge level or religious background, he used the English word, but once he realized that I knew the word *chavrusa*, he used it as well. Similarly, I called the synagogue and left a message saying, "I'm interested in classes at [Shomrei Emuna]." Rabbi Passo called me back a few days later, saying he was calling about "classes at the synagogue." In my subsequent conversations with Rabbi Passo, when he learned more about my knowledge level, he used loanwords like *shiurim* ('classes') and *shul* ('synagogue').

It is clear that community members use fewer loanwords in the presence of Peripheral BTs and others they perceive as having less knowledge. They also temper their use of other linguistic features. As I describe throughout Chapters 4 and 5, when FFBs and long-time BTs are speaking to recent BTs or non-Orthodox Jews, they translate Yiddish-influenced English words like "hold" and "learn," and they use more Israeli than

Ashkenazic Hebrew phonology. The most dramatic examples come from FFB Rabbi Nussbaum, who uses mostly the Ashkenazic variants of /#C↔C/ and /o/ ([#CC] and [oy]) in his learning session with another FFB and mostly the orthography-influenced and Israeli variants ([#C↔C] and [o]) in his learning session with a Community BT (see Chapter 4).

As BTs are exposed to more and more symbolic practices of Orthodoxy, they incorporate many of them into their personal styles. When I asked BTs how they learned linguistic features, several of them focused on the length of exposure. Andrew said, “I just hear them a thousand times, and they finally sink in.” Cecelia emphasized the unconscious nature of acquiring grammatical features through exposure: “People do not consciously start saying ‘by’. What you hear often you just repeat.” This may be true for some speakers for some features. But newcomers do make a conscious effort to acquire certain features, especially loanwords, as I describe in the following section.

EPISODES IN THE ACQUISITION OF LOANWORDS

Based mostly on my observations, with some input from interviews, I have determined a number of loosely ordered and optional stages that BTs experience as they acquire loanwords.⁶¹

Figure 7-3: Stages of loanword acquisition

The learner:

1. hears the word without noticing it or without understanding it
2. hears it in a context that facilitates understanding or remembering it
3. asks about it or looks it up
4. uses it with a mistake in phonology, morphosyntax, or pragmatics
5. uses it in a marked way
6. uses it seriously, correctly, and with full authority

⁶¹ How much do these stages apply to non-lexical features of Orthodox Jewish English? All of them might apply to any feature of which the speaker is conscious, such as some chanting intonation contours and Yiddish influences in syntax or semantics. But for less salient features like /t/ release or schwa deletion, these stages likely do not apply.

My data suggest that speakers go through stages 1 and/or 2, 4 and/or 5, and that stage 3 is optional. The order of stages 3, 4, and 5 is interchangeable. While some BTs never reach stage 6 for some words, most do.

Throughout my fieldwork, I witnessed all of these stages, but I rarely observed all stages for any particular BT learning a particular word, except in the study domain. My regular recordings of Andrew and Avrum’s study sessions allowed me to observe all six stages for Andrew’s acquisition of *chazer* (‘review, go through [a text] with the goal of completely understanding it’). Andrew is a Peripheral BT, and Avrum is an FFB who is teaching him how to study Gemora in weekly study sessions at Ner Tamid:

- Stage 1: 11/26: Andrew hears the word a few times, likely without understanding (he may have also heard it in the past).
- Stage 2: 11/26: Avrum explains the word (without a question from Andrew – Avrum just assumed he didn’t know it) by telling a story about his *chavrusa* (‘study partner’) who thought that “learning Gemora and not *chazering* it is like [planting] a field and not cultivating it.”
- Stages 3, 4: 12/3: As Andrew is about to *chazer* the text, he says, “Now what’s the- what’s this called when we uh sort of summarize what we did? It’s *kaaaa-*” Avrum tells him.
- Stage 5: 12/3: When Avrum asks Andrew to go through what they just learned, Andrew uses the word in a marked way: “You want me to (pause, rise in tone, smile) *chazer* it, huh?”
- Stage 5: 2/18: Avrum says it, and Andrew repeats it with a slight smile, but not marking it in any way as foreign. Avrum: “Wanna *chazer*?” Andrew: “Let’s *chazer*.” His smile, as well as the fact that he repeats it rather than responding “sure” or “OK,” indicates that he still does not feel full ownership over this loanword.
- Stage 6: 3/18: Andrew uses *chazer* regularly without a smile or other marking.

Outside of the study domain, I observed stages 2, 3, and 4 for Norm learning the word *shadchan* (‘matchmaker’). Norm is a middle-aged Peripheral BT who is starting to the search for a marriage partner. Because he knows he wants to become more involved with Orthodoxy, he is dating only women with similar religious interests, and he is meeting them through a matchmaker. He was talking to Roberta, a veteran community member, about his dating experiences, and he used the word “matchmaker.” When Roberta responded, she used the loanword, *shadchan* (Stages 1, 2). Norm said, “Excuse me?” (Stage 3). Roberta said the word again. Norm tried to repeat it but got it wrong.

They went back and forth several times: she said it and he tried to repeat it. I tried to help too, saying the word slowly and spelling it in English letters, s-h-a-d-c-h-a-n. Norm, a bit frustrated, said, “I need a guide to pronunciation. Is there a tape on that?” The conversation about dating continued, and the next time he mentioned the matchmaker, he used the loanword, but with a slight mistake in phonology: *shabcham* (Stage 4).

In the sections that follow, I elaborate upon the intermediate stages of loanword acquisition. Stages 2 and 3 involve interaction of linguistic socialization, and stages 4 and 5 involve ways that BTs distinguish themselves from FFBs.

INTERACTIONS OF LINGUISTIC SOCIALIZATION

As the BT “apprentices” go through this progression of access to the practices of Orthodoxy, they also take part in various forms of meta-linguistic interaction with FFBs and long-time BTs. In some of these interactions, the more experienced community member initiates overt or covert language teaching, including explanation of words, translation, and correction. And in others, the BT takes the lead, asking questions and repeating the speech of FFBs and other BTs. Both BTs and FFBs are aware that language socialization is an important part of BTs’ integration into Orthodox communities. It should be emphasized that different BTs have different strategies for learning. Some are quite willing to ask questions, some prefer to look words up on their own, some request that their friends correct them, and some prefer not to use a word until they are sure they can say it perfectly.

Language instruction and translation

I observed several instances of FFBs or BTs teaching words and other features to BTs. These metalinguistic discussions were sometimes triggered by the newcomer’s question and sometimes initiated by the veteran. This happened most often in study sessions. For example, in Andrew and Avrum’s study sessions, Avrum taught Andrew several words, going well beyond the goal of comprehension of the text at hand. In the following excerpt, Avrum is teaching Andrew the Hebrew verb *l’hakel* by using the present-tense masculine singular form it usually takes in Orthodox Jewish English, *meykil*

(‘lenient’). He contrasts that to a word even more commonly heard among Ultra-Orthodox Jews, *machmir* (‘stringent’):

- Avrum: *Heykilu* means- it means easy. Oh, he’s *meykil*, he’s easy on that. *Machmir*, much stricter. So that- Because you hear that all the time and they never tell you what it means. You go hundreds of years, you never know what it means; now you do. You know what I mean? So-
- Andrew: Because of you.
- Avrum: No, because eventually, you get annoyed and you ask somebody.
- ...
- Avrum: ...*meykil* and *machmir*, you know what I mean? I’m sure you’ve heard those terms before, like Oh, he’s *meykil*-
- Andrew: Yeah, yeah, sure. I just never knew what it meant.
- Avrum: Exactly, cause no one-
- Andrew: *Machmir* I knew, but-
- Avrum: Yeah, but they always say that, and you never know what it means, and you’re always too embarrassed to ask, and you’re always expected like you know, you know. It’s kind of rough.

Avrum spends so much time on *meykil* and *machmir* (about 90 seconds) not because they are crucial for comprehension of the text but because they are crucial for integration into the community. The same is true for the word *shver*, a non-Semitic Yiddish word meaning ‘difficult’ that never appears in the Gemora. After reading a difficult passage, Avrum says:

- Avrum: As they say in the yeshiva, it’s *shver*. It’s difficult. It’s hard for me.
- Andrew: (little laugh)
- Avrum: No, I’m serious. I hear that all the time.
- Andrew: *Shver* (starts to write it down).

Later in that same study session, they come across the Aramaic word *pshita* (‘simple’). Andrew realizes that this is the opposite of *shver*, and he points that out, but with a mistake in the phonology:⁶²

⁶² This is an example of Stages 4 and 5 (see Figure 7-3). Andrew uses the loanword in a marked way, pausing first to look at his notes, and he makes a mistake.

- Andrew: *Pshita...* (looking at his notes) It's not *sháver*.
 Avrum: It's not *shver*. (higher pitch, humorous tone) It's not *shver*!
 Good call. You know how to use that word. You see how well you're using these words? I want you to use *shver* whenever you speak to anyone now. You're just walking on the street-
 Andrew: (smiling) That's going to be very *shver* to do.

Avrum clearly thinks it is important for Andrew to become familiar with the language style of the yeshiva. He even discusses the norms of phonology, as when he teaches Andrew the Aramaic word *hasam* ('there'): "*Hatam* or *hasam*. They'd never say *hatam*. It's *hasam*." "They" refers to Orthodox Jews learning in a yeshiva. Avrum knows that Andrew will soon spend a year or more in yeshiva, and his metalinguistic instruction is meant to prepare him for that experience.

Another common technique used to teach Orthodox language is translation. In most situations where recent BTs or non-Orthodox Jews are present, especially at Ner Tamid, the BT or FFB speakers translate many of their Hebrew and Yiddish loanwords. Teachers translate in their lectures, and more experienced students translate in their conversations with less experienced ones. Most often, translation goes from loan to English, but sometimes it goes from English to loan, and sometimes even from loan to loan. Usually, speakers translate loanwords by restating all or part of the phrase in which it occurred. Examples from lectures include:

- from the *medresh*, from the commentaries
- the *mabul*, the flood
- *Nebach*, how sad it is, that...
- that lies in the *ruach*, in the spirit.
- *loshon kodesh*, Classical Hebrew, Classical *Ivrit*
- a series of tests, a series of *nisyonos*
- the *heychal*, the *beys hamikdash* ('Temple')
- all *chanúkiyas*, all *menoras* ('candelabra')
- the *amud*, the *bima*, the *shtender* ('lectern/platform from where services are led')

If the teachers did not consider it important for the students to learn the loanwords, they would just use the English equivalents. But some teachers translated the same loanword up to dozens of times in the same lecture. They wanted to make sure that

the students understood the content, but they also thought it was important to use the loanword. Translation also serves an additional purpose: emphasis. By using both a loan and its translation in the same sentence, the speaker highlights the importance of the referent at hand.

Written material geared toward BTs also includes a good deal of translation. For example, Tatz's (1987) book, which describes the author's journey to Orthodoxy and provides advice and arguments in favor of observance, defines all loanwords in footnotes. And Greenberg's (1997) book of interviews with dozens of BTs has a large glossary in the back. Even mainstream Orthodox books and periodicals also include some translations, because the authors recognize that their readership includes many BTs.

Correction

Veteran community members expect new BTs to make mistakes. And they sometimes correct these mistakes in an effort to help them avoid future embarrassment. One long-time BT rabbi explained why he corrects someone for making a mistake in a Hebrew word: "I'm helping them they should know ('to know') how to use the word." Although a number of FFBs and long-time BTs told me that they correct BTs' incorrect plurals, mispronunciations, and mis-uses of loanwords, I observed several mistakes that went uncorrected in their presence. This is because corrections can be insulting to the learner, especially if they are frequent.

Overt corrections seem to be more accepted when they occur in a classroom setting. Especially when the newcomer was reading Hebrew, the teacher or more advanced study partner often corrected mistakes. Outside of the classroom, I heard only a few overt corrections. When a BT addressed Rachmiel as Rachimel (pseudonyms), he responded, "You didn't pronounce my name right." When I used the English plural of the loanword for "matchmaker," *shadchans*, an FFB corrected me to the Hebrew/Yiddish plural: *shadchonim*. And when a BT used [h] for /x/, an 11-year-old boy corrected him obnoxiously.

The other corrections I heard outside of the classroom were more covert. Just as the literature on child language acquisition and socialization describes caregivers giving young children implicit negative feedback (Bohannon and Stanowicz 1988), BTs are

often corrected covertly. For example, Will (a Peripheral BT) asked Rebecca (a Yeshiva BT) what she did for “*kol hamoed*” (‘down time between the holiest days of a long holiday’, should be *chol hamoed*). She asked, “For chol *hamoed*?” And then she answered his question. Other examples of covert correction of phonology are presented in Chapter 4, such as the BT who said, “I always forget what you say before *Yom Kipur. Gmar chatimá tová?*” Her FFB friend responded kindly, “Right, *gmar chasíma tóva,*” including a covert correction of her non-Ashkenazic phonology.

Questioning

BTs often ask veterans overt questions about language, such as “What does that mean?” and “What’s the word for...” My notes are filled with examples of BTs – mostly Peripheral but even some Community and Yeshiva BTs – asking questions. People ask questions about language, religious practice, philosophy, and culture. They direct them to rabbis, *rebbezins*, FFBs, and other BTs. They ask teachers for immediate clarifications during class, they whisper “What did he say?” to their neighbor, and they ask larger-scale questions in more private settings.

To give just one example of a question: Brandon, a recent BT, and Erez, a long-time BT, were talking on Saturday night at an event at Ner Tamid. As Brandon was leaving, Erez said, “*Shavua tov*” (‘good week’), a parting phrase used on Saturday night, which is the beginning of the Jewish week. Brandon said, “What’s that – take care?” Erez said, “*Shavua* is week, so-” And Brandon cut in, “Oh, have a good week.”

Long-time community members expect BTs to ask questions as part of their learning process. One FFB said that you know you can trust a BT’s *kashrus* (‘observance of dietary laws’) when “they ask the right questions.” However, this expectation does not eliminate the vulnerability some BTs feel when they ask questions. I heard BTs preface questions with “This is going to sound silly, but...” A few BTs have mentioned that they sometimes feel more comfortable directing questions about practices (such as dress, rituals, and language) to children rather than their parents. I did hear BTs asking questions to children as young as six – children they have come to know well through events at Ner Tamid and *Shabbos* and holiday visits to their homes in Milldale.

Imitation / repetition / uptake

At a concert sponsored by Ner Tamid, Reuven, a BT musician, told a story: There was once a king who had an empty palace. He found two architects and asked them each to decorate half of it in a year. One architect put so much effort into it, doing all sorts of intricate decoration. The other architect waited until the last minute, and when he noticed how soon the deadline was, he started to worry. But then he had a brilliant idea: he covered his side of the palace with mirrors, so it reflected everything the other architect did. The king loved both sides of the palace.

Reuven told the audience that this story used to bother him, because the king approves of the guy who did not do much work. But then he realized that the moral is: “Even if you don’t have much learning or much time to learn, you can still please God. Just mimic what the *tzadik* (‘righteous man’) does, and God will love you.”

This allegory must have really hit home with many of the BTs in the audience. By imitating someone with more experience and skill, they can please God. Most of them probably thought of the story in terms of religious practice, but I also thought of its applicability to language. Even if you don’t have the knowledge of the loanwords and other distinctive features, or the time to study them, you can use them by imitating others. The imitated item and the imitation might be separated by time, as the speaker might observe something and then use it only later. Or imitation can happen on the spot. In fact, I noticed several BTs imitating FFBs like this – immediately repeating their words, constructions, and intonation contours.

The domain where I observed the most repetition was text study sessions. When the learning partners had different levels of knowledge and experience, the newcomer often imitated the veteran. In BT Andrew and FFB Avrum’s study sessions, I often heard Avrum read a passage and Andrew repeat it word-for-word. Avrum would translate, and Andrew would repeat his translation. Once I even heard Andrew repeat a Yiddish-influenced construction that Avrum used in a translation:

Andrew: (reading Aramaic phrase): *D’iy salka daytach*
Avrum: *D’iy salka daytach*. And if I would have thought-
Andrew: And if I would have thought-

I never heard Andrew use the if-clause “would” in his everyday speech, and I did hear him say things like “If I had thought...” It is likely that the if-clause “would” sounded strange to Andrew. But he used it readily in his study session, because he was imitating the more experienced learner, Avrum.

In study sessions, I often heard BTs imitating the veterans’ intonation. When Jacob was studying with Rabbi Nussbaum, he sometimes read and translated in spoken intonation. But often when Rabbi Nussbaum read a phrase with chanting intonation or used a high-falling pitch boundary, Jacob would imitate this intonation. Once when Rabbi Nussbaum read a Hebrew phrase in a chant, Jacob used the same chanting contour in his translation of the phrase. But he had trouble with some words and never reached the end of the phrase, so his chant never reached the low tone like Nussbaum’s did. Even so, he was attempting to imitate the FFB, likely as part of his quest to become a more proficient learner.

I also observed a few instances of imitation outside of the learning domain, where the BT repeated a veteran’s use of a loanword. These repetitions are instances of “uptake,” a term used in recent research on child language acquisition. As Clark (2003) explains, children’s immediate repetitions of an adult’s term “connote acceptance or ratification of the adult term” and allow the child to practice using it (2003:321). In the Orthodox community, new apprentices also sometimes use uptake for these dual purposes.

One example of uptake is from Mark, a recent BT, in conversation with FFB Rabbi Tovin, who was visiting from Israel:

- 1 Mark: Anyone who can live in Israel but doesn’t, that’s not *kidush hashem* (‘sanctifying God’s name’).
- 2 R. Tovin: It’s *chilul hashem* (‘profaning God’s name’).
- 3 Mark: It’s *chilul hashem*.

In line 1, Mark conveys the message he intended, but the loanword he uses is not what a more experienced Orthodox Jew would use. Rabbi Tovin expresses agreement with Mark, using the more appropriate loanword. And Mark immediately mimics what Rabbi Tovin says, both ratifying his statement and practicing this phrase that he may have never used before. Soon after, in conversation with someone else, Mark uses the same phrase

again: “The only way it wouldn’t be *chilul hashem* would be if you thought it was *kidush hashem*.” His imitation in line 3 helped him to incorporate this phrase into his active vocabulary.

Another example of uptake involved three people. Olivia, a long-time BT, and Marissa, a recent BT, were talking with FFB Rabbi Hollander. Olivia mentioned that Elinor, a non-Orthodox woman, was interested in learning more about traditional Judaism:

Olivia:	She really wants to get into the whole thing.
R. Hollander:	Good, <i>baruch hashem</i> [‘bless God’].
Olivia (smiling):	<i>Baruch hashem</i> .
Marissa (smiling):	<i>Baruch hashem!</i>
Olivia (smiling):	<i>Baruch hashem!</i>

Marissa and Olivia’s uses of the same phrase Rabbi Hollander had used were somewhat tongue-in-cheek, but they represent both uptake and apprenticeship-like participation. By saying *baruch hashem*, Olivia and Marissa are ratifying Rabbi Hollander’s happiness that Elinor is becoming involved in Orthodoxy, starting on the path they took to becoming BTs. They are demonstrating that they too are thankful to God. And they are showing that they can use Hebrew phrases like this FFB rabbi. Although this is certainly not the first time Olivia and Marissa have used *baruch hashem*, they are using repetition to perform their Orthodox identity – both in form and in content.

The literature on language socialization provides many examples of children repeating their caregivers, often after being prompted to do so (Ochs 1986). For example, Watson-Gegeo and Gegeo (1986) describe repeating routines among the Kwara’ae of the Solomon Islands. The caregiver uses an “eliciting imperative” – the word ‘*uri* – or a special “invitational intonation contour” (25) with a word or phrase. The young child is then expected to repeat the word or phrase. In situations of adult language socialization, this type of prompting for repetition is rare. Except in a second-language classroom, it would be demeaning to an adult apprentice to tell him to “say X.” Even in the classroom discourse I observed, BTs were never explicitly instructed to repeat after FFBs. And even in the belittling Socratic exchanges that Mertz (1998) describes between professors and students, in which professors sometimes put words in their students’

mouths, instances of prompting for repetition are rare (as in “Say yes” after the student answered “No”) (155-6). This is an important contrast between child and adult language socialization.

Self-teaching

Another unique aspect of adult language socialization is that adults are able to take the initiative to teach themselves outside of social interactions. While children’s socialization process involves their learning how to learn, adult novices already have years of experience with learning and self-teaching. Many BTs spend hours listening to recorded lectures and reading books and periodicals. The primary goal of this self-teaching is to absorb the content, but an additional result is that BTs also increase their repertoire of loanwords and other features of Orthodox Jewish English.

Mark, a Community BT, says he has learned a lot of his “Yeshivish” from listening to taped lectures by rabbis, including “whatever I can get my hands on.” I once heard him tell some other BTs over dinner about a rabbi he had recently heard on tape: “You should hear [this rabbi] – he sounds so Yeshivish!” Rhoda, a Peripheral BT in transition to Community, said she uses books and newspapers to learn Hebrew and Yiddish words. She owns the *FrumSpeak* dictionary (Weiser 1995), and she often adds entries to it. This is sometimes based on her reading of *Yated Ne’eman*, a Jewish English Ultra-Orthodox newspaper. She says she underlines words she does not understand, often “every fifth or tenth word!” and asks friends for their translations.

BTs’ DISTINGUISHING PRACTICES

In my interviews in the Orthodox community, dozens of people – BTs and FFBs – told me that they can often tell who is BT – especially recent ones – by the way they talk. They mentioned their mistakes, their overuse of certain words and expressions, their pronunciation of Hebrew words, and their sounding awkward or unnatural. Even a 9-year-old boy said, “Their voice sounds weird, like not a Jewish voice.” While some BTs do acquire Orthodox styles quite well and can even pass as FFB, others do not. This is sometimes intentional and sometimes quite inadvertant. In this section, I discuss distinguishing practices common among BTs. Especially in the early phases of

Orthodoxy, they make mistakes at all levels of language. Some of these mistakes are examples of hyperaccommodation, going too far in their attempts to sound like Orthodox Jews. On the other hand, some BTs make deliberate attempts to distinguish themselves from FFBs in language and other practices. These conflicting strategies, often used by the same BT even for the same feature, are instances of stages 4 and 5 in the acquisition of loanwords.

Mistakes

Trudgill (1986:58) describes how people accommodating to new dialects often exhibit imperfections. Among BTs learning Orthodox Jewish English, I have observed many mistakes – mostly from recent BTs – in the phonology, morphology, and pragmatics of loanwords and loan constructions. Figure 7-4 presents some examples from the several dozen I documented in my fieldnotes (see details in Chapters 4 and 5):

Figure 7-4: Examples of BT mistakes

Phonology:

1. /x/ => [k]: *kol hamoed* for *chol hamoed* (period between the holiest days of a long holiday)
2. /a/ => [ɤ]: *chussena* [x ɤ s ↔ n ɤ] for *chassena* [x a s ↔ n ɤ] ('wedding'), probably on analogy with [x ɤ sn] ('groom')
3. /Y/ => [ɤ]: *from* [fr ɤ m] for *frum* [fr Y m] ('religious')

Morphology:

1. plural as singular: "That *nigunim* ('melodies') ... was so beautiful."
2. singular as plural: "I'm not one of the *chacham* ('learned one') like [Rabbi Goldman] and [Rabbi Passo]."
3. Yiddish adjective suffix used not preminally: "somebody who's more *yeshivishē*"

Pragmatics:

1. overusing *kaynahora*, *baruch hashem*, and *chas v'sholom* and extending their pragmatics
2. using the greeting *sholom aleichem* when parting
3. response to my saying "I'm pregnant": "*Mazel tov!* Oh, not yet. I mean, *b'sha'a tova!*" (*mazel tov* is 'congratulations', and *b'sha'a tova*, the appropriate response, is 'in a good hour')

Prosody:

1. stress: “Her hair was *mamIsh* short.” The intensifying adverb *mamish* is usually less stressed than the adjective it modifies.
2. intonation contours: “You’re three. [pause] *Kaynahora*, right?” *Kaynahora* (‘no evil eye’) is usually used in the same intonation contour as the preceding statement.

Lexicon:

1. “being cut off from the Children of Israel for ... eating *matzah* (‘unleavened bread’) on *Pesach*” (should be *chametz* ‘leavened food’)
2. “I fried *sheytel* (‘wig’) with the *rebbetzin*” (should be *shnitzel* ‘fried chicken patty’)
3. “We had a squad of six *shiduchim* (‘set-up couples’) come in” (should be *shadchonim* ‘matchmakers’)

Loan usages from Yiddish:

1. “Does Rabbi hold to the Dragon Inn?” (should be “hold of” ‘approve of’)
2. “Where do you hold with your *kosherness*? (should be “Where are you holding in your *kashrus*?”)
3. “I’m staying by Joanna’s brother’s” (should be “brother”)

The new BTs themselves are certainly aware that they are liable to make mistakes. They sometimes avoid saying words that they do not yet feel comfortable with, for fear of making a mistake. Jenny was taking a Hebrew class and was very excited to learn the future tense of the verb *rotse* (‘want’). The future masculine singular form, *yirtse*, is used in the Hebrew/Yiddish/Jewish English expression *im yirtse hashem* (‘if God wills it’), which is often pronounced *mirtseshem* or *mertseshem*. A few hours after that Hebrew lesson, Jenny said, “I never said *im yirtse hashem* before, because I knew I was saying it wrong. But today I’ve said it many times.”

Hyperaccommodation

Many of the mistakes BTs make are what have often been called “hypercorrections” (e.g., Labov 1972). Trudgill defines hypercorrections as “attempts to adopt a more prestigious variety of speech which, through overgeneralization, leads to the production of forms which do not occur in the target prestige variety” (1986:66). As Yaeger-Dror (1992, 1992 ed.) argues, “correction” may not be the most appropriate term, since the phenomenon at hand may not be conscious and often does not involve accommodation to a “prestigious” variety or to what the accommodators view as correct

(see, for example, Baugh 1992). The term she proposes, following Giles et al. (1977), is “hyperaccommodation.” Yaeger-Dror defines this as “the shift toward or away from a given speech variety (for social reasons which need to be determined), creating linguistic patterns which overshoot the speech in that target variety” (1992:184).

A number of sociolinguistic studies have found that speakers hyperaccommodate when their target speech style is not their own (see Yaeger-Dror, ed., 1992). Labov (1966) found that, in the more formal and careful speech characteristic of reading passages and word lists, New Yorkers who may have aspired to a higher socio-economic class used post-vocalic /r/ more frequently than people in the class above them. Baugh (1983) describes African American Vernacular English speakers who use hypercorrect forms like “loveded” (‘loved’) and “two-faceded” (‘two faceded’) in formal situations when they are approximating Standard English.

Janda and Auger (1992) distinguish between the types of hypercorrection described by Baugh and by Labov, calling the former “quantitative hypercorrection” and the latter “qualitative hypercorrection.” Using Yaeger-Dror’s term, I paraphrase their definitions: quantitative hyperaccommodation is when speakers use a higher frequency of a variant than the speakers they are accommodating to. And qualitative hyperaccommodation, which Janda and Auger (1992) complain has been neglected by linguists, is when speakers generate innovative forms as they try to approximate a target. I have observed both of these tendencies among newly Orthodox Jews.

Qualitative hyperaccommodation

Examples of qualitative hyperaccommodation include:

Phonology:

1. /h/ => [x]: *chalacha* for *halacha* (‘Jewish law’)
2. /k/ => [x]: *medayech* for *medayek* (‘exacting’)
3. /t/ => [s]: *amarsa* for *amarta* (‘you said’) (in Whole Hebrew)

Morphology:

1. double plural: *ba’alei teshuva*s for *ba’alei teshuva* (plural of *ba’al teshuva*)
2. double adjective suffix: *hey^mishdik* for *hey^mish*: *hey^m* (‘home’) + *-ish* (ADJ suffix) + *-dik* (ADJ suffix)
3. *-e* suffix when adjective is not prenominal: He’s so *yeshivish^e* looking

These speakers are aware of the linguistic transformations involved in switching from the English and Hebrew spoken by non-Jews and non-Orthodox Jews to the English and Hebrew spoken by Orthodox Jews, such as replacing some [t]s with [s] and adding the *-e* suffix to loan adjectives. But they do not understand all the intricacies of the transformations, and they overextend them. Once I heard a BT originally from New York produce two hyperaccommodations in one word: she said *muchser* [mYxs↔r] for *muktza* [mYkts↔] (‘objects that should not be touched on *Shabbos*’), using [x] for /k/, as well as the New York epenthetical [r].

The hyperaccommodations in pragmatics call for more detailed explanations. As I discuss in Chapter 4, several BTs overextend the pragmatics of loanwords, sometimes based on the norms of the English correlate. One BT said, “Such a *nebach* (‘pity’),” using the interjection *nebach* as a noun, like the English word “pity.” Another BT said *sholom aleichem* to a friend when he was leaving the building. This phrase is used as a greeting, but the BT assumed it was also a parting phrase, perhaps on analogy with Israeli Hebrew *shalom* (an understandable mistake, considering that *shalom* is part of the phrase).

Quantitative hyperaccommodation

One BT woman used the phrases *baruch hashem* (‘bless God’) and *bli ayin hara* (‘without the evil eye’) more in the two evenings I spent with her than I hear most Orthodox Jews use in several weeks. Usually these phrases are appended to expressions of important things, like having good health or many children. Just to give a few examples, she said: “He met a guy, and he was *frum*, *baruch hashem*.” “*Baruch hashem*, [he]’s helping people find jobs.” “Rabbi [Passo] knows so much, *bli ayin hara*.” “Rabbi [Marks] is very nice, *bli ayin hara*. He has nine children, *bli ayin hara*.” And when her daughter said she could only count to 100, she responded, “You could count to 200, *bli ayin hara*.” These instances represent qualitative hypercorrection, in that the speaker is using these words with different pragmatics. But they also represent quantitative hypercorrection, in that the speaker is using these words more frequently than many of the people she is trying to emulate.

Quantitative hyperaccommodation is also evident when we look at the overall use of distinctive Orthodox features. Take, for example, the speech of Rivka-Bracha and Devora, two Yeshiva BT women who have been Orthodox for only a few years. As the discussion of Figure 7-2 indicates, their linguistic indices are much higher than other BT and FFB women; Rivka-Bracha has even begun to use Yiddish influences in syntax that most FFBs do not use. In their attempt to speak like Orthodox Jews, they go beyond most FFBs.

Discourse about hyperaccommodation

Hyperaccommodation is the subject of a discourse among FFBs, BTs, and even non-Orthodox Jews. One BT man says, “In their attempt to make sure that they’re saying things properly, they end up making more of a botch of it ... There are people who try too hard ... every other word is some kind of [Hebrew or Yiddish] expression.” When I told an FFB teenager that my dissertation is about *ba’alei teshuva* and how they learn Orthodox ways of speaking, she responded, “You mean they learn it and then they go way beyond other people, making us feel like we’re not religious? [To her friend] Have you noticed that?” Similarly, an FFB woman commented:

Sometimes a BT wants to sound *frum* (‘religious’), so they throw in *frum* expressions. BTs do it more because they’re trying to make up for lost time and because they’re trying to fit in. That’s [the/a] mark of being *frum*. They don’t want to be looked down upon. They pepper their [language] with “*Baruch Hashem*” more. I use them too, but not every third word.

There are even jokes about BTs’ overextension of linguistic rules. There is a prohibition against saying God’s name, and Orthodox Jews often say *Kel* instead of *El* (one of God’s names). The joke goes: “What do BTs name their children? Kelisheva and Keliyahu” (instead of Elisheva and Eliyahu). And “What do BTs drink? Ginger Kale.” The rule that changes *El* to *Kel* does not apply to names, and it certainly does not apply to an English word.

Overextension of audience

Another way that BTs hyperaccommodate is to use Hebrew or Yiddish loanwords in conversations with non-Jews, while FFBs generally mitigate the distinctness of their outsider speech. For example, Levi is one of the only Jews in his office, and he says he often uses Hebrew or Yiddish words. He has a sign on his desk saying, “No Loshon Hora,” and he often silences gossiping colleagues by saying, “Shhh. *Loshon hora.*” He says that one of his “*goyishe*” (‘non-Jewish’) co-workers now says *mamish* and *takeh* (intensifiers) because he likes them. For a co-worker to pick up these words, Levi must have used them multiple times. In contrast, FFB Rabbi Hollander was talking to his Torah class about the phrase “God willing.” Apparently he tries not to use phrases like this at work. He said, if you “let it slip out of your mouth, they say, ‘What’s God doing in the workplace? Keep him in church.’” As unlikely as this reaction is, this quote shows that Rabbi Hollander attempts to de-Judaize his speech to non-Jews, a practice common among FFBs. Levi and some other BTs use not only religious phrases but even Hebrew and Yiddish words. This allows them to perform their new Orthodox Jewish identity in the presence of outsiders.

Another example of this trend is Joanne’s use of Hebrew words to an African American man who asked her for money in the street. After she gave him a dollar, he said something like, “May God be with you.” Joanne responded happily, “*Baruch hashem, amen*” (‘bless God, amen’). This may have been a performance for my sake, as we had just been speaking about Orthodox language. But it is extremely unlikely that an FFB in the same situation would have used these Hebrew words.

Of course, not all BTs overextend the audience of their newly learned Orthodox features. Most of the times I observed BTs with non-Orthodox Jews or non-Jews, they did not use Hebrew or Yiddish words. I asked one Peripheral BT if she says *baruch hashem* around non-Orthodox Jews, and she said, “No, because they’d look at me like I’m nuts.” In fact, one time when I observed a BT using several loans with non-Jews, she got a reaction of confusion. Chana used the words *Pesach*, *seder* plate, and *kiddush* cup with two non-Jews, and they asked for clarification. She explained these words, using them a few times again in the explanations. It seems that her intent was to teach these

non-Jews about Jewish culture and language, in addition to performing her new identity as an observant Jew.

Overextension of lexical replacement

Sometimes the overuse of Hebrew and Yiddish words seems to be accidental, a result of having replaced the English word in their mental lexicon. Shira, who grew up Catholic and converted to Orthodox Judaism, was talking to a non-Jewish girl in the neighborhood. She asked, “Are you here to visit your *bubby*? Your grandmother?” She immediately corrected herself with the English equivalent. Devora did a similar thing when she was at the home of a Polish Catholic seamstress, getting her borrowed wedding dress altered. She said, “I’m not allowed to get more than an inch removed, because it has to be OK for another *kallah*. For another bride.”

Shira and Devora know that *bubby* and *kallah* are not English, and they did not seem to intend to teach these non-Jews Hebrew and Yiddish words. Because they corrected themselves, it is likely that their use of the loanwords was accidental (or it is possible that, even with the translations, they were performing their Jewish/Orthodox identity for the benefit of the non-Jews). It seems that they replaced their mental entries “grandmother” and “bride” with *bubby* and *kallah* and that when they tried to access the lexical items for those referents they accessed the new words instead. This is a process I refer to as **overextension of lexical replacement**: speakers who use Word X learn Word Y, which has a similar referent but differs to some extent in semantics, pragmatics, or stylistic variation, and then they use Word Y even when Word X would be appropriate.

Overextensions of lexical replacement are made not only by people who acquire a new style but also by people who learn a new lexical item, such as when a store or restaurant changes its name. To give examples of my own overextensions of lexical replacement: My undergraduate university, Columbia, was on the semester system, and my graduate school, Stanford, was on the quarter system. When I started graduate school, I learned to replace the lexical item “semester” with “quarter.” But I often found myself referring to academic terms at schools on the semester system as quarters. The same holds true for my use of “woman” as a lexical replacement for some uses of “girl.” In college, I learned to refer to myself and my female peers as “women,” and even now I

sometimes find myself using “woman” in reference to teenage or pre-teen girls. The 9th graders in my Yiddish class thought this was quite strange. Usually, I notice my mistakes and correct myself, as these BTs did.

Non-linguistic hyperaccommodation: BT zeal

The sense that BTs do things too much extends beyond language. Both BTs and FFBs talk about BTs *shuckling* (‘swaying back and forth’) harder when they pray, wearing sleeves and skirts longer than necessary, and following every stringency they know of in Jewish law. There is a joke about this too, repeated here from Chapter 2: “How many BTs does it take to screw in a lightbulb? You mean you can do that?”

There is an element of truth to this discourse of hyperaccommodation, at least for some BTs. My fieldnotes include several examples of BTs doing things more intensely or frequently than FFBs, based on my observations and people’s reports of themselves and others. BTs avoid certain acceptable activities, and they go overboard on the observance of positive commandments. They do this in part because they want to make sure that they are observing laws and customs correctly, but also, as the FFB woman suggested above, “to make up for lost time.” One BT told me that when she gets married she plans to wear both a *sheytel* (‘wig’) and a hat, a practice common among some Ultra-Orthodox women, especially in the New York area. She said, “I had days when I was not *tsnius* (‘modest’). So for me, I feel like the way to do *teshuva* (‘repent’) on that is I’m going to double cover.” To make up for the years she was not observant, she plans to follow very strict interpretations of laws and customs.

Another reason that BTs are overzealous in their use of Orthodox symbolic practices is to show off the knowledge and culture that is new to them. To give an example from language, I heard BT students insert a loanword when the teacher had used English, such as a newcomer’s “The *akeyda!*” when the teacher had said, “The binding of Isaac.” An example from home decoration is the placement of bookshelves. Some Orthodox Jews, such as the learned FFB Rabbi Passo, keep most of their books in a dedicated office in the basement. But others, especially BTs, keep their books prominently displayed in the living room. Perhaps BTs’ lesser knowledge leads them to feel more need to show off their books. One BT actually did show off her books to me.

As I was waiting to interview her while she put her children to bed, she said, “You’re welcome to look at our library.” The library consisted of two prominently displayed bookcases, including some *seforim* (‘holy books’) and many English books about Orthodox observance. During my many visits to FFB homes with very impressive collections of *seforim*, nobody ever invited me to look at their libraries.

Another way that BTs hyperaccommodate to Orthodox norms is to shed connections to their pre-BT days. As one FFB says, some BTs “throw the baby out with the bath water.” BTs have told me that they threw away all their old clothing, music, art, or photographs, even those that were not offensive or immodest. And some BTs choose not to keep in touch with old friends, partly because of the complications that arise in maintaining such relationships, but also partly because they wish to make a clean break from their non-Orthodox past.

Historical context of hyperaccommodation: Orthodox stringency

BTs’ hyperaccommodation to Orthodox norms can be seen as a parallel to the swing toward stringency in the Ultra-Orthodox community at large. As Friedman (1992) and Soloveitchik (1994) explain, the Haredi (Ultra-Orthodox) world of the 20th century took on stringencies in religious and social practice that their grandparents had not followed. An example is the Hazon Ish’s famous rulings that the amount of wine required on *Shabbos* and holidays is actually more than had been practiced for centuries. In the 20th century, stringencies like this one were widely accepted in the Ultra-Orthodox world, as individuals began looking to texts for definitive advice on practice rather than to the family, which had always been the authoritative source of tradition. This turn toward stringency was possible due to the ruptures of continuity caused by early 20th-century migration from Eastern Europe and the Holocaust. These ruptures led to the rise of the yeshiva as the major institution of higher learning among Ultra-Orthodox Jews, and the students began to prefer the authority of texts and their teachers who analyze these texts over the authority of their family traditions. This trend continues in the Orthodox world today: some FFB children of FFBs refuse to follow their parents’ traditions, preferring to abide by the stringencies codified in recent rabbinic texts. It is not only BTs who observe Judaism more strictly than their parents.

For many Jews, the 20th century ruptures of migration and the Holocaust, as well as earlier transitions such as urbanization and *haskalah* (Enlightenment), led to a reduction or sometimes even cessation of Jewish religious practice. Whether this change happened in Europe or America, in 1850 or 1950, the descendents of these Jews no longer looked to *halacha* ('Jewish law') as the guiding force in their lives. Some of these descendents, BTs, have recently looked back to the practices of their ancestors. And, like the Ultra-Orthodox world in general, BTs go through a process of looking to texts and textual masters as authorities, rather than their families (who are much less observant). Even more than some of their FFB peers, they gravitate toward the stringencies of religious and social practice.

Highlighting difference to avoid inauthenticity

Turning back to the sociolinguistic literature, Yaeger-Dror stresses the value of analyzing the motivation for speakers' hyperaccommodation (1992:189). In a situation of newcomers joining a community as adults, the motivation is clear: the newcomers want to integrate into the community. In attempting to acquire the new styles, they sometimes overshoot the target. But, as I explain in Chapter 6, not all BTs have the goal of complete cultural assimilation to Orthodoxy. Some wish to maintain aspects of their previous self. Especially in the early stages of embracing Orthodoxy, many BTs feel uncomfortable taking on cultural practices completely.

One reason for this is the discourse of authenticity among BTs: that BTs seem inauthentic when they use Orthodox practices. New BTs observe the ways that veteran community members act, dress, and talk, and they may see those practices as an eventual goal. But they often feel that if they were to take on those practices right away they would be acting inauthentically. A few BTs talked about certain practices feeling unnatural or foreign to them. Matt, a Conservative Jew who spent a few years in Orthodox communities, says that he never adopted the speech style, because "it wasn't me." Some people feel that wearing Orthodox clothing – and doing other practices – is like dressing up for Purim. Ira, an advisor at a BT yeshiva, says, "To a large part, everyone's putting on a costume in yeshiva." When Mark was a Peripheral BT, he compared using the chanting intonation with wearing a black hat. When he did these

Orthodox practices, he felt like he was not acting like himself. But he sometimes did them anyway, because he thought “it’s fun.” So when he was planning his wedding, he told friends and family that it would be “black hat optional, and I’m opting in.”

Sometimes BTs are criticized for taking on Orthodox practices that are associated with FFBs or Ultra-Orthodox Jews. As Joseph says about the [o]~[oy] variable, “People who say *Toyrah* are ... either *ba’alei teshuva* who are really trying hard to look really *Yeshivish* or [FFBs who have] a *Chasidish* or ... very religious upbringing.” He avoids the [oy] because he does not want to be perceived as inauthentic.

Shana, a recent BT who wears short sleeves and low necklines and aligns herself closer to Modern Orthodox than Ultra-Orthodox, teased her friend, Tamar, for speaking too *frum*. Tamar used the word *tsniusdik* (‘modest’), while many Orthodox Jews, especially BTs, use *tsnius* without the Yiddish adjective suffix *-dik*. Shana shook her by the shoulders playfully and said, “You’re starting to sound *Yeshivish*!” Shana never would have reacted this way toward an FFB’s use of *tsniusdik*. Her response seemed to be fueled not only by her negative stance toward Ultra-Orthodoxy and its notions of women’s modest dress but also by her sense that this word seemed inauthentic when used by a recent BT.

How do BTs deal with their feelings of inauthenticity and their discomfort with new cultural practices? There are two different strategies: avoiding these practices and using them in a marked way. Some BTs avoid certain Yiddish influences in syntax and semantics, certain phonological features, certain loanwords (or their overuse), and chanting intonation. Some BTs resist wearing black hats or *sheytels* (‘wigs’). And some BTs refuse to cook *gefilte* fish, chicken, and *farfel* for *Shabbos* dinner. These BTs tend to identify themselves closer to the Modern Orthodox side of the spectrum.

The other strategy is to use Orthodox practices in a way that emphasizes the individual’s difference as a BT. Some BTs do this through unique semiotic combinations (see Chapter 3 for details): there is the BT who keeps his Grateful Dead teddy bear stickers on his windshield, while his bumper sticker says “Moshiach is coming!”; the BT who adds Indian spices to her *gefilte* fish; and the BT who wears his black hat with trendy sunglasses. By combining practices like this, BTs are able to identify as Orthodox Jews without giving up their previous selves completely.

In the linguistic realm, BTs use old and new features together, such as slang and loanwords in the same sentence. One man uses many loanwords, Yiddish semantic and syntactic influences, and other Orthodox features, but he continues to use words that are considered somewhat immodest, like “screwed up.” Another linguistic strategy, especially common among BTs trying out new loanwords, is to mark new features as foreign (Stage 5) through metalinguistic comment or even through subtle prosodic cues.

Marking non-ownership

I noticed several instances of BTs making a joke about a new feature, pointing out that they just learned it, or attributing it to someone else. Leah recognized that she might be making a mistake in forming the plural of *talmid chacham* (‘wise scholar’) which should be *talmidei chachamim*. She said, “*Talmid chachams, talmid chachamim*—Whatever, that’s just me being pluralistic.” Marissa was giving a *dvar torah* (‘sermon’) at Ner Tamid, and when she used the word *cheyn* (‘charm’) she qualified it by adding “as Rabbi Hollander would say.”⁶³ And Dan ended his short *dvar torah* in Milldale with “Speedily in our days, and all that.” By saying this, he pointed out that he knows that a *dvar torah* often ends with a wish for the coming of the Messiah – something like, “We should all be *zoche* (‘merit’) to witness the coming of the *Moshiach* (‘Messiah’) speedily in our days.” It is possible that Dan knew the full sentence but did not feel he had the authority to say it.

Another way of marking new forms as foreign is through prosodic cues, such as interrupting the flow of the sentence or raising the pitch or volume. This type of marking is used when the interlocutor is aware that the speaker has just learned the new form. Andrew did this in his first unprompted use of the word *chazer* (‘to review’), soon after a metalinguistic discussion about the word. When Avrum asked him to review part of the

⁶³ In the same *dvar torah*, Marissa used some slang phrases like “kick ‘em in the butt” and “Potifara had the hots for Yosef.” Later that *Shabbos*, when FFB Rabbi Hollander was giving a *dvar torah*, he made a few allusions to Marissa’s use of slang, but not using the actual words she did. He said things like, “It’ll come back to bite you in the-” and “She thinks he’s- whatever [Menucha] said” (Menucha is Marissa’s Hebrew name). Then he went on to say a metalinguistic monologue about semantic shift in slang and how he has trouble keeping up: “When I was young, it was cool. Now it’s hot. Then, fat was an insult, now it’s a compliment.” By almost using slang words and attributing them to a BT, Rabbi Hollander was marking slang as foreign to him, just as Marissa marked loanwords as foreign to her by attributing them to an FFB. His marking and self-deprecation serve to make BTs feel more comfortable with their language use and non-use, but they also serve to reinforce the differences between FFBs and BTs.

text, Andrew said with a smile, “You want me to [short pause, rise in pitch and volume] *chazer* it?” By marking *chazer* through prosodic cues, he pointed out that he had just learned it and did not quite feel comfortable using it normally. Linguistic crossers – people using language that is not their own – also tend to use marking, or flagging (Rampton 1995). Like new BTs, European Americans using African American Vernacular English or Anglos using Indian English also recognize that they are not “authentic” speakers of the language they sometimes use, according to community ideologies. They mark this recognition of inauthenticity through various discursive means.

Leah, Marissa, Dan, and Andrew used linguistic marking to highlight their discomfort with new morphological, lexical, and discourse features (Stage 5). Eventually, they got used to these new features and used them in an unmarked way (Stage 6). This happened through their long-term participation in the community. As Lave and Wenger say, “An extended period of legitimate peripherality provides learners with opportunities to make the culture of practice theirs” (1991:95). However, even after many years in the community, some BTs still do not feel complete ownership of these practices. For example, a well respected long-time Yeshiva BT says that by now he is pretty comfortable with the way he speaks. But, he says, he sometimes still feels insecure about his language when he is speaking to very learned people, especially FFBs.

CONCLUSION: THE BUNGEE EFFECT AND LIMINALITY

In this chapter, I have shown how BTs learn the linguistic and other practices of Orthodoxy through legitimate peripheral participation in the community. As they progress through the stages of integration (Peripheral, Community, Yeshiva), they gain increased access to roles and styles, and they progress in their perception and production of Orthodox linguistic features. They are assisted in this process by interactions of linguistic socialization, including instruction, correction, questioning, imitation, and self-teaching. As BTs acquire loanwords, they potentially go through four intermediate stages, including two of these practices: instruction and questioning (Stages 2 and 3). Stages 4 (mistakes) and 5 (marking non-ownership) represent larger issues involved with being a newcomer: hyperaccommodation and remaining authentic. In their desire to

integrate into the community, BTs sometimes take on symbolic practices to an extreme. And sometimes they attempt to remain authentic by avoiding certain practices, by using unique semiotic combinations, or by marking Orthodox practices as foreign to them. These two strategies – hyperaccommodating and remaining authentic – are often used by the same BT at different times. For some, they are used in a progression, which we might call **the bungee**⁶⁴ **effect**: newcomers, eager to integrate into the community, go overboard in their use of symbolic practices at first. As Friedman the Tutor (1994) refers to it, they go “off the deep end.” Eventually they bounce back to a happy medium, moderating their use of these practices.

Levi, who has been Orthodox for several years, says that he used to try too hard to fit in. Now he no longer wants to pass as FFB, he does not wear his black hat and dark suit all the time, and he has made a conscious effort to tone down his use of Orthodox linguistic features. He says:

Initially you're constantly trying to prove yourself, and then eventually you get to a point where, you know, I'm comfortable with my knowledge and ... what I know how to do and I'm not fooling anybody but myself ... And you come to grips with who you are. ... There's a lot of sort of going out and finding where you feel comfortable. So you really have to go beyond it and then slip back to it. So that's ... the difficult part of the transition.

When Levi talks about “finding where you feel comfortable,” he refers to the various social axes in the Orthodox community (Figure 6-3), especially Modern to Ultra-Orthodox and BT to FFB. Levi and other BTs try out different locations on these axes by following different stringencies or leniencies in Jewish law and by using different linguistic, sartorial, and other symbolic practices. And often they “slip back” to a location where they feel more comfortable religiously and culturally, toning down their use of these practices.

Another example of the bungee effect is Mark, who made the transition from Peripheral to Community BT during my year of fieldwork. In December, when he was

⁶⁴ I owe this term to an audience member at a talk I gave at Emory University. A bungee jumper jumps off of a high place attached to a strong elastic cord. When she reaches the bottom of the cord's reach, she bounces back up to somewhere in the middle.

still a Peripheral BT, he told me he enjoyed using chanting intonation for fun. The following October, he told me he avoids chanting intonation and uses less Yeshivish speech in general. Why? In an e-mail response, he wrote, “Maybe it was a bit too forced? And, it’s not really me. I mean, I may be observant, but that doesn’t make me ‘Yeshivish.’” Mark has changed his preference for where he wants to locate himself along the Modern to Ultra-Orthodox and BT to FFB axes, partly because of issues of authenticity. After his initial plunge into Orthodoxy, he has bounced back to somewhere in the middle.

The bungee effect is nicely illustrated by a song called “B.T. Blues,” which is performed in a bluegrass style, complete with fiddle and banjo solos:

“B.T. Blues,” by Rabbi Moshe Shur, on the album *King David Sang*⁶⁵

Now this is a story about a man named Joe.
He did some tshuva (‘repentance’), or at least he thought so.
But after fifteen years, eight whole months, and just about a week,
They still called him a ba’al tshuva freak.

Refrain:

L-rd,⁶⁶ don’t make me into a *benoni* (‘in-between’).
All my friends are tzadikim (‘righteous people’); it’s so hard on me.
‘Cause I work on myself, but I’m still a bit confused.
Guess I got me a case of them ba’al tshuva blues.

Joe went off to a simcha (‘party’) and took a glance
The were all dancing the loshon hora (‘gossip’, pun: Jewish dance) and we didn’t
have a chance
They were 100% authentic, super glatt (‘smooth, very kosher’) F.F.B.’s,
A different kind of breed than a real live B.T. (*Refrain*)

Joe went down to shul (‘synagogue’) to learn how to davin (‘pray’)
He shuckled (‘sway’) so hard, his head was a-bobin’ [sic].
They all stared at him, not knowing what to say.
“You’re much too quiet for us.”
“You’re not talking or making a fuss.”

⁶⁵ This song is reprinted from the liner notes, maintaining spellings and orthographic practices, even inconsistencies in transliteration (daven~davin) and an English spelling error (bobin’). Translations and underlines are mine. I am grateful to Rabbi Moshe Shur for having written and recorded a song that illustrates my points so nicely and to “Yakov-Tzvi” for introducing me to it.

⁶⁶ “L-rd” is similar to “G-d”: it allows Jews to throw away paper without worrying about discarding God’s name.

“You can’t do just what you wanna.”
“You got way too much kavanna (‘fervor’).”

Joe went out on a shiduch (‘set up date’) to find a ba’alas tshuva (‘female BT’) freakess.

He even ironed his tzitsis (‘fringed ritual undergarment’), he knew he had a weakness.

But when he saw her standing there, her chumash (‘Bible’) and birkenstocks,
He knew she was his zivug (‘match’), another one of the flock. (*Refrain*)

Now Joe has a family, a mortgage and a car.

He’s come a long way, though he hasn’t gone too far.

But when his kids show him the pictures of “them good old days,”

He says, “It really doesn’t look like me.

It must be my old friend Tzvi.

I could have never ever looked like that.

I’m not wearing my Stetson hat.”

Now they call our Joe Yossil (Yiddish: ‘Joey’) Frumovitz.

He even talks during davening (‘praying’) and hangs out at the shvitz (‘steam bath’).

He’s trimmed his beard and payus (‘sidelocks’), and he only learns once a week.

He’s become one of them, a real chevra (‘society’) man.

He’s now an F.F.T., Frum From Tshuva, you see, about his past he will not speak.

Cause he never lets on that he ever once was a ba’al tshuva freak. (*Refrain.*)

“B.T. Blues” nicely illustrates some of the points I have made in this dissertation, such as the prominence of loanwords in Orthodox Jewish English, the importance of symbolic practices in the construction of Orthodox identity (names, clothing, hair, and dancing), and the fact that FFBs are seen as more authentic Orthodox Jews. It gives examples of the two processes described above: hypercorrection (Joe’s *shuckling* too hard and having too much fervor) and using semiotic combinations that highlight BT-ness (the woman carries a Jewish book while wearing Birkenstock sandals, rare among FFBs but more common among BTs). And it demonstrates the bungee effect: after his initial plunge into Orthodoxy, Joe bounces back and tempers his use of symbolic practices. He trims his beard and sidelocks, he cuts down on the time he spends learning, and he allows himself to talk during prayer services. He becomes an “FFT,” a BT who has been Orthodox so long that he hangs out with FFBs and can sometimes even pass as FFB.

This song also brings up the concept of in-betweenness, or liminality (“L-rd, don’t make me into a *benoni*”). *Benoni* is the only loanword that is italicized in the liner notes, probably because it is not commonly heard in Orthodox Jewish English. The author of this song seems to be creating a name for the liminality that BTs feel, or, to borrow a term from post-colonial theory (e.g., Anzaldua 1987, Bhabha 1994), for the “borderland” in which BTs exist. When a colonial power takes over a country and imposes cultural forms, the colonized people are necessarily changed. They can never fully return to their pre-colonial culture, and they can never fully take on the culture of the colonizers. Similarly, when BTs join an Orthodox community, their former selves are necessarily changed, but they can most likely never attain full status as FFBs (cf. Tallen’s 2002 psychological study of female BTs).⁶⁷

How do BTs address this liminality? Some become “FFTs,” and others highlight the fact that they are BTs. As much as they have control over their self-representation, they choose where to locate themselves along the continuum between BT and FFB and other axes of Orthodoxy. They do this through their variable use of language and other symbolic practices.

⁶⁷ An important difference is that BTs voluntarily choose Orthodoxy, while the colonized have a new culture thrust upon them.

Chapter 8
Conclusion

BECOMING ORTHODOX JEWS

In this dissertation, I have presented an analysis of the cultural transformation involved in becoming Orthodox. *Ba'alei teshuva* become Orthodox through a process of legitimate peripheral participation in various communities of practice. At different rates, they incorporate linguistic, sartorial, culinary, and other symbolic practices into their stylistic repertoire. BTs use these practices to align themselves with Orthodox Jews and distinguish themselves from non-Orthodox Jews and non-Jews. At the same time, BTs distinguish themselves – intentionally and unintentionally – from those who have been *frum* ('religious') from birth.

In this concluding chapter, I elaborate on some of the fundamental issues that have appeared throughout the dissertation. I describe how Orthodox ideologies, especially that of distinctiveness, influence the cultural practices that BTs encounter. I sort out the similarities and differences between the BTs' learning process and the apprenticeships described by Lave and Wenger (1991), as well as the linguistic socialization of FFB children. I highlight the importance of gender difference in the Orthodox community and its relation to BTs' feelings of infantilization. And I discuss the extent to which BTs can integrate into the community and become like FFBs.

Ideology and practice

In Chapters 3, 4, and 5, I describe many linguistic and non-linguistic practices common among Orthodox Jews. These practices are meaningful to Orthodox Jews because of a number of beliefs and worldviews. For example, the frequent discussion of Bible stories and the use of Hebrew names, loanwords, and songs are influenced by Orthodox Jews' strong bond to the biblical Children of Israel. The preference for Eastern European foods, Yiddish names, and Ashkenazic phonology is influenced by a reverence for the recent Eastern European past. The differences in women's and men's dress, activities, and language are dictated by a complex gender ideology (see El-Or 1994, Kaufmann 1991). Many practices are also affected by Orthodox Jews' complex system of laws and customs, such as the length of women's sleeves and the avoidance of gossip and profanity. The belief in an omnipotent, omniscient God encourages the use of psycho-ostensives like *baruch hashem* ('bless God') and *im yirtse hashem* ('God

willing'). An expectation that the coming of the *Moshiach* ('Messiah') is imminent affects the formulaic ending of a *dvar Torah* ('sermon'): "May we be *zoche* ('merit') to witness the coming of the *Moshiach* speedily in our days." And a reverence for rabbinic leaders influences the yeshiva-based practice of addressing rabbis in the third person and the more general custom of prominently displaying portraits of elderly rabbis.

Another ideology that affects many Orthodox practices is the value of distinctiveness from non-Orthodox and non-Jews. While members of the Milldale Orthodox community do interact with non-Jews regularly – at work, in service encounters, and with some of their neighbors – they try to maintain strict boundaries between themselves and the *goyim* ('non-Jews'). It is rare for Orthodox people to socialize with non-Jews, and it is a major scandal when an FFB marries a non-Jew. This desire for distinctiveness has an overt effect on Orthodox Jews' use of certain Hebrew words rather than the English equivalents associated with Christianity (e.g., *tanach* 'Bible' and *malach* 'angel'). Less overtly, it helps to maintain much of the distinctiveness of Orthodox Jewish English. When Orthodox Jews use language that differs from general American English, they are distinguishing themselves from their non-Jewish neighbors – sometimes consciously, sometimes subconsciously. Recall the FFB rabbi's comment comparing Orthodox speech to African American speech: "We have Yeshivish, and the people in the 'hood have Hoodish."

Of course, the value of distinctiveness also has an effect on other symbolic practices. Once I was walking to *shul* ('synagogue') with a long-time BT, and we passed a girl of about ten, who was playing ball with a man (her father, I assume). The girl was wearing tight stonewashed jeans with fringes hanging off the sides. The BT pointed to her and said to me, with a mixture of contempt and pride, "My daughter will never look like that." I was slightly embarrassed, because he said it loud enough that the people might have heard him. But this comment enforced the importance of distinctiveness from non-Orthodox and non-Jews, especially among BTs. FFBs would be less likely to make a comment like this, because there was never much of a chance that their daughters would wear anything but skirts.

Many Orthodox Jews say that they prefer not to make distinctions like "Orthodox" vs. "non-Orthodox"; several people talked about *klal yisroel* – a unified

people of Israel – or commented, “Jews are Jews!” Even so, there is a strong ideology of distinctiveness from non-Orthodox Jews and their institutions. A song by the popular Orthodox children’s singer Uncle Moishy illustrates these conflicting attitudes (transcribed from the tape; translations are mine):

“Together” by Uncle Moishy and the Mitzvah Men, Volume 9

We are all so very different,
No two alike at all.
I am short with curly brown hair,
You are blond and tall.

My name is Dedi,
V’ani medaber ivrit (‘and I speak Hebrew’).
Un (‘and’) Shimmy knows Yiddish too.
Whenever Dovid speaks,
He prefers to stick to English [(British accent)].
Yet everyone can get along with you.

You’re my brother, my sister, my friend –
Together we’re *Am Yisroel* (‘the People of Israel’).
We share one Torah, one nation, one dream –
We are all the children of *Hashem* (‘God’). ...

Yitzi wears a different *kipah* (‘skullcap’).
His father’s hat is tall and round.
Baseball caps are Yossi’s favorite.
Yet both can walk hand in hand.

Ahuva wears a different uniform.
Her school has a Spanish name.
Sometimes we seem so very different.
But really we are very much the same. ...

You know, when I grew up,
Our family lived in the most interesting building.
Shloymi loved to roller skate,
And Dovid loved to read...
Mr. Golding ran a restaurant...
Mr. Goldbaum taught us all about the Torah.
And with so many people... we called the building
Chaverim kol yisroel (‘all Israel (are) friends’) ...

This song emphasizes unity despite the diverse practices within *Am Yisroel*, the Jewish people. And to many of the children (and parents) who listen to this song, it is an accurate representation of the diversity they encounter in their daily lives. But Jews who did not grow up Orthodox recognize that the song actually portrays semiotic variation only within the *frum* ('Orthodox') world. "Shloymi," "Rivky," and all the other names mentioned here are used almost solely by Orthodox Jews. All male heads in this song are covered in an Orthodox fashion, and none of the activities represented here flouts Jewish law. Not one of the children who lives in the "*Chaverim kol yisroel*" building eats pepperoni pizza or likes to watch cartoons on *Shabbos*. Yitzi wears a different *kipah*, but the song does not say, "Jeremy goes out bareheaded," and certainly not, "Jennifer wears a *kipah*." While this song purports to be about Jewish unity, it is actually about a multi-lingual, multi-national *frum* unity. Distinctiveness from non-Orthodox Jews does not even need to be stated; it is understood by the Orthodox audience.

BTs are often the most vehement critics of non-Orthodox Jews and the branches of Judaism they were once affiliated with. And they use symbolic practices to distinguish themselves as Orthodox. Once I attended a lunch with two BT couples, and the conversation turned to the subject of prayer melodies used at their *shul*, Shomrei Emuna. One man said that he likes the fact that he had to learn new tunes when he became Orthodox. The others agreed, saying they think most BTs are glad they do not use the same tunes sung in the Conservative and Reform synagogues of their childhoods.

This sense of distinctiveness also has an impact on BTs' language. Since many BTs grew up learning Israeli Hebrew pronunciation, they associate those norms with non-Orthodox Judaism. Their preference for Ashkenazic norms represents their desire to be distinct, as well as to align themselves with their new community. The same holds true for the use of loanwords and other features not common among non-Orthodox Jews. As BTs distinguish themselves from their former non-Orthodox communities, they are aligning themselves with certain factions of Orthodoxy. Both alignment and distinction are important tactics (Bucholtz and Hall forthcoming) that affect and are affected by symbolic practices.

Extent of BTs' integration

In Lave and Wenger's (1991) model of learning as legitimate peripheral participation, an apprentice always has the opportunity to become a master. A trainee becomes a full tailor when he receives the blessing of his mentor. And an apprentice in Alcoholics Anonymous becomes a master when she reaches the twelfth step. BTs can become "masters" in the Orthodox community (i.e., learned and well integrated BTs), but the only people who can be FFBs are those who grow up Orthodox. It is possible for BTs to attain high status in the Orthodox community, becoming a synagogue president, teacher, rebbetzin, rabbi, or director of a school or outreach organization. And they can raise FFB children – several BTs have expressed pride in this fact. However, no matter how integrated BTs are, they have no chance of becoming FFBs. This fact may have little impact on everyday life, but it leaves BTs with a small degree of outsider status.

While many Orthodox communities, especially Milldale, are extremely welcoming of BTs and make a big effort to help them integrate, a number of BTs in various locales told me that they have encountered some prejudice or discrimination because they are BTs. BTs have reported hearing FFBs gossiping about BTs' backgrounds, and they know they have less chance of being matched with an FFB by a *shadchan* ('matchmaker'). Some BTs say that they worry about their (FFB) children's chances of being accepted into elite yeshivas or landing choice *shiduchim* ('marriage matches') (see Levine 2003). Kaufmann reports that the descendents of BTs are sometimes accorded non-FFB status. She said the principal of an Orthodox school was trying to convince a visitor that there are many BTs in his school, and he said something like, "We have many BTs; some have been BT for a few generations" (Debra Kaufmann, personal communication, 12/23/03).

Even if BTs do not experience discrimination, they are likely reminded of their non-Orthodox past every now and then. When an FFB reminisces about her *frum* childhood, a BT might feel left out. An elementary school cookbook, complete with quotes from the students about the holidays in their homes, includes an introduction by a teacher with sentences like these: "Think back to the kitchen of your childhood. ... your mother is making the gefilte fish and braiding the round challah..." The BT parent reading this cookbook might feel excluded from the community of elementary school

parents. And she might feel all the more passionate about making sure her FFB children have *frum* experiences.

BT adults and FFB children

Another difference between BTs' learning process and that in Lave and Wenger's model lies in the age of the community members. The midwives, tailors, quartermasters, butchers, and alcoholics learn to be part of their communities of practice only as adults. While the children of midwives and butchers may feel part of their parents' vocational communities, they are not socialized to be midwives and butchers as young children, and they are certainly not born butchers or midwives. This is also the case for graduate students learning to be academics, gay men joining a gay friendship group, and many other newcomers. But in some situations of second style acquisition, the community of practice is likely to include masters who were born into the community and began their apprenticeships in infancy. This is true in regional and ethnic groups, as well as in the Orthodox community, where many of the FFBs that newcomers encounter are 20+ years their junior.

In some respects, FFB children are similar to the masters in Lave and Wenger's model. BTs see them as a model to emulate, and they learn a good deal by observing and interacting with them. Some BTs told me they feel more comfortable asking certain questions to children than to their *rabbi/rebbetzin* parents. To a recent BT, even a preschool child may come across as being quite knowledgeable and competent with regard to language and other practices of Orthodoxy.

On the other hand, FFB children – like BTs – are in the process of being socialized into the Orthodox community. Despite the term FFB (*Frum* 'religious' From Birth), Orthodox children are not born knowing how to act like Orthodox Jews. Throughout my fieldwork, I noticed a number of similarities between the socialization of FFB children and the socialization of BT adults. Both involve mistakes, hyperaccommodation, interactions of linguistic socialization, and a gradual progression of access to the styles of Orthodoxy.

Children make mistakes in analyzing the morphology and phonology of Hebrew words, just as they do with English words. Three-year-old Mendy was showing off his

knowledge of the Hebrew word for fish – *dag* – which he recently learned in preschool, and he said *dagims*, while the correct plural is *dagim*. Two five-year-old girls gleefully chanted, “*chas alila, chas alila*,” inaccurately imitating the Hebrew phrase *chas v’chalila* (‘God forbid’). They did not know what it meant, but they said it over and over because they thought it sounded funny. And the adults present certainly thought their mistake was cute – an unlikely reaction to a BT mistake.

I observed an FFB child hyperaccommodating to adult Orthodox norms on a road trip with the Kramers. 13-year-old Shimon Kramer did not want to sit on the van bench next to Sara, a recent BT woman who the Kramers consider “part of the family.” Shimon explained, “It’s not *tsnius* (‘modest, modesty’).” His sisters made fun of him and pointed out to me that Shimon (who just became a *bar mitzvah* – ‘adult’ according to Jewish law – the previous week) was still getting used to the laws of *tsnius*, which apply more fully to “adults.” It is possible that Shimon was confused about the details of the laws, but it is also likely that he used this encounter as an opportunity to highlight his new adult status. In either case, Shimon’s overextension of rules is similar to the hyperaccommodation I observed among BTs.

Children in the Orthodox community experience interactions of linguistic socialization similar to those described in Chapter 7. FFB children ask questions and repeat (English and loan) words they hear (which might be both imitation and uptake), and adults and other children teach and correct them overtly and covertly. Like BTs, they gradually gain access to and participate in more specialized styles. For example, boys hear the rabbi give a *dvar torah* (‘sermon’) in synagogue and are expected to do the same when they turn 13 (at their *bar mitzvah vort* ‘sermon’, lit. ‘word’); they begin Gemora study in elementary school; and they learn how to interact in the full-blown “Yeshivish” style when they study in a yeshiva. Girls progress in their access to levels of Torah (not Gemora) study as they advance from grade to grade. In addition, girls gradually gain access to child rearing duties by helping their mothers and eventually babysitting, especially when they are among the older children of a large family. As they assume more responsibilities, they are able to try out aspects of child-directed speech.

One major difference between the socialization of BTs and FFBs is the timing of the stages. For FFB children, access and responsibility increase when they reach a new

age, a new grade, or a new level of maturity. Their process of legitimate peripheral participation is, to some extent, institutionalized. BTs, on the other hand, must take the initiative and seek out new stages themselves. Another difference is the level of self-consciousness. As adults, BTs might feel that they should exhibit a certain skill level. When they recognize their mistakes, they are likely more self-conscious and embarrassed than FFB children. The 5-year-old girls who chanted “*chas alila*” would probably not flinch if someone told them they left out a few letters. But BTs have reported feeling very ashamed when they learned they had been using a loanword incorrectly. Some BTs even avoid certain words until they are sure they can say them correctly.

When BTs observe and interact with FFB children, they are bound to feel belittled, a phenomenon that might be called infantilization. The first time a BT spends *Shabbos* in Milldale, he likely notices that the 7-year-old child knows more than he does about Judaism and can effortlessly partake in practices such as washing the hands ritually, singing Hebrew songs, and using Hebrew loanwords. This observation may make him feel, to some extent, like a young child, with much to learn in order to become a full participant in the adult world. BTs have generally spent several years as competent members of the secular world, and it is quite a shock to be a beginner again. One woman with an advanced degree and a successful career commented on this irony.

BTs are especially liable to feel infantilized when they are unable to help their own children with the assignments they bring home from elementary school. One rabbi in a different Orthodox community organized a weekly class to teach BTs what their children were learning in third grade. Levi, a long-time BT, says he has complained about feeling like a child during classes and study sessions: “I’m a 40-year-old guy here, I am learning on a 4th-grade level.” One of his teachers consoled him by pointing out that he has a higher understanding of the concepts and a more sophisticated interest in learning than a teenager. An FFB woman likes to make young BTs feel better by telling them, “You have a head start on Rabbi Akiva,” a famous Jewish sage who is reported to have begun studying Torah only at age 40.

I mentioned my thoughts about infantilization to Jacob, a long-time BT in Milldale. He responded with a smile, “I absolutely feel like a child.” Jacob, who has close ties to a Hasidic community in Brooklyn, told me about a *seder* (‘Passover

ceremony’) he went to there. At some point during the evening, the children recited a Yiddish script about the story of Passover, and Jacob was asked to translate line-by-line into English. Although he was in his twenties, the family had him participate in this children’s activity. However, he said it did not bother him to feel and be treated like a child. That is part of the process of becoming BT.

Gender and infantilization

An image I observed at Shomrei Emuna synagogue helps to illustrate the phenomenon of infantilization and its connection to gender. During the celebration of the synagogue’s new Torah, I watched a mother pass a young girl to her father over the *mechitzah* (‘partition separating men from women in synagogue’). This girl, probably about two years old, symbolized for me the gender “ambiguity” of Orthodox children (see discussion about fluid gender categories among Orthodox children in Fader 2000: Chapter 4). The laws of *negiya* (‘touching members of the opposite sex’) do not apply in the same way to young children: boys and girls can be seen holding hands as they play together in preschool, and mothers hold their friends’ sons or pat them on the head. Young boys are allowed to sit with their mothers on the women’s side, and young girls with their fathers. Baby and toddler girls may wear pants, although dresses are quite common. Boys generally do not wear ritual garments – *yarmulkes* (‘skullcaps’) and *tzitzis* (‘ritual fringed torso undergarment’) – until age three, and they often wait until age three to have their first haircut. One mother told me that her son was bothered by his long hair: “People think I’m a girl,” he complained. To rectify the situation, she sometimes put a barrette in his hair that said, “I’m a boy.”

In the non-Orthodox world, it is acceptable for a grown man to have long hair, to sit with women in synagogue, and to walk around without a *yarmulke* or *tzitzis*, just like a two-year-old Orthodox boy. A grown woman is expected to shake hands with men and can wear pants and short, uncovered hair. New BTs are used to constructing their gender identities in the secular world, where the “*mechitzas*,” or gender boundaries, are more subtle and fluid. When they first become Orthodox, they may have a good deal in common with a two-year-old, only later taking on the practices that allow them to construct the masculine or feminine identities common in their new community. A

young man coming from the secular world into the world of “Torah Judaism” must learn how to study texts and speak, dance, and shave like an Orthodox man. Similarly, a woman entering the community exchanges her pants for long feminine skirts, learns not to yearn for the masculine leadership roles of synagogue life, and grows into her role as the mother of (likely several) Jewish children. Especially with regard to gender, the process of becoming BT is infantilizing. A BT integrating into Orthodox community must feel somewhat like that child being passed over the *mechitzah*.

BTs learning from other BTs and the effect on Orthodox Jewish English

Lave and Wenger (1991:57) talk about the “importance of near-peers in the circulation of knowledgeable skill.” Apprentices learn to be competent members of their new community in part from their interactions with other apprentices. This is true among BTs as well. At *Shabbos* celebrations, BTs take part in the laws and rituals together, helping each other along the way. During classes, events, and informal interactions, BTs observe other BTs using Orthodox symbolic practices. And they talk about these practices, asking each other questions and correcting each others’ mistakes.

This learning from near-peers has a consequence: BTs sometimes acquire distinctly BT practices they observe from other BTs. These distinct practices might be considered mistakes, such as the analysis of singular loanwords as plural or the influence of English pragmatics on Hebrew/Yiddish loanwords. Some community members are aware of the possibility of learning “flawed” language from other novices. One BT said he does not use Orthodox language as much as he used to, because “I live in a mixed [BT-FFB] community. ... You hear things from *ba’alei teshuva* and FFBs, so you don’t know if you’re making mistakes.”

The acquisition of distinctly BT language might be a temporary stage, and the BT might eventually acquire the forms more common among FFBs. Alternatively, BTs might retain these features as part of their linguistic repertoire. The latter option has the potential to change Orthodox language, as the distinctive practices might spread even to FFBs. I have observed a number of instances of FFB language use that could conceivably be influenced by BTs. For example, many BTs and several FFBs, especially FFB women, analyzed *ba’alei teshuva* as a singular word, pluralizing it as *ba’alei*

teshuvas. And I heard several BTs and a few FFBs use the Yiddish-influenced “by” in a motion phrase, as in “we’re going by them,” while Yiddish allows it only in stative phrases, such as “staying by them” or “eating by them.”

One FFB man⁶⁸ used two features that I heard more from BTs than FFBs. He used the words *daven* (‘pray’) and *Hashem* (‘God’) with English pragmatics. He said, “Have you ever *davened* for something really hard?” In Yiddish, *daven* indicates the act of praying, and a different word, *bet*, is used for the ‘request’ meaning of pray. This usage is influenced by the pragmatics of the English word “pray.” This FFB also said, “There is one *Hashem*,” and “It’s hard to send the message of a loving *Hashem*.” *Hashem* is a Hebrew and Yiddish name for God that literally means ‘the name’. In both of those source languages, it would be ungrammatical to use an additional article – definite or indefinite – with *Hashem*. This is clearly a pragmatic transfer from English, where “God” can take an article. I have heard a number of BTs use *daven* and *Hashem* like this, and it is possible that this FFB (lecturing to BTs) was thinking of how BTs would speak when he used these words. Or maybe he also uses these English pragmatic influences in his speech to FFBs. Future research is necessary to determine the direction of change in this and other variables and how they are influenced by the speech of BTs.⁶⁹

CONTRIBUTIONS OF THIS DISSERTATION

As an interdisciplinary work, this dissertation contributes in overlapping ways to three major areas of academic discourse: Jewish studies, linguistics, and the intersection – Jewish language studies. The contributions are methodological and descriptive, as well

⁶⁸ This learned rabbi generally uses Hebrew loanwords with phonology, morphology, and pragmatics associated with FFBs.

⁶⁹ I suspect that at least *daven* may be undergoing pragmatic change in the Orthodox world. I found a similar use in a Yiddish and Orthodox Jewish English coloring book geared toward (FFB) Hasidic boys (“*Ikh Bin Alt 3 Yohr* – I Am Three Years Old Coloring Book.” Monsey, NY: R.M. Brandvayn. 3rd edition. p. 10). The following sentences appear together:

(Sentence (a) appears in Hebrew letters. Translations and underlines are mine.)

- a. *Di eltern beten az er zol oysvaksen an erlikher id.* (lit. ‘The parents pray that he should [will] grow up [to be] a serious/honest Jew’)
- b. The parents daven (‘pray’) that their children should be Talmidei Chachomim (‘wise scholars’) and Yirei Hashem (‘God-fearers’).

Yiddish *beten* is rendered as *daven* in the English sentence. This may be an influence from BTs’ speech, or it may be an independent development that would have occurred without input from BTs.

as theoretical. In this section, I enumerate these contributions, recognizing that contributions in one area can also have an impact on another area.

Jewish studies

Centrally, this dissertation expands our understanding of the process of becoming a *ba'al teshuva*. While previous literature focuses more on why people become BT, this work focuses more on how they do so: in part by taking on Orthodox cultural practices. This work also highlights the individual's agency in constructing Jewish identity. A good deal of previous literature has taken a more essentialist approach: Jews are Jewish because they were born that way. My dissertation joins recent work in the anthropology of Jews and the cultural studies of Jews (e.g., Silberstein, ed., 2000) that focuses more on individuals' choices – conscious or subconscious – of where to locate themselves within the Jewish landscape.

This work contributes to Jewish studies by showing how BTs are often in a borderland between their former non-Orthodox self and the FFB status that they can most likely never attain. They express their liminality by using unique combinations of symbolic practices, such as wearing a black hat with trendy sunglasses, preparing gefilte fish with Indian spices, or maintaining some slang while using Ultra-Orthodox linguistic features. Another contribution of this work is the “bungee effect”: some BTs take on Orthodox practices to an extreme and then bounce back to a more moderate level.

Jewish language studies

The current study connects Jewish linguistic practice in 21st-century America with Jewish linguistic practice around the world and throughout history. Jews have generally distinguished themselves linguistically from their non-Jewish neighbors. The difference has been as minor as the addition of a few lexical items (e.g., the speech of some marginally affiliated Jews in America today) or as major as the maintenance of an almost completely different grammar, phonology, and lexicon (e.g., Yiddish in Slavic lands). This dissertation represents a novel contribution to the budding field of Jewish language studies, which explores this continuum of Jewish linguistic distinctiveness. This is one of the first studies to use both ethnographic and linguistic methods to research a Jewish

language. The linguistic analysis in Chapters 4 and 5 represents the most comprehensive description yet of Orthodox Jewish English. I describe dozens of distinctive features, discuss influences from Hebrew and Yiddish, and present some preliminary data on variation according to gender, age, religiosity, and religious background.

Much of the research on Jewish language varieties has focused on written language. This is partly out of necessity, because some of the languages are endangered or extinct. This dissertation shifts the focus from written to spoken language, which has several advantages. It gives the analyst more direct access to phonology, intonation, and other aspects of language not directly discernable from texts. It provides a more nuanced look at variation between Jews and non-Jews and according to several dimensions within the Jewish community. And it presents a window onto the ideologies surrounding this distinctiveness and variation.

Previous work on Jewish languages, most notably Weinreich (1980), identifies several components of the language at hand: the base language (in this case English), the previous Jewish language (in this case Yiddish), and the Hebrew/Aramaic component. In this dissertation (see also Benor 2000), I show how the Hebrew/Aramaic component is inextricably intertwined with the previous Jewish language. And I show how Orthodox Jewish English has an additional component: Israeli Hebrew. It is likely that any contemporary Jewish language community that has contact with Israel will evidence some influences from Israeli Hebrew.

Linguistics

This dissertation makes a number of contributions to sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology. Most significantly, it presents a model of second style acquisition, predicting which features are more likely acquired and which speakers are more likely to acquire them. It shows the importance of language ideology in adults' acquisitions of new styles. Newcomers learn to connect linguistic forms to social categories, and they form opinions about linguistic variables or styles. Because of ideology, learners intentionally use certain linguistic features and avoid others. Speakers use language to locate themselves along various social axes, aligning themselves with some people and distinguishing themselves from others. This dissertation highlights the

importance of both alignment and distinction not just in second style acquisition, but in sociolinguistics in general. In addition, it contributes to debates about the “critical period,” demonstrating that adults can and do change the way they speak to a great extent under the right social circumstances. It also shows that features that are more systematically distributed throughout the grammar are acquired later and less frequently.

The current study brings together methodologies from linguistics and anthropology. I present a three-part methodology for understanding the interplay between variation and ideology in the construction of social meaning. The combination of ethnographic, linguistic, and experimental methods used in this study is useful not only for research on second style acquisition, but in any socially situated study of language. In addition, I offer a methodology for determining the salience of a linguistic variable: examination of imitations and discourses and a matched guise test. Using these methods, I show how features are differentially salient to different speakers. Rather than classify features as indicators, markers, and stereotypes, I argue that salience exists on a continuum.

This dissertation adds to our understanding of individual language change (Eckert 1997, Sankoff 2004). Second style acquisition is not limited to a life change as drastic as religious conversion. People enter new communities at various points throughout their life: when they graduate from middle school to high school, when they start a new job, when they join a parents’ group, when they serve on a church committee, or when they move to a retirement home, just to give a few examples. In each of these “moves,” they are likely to change their linguistic repertoire and performance to some extent. As Eckert puts it, “It is unlikely that speakers pass through all the identity changes of a lifetime without making any changes in their use of sociolinguistic variables” (1997:152). This individual language change may represent age grading or linguistic change in progress.⁷⁰ I hope that future research will use a similar multi-tiered methodology – linguistic

⁷⁰ When speakers of different ages use linguistic variables differently, this variation can represent age grading – a change that continues across generations, such as teenagers reducing their use of slang as they become adults – or a linguistic change in apparent time, which historical records may show to be an actual linguistic change in progress.

analysis, ethnography, and experiments on speech perception – to analyze the role of second style acquisition in the process of individual and group language change.⁷¹

The current work also contributes to our knowledge about the language socialization of adult novices, joining a growing body of research on this topic within linguistic anthropology (e.g., Mertz 1998, Jacobs-Huey 1999; see Garrett and Baquedano-Lopez 2002). A major point of this research is that novices become veterans partly by learning the language patterns of their new vocational, regional, or religious community. While previous literature in this area tends to analyze language only at the discourse level, this dissertation takes a more comprehensive approach, incorporating data on lexicon, phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, pragmatics, and discourse. I describe several types of interactions of linguistic socialization: overt teaching, questioning, correction, and repetition/uptake. I introduce the process of “overextension of lexical replacement.” And I enumerate several stages in the acquisition of new loanwords, showing how speakers who feel a lack of authority to use a certain feature may mark it through humor or other means.

DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Orthodox Jewish English

The linguistic data presented in Chapters 4 and 5 are based on a relatively small sample of BTs and FFBs in Philadelphia. To understand the scope of variation around the country, future research should involve recording and analysis of speech in several cities, controlling for social variables like gender, age, and learnedness, as well as situational variables like topic and audience. This dissertation is based on impressionistic rather than acoustic analysis. Acoustic analysis might prove illuminating for the phonological variables and, especially, for the high-falling pitch boundary, the rise-fall intonation contour, and other aspects of Orthodox intonation, which could on their own comprise a full dissertation.

A survey of Orthodox Jewish English is likely to find that New York speech has an influence on Orthodox speech around the country.⁷² In Philadelphia, as well as in an

⁷¹ Since people acquire new styles throughout their lifetimes, the title of this dissertation is misleading: perhaps “second style” should be changed to “additional style.” However, I chose to keep the title as is

Orthodox community in Northern California, I observed the non-raising of pre-nasal /θ/ only among children and adolescents and among adults who grew up in New York. This suggests that this variable is in the process of radiating out from New York to other parts of the country, but future research is necessary to determine that and other directions of change.

Another issue that deserves further research is the connection between gender and learnedness. As I explain in previous work (Benor forthcoming b), Orthodox men are expected to be more learned in the religious sphere than women. And they construct their learnedness partly through linguistic variables, such as the greater frequency of word-final /t/ release and loanwords associated with Talmud study. In the Modern Orthodox world, it is becoming more common for women to attain a high degree of religious learnedness. Future sociolinguistic research should look at female Talmud scholars, such as those trained at the Drisha Institute in New York. How do they use language to construct themselves as both learned and feminine Orthodox Jews?

Adult style acquisition

In this dissertation, I have presented a case study of adult language acquisition and socialization. A great deal of research is necessary to determine how applicable my analysis is to other situations of second style acquisition. When gay men “come out of the closet,” how important are phonological, prosodic, lexical, and discourse variables to their self-presentation as gay? Do they go through a similar process of legitimate peripheral participation in a gay friendship group as they learn gay stylistic practices? When urban Northerners move to the rural south, what role does ideology play in their use of variable vowels? When working-class African Americans join a middle-class European American workplace, to what extent do they see themselves as existing in a cultural borderland, and how do they express that liminality linguistically? How do all of these newcomers combine stylistic variables from different parts of their lives to construct themselves not only as members of a new community but as newcomers to that community?

because of its parallel to “second language acquisition.”

I have little knowledge of these situations of second style acquisition according to variables of ethnicity, region, and sexual orientation. But I have observed (informally) a number of people training to join professional communities: my friends, my relatives, and I have spent time in law school, medical school, or graduate school. Throughout the three to ten years of training we go through to become professionals in our fields, we learn many of the skills necessary to do our jobs. But we also learn the cultural practices that go along with being academics, doctors, and lawyers. Lexical and discourse variables are quite important – all professions have some degree of distinctive jargon. But the styles we are learning pervade all areas of language, even lexically-based phonology (ideology [ay] or [I], centimeter [sEn] or [san]).

Among newcomers to professions, issues of audience are very important – how do we speak differently with people inside and outside of our field? Overextension of lexical replacement is sometimes an issue for new doctors, for example. They might replace the term “heart attack” in their mind with “myocardial infarction” or “MI.” And when they are speaking to a patient or a friend, they might accidentally use the new term. Or, as my husband sometimes does, they might transfer medical constructions to everyday life: “That’s contraindicated” or “The differential [diagnosis] is...” Issues of authority also arise. When do we feel like we have the authority to take part in certain practices? While some social science graduate students might feel uncomfortable using words like “problematize” and “reification” or referring to their work as a “theory” or “model,” others might go overboard and do so even when a veteran academic would not. In all of these situations of socialization, ideology is fundamental – views about how certain people act and speak and how they should act and speak, as well as the individual’s desire to locate herself within her new community.

There are also many similarities between socialization practices for graduate students and those I have described in this dissertation. Masters teach and correct overtly and covertly, and apprentices ask questions and attempt to teach themselves. But most of the learning in all situations happens through the apprentice’s legitimate peripheral participation: she gradually increases her roles and responsibilities, as well as her access

⁷² Knack (1991) found an influence from New York speech among Jews (not necessarily Orthodox) in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

to individuals and their symbolic practices, and she becomes more and more comfortable being a member of the community. The learning in all of these situations happens in multiple communities of practice. Just as a BT has the outreach center, the synagogue, and various groups that meet around certain activities, a law student might have her classroom, her study group, her internet chat group, her summer law firm, her courtroom team, and her bar review course.

While this dissertation presents data on trends among newcomers at various stages of integration, it does not include longitudinal comparison. Future research should track newcomers throughout their integration process, recording and analyzing their speech at various points along the way. In combination with ethnographic and experimental data, these linguistic data will vastly improve our understanding of second style acquisition.

CONCLUSION

Chapter 1 of this dissertation began with excerpts from *My Fair Lady*, the Lerner and Loewe musical based on George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion*. The main character, Eliza Doolittle, transforms from a working-class "guttersnipe" to an upper-class lady after just a few weeks of locution lessons. There are many similarities between Eliza's transformation and the "conversion" of *ba'alei teshuva*. Along the way, Eliza makes many mistakes, like her use of slang and obscenity at an upper-class horse race. She makes qualitative hypercorrections, such as "'urricanes 'ardly hever 'appen." And she makes what might be considered quantitative hypercorrection, as a phonetician assumes she is not a native English speaker because her English is too good.

Ideology plays an important role in *My Fair Lady*. Throughout the play, language is connected with other symbolic practices, like dress, cleanliness, and decorum. And characters, especially Professor Henry Higgins, frequently articulate their ideologies about the relationships between these practices and socio-economic class. Eliza does not change her phonology until she decides she really wants to be part of the upper-class community. Once her transformation is complete, she finds herself in a borderland: she does not quite feel comfortable in her new role as upper-class lady, but, when she goes

back to visit her old community, she is not recognized because her appearance and speech are so changed.

There are many similarities between *My Fair Lady* and *Second Style Acquisition*. But, in this case, art is not a completely accurate representation of life. Based on my research, it should be obvious that a newcomer cannot pass as a community veteran after a few weeks of formal lessons, even from a world-renowned phonetician. Adults learn new ways of speaking, dressing, and acting through a complex process of legitimate peripheral participation in a community of practice. This process may involve some formal instruction and overt interactions of linguistic socialization. But the lion's share of learning happens informally, as the learner gains increasing access to roles and practices within the new community. If only linguists could have such an impact on the transformation and socialization of newcomers as Henry Higgins did, there would be jobs for us in Orthodox outreach centers around the world. As Eliza put it, "Wouldn't it be lovely?" Or, as the Hebrew / Aramaic / Yiddish / Jewish English expression goes, "*Halevay!*" ('if only').

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