

Multilinguality and emotions: Emotional experiences and language attitudes of trilingual immigrant students in Israel

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Abstract

This study was conducted with young Russian-speaking immigrant adults in Israel who are in the process of becoming trilingual in Russian, Hebrew, and English. The focus of the study is on these trilinguals' emotional experiences and attitudes with regard to a) themselves as speakers and learners; b) the process of language learning, and c) each of the languages in question. The findings suggest that the students display positive attitudes towards all of the languages in question and show increased self-confidence in the face of newly acquired multilinguality.

Key words: multilingualism, multilinguality, language, identity, emotion, feeling, attitude.

Resumo

Este estudo levouse a cabo en Israel con xente nova inmigrante adulta que fala ruso, que está no proceso de facerse trilingüe en ruso, hebreo e inglés. O punto central do estudo son as experiencias emocionais e as actitudes destes trilingües en relación: a) con eles mesmos como falantes e estudantes da lingua; b) co proceso de aprendizaxe lingüística; e c) con cada unha das linguas. Os resultados suxiren que os estudantes mostran actitudes positivas cara a todas as linguas en cuestión e mostran un incremento da confianza neles mesmos diante da súa recente competencia plurilingüe.

Palabras clave: plurilingüismo, competencia plurilingüe, lingua, identidade, emoción, sentimento, actitude.

1. Introduction¹

Multilingualism is attracting increasing academic interest nowadays (Cenoz & Genesee, 1998; Cenoz, Hufeisen & Jessner, 2001; Jessner & Cenoz, 2000; Hoffman, 2000, 2001a, 2001b; Skutnabb-Kangas, 1981). With the advent of globalization, both multilingualism as a societal phenomenon and multilinguality as an individual phenomenon are becoming a global reality, and require attention from researchers. The focus of the present paper is on the intricate interconnection between multilinguality, identity, and emotions (in particular emotions linked to language, the learning process and oneself as a speaker). This relationship is examined in a multilingual and multicultural setting of the Middle East, and the discussion below will present the initial findings of an ongoing study with Russian immigrants in Israel.

1.1. Emotions, identity and multilinguality

Before I move on to the discussion of the actual study, I would like to clarify the terms employed in the paper. Multilinguality will be seen as:

(...) a personal characteristic that can be described as an individual *store of languages* at any level of proficiency including partial competence, incomplete fluency as well as metalinguistic awareness, learning strategies, opinions and preferences and passive or active knowledge of languages. (Aronin & Ó Laoire, 2003a)

Multilinguality is influenced and largely modified by societal and political factors in addition to the purely linguistic ones; it also involves cognitive behavior.

In turn, identity is theorized as compounded and multifaceted, transient, negotiable, and negotiated (Bauman, 1998; Bendle, 2002; Doepke, 1996; Giddens, 1991; Williams, 1989). Bendle (2002: 1) points to “the imperative under globalization to theorize people as possessing identities that are extremely adaptive to social change”. The focus of the present paper is on immigrants, who, in addition to adjusting to the rapidly changing modern world, have to undergo a more radical change. Their self-concepts fluctuate in the crossing from one culture to another where they have to adapt themselves to a new environment. Studies of identity changes in migration commonly focus on identity *redefinition* (Olshtain & Horenczyk, 2000) and *negotiation* of identity (Blackledge & Pavlenko, 2001). Unlike physical transitions, changes in ethnic and cultural identity are usually not

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abrupt. Horenczyk (2000: 14) claims that “selves arrive ‘later’ than bodies”. Thus identity is in the process of constant construction.

The immigrants’ encounter with a new reality is known to generate a “culture shock” and, like other major changes and significant events, profound emotions (Ben-Ze’ev, 2000: 13; Frijda, 1986: 4). Adaptation to a new culture often involves the process of language learning, and sometimes even language shift, concurrently with a readjustment of the values of the different languages immigrants have at their disposal. This long process of (re)negotiation and change in linguistic allegiances is clearly an emotional one and is of utmost interest in the study of bilingualism and emotions. Recognizing that emotions come into play in the transition period of immigration allows for a more comprehensive view of the individual and provides a more detailed insight into the transformation s/he undergoes at that time.

In current scholarly literature there is no unanimity about what *emotions* and *attitudes* and other related phenomena are composed of, nor is there a consensus about the relationship between them. The discussions on these matters are scattered over the scholarly sources in the fields of philosophy, psychology and linguistics. Frijda (1986) views motivation (desires plus enjoyment) also as an emotional phenomenon, yet draws a distinction between *emotions proper* and “desires plus enjoyment”. In turn, Ben-Ze’ev (2000) distinguishes between components of emotion (e.g. like/dislike or expectations), emotions themselves, affective states, and attitudes (e.g. trust and confidence). Ortony, Clore & Collins (1988) include like/dislike in their list of emotions. Artz (1994: 22) widens the dialogue on this issue by expressing the belief that “feeling is the making of value judgments; emotion is the outcome of that evaluation. Emotions are the adjectival labels we apply to our experience once feeling choices have been made”.

Recently the discussion of emotions has come to include a cognitive aspect. Averill (1996: 25) adds intellectual emotions (like hope) to the range of emotions, stating that “sometimes emotions tend to be primarily cognitive or intellectual in nature, with little bodily involvement”. Emphasizing cognitive dimensions in emotions, appraisal theories present the thesis that differences in emotions are due to the differences in our interpretation of the environment; that is, our emotions are a result of what we believe the world to be, of how events are perceived to have come about, and what implications events are believed to have (Ellsworth, 1995; Frijda, 1986; Ortony, Clore & Collins, 1988; Schachter & Singer, 1962; Scherer, 1999).

A similar view of emotions as containing an assessment element, is discussed by other researchers in terms of the rationality of emotions. Ben-Ze’ev (2000: 61) believes that “emotions... involve a practical concern, associated with readiness to act” and that “emotions are evaluative attitudes”. De Sousa holds the view that emotions are functional and improve the quality of the decision (de Sousa, 1987: 194-96). These multiple points of view as to what emotional phenomena are composed of and the relationship between them make it extremely difficult to

distinguish between various components of emotions. In the present paper I will adopt Frijda's (1986: 371) definition of emotion as "action readiness change in response to events relevant to an individual's concerns" and treat the word 'emotion' as an umbrella term to include a wide range of emotions and emotion-related phenomena. As such it will be used interchangeably to refer to "enjoyment", "feeling proud", "like/dislike", or any other emotional phenomena. Since the present research aims to paint a general picture of "emotion landscape" connected to language acquisition and multilinguality, at this point it is not necessary to fully differentiate between emotions as such, attitudes and other affective phenomena.

Unlike emotions, attitudes are more widely researched or at least referred to in the studies of bi- and multilingualism (Baker, 1992). At the same time, researchers admit numerous problems in studying attitudes (Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993) and point to the need for more research in this domain (Herdina & Jessner, 2000). Studies suggest that attitudes toward language learning may change and become less positive as people mature (Baker, 1988). Björklund & Suni (2000) investigating trilingual education in Finland state that "the age factor plays an important role for the students' own perception of their multilingualism" (p. 215). In the present study, language attitudes are seen as:

(...) the attitudes which speakers of different languages or language varieties have towards each other's languages or to their own language. Expressions of positive or negative feelings towards a language may reflect impressions of linguistic difficulty or simplicity, ease or difficulty of learning, degree of importance, elegance, social status, etc. Attitudes towards a language may also show what people feel about the speakers of that language. (Richards, Platt & Platt, 1992: 199)

This definition is comprehensive enough to embrace a whole assortment of affective and cognitive phenomena relating to languages and language learning, including appraisal and judgment. At present, the studies on emotions and attitudes in formal settings are scarce. The study by Lasagabaster (2001) is the closest to the present one in that he also investigated trilingual students in formal settings. Yet the trilinguals he studied were not immigrants, but an indigenous population in a multilingual setting. In addition, in significant contrast to the case with Russian/Hebrew/English in Israel, the relationship between their three languages was "touchy and controversial" which likely influenced the results (Lasagabaster, 2001: 44). According to Lasagabaster's (2001) findings, the students' attitudes toward their languages differed depending on their first language (L1), Basque or Spanish.

The goal of the present paper is to discuss emotional experiences and language attitudes of Russian-speaking youth, who due to immigration to a multilingual society, have to learn concomitantly two distinct languages, Hebrew and English. The study will consider (1) the multilinguals themselves as language learners/speakers;

(2) the process and outcome of language learning; and (3) the languages of the individual's Dominant Language Constellation (Aronin & Ó Laoire, 2003a)².

2. Population and settings

2.1. Multilingual settings in Israel

Demographically, Israel presents a mosaic of ethnic groups. According to *The World Factbook 2002*, non-Jewish citizens of the country constitute about 19.9% of its population. They are mostly Arab, but also Druze, Bedouins and Chircassians. Among the Jewish population constituting 80.1% of the citizens, only 20.8 % are Israeli-born, while others oftentimes bring with them the languages of the country of their origin. Consequently the knowledge of many languages is commonplace in Israel. The official languages are Hebrew and Arabic; English is the main foreign language and the native language for immigrants from the English-speaking countries. Historic developments and immigration also brought Yiddish, Russian, Romanian, French, Spanish, German, Hungarian, Amharic and other languages into widespread use throughout the country. The exact number of languages spoken at home is not known but estimates range from 30 to 40 and up (Spolsky & Shohamy, 1999: 2).

2.2. Languages

The participants in the present study were young (17.5-25 years old), male and female recent immigrants to Israel from the different post-Soviet states who were studying Hebrew and English in the various educational establishments of Haifa. Their specific DLC is made up of Russian as their first language, Hebrew, the official language of the country they live in and English which for them currently constitutes the main foreign language and the language of education and academic progress in the country. These new immigrants in their effort to adjust to the new culture do not, for the most part, find Arabic, the second official language of Israel, spoken mainly by the Arab, Druze and Bedouin minorities, to be relevant to their immediate needs.

The student population ranges between monolinguals and balanced or non-balanced childhood bilinguals who speak Russian and another language of the republic they used to live in (e.g., Ukrainian, Byelorussian, Azerbaijani, etc.). Byelorussian, Ukrainian and Russian are Slavic languages in close linguistic

² Due to historical and political reasons, each speech community utilizes in daily life a certain set of languages specific to this particular group. These sets of languages, habitually in use within a given population, will be called here Dominant Language Constellations (DLC) (Aronin & Ó Laoire, 2003a).

proximity. Others, like Azerbaijani and Uzbek, are typologically distinct from Russian. Before immigrating all the students had full command of Russian as their mother tongue/first language, Russian being the *lingua franca* in the former USSR, and then in post-Soviet states. Almost all of the students were exposed to foreign language instruction (English, French, German) in secondary schools in the republic of their origin. The circumstances of repatriation and education forced upon them the necessity of learning Hebrew and English almost simultaneously.

It is necessary to point out here the difficulty in the case of some students, of defining unambiguously which language (English or Hebrew) is L2 and which one is L3, especially during the first months upon arrival. On the one hand, chronologically, English is their L2, because as mentioned above, it was taught to them earlier in life and upon arrival newcomers tend to use English, which is still more familiar and comfortable than Hebrew. On the other hand, their skills in Hebrew improve each day as the repatriates are exposed to it daily in every possible form: written and oral, colloquial and official. Hebrew very soon takes the upper hand. One of the students expressed a common opinion on that subject, indicating the existence of competition between these two languages: “I noticed that Hebrew overpowers all the other languages, even English”. From this point of view it may be more correct to consider Hebrew their second language. Therefore, in this paper Hebrew will be considered the L2 and English the L3 of these young repatriates.

This particular DLC is clearly not easy to master, as it embraces a Slavic, a Semitic and a Germanic language with Cyrillic, Hebrew and Roman alphabets respectively. Hebrew is written from right to left and does not use capital letters, while Russian and English are written from left to right and use capital letters at the beginning of each sentence and with proper names. Making things even more complicated, there are many cases of double negative interference between the languages. For example, in Hebrew and Russian many grammatical structures are similar, yet they are different from English. In this case one language supports another by a positive transfer of skills between Russian and Hebrew, but their united effect on English may be negative transfer.

2.3. Social background

A discussion of the previous socioeducational background and present sociolinguistic circumstances of the study group will provide more detail on this trilingual situation. It is problematic to characterize this group in terms of the class divisions. For one, the countries of their origin were officially supposed to be a classless or post-class society. Secondly, immigrants from the post-Soviet countries came from of all walks of life. Thirdly, the applicability of the notion of class is now seriously questioned in sociology (cf. Friedman, 1999). Roughly, in “old terms”, the

status of the majority of this study group may be defined as lower-middle class and regular middle class.

Whatever the class status of their parents may have been, it does not play a decisive role in determining the present status of the young immigrants. Their present status is established by two main factors: being a repatriate and a student. In Israel the status of immigrants is different from that in other countries in that politically, ideologically and practically the newcomers are seen as already belonging to the people of Israel and returning to their homeland, (in Hebrew Jews arriving to settle in Israel are called *olim*, which means literally “ascending”). They are automatically granted the rights of citizenship. Their social standing is also defined in terms of educational opportunities and financial capacities. Due to their immigrant status they get support from the state for their daily life and studies. Some students enjoy a relatively free existence being supported by their families; others have to work to supplement the support they receive from the state.

Special educational frameworks are tailored for the specific needs of particular ethnic repatriate groups, of which many of our participants were members. It is not by chance that nowadays the opportunity to study is one of the attractions for young people to come to Israel. Jews from Eastern Europe are known for their motivation to acquire an education. A large proportion of the students in question have come to Israel by themselves, without their parents within the framework of youth programs. Their parents have consented to their child’s decision to be educated in Israel. Some parents expect to join their children after they have completed the initial stages of cultural absorption.

2.3.1. Educational establishments

The 360 participants of the present study come from a variety of educational establishments in Haifa, allowing for a comprehensive picture of the immigrant students’ ‘emotional landscape’. Among them were the students of Hebrew and English summer Ulpan (n=146), Pre-Academic department of Haifa University (n=91), various non-language departments of Haifa University (n=84) and Tichonia in Haifa (n=39).

The information in Table 1 presents educational establishments of Haifa used in this study; the first three institutions offer lower levels of English and/or Hebrew than the final two. The levels are defined by the entrance requirements of the respective educational institutions. The fluency in English and Hebrew and the general education level of the students varies; university students enjoy the highest level.

Table 1. Description of the educational institutions in the study.**Table 1.** Description of the educational institutions in the study.

Institution	N	Target language	Other languages and their function/position
1 Hebrew Ulpan	64	Hebrew	Russian – native language; English was studied at school and will be studied later during the academic year.
2 English Ulpan	82	English	Russian – native language; Hebrew was and will be studied after the course, during the academic year.
3 Tichonia	39	English	Russian – native language; Hebrew is studied as another target language and is used in everyday life.
4 Pre-Academic Department University	91	English	Russian – native language; Hebrew is also studied and is used in everyday life.
5 University	84	English	Russian – native language; Hebrew language of academic studies and everyday life.

It is necessary to provide brief information on the educational establishments in question. *The English and Hebrew summer Ulpans* in the framework of Haifa University are offered to the students who have been in Israel for 6-8 months and who have attained the lowest grades in English or Hebrew on the entrance exams of the Pre-Academic Department. As can be seen in Table 1, most of our subjects had English as their target language, but there were also those who had Hebrew as a target language during that period of their studies. The two summer programs share many common factors: the age and socioeconomic status of their populations (18-23 year olds who had not been in the country for more than three years); the same set of languages, or DLC; the general goals of the course —to start their studies on equal terms with the other applicants to the University, and the time allotment. At the same time, there are also differences between the programs of the English and Hebrew Ulpans which emerge due to the status and role of the target language (English or Hebrew) in the lives of the participants. While the English course emphasizes reading comprehension skills accompanied by all basic language skills on a minimum level, the Hebrew program focuses on all the aspects of the language as equal goals.

Tichonia is a Ministry of Education project intended to accommodate the new immigrants after they finish the basic Ulpan (the intensive language course for adult immigrants). The students who have been in Israel not longer than 3 years, mostly from the countries of the former Soviet Union, aged 16.5-20, have not managed to complete their high school education in the countries of their origin. These students cannot attend a high school in Israel due to their lack of Hebrew skills and insufficient knowledge of English and other subjects. *Tichonia* provides these

students with an opportunity to complete their high school education focusing on the minimum of critical subjects, necessary for the state matriculation exam. These subjects are Hebrew, Hebrew Literature, General History and History of the Jewish people, Mathematics, Russian as a second language and English as a foreign language. A sizable proportion of the Tichonia students come from socially underprivileged families, where heads of families are single mothers or unemployed.

The Pre-Academic Department of Haifa University offers its students a year-long course in Hebrew, English, Mathematics, Statistics and History in order to help the students meet the entrance requirements for academic studies.

The *University* students represent a wider range of ages, they are usually older (up to 25 years of age) and may have been in the country longer than the previously mentioned students. Among the students of the University are those who have finished the Pre-Academic Department and those who entered the University after studying for some years at regular Israeli schools. Their status as university students presupposes adequate language skills and advanced educational status.

Despite differences in terms of educational establishments, the study participants represent a relatively homogeneous group, as seen in terms of their formal education in the country of origin (which differs from the Israeli educational system), experiences of cross-cultural transition (i.e. immigration, language shift, culture shock), as well as their present social status as repatriate citizens and students. Of major importance is that these young people are a part of the same language community and share a DLC with the three languages performing similar roles in the set. Consequently, the emotional phenomena discussed by the participants in this case study may be recognized as typical ones within the described sociolinguistic settings.

3. Method

The study was performed on the basis of 360 questionnaires administered to the students in their native language, Russian. The questionnaires were initially designed to study the learning strategies and metalinguistic awareness of trilingual students in different multilingual settings within the framework of an international comparative study. The questionnaires consisted of three parts. Part one covered the information on age, gender, which and how many languages students use, in the form of open-ended questions. The format was different in the other two parts where students were asked to answer multiple choice questions and, for some questions, to explain their choice. Part two consisted of 12 questions and was dedicated to learning strategies, and a comparison of strategies used by students while learning Hebrew and English. Part three focused on the metalinguistic awareness of the trilingual students and consisted of 17 questions. The questionnaires were completed during a lesson in class and the students were allotted ample time to answer the questions. After the data were

analyzed, the findings were reported in the paper delivered at the 6th *International Conference of the Association for Language Awareness* (Aronin & Ó Laoire, 2003b).

As pointed out above, the questionnaires were designed for another purpose and did not contain questions specifically intended to elicit students' emotional responses or opinions concerning their emotional experiences. However, the reactions of the respondents unexpectedly spilled over the intended range and yielded abundant data on emotional aspects of L2 and L3 learning. Very often in addition to answering the question the student would add a comment which manifested affective involvement. Not all the students offered emotional replies and not all the respondents expressed themselves in the same way. Not every completed questionnaire contained information pertinent to the present investigation, but those which did presented supplementary information. There were several questions that almost invariably provoked an emotional response from the participants. These questions are discussed in the findings section along with the responses they have elicited. The mere fact that most of the students had chosen to express themselves in the emotional sphere without being asked to indicated the significance of these unanticipated findings. Moreover, the amount of the unexpected information was so conspicuous, that the findings had to be addressed.

To widen the picture beyond the questionnaires which had yielded these unexpected data, I asked the students of the Pre-Academic department to write a self-report. The topic of the essay was indeterminate, neither restricting nor limiting responses in order to avoid prompting effects and to allow the students to raise freely any and all issues relevant to their immigration experiences. I asked the students to write what they think and feel about themselves studying and being able to communicate in three languages, as well as to offer their general opinion on the subject of mastering many languages. In doing so, I intended to elicit feelings and opinions on the students' newly acquired status as multilinguals. The students of the Pre-Academic department were chosen for the self-report task because they were the ones who had experienced the change from mono- to multilingualism in the most easily defined way. Within literally 6-11 months, their lives underwent drastic changes. As the changes were still fresh and in process, the respondents were eager to dwell on the subject and no additional explanations as to what to write were needed or asked for. Eighteen reports were received and analyzed in addition to the questionnaire responses.

By using and analyzing the "soft data" from the self-reports and questionnaire remarks scattered around the questions, I draw on the approach of Goldie (2000) who makes a case for "a personal perspective or point of view", and argues for interpreting emotions "first-personally" as opposed to the commonly accepted "third-personal" way (Goldie, 2000: 1-2). The data are first-person comments on the students' emotional experiences on two planes: themselves becoming and acting as tri-/multilinguals and their feelings concerning the languages in use.

Referring to the difficulties of emotion research and the use of self-report techniques as a potential solution, Scherer (1988: 1) maintains that:

These methods are well-proven in many different areas of psychology where one has to rely on verbal report of internal processes that one cannot measure otherwise with present methodology. Given the difficulty of gaining access to settings where one could objectively observe different types of emotions, asking people about such experiences remains the only possible approach.

Not only the self-reports, but also the casual remarks on the completed questionnaires appear helpful in visualizing the types of emotional experiences these immigrants have undergone. Questionnaires and essays together formed a picture of the emotions accompanying the process of acquiring two new languages and becoming multilingual. The findings were handled in various ways depending on whether they allowed for quantitative or qualitative analysis. In cases when the questionnaires elicited enough numerical data I tried to maximize their utility and used correlational analysis. I also took into consideration the scattered comments near the questions or those elicited by the questions and analyzed and interpreted the remarks on the basis of the linguistic cues.

4. Findings

As stated above, the present study was not preplanned but has materialized in response to a need to attend to the abundant data which appeared unexpectedly. Therefore the findings should be regarded as a pilot foray into the area of emotions and attitudes directed towards multilinguals themselves as learners and speakers. These findings point to issues of importance and interest rather than give any data which permit scientific generalization. The initial data might be used for future generalizations if complemented with other case studies.

In the process of data analysis, I account for the students' subjective emotional and attitudinal experiences basing conclusions on their own spontaneous statements. This kind of information appears more reliable than answers induced by questions, since they were not even remotely prompted. Prior to describing the findings it is important to note that the respondents themselves were associating the emotions and reactions with language learning and use, stating, for instance "I used to live in the Ukraine, knew Russian and Ukrainian and didn't feel myself deficient at all".

The students' awareness of the change in their sociolinguistic environment is also clearly seen in their answers. Many students used the words "the former", "before" and "now" thus distinguishing between their previous and present linguistic situations, e.g. "before I could not see...", "I thought it was normal". Or even "unfortunately I lived in a country where it was enough to know one language".

These time markers placed ‘the past’ within the socio-cultural context of the former Soviet Union where the linguistic landscape as well as the perception and common attitudes to language learning were in many ways different, not to mention the constellation of languages itself.

The findings of the study describe the emotional and attitudinal experiences of trilingual students in multilingual settings towards: (1) one’s newly forming multilingual identity; (2) each of the languages in the constellation; (3) the process of language studies. Below I will discuss each finding in more detail.

4.1. Emotions resulting from learners’ awareness of their new multilingual identity

All the students assessed the changes in their language domain and the consequences associated with it in a positive and optimistic way. They felt fulfilled and proud of themselves, and noted with satisfaction the changes in their abilities and the new opportunities which have opened up for them upon acquiring the new languages, e.g.:

The mere fact that now we have the command of the three languages (Russian, Hebrew, English) is remarkable. It is a wonderful achievement — to simultaneously know three languages.

In particular, the students felt significantly more confident as language learners and users. The respondents repeatedly remarked on their feelings of approval of what had happened to them with respect to their additional linguistic knowledge and skills. Evaluative terms ‘appreciate’, ‘proud of’, ‘glad’ were among the frequent responses, e.g.:

At first I felt frustrated and lost. But as the time passes one starts realizing that some progress does take place in studies and you have ascended to a higher stage than before your arrival here [in Israel]. Now I feel confident. The more languages one knows, the higher his standing in the intelligence scale.

Reassessment of one’s own abilities in a more favorable and optimistic light takes place. This in turn spurs motivation:

I will be able to study at the university, where lectures are delivered not in my native language.

The students realize they can do what they once perceived as unattainable:

Formerly I could not and did not even think it possible. Now I realize I can because everyone here can and does it.

The last statement is meaningful as it sheds light on some of the reasons for this reassessment and the positive emotions: the change in linguistic and educational circumstances. Overall, it appears that the emotional background, associated with the language shift and acquisition of two more languages, is markedly positive in this particular group. The students do not see themselves as victims of language shift. This outcome, however, is not the only possible one with multilinguals acquiring languages in a multilingual setting in a country other than the country of their origin. As Skutnabb-Kangas (1981: 235) wrote:

to live in a world dominated by the majority and to belong oneself to a minority, which is the experience of most bilinguals in the world, can easily *produce a chronic state of stress*, which makes performance worse. (...) minority (...) children tend to have a more modest idea of their abilities than majority (...) children.

This statement, like the greater part of knowledge about the affective domain of multilinguals (including bilinguals), refers mainly to immigrants to European countries who experience *a strong external pressure to become multilingual* (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1981: 79; the italics are mine).

To account for the discrepancy between this account and the data presented above, we should bear in mind that although the Russian immigrant population does belong to a minority, they are not automatically relegated to a lower status. Israel after all is made up of a conglomerate of minorities encompassing practically all of the population. The optimistic and positive tone of the trilingual population group in question is best compared with elite bilinguals described by de Mejía (2002), who are becoming bilingual for *voluntary* (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1981: 75) reasons in a foreign country. De Mejía (2002: 120) describes students in European and International schools, many of whom come from middle-class or upper-class families enjoying a relatively high standard of living. The common features with our population are the often prolonged absence of at least one of the parents, acquiring additional languages in another country, and their age in the higher grades of such schools which is comparable to our representative group lower-age level (16). The difference, in addition to the socioeconomic one, is that the school and class fellows are linguistically and culturally diverse, in contrast to our group where the students share the DLC. De Mejía notes that “the stress involved in interacting in a foreign language with teachers and peers”, and the “increased emotional difficulties and problems of adaptation” are “evidence of extreme tiredness or fatigue resulting from the effort needed to adjust to new language and educational demands” (de Mejía, 2002: 120-21).

Indicative of the attitude of the students towards their new opportunities and status as multilinguals were their responses to the following multiple choice question:

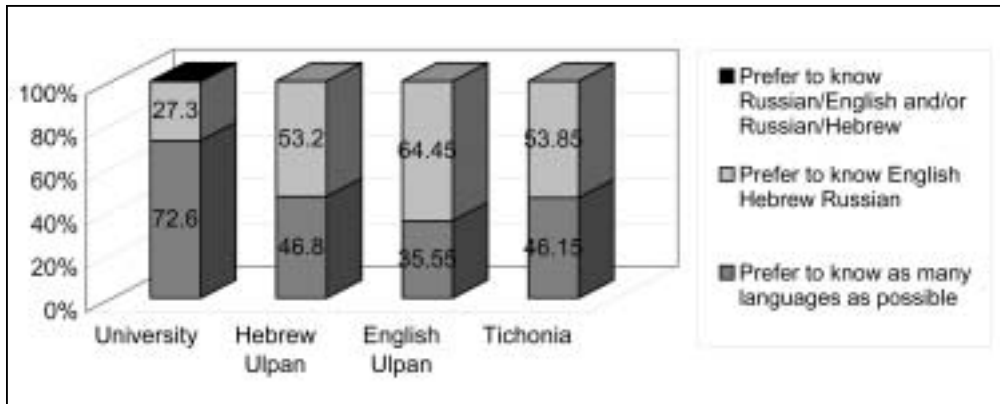
Choose the appropriate answer:

I prefer to know

- as many languages as possible;
- Russian and English;
- Russian, Hebrew and English;
- Russian and Hebrew.

Results are presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1. ‘How many languages do you prefer to know?’



As seen from the figure, there was no wish to master any combination of only two languages —neither “English and Russian” nor “Hebrew and Russian”. The overwhelming majority of the choices involved either the three languages of the linguistic set or the option “as many languages as possible”. These choices may be explained by the fact that multilinguality made the students confident in their abilities to succeed in language learning, allowing for the transition of their identity from a *homo lingues* into a *homo multilingues*. Sixty-three percent of the respondents also expressed the intention to improve their Hebrew and English, e.g.: “I will take the summer course to improve my English”; “I’ll have to enrich my vocabulary in Hebrew by speaking to more people”.

The data displayed in Figure 1 point to the manifest difference in the preferences of languages to be learned between the university students and those enrolled in other educational institutions. One possible explanation of this difference is that the university offers the students ample opportunities to experience Israeli diversity first hand. Surrounded by people fluent in Yiddish, Romanian, French, Spanish, etc., they may have had more opportunities to interact with speakers of diverse languages than other groups of students. They may have also been more knowledgeable about literature and art produced in the countries where these

languages are spoken. In addition, they may also have had access to fields of study associated with a specific country and developed an interest in its language. In contrast, the Ulpans and Tichonia have more homogeneous populations with similar DLC which do not stimulate each other in this respect. It appears then that the general attitude towards language learning and multilingualism is influenced both by the larger (country) environment and the more immediate milieu (place of work, study), in our case university *versus* other educational establishments.

Taken as a whole, the multilingualities of the students undergo changes. It seems that multilinguals rearrange the configuration of their set of languages, adjusting the language roles to their changing needs and planning further alterations. As the immigrants reshape their multilinguality they attempt to preserve their “old” languages. In contrast to reports of previous waves of immigrants who felt the need to hide their Russian identity at some point (Bekerman, 2000), this current population intends to preserve their L1 as they integrate it into a Dominant Language Constellation. The students in the study are constructing an additive multilinguality, not a subtractive one, as may happen in multilingual immigrant communities, and exhibit a positive overall attitude towards mastering more languages.

4.2. Emotions relating to each of the languages in the constellation

The next two findings concern the issue of mother tongue. The question that stimulated the emotion related and supplementary emotional responses was:

“Why do you think you need to know these three languages?”

Russian _____
 Hebrew _____
 English _____

Eighty-two percent of the answers to this question concerning Russian, were given using the phrase “this is my native language”. Approximately half offered no further explanation. The other half offered explanations such as “this is my native (*rodnoy* in Russian conveys the connotation of blood relation) language”. Some elaborated: “It is sacred!”; “I was born in a Russian environment; my favorite movies are in Russian”.

This shows that it is assumed that the native language is here to stay. In 10 out of 18 essays the respondents stated that they were “certainly” going to teach their children Russian. For Russian as well as for Hebrew, many explanations were in personal terms, with Russian being the language “I speak to my family; to my mother and father; to my relatives; to my most significant people”; and Hebrew the language to speak “to my best friends, to my friends”, etc. Less than a fifth of all the explanations given were in more pragmatic terms, referring only to the status of the language: “this is the language of the country I live in”, or “this is the official

language”. In contrast, the need to study English was mostly expressed in practical terms, concentrating on how it can be used and under which circumstances.

In addition to the emotionally charged answers, there were spontaneous remarks of incredulity, many of them with one or more exclamation marks. “What are you talking about! It is obvious! It is my native language!”. The fact that these were abundant, and that they appeared uninvited testifies to the significance of the language issues for the students at the time and indicates strong emotional involvement. It seems thus that as two more languages come into play, the attitude towards the native language becomes markedly emotional.

The same question (“Why do you think you need to know these three languages?”) evoked answers attributing the role of the native tongue to Hebrew, which is factually, patently, not the first language of the students. Some students reported the perception of Hebrew as their native or future native language, e.g.: “Now I speak mostly Hebrew, my future is connected with Hebrew, it is more and more my native language”.

It seems reasonable to posit that multilinguality of the students changed by embracing two more languages. They experienced a redistribution of language roles and functions, reassessing the emotional place of the language. Here, one more comment connected with the occasional appearance of the term *rodnoy* (= native, close) in connection with Hebrew seems appropriate. This population is supposed to have immigrated out of ideological motives and is expected to exhibit an *a priori* affinity for the Hebrew language and culture. Thus, answers evoking the “native-*rodnoy*” connotations may indicate the process of a cultural and national identity renegotiation. The Russian term then is used to connote not the fact that this is a language one was born into, but the degree of closeness and affinity one feels toward the language, a meaning which is not within the semantic scope of the English term *native*.

The current findings shed some more light on the discussion of criteria for defining the mother tongue. Skutnabb-Kangas (1981: 18) lists five criteria according to which one’s mother tongue may be defined: origin, the language one learned first; competence, the language one knows best; function, the language one uses most; attitude, the language one identifies with; and world view, the language one counts in, thinks in, dreams in. Within the context of this discussion, it is noteworthy that the multilinguals answering our questionnaire used only attitudinal and functional criteria in deciding what their mother tongue was.

Continuing along the same lines, the question of whether one can have two mother tongues may have a tentative answer with this kind of population. Our data suggest that trilingual immigrants, more specifically repatriates, may have two mother tongues. If this finding is confirmed with a significant number of people from this population and from other populations of this kind, it may have operative consequences in language planning, culture, educational and political decisions.

The issue of emotions and the attribution of mother tongue status is important in dealing with identity issues from a political point of view. Determining which is the mother tongue of any given population is vital for the implementation of the rights of linguistic minorities and society's obligations to make linguistic provisions for them (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1981: 12-13).

4.3. Emotions relating to the process of language studies

Just like positive emotions, negative affective states accompanying language study and acquisition have not been the topic of this investigation. The information came about as I observed the answers to the following questions in the questionnaire: "Which kinds of class work do you like most? Why?" and "Which kind of class work do you like least? Why?". The negative attitude towards quizzes and exams was clear in the students' responses. Most of the students admitted they would avoid quizzes and examinations because they did not feel comfortable then and anxiety would be their prevalent feeling: "It makes me nervous", "I feel ill at ease", "I don't feel confident because I don't know the material well enough", "I am afraid to give a wrong answer", "I am not sure of myself". And the grudging: "we supposedly come here to study, not to be checked".

The data yielded from the questionnaires supported and contributed to the previous studies on the same issue, which report performance anxiety on the part of immigrant children while doing quizzes and tests in general (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1981) and communicative anxiety in multilingual speakers in L2 and L3 production (Dewaele, 2002). But these emotional experiences are not consistent with the feelings of self-confidence and the drive to study more languages which were reported in this study. One may think that in general, "theoretically", the students are enthusiastic about their language studies, but when it comes down to the daily challenges the frustration of an evaluation situation prevails over their positive feelings. There may be a tug of war of emotions, one coming from the situation of a test and the other from the assessment of changes in life and language shift in general. The negative emotion takes the upper hand in a quiz situation, overriding a more general positive attitude towards language learning.

The analysis of student commentaries confirmed the previous observation that the appraisal mechanisms involved in emotions are at work in the language learning situations. When asked about *the activities they like most of all* during their L3 lessons and *the activities they find the most useful*, the students singled out the same ones. Consequently, appraisal/rational and purely emotional aspect were seen as corresponding.

The students of the Pre-Academic department (Table 2, row 1) listed reading the text, discussing the text and corresponding questions, as well as vocabulary work, as the activities they liked most. The same activities were mentioned as the

most useful ones. A Pearson correlation analysis revealed a significant positive relationship ($r = .84$) between the emotional and rational responses of the Pre-Academic department students.

A third of the University students (Table 2, row 2) liked the discussions most of all and a quarter thought this activity to be the most useful. The students of Tichonia (Table 2, row 3) expressed their preference for checking homework, grammar work and tests as the most enjoyable activities. The same activities were among the most useful according to these students. A Pearson correlation analysis revealed an equally significant positive relationship ($r = .92$) between the emotional and rational responses of the Tichonia students.

Table 2. Distribution of student commentaries.

	activities you like most			the most useful activities		
	reading	discussion		reading	discussion	
Pre-Acad.	40.7 %	25.3 %		12.1 %	25.3 %	
		discussion			discussion	
University		33.3 %			26.7 %	
	check h-w	grammar	tests	check h-w	grammar	tests
Tichonia	12.8 %	12.8 %	20.5 %	5.1 %	20.5 %	17.9 %

The Pearson correlation between activities the students liked most and the activities the students thought to be most useful was also very high ($r = .89$). Another instance of high correlation between emotional and appraisal/rational aspects in L3 language learning was found in the responses to the two questions:

“Which are the activities you dislike most in your L3 lesson?”

“Which are the activities you consider the least useful?”

The least liked activities were judged as the least useful. A large proportion of the students didn't even bother to answer these questions (“no answer” option in Table 3) because they found the question itself irrelevant. Comments like “silly question!” and emotional explanations like “there are no useless activities for those who intend to learn a language” accompanied the “no answer” option, implying that this option means “it is self-evident that all the activities are important and necessary” (see Table 3). The reply “no answer” means “there is no such an activity that is totally useless in the L3 lesson” and the reply “no such activity” means “there is no activity that I dislike very much in the L3 lesson”.

Table 3. Distribution of judgment of activities.

Question	No answer		No such activity	
	Least useful	Especially dislike	Least useful	Especially dislike
Pre-Acad.	56.0%	37.4%	18.7%	8.8%
University	56.3%	30.8%	17.8%	10.3%
Tichonia	25.6%	0.0%	23.1%	17.9%

The data in Table 3 show a high correlation between the judgments of activities as “least useful” and the ones that are “especially disliked”: $r = .95$ for answers “no answer” and $r = .98$ for “especially dislike”. It is possible that the emotion “like/dislike” includes appraisal, i.e. they like what they find right. Because these students are second language students and not foreign language students, they presumably use their new languages outside of class, and are therefore able to tell rather accurately what is useful to them. They naturally like learning useful things that will make their communication more successful.

5. Conclusions

Worldwide, increasing numbers of people are faced with the need to adjust to multilingual and multicultural environments. In the postmodern world identities are considered to be many-sided, transient and negotiable. Among immigrants, who experience more pronounced changes than other people, identity undergoes important shifts. The linguistic side of their identity, called multilinguality in this paper, acquires extraordinary weight as they adjust to new environment. It has been found that major changes and significant events generate emotions, which are shaped and modified by culture and society. Language shift, necessitated by immigration, requires reconstruction of identity and multilinguality and is inevitably accompanied by emotions and affective phenomena. But exactly which emotional and attitudinal phenomena will be experienced by a multilingual is determined by a multitude of variables related to the historical and cultural circumstances.

In this paper I intended to describe a unique speech community of late tri/multilinguals with the Dominant Language Constellation consisting of three typologically different languages —Russian, Hebrew and English. My goal was to display and discuss the “emotional landscape” formed in the process of adaptation of these young immigrants to the multicultural and multilingual Israeli society. The students associated the language shift with their emotions regarding themselves, each of the languages in the constellation, and the process of language studies. They reassessed their abilities in a more favorable way, gained confidence in language

learning and perceived all the changes in language domain and the consequences associated with it as positive. On evaluating these findings against the background of other comparable research data, I concluded tentatively that the predominantly positive response to the language-related changes was due to their age and the exceptional circumstances of their voluntary immigration-repatriation.

The emotional responses of multilinguals refer not only to human beings, but to languages as well. Multilingual students of all the educational institutions under discussion tended to prefer having more languages in their repertoire. Some limited their wishes to the languages of their DLC, while others expressed the desire to expand their set of languages. I associated the differences in the students' stated goals with the influence of the sociolinguistic environment of the country and the immediate milieu of each educational institution.

The students reorganized the languages of their Dominant Language Constellation. They did not intend to give up any of the already acquired languages, but chose to rearrange the roles of the languages they used. The issue of native language has arisen as a significant one and needs further investigation. In deciding what their mother tongue was, the students used only attitudinal and functional criteria. The findings may indicate the process of redefinition and renegotiation of a cultural and national identity. With a trilingual population undergoing language shifts during repatriation there seems to be a possibility for a native language transition, allowing, at least theoretically, for an individual to have two native languages. Emotions containing appraisal and judgment took a prominent place among the emotions and attitudinal phenomena related to language learning.

These findings have to be looked upon as a pilot foray into the domain of language and emotions calling for further research. The directions for forthcoming research may involve an investigation of "emotional landscape" in various formal or informal settings, in diverse multilingual regions, with different age groups, various groups of multilinguals (from majority and minority populations, territorial, historical, immigrants, refugees, repatriates, elite, etc.), longitudinal research to monitor possible changes in the emotional accompaniment of multilinguality within one population, or comparative studies of various populations within the same sociolinguistic multilingual settings.

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