

## Characterizing code-switching in the context of language shift and maintenance across three generations of Mountain Jews in Israel

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The Mountain Jewish immigrant community (MJ), native of the Eastern Caucasus, is unique in their use of two heritage languages (HLs), Juhuri and Russian, in Hebrew-dominated Israel. The native language of MJs, Juhuri, an endangered language with around 200,000 speakers worldwide, is used along with Russian, the dominant language MJs spoke in former Soviet Union. These languages are used interchangeably, thus creating an interesting mix of languages and identities.

The present study explored the linguistic behavior of MJs in the context of immigration and socialization into life in Israel and aimed to tap into code-switching patterns as evidence for language shift and maintenance. Audio recordings were elicited to examine differences in language use across three generations of MJs, two of which immigrated during the 1990s: Generation 1 (G1/aged 60-75), Generation 2 (G2/aged 33-50), and Generation 3 (G3/aged 9-21). Six female G2 participants engaged in 12 conversations, half with G1 (mothers) and half with G3 (children) interlocutors.

Findings show significant cross-generational differences, where the use of both Russian and Juhuri decreases across generations along with a consistent increase in the use of Hebrew. G1 speakers have little or no proficiency of Hebrew. Russian was the language used most, primarily by G1 speakers followed by G2 speakers. Maintenance of Juhuri was, by and large, found only among G1 participants, mostly in code-switching (CS) from Russian with G2 speakers. G2 speakers mostly retain Juhuri as a HL for comprehension, while G3 speakers abandon it completely.

Language shift to Hebrew is evidenced in CS directionality, which occurred mainly from Russian to Juhuri among G1 speakers, whereas among G2 speakers CS was primarily from Russian to Hebrew. CS was almost absent in the speech of G3 speakers, most of whom comprehend Russian but are virtually monolingual in Hebrew; only occasional switching to Russian was found among two participants in this group. CS was interpreted as a basis for construction of social identity, as a means to adjust social distance and affiliation, and in order to establishing interspeaker accommodation.

Language shift and maintenance account for the loss of Juhuri, beginning with restricted demographics in Israel and culminating in the lack of new Juhuri-speaking immigrants since the early 2000s. The two HLs, particularly Juhuri, were observed as the primary representative tools of participants' collective and individual identity, and CS is seen as enabling speakers to set communal boundaries and highlight their ethnocultural background by means of speech accommodation.

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