RHODE ISLAND COLLEGE

M.Ed. In TESL Program
Language Group Specific Informational Reports

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TESL 539

Language Group Specific Informational Report
~Hebrew~

http://www.sxc.hu/photo/1134681

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עֶפְרוֹנָה

Efrona

My Hebrew Name

(http://www.my-hebrew-name.com, 2012)

Hebrew square book script. Iraq, 1st half of 11th c.

Facts about the Hebrew Language

➤Hebrew is the official language of Israel and is spoken by 5 million people.
➤Hebrew is the language of the Jewish Religion.
➤Hebrew is very similar to Arabic.
➤2 to 3 million people speak the language of Hebrew in Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, France, Germany, Palestinian West Bank and Gaza, Panama, the UK and US
➤ As a semantic language, there are many aspects of Hebrew that are very different from English.

• The earliest known writing in Hebrew dates from 11th century BC.

•Hebrew is a Semantic language in the Afro-Asiatic family.

Like English, Hebrew has an alphabet. In fact, our English word "alphabet" comes from the names of the first two letters of the Hebrew alphabet, Aleph and Beth. The Hebrew alphabet was used as the basis for the ancient Greek alphabet, which in turn became the basis for the alphabet used by the Romans, and now by most languages in Europe.

tfel ot thgir morf yllatnoziroh nettirw si werbeH

1. Hebrew is written horizontally from right to left.
2. Hand-written Hebrew does not join letters, unlike most hand-written English.
3. Standard western numerals (1, 2, 3 etc) are used in Hebrew.
4. Hebrew consists of consonants, spaces and punctuation.
5. Most vowels in Hebrew are represented by diacritical marks which appear above or below the consonant.
6. The alphabet is made up of 22 consonants.
7. Capital letters exist in English, as opposed to Hebrew where there are five final letters represented by graphemes.
8. Because of the existence of upper-case letters in English, Hebrew Speaking students have to 52 English graphemes as opposed to 27 Hebrew graphemes.

Hebrew Alphabet
(read horizontally from left to right)

Vav	Hay	Daled	Gimmel	Vet	Bet	Aleph
Final Chaf	Chaf	Kaf	Yud	Tet	Chet	Zayin
Ayin	Samech	Final Nun	Nun	Final Mem	Mem	Lamed
Resh	Kuf	Final Tsadee	Tsadee	Final Fay	Fay	Pay
Taf	Taf	Sin	Shin			

Phonology

The following sounds cause difficulty in spoken and written English because they do not exist in Hebrew:

/j/, /qu/, /w/, /th/, /ch/, /ou/

Difficulties are experienced with the short vowels, particularily in the difference in sound between the short /a/ and the short /e/, which are almost non-distinguishable for the Hebrew speaker.

הַשָּׂפָה

הָעִבְרִית

<u>Morphology</u>

○   Research (Bentin and Frost, 1995) has shown that Hebrew is decoded from the root outwards, as opposed to English which is decoded linearly. Frost, Forster and Deutsch (1997) have suggested in their printed word recognition model that the Hebrew reader has access to the printed word via two channels-either directly from the orthographic structure or via recognition of the root or a combination of both. Hebrew-speaking students who learn to read English may require different word recognition strategies.

<u>Orthography</u>

o   The letters /p/ and /f/ are represented by almost the identical grapheme in Hebrew. The student often confuses these sounds in reading and writing them in English. Once the consonants in Hebrew are learned, the remain constant and do not change their sounds in new combinations. In English there are letters that change their sound depending on their position in the word.

Syntax
(Tachbir)

- When you read or hear Modern Hebrew sentences, you may think they're oddly constructed compared to English or any other European language. In English, so much depends on word order. In Hebrew, on the other hand, less depends on word order.

Memshalah Chadashah Kamah (mehm-*shah*-lah chah-dah-*shah* kah-*mah; Literally:* government new arises)

Kamah Memshalah Chadashah (kah-*mah* mehm-*shah*-lah chah-dah-*shah; Literally:* arises government new).

Both of these phrases mean the same thing: A new government rises. The order of the words doesn't affect the meaning.
http://www.dummies.com/how-to/content/making-sense-of-hebrew-syntax.html

While Hebrew differs from English in that you don't need to flip the order in a statement in order to make it a question, the word-order flexibility of Hebrew allows the speaker to stress a particular part of the sentence by putting it at the beginning.

More Challenges an ELL may Face…

- In Hebrew the nouns, verbs, adjectives and pronouns (just about every word has a gendered conjugation)

  - In Hebrew there are a lack of vowels
    - ✓ ELL's may have difficulties pronouncing English words using vowels
      More difficulties….

- There are a few Hebrew words that sound like English but who's meanings couldn't be more different.

Hebrew Word & Pronunciation	English Meaning
"die" (די)	enough!
"me" (מי)	Who?
"who" (הוא)	He
"he" (היא)	She
"mommy" (מאמי)	cute
"boy" (בואי)	come (feminine)

http://ulpangordon.com/2009/03/top-5-difficulties-for-new-students-of-hebrew/

Nonverbal Communication
Greetings

- **Man greeting Man** - Men shake hands warmly when greeting one another and maintain direct eye contact. Handshake are often combined with slight touches on the arms and/or elbows. Good friends and family may engage in light hugs. Always use the right hand when greeting Muslims.
- **Woman greeting Woman**- At a first meeting, a handshake will suffice. Friends may kiss each other once on the cheek. Always use the right hand when greeting Muslims.
-
- **Man greeting Woman-** At a first meeting a regular handshake will do.

  Note: It is taboo for religiously observant men to touch women and vice-versa.

Communication Style

- Israelis are known to be very direct and to the point. Many foreigners feel they are blunt.
- Israelis tend to speak quite loudly and at a fast pace. It may appear as if they are yelling and annoyed but it is most likely a normal tone of voice.
- Israelis appreciate honesty and discourse over hypocrisy and insinuations.

Personal Space and Touching

Israelis usually stand close to one another while talking. One to two feet is normal. It can be considered rude to back up or away from someone while they are speaking..
Note: Personal space for religiously observant men and women is farther apart and there is usually no touching between the two.

Eye Contact & Gestures

- Israelis favor direct eye contact over indirect. Maintaining eye contact is viewed as sense of respect and interest in the person who is speaking.

- The OK sign is common and shares the same meaning as it does in the United States. Same goes for the "thumbs up" sign. Putting your thumb in between your middle and index finger while making a fist is an obscene gesture.

Resources

Books/Articles

Danon, G. (1996). *The Syntax of Determiners in Hebrew*. Print [Thesis paper].

Kahn-Horwitz, J., Roffman, N., & Teitelbaum, T. (1998). Facing the challenges as learning English as a foreign language in Israel. *Dyslexia News World Wide*, *4, 169-174.* Retrieved from Electronic Journal Center database

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Internet Sites

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Images

Israel's banknotes 1948 to present with a touch of the history : The Hebrew Alphabet. (2010). Retrieved April 5, 2010, from: http://lenapedata.tripod.com/hebrew-alphabet.htm

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