“THE MOST BEAUTIFUL AND CORRECT HEBREW”: AUTHENTICITY, ETHNIC IDENTITY AND LINGUISTIC VARIATION IN THE GREATER TEL AVIV AREA

A DISSERTATION
SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF LINGUISTICS
AND THE COMMITTEE ON GRADUATE STUDIES
OF STANFORD UNIVERSITY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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August 2014
Abstract

Among Israelis, Jewish ethnicity is usually understood as a dichotomy between Ashkenazi Jews (Jews of European descent) and Mizrahi Jews (Jews of Middle Eastern descent). While this distinction is extremely socially salient in Israel, little is known about how these categories related to linguistic variation. In this dissertation, I explore the interaction of Hebrew phonetic variables with ethnicity, and show that the Ashkenazi-Mizrahi binary hides many meaningful distinctions, both linguistically and socially. I challenge the notion of an ethnolect, and claim that while there is no single distinctive “Mizrahi Hebrew”, certain linguistic features are associated with particular aspects of a Mizrahi identity, and can be used in the construction of specific ethnic personae.

My main source of data is sociolinguistic fieldwork in two field sites in the greater Tel Aviv area, which have decidedly different Mizrahi populations: the first is Rosh Ha’ayin, a town whose population is predominantly Yemenite (often described as “the most Mizrahi Mizrahis”). The second is Tel Aviv proper, which has an extremely mixed population. I analyze two consonantal features: the first, pharyngealization, is the feature most stereotypically associated with Mizrahis, but all extant research suggests that it has been lost in the speech of most contemporary Israelis. I demonstrate that contrary to received wisdom, there are still some younger Mizrahis in my sample with robust pharyngealization, but only among the Yemenites of Rosh Ha’ayin, who express overt language ideologies about the link between this conservative linguistic feature and an authentic Yemenite identity. And while
pharyngealization is very uncommon among most younger Mizrahis, I show that it is enregistered as a Mizrahi feature, and that Mizrahis who do not consistently pharyngealize, still do so when performing attributes associated with a stereotypical Mizrahi persona (such as being down-to-earth and authentic).

This insight also applies to another variable I research, /h/-deletion, which is stigmatized as sounding uneducated and unintelligent. I demonstrate that [h] in Hebrew actually varies between three productions – produced, deleted and replaced with a glottal stop. There was no significant interaction between this variable and ethnicity in the Tel Aviv sample, but while the social meaning of /h/ is not directly linked to ethnicity, it can combine with pharyngeals in constructing a consistent style: the Yemenites of Rosh Ha'ayin use more fully articulated [h] and less glottal stop, once again overtly linking this variable with the notion of the most authentic variety of Hebrew.

Taken together, both variables highlight the importance of moving beyond binary distinctions when trying to understand how language and ethnicity interact – on the social level, a more nuanced understanding of ethnic identity is needed since the linguistic behavior of Mizrahis cannot be explained simply in terms of “sounding more or less Ashkenazi”. On the linguistic level, features usually considered as categorically present or not reveal more complicated patterns upon careful inspection.
Acknowledgements

When I began my PhD program, I never thought that writing a dissertation would be easy, but I could not imagine how much of a team effort would be required in order to bring my linguistic musings into this form. I don’t know much about raising a child, but I definitely know that it takes a village to write a dissertation. And what a wonderful village I had!

Thanks first of all to my incredible dissertation committee, the best team a graduate student could hope for: Penny Eckert, John R. Rickford, Rob Podesva and Meghan Sumner. Penny, your research has always been such a source of inspiration for me, and your advice and guidance have been invaluable in every stage of this project. Even after so many meetings I still sometimes find myself amazed by your razor-sharp insights about linguistics and social theory, and how you can understand my ideas when they are still too half-baked for me to understand them myself. John, your wealth of knowledge about sociolinguistics is unsurpassed, and I was fortunate to have had your sage advice during my time at Stanford. You were always available for discussing my work and were ever dedicated to make it better – you truly are a scholar and a gentleman, and I will cherish our many conversations for years to come. Penny and John, I’m grateful to have had you both as my co-advisors and academic role models, and the fact that this dissertation is done owes so much to your support. Rob, I’m so glad you joined the faculty at Stanford when you did! You always knew how to push my work in more interesting directions, and also to help me reign in my ideas.
when I was going off on flights of fancy. Meghan, your enthusiasm for the phonetic aspects of language had a huge impact on my work, and in shaping this dissertation. Our meetings were always something I looked forward to – whether they were fast-paced back-and-forth about linguistics or just kind and gentle encouragement.

The Stanford Linguistics Department was the greatest environment I could possibly hope for in my development as a researcher and linguist. I have learned so much from the faculty – in classes I took with them, in joint research projects, and in hallway conversations. For their great help and advice in the earlier stages of the program, I would like to thank Dan Jurafsky, Vera Gribanova and Tom Wasow. And of course, many thanks go to the one and only Beth Levin. Would any Stanford dissertation actually be done on time without Beth? Surely not this one. Beth’s willingness to devote so much time, attention and support to grad students, walking them through the linguistics and the logistics of it, even when they stray pretty far from the timelines and regulations, had a huge part in making this dissertation possible. I would also like to thank the department’s staff and administrators, and especially Ann Marie Pettigrew, who saved me from self-inflicted logistics debacles time and time again.

Beyond the Stanford linguistics department, I am also grateful to have found in Stanford a greater community of scholars happy to interact and dispense their wisdom. Special thanks go to H. Samy Alim and Vered Shemtov for sharing with me their time and advice. In my sixth year at Stanford, I had the great fortune of joining the Center for the Comparative Study of Race and Ethnicity as a graduate fellow. I would like to
thank the members of the CCSRE research workshop for their companionship and insights, and especially the organizers, Prudence Carter and Maryam Hamedany.

My fellow graduate students at Stanford were always a source of inspiration and support, sharing innumerable conversations over beer, coffee, or nasty Thai food, having pitchers at the Nut House and sandwiches at Madame Tam’s. You were there to geek out about linguistics and general nerdery or to help me turn an abstract into something worth submitting, and through it all, you have been such a remarkable community to be part of. Thanks guys, you’re awesome. A very special thanks goes to Matthew Adams, Mira Balberg, Patrick Callier, David Clausen, Uriel Cohen Priva, Phil Crone, Katherine Geenberg, Jason Grafmiller, Scott Grimm, Katherine Hilton, Masoud Jasbi, Seung Kyung Kim, Chigusa Kurumada, Kyuwon Moon, Stephanie Shih, Natália Silveira, Jessica Spencer and Rebecca Starr.

I would also like to thank the members of the Tel Aviv University Linguistics Department, my first linguistic home. When I showed up in Tel Aviv I was a software engineer who kind of liked languages, but once I met this amazing group of researchers I was convinced that being a linguist is what I really want to do. Nothing makes me happier than knowing I will get to interact with this remarkable set of people again. I want to thank Tali Siloni, who taught the first linguistics class I took – Syntax I – and got me hooked. Tali played a big part in persuading me that linguistics is right for me, and though my own research path took me in a different direction, Tali’s attention to detail, and her enthusiasm and excitement about uncovering linguistic structure, remain a lasting influence. And a huge thanks to Mira Ariel, my
mentor and MA advisor. Mira’s work has always been an inspiration to me, and I hope that her great influence still shows in every aspect of my own research.

I feel fortunate in having a support network on both sides of the Atlantic, and my friends back home in Israel may have been far away physically, but always in my heart. Through Skype, and Gchat, a million phone calls and occasional whirlwind visits home, I knew that I was never alone. Here’s looking at you, Noga Almi-Hantke, Yaniv Bar, Tomer Ben-Aharon, Iris Ben-Yair, Eran Edry, Yael Kidron, Karin Moscovici, Avichay Mulyan, Tal Otiker, Elad Peled, Itai Rolnick and Keren and Asi Zilka. And last but most certainly not least, thanks to my family. To my parents, Uzi and Michal Gafter, whose never-failing support made all of this possible. There is no way words could do justice to my gratitude. And to my beloved siblings, Niv Gafter and Anat Gafter-Gvili, and Anat’s amazing children, Adi, Omri and Amit. I love you guys.

Finally, a very special thanks goes to the people of Rosh Ha’ayin and Tel Aviv, who were willing to open their hearts and homes to me, and share with me their stories. Let me know if you want to read this dissertation – I hope you find it interesting, since it was in many ways written for you. Also, let me know if you have more family members that are willing to interview. See, I have this follow up project planned and I need more people ;) But seriously, thank you.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

In May 2014 Israel celebrated its 66th independence day, and as part of the festivities, Ynet, a leading news site, asked its readers a simple question: “what says Israeli to you?” One extremely popular reply was a specific food, hummus, which has its origins in Levantine Arab cuisine. In the words of the Ynet article, “Well, it’s not exactly ours, but we make it the best”, and this unites everyone: “even if they say danke schön bitte schön or they bring spices from far away lands”. This seemingly odd response, hummus, speaks volumes about the constant struggle Israelis have with defining the identity of their young nation. Is Israel an integral part of the Middle East, a Western enclave within the orient, or both?

When trying to understand Israeli culture and identity, ethnic divisions surface on every level. The most contentious ethnic divide is the distinction between the Jewish majority (76% of the population) and the non-Jewish minority, most of whom are Muslim Palestinians (17% of the population). These communities also differ along linguistic lines; the Jewish Israelis are mostly native speakers of Hebrew, whereas the Palestinian population natively speaks Arabic. Although this divide is heavily racialized, in Israel it is conceptualized mostly as part of a larger conflict of

1 http://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4515991,00.html
2 All demographic data is taken from Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics website, and is based on the 2008 census: http://www.cbs.gov.il/shnaton64/st02_02.pdf
3 Both languages are official in Israel, but whereas most Palestinians can speak Hebrew, relatively few Israeli Jews can speak Arabic.
nationalities (Lefkowitz 2004:88), or more recently, in terms of a “clash of civilizations” (Huntington 1996) between the West and the Islamic East. When Israelis talk about ethnicity, they specifically refer to distinctions within the Jewish community, which recursively mirror the Arab-Jewish conflict, in its distinction between Eastern and Western. It is these ethnic identities of Jewish Israelis, and how they interact with their use of Hebrew, that are the main focus of this dissertation.

Among Israelis, Jewish ethnicity is usually understood as a dichotomy between Jews of European descent, referred to as Ashkenazi Jews, and Jews of Middle Eastern descent, referred to as Mizrahi Jews⁴ (Swirsiki 1981, Ram 2002, Shalom Chetrit 2009 among many others). In this dissertation I investigate language variation that is related to ethnicity, by trying to move beyond these two binary categories and develop a richer notion of ethnic identity in Israel. The linguistic variables I explore are all from the realm of consonants: the pharyngeal segments, which are commonly considered a Mizrahi feature, and the deletion of [h], which is not. Before moving on to describing the variables and linguistic analyses in detail, some background is required about the social setting in Israel and how ethnicity is understood there, and about the linguistic approach I take to the research of variation.

⁴ The term Mizrahi is similar to, but not strictly synonymous, with the term Sephardi, often used in the US.
1.1 Ethnic distinctions among Jewish Israelis

1.1.1 On Ashkenazis and Mizrahis

The importance of ethnic origin in Israel is intertwined with its history as a nation. While offering a full account of the history leading up to the founding of Israel is well beyond the scope of this paper, I will present some key points here very briefly. Up until the late 19th century, there were very few Jews living in what was to become modern Israel – an area that was part of the Ottoman Empire until it became the British Mandate of Palestine in 1920. At the time, almost all Jews lived in Diaspora communities in Europe and the Middle East, with little connection between them. Modern Israel is a product of the Zionist movement, the ideology that Judaism is not just a religion but also a nation, and as such, Jews deserve their own nation state in the ancestral homeland of Israel. This movement originated among the Jews of the European Diaspora, in no small degree as a response to the increasingly dangerous rise of anti-Semitism in Europe. While there was always a trickle of Mizrahi Jews immigrating to Israel, the initial waves of Zionist immigration were virtually all from Europe, and the nascent nation that was being created consisted mostly of Ashkenazi Jews – in 1948, the year Israel became an independent state, Ashkenazis comprised 88% of the Jews in Israel (Goldscheider 2002:31).

When the British Mandate of Palestine ended in 1948, and Israel declared its independence, it was immediately in a state of war with the neighboring Arab countries. This drastically changed the status of Jews in the Arab world, who were suddenly seen as aligned with an enemy nation. Many immigrated to the young state
of Israel – some fleeing persecution, others enticed by the Zionist ideology. The Israeli establishment, which was explicitly invested in increasing Israel’s Jewish population, actively sought out and encouraged this, and the 1950’s saw massive waves of immigration of Jews from the neighboring Arab and Muslim countries.

The Mizrahi immigrants were hired mostly for low-income jobs, and during the first decade of Israel’s independence, inequality in earnings and in education between Ashkenazis and Mizrahis quickly became a fact (Swirski 1990). And while the demographics of Israel rapidly changed to become more Mizrahi, the political establishment and cultural and economic elite remained thoroughly Ashkenazi.

One can easily draw parallels between the status of the Mizrahis in Israel and the marginalization of ethnic minorities in other settings. In fact, one of the first Mizrahi activist groups, founded in 1971 in order to raise awareness to the discrimination against Mizrahis, called itself “the Black Panthers”, making an explicit link to the plight of African Americans in the USA. But in understanding the dynamic between Mizrahis and Ashkenazis, a key point must be kept in mind – that Mizrahis are not, in fact, a minority. By 1961, Mizrahis were already 44% of the Jewish population (Goldscheider 2002), and their numbers quickly grew further to become roughly equal, though slightly larger, than those of Ashkenazis (Yaeger-Dror 1988).

Although recent years have seen a shift towards greater ethnic equality, with a rise in inter-ethnic marriages and Mizrahi Jews occupying high profile jobs, the

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5 The parallel to African Americans is also explicitly made throughout Sami Shalom Chetrit’s book about the history of Mizrahi activism, and is evident in its title: “Intra-Jewish conflict in Israel: white Jews, black Jews”.

6 The last Israeli census, in 2008, did not collect data on Jewish ethnicities, and distinguished only between Jews and non-Jews, so I cannot give an exact breakdown of the current demographics.
inequality in education and earnings still persists. Dahan et al. (2003) found that according to the 1995 census, the percentage of high-school graduate Mizrahi Jews is 22% lower than that of Ashkenazi Jews. At the university level the situation is even worse: Cohen et al. (2007) analyze the gaps in the university graduation rates of third-generation Ashkenazis and Mizrahis, and demonstrate that the ethnic gap is not smaller in the third generation than in the second generation. Finally, with respect to economic status, according to the survey reported in Swirski (2008), the average earnings of Ashkenazis are more than 30% greater than those of Mizrahis. In a think piece written for the popular newspaper Ha’aretz in 2012, prominent Israeli sociologist Even Illouz highlights the importance of acknowledging that ethnic inequality in not a thing of the past:

(1) “I am, of course, aware that Mizrahim and Ashkenazim increasingly marry each other, that there are increasing numbers of high-ranking Mizrahim in the army, in banking, and in politics, that a larger percentage of students are enrolling at universities and colleges. This process is very well documented by my colleague, Prof. Momi Dahan, and is, obviously, very encouraging. But look somewhere else, where the test of discrimination is surest and clearest: look at Israel’s cultural elites. Mizrahim have been and continue to be spectacularly absent from the elites that shape the identity of the country. As a member of the Israeli academic system, I am daily astounded by the near-absence of Mizrahim

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7 One can draw parallels between the marginalization of Mizrahis in Israel and that of women – another group that constitutes half of the population, but is treated in many ways like a marked minority.

8 When discussing ethnicity in Israel, many researches use the Hebrew plural forms Mizrahim and Ashkenazim. I find this unnecessarily confusing, and will use the English plurals (Mizrahis and Ashkenazis), except when directly quoting these authors.
from the ranks of university professors and by their total absence from the positions that signal academic, journalistic and cultural leadership.\(^9\)

1.1.2 Ethnic stereotypes

The ethnicity-based social stratification in Israeli society is unsurprisingly coupled with some persisting perceptions and stereotypes of Mizrahis and Ashkenazis. A seminal and influential work in the study of ethnicity in Israel was Shohat’s (1989) critical survey of ethnic stereotypes in Israeli cinema, and it draws a bleak picture. According to Shohat, Ashkenazis are described as “just Israelis”, the unmarked category. Mizrahis, on the other hand, are portrayed in a stereotypically Orientalist (Said 1978) way – they are uneducated, primitive, vulgar, sexist, and violent; they are also warm, hospitable, and have good food. A similar conclusion was reached by Swirski (1981), who conducted interviews with Mizrahi Israelis concerning ethnic inequality. The Mizrahis were described as innocent, kind, and warm, but on the other hand irrational and quick to get angry. The Ashkenazis were described as the opposite – distant in their relationships, condensing and cunning, but on the other hand very skilled and rational.

The situation that Shohat described in 1989 has changed quite a bit in recent years, and the mass media now often features less stereotypical portrayals of Mizrahis. Sociologist Oz Almog goes so far as to claim that for many younger Israelis, a categorization into Ashkenazi and Mizrahi is no longer particularly relevant, as they no longer see “Ashkenazi” as the unmarked Israeli category, but rather subscribe to a

\(^9\) http://www.haaretz.com/weekend/magazine/begin-s-legacy-enough-of-ethnicity-1.414169
notion of Israeliness that incorporates both Ashkenazis and Mizrahis (Almog 2004). In a similar vein, Nocke (2006) discusses the emergence of a Mediterranean identity, which once again can encompass both Ashkenazis and Mizrahis. Nevertheless, the notions of the stereotypical Mizrahi and Ashkenazi have a lasting effect and they still do persist. Shohat (2010) revisits the topic of her famous 1989 study, the portrayal of Mizrahis in Israeli cinema. She agrees that there has been a visible change in the two decades that had passed and states that many Jewish characters have come to bear a more ambiguous and diffuse marker – the “Israeli” – no longer imagined as necessarily Ashkenazi locals or Mizrahi immigrants, in a trend she describes as “moving beyond Mizrahi stereotypes into a post-ethnicity Israel”. Nonetheless, upon a closer inspection she concludes that while mainstream Israeliness is now constructed as more inclusive of Mizrahis, they are still othered: “The newly trans-ethnic Israeli characters persist to signify ambivalence around the traces of Arabness in the Mizrahi body. No longer fixed to the ‘negativities’ of a cultural Arab geography, Mizrahi identity over the past decade has expanded yet remains tethered to an exclusivist vision” (Shohat 2010: 258).

Crucially, although some Israelis may adhere to the ideology that they live in a “post-ethnic” society, the categories Mizrahi and Ashkenazi nevertheless remain extremely socially salient in Israeli discourse, in discussions of politics as well as culture. For example, at the time of writing, all of Israel’s prime ministers have been Ashkenazi, and every recent election has been coupled with an on-line debate of “why

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10 See also Section 3.3.1 for my discussion of portrayals of Mizrahis in reality TV show from 2010.
have we never had a Mizrahi prime minister?”, invariably framed in those terms. In 2013, Israel announced a redesign of its currency, replacing the four Ashkenazi men currently on the 20, 50, 100 and 200 shekel notes with the portraits of four Israeli poets – two men and two women, but still all Ashkenazi. Again, this created a political backlash, with prominent Mizrahi politician Arye Der’i stating that “it is impossible that they could not find a single Mizrahi poet to put on the money. Money with a Mizrahi portrait is not worth less”.

The persistent salience of the Ashkenazi-Mizrahi distinction can also be seen in the discourse surrounding the very popular TV show ha-ax ha-gadol, a remake of the American show Big Brother. The premise of the show revolves around a group of people living together in a specially constructed large house. During their time in the house they are isolated from the outside world and in order to win the final cash prize, a contestant must survive weekly evictions. In the first season, in 2008, the contestants in the Israeli Big Brother house quickly divided themselves into rival factions of Ashkenazis and Mizrahis, which were nicknamed after the last name of their most prominent member – the Bublils (Mizrahis) and the Friedmans (Ashkenazis). This quote from Israeli TV critic S. Lumpi about the show and debate that ensued is telling:

(2) “Something else that that reminds me of my childhood full of games in school playgrounds is the good old division into Ashkenazis and Mizrahis, as offered by Big Brother. Some of the members of the house, it would seem, have a

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11 For two examples out of a great many, see:
http://rotter.net/forum/scoops1/40138.shtml
http://www.nrg.co.il/online/1/ART2/232/109.html
12 http://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4372706,00.html
13 While those are the actual names of two of the contestants, these monikers caught on as names for the factions. It is likely not a coincidence that Friedman is a very stereotypically Ashkenazi sounding last name, and Bublil is a very stereotypically Mizrahi sounding name.
special nickname for some of the other members of the house, which combines continent of origin, personality characteristics and average body temperature…

I was surprised to discover that there are places where the 80’s have not ended. Places where “Ashkenazi” is synonymous with coldness, pretentiousness and wealth, and “Mizrahis” are always always poor and discriminated.”

The Orientalist perception of Mizrahis lies at the heart of two persisting stereotypical personas: the ars and the freha. Ars (plural: arsim) is a word borrowed from Arabic, which originally meant ‘pimp’. However, in Hebrew its meaning has changed considerably, and is most often used pejoratively for Mizrahi men, in order to characterize them as loud and violent brutes (Mizrachi and Herzog 2013). Freha (plural: frehot) is in many ways its female counterpart, denoting a loud and vulgar woman and used pejoratively for Mizrahi women. Its meaning is more specific than that of ars, however, as it is generally reserved for younger Mizrahi women, and also implies stupidity and sexual promiscuity (Ivri 2008).

Calling someone an ars or a freha is therefore saying they are a particular type of Mizrahi – loud, brutish, violent and vulgar. Despite their ethnic connotations, the terms ars and freha have become generalized, and are used to describe such qualities among non-Mizrahis as well, to the degree that some speakers do not think of them as primarily ethnic terms. Such, for example, is the definition offered by a 35-year-old Mizrahi woman in Mizrachi and Herzog (2013)’s research of ethnic stigmas in Israel:

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14 http://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-3618630,00.html
15 Ars also has a more direct female counterpart – its feminine form arsit. However, the term is far less common than freha (see section 3.3.1)
“Being an *ars* means being uncouth; it’s not your ethnic origin… There’s a stigma that *arsim* are Mizrahim, but there are more *arsim* than there are Mizrahim… 80% of Israel are *arsim*”. However, though such uses do exist, the strong ethnic associations of the term remain at the core of their meaning\(^\text{16}\).

The importance of these persisting stereotypes can be seen in the fact that Israel’s only literary publication focusing on Mizrahi culture, *Ha-kivun Mizrah*, devoted its entire 2008 volume to *arsim* and *frehot*. In the introduction, editors Gormezano-Gurfinkel and Herzog (2008) acknowledge the broad meaning of the terms, but also argue that the fluidity of these terms is limited, and that ultimately the concept of *arsim* and *frehot* is intertwined with the marginalization of Mizrahis in Ashkenazi-Israeli culture. This is also the sentiment in this quote from Eva Illouz, taken from the same 2012 think piece that was quoted in (1). Illouz, who was born in Morocco, recounts the erasure of Mizrahi identities and culture upon arrival in Israel:

(3) “The world I grew up in was cosmopolitan, multilingual, multiethnic. Here, Mizrahim were turned into a culturally isolated and one-dimensional population, thus further justifying, in the eyes of Ashkenazim, the discrimination: Because Mizrahim had been stripped of their cultural anchors, they could now be viewed as more primitive, typified by the *ars* (low class guy) and the *freha* (the female version).”

\(^{16}\) See this discussion by Roni Sabag-Albin on the cultural critique blog *Haokets*. http://www.haokets.org/2012/10/29/%D7%94-%D7%A2-%D7%A9%D7%9C-%D7%94%D7%A2%D7%A8%D7%A1/
To conclude, as this section shows, not only does ethnic inequality persist in Israel, but the discourse surrounding it still revolves around a dichotomy between two essentialized categories – Ashkenazis and Mizrahis – that are constructed as polar opposites, and this distinction is perpetuated in ethnic stereotypes. However, as I show in the next section, the reality of ethnic identity in Israel goes well beyond a single binary dichotomy.

1.1.3 Unpacking the category “Mizrahi”

Despite the prevalence of the terms “Mizrahi” and “Ashkenazi” in Israel, it is important to acknowledge that ethnicity is not a pre-determined monolithic category, but rather an ideological construct, and therefore, framing ethnicity in Israel as a dichotomy hides many other meaningful distinctions. Furthermore, “Mizrahi” and “Ashkenazi” are actually broad cover terms for many sub-groups that have had quite different cultures and settling patterns – Mizrahis trace their origin to places as diverse as Morocco, Yemen, Iraq, Iran, Syria and Egypt, which do share commonalities, but are also culturally distinct. Similarly, Ashkenazis come from a wide range of rather different European countries, such Poland, Romania, Germany and Russia.

As discussed in the previous sections, the discourse in Israel is generally one of erasure, with Mizrahis usually perceived as having a shared Middle-Eastern identity. Nevertheless, differences within these groups are sometimes addressed, but the discussion of such distinctions has also taken on a specific and constrained meaning in Israel. In Israel, the term ethnicity itself is rarely used – the loan word etni (‘ethnic’) refers virtually exclusively to distinctions made outside of Israel. The word Israelis
actually use is *eda* (plural *edot*), and although it is usually translated as “ethnic group”, its application is restricted in actual usage to Mizrahi Jews. While Moroccan Jews and Yemenite Jews are considered different *edot*, the parallel groups of Ashkenazi Jews, such as German Jews and Polish Jews, are not – Ashkenazis are all generally considered of the same *eda*. Furthermore, the adjective derived from *eda*, *adati*, is equated in actual use with *Mizrahi* (Shohat 2001). Thus, the discourse of ethnic differences in Israel generally does not acknowledge an understanding of a full spectrum of ethnicities, but rather reinforces the perception of ethnicity as being a conundrum of Oriental behavior restricted to Mizrahi Jews.

Lefkowitz (2004) suggests understanding the rhetoric surrounding Israeli ethnic identity as a continuum that varies simultaneously along two dimensions of meaning: Israeliness and Easternness, shown in Figure 1.1. In this model, Israeliness corresponds to the imagined ideal of the Zionist literature, whereas Easternness is the Israeli instantiation of otherness, mimicking Western Orientalist discourses that project qualities such as irrationality, backwardness, primitivity and emotionality onto cultural others – both the Palestinian Other and the Mizrahi Other.\(^{17}\)

Thus, the model highlights how the Orientalist discourse that others the Arab population is recursively mirrored on a smaller scale in the othering of Mizrahis. This is apparent even in the terms Mizrahi and Ashkenazi themselves. The etymology of Ashkenazi, an old Hebrew name for Germany that became generalized, is opaque to most Israelis. The etymology of Mizrahi, however, is very clear: it is simply the Modern Hebrew word for eastern, the same word that is used in any geographical

\(^{17}\)The reader may be surprised that “Christian” is placed so far east on the schema – but in the context of Lefkowitz’s discussion, “Christian” refers to Christian Palestinians.
context. Thus, in Hebrew, Mizrahi-ness and Easternness are one and the same. The term is somewhat ironic, since the largest Mizrahi group has its origins in Morocco, which lies considerably further west than Israel. But this contradiction just highlights the fact that the term refers not to actual geography, but rather to an imaginary othered East.

Figure 1.1: The space of Israeli identity (from Lefkowitz 2004:89)

While this model is useful in understanding key aspects of the Israeli perceptions of ethnicity, it also fails to capture the full picture of differences within Mizrahi groups, since it defines Israeliness and Easternness as essentially opposite. It is
particularly interesting to compare the divergent discourses regarding the two Mizrahi groups that Lefkowitz places the furthest apart: Yemenite and Moroccan Jews.

Moroccans, the largest Mizrahi group, are associated with non-conformity to mainstream Israeli culture and politics (Lefkowitz 2004), and seen by the Ashkenazi establishment as the most threatening Mizrahis, who are willing to violently demand their rights. In July of 1959, riots broke out in the Wadi Salib neighborhood of Haifa, the first time that ethnic strife in Israel erupted violently. These riots were sparked by the shooting of a Moroccan Jewish immigrant by police officers, and participants were predominately of North African, and specifically Moroccan, descent; as such, the riots are still associated with Moroccan Jews. Furthermore, the leading activists in the aforementioned Israeli Black Panther movement, which was founded in 1971, were also of Moroccan descent, and the movement still strongly resonates as a symbol of Mizrahi resistance and is associated particularly with Moroccan Jews. One incident is especially memorable in the Israeli narrative; in April 1971, the erstwhile Prime Minister Golda Meir agreed to meet with five of the founders of the Black Panthers. The meeting went very badly, and harsh words were exchanged. When she described the meeting, Meir used a now notorious sentence: “they’re not nice” (hem lo nexitmadim) – a phrase that became emblematic for the establishment’s view of Moroccans. Finally, Mizrachi and Herzog (2013) claim that the pejorative ars, introduced in the previous section, is most commonly associated with Moroccan men.

The Yemenites, in stark contrast to the Moroccans, are often portrayed using a favorable rhetoric. (Lefkowitz 2004). This has much to do with their immigration history, as they are the only Mizrahi group to have arrived in Israel in significant
numbers before independence. Furthermore, the so-called “Magic Carpet”, the widely known nickname for an operation between June 1949 and September 1950 in which the overwhelming majority of Yemenite Jews (some 49,000 people) were airlifted to Israel, is seen as one of the biggest and most heroic successes of the young state. As such, Yemenites are commonly perceived as being willing and dedicated Zionists. However, while this grants them the position of most Israeli and least Eastern on Lefkowitz’s scale of Israeli rhetoric, in other ways they are also perceived as the most Eastern, as they retain more Middle Eastern traditions and folklore than the other groups.

The complex positioning of the Yemenites – on the one hand the most “Eastern” Mizrahi group, but on the other hand, the least threatening to the “mainstream” (that is, Ashkenazi) Israel – makes the navigation of their ethnic identity particularly interesting. This dual view and ambiguous accepting of Yemenites reiterates the general schizophrenia inherent in Israeli identity, which constructs the notion of a “Western European island in the midst of Oriental geography and demography” (Shohat 1989), but also struggles with defining itself as an authentically Semitic and integral part of the Middle East. As we shall see in the next chapters, this tension plays out very clearly with respect to the Hebrew language itself, and is a main focus of this dissertation.
1.2 Sociolinguistic variation in Israel

When considering sociolinguistic variation in Israel, some attention must be paid to the unique history of the language. Hebrew had not been a spoken language for generations, and was revitalized in the late 19th and early 20th century (by the early Zionists, who were mostly Ashkenazis). In current Israel, Modern Hebrew is now the mother tongue of most speakers, and is used in all domains of life. The remarkable success of the revitalization is taken as a point of great pride by Israelis, but has also had an effect on prevailing language attitudes.

Despite conscious attempts to reconstruct the language as it was historically spoken, the Hebrew that emerged from the revitalization is, of course, not the same as Biblical Hebrew, or of any other historical form of Hebrew, and has been greatly influenced by the first languages of the early revitalizers (Zuckerman 2005). Nevertheless, the ideology that Modern Hebrew and its older forms are one and the same still carries much clout in Israel (Zuckerman 2005), and is reinforced by such bodies as the Academy of the Hebrew Language, which, among other things, sanctions word forms based on whether they are historically attested. This friction between prescriptivist ideology and the natural development of Modern Hebrew results in many native speakers suffering from great linguistic insecurity, to the degree that even highly educated literate speakers are often not confident about what constitutes the correct form of very common, everyday Hebrew words (Ravid 1995). This has a large impact on the Israeli notion of a “standard language”. Whereas in many communities the standard is understood to be similar if not identical to the language as spoken by the cultural and economic elite, in Israel, the standard language is an ideal rather than
a practice. As I will show in the following chapters, this has important consequences for the interaction of language and ethnicity as well – although Ashkenazis are higher in the socioeconomic status and are culturally dominant, language ideologies attribute much prestige to the authentically Semitic nature of Hebrew, which is associated with Mizrahi-ness.

The recent immigration history of most families and the unusual historical development of the Hebrew language make Israel an excellent place to look for linguistic features that are rich with multilayered socially meaningful linguistic variation. However, to this date surprisingly little sociolinguistic research has been done in Israel, and not much is documented with respect to even the most basic of questions. There have been few community studies that link particular linguistic variables with inter-speaker or intra-speaker axes such as formality, gender, geography, class, let alone look at more locally significant categories and ideologies. For example, with respect to regional variation, Ravid (1995) states: “Israel is too small and modern Hebrew too young for local dialects to have formed” (Ravid 1995:8).

One social axis that has been explored is that of ethnicity, and there has been shown to be a difference in language use between Ashkenazis and Mizrahis. Most of this research focuses on the feature most stereotypically associated with Mizrahis, the use of the pharyngeal segments [ʕ] and [h]. I explore this feature in detail in this dissertation, and therefore I will survey the previous research about it in Chapter 3. I expand on previous research on language and ethnicity in Hebrew by also investigating a feature that is not stereotypically associated with ethnicity, the deletion
of [h], and I survey the small amount of previous attention it has received in Chapter 5. Before moving on to the next chapters, which describe my methodology and these variables in detail, I will sketch my theoretical approach to analyzing variation and understanding social meaning.

1.3 Exploring variation, social meaning and ethnic identity

This dissertation is a study of sociolinguistic variation and as such is engaged with a large body of work that uses quantitative methods to observe variable patterns in language, and how they relate to the speakers’ positioning in society. This approach began with Labov’s (1996) study of English in New York City, which laid the foundations for the study of sociolinguistic variation, and made way for the modern inquiry of the social aspects of language beyond traditional dialectology. While the dominant view of the time was that if variation exists, it is unconstrained and of little interest to linguists, Labov’s work thoroughly dispelled this notion, and demonstrated an overall pattern of linguistic variation that correlated with social categories, such as class, sex class, ethnicity and age. The many subsequent studies that followed the variationist tradition share this insight – linguistic variation is not noise that needs to be ignored, but quite the opposite, it is the locus of the interaction between language and society.

The focus on linguistic variation as an object of study may have remained a key aspect of sociolinguistics, but the way in the relationship between variation and social meaning is understood has developed and changed considerably since Labov’s (1966)
influential work. Eckert (2012) describes the different treatment of social meaning in variation as three waves of analytic processes, with each wave not superseding the previous but rather incorporating its insights into a richer understanding of social meaning.

The first wave was launched by Labov (1966), and in the work influenced by it, variation was analyzed mainly by establishing correlations between linguistic variables and macro-sociological categories. An often replicated finding was a pattern of socioeconomic stratification of variables, in which lower socioeconomic status correlates with greater use of non-standard variants. Thus, class stratification of language was understood as aligned on a continuum of linguistic prestige. Linguistic correlations of variables with categories other than class, such as age and gender, were seen as a reflex of how these categories affect speakers’ orientation to their place on the same hierarchy – a pole with ‘stigma’ on one end and ‘standard’ on the other. The first wave studies also explored intra-speaker variation, examining them mostly along the same continuum of linguistic prestige. An important finding was that an individual’s stylistic variation often mirrors the class stratification, with more formal speech and reading styles being closer to the standard and casual speech being further from the standard. Stylistic variation was framed as traversing an axis of formality, with the underlying assumption that the more attention is paid to speech (e.g. in reading styles), the closer the speaker gets to the standard. Thus, the notion of the standard is inseparably linked to how social meaning was understood in the first wave, in its treatment of both intra-speaker and inter-speaker variation.
A key move of the second wave was incorporating insights from ethnographic work, and shifting from examining only pre-determined social categories into more specific categories, which are locally salient in the community. An example can be seen in Rickford (1986)’ analysis of linguistic variation in Cane Walk, a sugar plantation in Guyana. Rickford uncovered a locally significant distinction based on occupation: the estate class (those who worked the sugar and lived on the plantation) and the non-estate class (those who worked in offices and lived off the plantation). These two groups differ considerably both in their linguistic production and in their language attitudes, suggesting that in that community, linguistic variation is better understood as conforming to a conflict model of class than to a continuum of social stratification.

The first and second wave thus differ considerably in the kind of categories they use, moving from understanding variation as conditioned by macro-sociological factors in the first wave to more ethnographically salient categories, which represent community members’ own conception of their social reality, in the second wave. The waves are similar, however, in their conception of social meaning, which links linguistic variants directly to the populations who use them. The third wave, as conceived by Eckert (2012), shifts the focus away from populations and categories, and into the people who make up these populations.

The third wave approach conceptualizes variables as having social meanings more basic than the categories with which they correlate, with these meanings combining stylistically to construct the kinds of personae that populate social categories. While the first and second waves focused on social structure, the third
wave highlights the importance of linguistic practice in the process of meaning making, and allows for consideration of the speaker’s agency and goals in a particular interaction. An important concept in understanding the nature of the link between linguistic variants and social groups is indirect indexicality (Silverstein 1976, Ochs 1991). In this framework, linguistic forms are not associated directly with categories, but with the qualities and stances that are associated with those categories. For example, if a male speaker uses a feature stereotyped as working class, he is not necessarily making a claim to be part of the working class, but rather it is the kinds of qualities associated with working class men that are being indexed. Emphasizing the role of indexicality in the link between linguistic variable and social meaning therefore allows for a much richer understanding of what social meanings can be conveyed.

While this view arguably complicates our notion of the social meaning of linguistic variants, I agree with Eckert’s position that it is necessary in order to understand the full range of linguistic variation. The insights of third wave analyses are particularly important when considering the interaction of language and ethnicity. When discussing the role of gender in linguistic variation, Eckert (2012) warns against interpreting a gender difference as meaning ‘male’ or ‘female’, claiming that these differences index qualities and stances that pertain to specific ways of being ‘male’ or ‘female’ – femininity is a social construct and there is no reason to assume that all women should pattern linguistically the same. This critique most certainly applies to the study of ethnicity, which is once again a social construct, one that does not even have the façade of being a natural distinction.
In theorizing about sociolinguistic variation, questions of ethnicity have often been somewhat neglected, in no small part due to the legacy of the classic methodology of North American regional dialectology, which equated white speakers with long-term residents. This bias can still be seen in the most recent dialectological survey, The ANAE, which focuses on majority white ethnic groups as a way to consistently sample local speakers (Labov, Ash, & Boberg, 2006). Nevertheless, ethnicity has certainly not been ignored in the study of sociolinguistic variation. A research interest in the linguistic features of African American speakers has been a key part of sociolinguistics almost since its inception as a field of interest, starting with Labov’s (1972) research, and Rickford’s (1985a) influential position on understanding the importance of ethnicity as a social axis.

Much subsequent work has further investigated African American English, and expanded the research to include other American ethnicities as well, such as Latino Americans. However, most of the research focus remains on minority ethnic groups within the US, more often than not with a “first wave” approach to social meaning: contrasting the minority group’s non-standard variables with the majority (white) patterns (Fought 2002:456). Of course, ethnicity need not necessarily mean ethnic minority, and linguistic differentiation can play out in ways that are quite different from a standard speaking majority and a non-standard speaking ethnic minority. Trying to apply this approach to the Israeli setting highlights its shortcomings. First, it is not clear what ethnic grouping is relevant – as shown in section 1.1.3, although “Mizrahi” and “Ashkenazi” are salient categories in Israel, they are broad cover terms hiding many other meaningful distinctions. Furthermore, although one can easily draw
parallels between Mizrahis and marginalized ethnic groups in the US, trying to contrast their linguistic behavior with an unmarked majority standard will just not do. First of all, they are not a minority, and furthermore, the social dynamic and the specific history of the Hebrew language challenge the notion of an agreed upon standard that any group can claim ownership of.

In order to understand how linguistic variation interacts with ethnic identity in Israel, I argue that we must adopt the insights of third wave analyses. When a Mizrahi speaker uses a pharyngeal segment, she is not necessarily being more or less standard, nor is “Mizrahi-ness” necessarily being invoked. Rather, she is creating an indexical link to stances and qualities associated with particular Mizrahi personas. Therefore, we must have a richer notion of the what meanings can be indexed by linguistic variants, and we must unpack the notion “Mizrahi” in order to uncover what kinds of specific ethnic identities are being constructed.

In this dissertation, I adopt this approach, and investigate the interaction of language and ethnicity by focusing on several consonantal features out of the Hebrew linguistic repertoire. Thus, the goal of this work is not to correlate specific linguistic features with Mizrahis as a group, but rather, see how different Mizrahi speakers use the social meanings conveyed by these features in constructing their own ethnic identity, and in what ways these features combine to create specific and identifiable styles. My main source of data comes from sociolinguistic fieldwork that I have conducted in Israel, and the field sites and methodology are described in the next chapter.
Chapter 2

Fieldwork in the greater Tel Aviv area

In order to empirically research the interaction of ethnic identity and language, while taking into consideration the variation within ethnic groups, I carried out sociolinguistic fieldwork in Israel. Since there are very few sociolinguistic community studies of Israel, one location stood out as the obvious choice. The Tel Aviv Metropolitan Area, which sprawls along the Mediterranean coast, is by far the largest metropolitan area in Israel. With an estimated population of 3,464,100 residents, it is home to over 40% of Israel’s population\(^\text{18}\). Nevertheless, it has never been described by sociolinguists, and I see the filling of that lacuna as one of the goals of this dissertation. The entire greater Tel Aviv area is far too broad a region to be covered in one community study, since it is comprised of many towns and cities that are culturally and demographically quite distinct. Therefore I chose to restrict my research to two specific locations within the Tel Aviv area.

In December 2011 I carried out the pilot phase of my fieldwork, and interviewed over 20 people from all parts of greater Tel Aviv. The observations from that pilot work led me to focus on two locations for the main part of my fieldwork,\(^\text{19}\) which was conducted in the summer of 2012 (June-August). The first field site is Tel Aviv proper, which is very ethnically diverse, and has a broad range of both Ashkenazi and


\(^{19}\) The interviews from the pilot stage come from many different locations in greater Tel Aviv, and are not strictly comparable to the ones from the main stage of fieldwork. Therefore, they are not included in the analysis in chapter 4, though insights gained from them are incorporated throughout this work.
Mizrahi ethnicities, mirroring on a smaller scale the population of Israel in general. Accordingly, my sample tries to capture this diversity. The second field site is more unique – Rosh Ha’ayin, a Tel Aviv suburb that has a predominantly Yemenite Mizrahi population. Although Rosh Ha’ayin does have non-Yemenite residents (see section 2.2 for more about the social make up of the town), my main interest in it as a field site was precisely the Yemenite population, which as pointed out in the previous section, is particularly interesting in the context of how they construct their ethnic identity. Therefore, for the purpose of this study my sample includes only Yemenite residents of Rosh Ha’ayin. Table 2.1 shows the ethnic and gender make up of the sample in both field sites.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tel Aviv Ashkenazis</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tel Aviv Mizrahis</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosh Ha’ayin (all Yemenites)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.1: The sample breakdown by ethnicity and gender

The interviews were conducted in the speakers’ homes, and were recorded using a Marantz PMD-661 solid state recorder, and two lapel microphones (one for me and one for the interviewee). The main part of each interview was a in a free-form style, which began with talking about the interviewee’s experiences growing up (either in Tel Aviv or in Rosh Ha’ayin) and proceeded to various other topics, generally following what the interviewee was most interested in talking about, while steering the

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20 There were two cases of interviewing a married couple that wished to be interviewed together. In these cases each one of the interviewees had a separate lapel microphone.
conversation to how they see their ethnic identity, both in the context of their home
town and in a broader Israeli context. On average, this component consisted of an hour
of speech. In addition, after the interview component was over I asked each
interviewee to read a word list, which contained the specific linguistic features I was
interested in (see Appendix 1 for the list).

2.1 Tel Aviv

The city of Tel Aviv is the cultural and financial center of the greater Tel Aviv
area (and in many ways, of all of Israel), but its population of 402,600\textsuperscript{21} is only a
fraction of the entire metropolitan area. The Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics does
not publish data on Jewish ethnicities, and distinguishes only Jews from non-Jews, so
there are no exact numbers for the ethnic breakdown. Nevertheless, the population is
considered thoroughly mixed between Ashkenazis and Mizrahis, although they are not
distributed equally in all parts of the city.

A salient divide often mentioned by my interviewees was a distinction between
the northern neighborhoods and the southern neighborhoods. The northern part of the
city is considered more wealthy and more Ashkenazi, whereas the southern part of
town is considered poorer and more Mizrahi. Despite the terms north and south
constantly being brought up, there was little agreement among speakers when I asked
them where the dividing line is drawn. There is a consensus, however, about certain
neighborhoods being distinctly southern and Mizrahi – HaTikva and Shapira, two

\textsuperscript{21} Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics 2008 census:
adjacent working class neighborhoods that are almost at the southern tip of the city, north only of Jaffa (which has a strong Arab identity).

In constructing the sample I had two goals in mind – the first was to capture the ethnic diversity of Tel Aviv, and the second was to have a large enough number of Mizrahi speakers, so that the analysis could go beyond simply contrasting Mizrahis and Ashkenazis, but also explore meaningful differences among Mizrahis. These goals are somewhat at odds, and as such, my sample does not attempt to represent an exact snapshot of Tel Aviv demographics on a smaller scale. Though it includes both Mizrahis and Ashkenazis from various parts of the city, it oversamples Mizrahi speakers, with a focus on the southern neighborhoods of HaTikva and Shapira. A breakdown of the sample is given in Table 2.2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ashkenazis</td>
<td>Under 45 years old</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Over 45 years old</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mizrahis</td>
<td>Under 45 years old</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Over 45 years old</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>17</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.2: The Tel Aviv sample

An important methodological consideration was how to approach the issue of determining the interviewee’s ethnicity. Ethnicity can be a thorny topic in Israel, and I did not wish to foreground it to my interviewees as a main interest of my research, nor
did I want to simply ask my interviewers about their ethnicity directly, especially since
I myself am Ashkenazi. Rather, I introduced myself as a linguist interested in the local
culture and language, and before the interview, asked them to fill out a form, which
along with questions about their date of birth and gender, included a question about
where their mother and father were born. This would not seem unusual at all in an
Israeli context, since many Israelis have parents born overseas, and most official forms
ask for the parents’ country of birth. From my experience, most Israelis are intimately
familiar with their family’s immigration history, and it is a story they are eager to tell
and discuss. Therefore, during the interview, I asked them to tell me about how their
parents immigrated to Israel (or their grandparents or great-grandparents in the case of
locally born parents22). This naturally steered the conversation to issues of ethnicity
and self-identification, and invariably segued into discussing Ashkenazis and
Mizrahis.

Thus, although Table 2.2 divides the speakers into Ashkenazis and Mizrahis, it is
important to keep in mind that in my Tel Aviv sample, like in Israel in general, these
categories represent very mixed bags. The Mizrahi ethnicities represented in my
sample are: Bukharan, Iraqi, Persian, Libyan, Moroccan, Syrian, and Yemenite. The
Ashkenazi ethnicities represented in my sample are: German, Hungarian, Lithuanian,
Polish, Romanian, and Russian.

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22 None of the interviewees had great-grandparents born in Israel, which is unsurprising given the recent
immigration history of most families.
2.2 Rosh Ha’ayin

My second field site is a town that is considered a part of the greater Tel Aviv area, but differs from Tel Aviv proper in many crucial ways, and therefore, the sample is quite different, and much more homogenous. Rosh Ha’ayin, a town of 37,900 people\textsuperscript{23}, is located at the very eastern edge of the Tel Aviv sprawl – right to the east of it lies the green line, which delimits the occupied Palestinian territory of the west bank. The town was founded in the early 1950’s, and from its inception, had a unique demography. It was intentionally built as a home for the Yemenites who had come to Israel in the so-called “Operation Magic Carpet” (1949-1950) – the first major immigration from an Arab country, in which almost all of the Jews from Yemen relocated to Israel. The town remained almost completely Yemenite until only 20 years ago, when new neighborhoods started getting built on the neighboring hills, and attracted a more mixed population from other (more expensive) parts of the Tel Aviv area.

Although the population now is quite mixed, the town still retains a strong local Yemenite identity. In fact, the main (if not only) thing the town is known for by most Israelis, is its Yemenite population, due in no small part to the lyrics of a popular song from 1988, by Yemenite-Israeli singer Jacky Mekaiten, shown in (4).

The locals that I interviewed speak of two distinctive parts of the town: “Old Rosh Ha’ayin” (roš ha-šayin ha-vatika), the original town which had very little incoming immigration and is still almost completely Yemenite, as opposed to “new Rosh Ha’ayin” (roš ha-šayin ha-hadaša) or “The Hills” (ha-gvašot) which has a mixed population. However, the new neighborhoods still have a far larger Yemenite population than the average Tel Aviv suburb, since they are home to many families of Yemenites who were born and raised in the older part of town. The downtown area is in Old Rosh Ha’ayin but serves both parts of town, and is bustling with signs of Yemenite identity – many stores along the main commercial street are Yemenite restaurants, and the most impressive building in the town center houses the Yemenite Heritage Museum.

As was already shown in the song lyrics in (4), Rosh Ha’ayin is well known for its Yemenite population, and is associated with a Yemenite identity in popular culture. As such, it is the perfect place to see how language interacts not just with Mizrahi-ness in general, but with a specifically Yemenite identity. Therefore, even though the current population of Rosh Ha’ayin is ethnically mixed, when constructing my sample

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24 To “speak with het and ayin” is a major linguistic stereotype about Mizrahis, which is one of the sociolinguistic variables addressed by this dissertation, and will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4.
I chose to interview only speakers of Yemenite descent. This also had a methodological reason: except for the youngest cohort, there are essentially no non-Yemenites who were born and raised in Rosh Ha’ayin. I interviewed 23 speakers (8 men and 15 women), between the ages of 18-64, who had spent their entire lives there (or in the case of some speakers who went to college or high school elsewhere, almost their entire lives)\(^{25}\). My oldest speakers therefore represent the first generation of native speakers born in Rosh Ha’ayin, and my youngest speakers are third generation Rosh Ha’ayinites. Table 2.3 shows the breakdown of the sample by age and gender.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 45 years old</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 45 years old</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.3: The Rosh Ha’ayin Sample

The link between Rosh Ha’ayin and its Yemenite population came up time and time again in my interviews. As in Tel Aviv, once again I introduced myself as a linguist interested in the local culture and language; the immediate response was almost always that I had come to the right place, and that Rosh Ha’ayin is special, because it is so Yemenite. This invariably led the discussion to the speakers’ Yemenite identity, something most of them felt very strongly about. Almost all speakers expressed extreme fondness of the town and a sense of great loyalty to it, and made a

\(^{25}\) I interviewed two additional speakers, one man and one woman, but since the interview ended up being too short for linguistic analysis, they were not included in the final sample.
point of saying that it is specifically because of its Yemenite community, of which they feel an integral part. These speakers were well aware both of how unique the demographics are compared to other towns in Israel, and of how insular the Rosh Ha’ayin community was until fairly recently, as can be seen in the following quotes form my interviews. Gaby, a 47-year-old man, recounts what the town was like when he was growing up:

(5) “There was nothing east of Rosh Ha’ayin. Rosh Ha’ayin was the last stop before the Arabs, who lived there in the mountains. It was really the boondocks”.

Kineret, his wife, who is 36, added:

(6) “Yeah, and you know, because it was a completely Yemenite place – because it was only Yemenites – there were no Ashkenazis at all in Rosh Ha’ayin.

Actually, there was one, he used to live close to my grandmother. His name was Haimke, a Holocaust survivor. Everybody in Rosh Ha’ayin knew him”

The speakers in my sample did not all identify as religious, but they did all claim a faithfulness to traditional Jewish values and customs: attending synagogue (occasionally if not regularly), trying to avoid driving on the Sabbath, and maintaining some form of kashrus (traditional Jewish dietary laws) by avoiding eating pork. They also spoke of specifically Mizrahi customs, such the henna ceremony, a Middle Eastern tradition common to both Jews and non-Jews, in which the hands of a bride-to-be are adorned with intricate body paint during a lavish bridal shower. This custom is considered outdated among many Israeli Mizrahis, but the female speakers in my
sample took great pride in showing me pictures of themselves in traditional Yemenite garb during their own henna ceremony, and many expressed great enthusiasm to see their daughters do the same. A specifically Yemenite tradition practiced by the male speakers is studying with a mori. The mori is a teacher, invariably an old Yemenite man, who prepares young boys for their bar-mitzvah, by way of teaching them the particular Yemenite style of bible reading. Some of the younger speakers, who were born in Rosh Ha’ayin and decided to stay and raise their own children there, often cited the availability and commonness of institutions such as the mori and henna as major reasons for staying. Another way in which the speakers saw Rosh Ha’ayin as connected to their ethnic identity was the abundance of good Yemenite food: speakers described to me in detail the differences between malawah, sabaya, jahnoon and lahooh, all distinctively Yemenites food. Finally, and of most interest to me, the speakers were eager to express overt language ideologies that linked their language use with their Yemenite identity, and I will discuss these in details in the following chapters.
Chapter 3

Speaking with *het* and *ayin*: The pharyngeals and Mizrahi identity

The general paucity of research on segmental variation in Hebrew means that few linguistic variables have been defined, let alone attributed any specific social meaning. Therefore, as this dissertation seeks to explore connections between ethnic identities and linguistic variation, a key question is which linguistic resources may be relevant for this line of inquiry. However, in one case the choice was obvious – the variable discussed in this chapter, the use of the pharyngeal segments, is the key shibboleth of Mizrahi-ness. It has received most attention from researchers, and is probably the only linguistic feature that is associated with specific ethnicities by the general public. Therefore, the pharyngeals are clearly an ideal place to begin exploring links between ethnic identity and linguistic variation in Israel.

This chapter is organized as follows. Section 3.1 describes the variable and the extant research on its use. Section 3.2 uses insights from meta-linguistic commentary to interpret the social significance of the pharyngeals. Section 3.3 describes two case studies using data from Israeli reality TV, demonstrating how speakers who do not use the pharyngeals consistently, can still produce them occasionally to perform aspects of a Mizrahi persona.
3.1 The pharyngeal segments in Hebrew

Blanc (1968), the first description of the sociolinguistic situation in Israel, already includes a prominent reference to the pharyngeals. In a work based mostly on the writer’s own impressions, Blanc describes two distinct varieties of Hebrew, which he named “General Israeli”, the emergent standard spoken by Ashkenazis, and “Oriental Israeli”, spoken by Mizrahis. He specifies only three distinctions between the two varieties, all of which are in the realm of consonants. Specifically, “Oriental Hebrew” has two pharyngeal sounds which “General Israeli” has collapsed with their non-pharyngeal counterparts, and it uses a trilled apical rhotic, as opposed to the “General Israeli” uvular rhotic. In Yaeger-Dror’s (1988) discussion of the same variables, she also refers to two varieties of Hebrew, but uses the terms “Modern Koiné” (MK) for what Blanc called “General Israeli” and “Mizrahi Hebrew” (MH) for “Oriental Hebrew”, and I will adopt these terms here.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mizrahi Hebrew</th>
<th>Modern Koiné</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>r</td>
<td>k</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ʕ</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ħ</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1: Differences between Mizrahi Hebrew and the Modern Koiné (adapted from Blanc 1968)

In all the cases in which the segment inventory of Mizrahi Hebrew and the Modern Koiné differ, Mizrahi Hebrew is considered the more conservative variety, or more specifically, the one more similar to Biblical Hebrew. This is key, since the ideological goal of the revitalization of Hebrew was to resurrect Biblical Hebrew as it
was believed to have been spoken. With respect to the rhotic sounds, there is no way of knowing how the Biblical Hebrew rhotic was actually produced, but nevertheless the Mizrahi apical variant is considered the original one (Yaeger-Dror 1988). In the case of the pharyngeals, however, it is not just a case of one production replacing another – Mizrahi Hebrew maintains a distinction that clearly existed in Biblical Hebrew and is always preserved in writing, but has been lost in the Koiné.

Biblical Hebrew had two pharyngeal sounds, represented by the Hebrew letters *het* (ח) and *ayin* (ע). In the Mizrahi liturgical reading tradition, as shown in Table 3.2, *het* was pronounced as [ħ] (a voiceless pharyngeal fricative) and *ayin* was pronounced as [ʕ] (a voiced pharyngeal approximant). Current researchers of Biblical Hebrew assume that this really was the historical pronunciation (Laufer 2009), but far more important for this discussion is the fact that the revivers of Hebrew believed that the Mizrahi pronunciation was the accurate biblical pronunciation. Although the pronunciation used by Mizrahis was considered truer to the Semitic roots of the language, most Hebrew speakers during the early years of the revival were Ashkenazis. While many of the early Mizrahi immigrants were fluent in Arabic, a close relative of Hebrew which has these pharyngeal sounds, the early Ashkenazi revitalizers of Hebrew were native speakers of European languages (primarily Yiddish) with no pharyngeal segments, and they could not pronounce them (or chose not to). The result was that virtually all Ashkenazi speakers, from the days of the early revival to current times, do not normally produce these segments. In the modern Koiné, the pronunciation of *ayin* has merged with that of the biblical glottal stop, though in current usage, both are usually not pronounced at all. As for *het*, it merged
with another biblical sound, [x], represented by the letter xaf (כ)\textsuperscript{26}. This is shown in Table 3.2:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hebrew letter</th>
<th>Biblical Hebrew</th>
<th>Modern Koiné</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>aleph (א)</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>? / ∅</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ayin (י)</td>
<td>ꝏ</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xaf (כ)</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>het (ה)</td>
<td>h</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 3.2:** The pharyngeals and non-pharyngeal counterparts

As discussed in section 1.1.1, Ashkenazis tend to be of higher socio-economic status than Mizrahis, and are considered by many to be the “unmarked” Israeli. As such, the variety of Hebrew that lacks the pharyngeal sounds may be considered “standard” Hebrew, and indeed, it is the one most widely used in the media. Nevertheless, due to the unusual history of the language, prescriptive norms in Israel have taken an atypical turn. Unlike many places in which the prestige standard is the language of the elites, in Israel the model was the reconstructed “Semitic” pronunciation, which retains the Biblical distinctions (Zuckerman 2005). Up until recent years, newscasters would always use the “correct” pharyngeal pronunciation. While the trend has shifted in this decade and newscasters now speak in the Modern Koiné, the “correct” pronunciation still carries prestige, and is always used, for example, by the host of Israel’s annual independence day ceremonies. Thus, the pharyngeal segments occupy a special position – they are a marker of lower socio-

\textsuperscript{26} Blanc states that the Modern Koiné merged het and xaf into a velar fricative (as does Yaeger-Dror 1988 and other writers), whereas Zuckerman (2005) states that it is a uvular fricative, though to my knowledge, these claims are all based on auditory perception. I will refer to the merged phoneme here as /x/, and will return to examine the actual acoustics of it in chapter 4, in which I show that it in fact alternates between a dorsal fricative and a uvular trill.
economic status, and at the same time they are considered the “correct” and authentic pronunciation. This ambiguous position contrasts sharply with the sociolinguistic variables in Labov’s (1966) classic study of New York City English, in which socio-economic class, style, prestige and sound change are all neatly aligned on the same axis, with the move from more casual to more careful speech in intra-speaker variation reproducing the class differences observed in inter-speaker variation, which in turn, aligned with how far along a speaker is in the trajectory of a sound change. Crucially, the social evaluation also mirrored this unified axis, in what Eckert calls “a folk connection between old and new, formal and informal, better and worse, correct and incorrect” (Eckert 1990:249). Eckert warns that interpreting gender differences solely along such a unified axis cannot fully account for women’s linguistic behavior, since women do more than simply be more or less conservative than men. This critique applies to analyses of ethnic variation as well, and strikingly so in the case of pharyngeals in Modern Hebrew, where the axes do not align even in the folk perception, in which the “old”, “correct”, “authentic” and “prestigious” are at odds.

This combination of features coupled with the immense importance of the Mizrahi-Ashkenazi distinction make the pharyngeals pregnant with social meaning. Labov (1971) makes a distinction between indicators, markers and stereotypes. While indicators distinguish social or geographic categories, but have not been noticed by the speakers, markers have garnered the attention of the speakers. Stereotypes, like markers, are noticed by the speakers; both are likely to play a role in stylistic variation, but the difference is that the speakers are consciously aware of the stereotypes, and they are thus the topic of overt social commentary. In this typology, the use of
pharyngeal segments is certainly a stereotype, as it is quite often referred to in Israeli discourse, and Israelis have a term to refer to it – *ledaber be-het ve-ayin* (‘to speak with *het* and *ayin’). As I will show in the next section, this term is used quite often, showing the salience of the stereotype and its ideological link to Mizrahi-ness.

However, due to the dearth of community studies conducted in Israel, it is hard to assess how many Mizrahis currently use pharyngeals in speech and to what extent. The consensus from the extant literature gives us little more than the observations that the pharyngeals are very rare in current Israel, and that if they are used at all they are used by Mizrahis (though less and less so). As mentioned before, Blanc (1968) presented the pharyngeals and the apical /r/ as the sole features distinguishing a Mizrahi pronunciation; however, he immediately proceeded to claim that they are uncommon among Mizrahis as well. Subsequent work followed that trend.

Davis (1984) interviewed Mizrahis in predominantly Mizrahi towns (Kiryat Shmona, Or Akiva and Dimona, in northern, central and southern Israel respectively) and noted that younger speakers use them far less than adults. With pharyngeal use at around only 5% for his group of 12 year olds who were not bilingual in Arabic, Davis stated that “in a generation or two, the pharyngeals will have disappeared completely from Israeli Hebrew”. The trend reported by Davis was found by others as well, though possibly to a less extreme degree. Lefkowitz (2004) conducted sociolinguistic interviews in Haifa with 90 Israelis, and found that only a minority of Mizrahis pharyngealized to any noticeable extent, all of them over 40 years old. Laufer (2009),

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27 The trilled /r/, which Blanc (1968) defines as the third shibboleth of Mizrahi Hebrew, has too has given way to the Koiné uvular pronunciation, perhaps to a greater extent than the pharyngeals (see Yaeger-Dror 1988, 1993) for details. However, it is not as salient a stereotype in the Israeli speech community, and will not be examined in this chapter.
in a phonetics paper focusing on the articulation of nine speakers, anecdotally notes “the tendency we find in the Oriental pronunciations of Modern Hebrew, especially by younger generations: the weakening of pharyngeals and the almost disappearance of the pharyngealized sounds”. Finally, Zukerman (2005) anecdotally states regarding the Semitic pharyngeals that “most Israelis do not pronounce them but they are used, for example, by old Yemenite Jews (though less and less by young ones)”.

A single exception is Bentolila (1983), who examines the pharyngeals among Mizrahi speakers from a small isolated rural community, settled primarily by immigrants from the same small town in Morocco. To my knowledge, his is the only study that shows high levels of pharyngealization, for both adults and children (and in fact, higher rates for the children, approaching 100% for some).

Though the pharyngeals appear to be rare and receding, perception studies show that speakers do have some ability to distinguish speech as sounding Mizrahi or Ashkenazi, and attribute social meaning to it. Lambert et al. (1965) played recorded voices of Ashkenazi and Yemenite Israelis to a group of mostly Ashkenazi Israeli participants, and asked them to rate the speaker according to certain personality traits. The Ashkenazi speakers were rated more favorably in traits such as “success”, “self-confidence”, “leadership” and “good manners”, whereas the Yemenites were rated more favorably for “honesty” and “friendliness”. All the participants in the study could correctly classify the speakers as either Ashkenazi or Mizrahi, but not specifically Yemenite, and the results might be interpreted as referring to attitudes towards Mizrahis in general. Unfortunately, Lambert et al. do not state which linguistic features their Yemenite speakers used that made them identifiable as such,
but due to the importance of the pharyngeals, it is likely that speakers who produce them were chosen for the experiment.

Devens (1981) conducted an experiment in which the same 10 participants were both the speakers and the hearers. Nine of the participants were Mizrahi, and Devens defined 7 of them as speaking Mizrahi Hebrew\textsuperscript{28}. She played clips of each participant in two guises – speaking either words that included or did not include pharyngeals – and in both guises the speakers were correctly identified as Mizrahi at a rate that was low, but still better than chance. Two of the Mizrahi speakers were Yemenite, and it is interesting to note that they were correctly identified far more consistently than the other Mizrahis.

To conclude, the extant literature does not give a clear picture of the extent to which pharyngeals are currently used, but strongly suggests an advanced stage of a change in progress in which the pharyngeals are being lost. Furthermore, although it is not clear to what extent Israelis can distinguish Mizrahi and Ashkenazi speakers based on their voices, it appears that Hebrew speakers do have some intuitions on the matter, which are likely to involve the pharyngeals, but are not based solely on them. Finally, we see several cases in which Yemenites are singled out as the most linguistically distinct, or “the most Mizrahi sounding”: they are the speakers who are easiest to distinguish, and who have the most pharyngeal pronunciation.

\textsuperscript{28}Devens does not state what exactly she means by that, but from the way the study was designed, it appears that they used the pharyngeal segments.
3.2 Getting at the social meaning

Since the existing research suggests most Mizrahis do not use the pharyngeals, and that their disappearance from the language of all Israelis (including Mizrahis) is all but complete, the reader may wonder whether they are still variables worth exploring. The answer, I believe, is a resounding yes. First, as shown by the data collected in my fieldwork, which I will describe in detail in Chapter 4, Davis’s (1984) prediction that the pharyngeals will have completely disappeared from Modern Hebrew appears to have been premature – in 2012 the pharyngeals are by no means the norm, but at least in some communities they are alive and well, with some younger speakers exhibiting robust pharyngealization. However, even if that were not the case, it is important to acknowledge another crucial aspect which sets the pharyngeals apart – their great salience in the Israeli-internal discourse about language and ethnicity. When we consider the extraordinary number of references in the media to a variable that, after all, not many people use, it would not be an exaggeration to say that Israelis are obsessed with the pharyngeals.

If most Mizrahis do not produce pharyngeals, they are clearly no longer simply a marker of ethnicity (if they ever were); however, as described earlier, the historical and social circumstances have made the pharyngeal pronunciation pregnant with a rich and multi-layered social meaning. It is important, at this point, to reconsider the discussion in section 1.3, of what it means for a linguistic feature to carry social meaning. In this case, it is clear that we are not likely to find any one fixed social correlate (such as one simply indicating “Mizrahi”). I argue that the great importance of the pharyngeals in Israeli discourse stems from the ideological links created
between their use and stereotypical aspects of a Mizrahi persona. As described in detail in section 1.1.2, in mainstream Israeli discourse, Ashkenazis are described as “just Israelis”, the unmarked category. Mizrahis, on the other hand, are portrayed in a stereotypically Orientalist way – they are uneducated, primitive, vulgar, sexist, and violent; they are also warm, hospitable, and have good food. All of these stereotypes are linked with the pharyngeals, alongside the complicated history that makes them the authentically correct pronunciation.

A useful concept to use here is indexical orders (Silverstein 2003) – in this framework, membership in a certain population (such as being an Ashkenazi or Mizrahi Israeli) is a first order index (or “nth order index” in Silverstein’s terms), and the forms used by this population are always available for reinterpretation, linking the social characteristics attributed to this population with the variable, and constantly construing higher order indexical links. As we will see, the salient social meaning that keeps the pharyngeals an important part of the discourse is the higher order indexicals – the associations not only with Mizrahi-ness per se, but with ideas of what it means to be Mizrahi.

As a first step towards getting a grasp on what social meanings the pharyngeals have, and the great importance ascribed to them, we can first observe what Israelis say about it. As mentioned before, Israelis have a term to refer to producing the pharyngeals – *ledaber be-7et ve-3ayin*29 (‘to speak with *het* and *ayin’). Searching

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29 When transliterating Hebrew into English letters, most writers adopt a broadly phonetic representation of “standard” Hebrew, which means that *ayin* is not transcribed at all, and *het* is rendered *x* (making it indistinguishable from the letter *xaf*, which is indeed the case for most speakers). However, in this chapter such an approach would be very confusing. On the other hand, consistently using the IPA
Google for this phrase produces a vast range of comments, demonstrating its salience in Israeli discourse. The comments that I have collected demonstrate the intense love-hate relationship Israelis have with the pharyngeals, as they are ideologically linked to matters that are at the heart of what it means to have an Israeli identity.

Perhaps the most famous comment on the use of pharyngeal segments comes from a well-known song, “Me, Simon and Little Moiz”, written and performed by Yosi Banay. In the song he nostalgically recounts the long gone days of his childhood in a city, which is never named, but is easily recognizable as Jerusalem. For Banay, who is Mizrahi, the pharyngeal segments are a thing of beauty, reminiscent of simpler times, and specifically, of a beautiful form of Hebrew.

(7) be-na3aley šabat ve-kova šel baret, "With Sabbath shoes and a beret hat ve-be-3ivrit yafa 3im 3ayin ve-im 7et And in beautiful Hebrew with ayin and het daharnu 3al 3anan 3asuy mi-kariot We rode on a cloud made of pillows u-ve-ekda7 pkakim hitba3nu oniyot And with a toy gun we sunk ships"

As could be expected, many of the other examples found on-line link the pharyngeals with ethnicity, either tacitly or explicitly. Recall the song lyrics in (4),

symbols ʕ and h would give the impression that they are always pronounced as such, which is not true either. The approach I chose was to base my transliteration on Hebrew orthography (in which the pharyngeal sounds have dedicated letters), without making claims with respect to the pronunciation I adopt a common convention for spelling Arabic in English letters, and therefore use 3 for ayin and 7 for het. The metalinguistic commentary consistently refers to “speaking with het and ayin”, in that order. In these lyrics, the order is reversed (“ayin and het”), which is unusual. This was likely done only for poetic reasons, so that het would rhyme with the previous line.
repeated here as (8), which show that the pharyngeal pronunciation is strongly associated with Mizrahi-ness and is enregistered (Agha 2003) as a Mizrahi feature. These lyrics, from a song by Yemenite-Israeli singer Jacky Mekaiten, highlight the use of *het* and *ayin* as an act of pride and empowerment.

(8) ani mi-roš ha-3ayin I’m from Rosh Ha’ayin,
medaber be-7et ve-3ayin I speak with *het* and *ayin*
teymani muvhak clearly a Yemenite
makor še-lo niš7ak the unchanged original$^{31}$

Rosh Ha’ayin, which was described in section 2.2, is a suburb of Tel Aviv, which historically had a predominantly Yemenite Mizrahi population. In this case, the pharyngeal pronunciation is invoked as a marker of authentic identity, specifically Yemenite-Israeli. Recall that in the previous section, Yemenites were often singled out as the Mizrahi group with the most pharyngeals, and now we see that this link is acknowledged in the meta-linguistic commentary as well. As chapter 4 will show, that is not without reason – not all Yemenites pharyngealize, of course, but the only young speakers in my sample with robust pharyngealization were indeed Yemenites.

It is interesting in this context to reconsider Lefkowitz (2004)’s model, which was presented in Figure 1.1 in the previous chapter. In this model the rhetoric surrounding Israeli ethnic identity can be understood as a continuum that varies simultaneously along two dimensions of meaning: Israeliness and Easternness.

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$^{31}$[www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-1838768,00.html](http://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-1838768,00.html)
In this model, Israeliness corresponds to the imagined ideal of the Zionist literature, whereas Easternness is the Israeli instantiation of otherness. As highlighted in Section 1.1.3, it is useful in understanding how the Orientalist discourse which others the Arab population in Israel is recursively mirrored within the Jewish population in the othering of Mizrahis. However, when considering the differences within the different Mizrahi groups, this model, in which Israeliness and Easternness are defined as essentially opposite, fails to capture the full picture. This is specifically relevant for Yemenites, the only Mizrahi group to have arrived in Israel in significant numbers before independence. As they are commonly perceived as being willing and dedicated Zionists, they are often portrayed in a favorable rhetoric, and therefore in Lefkowitz’s model they are the most Israeli Mizrahis (Lefkowitz 2004:91). However, this ignores the fact that Yemenites are in many ways also the most Eastern, retaining more Middle Eastern traditions and folklore than other groups. The complex recursive positioning of the Yemenites – at once the most “Eastern” Mizrahi group, the most Mizrahi of the Mizrahis, but on the other hand, the least threatening to “mainstream” (that is, Ashkenazi) Israel – can be understood if we interpret identity across an additional axis, a notion of Jewish and Semitic authenticity, which is not necessarily at odds with Israeliness. A key tension in Israeli self-definition stems from the attempt to reconcile its notion of being a Western enclave in the Orient with its laying a claim to being an authentically Semitic and integral part of the Middle East. The most authentic Mizrahi maintains a link to his Middle Eastern roots; roots that are in the traditions, religion, social practices and language use of the original Mizrahi Jews. The Yemenites can thus be perceived as the most authentic Mizrahis, retaining aspects of
their culture that make a claim for a true Semitic identity that is not challenged as non-Israeli – including being the most linguistically distinct group. This backdrop serves as a basis for the complicated language ideologies about the pharyngeals, which are considered the authentic and “correct” form (a fact which is accepted – if only as lip service – by speakers who do not use them), and as such can be neatly wrapped within an “authentic” Yemenite identity. The sentiment in the song lyrics (“the unchanged original”) is not unique, and I heard similar opinions from many of the Yemenite speakers I had interviewed in Rosh Ha’ayin during my fieldwork. Many of them exhibited an extremely positive attitude towards pharyngeals, boasting that their children use them as well, claiming that they do not want them to sound “ashkenazified”. They often went on to explain that what they speak is correct Hebrew and made ideological links to their use of an authentic variety. For example, Rinat, a 37 year old kindergarten teacher, said:

(9) ana7nu ha-aneymanim yoter šamranim, ve-lokxmin et ha-tañax be-recinut. ve-im ata roce likro me-ha-tañax ata carix ledaber 3ivrit nexona

“We Yemenites are more traditional, and we take the bible seriously. And if you want to read from the bible you need to speak correct Hebrew”

Of course, not all opinions about the pharyngeals are positive, which is not surprising for a linguistic feature that is so strongly associated with a community that is in many ways marginalized. Consider the following remark from a blog post titled “Am I still ashamed to be Mizrahi?”
“When I was young I was ashamed of my parents because they were Mizrahi… My dark skinned father, who spoke with guttural *het* and *ayin*, never came to my school – so I felt relieved”\(^{32}\)

A further example comes from an on-line forum that compares Naomi Shemer, a well-known Ashkenazi singer and songwriter, with the late Zohar Argov, a tremendously popular Yemenite-Israeli singer, who indeed used a very noticeable pharyngeal pronunciation.

“Semitic languages put an emphasis on *het* and *ayin*… In spite of Naomi Shemer’s vocabulary, she doesn’t speak correct Hebrew like Zohar Argov does. Even though it’s quite likely that her vocabulary is richer or

\(^{32}\) [http://yaelisrael.wordpress.com/2007/01/27/%D7%94%D7%90%D7%9D-%D7%90%D7%A0%D7%99-%D7%A2%D7%93%D7%99%D7%99%D7%9F-%D7%9E%D7%AA%D7%91%D7%99%D7%A9%D7%AA-%D7%91%D7%9E%D7%96%D7%A8%D7%97%D7%99%D7%95%D7%AA%D7%99/](http://yaelisrael.wordpress.com/2007/01/27/%D7%94%D7%90%D7%9D-%D7%90%D7%A0%D7%99-%D7%A2%D7%93%D7%99%D7%99%D7%9F-%D7%9E%D7%AA%D7%91%D7%99%D7%A9%D7%AA-%D7%91%D7%9E%D7%96%D7%A8%D7%97%D7%99%D7%95%D7%AA%D7%99/)
that her IQ approaches 160”.

It is interesting to note that the writer of this passage obviously accepts the older prescriptive norm – “correct” Hebrew must make use of the pharyngeal segments, the hallmark of Semitic languages. Interestingly, he implies that Shemer is smarter than Argov, echoing the stereotype of Ashkenazis being more intelligent than Mizrahis. Nevertheless, he does not equate intelligence, or even having a rich vocabulary, with a correct use of language. For this writer it is the use of het and ayin, which gives Argov access to the “proper” version of Hebrew.

Still less positive stereotypes associated with users of het and ayin can be seen in the following example, which refers to Margalit “Margol” Tsan’ani, another Yemenite-Israeli singer. The writer is discussing her recent addition to the cast of the Israeli TV show Koxav Nolad (a remake of “American Idol”) as a judge – the popular conception being that she was added as a “good cop”, to balance the other three (Ashkenazi male) judges.

(12) naxon, lif3amim hi lo mehukca3at, medaberet be-7et ve-3ayin, hi lo mityameret lihyot mašehu še-hi lo, ve-lif3amim ze nišma keat behemi o mešulal takt, aval ze 3adif pi elef 3al kol ha-lakek ve-ha-dawinim šel 3amitea la-bizness

“True, sometimes she’s unpolished, talks with het and ayin, she’s not trying to be something she’s not, and sometimes that may sound vulgar or tactless, but it’s a million times better than the sucking up and showing off of her (show) biz

http://sf.tapuz.co.il/shirshur-830-125257342.htm
As noted in the previous section, being vulgar and crude is often attributed to Mizrahi Israelis. The writer of this passage links the use of *ayin* and *het* with sounding vulgar and unpolished, exemplifying the higher order indexing. Of course, there is nothing inherently vulgar sounding about pharyngeal sounds (or any other sound, for that matter) – in Arabic, for example, they are a part of the *tajwid* register, the “perfect” recitation of the Koran, which has great prestige. However, in Israel they are imbued with locally significant meaning, and it is the association with certain types of speakers, which creates the link with vulgarity. Nevertheless, it is important to notice that in this passage, Tsan’ani’s style is at once both criticized and respected. There is a way in which vulgarity and tactlessness can be a good thing, and that is when it is opposed to being fake. Tsan’ani is described as real and authentic, yet again echoing the link with ethnic stereotypes discussed in Swirski (1981).

The stereotype of the Mizrahi man is most strongly exemplified by the Hebrew word *ars*, which was introduced in section 1.1.2. This word denotes a derogatory stereotype of males displaying bad manners, vulgarity and contempt for social norms, but it is also an ethnicized stereotype – it is typically applied to Mizrahi men. In Hebrew, the word *ars* is spelled with an *ayin* (i.e., ʕars); in fact, the piece by Roni Sabag-Albin, which is cited in section 1.1.2 and argues that *ars* has a strictly ethnicized meaning, is titled simply “the *ayin* in *ars*” highlighting to what a great

34 zone.walla.co.il/?w=/2726/1110227
35 http://www.haokets.org/2012/10/29/%D7%94-%D7%A2-%D7%A9%D7%9C-%D7%94%D7%A2%D7%A8%D7%A1/
degree the pharyngeals are enregistered as a Mizrahi feature. And of course, the prototypical *ars* evoked by this stereotype does speak with *het* and *ayin*, as is explicitly stated in this comment from an Israeli web forum.

(13) ve-ze ha-3ars ha-macuy. 3im šaršeret ve-gormetim, 3im ha-dibur 3al elohim, 3im ha-silsulim um-kultum šik, 3im ha-dibur be-7et ve-3ayin, ve-be3ecem, ma la3asot, be-signon še-nora mazkir et bney-dodenu…

“This is your common *ars*. With the necklace and bracelets, talking about god, with the Umm Kulthum style singing, speaking in *het* and *ayin*, in a style that, what can you do, is reminiscent of our cousins.”

Umm Kulthum is a famous Egyptian singer, and “our cousins” is a term used when referring to Arabs, mostly in pejorative contexts; the writer is saying that if you use *het* and *ayin* you are sound like an *ars*, and an *ars* sounds like an Arab. Of course, the pharyngeal segments do indeed occur in Arabic, as has already been pointed out. However, the writer is not making a cross-linguistic observation, but rather an ideological link – using the pharyngeal segments ties the character of the speaker with those traits attributed to speakers of Arabic. While surveying the stereotypes of Arabs in Israeli society is well beyond the scope of this chapter, recall their positioning in the model presented in Figure 1.1 – Arabs are the most Eastern, and the most opposite to Israeliness. Using the pharyngeals to link Arabic identity and Mizrahi identity is therefore directly challenging the place Mizrahis occupy in Israeli society, recursively

36 www.tapuz.co.il/blog/ViewEntry.asp?EntryId=470082
reproducing a discourse of othering. The following excerpt, from a comment on a web forum, makes this link between pharyngeal and Arab even more explicit.

(14) ha-absurd hu še-kol mekaleley tibi kan ba-forum hem 3aravim-yehudim,
megišim mi-medinot 3arav, medabrim be-7et ve-3ayin ha-dome le-3aravim
“The absurd thing is that all the people here cursing Ahmed Tibi are
Jewish-Arabs, coming from Arab countries, speaking in het and ayin just like
Arabs do. 37

While the ars character, as well as the link with being an Arab, had negative connotations in the previous two examples, the meaning is actually more complicated. The two final examples are quite tongue in cheek, and highly recommend dating an ars, highlighting the complexity of the attitudes towards this social stereotype. The first, titled “Diary of a Mizrahi Girl”, makes a plea for the authenticity of the ars (emphasis mine).

(15) a7arey še-maast be-aškenazim 7ašvt še-ulay tik7i lax, eyze intelektual mizra7i,
exad kamox, 7aci mešuknaz 7aci oenti aval… 3izvi otax me-ele, memeyle lo
nišar bahem šum davar mizra7i, k7i lax marokai otenti mi-kiryat-gat, 3im 7et
ve-3ayin groniyot, racuy 3avar plili o lefa7ot eyze yešiva ktana ba-kele bi-zman
ha-šerut ha-cvai kedey še-targiši otentit lemaday, ki hine a7arey kol ha-7nunim
še-savalt yeš lax gever gever ba-yad, 3ars 3im lev zahav še-mezayen otax

37 http://www.ynet.co.il/Ext/App/TalkBack/CdaViewOpenTalkBack/1,11382,L-3198063-6,00.html
be-marokait le-cliley um kultum

“After you get sick of Ashkenazis you think to yourself that you’ll find some Mizrahi intellectual, one like you, half Ashkenazified, half authentic, but… Forget about those, there is nothing Mizrahi left in them anyway, find yourself a real Moroccan from Kiryat Gat\textsuperscript{38}, with\textsuperscript{39} guttural \textit{het} and \textit{ayin}, preferably some criminal record or at least some jail time during his military service so that you can feel pretty authentic, because finally after all the geeks you had to put up with you have a real man, an \textit{ars} with a heart of gold who fucks you in Moroccan while listening to Umm Kulthum”

The second quote is from a humorous web page titled “advice for \textit{ars}-loving women”, which is geared to Ashkenazi women and proudly boasts that it has all the steps to get “a real oriental man”. Its advice is as follows:

(16) at lo tuxli laševet 3im ha-3ars ha-meyu7al šelax ecel horav, bli lehafgin solidariut klapey minhagey “ha-eda”. Az be-aru7at boker, bimkom ha-granola ve-ha-yogurt ha-lavan ve-ha-laflafi šelax, panki et 3acmex be-karix beyca 3im xacilim metuganim ve-harebe xarif, hitamni 3al haxanat kube memula bsar 3egel ve-cnobarim, ve-hatxili lelamed et ha-lašon šelax ledaber be-7et ve-3ayin.

\textsuperscript{38} A predominantly Mizrahi town in southern Israel
\textsuperscript{39} http://www.kedma.co.il/index.php?id=1601
“You won’t be able to sit with your long awaited ars for dinner with the folks, without expressing solidarity with the customs of his “ethnic group”\textsuperscript{40}. So for breakfast, instead of your granola and geeky yogurt, treat yourself to an egg sandwich with very spicy eggplants. Learn how to make kubeh filled with veal and pine nuts, and start teaching your tongue how to talk with het and ayin.”\textsuperscript{41}

Once again, talking with het and ayin is linked to the qualities of the ars – here it is suggested that speaking this way can actually turn one into an ars (or rather, into the kind of woman an ars would find appealing). The aforementioned stereotypes take center stage here, particularly the link with spicy food; it is a common trope in Israel that Mizrahi food is good and spicy, whereas Ashkenazi food is bland, echoing the dichotomy of the simple, sensual Mizrahi and the cold, rational Ashkenazi.

These meta-linguistic commentaries demonstrate the wide range of indexical meanings associated with the pharyngeals. When trying to assess the plethora of related meanings invoked by the metalinguistic comments made about pharyngeals, we may make use of the semiotic processes of iconization and recursiveness (Irvine and Gal 2000). Iconization is the process by which “linguistic differences appear to be iconic representations of the social contrasts they index – as if a linguistic feature somehow depicted or displayed a social group’s inherent nature or essence” (Irvine 2001: 33). In our case, we can see how the pharyngeals come to be linked with supposed characteristics of pharyngeal users, as if there were anything inherently

\textsuperscript{40} The original Hebrew used the word eda in scare quotes. I translated it here as “ethnic group” for simplicity’s sake, but see to the analysis of ethnicity terms in Israel presented section 1.1.3 for a discussion of this word’s significance.

\textsuperscript{41} http://www.haifastudent.net/index.aspx?id=1545
vulgar or warm-blooded about using them. Recursiveness repeats this process by creating distinctions within distinctions. Such may be the case with the stronger link which the feature apparently has with Yemenite-Israelis: In the Ashkenazi-Mizrahi dichotomy, pharyngeals are considered typical Mizrahi features, but within the Mizrahi groups, Yemenite-Israelis who use the pharyngeals more are the most authentic Mizrahi, the purest exemplification of “true” Semitic Jews.

As I have attempted to show, the social meaning of the pharyngeals cannot be reconciled into one scale, as it has both elements of hyperarticulation, clarity, and an old fashioned kind of learnedness on the one hand, and elements of Mizrahi-ness, warm-bloodedness and authenticity on the other hand. Building upon Silverstien’s order of indexicality, Eckert (2008) developed the notion of an indexical field of meaning for sociolinguistic variables. In this framework variables do not have a fixed value; rather, a dynamic structure is created by the constant linking of form and meaning, without the previous reconstruals disappearing. The social meaning of the Hebrew pharyngeal segments is an example of why such an approach proves necessary. Following Eckert (2008), I will try to couch these meanings within an indexical field, which includes both momentary stances and permanent qualities, as well as social types that provide the anchor for the interpretation of this variable.
Most of the qualities on this chart can be directly associated with the old-fashioned standard, the Mizrahi stereotype, or the hyper-articulated aspect of *ayin*; some of them, like “old fashioned”, relate to all three. Other features may require some further explanation: “means business” has to do with their supposed Mizrahi no-nonsense, “real” attitude to getting things done. Eckert’s conception of the indexical fields does not attribute a hierarchical ordering between the indexical meanings, but rather, the representation is meant to highlight the co-existence of the multiple layers of meaning. Nevertheless, some of these qualities are more at the heart of the social meaning of the pharyngeals than others. In Chapter 6, I will return to this schema and propose more detailed connections and orderings between the meanings in the indexical field, and particularly the centrality of the claim for *authenticity* made by many of these uses. However, before doing so, we must first observe not just discourse on the pharyngeals, but also their usage by Hebrew speakers. In the following section, I will demonstrate how the intricate indexical meanings of the pharyngeals are used as a linguistic resource.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>AUTHENTIC</strong></th>
<th><strong>PASSIONATE</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>VULGAR</strong></td>
<td><strong>WARM-BLOODED</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MIZRAHI</strong></td>
<td><strong>OLD FASHIONED</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ANGRY</strong></td>
<td><strong>MEANS BUSINESS</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOUGH</strong></td>
<td><strong>EMPHATIC</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ARAB</strong></td>
<td><strong>YEMENITE</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 3.1:** Indexical field of the pharyngeals
Boxes = social types, black = permanent qualities, gray = stances

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3.3 Performative uses on reality TV: two case studies

The previous sections showed that even though the extant research suggests that pharyngeals are all but extinct, they are extremely salient in Israeli discourse. The production study based on my fieldwork (see Chapter 4), shows that the pharyngeals are in better shape than the received wisdom would assume, but only in specific communities. However, before proceeding to these results, another question raises itself – if the pharyngeals are laden with such important social meaning in the Israeli view, but are in general uncommon, can they still be used as a stylistic resource by speakers who use them infrequently? In this section I will use data from two Israeli reality TV shows to demonstrate that the rich indexical meanings of the pharyngeals are indeed available as a resource, even when used sparingly.

3.3.1 Beauty and the Geek

The first source of data is the Israeli show Ha-yafa ve-ha-xnun, an Israeli version of the American show “Beauty and the Geek”. The show, as the producers put it, places “11 beautiful women and 11 nerdy men in a villa” – each “geek” is paired with a “beauty”, and the couples are made to perform tasks which portray the men (that is, the “geeks”) as highly intelligent but socially awkward, and the “beauties” (that is, the women), as their polar opposites – beautiful and socially adept, but not too bright. The show, which is meant to be humorous, derives much of its alleged humor from highlighting and reiterating gender stereotypes. However, an interesting thing happened in the Israeli remake, which makes it an excellent source of data for looking
into questions of ethnicity. Although the show is based on a gendered conflict, in the second season it turned out that the men and women were also differentiated ethnically – all but one of the geeks were Ashkenazi, and 7 of the 11 beauties were Mizrahi. This is not in itself surprising, since the misogynistic stereotypes perpetuated by the show parallel, to some extent, stereotypes about Mizrahis – both women and Mizrahis are accused of being rash and thinking with their heart instead of their head (unlike the cold and rational Ashkenazi geeks). Therefore, it is interesting to observe the use of pharyngeals in this show, which is a charged arena for performing ethnic identities.

Unsurprisingly, none of the geeks (who were almost all Ashkenazi) used pharyngeals at all. Furthermore, most of the women did not produce pharyngeals either. This is not surprising in itself either, as the participants are all in their 20s, and most younger Mizrahis do not produce them. However, two of the female participants, Lital and Sivan, did use pharyngeals some of the time, and focusing on their variable usage is telling. First, it is important to note that although most of the female contestants were Mizrahi, Sivan and Lital made a point of singling themselves out as more authentically Mizrahi in other ways as well. For example, both of them made constant references to their predominantly Mizrahi hometowns, references to their own ethnicity, and in Sivan’s case – using Arabic vocabulary, which is stereotypically Mizrahi, as in this example:

(17) hu hitxil ledaber ve-ledaber, 3asa li sada-raas, ze keev roš be-marokait le-mi še-lo mevin

---

42 Be’er-Sheva and Ashdod respectively
“He started talking and talking, he gave me sada-raas, that’s Moroccan for headache, if you don’t get it”.

In order to explore the variation more carefully, the speech of Lital and Sivan in six hours of the show was coded by two native speakers of Hebrew for potential and actual pharyngeal productions (potential productions were defined by where the orthography marks a historical pharyngeal). The results show a clear difference between the use of het and of ayin: while the two women produce a pharyngeal ayin ([ʕ]) about 5.5% of its possible occurrences (20 / 368 tokens), there were no instances of a pharyngeal het ([h]) in 320 potential occurrences. Table 3.3 and Table 3.4 present the pharyngeal productions of Lital and Sivan.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pharyngeal</th>
<th>Non-Pharyngeal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ayin (/ʕ/ - Ø)</td>
<td>6.7% (17/252)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>het (/h/ - /x/)</td>
<td>0% (0/227)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 3.3:** Lital’s production of het and ayin

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pharyngeal</th>
<th>Non-Pharyngeal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ayin (/ʕ/ - Ø)</td>
<td>2.6% (3/116)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>het (/h/ - /x/)</td>
<td>0% (0/93)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 3.4:** Sivan’s production of het and ayin
A few observations can be drawn from the numbers – the first is that contrary to the common stereotype of “speaking with het and ayin” it appears that, at least for these women, het and ayin exhibit different distributions – namely, ayin but not het is useful as a stylistic resource. Of course, even ayin is not used very often at all, but the key observation is that it is used often enough to be noticed, as we can tell from metalinguistic commentary about the show, such as this “tweet”43 about Sivan (emphasis mine):

(18) yeš li kcat kraš 3al lital seleb beer ševa3it me-ha-yafa ve-ha-7nun. muzar,
davka ani še-beer-ševa3 ve-fre7ot 3im 7et ve-3ayin 3osot lo b7ila bederex klal
“I have a little crush on Lital, the Beer-Sheva celebrity from Beauty and the Geek. It’s funny, cause usually Beer-Sheva and frehas with het and ayin make me sick”. 44

For this writer, two key things define Lital: she speaks with het and ayin and she is a Freha. The word freha, as discussed in section 1.1.2, is an ethnicized and gendered pejorative term that is applied to Mizrahi women (suggesting both “vulgar” and “bimbo”), and as we see here, this stereotype is also ideologically linked with the pharyngeals. Crucially, as this example shows, despite the low rates of production, Lital’s use of ayin is doing social work that does not go unnoticed. As such, ayin appears to be in a special class of sociolinguistic variables, where very few occurrences can still have significant social meaning. One could think of English

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43 A tweet is a message on the social networking site Twitter
44 http://twitter.com/#!/noyalooshemusic/status/7377013870432256.
equivalents – for example, a single use of *ain’t* can easily cost an English speaker a job interview, and similarly, a single use of *ayin* carries a lot of weight.\(^45\)

Another important observation is *when* the women on this show use a pharyngeal *ayin*. Due to the small number of tokens, a quantitative analysis would not be very useful, however, a qualitative approach proves to be revealing. When examining the occurrences of the pharyngeal *ayin*, we can see that they are not arbitrary. Lital and Sivan use the pharyngeal *ayin* to index the stereotypical Mizrahi traits discussed in the previous section, and to construct a “down to Earth” / “don’t mess with me” persona. This is apparent since the *ayin* occurs primarily when they are distancing themselves from their (Ashkenazi) geek counterpart, as can be seen in examples (19)-(20). In (19), Sivan is arguing with her partner, and in (20), Lital is telling the audience how she was flustered by her partner and what she had told him – and in both cases a strongly pharyngealized *ayin* is produced. (In these examples, and all the following ones, *ayin* which was actually produced as a pharyngeal [ʕ] is represented in italics as `ʕ`, while orthographic *ayin* which is not pronounced as such, will still be marked as 3).

\[\text{(19) } \text{takšiv, pa3am a7rona še- ata mitʕarev li ba- 7ayim} \]

*listen time last that you interfere to.me in.the life*

“This Listen, this is the last time you interfere in my life”

---

\(^45\) It is also interesting to note that the use of *ayin* alone is enough to invoke the *het* and *ayin* stereotype.
(20) ani karega3 te3una miday- bišvil laʕazor lexa

I now charged too to help to you

“I’m too annoyed now to help you”

To conclude, a few strategically placed ayin’s are useful for Sivan and Lital in creating a persona they are very much invested in – one which is associated with the stereotypical Mizrahi. As the next section shows, this type of usage is not unique to them.

3.3.2 Koxav Nolad

The second set of data comes from reality show Koxav nolad (‘A star is born’), an Israeli adaptation of the American television show “American Idol”. I focus on the host of the show, Tsvika Hadar, who is a popular Israeli comedian television personality. Hadar, who is of Romanian descent, was born in 1966 and was raised in Be’er-Sheva, a small city in southern Israel (which is also the hometown of Lital from Beauty and the Geek). In considering the more performative uses of the pharyngeals, Hadar makes for an interesting case study, since he is not technically Mizrahi, but nevertheless sometimes uses pharyngeals. It is possible that by virtue of his coming from a lower middle-class background, and from Israel’s peripheral south, he is not considered a prototypical Ashkenazi either. For example, Israeli sociologist Oz Almog argues that “Tsvika Hadar is the new Ashkenazi-Mizrahi. A Mediterranean mix… He is super Israeli with his comments and warmth, and with his lack of formality” (Almog 2004). Thus, his life story, as well as his immense popularity within all
echelons of Israeli society, allow him to perform Mizrahi-ness without it being perceived as ridicule.

In order to explore Hadar’s use of pharyngeals, I used the same procedure as the one used for the Beauty and the Geek data: his speech in four hours of the fourth season of the show was coded by two native speakers of Hebrew for potential and actual pharyngeal productions. The results show that his rate of use is quite similar to that of Lital and Sivan from Beauty and the Geek – in the course of four hours, he produced a noticeably pharyngeal ayin only 9 times out 379 potential occurrences (2.3%), and during these four hours, he did not produce a single pharyngeal het.

As in the case of Beauty and the Geek, Hadar’s use of the pharyngeal segment is by no means frequent, and yet it does not go unnoticed. For example, consider the following commentary on his hosting skills taken from the Israel website “Stage Magazine” (emphasis mine):

(21) nisyono šel Hadar lehitkarev le-paštut, le-3amamiyut, garar gam oto lesagel le- 3acmo et ha-7et ve-3ayin ha-mizdamnot, ve-ibu et ha-3ivrit ha-nexona hu kore mi-kartisiyot, bišvil še-lo yexašev le-7axam miday

“Hadar’s attempt to come close to simplicity and folksiness, made him adopt a het and ayin every so often, whereas he reads correct Hebrew from cards, so that no one would think he’s too smart”\(^{46}\)

\(^{46}\) http://stagemag.co.il/Articles/375
Crucially, as in the case of Lital and Sivan, the instances in which Hadar uses *ayin* are not arbitrary. In all but one case, it appears to index a departure from the serious host persona, performing a friendlier, warmer, more down-to-earth character. In addition, he seems to use the *ayin* primarily when addressing Mizrahi speakers. Most of the occurrences of *ayin* are when addressing Margalit Tsan’ani, one of the judges on the show. Tsan’ani, as has already been mentioned, is a Yemenite-Israeli, and does use *ayin* frequently, although not always. In one case, after saying that she had given a certain contestant an evil review, Hadar jokes and says:

(22) at yexola lihyot raʃa marjales? at yexola lihyot raʃa?
    you can be evil marjales? you can be evil?

“Can you be evil, Marjales? Can you be evil?”

His friendly tone can be noticed by his calling Tsan’ani by the nickname Marjales, but also in his very pronounced *ayin*, conjuring a less serious persona than he usually has throughout the show. It is noteworthy to mention that when Tsan’ani referred to herself as evil, she did not pronounce the word *ra3a* (‘evil’) with a pharyngeal *ayin*. However, the fact that she does often use *ayin*, and is Mizrahi, is likely to have facilitated Tsvika Hadar’s choice to use it when addressing her.

Another instance of *ayin* occurs when Hadar addresses a young contestant, who is also of Yemenite decent. In that specific episode all the contestants were asked to bring childhood pictures of themselves. The contestant brought a picture of herself in a
traditional Yemenite outfit, taken in a Henna ceremony in Yahini, the southern village in which she lives. To this Hadar jokingly replies:

(23) helbišu ḥalaix et kol ha- masoret
dress on. you acc all the tradition

“They dressed you up in all of the tradition”

There is only one example in which Hadar uses the pharyngeal *ayin* when speaking to an Ashkenazi speaker. In one of the episodes, Yehudit Ravits, a well-known Israeli singer who is Ashkenazi, appeared as a guest star. Hadar gushed and said that he had to confess that when he was growing up in Be’er-Sheva, he was a big fan of hers. In this sentence he pronounces a pharyngeal *ayin* in the name *beer-ševa3* (‘Be’er-Sheva’). In this case the stance he is making is not one of mutual Mizrahi-ness, but he may be highlighting his own humble upbringings, and the link *ayin* has with non-central Be’er-Sheva.

Interestingly, in one case Hadar uses *ayin* in a different way, which does not index features of warmth and authenticity; in this case, he is reading out the number that each contestant has been assigned, and says:

(24) ha- mispar šelax ha- ṣerev yihye Šnem-ʕasar
the number your the night will.be twelve

“How number tonight will be twelve”
The word he uses for twelve, šnem-3asar, is a somewhat archaic form reserved for a more formal register, and his demeanor is very official. Thus, in this case, he is not departing from his host persona, but rather performing the old-fashioned type of register that was once expected from a television host. Thus, certain speakers, such as Tsvika Hadar, have much stylistic variation in their use of ayin, employing a wide range of meanings.

3.3.3 Conclusion

These two case studies show how speakers who do not use the pharyngeals consistently, can still use ayin as a stylistic resource to index aspects of a stereotypical Mizrahi persona. The pharyngeals are so laden with social meaning and so salient, that even a single use may carry a lot of weight, be noticed and commented on. In the following chapter, I analyze the use of the pharyngeals in the production data collected in the course of my fieldwork in two sites in the Tel Aviv area. I demonstrate how these two segments pattern in less performative settings, and show both important similarities and differences from the patterns described here.

One question that remains open at this point is why can ayin be used in this way, at least by the speakers in my data, but not het? I will return to this question in Chapter 4, since the production data described in it also show that ayin and het have different stylistic uses. Regardless of the reason however, this difference between het and ayin demonstrates that despite the persistent Israeli stereotype of “speaking with het and ayin”, the two do not necessarily co-occur, and should be treated as separate linguistic variables, and in the following chapter, I do so.
Chapter 4

The pharyngeals in the production data

Chapter 3 highlights the social importance of pharyngealization in Israel, not as an ethnic marker per se, but rather as a linguistic resource which is useful in performing specific aspects of a stereotypical Mizrahi identity. However, in order to get a better grasp of the social meaning of the pharyngeals, a larger sample – of both speakers and settings – is necessary. To that end, as discussed in Chapter 2, I carried out linguistic fieldwork in the summer of 2012, conducting sociolinguistic interviews in two locations in the greater Tel Aviv area. The first is Tel Aviv proper, which is very ethnically diverse, and has a broad range of both Ashkenazi and Mizrahi ethnicities, mirroring on a smaller scale the population of Israel in general. Accordingly, my sample tries to capture this diversity. The second field site has less typical demographics – Rosh Ha’ayin, a Tel Aviv suburb that has a predominantly Yemenite Mizrahi population. Although Rosh Ha’ayin does have non-Yemenite residents, my main interest in it as a field site was precisely the Yemenite population. Therefore for the purpose of this study my sample includes only Yemenite residents of Rosh Ha’ayin. Table 2.1, repeated here from Chapter 2, shows the ethnic and gender make up of the sample in both field sites.
Table 2.1: The sample breakdown by ethnicity and gender (repeated)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tel Aviv Ashkenazis</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tel Aviv Mizrahis</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosh Ha’ayin (all Yemenites)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As described in Chapter 2, the main part of the interviews was a in a free-form style, and after the interview component was over I asked each interviewee to read a word list (see Appendix 1) which contains, among other items, words that have the *het* and *ayin* phonemes.

In this section, I will first describe the results of the production study in the context of the free-form interview. In order to determine the percent of pharyngealization for each speaker, I manually coded the first 50 words (starting 10 minutes into the conversation) that had a potential pharyngeal environment for each of the two variables (*ayin* and *het*) – that is, words that have the historically pharyngeal phoneme (determined by the orthography, which always maintains the distinction). For each of these words I determined a binary value – pharyngealized or not. In the case of *ayin* (the pharyngeal approximant), the non-pharyngealized variant was invariably realized as complete deletion of the historic phoneme. In the case of *het* (the pharyngeal fricative), however, the non-pharyngeal form does not get deleted, and there are several non-pharyngeal productions, varying between a velar fricative and a uvular trill. This variation is discussed in detail in section 4.4, but for the purposes of this section, I lumped together all realizations other than the pharyngeal fricative and coded them as simply non-pharyngeal.
Figure 4.1 shows the results for the percentage of pharyngeal realizations in the two field sites.

**Figure 4.1: Percent of pharyngeal production in the two field sites**

The graph clearly shows a difference between the two field sites – there is far more pharyngealization in Rosh Ha’ayin than in Tel Aviv (p<0.0001). That is to be expected, since the two sites were chosen specifically for their different ethnic make up, and the sample reflects that. Therefore, in order to better understand the role of ethnicity in the production of the pharyngeals, in the following sections I will analyze the result for each of the sties separately.
4.1 The interview results in Tel Aviv

For the first analysis, I operationalize ethnicity in Tel Aviv as a binary distinction – Ashkenazi vs. Mizrahi. Although I must stress again that this is not necessarily the most meaningful distinction from a sociolinguistic point of view, it is by far the most salient distinction as far as the speakers in my sample (and Israeli society in general) are concerned, thereby motivating using this distinction as an entry point to the data.

Table 4.1: Percent of pharyngeal production in Tel Aviv

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ayin</th>
<th>het</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ashkenazi</td>
<td>0.15%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mizrahi</td>
<td>12.32%</td>
<td>17.74%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As Table 4.1 shows, pharyngealization in Tel Aviv is clearly affected by the speaker’s ethnicity. As all the extant research suggests, it is only Mizrahis, and not Ashkenazis, who pharyngealize\(^\text{47}\). Furthermore, as expected, Mizrahis pharyngealize at rather low rates as well.

Since the table shows the percentage for the entire Tel Aviv sample, these averages are consistent with two different scenarios – the first is that all Mizrahis pharyngealize at a low rate, and the second is that most Mizrahis do not pharyngealize at all, and only a few pharyngealize at higher rate. In order to tease apart these two

\(^{47}\)The reason that the figure for \textit{ayin} among Ashkenazis is 0.15% and not zero, is attributed to a single token, which appears to be a performance of Mizrahi ethnicity by the speaker (i.e. crossing, in the sense of Rampton 1995)
scenarios, Table 4.2 shows the average pharyngealization for each of the Mizrahi speakers in the sample.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>% ayin</th>
<th>% het</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adi</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meytal</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>1.89%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michal</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>3.77%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uri</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>3.77%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lilach</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
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<td>Danit</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>3.77%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mira</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>1.89%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eti</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1.89%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elad</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ronen</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revital</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>3.77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nofar</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Itsik</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limor</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asi</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natali</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shalom</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>62.26%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dana</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>75.47%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sigalit</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>54.72%</td>
<td>94.34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tali</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>7.55%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dina</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>50.94%</td>
<td>90.57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haim</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>92.45%</td>
<td>98.11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shlomit</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>11.32%</td>
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<td>Geula</td>
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<td>65</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pnina</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>1.89%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yosef</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>1.89%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sara</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2: Pharyngealization rates in the Tel Aviv sample for Mizrahi speakers

As Table 4.2 makes clear, the ethnicity effect does not generalize to all Mizrahis. Rather, many Mizrahis do not pharyngealize at all, and most of them pharyngealize at very low rates. In fact, all of the younger speakers never pharyngealize het, and only very occasionally pharyngealize ayin. It is only a few speakers over the age of 45 who
have robust pharyngealization, and only four speakers who consistently pharyngealize
the majority of both their *het*’s and their *ayin*’s. This is once again, consistent with the
extant research, which suggests that pharyngeals are in decline, and at the final stages
of a change in progress.

Finally, this table highlights the importance of the difference between *het* and
*ayin*. Although the Israeli linguistic stereotype lumps them together (“speaking with
*het* and *ayin*”), we have already seen in the previous section that they actually pattern
quite differently – *ayin* but not *het* appears to be useful as a performance resource. The
younger speakers (who almost never pharyngealize) appear to follow a similar pattern
– for those who only occasionally pharyngealize, it is *ayin*, and not *het*, that gets
pharyngealized. Furthermore, the table shows another distinction between *het* and *ayin*
– for the speakers who do pharyngealize more than sporadically, the converse applies:
it is in fact *het*, and not *ayin*, which is more consistently realized in its pharyngeal
form, as can be also be seen in the aggregate percentages in Table 4.1 (17.74% for *het*
as opposed to 12.32% for *ayin*). This difference suggests a rather interesting division
of labor between the two variables – that while *ayin* is more loaded with symbolic
meaning, *het* might still retain more of its original distribution as an ethnic marker. I
will take this point up again in section 4.3.3 when I discuss the difference between *het*
and *ayin* in more attentive speaking styles (i.e. reading from the word list).

To verify that the difference between *het* and *ayin*, as well as the effect of age, are
statistically significant, I ran a mixed effect generalized logistic regression model, with
the data consisting of all coded productions of potential pharyngeals for all the
Mizrahis in my Tel Aviv sample. The predicted variable is whether the phoneme is
realized as pharyngeal or not. The predictors are age (a continuous variable), sex (male or female) and phoneme (het or ayin). In addition, the model includes a random effect of speaker\textsuperscript{48}.

| Estimate  | Std. Error | z value | Pr(>|z|) |
|-----------|------------|---------|----------|
| (Intercept) | -8.10792   | 1.17843 | -6.88    | 5.97E-12 *** |
| Age       | 0.0763     | 0.02228 | 3.425    | 0.000615 *** |
| Sex Male  | 0.13547    | 0.71462 | 0.19     | 8.50E-01    |
| Phoneme Het | 1.28528   | 0.18581 | 6.917    | 4.61E-12 *** |

**Model 4.1: Pharyngeal production for Mizrahis in Tel Aviv**

In this model, as in all the ones that will follow, a positive number on the estimate column shows that the predictor has the effect of more pharyngealization. Since age is a continuous variable, it means that bigger numbers (i.e. older people) have more pharyngealization (p<0.005). With a factor like Phoneme, which only has two values (ayin and het), the model shows the preference compared to a baseline that is chosen alphabetically. In this case, the baseline is ayin and the positive number for the phoneme factor shows that het is pharyngealized significantly more often (p<0.00005). This confirms that het and ayin have different distributions, and in the following statistical analyses I will treat them separately. In addition, it is interesting to note that the model shows no effect of gender.

The results so far are exactly what we would predict based on the research surveyed in the previous chapter – Ashkenazis don’t pharyngealize at all. Some Mizrahis do, but only a minority among Mizrahis, and none of the younger speakers.

\textsuperscript{48} There are very likely to be phonological constraints favoring and disfavoring a pharyngeal production as well. While the models in this section do not explore such effects, it would be an important topic for future research.
However, the picture is more complicated than that. As described in section 1.1.3, Mizrahi is actually a cover term for many different ethnicities, and although they are all bundled together in the Israeli stereotypes, there is no a-priori reason why they should behave the same linguistically. If we bin all Mizrahi speakers as a group we do get a significant effect of ethnicity, but the results may be hiding more subtle patterns, and a more nuanced notion of ethnicity may uncover that there is more to the distribution than simply “some Mizrahis pharyngealize”.

In fact, as I have shown in section 3.2, even in the laymen linguistic stereotype, not all Mizrahis are the same – one group consistently gets singled out as being more associated with pharyngeals, and that is Jews of Yemenite descent. Recall the song lyrics by popular Yemenite-Israeli singer Jacky Mekaiten (repeated here as (25)) in which he associates his *het* and *ayin* explicitly with being Yemenite, not simply Mizrahi.

(25) ani mi-roš ha-*ayin* medaber be-*het ve-*ayin* teymani muvhak makor še-lo nišhak I’m from Rosh Ha’ayin, I speak with *het* and *ayin* clearly a Yemenite the unchanged original\(^49\)

In addition Zuckerman (2005) asserts (based on anecdotal data) that “most Israelis do not pronounce them but they are used, for example, by old Yemenite Jews (though less and less by young ones)”, and in the perception study by Devens (1981)

\(^49\) www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-1838768,00.html
the two Yemenite speakers were correctly identified far more consistently than the other Mizrahis. Time and time again, it seems that Yemenites are singled out as being more likely to pharyngealize. In order to unpack the notion of “Mizrahi”, I reconsider my data, but this time distinguishing Yemenite from non-Yemenite Mizrahi. Of the 29 Mizrahis in the Tel Aviv sample, 7 are of Yemenite descent. If we repeat Table 4.1 and add a column for Yemenite ethnicity, we can see that out of the five most consistent pharyngealizers, three are Yemenite, as shown in Table 4.3.

That does not mean that all Yemenites pharyngealize – the two youngest Yemenites do not pharyngealize at all. Nor does it mean that only Yemenites pharyngealize – Dina, for example, who is of Iraqi heritage, also has high pharyngealization rates. However, it appears that there is some truth in the perception that Yemenites are more likely to speak with het and ayin, as seen in Figure 4.2.

![Pharyngeal production in Tel Aviv by ethnicity](image)

**Figure 4.2:** Pharyngeal production in Tel Aviv by ethnicity

---

50 The three Yemenites with most pharyngealization are Shalom, Sigalit and Haim.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>% ayin</th>
<th>% het</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adi</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Other Mizrahi</td>
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<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meytal</td>
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<td>24</td>
<td>Other Mizrahi</td>
<td>1.89%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michal</td>
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<td>24</td>
<td>Yemenite</td>
<td>3.77%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uri</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Other Mizrahi</td>
<td>3.77%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
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<td>Lilach</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Other Mizrahi</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>M</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Yemenite</td>
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<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revital</td>
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<td>36</td>
<td>Other Mizrahi</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>3.77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>F</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Other Mizrahi</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>M</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Other Mizrahi</td>
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<td>54.72%</td>
<td>94.34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tali</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>Other Mizrahi</td>
<td>7.55%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dina</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Other Mizrahi</td>
<td>50.94%</td>
<td>90.57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haim</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Yemenite</td>
<td>92.45%</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Shlomit</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Other Mizrahi</td>
<td>11.32%</td>
<td>94.34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shuki</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>Other Mizrahi</td>
<td>3.77%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geula</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>Other Mizrahi</td>
<td>13.21%</td>
<td>26.42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yona</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>Other Mizrahi</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pnina</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>Other Mizrahi</td>
<td>1.89%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yosef</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>Yemenite</td>
<td>1.89%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sara</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>Other Mizrahi</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 4.3:** Pharyngealization rates among Mizrahis in the Tel Aviv sample by speaker and ethnicity

Model 4.2 shows the likelihood of producing a pharyngeal realization of *ayin*, among the Tel Aviv Mizrahis, with the predictors being ethnicity (Yemenite or Other Mizrahi) and age. As in Model 4.1, the model includes a random effect of speaker. As the table shows, the effect of ethnicity is significant – that is, Yemenites are more likely to pharyngealize than other Mizrahis.
|               | Estimate | Std. Error | z value | Pr(>|z|) |
|---------------|----------|------------|---------|----------|
| (Intercept)   | -7.23939 | 1.43408    | -5.048  | 4.46E-07 *** |
| Age           | 0.06627  | 0.02657    | 2.494   | 0.0126   *   |
| Sex Male      | -0.8157  | 0.91006    | -0.896  | 0.3701   |
| Ethnicity Yemenite | 2.13081 | 0.93564    | 2.277   | 0.0228   *   |

**Model 4.2:** Pharyngeal *ayin* production for Mizrahis in Tel Aviv (including ethnicity)

Although Figure 4.2 suggests a trend in which Yemenites pharyngealize both *ayin* and *het* more, in a corresponding model for the production of *het*, the effect of ethnicity does not come out as significant. This might be yet another difference between *het* and *ayin*, but it is more likely due to the fact the Tel Aviv sample had only a few Yemenite speakers; since the rate for *het* was higher overall (see Figure 4.2), the difference between these speakers and the non-Yemenite Mizrahis failed to achieve significance. Whether the effect of ethnicity for *het* would hold up in a larger sample remains an empirical question, but even if it does not, we do see that for at least one half of the “*het* and *ayin*” stereotype, there is statistically significant evidence that Yemenites do pharyngealize more than other Mizrahis do.

What is it that sets Yemenites apart from other Mizrahis? If we recall Lefkowitz (2004)’s schema of the space of Israeli ethnic identity (Figure 1.1) that was described in section 1.1.3, Yemenites were actually the most Israeli and least Eastern on his two dimensions of meaning (Israeliness and Easternness).

This model may intuitively lead to the opposite prediction – that Yemenites would pharyngealize the least of all Mizrahis. However, I propose that his model is not at odds with my results, and can serve as backdrop for understanding them. It is a key point of difference that Lefkowitz’s model is not about language – but rather
about the rhetoric in the politic discourse surrounding these groups. Yemenites are commonly perceived as being willing and dedicated Zionists, they are often portrayed in a much more favorable rhetoric than other Mizrahis in Israeli media. Unlike the largest Mizrahi group, the Moroccans, they did not participate in the ethnic riots of Wadi Salib (see section 1.1.3), and are not perceived as threatening to mainstream Israel. This allows them a privilege that other Mizrahis do not have – whereas other Mizrahis have to constantly assimilate (or attempt to assimilate) to Ashkenazi norms in order to be accepted, Yemenites can afford to retain their Mizrahi-ness. This is particularly crucial in the case of the pharyngeals, since not pharyngealizing has both the effect of sounding more Ashkenazi, and of distancing one’s self from an Arab identity, two things which are often desirable or even necessary for a Mizrahi speaker in Israel. Yemenites, due to their unique position, can retain this authentically Semitic feature without the fear of it being perceived as a claim to an Arab identity or aligning themselves against Ashkenazi. I propose that it is precisely the fact that they are the most “Israeli” on Lefkowitz’s axis that allows them to be “the most Mizrahi Mizrahis” on another axis that Lefkowitz does not consider, and one that is important for the understanding of linguistic variation – the axis of authenticity.51

Although I have shown that Yemenites in Tel Aviv pharyngealize more, there are some caveats to this account. First of all, it is based only on a small number of Yemenite speakers, since my sample was intended to capture the ethnic diversity of Tel Aviv. Secondly, the younger Yemenites, like all younger speakers in my Tel Aviv sample, do not pharyngealize at all, suggesting that the decline of the pharyngeals,

51 I return to specify what exactly I mean by an axis of authenticity in section 6.4.
even if somewhat slower for Yemenites, is still very advanced. In order to dig deeper into what constitutes a Yemenite identity and how it relates to language use, and specifically to the use of the pharyngeals, in the next section I will describe the data from my second field site, which has a much larger sample of Yemenite speakers.

4.2 The interview results in Rosh Ha’ayin

My second field site is a town that is considered a part of the greater Tel Aviv area, but as described in Section 2.2, its demographics are crucially different – the population is pre-dominantly Mizrahi of specifically Yemenite descent. Up until recently the town was homogenously Yemenite, and although this has changed in recent years, it still maintains a strong association with Yemenite identity. I interviewed 23 speakers (8 men and 15 women)\textsuperscript{52}, between the ages of 18-64, who had spent their entire lives there (or in the case of some speakers who went to college or high school elsewhere, almost their entire lives).

With a demographic so different from that of Tel Aviv, it is no surprise that the Yemenites of Rosh Ha’ayin have far more robust pharyngealization than the Tel Aviv speakers, as was shown in Figure 4.1 (in Chapter 4), which compared the two field sites.

With an average pharyngealization rate of 71\% for \textit{het} and 63\% for \textit{ayin}, the Rosh Ha’ayin Yemenites pharyngealize considerably more than the Tel Aviv sample,  

\textsuperscript{52} As the numbers show, the sample over represents women. This gender imbalance was not planned, but was a result of it being easier to recruit female participants. However, since the results do not show any strong relation to gender effects, this is likely to be unproblematic.
and even far more than just the Yemenites in the Tel Aviv sample (who are at 27% for \textit{het} and 29% for \textit{ayin}).

When we go beyond averages and look at the pharyngealization rates for each speaker, an even more interesting pattern arises, as can be seen in Table 4.4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>% \textit{ayin}</th>
<th>% \textit{het}</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hagar</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>9.26%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renana</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3.77%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omer</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>79.25%</td>
<td>98.11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oded</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>11.32%</td>
<td>1.89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naomi</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>90.57%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kineret</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>37.74%</td>
<td>66.04%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sigal</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>20.75%</td>
<td>16.98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yonit</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>11.32%</td>
<td>1.89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ami</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>66.04%</td>
<td>56.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tomer</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>49.06%</td>
<td>79.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Udi</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>96.23%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaby</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>90.57%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hanit</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>90.57%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adit</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>86.79%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dafna</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>88.68%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniela</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>92.45%</td>
<td>96.23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ariel</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>86.79%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hava</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>96.23%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leah</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>49.06%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tsipora</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>84.91%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bracha</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>96.23%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eliyahu</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>92.45%</td>
<td>98.11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruti</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>94.34%</td>
<td>98.11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textbf{Table 4.4:} Pharyngealization rate in Rosh Ha’ayin by speaker

In the Rosh Ha’ayin sample, the older Yemenite speakers (everyone over the age of 45) have very robust pharyngealization. They all pharyngealize \textit{het} almost categorically (and many are at 100%), and with one exception, they all have pharyngealization rates exceeding 80% for \textit{ayin} as well. Among younger speakers there is considerably more variation, with many of them having very low
pharyngealization rates, which suggests that even in Rosh Ha’ayin there is a change in progress, and the pharyngeals are in decline.

To verify that the difference between *het* and *ayin*, as well as the effect of age, are statistically significant, I ran a mixed effect generalized linear model, in which the predicted variable is whether the phoneme is realized as pharyngeal, on the productions of all speakers in the Rosh Ha’ayin sample. The predictors are age (a continuous variable), sex (male or female) and phoneme (*het* or *ayin*). In addition, the model includes a random effect of speaker.

|               | Estimate | Std. Error | z value | Pr(>|z|)   |
|---------------|----------|------------|---------|------------|
| (Intercept)   | -5.7911  | 1.179      | -4.912  | 9.02E-07   *** |
| Age           | 0.1419   | 0.0249     | 5.699   | 1.20E-08   *** |
| Sex Male      | 0.8661   | 0.7362     | 1.176   | 0.239      |
| Phoneme *Het* | 0.9847   | 0.1458     | 6.755   | 1.42E-11   *** |

**Model 4.3:** difference between *het* and *ayin* in Rosh Ha’ayin

As we can see, the effect of age is statistically significant (p<0.001) – older people pharyngealize more. Furthermore, there is a significant difference between *het* and *ayin* – with *het* being pharyngealized significantly more. Model 4.4 and Model 4.5 repeat this analysis separately for each of the two phonemes (*ayin* and *het* respectively), once again having the speaker as a random effect. As we can see the effect of age is highly statistically significant for both *het* and *ayin*.

|               | Estimate | Std. Error | z value | Pr(>|z|)   |
|---------------|----------|------------|---------|------------|
| (Intercept)   | -4.2256  | 0.95142    | -4.441  | 8.94E-06   *** |
| Age           | 0.1092   | 0.02016    | 5.417   | 6.07E-08   *** |
| Sex Male      | 0.71366  | 0.59216    | 1.205   | 0.228      |

**Model 4.4:** Age effect for *ayin* in Rosh Ha’ayin
|                | Estimate | Std. Error | z value | Pr(>|z|) |
|----------------|----------|------------|---------|----------|
| (Intercept)    | -12.38852| 3.68057    | -3.36   | 0.000763 *** |
| Age            | 0.35231  | 0.08049    | 4.377   | 1.20E-05 *** |
| Sex Male       | 1.59071  | 2.15044    | 0.74    | 0.459475   |

**Model 4.5**: Age effect for *het* in Rosh Ha’ayin

While there are clear signs that the pharyngeals are in decline in Rosh Ha’ayin as well, this change in progress is at a far earlier stage than in Tel Aviv, in which none of the younger speakers pharyngealized at all. Unlike Tel Aviv, in the Rosh Ha’ayin sample one can find people in their 30’s and 20’s with virtually categorical pharyngealization. And though the two youngest speakers in my sample (who are 18) both do not pharyngealize at all, that does not necessarily mean that the change has gone to completion among the youngest cohort, but rather seems to be an artifact of my sample. Although I only interviewed adults, while spending time in Rosh Ha’ayin I definitely heard people in their teens as well as children who pharyngealized. In fact, when compared with the rest of Israel and with what is suggested by the extant research, what is surprising is not that the pharyngeals are in decline in Rosh Ha’ayin, but rather that this change is still not approaching completion and that the pharyngeals are still in relatively good shape.

It is interesting to compare my results from Rosh Ha’ayin to those of Lawrence Davis, who analyzed the speech of Mizrahi adults and children in 1984. His 16 adults ranged between the ages of 19 and 39, and came from Migdal Ha-Emek, a small town near Haifa. They were all first generation Israelis of Moroccan descent, and could all speak Jewish Moroccan Arabic. He also interviewed 45 children, all aged 12, and all
first generation Israelis from a variety of Mizrahi backgrounds (Moroccan, Iraqi, Indian, Iranian, Spanish and Tunisian). Of the children, 24 could speak Arabic and 21 could not, and Davis he analyzed the pharyngealization rates of the bilingual and monolingual children separately. Table 4.5 shows the rates for het and ayin in his data.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th><em>het</em></th>
<th><em>ayin</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adults</td>
<td>32.08%</td>
<td>29.59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arabic-speaking children</td>
<td>2.08%</td>
<td>17.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Arabic speaking children</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 4.5:** Results from Davis’ (1984) interview data (adapted)

The differences between Davis’s results and mine are particularly striking since his predate mine by thirty years, and yet the pharyngealization rates in his data are significantly lower. In fact, Davis concludes his paper with the statement that “in a generation or two, the pharyngeals will have disappeared completely from Israeli Hebrew”. It would appear that Davis’s prediction has been premature, at least as far as Rosh Ha’ayin goes. His 12 year olds would now be 42, whereas the average pharyngealization rates in Rosh Ha’ayin, even just for people under 45, is 39% for *het* and 35% for *ayin*, well above either of his children groups, and even his adult group. This is remarkable, since unlike his sample, none of the younger speakers in my sample claim to be bilingual in Yemenite Arabic – and therefore, it is clearly not the effect of speaking Arabic (which does indeed have pharyngeals), which can account for the retention of the Hebrew pharyngeals in Rosh Ha’ayin.

What then is the reason that the pharyngeals in Rosh Ha’ayin are still relatively robust? An obvious answer is the homogenous nature of the town’s demographic,
which has historically been exclusively Mizrahi. However, that alone does not suffice – though not quite as homogenous, all the towns in which Davis worked have a predominately Mizrahi population, and even more so 30 years ago. Having a predominately Mizrahi population is therefore not enough for the pharyngeals to be retained. I propose that the uniqueness of the pharyngeals in Rosh Ha’ayin is tightly linked to a specifically Yemenite, and not just Mizrahi identity. This is very clearly reflected in the language ideologies of the speakers in my sample, who explicitly link pharyngealization either with their Yemenite identity, with how homogenous Rosh Ha’ayin used to be, or both, but never with their Mizrahi-ness in general. Consider for example the youngest speaker in my sample with robust pharyngealization, Omer, who is 26:

(26) “Now actually as I got older, I like discovered more interest in Yemenite tradition and in these words… Another thing is my het and ayin, which is a very essential part of that for me, very essential. And it grew and – when did I understand it was important? When I left Rosh Ha’ayin. I mean when I got to the IDF Spokesperson Unit, and then to officer training, and when I got to law school at the university, I suddenly understood that it’s something unique… Look, to tell you the truth, when I grew up in Rosh Ha’ayin and in high school, I never noticed it, I never thought it anything extraordinary. Like, I didn’t really think about it. I mean, even in Rosh Ha’ayin, although you have people here who don’t speak with het and ayin, about half of them do speak with het and ayin. So it’s not like, you know, I was like – I’m with this half. It’s not something that sounded extreme.”
Similar feelings were expressed by other speakers, such as Kineret, 36:

(27) “Yeah, and you know, because it was a completely Yemenite place – because it was only Yemenites – there were no Ashkenazis at all in Rosh Ha’ayin… For fifty years people raised children there, and there was no one from the outside coming in. You see, that’s why we as young people speak with *het* and *ayin*. There are a lot of girls my age who didn’t grow up in Rosh Ha’ayin, they grew up in Giv’ataim. Yemenites who grew up in Giv’ataim, they don’t speak with *het* and *ayin*. And people are surprised that we’re young and we speak with *het* and *ayin.*”

We see that in Rosh Ha’ayin, the language ideologies link the notion of a Yemenite place with an authentic, pharyngeal pronunciation. However, we must keep in mind that as shown in Chapter 3, in most of Israel speaking with *het* and *ayin* is highly stereotyped, and has many negative associations as well. Therefore the next section examines how often the speakers – both in the Tel Aviv and in Rosh Ha’ayin – produce pharyngeals in a more formal, attentive setting.

### 4.3 The word list data

Ever since Labov’s (1966) seminal work it has been common practice to include different parts in a sociolinguistic interview – distinguishing between free conversation and reading styles. For Labov the reading styles were a reading passage,

---

55 A middle class suburb of Tel Aviv
a word list and minimal pairs that included the same variables he was investigating in the interview data. Labov’s findings, which have been reproduced many times for many different variables and in many different speech communities, was that the shift to more attentive read speech styles results in a significant reduction in the use of stereotyped linguistic variables. Thus, Labov shows that the inter-speaker variation on the social axes is reproduced as intra-speaker variation on the attentiveness axis.

Based on these results an intuitive prediction comes to mind – that speakers would pharyngealize less in the reading styles. However, there are important ways in which the Hebrew pharyngeals differ from the classic sociolinguistic variables Labov studied, in which socio-economic class, style, prestige and sound change are all neatly aligned on the same axis, which in turn, is aligned with how far along a speaker is in the trajectory of a sound change. In section 3.1, I highlighted the history of the pharyngeals leading to their special status; Israeli language ideologies identify “correctness” not as what is practiced by the elites but rather as what is most similar to a reified Biblical Hebrew, leading to an atypical combination in the pharyngeals – they are at once associated with a marginalized ethnic group and at the same time they are considered the “correct” and authentic pronunciation. Since they are stereotyped and yet associated with read formal styles, it is not at all clear that speakers would produce fewer pharyngeals in more attentive reading styles.

4.3.1 Results in Tel Aviv

In my interviews I included a word list that had 3 items with het and 3 items with ayin. An analysis of the rate of pharyngealization in the word list shows that for the
speakers who pharyngealize there is more pharyngealization in the word list when compared to the interview, rather than less. Since Ashkenazis virtually never pharyngealize, Figure 4.3 shows the results only for the Mizrahi speakers54.

![Pharyngeal production of Tel Aviv Mizrahis in two attentive styles](image)

**Figure 4.3:** Attentiveness effect for Mizrahis in the Tel Aviv sample

As we can see in the figure, the results show a large difference for *ayin* – from 12% in the interview to 38% in the word list. However, *het* shows essentially no variation between the interview and the word list (18% and 17% respectively). Model 4.6 analyzes the *ayin* data for the Mizrahis in the Tel Aviv sample, and includes all instances of *ayin*, in both the word list and the interview. Like previous models, it includes the speaker as a random effect, and age, gender and ethnicity as fixed effects,

---

54 A small number of Ashkenazis did pharyngealize in the word list (despite never doing so in the interview) – leading to 10% pharyngealization in *ayin* and 2% pharyngealization in *het*. This shows that the language ideologies linking pharyngeals and correctness are at play for some Ashkenazis as well.
in addition to a new factor, AttentiveStyle, which has two values (Interview or WordList). As the model shows, the preference for pharyngeal ayin in the word list as opposed to the interview is highly significant. The other significant effects in the model are Yemenite ethnicity and age, as in Model 4.2. A parallel model for het shows no significant effect for AttentiveStyle.

|          | Estimate | Std. Error | z value | Pr(>|z|) |
|----------|----------|------------|---------|---------|
| (Intercept) | -7.14885 | 1.16101    | -6.157  | 7.40E-10 *** |
| AttentiveStyle WordList | 3.5039   | 0.41389    | 8.466   | < 2e-16 *** |
| Age      | 0.06415  | 0.02197    | 2.919   | 3.51E-03 ** |
| Sex Male | -0.50941 | 0.74812    | -0.681  | 4.96E-01  |
| Ethnicity Yemenite | 2.2842   | 0.79931    | 2.858   | 0.00427 ** |

**Model 4.6:** Tel Aviv production of ayin in word list and interview

It would appear that for at least some of the Mizrahi speakers in Tel Aviv, the ideology associating pharyngeals with correctness and formal speech is alive and well. This is also evident in some explicit comments, such as this one made by Yona, a 65-year-old Mizrahi woman who did not pharyngealize in the interview but did so in the word list:

(28) “By the way, my father knew the entire bible by heart. His Hebrew was wonderful, different. It was with het and ayin, and it sometimes had a bit of a biblical character.”

It is interesting to note that the effect of pharyngeals appearing more in the word list is restricted to ayin, and not het. This shows a surprising similarity to the reality TV data (in section 3.3), in which speakers who do not consistently pharyngealize
occasionally used *ayin*, but never *het*, in order to index a Mizrahi persona. Shifting to a reading style and performing a down-to-earth persona may appear to be two very different, even conflicting, stylistic goals, but the fact that both cases show the same linguistic pattern suggests that they are two sides of the same coin. And in fact, the stylistic goals are not at odds; it is only thinking of the more attentive word list style as being strictly more *formal*, that makes it appear to be the opposite of what the women in *Beauty and the Geek* or the host of *Israeli Idol* were doing. Both of these uses of *ayin* can be considered loci for indexing an authentic Mizrahi persona. It is this complex social meaning of the pharyngeals as authentic, which allows them to surface in very different stylistic settings, both formal and informal.

### 4.3.2 Results in Rosh Ha’ayin

An analysis of the word list for Rosh Ha’ayin demonstrates that the patterns are similar, although the actual pharyngealization rates are much higher, as we would expect.

As Figure 4.4 shows, there is far more pharyngeal *ayin* in the word list as compared to the interview (79% vs. 63%). The statistical analysis in Model 4.7 demonstrates that this effect is highly statistically significant. Although the graph appears to show a difference in *het* as well, with slightly more pharyngealization in the interview (71% in the interview vs. 67% in the word list), a statistical model equivalent to Model 4.7 but predicting the use of *het* shows that this is not a statistically significant difference. Therefore, the patterns closely parallel those in Tel Aviv (though once again, with the overall rates being much higher).
It is interesting to once again compare my results to those found by Davis in 1984. One caveat is that his interviews included a reading passage and a minimal pair list, but no word list, and therefore the comparison cannot be exact. However, if we consider the reading passage, word list and minimal pairs as all consisting of attentive reading styles that contrast with the free conversation in the interview, comparing these two sets of results can still be informative.
Davis’s results show a similar pattern to those in my sample – for the children, only *ayin*, and not *het*, exhibits any stylistic differences between the interview and the reading styles. For the adults both *het* and *ayin* show an increase between the interview and the minimal pair task, but still much more so for *ayin*. Davis notes that this result is surprising given the pattern exhibited by most sociolinguistic variables, but claims that the different rates of pharyngealization are not a response to the different style levels. Rather, he suggests that this difference can be explained by Hebrew orthography – since in the written form the pharyngeals are always distinguished from their non-pharyngeal counterparts, the speakers were reacting to the spelling of the words, which called their attention to the pharyngeals.

I agree with Davis that the pharyngeals’ presence in the orthography is very likely to be part of why they appear more in reading styles. Nevertheless, an explanation based solely on the orthography would make a false prediction – that *het* and *ayin* should both be affected in the same way. As we have seen, that is not the case, neither in my data nor his. Therefore, I suggest that contrary to Davis’s claim, the effect has everything to do with speakers responding to different style levels – specifically, their

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Free conversation</th>
<th>Reading passage</th>
<th>Minimal pairs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>het</em></td>
<td><em>ayin</em></td>
<td><em>het</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adults</td>
<td>32.08%</td>
<td>29.59%</td>
<td>31.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arabic-speaking children</td>
<td>2.08%</td>
<td>17.9%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Arabic speaking children</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 4.6: Results from Davis (1984)*
language ideologies that link the pharyngeals with the correct form, something which is especially important when reading out loud.

This ideological link is especially visible in the overt metalinguistic commentary offered by some of the Yemenite speakers in my sample, who associate the pharyngeals with the correct and proper way of reading, and specifically, with properly reading from the bible. For example, in section 3.2 I quoted Rinat, a 37-year-old kindergarten teacher from Rosh Ha’ayin, who said: “We Yemenites are more traditional, and we take the bible seriously. And if you want to read from the bible you need to speak correct Hebrew”. This attitude is pervasive in Rosh Ha’ayin. Most of the male speakers went to a mori – an important Yemenite institution – when they were children. The mori is a teacher, invariably an old Yemenite man, who prepares young boys for their bar-mitzvah, by way of teaching them the cantillation marks and the Yemenite style of bible reading. Needless to say, all the speakers who went to a mori, said that he insisted on distinguishing pharyngeals and non-pharyngeals. Consider this story by Udi, a 45-year-old man from Rosh Ha’ayin with robust pharyngealization:

(29) “We’re two brothers, me and my brother, we’re 11 months apart. My brother, when he tried to go to the mori, he would mexatxet (not pharyngealize). And my father understood that I have the accent, and I can read (the Torah – RG), and I can continue him. The other one can’t continue him in reading the Book”

Udi’s story also stands out because of the word that he used for “not pharyngealizing” – the verb mexatxet – which is an obvious onomatopoeia for the sound of a non-pharyngeal het. I had never heard that word before doing fieldwork in
Rosh Ha’ayin, despite hearing the opposite term (i.e. “speaking with het an ayin”) dozens of times. Nevertheless, it came up in many interviews, referring to family members or Yemenite friends who do not pharyngealize, but never to Ashkenazis (who obviously do not pharyngealize either). As such, the term appears to be more than a linguistic stereotype: it contains an explicit challenge to the Yemenite-ness and authenticity of those who do mexatxet. The existence of this term highlights an important point: in Tel Aviv, not pharyngealizing is a default, and it is only pharyngealizing that is ever commented on. In Rosh Ha’ayin, however, there are socially meaningful consequences to both pharyngealizing and not pharyngealizing, and there are ways of stereotypically referring to either option.

The pharyngeals surface as desirably authentic on the one hand, but we must keep in mind that they are negatively stereotyped and even outlandish sounding once one leaves Rosh Ha’ayin, and these speakers are very much aware of this ambivalent positioning. It is their perception of the pharyngeals as authentically correct, which allows the speakers to deflect outsiders’ criticism of the way they talk, and to not be linguistically insecure despite using a variable that is both rare and pejorated in most of Israel. Consider this excerpt from my interview with Hava, a 54-year-old woman who pharyngealizes.

(30)
H – I used to work for this lawyer, and so he tells me, he writes me “I’m going to the bank tomorrow (maxar)”. So he writes me this, and he’s a lawyer, and he has a spelling mistake. Instead of writing tomorrow (mahar) with a het, he
writes *maxar*. And people make fun of Yemenites all the time for speaking with *het* and *ayin*, but I think we have the most clear and eloquent language, no?

RG – Sure. That’s one of the reasons why I’m interviewing people here. But I wanted to ask – you said people make fun of Yemenites. Has somebody ever asked you or made a comment-

H – Oh yeah of course

RG – What, for example?

H – “You’re from Rosh Ha’ayin”, you know, in this slang. “You’re from Rosh Ha’ayin, you speak with *het* and *ayin*”\(^{55}\)… So I tell them “I’m proud of that, what of it?”… Whenever I start talking or I’m on the phone – I work for a law firm, so people call and they tell me “You’re Yemenite, right?”. Straight away, because I don’t like speaking with *xet*. There are a lot of Yemenites who try to speak with *xet* and I don’t. I don’t like it – I like to be me, not a phony. I have just one voice, and I don’t change it and that’s what it is. And my boss sometimes hears me and dies laughing when I speak with *het*

RG – really?

H – Yeah, he’s Ashkenazi

Hava tells of how her former employer – an Ashkenazi lawyer – is amused by how she talks. But she has the last laugh: she tells of how he wrote her a letter with the word *mahar* (‘tomorrow’), spelled with a *xaf* (the non-pharyngeal counterpart of *het*),

\(^{55}\)This is a clear reference to the lyrics of the song quoted in (4), page 30.
even though the correct spelling is with a *het*. Since for her, who pronounces *het* and *xaf* differently, it is obvious what the correct spelling is, she makes a claim not just for the correctness of the pharyngeals, but that they are also better in an objective sense.

In addition – she makes an explicit link between her pharyngealization and authenticity: she pharyngealizes not just because it is correct, but also because that is an essential party of her identity – she is not a phony.<sup>56</sup>

Similar attitudes can be seen in this interaction with Naomi, a 35-year-old woman with robust pharyngealization. Like Omer who was quoted before, she did not realize that pharyngealizing was remarkable until she went out of Rosh Ha’ayin, and got ridiculed for it. But rather than not pharyngealizing, she is convinced that her way of speech is the most correct, and tells that to her young son when he faces the same prejudice.

(31)

N – Every where, wherever I would go, as soon as I start talking it would end up

   being about my *het* and *ayin*.

RG – People would comment on it?

N – all the time

RG – What would they say?

N – Say “bread” (*lehem*). Anything that has to do with *het* and *ayin* they would ask

   me. “What’s your teacher’s name?” When I was little, I can’t forget this, my

---

<sup>56</sup> Hava refers to not pronouncing the pharyngeals as “speaking with *xet*”. She is referring to *het*, which she pronounces *het*: since for her [h] and [x] are distinct, saying *xet* becomes a non-word that means a non-pharyngeal pronunciation. (The name for the actual letter representing the non-pharyngeal counterpart of *het* is *xaf*, not *xet*).
older sister took me to her army base and they put me up on stage, and they asked what my name was and all kinds of questions, and then “What’s your teacher’s name?” and I said “Simha”, and from the moment I said “Simha”, it became like a codeword in the base. Simha, Simha, everywhere Simha . Till this day, whenever I see friends of my sister’s, it’s “Simha, how are you doing?”. So the het and ayin was always emphasized with me. And the fact is, since I live here, I’ve never left for anywhere else, for example the people who have moved out-

RG – When you grew up here it wasn’t something people noticed?

N – No, because we all talk like this. Except that now in the new neighborhoods, there’s – well, we got mixed, as they say. But I’ll tell you something, my son, he grew up here in a neighborhood where everyone speaks with het and ayin and he has it too. And when I go out of town with him, it happens to me again, it’s like going back to my childhood. People always tell him “say milk (halav), say this”. So he asks me “Mom, why does everyone say this to me? I speak Hebrew right. They’re not speaking Hebrew right”. So I told him “that’s right”

RG – So in the beginning when people brought it up, did it make you upset?

N – Earlier, yes. Look, when you’re a kid it is upsetting. But with time you learn that you speak the best Hebrew. You won’t have spelling mistakes – this has been with me all along.

Finally, Kineret, who has already been quoted, tells of how her daughter does not pharyngealize, and goes so far as correcting her for doing so. But Kineret is not
impressed, and remains convinced that her Hebrew is not only more correct than her daughter’s, but also more beautiful, an adjective rarely associated with stereotyped features.

(32) “But if my oldest kid would want to, she could speak with *het* and *ayin*, she could talk to you with *het* and *ayin*. She doesn’t want to. She says that we don’t speak correctly. She corrects us. She doesn’t understand that our Hebrew is the most correct Hebrew. Listen, it’s the most correct language, I think we speak in the most beautiful Hebrew.”

These language attitudes contrast sharply with those expressed by some of the speakers in my Tel Aviv sample, most notably Yosef, a 70-year-old man from Tel Aviv. He is of Yemenite descent, and grew up in the poor southern neighborhood of HaTikva (discussed in section 2.1), which is predominately Mizrahi. As opposed to Omer, Naomi, or Rinat, he does not pharyngealize at all in conversational speech, but he did so in the reading component. Once he noticed that he had done that, he went on to say the following:

(33) “So I can tell you, I can say *ʕani* (‘poor’), and you would hear the *ayin*, and *ʔani* (‘me’). But if I just saw each word separately, I probably really wouldn’t… because of my socialization, I wouldn’t want whoever hears me to immediately recognize that I come from that place. Even though today, I can tell you, I never suffered or don’t know that I suffered from any kind of discrimination. At all. But I knew it existed. But during my life I never encountered it, not in job promotions, not anywhere in life. But I know it exists.”
Yosef’s attitudes are typical of speakers of a marginalized variety – they fear that speaking that variety would hold them back from opportunities such as getting a job, and prefer to not be associated with it. And indeed, as the data shows, most Tel Aviv Mizrahis, like Yosef, do not pharyngealize, and the change in progress there is almost complete. Against this backdrop, it is made clear that the retaining of the pharyngeals in Rosh Ha’ayin, in conversational speech and in even higher rates in attentive reading styles – is intimately linked to the language attitudes of the speakers: that the pharyngeals are correct, eloquent, even beautiful, and most importantly, an authentic part of their Yemenite identity.

4.3.3 Why ayin and not het?

The results in the previous sections show that ayin is more common in attentive reading styles than in the interview, but het shows no such variation. This difference is comparable to the reality TV data shown in section 3.3, in which performative uses of the pharyngeals are restricted to ayin. I have proposed that the parallel patterns suggest that these two different stylistic moves are more similar than they may first appear.

One question that remains however, is why is ayin used in this way, at least by the speakers in my data, but not het? This calls for an explanation, since the difference between the two phonemes is remarkably consistent – it appears in both shows analyzed in the reality TV data, in both the Rosh Ha’ayin and in the Tel Aviv production data, as well as in Davis’s data from 30 years ago. In fact, the earliest mention I am aware of for a preference for ayin over het in specific stylistic contexts is in Blanc (1968), the first paper describing the sociolinguistic situation in Israel. Blanc
discusses Ashkenazis who sometimes use *ayin* as “a sort of decorative device” when reading out loud and he claims: “the effect it is intended to produce is hard to pinpoint… this does not apply to *het*”. Blanc’s paper does not include quantitative data, so it is unfortunately impossible to tell how widespread this phenomenon was. Nevertheless, it is yet another piece of evidence that despite the persistent stereotype in Israel of “speaking with *het* and *ayin*”, the two phonemes are very different in their stylistic variation, and have apparently been so for a long time.

The explanation Blanc offers for this phenomenon is that *het* is too closely associated with the corresponding Arabic phoneme (represented orthographically by the letter ݂), for it to be used as a beautification device in Hebrew. While reluctance to be too closely aligned with Arabic (and therefore with Arabs) undoubtedly shapes Israeli language ideologies and practices, I find this explanation unsatisfactory. *Ayin* also has a corresponding phoneme in Arabic (represented orthographically by the letter ݁). It is not at all clear why *het* should have this association with Arabic while *ayin* would not.

One possible explanation may come from the distribution of *het* and *ayin* among speakers who do consistently pharyngealize. Recall that among the speakers with robust pharyngealization, *het* is significantly more common than *ayin* (see Model 4.1 for Tel Aviv and Model 4.3 for Rosh Ha’ayin). It may be the case that since *het* is more common, it retains more of its original meaning of an ethnic marker; conversely, *ayin*, which is more advanced in its disappearance from casual speech, may be more useful as a carrier of symbolic meaning. In the case of *ayin*, as opposed to *het*, a
A stylistic move is more likely to be interpreted as such and carries with it less chance of being misunderstood as simply “someone who speaks with het and ayin”.

Another possible explanation for the difference between het and ayin stems from the fact that although they are both pharyngeal, the competing “standard” pronunciation is very different. Recall that for most speakers of the Modern Koinê, ayin is not pronounced at all, whereas het is replaced with another sound. While the use of ayin is clearly a hyper-articulation, the use of het is not, and does not achieve the same emphatic effect as replacing a zero with a very salient segment. When discussing the issue of /t/ release in English, Eckert (2008) ties its indexical meanings with a broader ideological association – linking hyperarticulation with care and hypoarticulation with laziness. She proceeds to compare /t/ release with /th/ stopping, and claims that while /th/ stopping is a fortition, it is not likely to have the same indexical values associated with clarity which the hyperarticulated released /t/ does.

The case of the Hebrew pharyngeals may provide an interesting parallel. Both het and ayin can be considered as more strictly adhering to the orthography (which always distinguishes these segments), but it may be the case that only in the case of ayin, which is clearly emphatic, can the whole array of indexical meanings – ranging from the old-school style of Hebrew to the warm-blooded Mizrahi stereotype – be readily used by the speaker (or understood by the interlocutor).

These two possible explanations are not mutually exclusive, and both may be in play. However, the exact reason for why ayin seems to be a more useful stylistic resource will have to remain an open question at this point. What is clear, however, is that het and ayin do differ in their distribution in meaningful ways.
4.4 The acoustic properties of non-pharyngeal *het*

The data in the previous sections supports the extant research, in showing that the merger between pharyngeals and their non-pharyngeals is very advanced, and complete for most speakers. On the other hand, the data also shows that in specific communities the pharyngeals are still alive and well. However, none of the previous research of which I am aware has addressed the question of what exactly the phonetic value of the merged phoneme is. In this section I show that in the case of *het*, the question is important, because there is, in fact, meaningful variation in the production of the non-pharyngealized phoneme.

4.4.1 The trilled production

In the previous section I made reference to the non-pharyngeal counterparts of *het* and *ayin*, without addressing the issue of what these counterparts are. I repeat Table 3.2 from Chapter 3, which shows the pharyngeal segments and their non-pharyngeal equivalents. For the sake of clarity, I will use the Hebrew letter names when referring to the etymological phoneme, regardless of the actual pronunciation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hebrew letter</th>
<th>Biblical Hebrew</th>
<th>Modern Koiné</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>aleph</em> (א)</td>
<td>ṭ</td>
<td>ṭ / Ø</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>ayin</em> (ע)</td>
<td>ʕ</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* xf* (כ)</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* het* (ח)</td>
<td>h</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 3.2:* The pharyngeals and non-pharyngeal counterparts (repeated)
As shown in the table, *ayin* merges with *aleph* (the glottal stop), and both are in fact usually deleted. While this fact is uncontroversial, the case of *xaf* and *het* is more interesting. Blanc (1968) states that the Modern Koiné merged *het* and *xaf* into a voiceless velar fricative [x], and most other writers agree: Yaeger-Dror (1988), from which Table 3.2 was adapted, has the non-pharyngeal *het* listed as [x], and Davis (1984) explicitly states that in the Ashkenazi variety the voiceless velar stop replaces the pharyngeal fricative of the Eastern (i.e. Mizrahi) variety. Nevertheless, this is not a consensus: Zuckerman (2005) also states that both *het* and *xaf* are now pronounced the same way, but he claims that the merged sound is the voiceless uvular fricative [χ]. This disagreement may point either to a confusion in the case of some writers about the actual phonetic realization, or to a genuine case of variation in the non-pharyngeal varieties. Unfortunately, in all of these papers, no acoustic analysis was performed to determine the phonetic properties of the merged phoneme, and the basis for the classification of the merged phoneme is never clarified.

To recapitulate my previous point, all the aforementioned writers make a distinction between two different lexical sets based on the biblical distinction: *het* words, which have a historical pharyngeal, and *xaf* words, which have the historical non-pharyngeal (presumably velar) fricative. The received wisdom therefore makes two important assumptions: that speakers who do not pharyngealize pronounce *het* and *xaf* the same way, and that the production of *xaf* is the same across speakers, whether or not they pharyngealize. These two assumptions can be summarized in Figure 4.5:
Although it is evident that het is very often not pharyngealized, neither of these assumptions about the nature of the merger between het and xaf is self evidently true without further investigation. In fact, the disagreement on the acoustic realization of the merged phoneme suggests that there are other options as well.

Analyzing the spectrograms of my interview data reveals that there is more than one phonetically distinct realization for non-pharyngeal het, and therefore that the pattern shown in Figure 4.5 is too simple. Specifically, for some speakers, the “fricative” is not a fricative at all, but rather a trill. Figure 4.6 shows the production of the word the word behatixa (‘in one piece’), which includes both a het and a xaf, by Anat, a 35-year-old speaker from Tel Aviv. As the figure shows, both het and xaf are produced in the same way, and the clearly visible points of contact indicate that in both cases, the realization is a trill: that is, the word is produced /beRatiRа/. 
This realization contrasts sharply with that of Rinat, a 35-year-old speaker from Rosh Ha’ayin, who consistently pharyngealizes. Figure 4.7 shows Rinat’s production of the word *mehunaxim* (‘educated’), which also includes both a *het* and *xaf*. As the figure shows, both are not trilled, and are clearly produced as fricatives (and spectrally different fricatives, as one would expect from a speaker who does not sound merged).

**Figure 4.6:** The trilled production of Anat (*behatixa*)
Figure 4.7: The fricative production of Rinat (mehunaxim)

The trilled production exhibited by Anat in Figure 4.6 is not idiosyncratic, but commonly appears in the speech of many of the speakers in my sample. Therefore, we can consider two distinguishable productions of the merged phoneme – a fricative and a trill. It is very likely that the trilled production is what Zuckerman heard as a [χ], but it also possible that there is variation between a uvular fricative and a uvular trill. Due to the difficulty of acoustically distinguishing a velar fricative and a uvular fricative, let alone a velar trill and a uvular trill, in this section I will not attempt to determine the exact place of the realization, but rather, only distinguish the fricative realization from the trilled realization. As shorthand, I will use [x] to denote fricative productions and [R] to denote trill productions, without making a claim about the exact place of articulation.
The existence of the trill production is not surprising – if a phoneme becomes uvular, a variation between trills and fricatives is often the case (Ladefoged and Maddieson 1996:245). However, this variation in the production of the non-pharyngealized production shows that the merger is more complicated than Figure 4.5 would have us believe. The question that arises is how this variation relates to whether or not a speaker pharyngealizes, and if it is socially meaningful. The examples of Rinat and Anat suggest that the trill variant is preferred among speakers who merge xaf and het, but is that a general pattern?

In the next section I examine the distribution of the trill in detail and show that the trilled variant is indeed more preferred among merged speakers than non-merged speakers, but that there are further patterns as well: the non-pharyngealizing speakers in Tel Aviv and in Rosh Ha’ayin exhibit significantly different rates of trilling. Specifically, whereas the non-pharyngealizers in Tel Aviv have a stronger preference for the trill, in Rosh Ha’ayin the non-pharyngealizers have more of the fricative production.

4.4.2 Methods for analysis of the trill distribution

In order to analyze the distribution of the trill in detail, I coded 20 words with het, and 20 words with xaf for each of the speakers, based on the etymology that is reflected in the orthography. The words chosen were the first instances of relevant words to appear (after ignoring the first 10 minutes of the interview). For each of these I marked the relevant consonant (het or xaf) in a Praat text grid.
For the purpose of the analysis, I only chose words in which the relevant consonant occurs intervocally, motivated by the distribution of \textit{xaf}. In Biblical Hebrew \textit{xaf} was not a phoneme at all, but rather the spirantized allophone of \textit{k}. While in Modern Hebrew this is no longer the case, as the spirantization rule is entirely productive (Bat-El 1989, Adam 1994), this still has a lasting effect on the lexicon – \textit{xaf} occurs almost only post vocalically (which was the original spirantization environment). Therefore only post-vocalic environments could make for a phonologically controlled comparison between \textit{het} words and \textit{xaf} words. Restricting myself only to intervocalic positions (and not just postvocalic) enabled an easy and accurate delimitation of the fricative. After marking the relevant consonant in Praat, I coded for whether it is realized trill or a fricative, based on the spectrogram. Trills were defined as segments with at least 2 visible contact points (trill bars).

Uvular fricative and trills are often in variation (Laefoged and Maddieson 1996), and sometimes appear as phonologically conditioned allophones. For example, in Lakhtoa, the voiced uvular fricative becomes a uvular trill before \textit{i} (Rood and Taylor 1996). Furthermore, in her discussion of apical trills, Solé (2002) states that trills often show a narrower range of variation than fricatives, since their more constrained articulatory requirement may lead to “failing”, that is, an intended trill being realized as a fricative. Therefore, special care was taken in order to be able to further control for the phonological environment in the statistical analyses. For each token, I coded the preceding and following vowel, as well as whether the relevant consonant is the onset of a stressed syllable.
4.4.3 Results in Tel Aviv

The trill rates for the Tel Aviv sample, divided into *het* and *xaf* words, are shown in Figure 4.8. For clarity purposes, I divided the sample into “pharyngealizers” and “non-pharyngealizers”, based on whether or not they have a pharyngeal *het* production over 50% of the time. This binary division may appear somewhat overly simplistic, since many speakers are not categorically one or the other. However, since almost all speakers who pharyngealized *het* at all did so at very high rates (over 90%), this simplification seems reasonable\(^57\). This resulted in a group of 5 pharyngealizers and 38 non-pharyngealizers.

![Figure 4.8: Percentage of trills in Tel Aviv](image)

As can be seen in the figure, the pharyngealizers and non-pharyngealizers exhibit different patterns. The non-pharyngealizers trill both *het* and *xaf* at high rates (43%

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\(^57\) Only one speaker has non-negligible pharyngealization but falls into the “non-pharyngealizers” group by this criterion – Geula, who has a pharyngeal *het* 28% of the time.
and 38% respectively), which are not statistically significant from each other. This shows that trilling does not distinguish the two historical phonemes for these speakers, and they are indeed merged. The speakers who do pharyngealize follow a different pattern. They virtually never trill het, which can be expected – a pharyngeal consonant cannot be trilled. They do trill xaf, but at rates significantly lower than the non-pharyngealized speakers (17%). This suggests that in Tel Aviv the distribution can be schematized as in Figure 4.9, though in interpreting this schema we must keep in mind that it is not a categorical preference – it represents differential preferences, with both groups varying between trills and fricatives, but at different rates.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Pharyngealizing speaker} & \quad \text{Non-pharyngealizing speaker} \\
\text{het} /\text{h}/ & \rightarrow [\text{h}] & \text{het} /\text{h}/ & \rightarrow [\text{R}] \\
\text{xaf} /\text{x}/ & \rightarrow [\text{x}] & \text{xaf} /\text{x}/ &
\end{align*}
\]

**Figure 4.9:** Schema of the het-xaf merger in Tel Aviv

Whether or not someone pharyngealizes is obviously not the only determining factor in the distribution of trills, and to explore this further, I ran a statistical analysis with the phonological controls, in the form of a generalized logistic regression model with the predicting factor being whether or not the production is trilled. I performed this only on the subset of xaf words, since for speakers who make a phonemic distinction between het and xaf, the het words are almost invariably not trilled. The

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58 The fact that there are trilled het words at all within this group is of course the result of the so-called “pharyngealizers” not categorically pharyngealizing.
linguistic control factors are the preceding vowel, the following vowel (operationalized as whether or not it is a front vowel) and whether or not the xaf occurs in the onset of a stressed syllable. The social factors are age, gender, and ethnicity (operationalized as a three-way distinction between Ashkenazi, Yemenite and other Mizrahi, as discussed in the previous sections), as well as whether or not the speaker pharyngealizes. The results are summarized in Model 4.8:

|                          | Estimate | Std. Error | z value | Pr(>|z|) |
|--------------------------|----------|------------|---------|----------|
| (Intercept)              | -0.245258| 0.381606   | -0.643  | 0.52042  |
| Pharyngealizes = Yes     | -0.644645| 0.320172   | -2.013  | 0.04407  *|
| Ethnicity = Mizrahi      | 1.014823 | 0.500853   | 2.026   | 0.04275  *|
| Ethnicity = Yemenite     | -0.438099| 0.652216   | -0.672  | 0.50177  |
| Sex = Male               | -0.256547| 0.173909   | -1.475  | 0.14017  |
| Age                      | -0.01188 | 0.006823   | -1.741  | 0.08165  .|
| Preceding = Front        | 0.229168 | 0.154812   | 1.48    | 0.13879  |
| Following = Front        | 0.497015 | 0.163971   | 3.031   | 0.000244 **|
| Stress = Yes             | 0.324955 | 0.159699   | 2.035   | 0.04187  *|
| EthnicityMizrahi:Age     | -0.022887| 0.010319   | -2.218  | 0.02655  *|
| EthnicityYemenite:Age    | 0.003073 | 0.013909   | 0.221   | 0.82514  |

Model 4.8: Trilling in the Tel Aviv sample

As the model shows, speakers who pharyngealize are indeed significantly less likely to trill (as suggested by Figure 4.8). There are significant linguistic constraints as well: the trilled production is more likely before a front vowel (/e/ or /i/)59 and in the onset of a stressed syllable. Finally, we examine the link between trilling and ethnicity. Since the pharyngealizers in the sample are all Mizrahi, and pharyngealizers trill less, one might expect Mizrahis in general to trill less, under the assumption that trilling is an Ashkenazi feature. However, it appears that once pharyngealization is

59 This is not unexpected, as it mirrors the categorical phonological rule of Lakhtoa in which a fricative becomes a trill before an /i/ (Rood and Taylor 1996)
controlled for, Mizrahis actually trill more than Ashkenazis. This can be understood when we consider that there is also a significant interaction between ethnicity and age. The nature of this interaction becomes clear when we examine the individual trill rates: in Figure 4.10 the y-axis is the average trill rate for each speaker, and the x-axis is year of birth.

**Figure 4.10:** Rate of trilling in Tel Aviv by age and ethnicity

As the black trend lines show, younger Mizrahis are more likely to have higher trill rates – in fact, the highest trill rates overall are among the youngest Mizrahis – suggesting a change in progress. For Ashkenazis, however, the trend line (in gray) is virtually flat. It seems that the loss of pharyngealization is a two step process: as
Mizrahis are catching up with the Ashkenazi loss of pharyngealization, they are also trilling more, catching up with the Ashkenazis and even surpassing them.

4.4.4 Results in Rosh Ha’ayin

The previous section shows that in Tel Aviv, trilling seems to be linked to the loss of pharyngealization, with Mizrahis catching up with Ashkenazis in both features. This raises the question of what the pattern is among the Rosh Ha’ayin Yemenites, since the community has been shown to be far more conservative with respect to pharyngealization. Even some younger speakers do pharyngealize, and out of the 24 speakers in the Rosh Ha’ayin samples, only 5 were categorized as non-pharyngealizers. Figure 4.11 compares the Rosh Ha’ayin Yemenites with the Tel Aviv sample, and shows the different distribution of trills.

![Figure 4.11: Rate of trilling in the two field sites](image)

**Figure 4.11:** Rate of trilling in the two field sites
When we compare the pharyngealizing speakers in Tel Aviv and Rosh Ha’ayin, they appear to have essentially the same pattern: the Rosh Ha’ayin pharyngealizers trill 19% of the time in \( xaf \) words (compared to 17% among the Tel Aviv pharyngealizers) and virtually never trill in \( het \) words\(^{60} \). However, among the non-pharyngealizers in Rosh Ha’ayin the pattern is quite different from that in Tel Aviv. They trill \( het \) words at 16% and \( xaf \) words at 24%, and this difference is not significant, suggesting that they too have merged the two phonemes. However, the trill rates are significantly lower than those in Tel Aviv (43% and 38% respectively). I ran a second statistical model, once again predicting the production of a trill in \( xaf \) words, this time among the Rosh Ha’ayin speakers. The predictors are the same as in Model 4.8, with the exception of ethnicity, which is not included since all the speakers in the Rosh Ha’ayin sample are of Yemenite descent.

|                      | Estimate | Std. Error | z value | Pr(>|z|) |
|----------------------|----------|------------|---------|----------|
| (Intercept)          | -0.7893  | 0.48947    | -1.613  | 0.10684  |
| Pharyngealizes = Yes | 0.33392  | 0.36369    | 0.918   | 0.35854  |
| Sex = Mizrahi        | -0.10426 | 0.25902    | -0.403  | 0.68731  |
| Age                  | -0.0341  | 0.01201    | -2.839  | 0.00453 ** |
| Preceding = Front    | 0.4647   | 0.25475    | 1.824   | 0.06813 . |
| Following = Front    | 0.30149  | 0.27803    | 1.084   | 0.2782   |
| Stress = Yes         | 0.45119  | 0.28005    | 1.611   | 0.10715  |

**Model 4.9:** Trilling in the Rosh Ha’ayin sample

As the model shows, whether or not a speaker pharyngealizes is not a significant predictor of their trilling rate. This is consistent with the results in Figure 4.11, which shows that the Yemenites in Rosh Ha’ayin who do not pharyngealize do not trill as

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\(^{60}\) The rate here is lower than Tel Aviv since the Rosh Ha’ayin pharyngealizing speakers produce \( het \) words more consistently with a pharyngeal.
often as non-pharyngealizers in Tel Aviv; rather, they have the same rates as the
pharyngealizing speakers of their parents’ and grandparents’ generation.

Of course, it is not the case that everyone has the same rate of trilling in Rosh
Ha’ayin: we do see an effect of age, parallel to the one observed in Tel Aviv. That is,
even in Rosh Ha’ayin, younger speakers trill more. It may be the case that Rosh
Ha’ayin will eventually have the same pattern as Tel Aviv, in both pharyngealization
and trilling rates. However, for the time being, the merged speakers in this community
have a more conservative trill rate, which echoes the general linguistic conservatism of
the community with respect to pharyngealization. Finally, it is interesting to note that
none of the linguistic constraints that were significant in Model 4.8 turned out as
significant here. This is surprising, since generally the same variables follow the same
linguistic constraints, even if they show different rates, and it may suggest that the
merged phoneme among the Rosh Ha’ayin Yemenites is actually the result of a
separate linguistic process with its own constraints. However, that must remain an
hypothesis at this point.

Finally, Model 4.10 compares the non-pharyngealizing speakers from both sites,
and shows that the Rosh Ha’ayin Yemenites trill significantly less than the speakers in
the Tel Aviv sample, as suggested by Figure 4.1161.

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61 Comparing all speakers (and not just the non-pharyngealizers) for an effect of site will not be telling,
because pharyngealization rates differ so significantly between the two sites.
|                                | Estimate | Std. Error | z value | Pr(>|z|) |
|--------------------------------|----------|------------|---------|----------|
| (Intercept)                    | -0.927957| 0.512484   | -1.811  | 0.070187 |
| Site = TA                      | 0.750267 | 0.34133    | 2.198   | 0.027944 *|
| Ethnicity = Mizrahi            | 0.945116 | 0.500539   | 1.888   | 0.0659    |
| Ethnicity = Yemenite           | 0.47432  | 0.634502   | 0.748   | 0.454733  |
| Sex = Male                     | -0.325451| 0.170352   | -1.91   | 0.056073  |
| Age                            | -0.010817| 0.006813   | -1.588  | 0.112362  |
| Preceding = Front              | 0.15076  | 0.15162    | 0.994   | 0.320062  |
| Following = Front              | 0.545753 | 0.163886   | 3.33    | 0.000868 ***|
| stressy                        | 0.242445 | 0.156939   | 1.545   | 0.122386  |
| EthnicityMizrahi:Age           | -0.020788| 0.010331   | -2.012  | 0.044195 *|
| EthnicityYemenite:Age          | -0.024954| 0.014651   | -1.703  | 0.088515  |

**Model 4.10:** Non-pharyngealizers in both sites

### 4.4.5 The social meaning of trilling

This section showed that variation in the pharyngeals goes beyond just a question of whether the segment is pharyngealized – the actual production of the merged phoneme can carry social meaning as well. This once again highlights the general point that when variables are addressed not as binaries, a richer analysis of the linguistic variation is possible. Specifically, in this case the different trilling rates show an interesting point – while it is clear that Rosh Ha’ayin is more conservative in its greater use of pharyngeals than Tel Aviv, it is noteworthy that even the Rosh Ha’ayin speakers who do not pharyngealize are still using a more conservative feature. That is, they are slowly beginning to catch up with respect to merging *het* and *xaf*, but they are not converging on the same acoustic realization as the Tel Aviv speakers.

This can be understood when one considers the overt language ideologies of the speakers, who take great pride in their conservative variety. Maintaining low rates of trilling allows even speakers who do not pharyngealize to distinguish themselves, and not sound fully like the “Tel Aviv standard”.

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It is interesting to note a difference between pharyngealizing and trilling in how they relate to ethnicity. The relation between trilling and ethnicity is clearly quantitative and not categorical – virtually all speakers vary between a trill and a fricative production, and it is only the comparatively lower rates of trilling that are socially meaningful. But this does not mean that they are not related to ethnicity. In research on language and ethnicity, it is often the case that variables do not have a strictly “ethnic” meaning, and the link to ethnicity is created by differential rates of use or sensitivity to different linguistic environments (Rickford 1985b). If we consider AAVE, many of its best-researched features are not specific to it, and appear in many other varieties as well, but with a different distribution. For example, t/d deletion is considered a feature of AAVE, though almost all English speakers show a variation between producing and deleting final t/d – it is the high rates of deletion that carry social meaning (Rickford 1999). As such, the quantitative relation between trilling and ethnicity is not unusual, but it does stand in contrast to the pharyngealization, which as pointed out before, are intimately linked with Mizrahi-ness. Although the social meaning of the pharyngeals is richer than simply meaning “Mizrahi”, there is something qualitative about the relationship – non-Mizrahis very rarely use pharyngeals, and their social meaning is related to ethnicity even if the rate of use is very low.

As discussed in detail before, the use of the pharyngeals is a very salient stereotype in Israel. However, the differential rates of trilling seem to be completely below the level of consciousness. As opposed to the many references made to “speaking with het and ayin” I am not aware of any metalinguistic commentary on
them, let alone a name that speakers would use for this feature. Nevertheless, there are hints that some of the speakers in the Rosh Ha’ayin are – at least on some level – aware of the difference. Consider for example this quote by Adit, a 48-year-old woman from Rosh Ha’ayin with robust pharyngealization:

(34) “Let me tell you something about my grandson. He’s 11 months old. I speak with \textit{het} and \textit{ayin}. My daughter doesn’t – my children don’t speak with \textit{het} and \textit{ayin}. My children speak with \textit{xet}, something that really bothers me.”

Adit did not refer to the \textit{xaf} sound as \textit{xaf}, but rather with a non-pharyngeal realization for the name of the letter \textit{het} – \textit{xet} – and when she pronounced it she had a very clear trill, unlike her usual pronunciation. This suggests that at least for her the distinction between trill and fricative is salient enough to be noticed. While this is suggestive that trilling is not completely below the level of consciousness for all speakers, Adit’s insight seems to be the exception and not the rule. Considering how much Israelis clearly do care about the pronunciation of \textit{het}, it is remarkable how little attention trilling seems to receive from speakers and linguists alike. However, it is possible that this lack of attention to trilling is precisely the outcome of the interest in pharyngealization – for most Hebrew speakers, the presence of lack of pharyngealization is so salient, that all non-pharyngealized realization are perceived as being essentially the same. Nevertheless, as my data show, there are meaningful distinctions among non-pharyngealized productions of \textit{het} as well.
4.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I analyzed the distribution of the pharyngeals in my two field sites, and found major differences between them. Although the received wisdom – that the pharyngeals are in final stages of decline and are used only by a minority of older Mizrahis – holds for my Tel Aviv sample, I show that this is not universally true in Israel. In the Rosh Ha’ayin sample, while there is a change in progress and gradual loss of pharyngealization, the pharyngeals are by no means rare nor restricted to older speakers.

I have proposed that the retaining of the pharyngeals in Rosh Ha’ayin is linked to the language ideologies of the Yemenite speakers there, who associate het and ayin with an important part of an authentic Yemenite identity. I show that even in Tel Aviv Yemenite speakers pharyngealize more, but not nearly as much as in Rosh Ha’ayin, which for most of its existence was an insular Yemenite community, and still retains a very strong Yemenite identity.

I have shown that ayin is used more often in the word list data than in the interview data, something which is surprising for a stereotyped variable, but is expected when considering the background of the history of the variable and its perceived status as the correct, authentic pronunciation. With respect to het, it does not show different rates of pharyngealization between word list and interview, but I have demonstrated that there is meaningful variation in two different realizations of the non-pharyngeal form: Rosh Ha’ayin speakers who do not pharyngealize trill less often than their non-pharyngealizing counterparts in Tel Aviv, showing that even the speakers in this community who use an innovative feature (non-pharyngealization)
still manage to be more conservative than the Tel Aviv norm (by having lower rates of trilling).

Throughout this chapter, a running theme has been the link between the pharyngeals and authentic Mizrahi-ness or Yemenite-ness – in the overt language ideologies as well as in the retaining of older features. But what does it mean to linguistically perform an authentic Mizrahi persona? In the next chapter I will analyze the production and perception of a different variable, the deletion of /h/, which has a very different range of stereotypes and links to ethnicity. Following it, Chapter 6 consists of a discussion tying both of these variables together, and how they relate to the construction of authenticity.
Chapter 5

The production and perception of Hebrew /h/

This chapter deals with a novel Hebrew sociolinguistic variable – /h/. Like the pharyngeals, the /h/ of Modern Hebrew is a reflex of the corresponding Biblical Hebrew phoneme, and as such, it is always marked in the orthography, with the letter heī (ה). Also like the pharyngeals, it is usually not produced; however, it differs from the pharyngeals in meaningful ways as well. Following my practice in the previous chapters, I refer to the variable by the name of the Hebrew letter that represents it, heī.

The structure of the chapter is as follows. In section 5.1 I introduce the variable and show that it varies between three phonetic realizations: completely reduced (Ø), a fully articulated [h], and a glottal stop ([ʔ]). I then consider metalinguistic commentary as a means to exploring the language ideologies with respect to the variable, and survey the negative attitudes surrounding “not pronouncing heī”. In section 5.2 I analyze the production data from my sociolinguistic fieldwork and show the variation in heī, and specifically its links to a Yemenite ethnic identity. Finally, in section 5.3, I conduct a perception experiment, and demonstrate that despite the metalinguistic commentary about “not pronouncing heī”, it is only the glottal stop, and not the reduced form, which gets negatively evaluated.
5.1 Considering hei as a sociolinguistic variable

The variable *hei* has, to my knowledge, received no attention from sociolinguists. To the extent that it is referred to in the linguistic literature, it is only to state that Modern Hebrew does not in fact have an [h] sound. For example, Bolozky’s (1997) phonological description of Modern Hebrew goes so far as transcribing Hebrew words without the historical /h/ altogether. If that is true, one might ask if this is a variable worth exploring at all, and not just an orthographical vestige, like the letter *h* in French or Spanish.

As I show in section 5.2, *hei* does get deleted most of the time – it is deleted in 92% of its potential occurrences in the sociolinguistic interviews I conducted. Nevertheless, where there is variation there may be social meaning, even if a variable is infrequent. A first clue that the variation in *hei* is socially meaningful can be found in the substantial amount of metalinguistic commentary about it on the Hebrew web. Consider the statement in (35), made in a web forum about the Israeli reality show “Koxav Nolad” (the Israeli equivalent of *American Idol*, which was discussed in section 3.3.2):

\[(35) \text{kše-riki gal hayta šofetet, hi lo hayta meaššeret le-adam (lo, hi lo zameret mi-bxinati) kmo hagit yasu laavor et šlav ha-odišenim.}\\
\text{lo hoga et ha-ot hei kmo še-carix… dikcya yeruda be-yoter}\]
“When Riki Gal was a judge, she wouldn’t let a person (no, she’s not a singer as far as I’m concerned) like Hagit Yasu pass the auditions.

She doesn’t pronounce *hei* right… very poor diction”\(^{62}\)

The title of this post is “Eliezer is rolling in his grave” – and Eliezer is no other than Eliezer Ben Yehuda, the legendary revitalizer of the Hebrew language. If the writer of the post thinks that this is reason enough for him to roll in his grave, then he clearly has very strong opinions about not pronouncing *hei*. This does not seem like the kind of attitude a speaker would have about a variable that is extinct in the language. It would appear that even if *hei* is almost always deleted, the variation it does exhibit does not go unnoticed, and speakers do have clear attitudes about its different realizations.

Crucially, my data show that the variation in *hei* is not just between a fully realized [h] and a deleted form. Rather, there are three distinct phonetic realizations: fully articulated ([h]), completely reduced (Ø) and a glottal stop ([ʔ]). That is, a word like *maher* (‘fast’) may appear as *maher*, *maer*, or *maʔer*. While the difference between *maer* and *maʔer* may be subtle, it can still be perceived auditorily as well as discerned on a spectrogram. To my knowledge, this three-way realization has not been researched by sociolinguists. However, there is evidence that at least some Hebrew speakers are aware of it. For example, Daniel, a 79-year-old speaker in my Tel Aviv sample, complained that “nowadays every *hei* is an *alef*”. *Alef* is the Hebrew letter which marks a glottal stop, so it appears that Daniel is complaining not about the

\(^{62}\) http://www.ynet.co.il/Ext/App/TalkBack/CdaViewOpenTalkBack/0,11382,L-4099068-7,00.html
deletion of *hei* but rather about its realization as a [ʔ]. Similar comments can be found on the web, such as this post from an Israeli web forum:

(36) agam rudberg lo mevatet et ha-ot hei ve-mevatet kol mila im ha-ot hei keilu hi alef. ex adam im dikcya kazot mexurbenet yaxol laavod ba-radyo?

“Agam Rudberg doesn’t pronounce the letter *hei* and she pronounces every word with the letter *hei* as if it were *alef*. How can somebody with such shitty diction work in radio? “

In addition, one can find many examples of eye dialect on the Hebrew web, in which words with *hei* are spelled with an *alef* to mock the speakers’ pronounciation. While all this suggests that the feature being mocked is the production of *hei* as a glottal stop, the picture is somewhat more complicated. I have mentioned that *alef* is the letter that represents a glottal stop, but in fact it is the reflex of the *Biblical* glottal stop, which is always marked in orthography, but is also almost never produced in Modern Hebrew. For example, the word *meʔod* (‘very’), spelled with a glottal stop, is virtually always pronounced as *meod*. I have mentioned Daniel, who claimed that “nowadays every *hei* is an *alef*”, but then he continued to complain about the pronunciation of the word *madhim* (‘fabulous’), saying:

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[63](http://www.ynet.co.il/Ext/App/TalkBack/CdaViewOpenTalkBack/0,11382,L-3087719-3,00.html)
As we see in the example, Daniel is inconsistent about which pronunciation he finds problematic. The first time he says madim (where the hei is deleted) and then he says madim (with a glottal stop), so it is not clear what he actually means by “saying hei like alef”. With respect to eye dialect, the Hebrew writing system creates a further complication. In Hebrew orthography, generally only consonants are spelled out, and most vowels are left implicit. For example, the word yeled (‘boy’) is spelled y-l-d and the word meʔod is spelled m-ʔ-d (though again, this is usually pronounced meod, with no glottal stop). For speakers familiar with the language it is not difficult to recognize the correct word and pronounce the appropriate vowels. However, consider the word mehāmem (‘stunning’), which is spelled m-h-m-m. If one wanted to emphasize that the hei is not pronounced by deleting it orthographically, the results would be m-m-m, which would be completely unrecognizable to the Hebrew speaker. They might guess it is meant to be a non-word like memem or mamam, but never a tri-syllabic word, since each consonant can only have one implicit vowel. Therefore, the only way to spell the word without the hei but still being understood is spelling it as m-ʔ-m-m. Once again, since alef is more often than not deleted anyway, it is natural for speakers to interpret the ʔ in m-ʔ-m-m as signifying that there are two different vowels.
following the first \( m \) (\textit{meamem}), rather than marking the existence of an actual glottal stop.

Therefore, it is impossible to tell which phonetic realization speakers refer to when they talk of pronouncing \( hei \) like \( alef \), or when they replace \( hei \) with \( alef \) in the spelling\(^{64}\). But regardless of the actual phonetic realization invoked, this commentary clearly illustrates negative language attitudes about a pronunciation of \( hei \) other than [h]. Metalinguistic commentary of this sort is quite common, and often with very explicit judgments of the people “not pronouncing \( hei \)”. The following excerpt, for example, is from a web forum discussing a reality show called \textit{mikol habanot še-ba-olam}, an Israeli remake of \textit{the bachelor}. The bachelor in question is called Ari Goldman, and he is an American Jew who immigrated to Israel. The conversation shows the general confusion about [h] among Hebrew speakers – the blogger “Darth Ziv” is convinced that Ari Goldman’s name is actually Harry, and that the show’s host, Karin Magarizo, pronounces it wrong. In this example and the following ones, I use a bold exclamation point (!) to mark a use of an orthographic \( alef \) instead of \( hei \).

(38) Darth Ziv: lecaari arue šaloš hafx le-xamama šel štuyot, kaxa še-ela im ari ha-debil yofia šam (ve-ze hari, še-magarizo tilmad lehištameš ba-ot hei), mibxinatam hem yexolim lidros be-emca ha-toxnit

Celoteyp: ata lo recini, naxon?

Darth Ziv: korim lo hari, lo? karin magarizo lo mesugelet lehagid hei. hi ba-pirsomem omeret “eyze me!amem ha-ari ha-ze. takšivi paam

\(^{64}\) I return to this point in the perception experiment in section 5.3.
Asaf Razon: ata toe be-gadol, korim lo ali. šem nafof kanire ecel
yehudim amerikaim ayen emex ar me-“ha-pamalya” or arı flayšer,
dover ha-bait ha-lavan šel buš

Darth Ziv: a, xašavti še-hari... nu, hi adain lo yodaat lehagid hei, noxax
ha-me!amem ha-ko fakaci

Darth Ziv: Unfortunately channel three has become a hothouse for stupidity,
so unless that idiot Ari appears (and it’s Harry, Magarizo should
learn to use the letter hei), as far as they’re concerned they can cut
a show in half

Celoteyp: You’re not serious, right?

Darth Ziv: His name is Harry, isn’t it? Karin Magarizo is incapable of saying
hei. In the commercial she says “that Ari is so stunning
(me!amem)” Listen for yourself and you’ll hear it

Asaf Razon: You’re totally wrong, his name is Ari. It’s probably a common
name for American Jews, like Ari from “Entourage” or Ari
Fleischer, White House press secretary for Bush

Darth Ziv: Oh, I thought it was Harry. Whatever, she still doesn’t know how
to say hei, like in stunning (me!amem) that’s so stupid sounding65

65 http://www.tve.co.il/replies.php?id=2986#r76319
While the blogger “Darth Ziv” concedes that he was wrong with respect to Ari’s name, which does not have an /h/, he continues by saying that the host still sounds stupid, and invokes her use of ‘stunning’ (*melamem*). He insists on this word not just for its pronunciation – the use of this word is emblematically associated with the stereotypical *freha*, who allegedly describes everything as ‘stunning’. *Freha* the gendered and ethnicized stereotype discussed in section 1.1.2, suggests “bimbo”, and is used mostly for Mizrahi women. The term was and was shown to be linked to the pharyngeals in section 3.3.1, and here we see that is linked to not pronouncing *hei* as well. This is made explicit in example (39), also from the Hebrew web:

(39)  ima yesh davar she-meacben oti ze tauyt be-ivrit o safa zola kmo sel ha-moxrot be-rener (“ha-mixnas me!!amem alaix mami!!”). aval frehot bnot 20 ze davar exad, veshlatim ima tauyt ze kvar masehu axer

“If there’s something that annoys me it’s mistakes in Hebrew or crass language like the saleswomen in Renoir⁶⁶. (‘the pants look stunning (*melamem*) on you honey!!’). But 20 year old *frehas* are one thing, and signs with mistakes are another thing”⁶⁷

The production of *hei* as other than [h] is not always negatively evaluated, however. Example (40) is from a discussion about a contestant on the Israeli remake of the reality show *Big Brother*, and she is described as a ‘cool *arsit*. *Arsit* is a very

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⁶⁶ An Israeli chain of clothing stores
loaded term – it is the feminine form of *ars*, a pejorative associated with Mizrahi men, which was introduced in section 1.1.2. But in this quote it is meant as a compliment of sorts, conjuring the down-to-earth and positive associations of a Mizrahi persona, and for this writer, *melamem* is part of that package.

(40) hi bat 26, dey šmena, yeš la dibur šel arsit magniva, ‘me!amem’

“She’s 26, pretty fat, talks like a cool *arsit*, ‘stunning’ (*me!amem*)”

To conclude, we see that in the Israeli speech community the variable *hei* is far from extinct, and is the topic of much metalinguistic commentary. As the fully realized [h] is considered the prescriptively correct form, comments about “not pronouncing *hei*” are mostly negative. It is described as sub-standard and as an indicator of bad diction; people who do not pronounce *hei* are judged as simply sounding stupid, or more specifically, sounding like a *f’reha*.

This section makes a first step towards understanding the social meaning of *hei*, and opens several questions. First, I claim that *hei* has two phonetic realizations other than [h], but it is not clear which of these is the target of the language ideologies described here. I will return to that question in section 5.3. Other issues arise as well – it seems that much of the language ideologies and social evaluation refer specifically to women’s use of *hei*, and some explicitly invoke gendered stereotypes. It is not clear, however, if women do reduce *hei* more. Finally, I have mentioned that most *hei*’s get deleted, and the question remains if we can still find socially meaningful variation in

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68 http://israblog.nana10.co.il/blogread.asp?blog=84569&blogcode=2546881
its current use. In the next section, I address these questions by analyzing the use of 
*hei* in the sociolinguistic interviews that I have conducted in Tel Aviv and Rosh Ha’ayin.

5.2 The distribution of *hei* in the production data

5.2.1 Methods

In order to investigate the distribution of *hei*, I analyzed the sociolinguistic interviews collected in the course of my fieldwork in Tel Aviv and Rosh Ha’ayin. I followed a similar methodology to the one that I used for the pharyngeals in Chapter 4. For each of the speakers, I coded the first 50 potential occurrences of *hei* (after ignoring the first 10 minutes of conversation) as one of three values – null, [h] or a glottal stop. The distinction was done both auditorily and by verifying the existence (or lack) of a phonetic realization in the non-obvious cases. The sample is slightly smaller than that used in the previous chapter, since for four speakers, the sound quality was not good enough to accurately identify the [h] variant (due to background noise coming from the air conditioning). In addition to the interview data, my word list contained three words with *hei* (*harbe* ‘many’, *malhiv* ‘exciting’ and *maher* ‘quickly’), and I coded the realization of *hei* in those as well.

Previous research has robustly demonstrated that highly frequent words, and specifically function words, are often more likely to appear reduced (Jurfasky et al. 2001, among others). This has possible ramifications for the production of *hei*, since it appear in the Hebrew definite article, *ha* – and it maybe be the case that *hei* deletes
more in this environment. Therefore, I coded for each occurrence of *hei* if it was within the definite article. Furthermore, the preceding and following segment were coded as phonological controls, to once again allow me to tease apart phonetically motivated deletion processes from socially constrained variation.

5.2.2 Results

i. Overview

Table 5.1 summarizes the results of *hei* for the interview data.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>hei production</th>
<th>percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>∅</td>
<td>92.82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ʔ]</td>
<td>3.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[h]</td>
<td>3.38%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.1: Production of *hei* in the interview data

As the table shows, there is an overwhelming preference for the null pronunciation – with less than four percent for either a fully realized [h] or a glottal stop. It is important to point out that the averages in this table do not represent the scenario in which only a few speakers robustly produce [h] while most speakers do not use [h] at all. Rather, these numbers are indicative of the general pattern. While it is the case that 25 of the speakers in my sample do not use [h], most speakers do use it, albeit infrequently. The speaker with the most [h], a 73-year-old Ashkenazi man from Tel Aviv, realized *hei* as [h] 30% of time, and the remaining speakers who use [h], do so between 2% and 18% of the time. Similarly, for the glottal stop, only 16 of the
speakers do not use it at all, whereas the remaining majority realize *hei* as glottal stop between 2% and 16% of the time.

The low percentages of *hei* use raise the question of whether this is a meaningful variable, or whether the deletion of *hei* has essentially gone to completion, with this table only showing some remaining vestiges. I believe that the former is the case. First of all, as discussed in Chapter 3, a variable with very low frequency can still bear much social meaning in the speech community. Furthermore, while the non-deleted production of *hei* is most certainly rare in the speech of each particular speaker, it is still used occasionally by a majority of the speakers, and as such, should not be dismissed.

If we consider the word list data, a completely different pattern appears, showing that [h] has not disappeared from the Hebrew language, and still serves specific stylistic purposes. A comparison of the interview and the word list data is given in Table 5.2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Interview</th>
<th>Word List</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>∅</td>
<td>92.82%</td>
<td>7.69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ʔ]</td>
<td>3.80%</td>
<td>11.79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[h]</td>
<td>3.38%</td>
<td>80.51%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 5.2: Production of *hei* in the interview and word list data*

The table shows that in the word list, unlike the interview, a fully realized [h] is by far the preferred variant. Of the three possible realizations, the fully realized [h] is not reduced, it is considered the original form and is more faithful to the orthography, whereas the other two forms are judged as “incorrect”. As such, the alignment of [h]
with appropriateness for a more attentive reading setting is to be expected, and it behaves in the way that has typically been shown for many sociolinguistic variables. Nevertheless, the difference between the word list and interview is striking – whereas [h] very rarely appears in the interview, almost all speakers, including those who did not use it at all in the interview, prefer it nearly categorically in the word list. This highlights Ravid’s (1995) claim about the general linguistic insecurity of the Israeli speech community, which I discussed in section 1.2. In Israel, the friction between the natural development of the language and a persistent prescriptivist ideology that insists on faithfulness to Biblical forms results in many native speakers suffering from great linguistic insecurity, to the degree that even highly educated literate speakers are often not confident about what constitutes the correct form of very common, everyday Hebrew words. While Ravid’s claims were about morphological forms, they appear to extend to the realm of segmental phonology as well – most speakers in my sample, of all ages, have a drastic shift in their phonology with respect to hei, suggesting that they have internalized an ideology in which the pronunciation most natural to them is not appropriate for certain settings.

Table 5.2 also shows that the rate of glottal stop slightly increases from the word list to the interview. This is much less expected, since the glottal stop is most certainly not considered a “correct” from. If we interpret the eye dialect data in section 5.1 as referring to the glottal stop realization, it is very negatively evaluated as unintelligent sounding and as lazy diction, precisely the kind of variable we expect to see less of in attentive reading styles. This difference, however, is much smaller than that of the fully realized [h], and therefore I will return to it after a statistical analysis of the data.
**ii. Statistical Analysis**

Since *hei* has not two but three phonetically distinct realizations, we cannot simply use a binomial logistic regression (like the one used for the pharyngeals), since that requires a two-way distinction (e.g. realized vs. not-realized). One possible approach would be to consider the three realizations of *hei* as if they were ordered on a continuum and use a linear regression, but any such ordering would necessarily involve making assumptions about the nature of these realizations. For example, on an axis of reduction, $\emptyset$ is obviously the most reduced form, but it is not clear if $[?]$ is more reduced than [h]. Conversely, on an axis of distance from the “original” pronunciation, [h] would be considered the least innovative, but there is no obvious ordering of $\emptyset$ and $[?]$.

Therefore, I chose to use a different approach, and created three separate mixed effects logistic regression models for each of pronunciation variants, each time comparing one of them against the set of potential occurrences. That is, I first analyzed the occurrence of [h], binning together $\emptyset$ and $[?]$ as “not h”, and then analyzed $[?]$, binning together $\emptyset$ and [h] as “not glottal stop”, and finally, analyzed the occurrence of $\emptyset$, binning together $[?]$ and [h] as “not null”.

The data for the first statistical model, Model 5.1, has all of the coded occurrences of *hei*, with the predicted variable being whether *hei* is realized as [h] or not. The model includes the speaker as a random effect. The fixed predictors are as follows:

- AttentiveStyle, a binary variable with the two values “word list” and “interview”.
- Age, a continuous numerical variable
- Sex, a binary variable with the two values “male” and “female”
- Site, a binary variable with the two values “TA” (Tel Aviv) and “RH” (Rosh Ha’ayin)
- ArticleHa, a binary variable with the values “yes” and “no” (where yes means that the hei occurred in the definite article ha)
- AfterPause, a binary variable with the values “yes” and “no” (where yes means that the hei followed a pause, as a phonological control)

|                        | Estimate | Std. Error | z value | Pr(>|z|) |
|------------------------|----------|------------|---------|---------|
| (Intercept)            | -5.60632 | 0.62449    | -8.977  | < 2e-16 |
| AttentiveStyle WordList| 5.76735  | 0.29516    | 19.539  | < 2e-16 |
| Age                    | 0.03343  | 0.01184    | 2.823   | 0.004758 |
| Sex Male               | 0.7114   | 0.40304    | 1.765   | 0.077546 |
| ArticleHa yes          | -1.13783 | 0.30286    | -3.757  | 0.000172 |
| AfterPause yes         | 1.56381  | 0.21752    | 7.189   | 6.52E-13 |
| Site TA                | -0.85524 | 0.40905    | -2.091  | 0.036545 |

**Model 5.1: Realization of hei as [h] (entire sample)**

The model shows a highly significant preference for [h] in the word list over the interview, as we would expect given the results in Table 5.2. Both of the linguistic constraints are significant as well: [h] is significantly less likely when it occurs in the definite article, as expected, since this an environment that favors reduction (Jurafsky et al. 2001). [h] is significantly more likely when it follows a pause (as opposed to another segment), which is again expected, since this an environment that favors retention, and not reduction.

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69 I coded the data for the preceding and following segments as well, but as this turned out not to have a significant effect, they are not included in the final statistical models.
There are several significant social constraints as well. [h] is more favored by older speakers, which is expected if it represents a more conservative form that is undergoing a change in progress, in which it is becoming less and less common. Possibly more surprisingly, there is a significant effect of the field site – [h] is less preferred in Tel Aviv than it is in Rosh Ha’ayin. Finally, the metalinguistic commentary in section 5.1 linked the non-production of [h] with a gendered stereotype, and it appear that the men of my sample do produce slightly more [h]’s. However, the effect of gender is only marginally significant, and therefore no robust conclusions can be made in that respect.

The next model, Model 5.2, is identical to Model 5.1 except for its predicted variable. This time, the model predicts not the realization of hei as [h] but as a glottal stop.

|                          | Estimate | Std. Error | z value | Pr(>|z|)  |
|--------------------------|----------|------------|---------|-----------|
| (Intercept)              | -3.571608| 0.415102   | -8.604  | < 2e-16 ***|
| AttentiveStyle WordList  | 0.467266 | 0.27336    | 1.709   | 0.08739   |
| Age                     | -0.012173| 0.007792   | -1.562  | 0.11825   |
| Sex Male                | -0.398965| 0.267308   | -1.493  | 0.13556   |
| Article Ha yes          | -0.702243| 0.259206   | -2.709  | 0.00674 **|
| AfterPause yes           | 1.983707 | 0.193472   | 10.253  | < 2e-16 ***|
| Site TA                 | 0.793841 | 0.283635   | 2.799   | 0.00513 **|

**Model 5.2:** Realization of hei as [ʔ] (entire sample)

We see the same significant effects for the linguistic constraints as in the previous model: [ʔ] is significantly favored following a pause, and significantly disfavored when it occurs in the definite article ha. On the social side, however, the two models have very different results. There is again a significant effect of field site, but in the
opposite direction: unlike [h], the glottal stop is preferred in Tel Aviv. Age is not significant in this model, suggesting that even if the glottal stop is an innovation, it is not necessarily more common among younger people, but rather seems to have a similar rate across age groups. Finally, while Table 5.2 showed a higher percentage of glottal stops in the word list compared to the interview data, the preference fails to achieve significance, though it seems to be trending that way. I will return to this point in the discussion in section 5.2.3.

Finally, I ran a third model, which is identical to the previous two models expect for the predicted variable – this time the model predicts whether the realization is null, while binning together the two realizations of [ʔ] and [h].

|                | Estimate | Std. Error | z value | Pr(>|z|) |
|----------------|----------|------------|---------|----------|
| (Intercept)    | 3.528711 | 0.424948   | 8.304   | < 2e-16  *** |
| AttentiveStyle | -5.518375| 0.312197   | -17.676 | < 2e-16  *** |
| WordList       | -0.008554| 0.008025   | -1.066  | 0.28     |
| Age            | -0.077772| 0.271479   | -0.286  | 0.775    |
| Sex Male       | 0.963279 | 0.201913   | 4.771   | 1.84E-06 *** |
| ArticleHa yes  | -2.242244| 0.16101    | -13.926 | < 2e-16  *** |
| AfterPause yes | 0.038596 | 0.278298   | 0.139   | 0.89     |

**Model 5.3**: Realization of hei as null (both sites)

The results of Model 5.3 are consistent with the two previous models. The phonological constraints that favor reduction are both significant, but in the opposite direction: occurrence in the definite article favors a null realization, and following a pause disfavors it, as we would expect. There is a significant effect of the attentive style – the null realization is less preferred in the word list. On the other hand, the
The results of the statistical analyses highlight the necessity of the approach taken, as opposed to ordering the three phonetic realizations on one unified axis. In fact, no such axis exists, since *hei* behaves differently with respect to the linguistic and the social constraints. With respect to the linguistic constraints, [h] and [ʔ] pattern together, favoring non-reduction environment, as opposed to $\emptyset$, which favors reduction environments. On the other hand, with regard to the social constraints, [h] and [ʔ] show opposite patterns – [h] is preferred in Rosh Ha’ayin and [ʔ] is preferred in Tel Aviv – whereas the null realization showed no significant effect. The results suggest that the three realizations of the variable form a hierarchy: the linguistic constraints determine whether *hei* is phonetically realized at all, whereas the social constraints determine what that phonetic realization will be.

A particularly interesting result emerging from these models is the significant effect of field site – among the two phonetically realized from of *hei*, Rosh Ha’ayin has a stronger preference for [h] whereas Tel Aviv has a stronger preference for [ʔ]. Since the ethnic make-up of the two samples is so different, this suggests that the variable may interact with ethnicity in meaningful ways. However, since the Rosh Ha’ayin sample consists only of Yemenites, simply adding ethnicity as a factor to the statistical analysis will not be telling, as the factors of site and ethnicity will be confounded in the model. Therefore, I will proceed to analyze each of the field sites separately. Since the model in which [h] or [ʔ] were binned together as “not null” was
consistent with the previous two, in the subsequent analyses I separately analyze only the occurrence [h] and [ʔ].

**iii. The results in Tel Aviv**

For the Tel Aviv data, I once again use the approach in which I separately model the realization of *hei* as either [h] or [ʔ]. In Model 5.4 the predicted variable is whether the realization of *hei* is [h], and it is identical to Model 5.1, except for two key differences. The first is that the data contains only the speakers from the Tel Aviv sample. The second is the addition of one more social factor, ethnicity, which following the results of Chapter 4, is operationalized as a three-way distinction between Ashkenazi, Mizrahi (non-Yemenite) and Yemenite.

| Estimate  | Std. Error | z value | Pr(>|z|) |
|-----------|------------|---------|----------|
| (Intercept) | -5.35094  | 1.00963 | -5.3     | 1.16E-07 *** |
| AttentiveStyle WordList | 5.9338  | 0.37839 | 15.682   | < 2e-16 *** |
| Ethnicity Mizrahi | -0.59469 | 0.62636 | -0.949   | 0.3424    |
| Ethnicity Yemenite | -0.91219 | 0.80494 | -1.133   | 0.2571    |
| Age | 0.01627 | 0.01521 | 1.07     | 0.2848    |
| Sex Male | 0.53039 | 0.55776 | 0.951    | 0.3416    |
| ArticleHa yes | -0.85875 | 0.39379 | -2.181   | 0.0292 *  |
| AfterPause yes | 2.0744 | 0.29966 | 6.923    | 4.44E-12 *** |

**Model 5.4:** Realization of *hei* as [h] in Tel Aviv

The model for Tel Aviv shows the same significant linguistic effects as we saw in the analysis for the entire sample – [h] is favored after a pause and disfavored in the definite article. It also shows the expected preference for the word list over the interview. However, none of the social factors considered came out as significant. Age, which was significant when considering the entire sample, is not a significant
predictor in Tel Aviv, which may have two explanations: one is that the age effect is
driven by the Rosh Ha’ayin sample, or conversely, that the effect in either sample is
too small on its own to achieve statistical significance. Most interestingly, ethnicity
does not have a significant effect either.

Model 5.5 is identical to Model 5.4, except that the predicted variable is whether
hei is realized as glottal stop.

|                         | Estimate | Std. Error | z value | Pr(>|z|) |
|-------------------------|----------|------------|---------|----------|
| (Intercept)             | -2.941015| 0.594747   | -4.945  | 7.61E-07 *** |
| AttentiveStyle WordList | 0.826985 | 0.302763   | 2.731   | 0.00631 **  |
| Ethnicity Mizrahi       | -0.231994| 0.387711   | -0.598  | 0.54959   |
| Ethnicity Yemenite      | 0.349639 | 0.494163   | 0.708   | 0.47923   |
| Age                     | -0.00572 | 0.009711   | -0.589  | 0.55581   |
| Sex Male                | -0.650754| 0.355903   | -1.828  | 0.06748   |
| ArticleHa yes           | -0.893477| 0.323127   | -2.765  | 0.00569 ** |
| AfterPause yes          | 1.877994 | 0.227506   | 8.255   | < 2e-16 *** |

Model 5.5: Realization of hei as [ʔ] in Tel Aviv

In this model we once again see the expected effects of the linguistic constraints:
[ʔ], like [h], is favored after a pause and disfavored in the definite article. Once again,
there is no effect of ethnicity or age. There appears to be a slight preference for
women to use [ʔ], but it is only marginally significant. Finally, we see that the
preference for [ʔ] in the word list, which was only marginal when considering both
field sites together (see Model 5.2) is significant in Tel Aviv, a point which I will
address in the discussion in section 5.2.3.
iv. The results in Rosh Ha’ayin

The final statistical analysis in this chapter is of the Rosh Ha’ayin data, for which I use the same approach as in the previous two analyses. Model 5.6 predicts the realization of hei as [h] in Rosh Ha’ayin, and is identical to Model 5.1 with two differences: first, it includes only the data from the Rosh Ha’ayin sample. Second, I added an additional predictor – whether or not the speaker has robust pharyngealization, based on the production data described in section 4.2. As in the analysis of trilling in section 4.4, this was operationalized as a binary distinction between “pharyngealizers” and “non-pharyngealizers”, based on whether or not they have a pharyngeal het production over 50% of the time.70

|                      | Estimate | Std. Error | z value | Pr(>|z|) |
|----------------------|----------|------------|---------|----------|
| (Intercept)          | -6.42751 | 0.959      | -6.702  | 2.05E-11 *** |
| AttentiveStyle WordList | 5.98532 | 0.66116    | 9.053   | < 2e-16 *** |
| Age                  | 0.01262  | 0.02147    | 0.588   | 0.5565   |
| Sex Male             | 0.49004  | 0.44666    | 1.097   | 0.27259  |
| Pharyngealizes yes   | 2.78253  | 0.91293    | 3.048   | 0.0023 ** |
| ArticleHa yes        | -1.52767 | 0.49628    | -3.078  | 0.00208 ** |
| AfterPause yes       | 0.95056  | 0.32478    | 2.927   | 0.00343 ** |

**Model 5.6:** Realization of hei as [h] in Rosh Ha’ayin

As expected, the model shows the significant effect of the linguistic controls: [h] is favored after a pause and disfavored in the definite article. In addition, we once again see the preference for [h] in the word list. Sex did not have a significant effect. Furthermore, age did not show a significant effect either, despite being significant when considering the sample as a whole. Finally, we see a significant link between

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70 This binary division may appear somewhat overly simplistic, since many speakers are not categorically one or the other. However, since almost all speakers who pharyngealized het at all did so at very high rates (over 90%), this simplification seems reasonable.
pharyngealization and *hei* – speakers who pharyngealize, are more likely to produce *hei* as [h].

Model 5.5 examines the production of glottal stop in Rosh Ha’ayin, and is identical to Model 5.6, except that the predicted variable is whether *hei* is realized as glottal stop.

|                  | Estimate | Std. Error | z value | Pr(>|z|) |
|------------------|----------|------------|---------|----------|
| (Intercept)      | -2.31361 | 0.59005    | -3.921  | 8.82E-05 *** |
| AttentiveStyle WordList | -1.09978 | 0.77564    | -1.418  | 0.15622 |
| Age              | -0.05013 | 0.01761    | -2.847  | 0.00441 **  |
| Sex Male         | -0.34785 | 0.41328    | -0.842  | 0.39997 |
| Pharyngealizes yes | 0.50349 | 0.53899    | 0.934   | 0.35023 |
| ArticleHa yes    | -0.22657 | 0.43094    | -0.526  | 0.59905 |
| AfterPause yes   | 2.35192  | 0.37235    | 6.316   | 2.68E-10 *** |

**Model 5.7:** Realization of *hei* as [ʔ] in Rosh Ha’ayin

Unlike in the Tel Aviv data, we do not see a preference for [ʔ] in the word list over the interview – in Rosh Ha’ayin it is only [h], and not [ʔ], which surfaces more in the attentive reading style. With respect to the linguistic constraints, we see a preference for [ʔ] when following a pause, but unlike all the other models, there is no effect of occurring in the definite article. Unlike in the model for [h], we do not see an effect of whether the speaker pharyngealizes, but we do see an effect of age – older speakers use [ʔ] less.

**5.2.3 Discussion**

In the previous sections I have shown that contrast to the typical view of *hei*, a fully realized [h] is a part of the phonological inventory of Modern Hebrew, and
participates in patterned variation. This is most clearly seen with respect to the
difference between the word list and interview data, in which the preferences
essentially flip – from 93% null realization in the interview data to 81% fully realized
[h] in the word list. This highly significant effect shows that even if it is only common
in specific settings, such as reading out loud, [h] is most certainly part of the
phonological inventory of almost all Israeli speakers, in all ages. Furthermore, even
though a fully realized [h] is rare in the interview data, it is by no means non-existent:
most speakers do use it, even if infrequently.

A key point to understanding the distribution of hei is that the variation is more
complex than simply a binary distinction between a realized and a reduced [h]. Rather,
there are three distinct phonetic realizations: null, [h] and a glottal stop. The data
reveal an interesting relation between these three variants. On the linguistic side, [h]
and [ʔ] consistently pattern together, with both of them dispreferred in environments
favoring reduction. On the social side, however, they show opposite patterns. With
respect to field site, [h] shows a significant effect of being more common in Rosh
Ha’ayin whereas [ʔ] is significantly more common in Tel Aviv. These opposing trends
are also reflected to a degree with respect to the effect of age: older speakers are more
likely to use [h] (though this is only significant when the sample is considered as a
whole, Model 5.1), whereas older speakers are less likely to use [ʔ] (but only in the
Rosh Ha’ayin data, Model 5.7).

Given these results, I proposed a hierarchical relation between the three variants,
in which the linguistic constraints, which favor reduction or non-reduction, determine
whether hei is phonetically realized at all, whereas the social constraints determine
whether the phonetic realization will be an [h] or a [ʔ]. This model is summarized in Figure 5.1.

![Diagram](image)

**Figure 5.1**: Schema for determining the phonetic realization of *hei*

The model proposed in Figure 5.1 can help us understand an otherwise puzzling result, when considering the word list data. As I have already noted, there is a very strong preference to use [h] in the word list, which is expected, since it is considered the more correct, original realization and is faithful to the orthography. However, as shown in Table 5.2, there is also a slight preference for [ʔ] in the word list – 12% as opposed to 4% in the interview data – and in Tel Aviv, this effect is statistically significant (Model 5.5). The glottal stop has none of the associations [h] has with prescriptive norms, nor is it faithful to the orthography, and yet it surfaces in the word list. This effect can be understood, if we consider that the word list is also an environment that does not favor reduction. In the attentive reading style, speakers feel pressure to use fully phonetically realized forms, which surfaces as an [h] for most speakers. However, it may be the case that for a minority of the speakers, [h] really is
not part of their phonetic inventory; when pressured to produce a phonetic realization, 
*hei* surfaces as the only non-reduced variant available to them, the glottal stop.

The metalinguistic commentary in section 5.1 appears to link the reduction of *hei* with a gendered stereotyped – most of the comments which have negative evaluations of reduced *hei* refer to women, and the specifically gendered stereotype of the *freha* is invoked. However, the production results show no robust link between gender and the realization of *hei*. Model 5.1 shows a marginal preference of [h] by men (when considering the entire sample), and Model 5.5 shows a marginal preference of [ʔ] by women (in the Tel Aviv data), but as neither of these is statistically significant, my data cannot point to any conclusions about gender.

Most interesting in the context of this dissertation is whether there is a link between ethnic identity and *hei*, and my production data shows that such a connection exists. When considering the prevailing linguistic stereotypes surveyed in section 5.1, *hei* is not explicitly linked with a particular ethnic group. However, since the metalinguistic commentary does involve the *freha* stereotype, which is not only gendered but also ethnicized, there are some hints about its being associated with Mizrahi speakers. Nevertheless, the production results do not show that Mizrahis differ from Ashkenazis in their realization of *hei*. But as was shown for the pharyngeals in Chapter 4, the links between ethnicity and language use can be more subtle than simply a distinction between what Mizrahis do and what Ashkenazis do.

While the pharyngeals are imbued with a rich set of social meanings, which allows them to index a wide range of attributes associated with a Mizrahi persona, *hei* is more commonly ideologically linked with formality and correctness. But the one
thing that an overtly realized [h] and pharyngealizing have in common is their adherence to the original historic form of Hebrew. While there is no general link between hei and ethnicity in my data, the results show that the Yemenites of Rosh Ha’ayin do differ from the speakers in Tel Aviv – they use [h] more and [?] less. It appears that the Yemenite speakers in Rosh Ha’ayin, who use pharyngeals in constructing their authentic Yemenite identity, use hei in a similar way – and have a stronger preference for the conservative [h] form. Although the two variables are very different in their range of meanings, when combined together their intersection constructs a consistent style: a form of linguistic conservativism that actually produces what for most other speakers is just a reified ideal, thereby making a claim for being the most authentic speakers of Hebrew as it “should” be spoken.

This link between pharyngealization and fully realizing hei is made explicit in the overt language ideologies of some of the speakers in the Rosh Ha’ayin sample. For example, several speakers have commented on how they speak “correct Hebrew, with ayin and het and hei”, bundling the phenomena together. This can also be seen in this conversation with Hagar, an 18-year-old woman from Rosh Ha’ayin. She only occasionally pharyngealizes, but that is enough for some of her (non-Yemenite) classmates to comment on. In this excerpt she complains about a specific classmate who mocks her het and ayin, and then she immediately proceeds to say that her use of hei is commented on as well.

(41) yeš lo keta3 kaze le7akot, im ata omer mila kcat yoter be-7et or kcat yoter
    be-3ayin az hu omer, hu keilu me7ake. 3axšav ani ma ze le me3anyen oti dvarim
“He has this thing where he imitates you, if you say a word with a little bit more *het* or with a little bit more *ayin*, so he says, he like imitates it. Now I’m totally not interested in stuff like that. I tell him ‘Honey, you’re the one who’s wrong, I speak correctly, that’s your problem’…

They also used to say that I pronounce a really strong *hei*. My name is Hagar, why would I say Agar?”

The link is made even more explicit in this quote from Rinat, a 37 year old kindergarten teach from Rosh Ha’ayin, who is a very robust pharyngealizer.

(42) ba-mixlala šeli ha-more aškenaziya, ve-hi tamid kše-hi crixa lehagid et ha-ot *hei*

hi hayta omeret ‘tov rinat, at tagidi *hei’, ve-hi lo yexola lehagid et ha-*hei*.

Az yeš lanu itron… ken, yeš et ha-otiyot me-ha-garon, kaše lahem

“In college my teacher is Ashkenazi, and whenever she has to say the letter *hei*, she would say, ‘okay Rinat, you say *hei*’, and she can’t say *hei*. So we have an advantage… yeah, there are the letters from the throat, they’re hard for them”
The “letters from the throat” which Rinat is referring to are of course ayin, het and hei. Although her teacher might actually have problems realizing an [h], the word list data shows that most speakers can easily do so if they wish. Nevertheless, Rinat lumps together [h] with the pharyngeals as sounds that some speakers cannot produce, and since she herself does produce them, it gives her an advantage when she needs to read out loud, as she can do so correctly. Thus her conservative use of several aspects of the language combines in constructing a style that is part and parcel with her authentic Yemenite identity.

5.3 The perception and social evaluation of hei

The production data in the previous section shows meaningful variation in hei, but it also shows that the overwhelmingly preferred realization of hei is not pronouncing it at all. In this light, the metalinguistic commentary in section 5.1, which features negative social evaluations of people who do not pronounce hei, is somewhat puzzling. While the social evaluation and actual production of a variable often do not neatly align, it is surprising that a variant that is used by essentially all speakers, would be stereotyped as bad diction and sounding stupid.

One possible answer has to do with the difference between the word list and the interview. As opposed to the interview, for most speakers a fully realized [h] was the

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71 It is interesting to note that neither Rinat nor Hagar consistently produce [h]’s in these examples, nor anywhere else in the interview. In the Hebrew transcription I have marked in bold the instances of hei that are actually phonetically realized, and they are clearly the minority. Once again, since for all the speakers in the sample the null realization is by far the preferred variant, it appears that producing [h] even slightly more often is considered – both by the speakers themselves and the people commenting on their speech – as pronouncing the hei as [h].
preferred realization in the word list, suggesting its link with sounding more formal. However, while this could account for the sentiment expressed in (36), in which a television host was chided for not saying *hei*, the social evaluations shown in section 5.1 were by no means restricted only to what is acceptable in more formal settings. This explanation would suggest a language ideology consisting of a bizarre double standard, in which the speakers themselves very rarely use [h] in casual speech, but still expect others to do so.

I believe that the answer to this apparent paradox lies in a key point of the previous sections: *hei* varies not just between realized and deleted, but rather between three distinct forms: realized as [h], realized as [ʔ] and fully reduced. I propose that speakers do not have negative evaluations of the fully reduced form. As the most common production, complete reduction is considered a default and acceptable realization of *hei* – it goes unnoticed and it is not a feature that is commented on. Rather, it is the much more rare realization of *hei* as a glottal stop that is commented on negatively, and it is the form targeted in the social evaluations of “not pronouncing *hei*”.

This may appear counter intuitive, since from a linguistic point of view “not pronouncing *hei*”, seems to indicate a deletion, not a production of a different sound. However, negatively evaluating only [ʔ] would be consistent with the results of the production study. I proposed a hierarchical model in which phonetic constraints affect whether *hei* is phonetically realized at all whereas social constraints determine the choice between [ʔ] and [h]. If that is the case, it stands to reason that the more socially conditioned variation be the one that speakers are attune to.
Furthermore, the metalinguistic commentary lends support to the hypothesis that only [ʔ], and not Ø, is the stereotyped variant. This can be seen in the fact that some comments refer to “pronouncing hei like alef”, the letter which represents a glottal stop, as well as the many instances of eye dialect in which a written hei is replaced with alef. However, as stated before, however, this is not conclusive evidence. First, the historical glottal stop represented by alef is generally not produced either, so it is not clear what sound people refer to when they invoke this letter. Secondly, the particulars of Hebrew orthography make it impossible to simply delete hei while keeping the original word recognizable. Furthermore, it may be the case that the speakers referring to “not pronouncing hei” and the speakers referring to “pronouncing hei like alef” are thinking of two different realizations, and that both [ʔ] and Ø are negatively evaluated.

In order to convincingly show that it is only the glottal stop, and not the deleted form, which is stereotyped (regardless of the term used for this by speakers), we must gauge the actual reaction of speakers to these sounds. In this section, I present the results of a perception experiment designed to test the social evaluations of the three realizations of hei.

The experiment uses the matched guise paradigm (Lambert et al 1960), which elicits listener social evaluations of stimuli that differ in the sociolinguistic feature of interest. This technique has been used widely in research on the perception of sociolinguistic variables (see Garrett 2010 for a review), and is a popular way of targeting language attitudes. One critique of the method is that the speaker recording the stimuli is unlikely to be able to reproduce materials that differ only in the specific
variable that is researched. Technological advances have allowed for these concerns to be addressed in more recent approaches to the paradigm, in which the target variable is manipulated while controlling for all the other aspects of the speech signal. For example, in her investigation of –ING in American English, Campbell Kibler (2007) manipulated her stimuli by pasting two different variants (-ing and –in) into the same sentential frame, allowing her to explore the evaluations of this variable while remaining confident of what her participants are cueing into. I follow this approach, and in my experiment I investigate the reactions of speakers to stimuli that are minimally different, by manipulating the realization of hei to create three conditions: [h], [ʔ], and Ø.

5.3.1 Methods

i. Participants

The participants were 100 native speakers of Hebrew, currently living in Israel, recruited via on-line social networks and snowballing.

ii. Materials

In order to construct the stimuli, four native speakers of Hebrew were recorded producing the same Hebrew carrier sentence. The speakers were two men and two women: Uri (male, age 36), Haim (male, age 27), Ela (female, age 37) and Dana (female, age 33). None of them would be classified as being either prototypically
Ashkenazi or Mizrahi in the Israeli perception of ethnicity: Uri, Haim and Ela are all of mixed ethnic heritage (Ashkenazi and Mizrahi) and Dana is of Bulgarian descent.72

The carrier sentence contained a *heи* in intervocalic position: “*yeš la enaim nora kehot ve-yafot*” (‘she has beautiful dark eyes’). The speakers were instructed to record the sentence four times: one time for each realization of the *heи* ([h], [ʔ], θ), and one more time in their most natural production, to be used as the carrier (this was invariably a θ as well). While the best phonological control would be to alter only the realization of *heи*, simply pasting a glottal stop into the carrier did not result in natural sounding stimuli, nor was there a way to manipulate the θ guise. Therefore, a slightly different approach was used, which maximized the phonological similarity of the guises while ensuring that they were all manipulated and yet all sounded natural: the three guises ([h], [ʔ], θ) were created by using Praat to replace the entire V-*heи*-V sequence in the carrier sentence with the V-*heи*-V sequence in each of the three productions.

Figure 5.2 – Figure 5.4 show the production of the word *kehot* (‘dark’) by Dana, used for creating the guises.

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72 Although Bulgaria is in Europe, the Jewish community there was traditionally considered Mizrahi. In current day Israel it is one of the ethnicities that does not fall neatly into an Ashkenazi-Mizrahi dichotomy, as discussed in Chapter 2.
iii. Procedure

The experiment was conducted on-line, via a web form using Qualtrics, an online survey creation tool. The experiment was entirely in Hebrew. Each participant heard two different speakers, a man and a woman, each in one of three guises of the hei ([h], [ʔ], ∅). The speakers, the order (man first or woman first) and the guises were randomly selected.
After hearing each stimulus, the participants were asked:

i. To rate the speaker with respect to the following attributes on a likert scale of 1-6: smart (xaxam), nice (nexmad), attractive (yafe), sophisticated (metuxkam), urban (ironi), educated (maskil).

ii. If they can name the speaker’s ethnicity. In order to not force an Ashkenazi-Mizrahi dichotomy, the response was in free form, and the question used the Hebrew word eda, which does not necessarily imply an Ashkenazi-Mizrahi distinction.73

5.3.2 Results

i. Attributes

The results for the adjective attributes exhibited different patterns for the male voices and the female voices, and therefore I analyze them here separately. Figure 5.5 shows the results for the female speakers.

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73 As discussed in Section 1.1.3, the word eda is slightly problematic in this context; however, it was the best choice out of the problematic options. The only other option, motsa (‘origin’) invariably implies either Ashkenazi or Mizrahi.
As the figure shows, the ratings in the [ʔ] condition are significantly lower than either the ∅ or [h] conditions for two adjectives “sophisticated” (p<0.05) and “nice” (p<0.05). There appears to be a trend in which [ʔ] is rated lower than other guises in general, but this did not achieve significance for any of the other attributes. In addition, there is no significant difference between the ∅ and [h] conditions for any of the attributes.

The results for the men, given in Figure 5.6, show a less clear picture – there is much more variation and no clear trend. As opposed to the female speakers, in the case of the male speakers there was no statistically significant effect of the condition ([h], [ʔ] or ∅) for any of the attributes.
Figure 5.6: Ratings for the male speakers

ii. Ethnicity

Since the response for the question whether participants could name the ethnicity was in free form, I coded the results in a way that could be quantitatively analyzed. This proved to be very straightforward – virtually all responses were either “Ashkenazi”, “Mizrahi” or “I don’t know”. Therefore, I used these three categories for analyzing the data. The remaining responses were “mixed” (3 instances), which were lumped with “I don’t know”, and a few other nationalities (8 instances), which were excluded from the analysis. The results are shown in Figure 5.7.
There was no statistically significant difference between the three conditions, suggesting that the different realizations of the variable are not perceived as particularly associated with either Mizrahi or Ashkenazi ethnicities. When considering the data, however, we can see that the answers for the [ʔ] and ø guises are essentially identical, with “Mizrahi” (the lightest grey) getting 5-6% of the answers and “Ashkenazi” (the slightly darker grey) getting 45-47% of the answers. The [h] guise is somewhat different – there were no guesses for “Mizrahi” at all, and a larger part of the answers (59%) was “Ashkenazi”. This may suggest an actual trend that might have achieved significance with a larger set of participants: it is possible that the full realization of [h] is associated with being Ashkenazi, or rather, with not being Mizrahi. But once again, as this is not a statistically significant effect, it must remain a speculation at this point.
5.3.3 Discussion

The only significant effect found in the experiment was that the female speakers received lower ratings in the [ʔ] than in either the ∅ or [h] guises. There was no significant difference between the ∅ and [h] guises at all. Therefore, the results confirm the prediction that it is only [ʔ] and not ∅ that gets negatively evaluated, and support my hypothesis that the linguistics stereotypes about “not using hei” refer to the glottal stop realization, not to the far more common ∅ realization.

In addition, the results raise some questions. First, it is surprising that there was no difference between the ∅ or [h] guises at all, since the production data does show a clear variation in their use, with [h] being very frequent in the word list data and very rare in the interview data. Perhaps the manipulation was too subtle, and speakers could not hear a difference between these two guises. Conversely, it may be the case that although most speakers do produce both variants, hei is so often realized as ∅, that speakers actually perceive it as an [h] and do not reliably distinguish the two realizations.

Second, it is noteworthy that a difference between the guises was only found for the female speakers. Since the experiment only had two male speakers and two female speakers, it is impossible to come to a definite conclusion that this is an effect of the speakers’ gender – as it might be attributed to numerous other differences in the voices. Nevertheless, in light of the fact that much of the negative metalinguistic commentary about “not saying hei” was about women and involved gendered stereotypes, it does suggest that the social evaluation of hei is different for men and for women. Although the production data in section 5.2.2 did not show that women use
more, it may be the case that only women get negatively judged for doing so. Specifically, the ways in which the female speakers were negatively evaluated in the guise – less nice and less sophisticated – may suggest that evoked the image of a stereotypical freha, uncouth and loud, whereas for the male speakers there was no such association with any stereotyped character type.

With respect to the ethnicity results, since there was no significant difference between the guises, it is hard to come to any definite conclusions. The results suggest that despite the link with the freha character, which is an ethnicized stereotype, speakers do not associate the use with a particular ethnicity. If anything, the complete lack of “Mizrahi” responses and the greater number of “Ashkenazi” responses in the guise may suggest that is more Ashkenazi sounding – which may correspond to the stereotype of Ashkenazis being more proper and less casual, as discussed in section 1.1.2. This would be a case in which the language ideologies have more to do with how the speaker is perceived than with actual language use: recall that based on the results of the production data, Ashkenazis did not have a preference for and it was only the Yemenites of Rosh Ha’ayin who showed such a preference. But once again, as this is not a significant result, it must remain a speculation at this point.

The ethnicity results raise a few more noteworthy points. Although the question about the speaker’s ethnicity was not a forced choice, virtually all speakers answered in the terms of Ashkenazi-Mizrahi dichotomy, with almost all responses being “Ashkenazi”, “Mizrahi” or “I don’t know” (in fact, one participant actually answered “I don’t know if he is Ashkenazi or Mizrahi”). This result highlights how salient the
binary distinction is, and that for many speakers, these are the most relevant categories when considering ethnicity in Israel. Furthermore, although the speakers themselves were not prototypically Ashkenazi, almost half of the participants guessed that they were. This suggests that for many of the participants, “Ashkenazi” is perceived as the default unmarked category – if there are no cues leading them to consider otherwise, an unfamiliar voice is assumed to be Ashkenazi.

5.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I explored the variable hei from various perspectives, and demonstrated that it is well worthy of further attention from a sociolinguistic perspective. I showed that it has not two but three distinct phonetic realizations, and that this has consequences for its social evaluation – while only a fully articulated [h] is the prescriptively correct form, it is only the glottal stop, and not a complete deletion, that gets negative social evaluation.

With respect to production, I demonstrated that there is meaningful variation: although a fully realized [h] is rare, it is the preferred variant for certain styles. The production data show an interesting relation between the social and linguistic constraints. Whereas linguistically [ʔ] and [h] pattern together as non-reduced forms that favor similar environments, on the social axis they are on the opposite ends of the pole, with the deleted form serving as a default of sorts. This is consistent with the results of the perception experiment, in which social evaluation deems [ʔ] the variant most distant in meaning from the prescriptive norms associated with [h].
Finally, I showed that for the Yemenites in Rosh Ha’ayin, the production of hei is a useful resource in linguistically performing their ethnic identity – compared to the other speakers, they prefer the [h] realization and disprefer the [ʔ] realization. Hei does not have the deep ideological links with ethnicity that the pharyngeals do, and accordingly, it does not appear to have the rich indexical meanings that were shown for the pharyngeals. However, the social meanings of hei and of the pharyngeals do converge on one point, a claim to the authentically correct form, and as such they are used together in creating the linguistic style of the authentic Yemenite speaker.

This raises the question of what exactly constitutes using language to perform authenticity, and what I mean by laying a claim to an authentic Yemenite persona or an authentic Mizrahi persona in general. After all, authenticity comes down to more than just using a conservative linguistic form. In the final concluding chapter, I try to unpack the notion of authenticity and how it relates both to a Mizrahi identity and to language use, and specifically – to the linguistic variables I have discussed.
Chapter 6

General discussion: Authentic Mizrahis and authentic speakers

6.1 Reconsidering the results

In the previous chapters I have shown how several segmental variables are related to the construction of Jewish ethnic identity. Contrary to Blanc (1968), none of my results patterned in a way that suggests a clearly defined Mizrahi Hebrew, which can be distinguished from the “Modern Koiné” (or from an Ashkenazi Hebrew for that matter). There was no feature that Mizrahis consistently use but Ashkenazis do not, nor vice versa. Linguistic features did interact with ethnicity, but in more subtle ways.

*Het* and *ayin* are the linguistic features most ideologically linked with Mizrahi-ness, and as such, the most likely candidates to pattern along ethnic lines, but most Mizrahis do not pharyngealize, and the pharyngeals are not simply a marker for Mizrahi ethnicity. The pattern of *het* and *ayin* is nevertheless intimately connected with ethnicity – while not common among all Mizrahis, they appear only in the speech of Mizrahi speakers, and are still a valuable stylistic resource. Even very occasional uses create indexical links to notions of a “typical” Mizrahi persona, and consistent use is shown to be a key part in the linguistic style of a specific Mizrahi identity, the Yemenites of Rosh Ha’ayin. A different variable that I have discussed, *hei*, does not have the same ideological links to ethnicity that the pharyngeals have, and does not
display a general pattern that correlates with ethnicity at all. Nevertheless, its associations with an older and more correct form of Hebrew make it a useful resource for the Yemenites of Rosh Ha’ayin in constructing their identity. Taken together, these findings highlight the need for an approach which explores the link between ethnicity and linguistic variation not by seeking a correlation between pre-determined and essentialized ethnic categories, but rather by observing how the social meaning of linguistic features from the general repertoire of the language are taken up in the construction and performance of specific ethnic identities.

Investigating the role that ethnicity plays in linguistic differentiation has been a key goal of sociolinguistics ever since its inception as a field of interest, and research such as Labov’s (1972) seminal work on African American English has had a tremendous influence on the field as a whole. However most of the subsequent research has focused on minority ethnic groups within the US, typically contrasting the minority group’s non-standard variables with the majority (white) patterns (Fought 2002). Trying to apply such a perspective to my data highlights its shortcomings and underlying assumptions. The first issue is that the axis of standardness is simply not the most relevant axis of social meaning. Being more Mizrahi does not just mean being more standard or less standard – the social meaning of these linguistic variables and their relation to prescriptive norms is multifaceted. The second issue is that despite the salience of the term *Mizrahi*, it is not a very useful category for investigating sociolinguistic variation, and placing it on *any* such axis would not be very informative.
Of course, the results described here are a product of the choice of specific linguistic variables. It may be the case that there are other variables, which do neatly line up with the categories of “Ashkenazi” and “Mizrahi”. However, I do not believe that that is very likely. Once again, pharyngealizing is the stereotypically Mizrahi feature, and nevertheless it shows a far more complicated pattern. But even if such variables do exist, that would not undermine the general point made by my results – that the linguistic variation related to ethnic identity amounts to much more than simply sounding more Mizrahi or less Ashkenazi.

A key point in arguing that the sociolinguistic variation cannot be explained by the categories “Mizrahi” and “Ashkenazi” is the specific linguistic behavior of Rosh Ha’ayin Yemenites, which is part of the construction of their distinct ethnic identity. That is not to say that all linguistic variation can be explained simply by replacing one set of demographic categories with another more nuanced one. Reifying any such categories inevitably involves a certain degree of essentialism, the position that the attributes and behavior of socially defined groups can be determined and explained by reference to characteristics inherent to the group. An ideology of essentialism rests on the assumptions that groups can be clearly delimited and that group members are more or less alike, both of which are false: ethnic identity is a complex social construct, and not simply a membership in a clearly delineated group.

Nevertheless, categories such as these are not without their use, as they can help make sense of extremely complicated structures. And they can be advantageous in research, when used to achieve a short-term goal while maintaining awareness of their limitations in the long term. This has been termed strategic essentialism (Spivak 1988;
for the introduction of the concept into sociolinguistics, see McElhinny 1996). Such is my use of the category Yemenite – I am not claiming that simply replacing one category (“Mizrahi”) with other more narrowly defined ones (e.g. “Yemenite”) can fully capture the range of ethnic identities in Israel. Obviously, just as not all Mizrahis are the same, not all Yemenites are the same either – and it most certainly is not the case that all Yemenites in my sample (even when distinguishing between those in Tel Aviv from those in Rosh Ha’ayin) use language in the same way. Rather, the focus on Yemenite as a category is in order to make a bigger point – even to the extent that Mizrahi and Ashkenazi are meaningful categories in Israeli sociology, they are not the most useful categories for explaining patterns of sociolinguistic variation. The ideological links between a Yemenite identity and a specific set of linguistic behaviors makes it clear that even when one remains within the realm of pre-determined ethnic categories, the resolution of “Mizrahi” and “Ashkenazi” is simply not fine enough, and more subtle distinctions are necessary. Using more nuanced categories can help us uncover more meaningful patterns in the variation, but we must keep in mind that the linguistic behavior we seek to explain is ultimately produced by individuals, not groups.

6.2 The multidimensionality of linguistic variation

When discussing the role of gender in linguistic variation, Eckert (1990) warns against interpreting gender differences solely along a unified axis which contains “a folk connection between old and new, formal and informal, better and worse, correct
and incorrect” (Eckert 1990:249). Eckert claims that such a single axis cannot fully account for women’s linguistic behavior, since women do more than simply be more or less conservative than men. Stated more generally, no single axis can account for the full extent of women’s linguistic behavior, because women do more than simply sound more or less like men.

This critique applies even more broadly, and in fact, it is likely to be relevant to any other socially meaningful category, since humans interact with other humans, not with categories. And while these categories may be useful for both linguists and speakers in conceptualizing the world around them, they are complex and ideological social constructs, and their relation to linguistic variation is accordingly complex. As I have shown, this insight most definitely applies to my Hebrew data, but it goes well beyond just the research of ethnicity in Israel.

The underlying assumption that linguistic variation can be analyzed along one unified axis of social meanings across a single dimension is common in sociolinguistics, but more often than not it is a tacit one. However, the study of creole languages invokes this notion explicitly. In creole language settings there is rarely a sharply defined boundary between creole and standard (or basilect and acrolect), which gave rise to the notion of the creole continuum. Understanding the distinction between basilect and acrolect as continuous, rather than a choice between two discrete categories, is undoubtedly necessary given the nature of language use in such setting. However, the appropriateness of this model to fully capture the range of variation relies on the assumption that variables can be ordered in terms of a single dimension, namely, that of “creoleness”. This has been accepted as a useful working assumption.
by many creolists, but nevertheless, the question of the unidimensionality of the variation has been raised even in the earliest description of the speech communities of Jamaica and Guyana as creole continua (see Rickford 1987 for a review). Washabaugh (1977) was the first to argue that the variation in the Caribbean creole-speaking community of Providence Island, Colombia, moves alongside separate and orthogonal axes of carefulness and creoleness. For example, the equivalent of the Standard English complementizer *to* varies between basilectal [fi] and acrolectal [tu], but there is also variation between careful [fi] and casual [fa], both equally basilectal, and between careful [tu] and casual [te], both equally acrolectal, as shown in Figure 6.1.

![Figure 6.1: Variation in to on Providence Island (adapted from Washabaugh 1977)](image)

Despite data such as these, the creole continuum remains a prevailing notion in creole linguistics, with some researchers taking the position that much can be gained from carefully determining when one can and should strive for unidimensionality, instead of making multidimensionality an a priori part of the model (Rickford 1987). It may indeed be the case that for certain linguistic phenomena, attempting to create a
unified scale for the variation is theoretically useful; nevertheless, I argue that my data clearly motivates a truly multi-dimensional approach to language and ethnicity and Israel. And I believe that that when one delves deeply into issues of identity construction, that is not the exception, but the rule.

6.3 Axes of ethnic identity

I have argued for the need of a multidimensional approach to understand the social patterning of the linguistic variables I discuss. With that perspective in mind, it is useful to reconsider Lefkowitz’s (2004) two-dimensional model of the space of Israeli identity (Figure 1.1). As discussed in detail in section 1.1.3, Lefkowitz models ethnicity as a continuum that varies simultaneously along two dimensions of meaning: Israeliness and Easternness. Lefkowitz places Yemenites as the most Israeli and least Eastern of the Mizrahi groups, a position attributed to them due to their being perceived as most conforming to Zionist ideals, and as such, politically least threatening to mainstream (Ashkenazi) Israel.

However, if we try to interpret linguistic behavior along this axis, we run into a problem – Chapter 4 shows that from a linguistic point of view, Yemenites stand out as the most Mizrahi of Mizrahi groups – with the highest retaining of the pharyngeals. This cannot be remedied by shifting the “Yemenite” square to a different place in the model. No reordering can adequately capture the complex positioning of Yemenites, since the model defines Israeliness and Easternness as essentially opposites. This highlights a limitation of the model – although it is portrayed in a two dimensional
space, the way in which the two axes are defined means that every move towards being more Mizrahi is at the same time a move towards being less Ashkenazi and less Israeli. The model is essentially equivalent to one unified axis, in which Mizrahi and Ashkenazi are opposite ends of the same pole, and Ashkenazi is equated with Israeli. This is schematized in Figure 6.2.

![Figure 6.2: A unidimensional schema of Israeli identity](image)

When portrayed in this way, the shortcomings of the model become clear. It relies on a dichotomy in which Mizrahi identity is nothing more than the flip side of Ashkenazi-ness, a position that cannot accommodate the linguistic evidence. That is not to say that there is no place for this schema – although it is overly simplistic, it does capture the perspective of many Israelis, who do think of Israeli ethnicity in precisely this way, as was discussed in section 1.1.1. And indeed, several of the speakers in my sample explicitly expressed such views, as can be seen in this exchange with Kineret, a 36 year old woman from Rosh Ha’ayin. In this conversation she says that she is sad that her husband, who is also Yemenite, had never learned how to read the prayers in Yemenite style, something that she misses:
K – He doesn’t know how to do it. He’s completely Israeli.
RG – And do you feel like there’s something about you that isn’t completely Israeli?
K – I’m completely Israeli too. Because my father didn’t have sons, he didn’t have anyone to pass it on to, we’re girls, so we didn’t learn how to read (i.e. recite the prayers). People always told me “You came out completely Ashkenazi”.
Yeah, we’re Ashkenazified.

For Kineret, being less Yemenite and less Mizrahi means being “completely Israeli”, and being completely Israeli is equated with being “Ashkenazified”. Other speakers expressed views in which Israeliness and Mizrahi-ness (or Yemenite-ness) are still considered as opposites – but not necessarily mutually exclusive, since one can occupy multiple positions on this pole. This can be seen in the following exchange with Udi, a 45-year-old man from Rosh Ha’ayin.

U – It’s like I told you, one foot here and the other one there. For me, my foot is here, and on the other hand my foot is there. Here in Israel, and here in Yemen, with the mentality.
RG – And you feel like-
U – Yes, two worlds. And you need to maneuver.
This unified axis, in which Israeliness and Ashkenazi-ness are one and the same, and the polar opposite of Mizrahi-ness, does not represent the perceptions of all Israelis, however. For many, while Mizrahis and Ashkenazis do occupy the opposite ends of an axis of ethnicity, neither of them is the opposite of Israeliness. Recall the discussion in section 3.3.2 of Tsvika Hadar, who sociologist Oz Almog sees as the epitome of Israeliness, precisely because he is neither the prototypical Mizrahi nor the prototypical Ashkenazi, but an amalgamation of both: “Tsvika Hadar is the new Ashkenazi-Mizrahi. A Mediterranean mix… He is super Israeli” (Almog 2004). This view of Hadar is common and exemplifies a bigger trend in Israel, as described in section 1.1.2 – the emergence of a Mediterranean identity (Nocke 2006), one that understands Israeliness not as Ashkenazi or Mizrahi but precisely as the mixture of both. Indeed, some of the speakers in my sample expressed a view in which focusing on ethnic distinctions is a thing of the past, and no one ethnicity is more or less Israeli. This can be seen in the following exchange with Hagar, an 18-year-old woman from Rosh Ha’ayin. When I asked her about ethnic stigmas she acknowledged their existence, but quickly added:

(45) “I believe that in a generation or two it will disappear. Because I think of myself as Israeli, and all my friends think of themselves this way too. We don’t see each other as Indian or Moroccan or Yemenite or Polish or French… We don’t see ourselves like that, we see ourselves as Israeli”
These perspectives support a different configuration from the one given in Figure 6.2. In this view, Israeliness is not diametrically opposed to Mizrahi-ness, but rather, is equally distant from both Mizrahi-ness and Ashkenazi-ness, or is the intersection of both, as shown in Figure 6.3.

![Diagram showing a unidimensional schema of Israeli identity (revised)]

**Figure 6.3:** A unidimensional schema of Israeli identity (revised)

While the view described in Figure 6.3 may more accurately represent the perceptions of certain Israelis, it still has the basic inadequacy of that in Figure 6.2. Namely, in both of them, regardless of where “Israeliness” is positioned, Mizrahi and Ashkenazi are still defined as polar opposites. Under such a view being more Mizrahi is being less Ashkenazi and vice versa, and once again, such a notion of ethnicity is not rich enough to explain the linguistic behavior of the actual speakers. I have argued against attempting to place Mizrahi speakers on an axis of linguistic standardness, and similarly, trying to arrange the linguistic features on an axis of Mizrahi-ness would be no more revealing. When the Yemenites in the Rosh Ha’ayin sample use more of the [h] realization of hei, it is part of their construction of their Yemenite ethnic identity, but it is not being “more Ashkenazi” or “more Mizrahi” – after all, hei did not show a correlation with either of these categories. The linguistic variation does not move along one unified axis, and in order to understand it, we need to understand ethnicity.
in a truly multidimensional fashion: it includes various axes of social meaning that can combine in building an ethnic identity. I propose that one such axis, which is crucial in theorizing how language interacts with ethnicity in Israel, is the axis of authenticity.

### 6.4 Who gets to be an authentic Hebrew speaker?

The notion of the authentic speaker is a key interest in the field of sociolinguistics. As Eckert (2003) notes, many sociolinguists have focused on finding this alleged spontaneous speaker of the purest vernacular, whose speech gives the researcher access to the “real” language in the speaker’s mind – language in its most unadulterated form, untouched by speaker agency or prescriptive pressures.

Authenticity in speech has also been touched upon by much of the language ideologies in this dissertation, both those found in media data and those expressed by the speakers that I interviewd. One of the ways in which the speakers brought it up was in stating that the most authentic Yemenite man not only speaks with het and ayin, but also knows how to recite the Jewish prayers in the Yemenite way (recall the interactions in (29) and (43)). But that is a specific ritualized language style that one has to actively learn by going to the mori. Clearly, these two notions of authentic speech appear to be very different things. Both views may exist, because authenticity is not an inherent quality, but an ideological construct, and while it may be central to both analysts and speakers, the emphases on what is truly authentic can be quite diverse.
In an attempt to unpack the term, Coupland (2003) distinguishes between establishment authenticities and vernacular authenticities. With respect to language, the former represents the ideology of proper and standard varieties ideologized metonymically as “the language”, whereas the latter focuses on how language really is on the ground. As Eckert (2003) points out, authenticity also “implies stasis – the ‘real’ peasant is just like the peasant that came before”, and indeed, an aspect of historicity is important in both cases. Establishment authenticities have history on their side in the form of a venerable tradition of proper standard usage, whereas vernacular authenticities derive their historicity from a natural and inherent linguistic change in community speech norms over time.

As Coupland points out, sociolinguists have traditionally focused on vernacular authenticities, explicitly working to validate it. As a social ideology, challenging the importance of establishment authenticities has valid and important motivations, seen very clearly in the study of African American Vernacular English – researchers actively sought to recognize and legitimate the widely devalued linguistic practices of a marginalized group. But as a theoretical ideology that determined the most worthy object of research, the insistence on a particular “authentic speech” also had a limiting effect.

In the Labovian tradition, there is an opposition between the “real” speech in a speaker’s mind, and speech that is conforming to standard language ideologies. One is seen as a completely natural use of language whereas the other is the product of outside forces. Allegedly, were it not for standardizing pressures, speakers would use the purest vernacular all the time, but that is hardly ever the case. Nevertheless, the
fleeting moments in which the true vernacular surfaces are actively sought out, and treated as a direct glimpse into the most authentic of speech. This ideology is entrenched in the methodology. The sociolinguistic interview has a free speech component and reading component (word list, minimal pairs etc.), designed to elicit different linguistic styles from the speakers. But these components are not treated equally; the free form interview is regarded as a much more telling source of data, and even there, not all parts of the interview are created equal. The interviews are explicitly designed to elicit the most vernacular style of speech, with methods like the “danger of death story”, because it is only when speakers are at their most casual and off guard, that they produce the “true” vernacular. The word list on the other hand, is seen as a valuable source of data, but mostly insofar as it contrasts with the interview – here speakers are at their most careful and attentive, and are more likely to use standard features, which are seen as an unwanted interference in their linguistic system.

The standard finding for many sociolinguistic variables certainly is that shifting from the interview to the word list results in fewer non-standard and stereotyped features. But that does not necessarily warrant the interpretation that the interview is in some ways more real, or that the word list is a contrived style. As pointed out by Wolfson (1976), a sociolinguistic interview is not a “neutral” way of eliciting speech samples, but rather a specifically situated speech event. An interview has its own particular style and setting, which for the average interviewee is quite unnatural – after all, for most of the speakers in my sample, it was the first time anyone had ever wanted to interview them. And despite all methodological attempts, it is unlikely that
the interviewer is actually getting the most natural and casual of speech from the
speaker; the interview is only an hour or two long, and while it does give enormous
insight about the speaker’s language use, it is ultimately only a small sliver of the
entire range – different settings, different interviewers and even different moods may
all result in very different sounding interviews with the same person (see Rickford and
McNair-Knox 1994 and Rickford 2013). Crucially, no methodology could capture the
one true vernacular, because once again, the notion of the most authentic speech is an
ideological construct – the interview and word list show different styles and settings,
but neither is more “real”.

Furthermore, as stated before, the typical preference of reading styles to occasion
lower frequencies for stigmatized linguistic variables is usually explained as the
outcome of greater attention paid to speech. But even if we take that position, it is
important to point out that greater attentiveness does not necessarily have to lead to
more standardness – speakers may have other goals in mind. In Schilling-Estes’s
(1998) work on Ocracoke, an isolated island community in North Carolina, she shows
that the some islanders use the community’s distinctive features (e.g. a backed /ay/) in
a register that is clearly a performance for outsiders’ and tourists’ sake. Therefore, a
feature that is considered vernacular gets highlighted, not suppressed, in a self-
conscious setting. There is no reason why attentiveness cannot lead to a similar effect
in the word list as well.

This is particularly relevant in the case of the pharyngeals – a highly stigmatized
feature, as I have shown in section 3.2. When considering ayin, the Labovian view
could make the prediction that [ʕ] is the natural vernacular production of some
speakers, but when more attention is paid to their speech, the same speakers can substitute it with $\emptyset$; we might therefore expect less $[\breve{s}]$ in the word list. Nevertheless, the speakers in my sample who pharyngealize produced more $[\breve{s}]$ in the word list compared to the interview, not less. This can be explained by the history of the pharyngeals and their unusual positioning with respect to standardness – they are on the one hand marginalized but on the other hand considered the older correct form. Thus, speakers may not feel a pressure to produce less $[\breve{s}]$ even when reading out loud. But I take this even further – once again, it is not only that speakers do not produce less $[\breve{s}]$ in the word list, they produce more $[\breve{s}]$. I claim that the language ideologies about ayin make it not only acceptable in the word list, but particularly appropriate.

An important point is that the speakers in my sample who produce the pharyngeals do indeed see these segments as their most authentic production, as opposed to non-pharyngeal forms. But their construction of what is authentic in language is different from that of the analyst – what is valued is not the least monitored form, but rather the form that is most faithful to the history of the language. As such it is more similar to Coupland’s notion of “establishment authenticity”, in which the authentic is the older form, but there are key differences: in the cases which Coupland discusses, “establishment authenticity” stems from a tradition of proper standard usage and of political action in its defense, and this often has a statist nature – the standard is iconized as ‘the fabric of the nation’, and imposes the priorities of the state onto minority varieties and communities. In Israel, however, there have been no
oppressive structures to enforce the pharyngeals\textsuperscript{74} and their position as standard is mostly lip service: children do not get corrected at school nor do people get negatively evaluated at job interviews or other settings for not using them – if anything, it is pharyngealizing that might be the target of such judgments. Nevertheless, the pharyngeals are consensually the older form that is truly connected to Biblical Hebrew, which in the prevailing ideologies is the real Hebrew.

Considering these language ideologies, in which the ‘authentic speaker’ is understood as being true to the history of the language (and not to the speaker’s subconscious), makes it clear that there is no reason why the pharyngeals should be at odds with the more attentive word list style, or even with explicitly performed styles. In fact, for the Yemenites in my sample, the pharyngeals’ association with the bible extends to a link with ritualized styles in general, such as reading the prayers in one’s own bar-mitzvah. It is an event for which one practices, and goes to a teacher – the mori – to prepare for it, but it is still one in which linguistic authenticity is important. In these speakers’ notions of authenticity a link to the old is crucial, but yet there is no paradox in having to learn how to be authentic.

A useful concept here is the notion of authentication (Bucholtz and Hall 2004). Unlike authenticity, which implies a given identity trait that a speaker may or may not have, authentication is a social practice, and identity itself is viewed as the outcome of constantly negotiated social practices. Bucholtz (2003) urges sociolinguists to speak not of authenticity but of the authenticating practices of those who use and evaluate language. She does not deny that speakers and hearers rely on the notion of

\textsuperscript{74} With a few exceptions. For example, as stated in section 3.2, until recently newscasters were expected to use them.
authenticity in the construction of their identities, and as such it is a cultural force, but authenticity is ultimately the result of the authenticating practices that create it. This perspective emphasizes that authenticity is not a given or pre-determined quality, but rather, it is achieved through social interaction. When thinking in terms of authentication, rather than authenticity, the word list data becomes clear – it is not simply a more attentive setting, it is a worthy site for authentication work.

The linguistic authenticity that the speakers in my sample are trying to gain is not the same as the notion of standardness. In fact, it is not entirely clear what the Israeli construct of a standard language is, and how it relates to language use. In section 1.2, I mentioned the lasting effect of revitalization of Hebrew on the language ideologies in Israel, in which prescriptive norms adhere to the rigid Hebrew Academy of Language, which insists on biblical forms that are not natural to any part of society. In her discussion of variation in Hebrew morphosyntax, Ravid (1995) suggests a three-way distinction: non-standard, standard, and normative. Non-standard is exactly what the term would suggest – forms which are not acceptable by the Academy of Language, and are stereotyped and evaluated by the speakers as wrong. “Standard” refers to forms that educated speakers use naturally, and are not negatively evaluated by most speakers. Her use of “normative”, however, refers not to speaker norms, but rather to forms which are sanctioned by the Academy of Language, that are often different from the “standard” forms; since I find this term confusing, I will refer to it as “hyper-standard” instead. The cases in which the standard and hyper-standard forms differ are quite common, and there is much confusion about what the hyper-standard form of many words is. This is a source of great linguistic insecurity, to the degree that even
highly educated literate speakers are often not confident about what constitutes the correct form of very common, everyday Hebrew words (Ravid 1995).75

Although Ravid’s claims are about morphosyntax, we can try to extend them to the realm of phonological variation. That would certainly work for hei – [ʔ], which is negatively evaluated, would be non-standard; Ø, the form most often used by all speakers would be standard, and [h], the only “correct” form, which is seldom used in casual speech but surfaces in reading, would be hyper-standard. Trying to do the same for the pharyngeals, however, proves more difficult. For ayin, Ø would once again be standard, but the position of [ʕ] is less clear. It is historically correct, but not hyper-standard in the same way as the morphosyntactic features; for example, I have stated that newscasters are no longer expected to pharyngealize, but they do retain the morphosyntactic hyper-standard forms. More importantly, [ʕ] is stigmatized by many, and therefore in this model it is non-standard as well – a rather problematic combination. Even if we think of standardness not as a three point scale but as a continuum, with non-standard on one end and hyper-standard on the other, we would run into the same problem of not having a clear place for the pharyngeals.

The ideology of the authentic Hebrew speaker is different. It draws its ordering of linguistic features not from the authority of a language academy, nor from the social evaluation of the elites. Rather, what is authentic and correct Hebrew is explicitly

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75 One might argue that this situation is less unusual than Ravid claims. For example, even in English, which has no tradition of language academies, we can think of “whom did you see?” as a hyper-standard form (which causes confusion to many speakers), as opposed to “who did you see?” which is standard and yet frowned upon by language pundits. Nevertheless, I think her key observation is true – the hyper-standard forms in Israel are ideologized to a far greater degree, resulting in great linguistic insecurity. For example, I believe that an educated middle-class American speaker of English generally tends to be confident that her language is a correct and good form of English, and appropriate for all settings. That is most certainly not the case in Israel.
equated with Hebrew as it once was – the most authentic forms are those least removed from the Historical sources. And importantly, since the Yemenite speakers in the Rosh Ha’ayin sample explicitly invoked this link when discussing their language, we know that this is the scale that they have in mind. On this scale we can order all three variables, as shown in Figure 6.4:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>[h]</th>
<th>θ</th>
<th>[ʔ]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>hei</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ayin</td>
<td>[ʕ]</td>
<td>θ</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>het</td>
<td>[h]</td>
<td>[x]</td>
<td>[R]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most authentic

Least authentic

Figure 6.4: Variables pertaining to the “authentic Hebrew speaker”

For ayin, [ʕ] is considered most authentic and θ is the least. For hei we see a three-way distinction, with [h] considered as the most authentic, [ʔ] as the least, and θ in between. For het, the trill production (presented in section 4.4) creates a three-way distinction as well: [h] is considered the most authentic, [x] is less so, but as the non-pharyngeal counterpart of [h] it is still more authentic than the innovative [R].

For the Yemenites of Rosh Ha’ayin this plays out as having more [ʕ] and [h] in the word list when compared to the interview. I have suggested that the way in which authenticity is ideologized makes the word list serve as an exceptional site for authenticating practices. But the Rosh Ha’ayin speakers do not relegate their authentication only to the word list, and we can see the relevance of this scale in the

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76 As shown in section 4.3, there was no difference between the word list and interview with respect to het. This puzzling finding will be taken up again in section 6.5.
interview as well when comparing the Rosh Ha’ayin speakers to the Tel Aviv speakers. The Rosh Ha’ayin speakers use more [h] and less [ʔ] for hei, more [ʕ] for ayin and more [h] in the case of het. Even the Rosh Ha’ayin speakers who do not use [h], use more [x] and less [ʀ] than the Tel Aviv speakers.

Taken together, these variables construct an identity of the most authentic speaker of Hebrew – and the most authentic speaker is authentic in more ways than just speech. This persona matches other social practices of the Rosh Ha’ayin Yemenites, who, as discussed in section 2.2, are invested in a distinct identity that is linked to days long gone. When evaluating how this relates to the social positioning of the Yemenites in the space of Israeli identities, it is worthwhile to reconsider Lefkowitz’s model (Figure 1.1), in which Yemenites were the most Israeli and the least Eastern of all Mizrahis. In Figure 6.5, I propose a modified version of his model.

![Diagram](image)

**Figure 6.5:** Israeliness, Easternness and authenticity
The left side of Figure 6.5, in (i), shows a subset of Lefkowitz’s schema, containing only three of the relevant categories – Mizrahi, Ashkenazi and Yemenites. On the right side of the figure, in (ii) I have recreated Lefkowitz’s schema, but using different axes. The x-axis conflates his notions of Israeliness and Easternness – a move that is not problematic, because as I have argued, the ordering along both those scale is essentially the same. On the y-axis, however, I have placed the scale of authenticity. This schema better captures the complex positioning of Yemenites – standing out from other Mizrahi groups in two ways. The scale from the original model represents the ideologization of Easternness as a conceived threat to mainstream (Ashkenazi) norms, and Yemenites are perceived as less threatening to Ashkenazis than other Mizrahis. And yet they also have a claim to be the most eastern; on the authenticity scale, a scale which values Semitic linguistic features and Middle Eastern traditions, they are placed much higher than other Mizrahis.

6.5 Multiple authenticities, multiple meanings

I have proposed that considering the use of certain linguistic features by the Rosh Ha’ayin Yemenites as acts of authentication is useful in understanding how their linguistic behavior builds into their construction of ethnic identity. However, I am not suggesting that the social meaning of the pharyngeals or hei is simply “authentic”. A key point of this dissertation is that this linguistic variation cannot be understood as simply more or less Mizrahi, and replacing Mizrahi-ness with a scale of authenticity is no more helpful. As I have argued in Chapter 3, the pharyngeals cannot be reconciled
into one scale of meaning, and we should not attempt to do so – “authenticity” is clearly central for understanding the social meaning of the pharyngeals, but it is not the meaning. And while using the pharyngeals does not simply mean being Mizrahi, Mizrahi-ness is obviously also closely linked to their social meaning. The scale of authenticity in Figure 6.4 is thus not a claim that the pharyngeals and hei can be united on one axis of meaning, as each of these variables has its own rich set of indexicalities. Some indexical links are different – the pharyngeals are linked to Mizrahi-ness and hei is not (after all, the Ashkenazis in my sample show variation in hei without sounding any more or less Mizrahi). But others are similar, and authenticity is one place in which the indexicalities of these variables align, and can be combined in constructing the authentic style of the Rosh Ha’ayin Yemenites.

While aligning variables on axes of meaning can help us discern patterns in the data, it ultimately fails to capture the full richness of their social meaning. Even with respect specifically to how authenticity relates to the pharyngeals, the ideologies are more complex than what I have described so far. I have discussed an ideology of “the most authentic speaker”, but that is not the only claim to authenticity that is at play. In fact, some of the speakers that I interviewed see their use of the pharyngeals in a way that could be couched in terms of “vernacular authenticity” as described above. Recall the conversation with Hava in (30), from which I repeat an excerpt here:

(46) There are a lot of Yemenites who try to speak with xet and I don’t. I don’t like it – I like to be me, not a phony. I have just one voice
For Hava, pronouncing the letter *het* as *xet* (that is, with [x] and not [h]) is something that other Yemenites may *try* to do, but it sounds phony, an attempt at being something they are not, because [h] is what would come out naturally. In Coupland’s terms, we can say that the pharyngeals have both establishment authenticity and vernacular authenticity, but that is not necessarily a contradiction – the ideology can incorporate elements of both. Consider this interaction with Naomi (who was introduced in section 4.2), a 35-year-old woman with robust pharyngealization, who expresses this double view of how the pharyngeals relate to authenticity.

(47) I see that even Avshalom Kor, and all those who speak correct language, try to speak with *het* and *ʕayin*. And for me it comes out smoothly. So people would always tell me “what, can’t you say *xet* and *ʕayin*?” I told them “for me it’s really easy. I have the *xaf*, I have the *alef*. So I can say ‘tomato’ (*ʕagvania*). It’s not difficult. But I’m used to saying ‘tomato’ (*ʕagvania*) and not ‘tomato’ (*∅agvania*).

Avshalom Kor is a famous Israeli language pundit, whose popular radio show “*rega šel ivrit*” (‘a moment of Hebrew’) consists mainly of discussing his prescriptivist pet peeves. His use of the pharyngeals is taken by Naomi as affirmation of her ideologies of their being the most correct. But whereas he only *tries* to use them, for her they come out smoothly. Since the non-pharyngeal counterparts are also

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77 Recall her language ideologies in (31), on page 95.
part of her phonemic inventory, she could use non-pharyngeals all the time if she
decided to do so, but that would be unnatural for her, since she is used to
pharyngealizing.

These different notions of authenticity feed into each other and combine in the
ideology of what is an authentic Mizrahi. The most authentic Mizrahi maintains a link
to his Middle Eastern roots; roots that are in the traditions, religion, social practices
and language use of the original Mizrahi Jews, who had lived in the area long before
Ashkenazis arrived and Israel existed. But the most authentic Mizrahi is also true to
*himself*—in Hava’s words, she is not a phony. Being true to one’s self is an important
part of how Mizrahi identity is perceived, and lies in the heart of the attributes
associated with Mizrahi-ness that were discussed in sections 1.1.2 and 3.2: genuine,
down-to-earth, real. As discussed, these attributes can be a double edged-sword. Being
real may be interpreted as friendly and warm, but also as too blunt, in your face, and
vulgar. But in either case, it stands in opposition to the stereotypical Ashkenazi, who
are considered not only less authentic as Middle Easterners and more removed from
their Jewish roots and traditions, but also reserved, dispassionate and calculated and
cold—and as such, they are “phony” and not true to themselves.

It is interesting to reconsider in this context the reality TV data presented in
section 3.3.1. Lital and Sivan, the two contestants on *Beauty and the Geek*, do not
pharyngealize often, but they occasionally do produce [ʕ]. I have argued that this is
not a claim to Mizrahi-ness per se, but rather highlighting their Mizrahi-ness in order
to index traits associated with Mizrahis, and to construct a “down to Earth” / “don’t
mess with me” persona, in contrast with their (Ashkenazi) geek counterpart. This too
is an act of authentication. Unlike the one discussed for the Rosh Ha’ayin Yemenites, there is not so much of an emphasis on an authentic link to the past, but both of these practices lay claim to instantiations of an authentic Mizrahi persona, though these personae can be quite different. It is noteworthy that both in the Beauty and the Geek data, and in the word list data from my interview, only ayin and not het appears to be doing the authentication work – ayin, but not het, is pharyngealized more in the word list, and ayin, but not het, is occasionally used by these speakers who rarely pharyngealize. In section 4.3.3 I have suggested several explanations for this difference between ayin and het. Yet another possibility is that the social meaning of ayin is more closely linked to authenticity than that of het – though I do not know why that should be the case. While I cannot offer a conclusive account for this preference for ayin, the similarity in choice of linguistic features supports the idea that although the goals and styles are quite different, there is still an underlying similarity in these linguistic performances as acts of authentication.

I have argued that the linguistic variation cannot be understood simply as one scale of being less or more Mizrahi. But once again, simply adding a scale of authenticity and having a two dimensional model (as in Figure 6.1 for the Providence Island data) would not suffice either. The social meanings of Mizrahi and authentic are not the same, but they are also not orthogonal, and using the pharyngeals is intimately related to both. Rather than conceptualizing the social meaning of variables as moving along scales of meaning, I believe that it is useful to think of the entire set of indexical meanings that they may have.
In section 3.2, I presented Eckert’s (2008) notion of an *indexical field* of meaning for sociolinguistic variables. In this framework variables do not have a fixed value, nor do they shift along one particular continuum. Rather, the field represents a dynamic structure created by the constant linking of form and meaning, without the previous reconstruals disappearing. I believe that the advantage of this approach is clear when considering the complex set of meanings associated with the Hebrew pharyngeals, and in Figure 3.1 (repeated here) I suggested an indexical field for them.

![Figure 3.1: Indexical field for the pharyngeals (repeated)
Boxes = social types, black = permanent qualities, gray = stances](image)

In understanding this figure, it is important to note that Eckert’s representation of the indexical fields is meant to highlight the co-existence of the multiple layers of meaning. It does not imply that the full range of meanings is always what is expressed, but rather, that particular specific meanings can be carved out from this range of indexical links during an interaction. It is important to point out that not all of the possible meanings represented here are equal in their range of application – some are very specific, whereas others are broader. I believe that two of the meanings are at the
heart of the indexical field – “Mizrahi” and “authentic”. It is from the coupling of these two that other more specific meanings (e.g. traditional, old fashioned, Yemenite etc.) radiate, but it is these more specific meanings which are the ones that are usually conveyed.

I have proposed Figure 3.1 as an indexical field for the pharyngeals, but at this point it is worth considering whether het and ayin have their own distinctive indexical fields, since they pattern differently as linguistic variables. The answer is most likely yes. It appears that the range of meanings expressed by het, although similar to that of ayin, is more restricted that that of ayin – possibly a subset that is more explicitly linked with Mizrahi-ness and less with authentication. However, since het and ayin are lumped together in the language ideologies of the speech community, their social meanings, though subtly different, are invariably intertwined.

While the meanings of ayin and het are closely related, both are very different from the case of hei. This dissertation has focused less on the possible range of meanings for hei, but in this approach we must also consider the possible indexicalities of [h] and [ʔ]. Although more work would be needed in order to construct a full indexical field for hei, the language ideologies suggest that [h] is more than just standard and authentically correct, but also linked to hyper-standard, a pedantic type of formality, and to the range of ideologies about people who would use a hyper-standard production. The social meanings of hei are not related to Mizrahi-ness (or to ethnicity in general) – and as such, it is a useful stylistic resource for both Ashkenazis and Mizrahis. Hei has none of the links to warmth or genuineness that ayin has, but it does share with them the link to the most authentic form of Hebrew.
This indexical meaning, which is at the intersection of ayin and hei, make their combination a coherent and meaningful style when used by the Yemenites of Rosh Ha’ayin.

But other combinations are possible as well. The linguistic style of the Yemenites is consistent with being authentically Mizrahi while unthreatening to Ashkenazi norms, but we can imagine another type of speaker – one who also lays a claim to an authentic Mizrahi-ness, emphasizing being tough and down to earth, but wishes to disassociate from any notion of standardness or pedantry, and express nonconformity. This speaker might combine ayin not with [h] but with the glottal stop production, which as the experiment shows, is evaluated as non-sophisticated and not nice, and might be associated with a disdain for formality. Such a speaker may not exist in my data, but she most definitely exists in the imaginary of the speech community – in the language ideologies about the stereotypical freha.

6.6 Conclusion

In this dissertation I demonstrate several ways in which linguistic variation in Hebrew participates in the construction of ethnic identity and in the performance of ethnic personae. A key point is that although “Mizrahi” and “Ashkenazi” are salient and important sociological categories for Hebrew speakers, they are not the most relevant for the linguistic researcher. Moving beyond this binary distinction by unpacking these categories allows us to uncover more meaningful patterns; understanding the social meaning of these patterns requires exploring what kinds of
qualities, attitudes and personae are associated with the people who populate these categories. This is true both for the pharyngeals, which are stereotypically associated with Mizrahis, and for *hei*, which does not have such strong associations. Thus, the specter of the Ashkenazi-Mizrahi dichotomy may continue to haunt Israeli media, discourse and society, but as researchers we must recognize it for the ideological construct that it is, and question the categories with which it supplies us.

In this work I adopt the theoretical position that indexical links are the basic building blocks of social meaning, and engage with the body of work of third wave linguistics (Eckert 2012). My data show support for the position that such a view of social meaning is necessary – the rich set of meanings associated with the pharyngeals cannot be understood as simply meaning “Mizrahi”, nor can they be resolved along an axis of standardness. This is perhaps most apparent in my comparison of the interview and the word list data. While the sociolinguistic interview methodology has been a mainstay of sociolinguistics since its inception as a field, my approach to social meaning allows me to analyze it in a novel way, which can account for otherwise puzzling data – as an act of authentication.

This dissertation also lends support to the view that while variables have social meanings, they combine to create styles, and stylistic meaning is ultimately in the aggregate (Half Moon Bay Style Collective 2006). This is most evident in the use of a fully articulated *hei* by the Yemenite speakers in Rosh Ha’ayin – while the social meaning of *hei* is not related to ethnicity, it becomes a resource for creating a cohesive ethnic style. In this my dissertation joins a body of work that examines stylistic
meaning not only in terms of individual variants, but also in how component parts combine in producing it (Zhang 2005, Podesva 2008 among others).

As is often the case in linguistic research, in answering several questions, this dissertation has also raised many further questions. First, this study focuses on communities in the Tel Aviv area, but the situation elsewhere may be different, and there is clearly a need for more sociolinguistic fieldwork and research in Israel. Another direction for possible research is how ethnicity interacts with gender. Although I discussed clearly gendered stereotypes, like that of the freha, no significant effects of gender were found in the production study. Nevertheless, the results of the perception study suggest that at least for hei, gender does come into play, and it would be worthwhile to investigate this further. Finally, an important remaining question is the difference between het and ayin – I have shown that they pattern differently, and suggested that the social meaning of ayin may have more to do with authenticity than that of het, but the reasons for that could not be determined conclusively. A future study, which tries to ascertain if there are situations which privilege only het and not ayin, may be able to answer that question. While these questions must remain unanswered for now, I hope that this dissertation demonstrates that there is much value in pursuing further research on the interaction between language and ethnicity among Hebrew speakers.

This dissertation focuses on Hebrew variables and Jewish ethnic identities, but its insights have a broader relevance. Much of our understanding of how language interacts with ethnic identities comes from research on varieties in the US, often comparing the non-standard features of an ethnic minority with the standard white
majority. I argue that in order to get a better understanding of the different roles that ethnicity can play in sociolinguistic variation, we must move beyond the more often-studied English-speaking communities, and seek situations in which the ethnic makeup of the population as well as the linguistic systems are dramatically different. The social dynamic of ethnicity in Israel and the different ideologies and attitudes about standard language highlight the need for an approach that does not take convergence with or divergence from an unmarked standard as its starting point. The need for such an approach may be more apparent in the Israeli setting than in others, but I believe that the advantages of this approach are not unique to Israel. Every social setting is different and has its own locally significant constructions of ethnicity, but in any community, researching language and ethnicity can be enriched by unpacking the census categories and unearthing the different identities, stances and personae associated with the people who populate them.
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