

**Title of presentation as announced in Program Book:** *“Freedom of Speech: Assimilating Slang, Jargon and Other Languages into Current Israeli Hebrew.”* By Yaffa Weisman.

**Yaffa Weisman** is the Library Director, the Frances-Henry Library, Los Angeles and the Adjunct Associate Professor of Contemporary Jewish Studies.

**Description:**

The presentation will discuss the state of the Hebrew language in Israeli society as a reflection of contemporary societal trends. New words, idioms, slang and cultural allusions will be demonstrated through recent dictionaries, media publications, and literary texts.

## Freedom of Speech: Assimilating Slang, Jargon, and Other Languages into Current Israeli-Hebrew

AJL Conference, Chicago, 2009

### Slide #1

**Abstract:** The presentation will discuss the state of the Hebrew language in Israeli society as a reflection of contemporary societal trends. New words, idioms, slang and cultural allusions will be demonstrated through recent dictionaries, media publications, and literary texts.

## OUTLINE:

### What got me started?

**Keeping up with idioms, words, metaphors in newspapers, fiction, tv after close to 30 yrs of living outside Israel.**

**What is happening to colloquial Hebrew and when did it start?**

**Is this really what Ben-Yehudah envisioned when he coined:**

**עברי – דבר עברית!**

## What happened between Milon Ibn Shushan to Milon Ibn Shoshanah?

“Spoken Hebrew has always been influenced by foreign languages. This influence is mainly evident in words and idioms that are inserted in their original form into spoken Israeli , as well as in idioms translated into Hebrew by the speakers. While this phenomenon is ongoing, the nature of the influencing languages has drastically changed in the last few decades’ and after years of dominance of Yiddish and Arabic, English is becoming the most evident influence on spoken Hebrew. (Rosenthal, 2005)

Exercise in pronunciation:

### Slide # 2

from my niece’s post on Facebook:

סחתיין מאמי איך שהזמן טס חבלז  
מזל טוב יאללה שיעבור מהר ותצאי לאזרחות

Exercise in comprehension:

*Beaufort/גן עדן/אם יש גן עדן*

Standard divisions of most living languages: **Slide #3**

= Literary/Normative: comes from sources & used for written expressions

“Insane”= בלתי שפוי

= Standard Israeli: contemporary, professional, correctly adjustable; colloquial

מזועזע, מופרע, מתוסבך = **Disturbed**

= Sub-Standard/Illegitimate: slang

פסיכי = **psycho**

I will focus mostly on the 3<sup>rd</sup> kind, but not before recognizing that it is never a “pure” form, and is sometimes influenced by and confused with:

## CLARIFICATIONS:

**Jargon:** a vocabulary of words and idioms that is specific to a profession or a defined group, i.e. doctors, sports writers, soldiers.

**Cant:** the language of felons and criminals

**Dialect:** a form of language that is specific to an area or a social sphere that emphasizes pronunciation and proprietary words, i.e. English includes Scottish, Cockney and American dialects. (Netzer, 2007)

## SLANG

**History:**

**18<sup>th</sup> century England:** language used by the criminal element

**19<sup>th</sup> century: the language of the ignorant**

**20<sup>th</sup> century: subversive code, intentionally sub-standard,  
informal**

**Since then: Part of popular culture, the “authentic” voice of  
specific social groups. (Military, Kibbutz, criminals)**

## **Slide #4**

**Unique elements:**

**Current, vibrant, creative, subversive, humorous**

**Structure:**

**Creating a new word or a new combination based on an old word**

**Semantics:**

**Changing the normative meaning of the word or combination of word – using an  
established word to express new content, sometimes the exact opposite of the  
original meaning (הורס, גנוב, חבל על הזמן) (Refael Nir in: Rosental, 2005)**

## **Slide #5**

**Phonetics: intentional derivations from the standard words**

**מפונדרק: מפונק + דרק**

**גועליציה: גועל + קואליציה**

## **Slide #6**

**Morphological: intentional derivation from form & conjugation**

**התפוטר, התגודב**

כלומניק, נהגוס

## Slide #7

**Grammatical: intentional [short] combinations**

זה מה יש

למה מי מת?

## Slide #8

**Lexical/Semantic: borrowing from another language and/or subverting the Hebrew**

Yiddish נודניק, גשעפט, ברוך

Arabic פשלה, סחבק, מסטול

English גימיק, פייר, לארג'

Ladino פוסטמה, דמיקולו

**(Ben-Shahar in Rosental, 2005)**

**Afterthoughts:**

**Literature: absorbing, reflecting, representing**

**HOW DOES IT SOUND?**

**Popular culture: comedy: Kaveret, Gashash**

**Israeli hip-hop: subliminal**

## Slide #9

**Kaveret: hamagafayim shel Baruch (1973) (2:12- more of a visual of Poogy)**

**<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0sHuLMsRX38>**

**Po Kavur haKelev: Taking idioms literally (2:44 – picture only)**

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XB\\_XeIyhYX4&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XB_XeIyhYX4&feature=related)

**Makolet (Monologue/absurd) (4:18 narrative preceding the song: absurd, misguided idioms, parodying styles of speech, story telling)**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x6g9kRy5J64&feature=related>

**Inside humor: making fun of the bible & bible quiz**

**Lool:(8:29 show 3:30)**

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vOp53vyXnRQ&feature=PlayList&p=21D1C3C5227BEF2E&playnext=1&playnext\\_from=PL&index=18](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vOp53vyXnRQ&feature=PlayList&p=21D1C3C5227BEF2E&playnext=1&playnext_from=PL&index=18)

**Hanoch Levin: Victory Speech – The 11 minutes War (2:05 – claymation reiteration of 1970 monologue that split the country then; militaristic lingo ad absurdum)**

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=feAMVIPH\\_A&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=feAMVIPH_A&feature=related)

### **SUBLIMINAL: ISRAELI HIP HOP**

**Peace in the ME: (5:45 Hebrew HipHop w/Subliminal)**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hCnXvqp4PH4&feature=related>

## Slide #10

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Dr. Yaffa Weisman

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