Yiddish Language and Digital Spaces

An Examination on the Effectiveness of Twitter, Facebook, Zoom, and Other Online Platforms

to Promote the Yiddish Language

Eloise Kadlecek

Tri-Co Linguistics Department, Bryn Mawr College

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Abstract

This thesis aims to explore whether the use of social media and digital spaces, or utilizing the internet, is effective in spreading and promoting the Yiddish language. As well as Yiddish, I look at other languages and how social media has aided speakers in finding a sense of community and how it has helped these languages gain more representation in society. Twitter, Facebook, and Zoom are just some of the platforms I will be investigating, and I will examine past, present, and future actions that utilize these digital spaces in the effort to preserve and educate people both inside and outside Yiddish-speaking communities about the Yiddish language. I will also propose my own plan for what I believe to be an effective path that language activists and those passionate about Yiddish education can take to increase the number of Yiddish speakers, achieve more representation of Yiddish, and support those in Yiddish-speaking communities.

Introduction

In this thesis, I want to examine social media in conjunction with Yiddish language activism and investigate the following questions. First, are digital spaces effective in contributing to Yiddish language activism and spreading knowledge about it? If so, why? If not, what are other ways to promote Yiddish language activism? What has worked for other minority language communities? What will present-day Yiddish speakers, mostly Hasidic communities, think about using digital spaces and the Internet to promote their language? Some Hasidic community members are against the use of the Internet- will their beliefs about technology change if they believe that it can strengthen linguistic education about Yiddish? Will they want to participate in

this language activism? In this thesis, I will present information about Yiddish history, social

media language activism, and investigate the questions I have proposed.

1 Yiddish History

Yiddish is the language of the Ashkenazi Jewish people, and it originated in the 9th

century in Central Europe. There are several languages that contributed to and influenced its

grammar, vocabulary, and syntax, making it a language with a complex linguistic history. Some

of the languages that have influenced Yiddish include High German, Mishnaic Hebrew, and

Aramaic. Additionally, most dialects of Yiddish have some traces of Slavic and Romance

languages. Yiddish is a language that is written using the Hebrew alphabet, but vowels are

always included in its spelling whereas in Hebrew, they are optionally represented, left to be

inferred when reading the consonants (Weinrich, 2008).

Little information is known about the formation of Yiddish, or how it came to be. Many

linguists and scholars have proposed models describing their ideas using other languages as

points of origin. In Weinrich (2008), he speculates that Jews who spoke Old French and Old

Italian migrated to Central Europe from Southern Europe, and their languages mixed with the

ones they encountered (Weinrich, 2008: 350). Linguist Paul Wexler describes a different model;

he theorizes that Yiddish is not Germanic in origin, but instead a "Judeo-Sorbian" language

which was later relexified by High German (Wexler, 1991: 11-12). Additionally, little to nothing

is known about the language of the earliest Jews in Germany. Many scholars believe it to be

Aramaic, which modern Yiddish has linguistic influences from. There are also theories that the

earliest Jews in Germany spoke "pure German," but Weinrich states that he believes this is

incorrect. Jews who immigrated to Germany were already multilingual, using their mother

tongues from where they came before, and they were possibly speaking a mix of many languages

(Weinrich, 2008: 350). The consensus, while there are many theories of Yiddish origins, is that

Jews immigrated to Central Europe, and when they encountered language in that territory, they

"Judaized" it (Spolsky, 2014: 185-189). This phenomenon can also be seen in other Jewish

languages such as Ladino, Judeo-Italian, and Judeo-Arabic, among others. While there may not

be a clear answer to how exactly Yiddish originated, there are written records dating back to the

12th century that depict a distinctive Jewish culture in Europe. At that time, Yiddish was called

לשון־אַשכנז (loshn-ashknaz) "language of Ashkenaz" due to the speakers being of Ashkenazi

Jewish descent (Weinrich, 2008).

Pre-Holocaust, it is estimated that there were about 11-13 million speakers of Yiddish.

Additionally, about 85% of Jewish people who were killed in the Holocaust were Yiddish

speakers. Following the Holocaust and tremendous loss of human life, the number of Yiddish

speakers declined rapidly. The results of the Holocaust had a profound impact on Yiddish

speakers and how Yiddish is viewed societally. Many people wonder if Yiddish is even spoken

anymore due to misinformation or lack of representation about the language. Individuals with

Yiddish-speaking ancestry may not wish to continue speaking it due to the lack of speakers

around them. Additionally, shtetl (small villages populated by Ashkenazi Jews that existed

around Central Europe) life was not continued after the Holocaust. These factors, among others,

may lead to Yiddish speakers or people with Yiddish-speaking ancestry getting discouraged and

not wanting to speak or learn Yiddish.

2 Yiddish Today

Today, there are varying estimates of the number of Yiddish speakers left. Low estimates are around 600,000, while higher estimates state that there are between 1-3 million speakers. Yiddish speakers are not concentrated in one country or location, but instead scattered across the globe. Such communities, Hasidic Jewish communities, are hard to study due to their private nature. This reason, in addition to there not being one concentrated location of Yiddish speakers, may be why an exact number of speakers is so difficult to achieve (YIVO, 2021). Yiddish is mostly spoken in the United States, Canada, Israel, and various European countries. In the United States, which has an estimated number of about 250,000 Yiddish speakers, most of the speakers are members of Hasidic communities, who are ultra-Orthodox Jews. Most of these speakers reside in New York (about 63% of American Yiddish speakers) and Florida (about 10% of American Yiddish speakers) and many are older than 65 years of age. In Israel, there are about 250,000 Yiddish speakers, the most concentrated groups being the Hasidim in Bnei Brak and Jerusalem. In Montreal, Canada, there is a Yiddish-speaking community of about 15,000 Hasidim. Additionally, there are different dialects in Yiddish spoken today such as Southeastern (Ukrainian- Romanian), Mideastern (Polish–Galician–Eastern Hungarian) and Northeastern (Lithuanian–Belarusian) (YIVO, 2021).

Due to dominant languages such as Hebrew, English, or other more widely spoken European languages prevailing in these countries, there has been a decline in spoken Yiddish since its peak in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. For example, there was pushback against Yiddish from many secular Zionists to make Hebrew the official language of Israel. Many anti-

Yiddish government policies were put in place in the early 20th century. In 1996, the Israeli

Knesset (the unicameral legislature of Israel) passed a law that founded the National Authority

for Yiddish Culture, which aimed to uplift Yiddish culture, language, and education. Despite

dominant languages and anti-Yiddish policies pushing back against Yiddish, Hasidic Jewish

communities have been preserving Yiddish as their primary language within their communities,

and there are many Jews with Yiddish-speaking ancestry around the world who have recently

taken interest in studying the language (YIVO, 2021).

In Avineri and Verschik (2017), the concept of Yiddish as a Heritage Language (HL) is

explored. This concept is defined by Avineri and Verschik as a language with a "focus on

tradition, the past, and history on the one hand, and innovation, change, and dynamism on the

other" (Avineri, Verschik, 2017: 451). When studying HL's, the struggle of that language against

dominant languages and linguistic power is often examined. Avineri and Verschik (2017)

explore Yiddish in the United States, where it appeared as an immigrant language, and Yiddish

in Lithuania, where it was at one point in the past a widely spoken language but has since

declined. Avineri and Verschik (2017) state that in Lithuania, linguists and historians are

acknowledging the importance of the studying of Jewish history and the once thriving Jewish

community there, and consequently this involves acknowledging the history of Yiddish in

Lithuania. Additionally, there has been a recent increase in people who want to study Yiddish all

over the globe. Both Heritage learners (members of the Jewish community that have Yiddish-

speaking ancestry) and non-Heritage learners (people that may live near Yiddish speaking

communities or those who simply have interest in Yiddish) are motivated to learn Yiddish. These

Yiddish learners "...engage in committed choices to learn Yiddish, since they generally are not

exposed to the language in the home, and also experience salient discoveries that connect to their

emerging and shifting identities" (Avineri, Verschik, 2017: 453). Due to this recent involvement

from Heritage and non-Heritage learners of Yiddish, there has been more involvement in Yiddish

conversation groups, cultural events, and programs. There is usually a motive such as connection

to Yiddish and Jewish culture that makes people want to study Yiddish, and Avineri and

Verschik (2017) define that as "Yiddish+". "The concept Yiddish+ highlights that learning the

language or taking interest in it is not just about the language itself; very often something else is

involved." (Avineri, Verschik, 2017: 458). Ashkenazi Jewish or people with ancestors that spoke

Yiddish people may want to reconnect with their heritage and will want to attend a festival or a

Yiddish class to learn the language of their culture. They may wish to talk to people who speak

Yiddish or be able to communicate with family members. Non-Heritage learners may have the

desire to find out more about Jewish and Yiddish history in the location that they live. They

might also know Yiddish speakers and want to communicate with them. Whatever the reason,

recently, people tend to have many motivations for why they are learning Yiddish, whether that

be a connection of heritage, or simply just interest.

3 Struggles Speakers of Minority Languages Face

For minority languages, the lack of available and affordable resources may provide

obstacles for people in these language communities to study or communicate in their language.

In academia or in the media, the lack of representation for minority languages may discourage

users of these languages from speaking to others in their community. It can also be disheartening

to individuals who speak a minority language to see other more widely spoken languages receive

representation, dedicated study, and money in academia and in media, while theirs is never

included or represented in that manner (Lillehaugen, 2019). It can be difficult for minority

language speakers to have opportunities to speak, study, and connect with other speakers of their

language.

The representation of dominant languages and the exclusion of minority languages in

academia and media did not just come out of nowhere, they are tied to long histories of racial,

ethnic, and religious minorities being persecuted and treated inferiorly. Therefore, by extension

these groups' cultures and languages are devalued and dismissed (Lillehaugen, 2019: 203-205**).**

One example of such historical discrimination can be seen in the Carlisle Indian Industrial

School, a school that forcibly enrolled Native American students and was built to "assimilate"

Native Americans into American culture. This institution forced Native American individuals to

change their names and clothes, speak in only English, and abandon anything "Native" about

them. The reality of this school is that it was a traumatizing institution that punished Native

American individuals harshly and violently. When students spoke their mother tongue, they

would be punished using corporal punishment (Fear-Segal and Rose, 2016). Today,

representation for Native American individuals, languages, and cultures, is severely lacking, and

this stems back from historically violent discrimination such as the Carlisle Indian Industrial

School and beliefs that they were inferior to others (Bataille, 2001).

Minority language speakers today still experience negative attitudes about their languages

and do not receive enough representation in society. This can play out in many ways, such as the

concept of "Broadcast media," in which dominant languages can permeate and wipe out smaller

ones because of their prevalence in job settings, academic settings, and the amount of

representation they receive. This may cause speakers of minority languages to undermine and

abandon their language for dominant ones (Lillehaugen, 2019). Broadcast media languages tend

to be dominant languages that are spoken by groups that have never received any racial or

religious discrimination, and groups that never received pushback or efforts to wipe out their

languages. Violence inflicted towards racial, ethnic, and religious groups contributed to the

erasure of language and culture, and these effects are still being felt today by speakers of

minority languages.

4 What is Language Activism?

When looking at minority languages, it is important to consider ways in which they can

be uplifted, ways its speakers can have opportunities to speak them, and ways more people can

learn about them. It is also important to consider its history of discrimination and pushback that

the language has experienced. Language activism is a complex concept, but a broad definition is

that it encompasses efforts and energetic action towards preserving linguistic diversity (Oxford,

1992). In Spolsky (2012), the complex nature of language activism is explored through many

examples: "a few individuals meeting regularly to study the grammar, vocabulary, and

pragmatics of their endangered ancestral language may... be called language activists, as could

the linguist helping them" (Spolsky, 2012: 462). Sometimes actions, such as a self-study of a

minority language grammar, that do not necessarily reach a wide audience can be considered

language activism, and these efforts can be intimate and personal. On the other hand, legislative

action, which can be seen as having a noticeable public impact, can also be considered language

activism. For example, during the time between World War I and World War II, the League of

Nations, an intergovernmental organization striving for world peace, carried many clauses for

minority language speakers in Central and Eastern Europe to be able to use their own language

privately or while pursuing education and not have to use the dominant language that prevailed

in their country (Caporti, 1979). Language activism can uplift speakers of minority languages

and allow them to have agency over how they use, study, and represent their own language in

society.

5 Using Social Media and Digital Spaces as Platforms for Language Activism

Linguist Brook Lillehaugen explores how Twitter can be used in Zapotec (Indigenous

languages spoken in and around Oaxaca, Mexico) speaking communities to engage in a form of

social and linguistic activism, combatting the history of discrimination and pushback against

variants of Zapotec languages. "Twitter has indeed the potential for being a valuable instrument

for small, localized groups and endangered languages. It can increase language use and

contribute to the visibility of languages that are not present in mainstream and traditional media"

(Lillehaugen 2019: 203). On Twitter and other social media platforms Zapotec individuals can

connect with other community members, non-Zapotecs, and are able share information about

their culture and identity. Many Indigenous languages such as Zapotec have often been only

associated with the past, and people ignore the fact that there are Zapotec speakers alive and

speaking today. Lillehaugen (2019) states about Indigenous languages, "Too often, Indigenous

languages are deemed things of the past, even in cases where the language continues to be used.

This type of prejudice is extremely dangerous—the denial of a present for a language, culture, or

people is a denial of the language itself, and this creates space for the abdication of responsibility

to protect the linguistic rights of speakers of such a language" (Lillehaugen, 2019: 204).

The association of Indigenous languages with the past denies the culture, heritage, and

the modern lives of the people of that language group. Using social media platforms that have a

modern connotation in society can help fight back against this mindset (Lillehaugen, 2019).

Sometimes, to connect with a wider audience and spread information about Zapotec languages,

Zapotec social media users offer translations of their posts in languages like English and

Spanish. This can help people outside Zapotec communities learn about Zapotec languages and

cultures, and these posts are then able to be shared to a wider audience. This may also motivate

outsiders to take part in sharing and uplifting Zapotec voices on the internet. Below shows a

screenshot of a Twitter user quoting a Tweet made by the Ticha Project, a digital organization

dedicated to making resources about Zapotec languages more widely available. This Twitter user

quoted and tagged her friend who she thought would be interested in the Tweet.
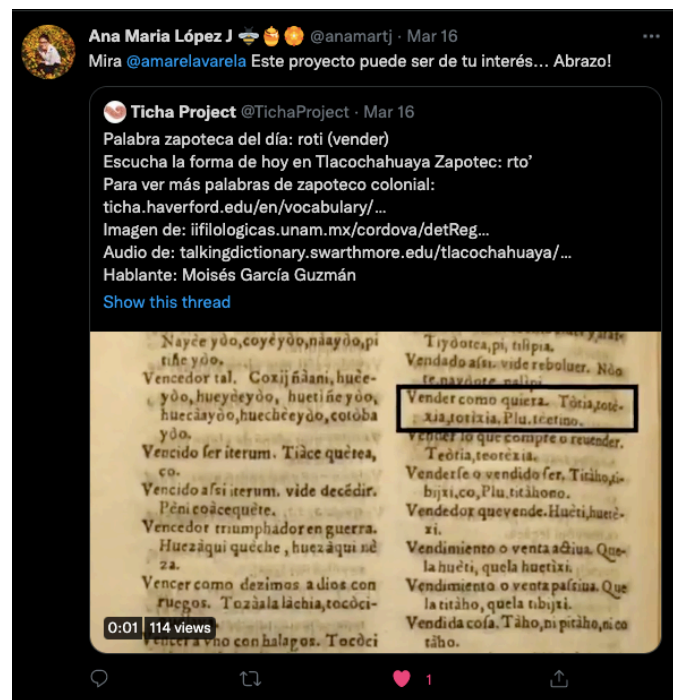

Figure 1: Screenshot depicting the sharing of a Tweet containing Zapotec

The act of sharing a Tweet containing a minority language by liking, quoting, or retweeting to

one's followers can not only make it possible for more people to see the Tweet, but it can also

encourage others to research the language themselves. Even though this is a seemingly simple

act, it can lead to more interaction between minority language speakers and those outside of that

language community.

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Social media can offer an easy, free way for speakers to share information in their language and a way to push back against linguistic discrimination. A speaker of a minority language posting a Tweet, for example, in their native tongue gives them the ability to hold claim over their language and may offer unseen before information about that language (Lillehaugen, 2019). Social media can also provide a way for speakers of endangered, small, and discriminated against languages to share local information, tradition, and culture. These posts can be formal, for example, sharing a document or manuscript containing that language and information about the local culture, or they can be informal, in the form of a public conversation on Twitter between two friends, or the sharing of a photograph along with text (Lillehaugen, 2019). Lillehaugen 2019 states that, "Social media presents opportunities for sharing and interacting with local knowledge, tradition, culture, images, and experiences in a small-language context. In fact, the nature of the Tweet allows for both more serious and more educational content, as well as more informal and entertaining uses" (Lillehaugen, 2019: 203).

There is value and importance to underrepresented and minority language speakers having their own agency and creating spaces for themselves on these social media platforms. Linguist Daniel Cunliffe states in a chapter entitled "Minority Languages and the Internet: New Threats, New Opportunities" from the book *Minority Language Media*, "Minority cultures and languages should not be viewed simply as victims of the Internet or as passive recipients of Internet technology, services and content. Instead, it should be recognized that they have the potential to be active shapers of this technology, able to create their own tools, adapt existing tools to the local needs and to create culturally authentic, Indigenous Internet media (Cunliffe, 2007: 147)". For example, the Ticha Project provided grant money for members of Zapotec communities to create their own *Conversatorios,* which are multi-week digital programs in

which they taught other community members aspects about Zapotec languages, culture, and

history. When Zapotec community members created their own resources and collaborated with

other people within their community, the results showed an extremely comprehensive and

beneficial learning environment for all participants. Many participants were encouraged to run

their own *Conversatorios* and were inspired to get their friends and family involved as well.

When speakers from these language groups Tweet or post content in their language, they

can uplift themselves by creating opportunities to speak their language in ways they have not

experienced before. Individuals can connect with their culture and other community members

through engaging in and learning about their language. It may be a meaningful and personal

experience for a minority language speaker to create a space for themselves online, where they

are free to post or say what they want. It is their own space that they can claim, and they can

communicate whatever thoughts or feelings they have in the language they choose to post in.

This can show that that their language is still being spoken, and that their culture and heritage is
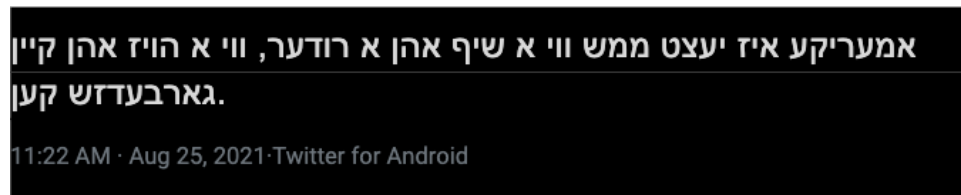
not something of the past.

Figure 2: Tweet from @Hasidic32 shows Yiddish being used in conjunction with current

American politics.

Transliteration: *Amerike iz yetst mmsh vi a shif ahn a ruder, vi a hoyz ahn keyn garbej ken.*

English Translation: *America is now just like a ship with a rudder, like a house with no garbage can.*

This Tweet shows that Yiddish is still being used today and that it is used to talk about

important current events such as America's political or economic state. This shows that Yiddish

is not simply something of the past or a language that nobody speaks anymore, and it is even

being used on modern social media platforms to communicate ideas and thoughts about the

world.

Figure 3: Tweet from @Jilevin shows Yiddish being used in conjunction with current American

politics.

@Jilevin uses transliterated Yiddish words to describe prominent American political figures. The table

below defines these words.

Transliterated Yiddish Word	English Definition
Chazer	A pig; piggish person
Ganef	Thief, crook
Ligner	Liar
Mamzer	A child born out of wedlock
Nebbish	A person, especially a man, who is regarded as pitifully ineffectual, timid, or submissive
Nokhshleper	A person who tags along where it is clear that he is not wanted

Pisher	an insignificant or contemptible person
Putz	a stupid or worthless person
Schlub	a talentless, unattractive, or boorish person
Schmegegge	baloney; hot air; nonsense
Schmuck	a foolish or contemptible person
Schnorrer	a beggar or scrounger

Figure 4: Table defining Yiddish vocabulary words used in @Jilevin's Tweet

(Simpson, Ja, & Weiner, Esc, 1989)

This Tweet is not written in the Hebrew alphabet that Yiddish uses, but it contains Romanized versions of commonly used Yiddish insults and uses them to describe American politicians. Again, like the last Tweet, this shows that Yiddish can be and is used to discuss (and criticize) current historical events and people in power.

Social media also offers the opportunity for native speakers of minority languages to give feedback to non-native speakers trying to learn that language and getting input from native speakers can encourage and help non-native speakers learn about that language. For example, in the fall of 2020, linguist and Professor Brook Lillehaugen taught a class on the structure of Colonial Valley Zapotec. Students in this class were encouraged to tweet Colonial Zapotec vocabulary words and use hashtags such as #UsaTuVoz and #ZapotecoColonial that many Zapotec community members use when sharing Tweets. I participated in this activity, and the Tweet below shows a Zapotec community member quote-Tweeting my tweet and sharing his Zapotec variant's way of saying the word I shared.

Figure 5: Tweet displaying Zapotec community member interaction with non- Zapotec people

Upon seeing this quote-Tweet, I was inspired to research other Zapotec variants and see how they say this word. I was interested to see spelling differences, and I also listened to audio on several Zapotec "Talking Dictionaries," which are online dictionaries with audio files, and people can hear the pronunciation of many Zapotec vocabulary words.

Additionally, anyone, native or non-native speaker, can upload content in, related to, or about a certain minority language. This can spark interest in that language and start important conversations, increasing information being shared about that language that anyone on social media can access. I appreciated the interaction from native Zapotec speakers that I received on my Tweets, and it inspired me to share with my classmates and professor. Many students in the class also received feedback from native Zapotec speakers and this prompted in-class discussions

about how social media is an effective environment to connect members of Zapotec communities

with others interested in Zapotec languages.

6 Benefits of Social Media and Digital Spaces in Language Activism

Social media applications such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram, among other

platforms, provide users with instantaneous, fast connection with others (Anwaruddin, 2019).

Additionally, it is a low cost or free way to communicate with others, which contributes to its

modern-day popularity. People who utilize these platforms have an easy way to share original

thoughts, as well as the opportunity to repost and retweet other's content. There are countless

individuals across the world who use these digital spaces, with no limit on age, gender identity,

racial identity, and language. For example, parents, students, teachers, brands, and people in the

working world may use social media to connect with others, learn information, share creative

thoughts, or even promote something. In Anwaruddin (2019), it is stated that many teachers

utilize social media "[because it holds] the potential to facilitate language learning" and "to

increase learner autonomy, collaboration, and collective knowledge-building experiences"

(Anwaruddin, 2019: 5).

Digital methods, or utilizing the internet, may be an exciting way to promote and share

Yiddish language education and culture and connect minority language speakers together.

Avineri and Verschik (2017) state that, "Online Yiddish courses may be another way to bring

together diverse metalinguistic community members in various geographical locales in the

diaspora. The use of social media can also bring metalinguistic community members together,

building upon diverse motivations and ideologies to merge old and new in innovative ways"

(Avineri, Verschik, 2017: 461). According to Margolis (2020), Yiddish activities hosted online

are more accessible to potential participants. Since these activities were hosted online, the

problem of in-person meeting spaces that people previously had difficulties getting to went

away, and the number of participants increased. Even though these online events were different

from in-person events in many ways, higher online participation, especially from younger

Yiddish learners who were familiar with these digital spaces, was seen more than before, which

had the problems of time constraints, money issues, and distance involved in attending in-person

events (Margolis, 2020: 25)

7 Setbacks of Social Media and Digital Spaces in Language Activism

As well as benefits, there are also setbacks to digital spaces being a tool for language

activism. Twitter displays sample utterances from individuals, conversations, pictures, and other

types of publications, which can be accessible, but there are aspects to this platform that make it

less than ideal to use for language activism to take place (Alshaabi et al., 2020). For example,

Twitter has a 280-character limit, and it does limit how much text or language can be displayed.

Full books or essays cannot be published using Twitter's text; links to these types of longer

publications can be shared, but people may not be as willing to click on a link that takes users to

another webpage (Anwaruddin, 2019). Additionally, misspellings, hashtags, and the use of

emojis due to the informal nature of Twitter may discourage people from viewing the social

media platform as a legitimate source where real language activism can take place (Alshaabi,

2020). A study introduced by Alshaabi et al. (2020) showed a trend that people on Twitter tend

to retweet others' content rather than producing original content. This could lead to a lack of

content being shared about a certain language, which may discourage others from sharing their

own original content or lead people to believe that there is not any desire from non-speakers of

their language to learn about it. Many Twitter users simply "like" or "retweet" without really

reading or being interested in the content that they see, just because the Tweet appears on their

timeline (Anwaruddin, 2019). I have subscribed to this mindset before, and sometimes when I

see a Tweet that has many retweets or likes from other people, I will retweet or like it as well

without fully reading it. If people are not truly engaging with the content but instead just pressing

buttons without thinking about it, it is hard to promote language activism, which requires active

engagement from participants. Simply because the retweets and likes are high does not mean that

people are guaranteed to do further research on the topic or share with others (Anwaruddin,

2019).

Modern day academia that focuses on dominant languages has resources such as money,

literature, and studies done on these languages. Minority languages do not usually have these

resources, and while digital spaces can offer platforms for conversations and information to be

exchanged, it is hard to compensate for the lack of representation and education about these

languages.

A chapter entitled "Yiddish on the Internet" written by Tsvi Sadan, found in the serial

publication *Language and Communication,* explores some additional setbacks of using digital

spaces to spread information about Yiddish language. Sadan states that, "The Internet, especially

websites and mailing lists, has a greater potential for diaspora languages like Yiddish than for

non-diaspora languages for forming virtual communities, as the former have few non-virtual

communities, while the latter already have communities outside the Internet. Yiddish has not

fully used this potential, so the virtual community in Yiddish remains rather small. (Sadan 2011,

105). Margolis (2020) does not think current online activities involving Yiddish language utilize

the potential that Sadan envisioned in "Yiddish on the Internet". She says, "While the 2020

technologies supported the delivery of formalized events such as lectures or performances to an

audience, they required extensive structuring to facilitate verbal interaction among participants

and did not support spontaneous conversation among multiple participants or participatory music

activities such as collective singing" (Margolis, 2020: 24). Additionally, virtual reality, or exact

replicas of in person spontaneity are not yet available, and not only does Yiddish conversation

rely on that, but cultural events such as music or performance do as well. Online Yiddish

Shmueskrayzn, or conversation circles, are almost always mediated by Zoom hosts, which may

also prevent that in-person conversational spontaneity. Participants may also feel shy and not

want to participate in front of other people besides the ones they are talking to. Another setback

to digital spaces is fatigue experienced when looking at screens for an extended period. Many

frequent Zoom users describe something called "Zoom fatigue" where they feel extremely tired

after they have been using a computer with their video turned on for multiple hours in a day.

Digital spaces are not perfect platforms for language activism to take place, but it is a start, and it

is very encouraging and exciting to see instances on these platforms that center and spread

information about minority language voices.

8 Yiddish, the Internet, and Hasidic Communities

Many Hasidic communities all over the world limit and control their internet use. Some

are stricter than others, for example, some right-wing schools filter the internet at school and

even at students' homes, and some Modern Orthodox schools utilize the internet to aid in Jewish

teachings (JCFS Chicago, 2021). Despite the variety of opinions, it can still be said that some

Hasidic individuals believe that the internet is not needed in Hasidic communities, and that it is a

dangerous place, especially for children (JCFS Chicago, 2021). This mindset is due to beliefs

that technology is harmful and addictive and that it does not align with Jewish faith and Hasidic

beliefs (JCFS Chicago, 2021).

In Gritz (2012), she states "For some rabbis, the solution is simple: Religious Jews

should boycott the Internet. In the large ultra-Orthodox community of Lakewood, New Jersey, a

2005 ruling forbade adults to go online without explicit rabbinical permission". But Hasidim are

not a monolith, some share different views on the usage of the Internet and digital spaces. For

example, some rabbis suggest putting filters on the internet instead of banning it completely,

differing completely from the 2005 New Jersey ruling. "...A long list of rabbis weighed in on the

problem. Ultra-Orthodox Judaism has no Pope, and while its authority may not be as

decentralized as Wikipedia's, there are hundreds of separate clans and rabbis. Some of the

speakers advocated for filtering software, while others insisted that Jews should avoid the

Internet altogether, even for work. The speeches -- some in English and some in Yiddish --

carried on until nearly midnight, but the final verdict wasn't entirely clear" (Gritz, 2012). While

some Hasidim are against the use of the Internet and digital spaces entirely, some are more open

to the idea, and believe their community can even benefit from its use. There is no consensus on

the topic, which makes it difficult to navigate. Digital spaces or the Internet used for Yiddish

language activism may appeal to some members of Hasidic communities and be completely shut

down by others. While having a conversation about how digital spaces can help spread

information about the Yiddish language, it is important to consider how this may be received by

the groups and communities that speak the language.

Some questions that may arise when observing Hasidic communities are: What will they

think about using digital media for Yiddish language activism? Will their beliefs about the

Internet change if they believe that it can strengthen linguistic education about Yiddish? Will

they want to participate in this language activism? Answers to these questions are unknown and

cannot be found out unless actual Hasidic individuals are interviewed and asked these types of

questions. I did not get the opportunity to interview Hasidic individuals because it would be

extremely difficult to do so, since these communities are often private and closed off to

outsiders. I also do not know anyone who lives in a Hasidic community near me. Additionally,

answers to these questions are difficult to find because of the sheer number of different opinions

that Hasidic community members share about the usage of the Internet. Because of the variety of

opinions, I cannot make a conclusive statement on whether all Hasidic individuals and

communities will support this kind of digital language activism or even want to participate in it.

Published resources on Hasidic communities are lacking, so again, it is difficult for me to answer

these questions. I hope that future research can be done on the opinions of Hasidic communities

on the Internet and digital spaces so I can find out more about this topic and answer the many

questions I have proposed.

9 Yiddish and the COVID-19 Pandemic

What happens when a global pandemic occurs, and suddenly in-person communication,

meetups, and events must be halted due to concerns over public safety? The COVID-19

pandemic affected Yiddish language gatherings and get-togethers and shifted these activities to

digital spaces, due to in-person activity being unsafe. In the early stages of the pandemic (March,

April, and May of 2020), virtual events, chats, and information sessions started to be held using

Zoom and other digital platforms. These events were free, open to all, and consisted of Yiddish

language activities that connected speakers across the globe. For example, *Shmueskrayzn,*

(conversation circles) became a popular online activity for Yiddish speakers to participate in and

connect with other members of Yiddish-speaking communities without even shaving to leave

their home. These *Shmueskrayzn* were popularized by a Yiddish podcast creator Sandra (Sosye)

Fox. The image below depicts a flyer that was shared online through multiple social media

platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook inviting Yiddish-speakers to participate in

the *Shmueskrayzn* using Zoom (Margolis, 2020).

Figure 6: Digital flyer advertising Vaybertaytsh Shmueskrayzn

This flyer contains an image of two people saying a Yiddish word, one who appears to be

from an earlier period based on the hairstyle and clothing, and one who appears to be from the

present day, again based on the hairstyle and clothing. They both share one speech bubble, which

comes from both of their mouths, and in the speech bubble is the word *vaybertaytsh,* which was

a font that originated as a replication of Ashkenazic semi-cursive, and then became associated

with work written by Jewish women (Frakes, 2017). The podcast *Vaybertaytsh Shmueskrayzn* is

a feminist Yiddish podcast, and the word *shmueskrayzn* means "conversation group/ circle." The

name of the podcast was aptly chosen to match the content. The flyer above is also the main

image on the V*aybertaytsh Shmueskrayzn* website and serves as an informational graphic for

what the podcast's theme is- connecting and inspiring Yiddish-speaking women across the

world, young and old. This flyer contains the podcast's website and encourages viewers to

follow their social media as well as listening to their podcast, and it can be shared easily on

social media. Using a modern platform like podcasting that has recently been gaining popularity

is a great way to get all kinds of listeners excited about and interested in the Yiddish language.

Additionally, new vocabulary that became a necessity to use during the COVID-19

pandemic started gaining popularity during these digital events. "…an exhaustive coronavirus

vocabulary list prepared by the League for Yiddish…included terms such as face mask, hand

sanitizer, quarantine, lockdown, practice self-isolation, and practice social distancing" (Margolis,

2020, 21).

Figure 7: Tweet from @Hasidic32 shows usage of newer COVID-19 vocabulary in response to doubts

about the effectiveness of the COVID-19 vaccine.

Transliteration: di vaxin vert aoysgeveft mit di tseyt funkt vi rub andere vaxins, in mdins ishral hat men

fshut angehoybn asakh fryer, deriber darf men shoyn dart gebn a frishe shat.

es toysht nisht di mtsyaus az der vaxin iz zikher aun efektiv.

English Translation: The vaccine is being phased out over time just like most other vaccines, in the state

of Israel it was simply started much earlier, so one must give it a fresh shot already.

It does not change the fact that the vaccine is safe and effective.

  Like Figures 2 and 3, this Tweet shows Yiddish being used in conjunction with current

events. The COVID-19 pandemic affected everybody, and communities had to adapt to a new

normal. Languages like Yiddish also had to develop new words or figure out how to say certain

things that suddenly became of importance, and this can show how Yiddish is able to adjust or

change, even in small ways, based on current events that affected not only its speakers, but the

entire world.

  Digital spaces hold potential for spreading Yiddish language and culture and much of this

activity has been increased due to the COVID-19 pandemic. These digital spaces help people

connect with other Yiddish speakers from all around the world and allow them to bypass the

costs and time spent going to in-person events, which therefore encourages more people to

participate. Additionally, young people, who use social media and digital spaces more than any

age group, (Auxier and Anderson, 2021) are more likely to participate in these events due to the

familiarity of the platforms.

Digital spaces also create an atmosphere that creates the opportunity for Yiddish

speakers to share their language, because it is less represented than other languages in other

spaces such as academia. The more informal nature of social media and digital spaces

encourages casual conversation and allows Yiddish to have a more modern connotation, which

shows that Yiddish is spoken and used today, just like other languages.

10 Sources for Digital Yiddish

Margolis (2020) offers many digital spaces that have been developed recently and have

been used to spread information about Yiddish language and culture. These sources have the

potential for interest and excitement to develop within communities interested in the study and

preservation of Yiddish. For example, the Yiddish Book Center in Amherst, MA is a museum

that contains many online resources such as a digital corpus of spoken Yiddish audio (Margolis,

2020: 5). Idishe Shtub Mx is a Mexican-Yiddish cultural group that hosts online presentations

and performances using Facebook live-streaming and their website. Dora Wasserman's Yiddish

Theater in Montreal hosted a streaming party of Yiddish-language plays (Margolis, 2020: 8) that

gained many viewers online. YiddishOystralye is a YouTube channel that posts videos of

Yiddish reading groups, Yiddish songs and dance, and various games and activities; these fun

videos are targeted at children learning the language (Margolis, 2020: 14). Virtual Klezmer

concerts and singalongs were hosted online using Zoom and live-streaming platforms, and this

online activity encouraged Yiddish musical artists to get creative with digital methods of sharing

their music (Margolis, 2020: 11). The Congress for Jewish Culture and the California Institute

for Yiddish Culture and Language along with Yiddish musicians and artists put together *Sholem

Aleichem from Every Continent*, a virtual event hosted using Facebook live-streaming. This was

an online performance and concert that featured Yiddish-speaking actors and singers from

around the globe. This event amassed more than 13,000 viewers (Margolis, 2020: 11). There is a

Yiddish Word of the Day video series from Rukhl Schaechter, who is the editor of the only

remaining Yiddish newspaper outside of Hasidic Jewish communities. Her goal is to teach

Yiddish vocabulary slowly and informally using videos, and this *Yiddish Word of the Day* series

is aimed at English speakers who want to learn Yiddish (Yiddish Book Center, 2021).

Figure 8: Tweet from @Forverts, a Twitter account for a Yiddish newspaper, shares a Yiddish article

about the planet Venus and its connotations in society.

Transliteration: *far vos der shturemisher, heyser planet, venus, vert asotsiirt mit libe.*

English Translation: *Why the stormy, sweltering planet, Venus, has been associated with love.*

This figure shares an article from a modern-day digital Yiddish newspaper. It is inspiring to see this because the number of published Yiddish newspapers has drastically decreased since the 19th and early 20th centuries. Using a social media platform to share publications from a Yiddish newspaper can allow many people to access it for free, making it accessible for all interested.

An organization called The Workers Circle is dedicated to spreading Yiddish education and creating online resources such as conversation groups and videos. The following is a promotional post sharing information about the Workers Circle that features a few Yiddish vocabulary words mixed in with English. This post can be especially beneficial for people looking for digital sources for Yiddish language and for people wanting to learn Yiddish words.

"The Workers Circle is helping keep #YiddishAlive! We've teamed with Yiddishist Mikhl Yashinsky to create a series of short, fun, educational videos that explore this vibrant and expressive language. This week's video is all about Friling/Spring! While many of us are stuck indoors, Mikhl took a socially distanced hike through natur/nature and is sharing some key Yiddish terms with us (#Yiddishalive)" (Margolis, 2020: 13).

Figure 9: Tweet from @Yidishlige sharing vocabulary words used on the Jewish holiday of Yom Kippur

Transliteration: *vokabular tsu ium-kipur / Yom Kippur vocab*

mir vintshn ale aundzere mitglider aun shtitsers: a gmr khsimh tuvh! a gmr tuv! me zol zikh aoysbetn a gut yor! ir zolt hobn a gringn tenis! (aoyb ir fast) aun a gutn ium-tuv!

English Translation: *We wish all our members and supporters: A good signature finish! A final blessing! Have a good year! You should have an easy fast! (If you fast) And a happy holiday!*

The League for Yiddish is a non-profit organization based in New York that has the goals of "encouraging people to speak Yiddish in their everyday life; enhancing the prestige of Yiddish as a living language, both within and outside the Yiddish-speaking community, and promoting the modernization of Yiddish" (League for Yiddish, 2021). This figure shows this organization's Twitter account that dedicates time to producing content about Yiddish culture, history, and language. It also forms a sense of community for Yiddish speakers and Jewish individuals who are a part of the League for Yiddish and provides an opportunity to connect with others who are interested in the goals that the League for Yiddish holds.

11 Can Digital Spaces Replicate What Yiddish Once Had?

Yiddish used to be spoken in concentrated areas in Central Europe and shtetls were an important part of Jewish culture; Yiddish was intertwined deeply with this lifestyle and was used daily between members of these communities. Margolis (2020) presents a concept called a "Yiddishland", and defines it as "a concentrated location of spoken Yiddish and Jewish culture (Margolis, 2020)". Pre-Holocaust, these Yiddish speaking communities thrived by being in proximity to each other, living together and celebrating together, and these aspects formed a sense of Yiddish and Jewish community- what Margolis defines as a "Yiddishland." Because of the Holocaust and the many migrations of Jewish people, there is no longer a Yiddishland that exists in terms of concentrated location. Can platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and Zoom create spaces where a digital Yiddishland can be formed? These digital spaces do serve as an online community for Yiddish-speakers and can connect individuals who want to participate in cultural events or language-based activities, but there are setbacks, and not everyone who speaks Yiddish may want to utilize them, such as some members of Hasidic communities. These spaces also cannot easily replicate what Central Europe once had in terms of thriving spoken Yiddish and cannot serve as a replacement or substitute for what once existed and was then greatly reduced by the Holocaust. Additionally, digital spaces also are not able to completely replicate the community and culturally based nature of singing, dancing, and celebrating holidays, or the spontaneity of in-person Yiddish conversations between community members.

12 Revival and Language Activism in Other Languages

In this section, I will analyze methods that have helped minority and endangered languages increase their representation and use in society. First, I will analyze the "revival" of the Hebrew language. Hebrew was spoken for about 1,300 years until it was replaced by

Aramaic and Greek in about 200 A.D. Despite its decline in being a spoken language, it was still

written, and there were two influential sources that used Hebrew- the Tanakh and the Mishna.

Sometime after its replacement, Jews were only able to speak and understand this religious

Hebrew, but it was no longer used as a "normal medium for everyday discourse" (Fellman,

1973). Additionally, since the corpus of Biblical Hebrew was restricted to about 8,000 root

words, it was not sufficient to use for everyday spoken language, so Jews wanted to use more

dominant European languages. Hebrew writers began to decrease, and it looked like spoken

Hebrew was on its way out (Fellman, 1973).

In the 1880's, during the post-Renaissance period in Europe, many countries developed

pride towards their culture and language. During this time, Hebrew started to gain more attention

from Jews who wanted a connection to their own language and culture. By cultivating "the use

of Biblical Hebrew, the Jews too could feel they were participants in [these] nationalistic trends"

(Fellman, 1973: 253). One such individual, Eliezer Ben Yehuda, was particularly adamant about

bringing back Hebrew as the language of the Jewish people. In 1879, in a Hebrew periodical, he

published that to secure the future of the Jewish people, they needed a safe place to settle. He

successfully networked with thousands of Jews through publishing these periodicals and

newspapers, and this served as a form of communication throughout the diaspora, so many Jews

listened to and considered what he had to say. Yehuda also stated that Jews already had a

language and could communicate in it if they want to, this language being Hebrew. He married

and settled in Palestine, encouraging other Jews to do so as well. Additionally, due to his

commitment to speaking only in Hebrew, his child was the first in almost 2 millennia to have

Hebrew as his mother tongue. To help others integrate into speaking Hebrew, Ben Yehuda

created a dictionary compiling all past and present Hebrew vocabulary with the help of the

Hebrew Language Council in 1890, which he also developed (Fellman, 1973).

Yehuda was extremely committed to the idea of Jews having their own safe place to live

in and a language that was uniquely Jewish. He put in a lot of effort to achieve these goals, and it

can be argued that he had a tremendous influence on the revival of Hebrew. However, Fellman

(1973) argues that without pogroms that forced Jews out of Eastern Europe, Ben Yehuda's

Hebrew revival would not have happened with such force. Many Jews went westward to escape

persecution, but a few thousand settled in Palestine and began adopting Hebrew as their

language. In Palestine, Ben Yehuda put many institutions into place like the Hebrew speaking

society called "The Revival of Israel" where members agreed to speak only Hebrew. He also

made Hebrew education compulsory for children, and additionally published Hebrew

newspapers and a comprehensive dictionary of Hebrew vocabulary. Jews were able to make the

switch to speaking Hebrew because most already knew religious Hebrew used in important texts,

they wanted to start a new life away from discrimination and were also aided by the institutions

set in place by Ben Yehuda (Fellman, 1973). One thing that is important to note is that the

revival of Hebrew is intertwined with Zionistic beliefs where eventually, an "apartheid state

where Jews had more rights than others" (Jewish Voice for Peace, 2021) was established.

Zionism has additionally created generational trauma for citizens of Palestine today (Jewish

Voice for Peace, 2021).

To revive Hebrew, a few key things had to happen. Religious texts that were particularly

important and influential to Jews remained and were not destroyed. This served as a basis for

developing modern Hebrew vocabulary and grammar. Jews also experienced traumatic expulsion

from their home countries and therefore were more willing to adopt Hebrew as their language.

Hebrew was also made compulsory in schools and families were encouraged to speak it amongst

each other as often as possible. It is also important to note that this revival was done completely

without digital resources. Hebrew's status changed from only being written in religious texts to

having thousands of speakers quickly (Fellman, 1973). Today there are about 9 million speakers

of Hebrew in places such as Israel and the United States (United States Census, 2021).

Next, I will examine how digital resources are being used in conjunction with academic

resources and in person language activism to promote and spread education about modern-day

variants of Zapotec languages. I work as a student research intern for the Ticha Project, an

organization dedicated to making resources for Zapotec education and Zapotec history more

accessible for people both a part of a Zapotec community and people outside those communities.

While this project relies heavily on digital resources such as an online corpus of manuscripts

written in Colonial Valley Zapotec and Spanish, an online dictionary containing many Colonial

Valley Zapotec words, encoding to enhance the website, and social media to post about its

resources, it also relies on other methods that do not use digital spaces (Lillehaugen, 2021).

There have been in-person conferences and lectures that the Ticha Project has held in places such

as Los Angeles, California, and Oaxaca, Mexico. For example, Janet Chávez Santiago, a member

of the Ticha team, recently gave a lecture at Haverford College on her experiences as Zapotec

educator and language activist. Members of the Ticha Project team also recently traveled to

Oaxaca to meet with members of the team that live there and discussed some of the teaching

resources that were created over the summer of 2021. Visiting archives in Oaxaca that contain

Zapotec documents is also something that the Ticha team has participated in. A combination of

utilizing digital resources, participating in in-person activities such as academic conferences and

lectures, traveling to various parts of the world, and visiting archives to study historical Zapotec

documents make aspects of the language activism the Ticha Project participates in very

impactful.

Lastly, I will examine the legislative efforts the Australian government has participated in

to uplift and support indigenous languages of Australia. There is a national project called "First

Languages Australia" that received financial support from the Australian federal government and

started the "Priority Languages Support Project," where its goal is to spread education about and

protect 39 indigenous languages (First Languages Australia, 2021). The Mobile Language

Project is a digital resource that is currently working on adding information about 46 indigenous

languages spoken in Australia. On their website, each language has a list of what the project is

doing to help support the language, information about community efforts and activism, and has

an online language learning portal complete with lessons on vocabulary and grammar in that

language (Mobile Language Project, 2021).

13 Proposal for Future Yiddish Language Activism

With these examples of Hebrew, Zapotec languages, and Australian Aboriginal languages

in mind, I propose, for Yiddish, a mix of digital spaces, in person interactions, language classes

and schools, an effort to educate people about Yiddish history and Yiddish today, and more

academic resources such as textbooks, lectures and conferences. Digital spaces alone cannot

fully support Yiddish language, history, and culture, especially since some of the speakers

remaining today may be opposed to utilizing these spaces. I think, however, if people and

organizations dedicated to the preservation and promotion of Yiddish collaborate and produce

creative ways to contribute to Yiddish language activism, the number of people interested in

Yiddish will grow, as will its representation in modern society. Below, I list my ideas, some of

which utilize digital spaces and the Internet, while some do not.

Resources like the Tlacochahuaya Talking Dictionary, an online dictionary with playable

audio files of word pronunciations in the Tlacochahuaya variant of Zapotec (Tlacochahuaya

Zapotec Talking Dictionary, 2019), would be beneficial for people studying Yiddish. Online

audio dictionaries that contain information about Yiddish dialects would not only be informative

to Yiddish speakers who could look words up and hear them in their family or community

dialect, but it would also serve as a point of clarification for learners like me, who have just

recently started studying Yiddish. One experience where I wished there were such a resource is

when I was using the language learning application Duolingo. When I used this application, I

learned that the word for "my" was מײַן (*mayn)* and on Google Translate, it is listed as מיין

(*meyn).* The small vertical bar under the second character distinguishes the *-ay* from the *-ey*

sound. There were many instances like that, where something I would learn on Duolingo differed

slightly in pronunciation and spelling from what I saw on Google Translate, and even what I

learned in my Yiddish class I took over Zoom in the summer of 2021. These differences, I would

later find out, indicated different dialects, and it frustrated me that there was no description on

Duolingo or Google Translate dictating what dialect was being used. Therefore, I think several

online audio dictionaries, specifically focusing on Yiddish dialects, would be extremely

beneficial for new learners, and it would also help others interested in Yiddish to do more

research and become more involved in studying the language. This could potentially encourage

more participation in Yiddish language activism.

Podcasts are also something I would like to see more of in terms of Yiddish language

activism. Despite these being digital resources, I think audience and listener participation could

spark interesting in-person conversations, and podcasters could even host events where they tell

audiences about Yiddish-speakers they have interviewed, anecdotes about Yiddish-speaking
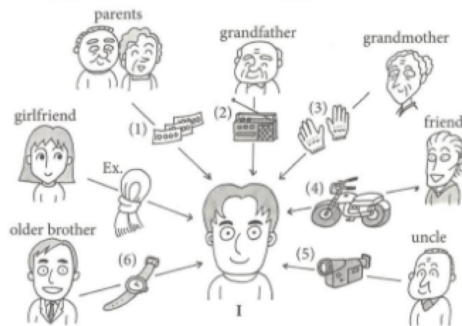
ancestry or family members, and their experiences speaking Yiddish, just to name a few ideas.

Many podcasters go on tour and tell stories just as if they were recording a regular podcast, but

instead of being alone in a room, they are in a venue and have an audience. A popular podcast

called *My Favorite Murder,* which is hosted by comedians Karen Kilgariff and Georgia

Hardstark, regularly does these tours, and has massive audience participation in which audience

members sometimes go on stage and share their own stories. The podcast is about true crime, and

the hosts share their interest in how these cases are solved and are passionate about justice for

victims (Kilgariff and Hardstark, 2021). Audience members sometimes meet new people at these

shows, and often form lasting friendships based on their interests. If more Yiddish language and

culture podcasts were created (for example, like *Vaybertaytsh Schmuezkrayzn*, the feminist

Yiddish podcast) and hosted shows like these, I think it would be a fantastic opportunity for

those passionate about Yiddish language activism to meet other like-minded individuals, and it

would potentially inspire them to start their own creative projects about Yiddish language and

culture that others could access and learn about.

Another resource that I think would promote interest in Yiddish language activism is

offering Yiddish classes at high schools and colleges. I think schools that are located near

Yiddish-speaking communities should offer these courses, not only in the Yiddish language, but

also about Yiddish history and culture as well, so students can be more informed about the

communities in their area. Despite the great decline of Yiddish speakers due to the Holocaust,

there is great perseverance in modern-day communities that continue speaking the language and

participate in their culture. Opportunities to interview individuals who still speak Yiddish would

be extremely inspirational and could serve as the basis for many educational class projects.

Yiddish Language and Digital
Spaces

I think a class that talks about Yiddish loanwords in English would be a particularly

interesting topic to students in both high school and college. Words such as *glitch, klutz, Lox,*

nosh, schlep, and schmooze, (Oxford, 1992) among others, come from Yiddish, and are often

used by English speakers who often do not know the origin. It would be interesting to examine

how these words are used in daily conversation and the media, and I think this class would help

offer a modern connotation for Yiddish and show that its influence is felt in more ways than

people might realize. Textbooks with illustrations and modern-day examples of the language

could be a way to make these kinds of classes more fun and interactive. One example that I like

are the *Genki* textbooks which are commonly used for beginner Japanese students. These

textbooks have illustrations of characters that reoccur in many parts of the text, and they even

have pages dedicated to information about Japanese traditions, pop culture, food, literary trends,

and so on.

Figure 10: *Genki* 1 textbook pages

(Banno, Ohno, Sakane, Shinagawa, and Takashiki, 1999)

In the figure above, on the left page, there are exercises about verbs to describe the act of giving or receiving. The illustrations on this page depict characters that students see throughout the textbook. The right page describes annual events in Japan that are celebrated, and *Genki* represents their significance with informational paragraphs and illustrations. These kinds of textbooks appeal to young students and provide not just language lessons, but content about the culture that the language comes from. As a student who studied from this textbook, I can speak from personal experience and say that *Genki* engaged me both linguistically and culturally in Japanese classes.

Additionally, there could even be dedicated Yiddish immersion schools, like Spanish or

French immersion schools, where all classes and subjects are taught entirely in the target

language. This can be incredibly effective for parents who want their child to be exposed to a

language from an early age, and it could help parents who have lost touch with their Yiddish-

speaking ancestry but want their children to experience it in some capacity.

I think there should also be lectures about Jewish history and culture in person, occurring

at universities, community centers, museums, and libraries, just to name a few places. These

could be about a variety of different topics including but not limited to Klezmer music, Yiddish

literature, Yiddish writing systems, Jewish holidays and useful Yiddish words, and current

Yiddish media. Like Janet Chávez Santiago, who participated in a lecture about her experiences

as a Zapotec educator and activist, I would like to see more people enthusiastic about Yiddish

language preservation hosting talks, conferences, and events that are accessible to those

interested.

Language activism contains a vast number of unique possibilities for increasing minority

language representation in society, so the above ideas are just some of the many options that

could be utilized for the Yiddish language. I am passionate about the growing interest in Yiddish

and hope that some of the ideas I propose, if not all, will be able to be realized in the future. I

hope that enthusiasm for Yiddish language activism will increase and that the importance of

representation for Yiddish in society will continue to be realized.

14 Conclusion

For the increasement of Yiddish language activism, digital spaces are a starting point, but not a complete solution. When digital spaces are introduced to the complex concept of language activism, accessibility increases, and language activists can produce possibilities for spreading information about Yiddish that would have simply not been possible before the Internet. However, digital spaces cannot solve every issue that Yiddish faces as a minority language, and they certainly cannot stand in as a replacement for cultural activities that require in-person connections. They also cannot always compete with the resources that modern-day academia may have access to. Therefore, digital spaces need to be combined with other in-person and academic methods to effectively contribute to language activism for the Yiddish language.

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