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Simplification of Language

The term 'linguistic simplification' (פישוט לשוני *pišuṭ lešoni*) refers to any process that reduces the structural complexity of a text while trying to preserve its meaning and information content. Simplification is intended to make the text more comprehensible and more suited to the needs, knowledge, and proficiency level of the reader (or listener) without rendering it childish or simplistic. Linguistic simplification can be achieved using a variety of means: a vocabulary of familiar, everyday words (e.g., להגיד *lehagid* 'to say' vs. להצהיר *lehashir* 'to declare', לקנות *liqnot* 'to buy' vs. לרכוש *lirkoš* 'to purchase') with no jargon (e.g., חוזה (= הסכם) בין קונה *xoze (= heskem) ben qone ha-bituax le-xevrat ha-bituax* 'a contract (= agreement) between the buyer of the insurance and the insurance company' vs. פוליסה *polisa* 'an insurance policy'), no abbreviations (e.g., קופת חולים *qupat xolim* 'medical clinic' vs. קופ"ח *q-v-p-x*), or long noun phrases (e.g., יש משרד לטיפול בצרכים של הקשיש. למשרד יש הנהלה. להנהלה יש חדר ישיבות זה חדר הישיבות

שלה *yeš miśrad le-ṭipul ba-ṣraxim šel ha-kašiš. la-miśrad yeš hanhala. la-hanhala yeš xadar yešivot. ze xadar ha-yešivot šelah.* 'There is an office for elderly affairs. The office has directors. The directors have a meeting room. This is their meeting room' vs. חדר הישיבות של הנהלת המשרד לטיפול בקשיש *xadar ha-yešivot šel hanhalat ha-miśrad le-ṭipul ba-qašiš* 'the meeting room of the directors of the office for elderly affairs'); analytic morphology (e.g., כרטיסיך *karṭisexa* 'tickets-POSS-2ms' vs. הכרטיסים שלך *ha-karṭisim šelxa* 'your [2ms] tickets', לקבלת *leqabalat* 'for receipt of' vs. כדי לקבל *kde leqabel* 'in order to receive'); unambiguous phrases (e.g., חברה בכנסת הראשונה *xavera ba-kneset ha-rišona* 'member [f] of the first parliament' vs. חברת הכנסת הראשונה *xavrat ha-kneset ha-rishona* 'the first member [f] of parliament/ member [f] of the first parliament'), simple, active sentences, in canonical word order (דני קנה כרטיסים *dani qana karṭisim* 'Dani bought tickets' vs. כרטיסים דני קנה *karṭisim dani qana* 'tickets Dani bought'), overt pronouns (e.g., אתה תלך *ʾata telex* 'you will go'/היא תלך *hi telex* 'she will go' vs. תלך *telex* 'go-FUT-2ms/3fs'); punctuation of homographic words (קופה *qupa* 'box office' vs. *qofa* 'monkey [f]'), and more. Other means relate to the quality and quantity of information, e.g., expression of one idea per sentence, avoidance of superfluous information, organization of information in a logical order (e.g., גש לקופה כדי לקנות כרטיסים *gaš la-qupa kde liqnot karṭisim* 'go to the box office to buy tickets vs. כדי לקנות כרטיסים גש לקופה *kde liqnot karṭisim gaš la-qupa* 'to buy tickets go to the box office'), etc. For years, linguistic simplification was mostly applied to foreign language teaching, to teaching new immigrants (e.g., שער למתחיל *šaʿar la-matxil* 'Gateway for the Beginner', a newspaper in simplified Hebrew) and to the adaptation of educational materials for children. However, in recent years, the application of linguistic simplification has expanded to two additional areas: (1) administrative simplification, plain language, i.e., simplification of legal, financial, and medical documents for the layman, emphasizing the economic benefits of this process for business and bureaucracy (e.g., the דבר פשוט *daber pašuṭ* 'Speak Simple' website); (2) linguistic accessibility (נגישות לשונית *negišut lešonit*), i.e., accommodation of linguistic information to people with special needs (i.e., intellectual and

learning disabilities, mental handicaps, aphasia, Alzheimer's disease, degenerative brain diseases, head injuries, as well as elderly people). In this context, linguistic simplification forms only part of a larger system of supports: auditory (e.g., audio-recorded information for blind people), visual (e.g., color contrast, adjustable font size, designated page layout, icons and symbols, communication boards, sign language), tactile (Braille), linguistic (e.g., translation), and more. Recently, the latter application of linguistic simplification received impetus by legislation (i.e., the extension of the "equality act for people with disabilities" to include accessibility of service [2005]). However, the implementation of simplification, its suitability for specific populations, and its efficiency still need to be established on the basis of solid academic research. Nonetheless, at the social level it is of the utmost importance, and in the long run, will no doubt lead to improving the quality of life of the individuals who need it.

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Slang, Israeli Hebrew

Slang often characterizes specific groups, such as teenagers, soldiers, or the underworld. Modern Hebrew slang has been described since the 1960s (Sapan 1965). The first salient group in which it is known to have developed is the פלמ"ח *palmax*, a Jewish fighting force in the British Mandate period (operated in the years 1941–1948). The richest source of Israeli slang is undoubtedly the IDF, but since military service is mandatory for the majority of citizens, and many of them also serve in the army reserves, most of this in-group slang spreads to the entire population. By contrast, criminals try to keep their slang secret, and once it is revealed it must be changed immediately. Other sources for Hebrew slang are popular entertainers, e.g., הגשש החיוור *ha-gašaš ha-xiver* 'The Pale Tracker', television comedies, e.g., ארץ נהדרת *ʾereṣ nehederet* 'Wonderful Land', the gossip columns of newspapers and magazines, e.g., סתם *stam* 'Just So', and popular groups on the Web, such as the פקצות *faqaṣot*. The last-mentioned name originated as a military acronym, פקצ"ה *faqaṣa* for פקידה צעירה *pqida ṣeʿira* 'young female clerk', but was later reinterpreted as פרחה קטנה וצעקנית *frexa qṭana ve-ṣaʿaqanit* 'loud little bimbo'.

Although the army has contributed to slang in different forms, the most common slang expressions of military origin are acronyms, which are concise in meaning not revealed by their outer form. Acronyms often are used as euphemisms, and sometimes their original meaning is intentionally kept secret. Some examples: דפ"ר *dafar* 'blockhead' (= דרוג פסיכוטכני ראשוני *derug psixotexni rišoni* 'preliminary psychotechnical classification'); בבל"ט / בבל"ת *bavlaṭ / bavlat* 'blah-blah, a pain in the ass' (= בלבול ביצים ללא תכלית/טעם *bilbul beṣim lelo taxlit/ṭaʿam* 'breaking balls without purpose/reason'); כסת"ח *kastax* 'CYA, cover your ass' (= כיסוי תחת *kisuy taxat*