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Religious Unification, Regional Divergence: Exploring Multifaceted Linguistic Practices and Identities among the Israeli Druze and the Druze Community in the Golan Heights

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Abstract

This study delves into a comparative analysis of language and identity within two distinct Druze communities: those residing in the Golan Heights, who transitioned from Syrian to Israeli governance post the 1967 War, and their counterparts within Israel proper. Both communities find themselves situated as 'sandwiched' communities, with the Golan Druze caught between Israeli and Syrian nationalisms and the Israeli Druze positioned amid the dynamics of Israel and the Arabs. Given the fluid nature of collective identities, which are subject to continuous shaping by sociopolitical influences within and beyond state boundaries, this study focuses on two pivotal political debates in each community during the fieldwork period. The Israeli Druze community is primarily concerned with the Israeli-Nation State law controversy. Meanwhile, the Golan Heights Druze community is grappling with the intensifying and widely publicized speculation regarding secret negotiations between Assad's regime and Israel, which suggests that the Golan was sold to Israel rather than being a result of a 'lost war.' This study explores how these debates gradually shape the collective identities of the respective communities. The research illuminates how navigating between opposing forces leads to the emergence of novel national identities and linguistic variations within these 'sandwiched' contexts.

Keywords: *Undefined Identity, language, Druze, code-switching, Israel, Syria, Golan Heights, 'nation-state' law, Hadbawi.*

Introduction

Bucholtz and Hall (2004, 382) defined identity as 'an outcome of cultural semiotics, accomplished through the production of contextually relevant sociopolitical relations of similarity and difference, authenticity and inauthenticity, and legitimacy and illegitimacy.' Thus, identities extend beyond individual and group attributes; they also characterize situations, making identification an ongoing social and political process.

Identity work involves downplaying differences within groups that share an identity and accentuating distinctions between members within the group and those outside it. Frequently, as language reflects the semiotic processes of practice, indexicality, ideology, and performance, this manifestation of identity occurs through language. The deployment of specific linguistic features and styles symbolizes and iconically embodies a group's unique identity and way of existing in the world (ibid 2004).

Undoubtedly, numerous linguists and scholars specializing in identity emphasize the inherent connection between language and identity. Language plays a pivotal role in shaping identity, acting as the medium to represent various ethnic and nationalist perspectives (Bucholtz and Hall 2004). Identities are expressed in language through the categorizations and labels that individuals and collectives ascribe to themselves and others. They use specific speaking methods to indicate belonging and interpret linguistic cues (Joseph 2016).

According to Auer (2007, 2), collectivities are akin to unique quasi-beings that express their identities through distinctive linguistic features, employing language to establish and convey their identity. For instance, bilingual minorities may utilize language to establish a connection with their community's identity. This involves how bilingual individuals speak both majority and minority languages, incorporating various mixing and switching styles considered authentic and 'natural' representations of their identity. In essence, linguistic practices, which include choices among linguistic varieties and accessible languages within a community, not only express but also actively contribute to shaping and reshaping the identity of a collective.

Considering the interconnected nature of language, sociopolitical contexts, and identity, this study investigates the nexus between codeswitching, mixed varieties, relevant sociopolitical circumstances in the case study, and identity within the Druze communities in the Golan Heights and Israel. The research provides a comparative analysis focusing on language use, identity formation, and sociopolitical

influences within the Druze communities in the Golan Heights and Israel. Using theories and concepts from intersubjective contact linguistics, this paper illustrates how communities positioned as 'sandwiched' between contrasting influences forge novel national identities and linguistic variations.

The Israeli Druze and the Druze of the Golan Heights

The Druze people, known as Al-Muwaḥidūn (the Unitarians, or those who seek oneness), predominantly inhabit the Middle East, specifically in Lebanon, Syria, and Israel, with a scattered presence globally. Lacking a distinct homeland, the Druze express their allegiance to the state of residence by embracing its ideologies, affiliations, identity, and nationalism. Consequently, Israeli Druze adopt a sense of Israeli national consciousness, while Syrian Druze align themselves with Syrian nationalism. In unique cases, like in the Golan Heights, which transitioned from Syrian to Israeli control after the 1967 War, the situation becomes precarious, carrying profound implications and uncertainties for the community and its collective identity. Scholarly research has highlighted that the Druze community does not consistently adhere to a sentiment of non-resistance, particularly in instances of persecution or perceived disrespect. Numerous studies illustrate this phenomenon, showcasing instances such as the Druze rebellions against the Ottoman Empire and the French Mandate. Additionally, scholarly observations extend to more contemporary events, such as the recent Civil War in Syria, during which many Syrian Druze expressed opposition to the Bashar al-Assad regime (Betts 1988; Firro 1992; Talhamy 2012). This pattern underscores the complexity of the Druze response to external pressures and challenges the notion of unwavering non-resistance within the community.

The Druze community in Israel, inclusive of those in the Golan Heights, numbers 150,000, representing approximately 1.6% of Israel's total population. This substantial Druze population is distributed across 19 localities in Israel, with 13 having a Druze majority. In the remaining settlements, Druze coexist with Arab Christians and Muslims, forming the majority or minority in various proportions. Notably, in Druze settlements in the Golan Heights—Majdal Shams, Buq'ata, Masada, and Ein Qiniya—the Druze comprise the entire population, accounting for a total of 23,000 individuals (Central Bureau of Statistics, State of Israel 2023).

The Druze community in Israel has cultivated a distinctive political and national identity as part of the Israeli state's deliberate policy to differentiate between Israeli Druze and Arabs (Firro 2001; Halabi 2006). Druze-Jewish collaboration

reached a significant milestone during the War of Independence in 1948 when Druze individuals willingly enlisted in the Israeli Defense Force (IDF), aligning their efforts with the Jewish population against the Arabs. This collaboration culminated in forming the Druze unit within the IDF (Azrieli and Abu-Rukon, 1989; Firro, 1999; Gelber, 1995; Nisan, 2010).

In 1949, the Israeli army chose the Druze religious shrine, al-Nabi Shu'ayb, as the venue for its inaugural swearing-in ceremony. New Druze recruits pledged their allegiance to the Jewish state during this ceremony. Al-Nabi Shu'ayb's selection, with its religious significance as the father-in-law of the prophet Moses in Druze beliefs (Jethro in Judaism), symbolized a profound historical connection between the Druze community and the Jewish people. This gesture aimed to reinforce the shared heritage between the two communities (Firro 2001).

Simultaneously, the Israeli media, including radio and press, regularly employed the terms 'Druzes' and 'Druze community' to emphasize the distinctiveness of the Druze community from the broader Arab population in the country (Firro 2001). Subsequently, in 1956, conscription of Druze males into the IDF became mandatory. This historical progression underscores the evolving relationship between the Druze community and the State of Israel. Zeedan (2019) asserts that the state of Israel and the Druze achieved a positive peace, characterized by cooperation and integration, following their integration into the army.

In a significant move in 1962, Israel initiated a transformative measure in identity labeling for the Druze, altering their nationality on birth certificates and identity cards from Arab to Druze. This change, while legally maintaining Arab status for the Arab Christians and Muslims, marked a pivotal step. Furthermore, the Druze received an independent education system that stood apart from the Arab educational framework, fostering the development of a distinct 'Druze and Israeli' consciousness.

According to Firro (2001), during the early 1970s, deliberate initiatives were undertaken to instill an 'Israeli Druze consciousness' through education, countering a trend of 'Arabization' among Druze youth. This consciousness found expression in specialized citizenship education classes, reinforcing the Druze sense of belonging to the Israeli state. Additionally, special military service preparation programs and workshops enhanced the youth's commitment to and contribution to the Israeli state. The establishment of special days for both Druze and national ceremonies, the adoption of special symbols of the state of Israel, the use of Hebrew alongside Arabic in Druze schools, and textbooks in Hebrew further so-

lidified this process. Court and Abbas (2010) explored in detail the role of Druze high schools in shaping students' identities. Additionally, the linguistic landscape among the Druze communities has consistently shifted towards increased usage of Hebrew in various villages and towns (Isleem 2015).

This multifaceted process has positioned the Israeli Druze in a 'sandwiched' dynamic between Israel and the Arabs. Despite cultural and linguistic similarities with the Israeli Arab citizens, the Israeli Druze have, over time, developed a connection to Israel influenced by social, religious, historical, and political factors (Kheir, 2023).

As a testament to their integration into Israeli society, a significant number of Druze individuals predominantly identify themselves as Israeli Druze. Extensive research on the identity affiliations of Arabs and Druze in Israel (Amara and Schnell 2004; Halabi 2014; Kheir 2023) indicates that most Druze place significant importance on their religious identity and Israeli citizenship. Nisan (2010, 576) emphasizes that, for the Druze, embracing an Israeli identity is a distinctive communal marker, signifying that Israeli-ness encompasses not only Jews but also non-Jews. Additionally, Nisan (2010, 585) and Zeedan (2019) emphasize the divergence in political identification between the Druze and Israeli Arabs, highlighting voting patterns in Israeli elections. They support their claim that 'Druze vote for Jews, and Arabs vote for Arabs,' with evidence from voting behavior and party preferences. Exceptions exist, such as "The Arab-Druze Initiative Committee," which aligns with the Palestinian cause and opposes mandatory conscription of Druze in the Israeli Defense Force. Nevertheless, such groups remain marginal, failing to garner substantial support among the Israeli Druze. This is primarily because the majority of Druze do not perceive themselves as Palestinians, lack connections or ties to the Palestinian people, unlike the Arabs, and take actions against Palestinians as part of their duty in the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) and other security services (Nisan 2010; Zeedan 2019).

The Druze community in the Golan Heights forms a distinct entity, exhibiting specific differences from the Israeli Druze in various aspects. These distinctions encompass cultural practices, customs, and habits (including dress code, exogamy practices, religious observances, and attitudes toward the consumption of alcoholic beverages, particularly among women), collective identity, secularism, and linguistic practices (Kheir, 2023). The paramount differentiator, however, lies in ideology. While the Israeli Druze have assimilated into Israel through historical collaborations with the Jewish community, compulsory military service, and

the adoption of state-related ideologies across education and other domains, the Druze of the Golan Heights maintain complex relations with Israel due to several sociohistorical factors, briefly outlined as follows.

Following the conclusion of the 1967 War, the Golan Heights, including the four Druze villages, transitioned from Syrian to Israeli control. It is essential to highlight that Seheta, a fifth smaller village, was demolished by Israel after the conclusion of the 1967 War (Alkhalili, Dajani, and Mahmoud, 2023). This geopolitical shift led to the creation of a new border between Syria and Israel, causing the separation of Druze families. By the end of 1981, the formal annexation of the Golan to Israel prompted the Knesset to apply Israeli law and regulations to the region. This decision, compelling the Golan Druze to acquire Israeli residence or citizenship, sparked unrest and a non-violent campaign against Israel. The Golan Druze religious leaders, influenced by pro-Syrian parties in the Golan and their relatives in Syria, issued threats of ostracism against those accepting Israeli identity cards and citizenship. Consequently, a majority of the Golan Druze at the time resisted, some willingly and others out of fear of social exclusion, even from receiving Israeli residence certificates (Kennedy 1984; Dana 2003).

Their objection stemmed from two primary factors. Firstly, the division of Druze families and fields created a situation where the Golan Druze faced pressure from the Syrians not to collaborate with Israeli authorities, fearing potential harm to their families and properties by the Syrian authorities. Secondly, the Golan Druze harbored concerns about the eventual return of the Golan Heights to Syrian rule. This fear compelled them to refrain from any form of identification with Israel, as such an act could brand them as 'traitors' in the eyes of the Syrians. This apprehension intensified after the 1973 War when Syria attempted to regain control of the Golan, leading the Golan Druze to display Syrian affiliation and distance themselves from Israel openly. The underlying fear also originated from precedents of the return of Israeli-occupied territories, discussions within the Israeli Cabinet about returning the Golan to Syria, statements from Israeli politicians suggesting tangible options for compromise on the Golan, and the broader context of Israeli-Syrian peace negotiations (Kennedy 1984; Dana 2003).

The Israeli Druze, headed by the Druze spiritual leader at the time, Shaykh Amin Tarif, tried to close the rift between the Golan Druze and the Israeli authorities but failed to do so as the Golan Druze explained that political circumstances forced them to act with extreme caution. Opposition to the Israeli move to grant them Israeli identity cards, implying Israeli citizenship, grew due to their

fear and uncertainties regarding their future. The entire community often shunned those who accepted them, resulting in only a few individuals taking advantage of the Israeli identification offer. Being caught between Syria and Israel—while both countries, in collaboration with local allies, had attempted to inculcate Syrian and Israeli national consciousness within the population through a variety of practices and discourses—many remained on the fence, while others attempted to cultivate an alternative form of national consciousness in the Golan (Kennedy 1984; Dana 2003; Phillips 2016). This alternative national consciousness arose mainly as a result of the Syrian state's chronic inability and unwillingness to recapture the Golan and an increasingly growing and publicized speculation that Assad's regime had conducted secret negotiations with Israel and had actually sold the Golan to Israel rather than 'lost a war.' Talks about this 'Golan secret deal' began around 2011 and continued to gain publicity as more Syrian army generals provided 'evidence' of the deal. Golan activists, therefore, called for the Golan Druze to detach their sense of belonging to the Syrian nation from their community's endorsement of Assad (Al Jazeera Arabic 2015; Phillips 2016).

In contemporary times, there has been a transformation for the Golan Druze, particularly for those without Israeli citizenship who maintain Israeli permanent residency. They now benefit from state privileges, and some claim to be undergoing a gradual 'Israelization' process. This evolution is evident in the assimilation of the younger generation, the adoption of a more Westernized lifestyle, an increasing number of individuals applying for and receiving Israeli citizenship, the permanent relocation to Israel by those studying and working there, and a linguistic shift in certain towns towards the predominance of Hebrew. Despite the occasional demonstrations that may still occur on the Syrian national holiday, many locals acknowledge these as merely 'acts of loyalty out of precaution.'

It is crucial to acknowledge that the Golan Heights has transitioned from a dictatorial regime to a democracy. The elders have deeply ingrained Syrian nationalism at both conscious and subconscious levels, and their love and loyalty to Syria remain undeniable. There have been varying degrees of success in passing this nationalism on to the next generations. Some of the participants in the current study have embraced it. In contrast, others have rejected their parents' doctrines, entering a new reality where they can distinguish between the oppressed lives their parents led and their freedom of choice. One participant wisely pointed out, 'There are always exceptional cases, on either extreme side of the dichotomy.'

Theoretical Approaches

Identity holds significant sway in various aspects of everyday life and has become a focal point in diverse fields of study. It originates from many sources: age, gender, race, sexual orientation, class, generation, institutional affiliation, geopolitical locale, religion, community, society, status, ethnicity, and nationality. Identity serves as a personal anchor in the world, establishing a connection between the individual and the society in which they live. Identities are dynamic, contested, and decentred. Individuals perceive themselves differently across time and social contexts, intertwined with power dynamics, and shaped by numerous forces that render their self-concept susceptible to change under different circumstances.

While individual identity tackles the question, 'Who am I?', collective identity delves into the matter of 'Who are we?' (Weedon 1996; Woodward 1997). Social forces and historical developments, spanning tribal, religious, family-based, racial, linguistic, ethnic, national, and civic dimensions, have been molded by collective identities throughout history. These identities continually shape and are shaped by evolving political and social forces within and beyond the state. In conflict scenarios, an ethnic group's collective identity can play a pivotal role in their interactions with other ethnic groups and the state, with the nature of the conflict intimately linked to identity dynamics.

However, given their fluid and contested nature, identities adapt in response to significant social forces, giving rise to new loyalties, groupings, identifications, and commitments. Consequently, they both influence and transform responses to sociopolitical changes (Rohana 1997).

Most experts conceptualize identities as nested, non-binary, cumulative, context-dependent, flexible, and often negotiated—frequently, indeed, negotiated, expressed, and organized through language. As such, linguistic processes lie at the heart of identity dynamics, where identity perceptions and constructions influence the deployment of linguistic resources. Given that language varieties and distinctions can demarcate the boundaries of ethnic belonging, diverse linguistic elements can be fashioned to distinguish individuals and communities. Language becomes a tool for individuals to convey aspects of their personal identity and a medium to construct, convey, and negotiate collective identities. In this sense, language can generate images of groups and communities (De Fina 2016).

Increased contact among people, and consequently among identities, has given rise to various linguistic varieties and resources that express and convey these identities. One prominent phenomenon in this context is codeswitching, which

involves spontaneous alternation between two or more languages. This alternation can occur either between sentences (inter-sentential), wherein a whole clause is produced in one language before switching to another, or within the same sentence, where elements of two languages coexist. However, a considerable debate exists regarding the classification and extent of labeling a particular language use as codeswitching (Kheir 2019).

Myers-Scotton (1997, 3) offers a more specific definition for code-switching, describing it as 'the selection by bilinguals or multilinguals of forms from an embedded variety (or varieties) in utterances of a matrix variety during the same conversation.' Here, the matrix language signifies the dominant language in the speech, while the embedded language plays a supplementary role, participating in speech production to a lesser extent. The matrix language establishes the morphosyntactic framework[2] of sentences involving code-switching, determining the order of morphemes,[3] and supplying the syntactically relevant elements in constituents containing morphemes from both languages.

Extensive research on codeswitching has revealed that different code-switchers within a community may exhibit distinct ways and styles of switching. This diversity has prompted scholars to distinguish between various types of codeswitching. Myers-Scotton (2002), for instance, identified two main types: classic and composite. In classic codeswitching, one language (the matrix/dominant language) furnishes the morphosyntactic frame, while the embedded (additional) language primarily contributes content morphemes, such as verbs, nouns, and expressions. Both participating languages contribute to the morphosyntactic frame in composite codeswitching, resulting in a composite (mixed) matrix language frame.

Differentiating between various types of codeswitching is essential for comprehending the diverse motivations, causes, and effects associated with codeswitching. Building on Eckert's (2004) performance and style theory, Kheir (2023) proposes considering codeswitching as a stylistic resource. Individuals positioned at different stances on conflict or political issues exhibit variability in how they select, combine, and situationally deploy codeswitching. According to Eckert (2004), style

[2] A morphosyntactic frame involves the way different components of a sentence fit together, including information about word forms, grammatical categories, and the overall syntactic structure. It helps describe the rules and patterns governing the combination of words in a language.

[3] Morphemes are the smallest meaningful units in languages. They can be words themselves or parts of words, such as prefixes, suffixes, and roots.

is not a fixed entity but a practice—an activity through which people create social meaning. Style is inherently dynamic and represents the visible manifestation of meaning.

Furthermore, as a deliberate and self-aware social display, performance involves stylization that highlights ideological associations (Bucholtz and Hall 2004). From this perspective, we can view code-switching as a form of stylization that manifests and accentuates sociopolitical identity (Kheir, 2023). Eckert (2004) asserts that the selection of variables in performance is based on the speaker's interpretation of meaning potential. Since "a stylistic move is to be put out into a community for the purpose of being interpreted, speakers select resources based on their potential comprehensibility in that community" (Eckert 2004, 44).

Hence, speakers and the community approach the use of code-switching with caution, viewing it as a reflection of a state identity dimension. Speakers conscientiously select, combine, and situationally deploy codeswitching; in some instances, they may modify it to align with their own ideology and the community's expectations (Kheir, 2023). According to Eckert (2004), prestige and stigma have emerged as primary social meanings linked to variables. This emphasis prompts individuals to strive for prestige and avoid stigma, influencing how speakers manage style to invoke a particular identity or establish distance.

An alternative model by Irvine and Gal (2000) has detailed a linguistic ideology process known as erasure. This process involves elements going unnoticed, being explained away, or, in extreme cases, eradicating elements that do not align with the ideological scheme. To eliminate the perceived threat, one must either ignore, transform, or act against 'problematic' elements. Irvine and Gal (2000) have also identified another semiotic process called iconization. This process transforms the sign relationship between linguistic features and the social image they are linked to. Linguistic features thus become the iconic ideological index of a social group's essence.

Given that code-switching has the potential to denote a state identity or a mixed identity, individuals seeking to distance themselves from that specific identity may perceive it as a stigmatized variant to avoid or, more radically, a variant to actively oppose. Conversely, those aiming to highlight that identity may embrace codeswitching as their iconic style (Kheir, 2023). Myers-Scotton asserted in her Markedness Model (Myers-Scotton, 1993) that unmarked (default) codeswitching may serve as an index of intergroup harmony, while marked (non-default) codeswitching may indicate conflict and tension. Consequently, little unmarked

codeswitching is anticipated in places where languages symbolize intergroup conflict or considerable tension.

Furthermore, Bucholtz and Hall (2004) articulate analogous concepts in their model Tactics of Intersubjectivity, which delineates the relational dimensions of identity categories, practices, and ideologies. The model encompasses three pairs of tactics related to the interconnected concepts central to identity—markedness, essentialism, and institutional power. The first pair, adequation and distinction, involves the pursuit of socially recognized sameness between individuals or groups either by setting aside potentially salient differences (adequation) or by emphasizing differences (distinction).

Adequation serves as a means to preserve community identity amidst cultural shifts, enabling bilingual speakers to 'locate themselves simultaneously within two different identity frames by syncretically combining elements of each language into a single sociolinguistic system' (Bucholtz and Hall 2004, 383). Adequation often forms the basis for political organization and alliance, either by building coalitions across lines of difference or collapsing such boundaries for politically motivated strategic essentialism, creating a shared identity as a social achievement.

Distinction, however, underscores salient differences rather than erasing them. It highlights identity differentiation by resisting the assimilating forces of modernity and the nation-state. Hence, 'speakers of minority or unofficial languages often elaborate linguistic differences between their own language and the language of the state (Bucholtz and Hall 2004, 384). While distinction typically operates in a binary manner, constructing social identities as oppositional may facilitate a process wherein groups establish an alternative to either pole of the dichotomy.

The second pair of tactics, authentication and denaturalization, correspondingly involves the construction of a genuine or credible identity and an identity deemed non-authentic. These tactics involve rewriting linguistic and cultural history and repositioning speakers of a national language as more 'authentic' to the historical workings of the nation-state. In this context, language plays a role in nationalist identity formation by imparting unity and cohesion to the language speakers (ibid 2004).

When nationalistic rhetoric authenticates the identity of a language and its speakers, the linguistic variety turns into an index of ways of being and belonging to the nation-state. Consequently, individuals may convey multiple ethnic, nationalist, and political stances through their linguistic practices.

The third pair of tactics, authorization and illegitimate, involves speakers attempting, respectively, to legitimize particular identities through co-legitimating an institutional power or authority or, conversely, to suppress or withdraw such identities by removing or denying structural power. In this context, legitimation can function as a mode of resistance to the state or the dominant authority. At the same time, authorization entails invoking language in ways recognized and sanctioned by the state (ibid, 2004).

This study primarily examined conversational, interview, and survey data by applying relevant theories and concepts. It explored both micro and macro-level aspects of language and identity, drawing insights from the abovementioned theories of language and identity contact and the field of sociolinguistics.

Data, methodology, and examples

The participants in this study consist of 40 individuals from various Druze and Arab/Druze mixed villages and towns in Israel (50%) and the four distinct Druze towns in the Golan Heights (50%). All participants are multilingual speakers, demonstrating high proficiency in both Arabic and Hebrew. The gender distribution among participants is uneven, with 23 females and 17 males. The age range of participants spans from 25 to 55 years.

This study derived its data from various datasets recorded in 2019 and 2020. These datasets included recordings of naturally occurring conversations (conducted without the researcher's presence), questionnaires, and interviews. All conversations and interviews were audio-recorded in different Druze and mixed Druze/Arab towns and villages in Israel, as well as in the four Druze towns in the Golan Heights. Each recording lasted 60 to 90 minutes.

After the recordings, the researcher administered questionnaires to gather information about identification, subjective attitudes towards codeswitching, identity, and affiliations. The questionnaires featured a set of choices and an option for participants to provide their responses. The researcher recorded two to three closely related participants (friends, relatives, colleagues, etc.) at a time. The researcher handed the recording device to the participants without any mention of codeswitching or language styles. After the conversations, the researcher returned to collect the device, distributed questionnaires for completion, left the room again, and returned solely to collect the completed questionnaires. This approach aimed to minimize the researcher's impact on the nature of the conversations, codeswitching, mixing styles, and participants' responses to the questionnaire.

The researcher conducted interviews after the recordings, asking participants about their self-identification, group affiliations, collective identities, and their personal perspectives on their relationship with the state of Israel. In the case of the Golan Druze, discussions also encompassed their connection to and perceptions of Syria. The researcher delved deeper into two major political debates prevalent within their communities at the time of the fieldwork. Sharing the same ethnic background and L1 as the participants, the researcher provided questionnaires in both Arabic and Hebrew, allowing participants to choose, add comments, and amend for their own comprehension and self-expression.

Subsequently, the study compared the objective data from spontaneous recordings to the participants' subjective responses in the questionnaires and open-ended interviews. Additionally, the examination extended to the correlation between sociopolitical identity and specific linguistic practices such as codeswitching, mixing, and language preference. The present study predominantly features participant statements reflecting their perspectives, self-expression, experiences, feelings, perceptions, identification, sense of belonging, and affiliations, presented in their own words.

Language and Identity Dynamics among the Druze of the Golan Heights: Navigating Classic to Composite Codeswitching and the Evolution of a Collective 'Undefined' Identity Toward a Proto-National 'Hadbawi/Julani' Identity

According to Bucholtz and Hall (2004, 372), the unmarking of powerful identities is shaped by various supra-local ideologies, with the process occurring at the local level, where 'unmarked identities may be reproduced, challenged, and reinscribed with identity markings.' Therefore, this study explores how the speculation surrounding the 'Syrian Israeli secret Golan deal,' which revolves around the idea that the Golan was sold to Israel rather than being a result of a 'lost war,' influenced the consciousness of the Golan Heights participants and its impact on their collective identity. Drawing from performance and style theory (Eckert 2004), Kheir (2023) proposes viewing codeswitching as a stylistic resource wherein individuals with diverse positions on conflict/political issues display variability in how they select, combine, and deploy it situationally.

It is noteworthy that the Golan Druze experience less language contact compared to their Israeli Druze counterparts since, unlike the latter, they do not serve in the Israeli army and mainly work in their own region. Following Kheir

(2023), the codeswitching scale's levels were defined as light, moderate/average, and heavy. Light codeswitching is characterized predominantly by borrowings and monolexemic switching; average codeswitching involves classic codeswitching; heavy codeswitching encompasses intensive codeswitching approaching convergence and composite codeswitching. The data yielded five categories**,** from which five participants were chosen to be representative, one for each category:

a) 'Without Citizenship/Without Nationality,' with Average Codeswitching (15%)
b) 'Druze Including the Israeli Component, Excluding the Syrian Component,' ranging from Average to High Codeswitching (15%)
c) A 'Salient Syrian Identity Component,' with Light Codeswitching (25%)
d) 'Unknown/Undefined,' ranging from Average to High Codeswitching (35%)
e) A 'Salient Israeli Identity Component,' ranging from High Codeswitching to Predominantly Hebrew (10%)

Most interviewees underscored the 'Julani' (Golani) identity component, with some expressing it directly and most indirectly. The speech data from most Druze participants in the Golan Heights predominantly revealed classic codeswitching with instances of composite codeswitching. This is evident in Examples (1)– (4) through incorporating Hebrew content morphemes and expressions, while Arabic serves as the matrix language and the primary source of relevant morphemes. Hebrew, functioning as the embedded language in this data, contributes content morphemes and embedded language expressions that align with the matrix language frame model (Myers-Scotton 1997; Myers-Scotton 2002), maintaining its role as an embedded language.

Example (1) is excerpted from the discourse of a male participant in his 30s who identifies as an "individual without citizenship" and views his identity as "undefined." The participant stated that he grew up in an environment that voiced an issue of a struggle with a 'sense of belonging'; however, he felt that this issue was not a local issue but rather a global one, or, in his words, 'the whole world suffers from a sense of belonging, and the next step for humanity is a life without national belonging.' When asked about Syria, this participant said he followed the public's belief in the conception according to which Syria had a secret agreement with Israel by which 'the Syrian authorities sold the Golan to Israel and that all the signs,

according to his own experience and the stories of the elders who lived throughout the duration of the war, alongside recent testimonies of Syrian soldiers and commanding generals who took part in the war, prove that the theory is grounded in reality.' He also expressed his wish for the Golan to 'never go back [to Syria], ever.' According to the participant, 'the public opinion is very powerful in the Golan, and it is a composite of highly educated individuals and those who work down [in Israel].' This participant asserted that the public opinion had successfully promoted the collective undefined identity among the Golan Druze, leading to the point that one of the popular bars in Majdal Shams was called 'Undefined' and later renamed 'Why' by the new owners as a concept of 'why do we need identity at all, what for, who cares?'

In terms of language practices, the participant naturally integrated Hebrew elements into his speech, viewing language as unrelated to identity. His codeswitching style was primarily classic, involving the insertion of content morphemes and expressions from Hebrew. There were a good number of instances of a composite, such as in Example (1), where he inflected the Arabic habitual pronominal clitic *b-* to the Hebrew future verb *yestadr-ú* 'get along', which is an indication of a composite since it denotes a mixed imperfective form of Arabic and Hebrew tenses. In Arabic, the equivalent would be *b-yetdabar-ū* 'get along,' while, in Hebrew, the correct form would be *mestadr-ím* 'get along.' Additionally, the speaker inserted monolexemic switches in the form of nouns, such as *zkhoyót* 'rights'; discourse markers, as in *bekhlál* 'at all'; and the expression *ló kayám* 'non-existent.' Hebrew elements are underlined in the transcriptions as well as their glosses; other elements are from Arabic, and morphemes under discussion appear in bold.

(1) *men nahet inno aākhth-in* **zkhoyót** *mish aākhth-in*
zkhoyót bekhlál *hāi esh-shi* ***ló***
with regards to that take-PRS-1PL **rights** not take-PRS-1PL
rights at all this the-thing **not**
kayám *'en-na lēsh laenno wein mathuti-na en-nās hāi elli*
hon ***b-yestadr-ú***
exist at-us why because where put-PRS-1PL the-people this that
here **FUT-get along-3PL**

'In terms of acquiring or not acquiring rights, that does not apply to us at all because we, the people here, will get along anywhere, anyway.'

Example (2) is extracted from the speech of a female participant in her 50s, who was born when the Golan was still under Syrian rule but came under Israeli control when she was very young. She expressed that Syrian affiliation is not a part of her consciousness but rather that of her parents. She stated, "Other than being historically Syrian, it is completely alien to me." She continued:

"My parents say we are Syrian, but I do not have any ties to the place. I do not know anything about it other than the destruction we see on TV, and I do not want to be a part of it. I feel very scared to live in a place where it is not safe, and I would choose to stay only here [in Israel]. I am happy in my own place. I am a citizen [of Israel], giving my duties to and receiving benefits from the state. Do I feel completely Israeli? No. Do I feel Syrian? No. There is some sense of bewilderment. I do not have a sense of belonging to Syria, nor do I feel completely Israeli. I have almost fully assimilated in Israel in terms of work, education, social ties, etc., but Israel has this discrimination of first-class and second-class citizens, with the Jews being first-class and everyone else classified as second-class. However, I do unequivocally perceive myself as a first-class citizen. I respect this state, and this state respects us; this is the place I live in, and I belong to my nation—here, to my land, to my town, to Majdal Shams, to my home, to my life. However, the fear [of the Golan returning to Syrian control] is always resonant, so we are on the fence, uncertain about our future and our destiny."

When asked about self-identification, the participant asserted that, above all, she identified as a human being, not tied to any specific geography or individuals, expressing, "In our core definition, we do not really know where we are, undefined." Regarding the increasing suspicion about the Israeli Syrian deal theory, she commented:

"We know for sure that it is true since my parents said [Syrian authorities] told us that Quneitra fell when Quneitra had not fallen yet. The Quneitra has been sold, all the signs show that [the speculation of selling the Golan] is true."

She seamlessly incorporated numerous Hebrew elements into her speech in her linguistic practices, maintaining a positive attitude towards Hebrew and code-switching. She emphasized the significant role of language in shaping one's identity and expressed that using Hebrew elements in her daily speech felt natural, driven by comfort and assimilation. Her code-switching style predominantly adhered to the classic type, frequently using Hebrew nouns, verbs, and expressions. Additionally, there were instances of composite codeswitching, exemplified in Example (2), where she combined the Arabic habitual pronominal clitic "*b-*" with the

Hebrew future verb "*yeshtalev*" and 'assimilate.' This blending indicates a composite style, reflecting a mix of Arabic and Hebrew tenses in a unified imperfective form. In Arabic, the equivalent would be *b-yenexret*, while in Hebrew, the correct form would be *meshtalev*.

Moreover, the use of the mixed Determiner Phrase (DP) construction (Arabic definite article prefixed to a Hebrew noun), as seen in "*el-shinúi*" (the change) and "*el-ʦa'ad*" (the step), further indicates a composite style. According to Kheir (2022), the construction's uniqueness lies in representing a mixture of the two languages in one combined DP and in changing the intrinsic rule of prefixing. While both Arabic and Hebrew have definite articles—*al-* or *el-* in Arabic and *ha-* in Hebrew—which are typically prefixed to nouns and adjectives, there is a notable difference in pronunciation consistency. In contrast to Hebrew, in which the article has consistent pronunciation, the *l* in the Arabic article maintains its original pronunciation unless it is prefixed to a word beginning with a sun letter (t, θ (th), d, ð (th), r, z, s, sh, $s^ʕ$, $d^ʕ$, $t^ʕ$, $z^ʕ$, l, n), in which case it assimilates. However, mixed DPs violate the assimilation constraints. For instance, in Example (2), the assimilation rule was applied when prefixing the Arabic definite article "el-" to an Arabic noun beginning with the sun letter 's' (siyase), forming "es-siyase" (the politics) instead of *el-siyase. Conversely, when prefixed to a Hebrew noun beginning with a sun letter 'sh' (shinúi), the assimilation rule was violated, and instead of "esh-shinúi" (the change), "el-shinúi" was used. The speaker also inserted monolexemic switches, such as the Hebrew adverb "kvár" (already). It appears that the speaker was following the process of adequation (Bucholtz and Hall 2004, 383) as a means "to locate [herself] simultaneously within two different identity frames by syncretically combining elements of each language into a single sociolinguistic system."

(2) *el-wahad* ***b-yeshtalev*** *aāni lamma 'melt toar rishón w-'melt toar shení* ***kvár***
the-one **FUT-integrate** I when did degree first and-did degree second **already**
aāni 'melt ha ***el-shinúi*** *ya'ni aāni bd-it* ***b-el-ʦa'ad*** *w-ha behem-ni ktir*
I did this **the-change** meaning I start-PST-1SG **in-the-step** and-this important-1SG a lot

el-tsa'ad *et-ta'limi* *pakhót siyasi* *laenno* ***es-siyase***
bhes *masaleh fiya-sh haq w-'adl*
the-step the-educational less political because **the-politics**
1SG-PRS-feel interests have-not right and-justice.

"The individual assimilates; when I pursued my first and second degrees, I had already embarked on that transformation. It is significant to me, focusing on the educational aspect rather than the political one. I believe politics is driven by self-interests, lacking fairness and justice."

Example (3) is extracted from a female participant in her 40s, born after the Golan came under Israeli control. Notably, the participant's parent was a pro-Syrian activist during what they referred to as 'the war of identities' in 1982, triggered by Israel's attempt to confer Israeli citizenship to the Golan Druze, a move resisted by some, including the participant's parent. Consequently, the participant did not possess Israeli citizenship but held permanent residency status. Describing the event, she expressed it as "an act of fear and resistance. For us, as **Syrians**, it felt like our nationality was being taken away. While some refused to accept it, others did so out of fear for themselves and their children, as their children would automatically receive it. We haven't accepted it; we have permanent residency. I am one of the mothers who got condemned because my [parent] discarded the identity card and stepped on it. My [parent] was one of the activists." (emphasis in original)

When questioned about the suspicion surrounding the Israeli Syrian deal theory, the participant commented, "We hear about it all the time, but it is not certain, not 100% proven. You can't enter this politics, and you can't believe it." Regarding identification, the participant expressed a profound and lasting sense of bewilderment, stating, "We are **Syrians** in an occupied territory; no one can deny that. It is true that we live here in Israel, but one cannot say I am Arabian-Arabian, nor can he say I am Israeli. I was born in Israel; however, I love Syria. I am Syrian, Hadʿbawiye ['Heightetian', from Hadʿabe, 'highland', referring to 'the Heights']. I do not say I am Israeli; the Golan is Syrian. However, we are not traitors. We do not stand with Israel against Syria, nor do we stand with Syria against Israel, but there are ever exceptional cases." (emphasis in original)

When discussing Syrian oppression, she remarked, "It is true that, in Syria, you are not allowed to say, 'I am Druze, Muslim, or Christian'; you are only allowed to say, 'I am Syrian Arab.' This, in a way, although it seems oppressive and imposes an identity upon a nation, is a sign of equity."

After some thought, she added, "I am neither Syrian nor Israeli. I cannot say I am a 100% [Syrian] national because I work with the state, I receive payslips, and I receive benefits from the National Insurance Institute of Israel for me and my children. Whoever wants to say I am a free Syrian Arab should not receive benefits from the state. So, I cannot say I am Syrian, nor can I say I am Israeli. I live in Israel; in fact, I live in the Heights, meaning not Syrian and not Israeli. If I were to state my identity, I will unequivocally say I am Hadbawiyye, Julaniyye [Golani]. I am a Hadabe native."

The participant's final statement about her identity immediately sparked an inevitable comparison to the situation in Alsace, which has moved back and forth between German and French control. While both the Germans and the French tried to instill their own nationalism in the locals, the people established their own distinct Alsatian identity, which was neither French nor German. When the participant was told about the situation in Alsace, she said, "That is exactly the case here, exactly the same case here, for sure." This is where Bucholtz and Hall's (2004) process of distinction can be applied—not in the sense of operating in a binary manner, establishing a dichotomy in which social identities are constructed as oppositional or contrastive, but in facilitating a process in which groups establish an alternative to either pole of the dichotomy, with Hadʕbawi/Julani being the alternative to either Syrian or Israeli.

Regarding her linguistic practices, the participant integrated very few Hebrew elements into her speech, held a negative attitude towards Hebrew, and did not believe there was any link between language and identity. Her speech yielded only a few instances of codeswitching and borrowings, such as in Example (3), where she used borrowings mainly from the technology domain, introducing many Hebrew borrowings primarily because they represented new concepts filling a linguistic void. Notably, the noun mat'en and adjective sbeir 'spare' were phonologically adapted into Arabic, with the former pronounced matén and the latter, spér, in Hebrew. According to Kheir (Kheir 2023), when a community or an individual is less socially and politically identified with the state or dominant culture, they tend to phonologically adapt 'code-2' into 'code-1'. In this participant's case, codeswitching is the marked mode of communication, reflecting a stronger affinity to Syrian nationalism. It seems that the processes of erasure (Irvine and Gal 2000) and illegitimation (Bucholtz and Hall 2004) are applicable to such participants, both in language and identity. The state's effort to instill Israeli nationalism and the pervasive Hebrew influence upon their language is rendered invisible, suppressed, or

denied. Since code-switching has the power to denote a state identity or a mixed identity, it is presumably viewed as a stigmatized variant to be avoided by those who wish to distance themselves from that specific identity.

(3) *badd-ek fi* ***mat'en*** *thani fik-i tjib-i battariyye* ***sbeir***
itthalla ma'k-i aw btisal-i
want-PRS-2SGF there is ***charger*** *second can-2SGF bring battery* ***spare***
stay with-2SGF or ask-PRS-2SGF
hinaki ba'refe-sh el-iphone btiji battariyt-o bti-tghayyar-sh gheir la-tghayr-i
el-makhshir *fi iphon-at heik*
there know-not the-iphone come battery-its PASS-change-not other until-change-2SGF
the-device *there are iphone-PL like it*

'If you'd like, you can grab an additional charger, consider bringing along a spare battery, or inquire there. I'm not sure, but some iPhones have non-replaceable batteries, requiring a device replacement for a battery change.'

Example (4) is extracted from the discourse of a male participant in his late 20s. Expressing an unknown or undefined identity, the participant asserted that "our nation is not Syria; we are way before Syria, native to this region, and believed to be originally Armenian." This belief aligns with research in Nature, which explored the genetic connections between Israeli Druze and various populations, revealing a notable affinity with ancient Armenian and Turkish ancestry (Marshall, Das, Pirooznia, and Elhaik 2016). Their DNA study highlighted a significant prevalence of ancient Armenian ancestry, distinguishing the Druze from other Levantine populations. The participant emphasized their connection to the land, stating, "If they tell us the borders are open, go to Syria, we will say 'no way'; this is our land, and the land is here. Syria can come, as can Mozambique, America, England, Jordan—we are here, and you are all welcome; we will not move away from our land."

The participant expressed the prevalent confusion among people regarding identity and belonging, remarking, "Whenever I am overseas, and someone asks me, 'Where are you from?' Do you know how many things flow in my head? It is really very perplexing; some say, 'from Israel,' some say, 'from Syria,' others say, 'Golan Heights,' then they ask, 'What is the Golan Heights?' and you start explaining."

The participant shared that the locals had grappled with issues of collective identity and nationality for a while until they concluded, "We do not need an identity, why would we need one? What is identity anyway? 'Undefined' or 'lacking identity' is the solution." While telling the researcher about some Golan history and stories, the participant raised the Golan deal theory entirely on his own, unprompted, providing details of testimonies from locals who were active during the war. He stated, "I believe that the Golan has been sold, and I have personally heard the true story of what had actually happened there from a local who was an active soldier in the Syrian army back then. Everything he said made perfect sense, and all the signs show that it is true and the whole world knows that they declared that the Golan had fallen 17 hours before the Israelis even got there and that the Syrian authorities had publicly executed the Syrian soldiers who refused the order to retreat and go back!"

He believed this speculation affected the locals' collective identity in a way he could not explain. Regarding his language practices, he frequently integrated Hebrew elements into his speech, describing them as automatic for him and expressing uncertainty about whether there is a link between language and identity. He codeswitched frequently, incorporating numerous Hebrew content morphemes and expressions. Several instances of a composite were observed, including his frequent use of the mixed determiner phrase (DP) construction, as in Example (4). Similar to Example (2), the assimilation rule of the definite article "el" was violated when prefixing the Arabic definite article "el-" to a Hebrew noun beginning with a sun letter, as seen in "b-el-tekhat-év-otí" ('in the CC'), where normally the "l" would assimilate into "t" and be pronounced as "b-et-tekhat-év-otí." The uniqueness of this mixed DP construction is discussed in detail in Example (2) above.

(4) *hati-hin fish ma'-i wrāq* ***la-l-medpeset*** *kil ma iysīr ma'-i belek*
give-IMP-them not have-1PS papers **for-the-printer** each that become with-me part
ba'mal sriká ***w-ʕa-l-meil*** *el-ek w-il-ha*
b-el-tekhat-év-otí *'ashan t-kūn heiy* ***b-el-'enyaním***
will do scan **and-to-the-mail** to-2SGF and-to-3SGF
in-the-CC so that FUT-be she **in-the-matters**

"Pass them to me; I currently lack documents for my printer. Once I obtain some, I will scan and forward them to your email, with a copy sent to her for awareness."

Example (5) features a female participant in her 40s who permanently moved to Israel in her early 20s, seeking what she termed "a genuine life." According to her, this life involved making personal choices in thought rather than being dictated what to think. During the 'war of identities' as a child, where activists propagated Syrian nationalism and hostility towards Israel, she experienced what she described as "brainwashing" and sought to distance herself from that narrative. She preferred anonymity, concealing any trace of her Hadabe or Druze identity. Even today, she remains guarded about revealing her background and avoids discussing it further. Rebellious from a young age, she questioned the narratives presented to her, looking for a more neutral, quiet, and story-free environment, aspiring to adopt aspects of Western culture similar to Israelis. She stated, "It really upset me, so I wanted to get away from all that; I wanted to get lost in a city where no one knows who I am, what I am...I am still deeply affected by it and, until today, I do not like anyone to know who I am or what I am. I usually hide any trace of identity, whether it is Hadabe or Druze. Nothing. I only say if I have to once, and I refuse to talk about it any further. I was always rebellious; I was the child that went according to 'not what he has been told,' so I have never believed their stories. True, I have felt for them, humanely speaking, but I have always looked for a better place, more neutral, more quiet, more 'lacking stories', 'lacking miseries', so I wanted to be like [Israelis], like them is the Western culture."

In her analogy, the participant likened the situation to a confused child of divorced parents, unsure of which parent is right or what is better for them—here or there. She believed this confusion gave rise to a new generation, markedly different from the past. According to her, this generation is highly accomplished, driven to progress, eager to be distinct, and even adopts a different language. Drawing a comparison with the situation 35 years ago when the region faced significant challenges, she noted that the current generation is remarkably Westernized, secular, and highly educated, with professionals in engineering and high-tech fields. Crucially, they are entirely detached from the Syrian theme, identifying neither as Syrians nor Israelis. Instead, they wholeheartedly embrace an 'undefined' or 'lacking' identity, demonstrating a lack of concern for the broader issue and having fully assimilated into their chosen way of life. In her words: "this creates a new gener-

ation, a completely different one, and we can already see this. They are extremely accomplished, desiring to advance, to be different, to be dissimilar, even speaking a different language, everything is different… if we compare the situation 35 years ago, in which the place was completely in dire straits, and now, they are top-Westernised, secular, highly educated, engineers, high-tech experts, etc., and they are completely detached from the whole Syrian theme. They are neither Syrians nor Israelis. They have completely embraced the 'undefined' or 'lacking' identity, and they do not even bother themselves with the whole issue. They do not care, and they have fully assimilated."

When informed about the parallel with the situation in Alsace, she affirmed, 'absolutely the same thing here, it's all about the need to be distinctive, entirely different from everything else.' Regarding her connection to Syria, she expressed that aside from it being her parents' place of origin, she had no ties to it—no emotional connection, no affiliation, and no sense of belonging. In contrast, Israel had a significant place for her:

"I am captivated by the West. I love democracy. I love witnessing progress. I am immensely proud of this state, and I truly love Israel. It is sufficient for me that it is a democratic state; it respects me and my children, and we are all very proud to be Israelis."

When questioned about the Israeli Syrian Golan deal theory, she initially maintained a neutral stance but later added, 'there are very high chances that there was a deal there, I tend to believe the conspiracy theory.' However, she remained uncertain about the potential impact on collective identity. Linguistically, her speech predominantly featured Hebrew, with minimal switches to Arabic, as exemplified in Example (5). This linguistic pattern remained consistent throughout the interview. The participant, displaying a deep appreciation and extremely positive attitude toward Hebrew compared to Arabic, proudly acknowledged undergoing a complete language shift into Hebrew. She firmly believed in the role of language in shaping one's identity. By applying Bucholtz and Hall's (2004) process of authentication, she aligned both language and identity, adopting the national identity (Israeli) and using the national language (Hebrew) as a means of authentication to signify ways of being and belonging to the nation-state.

(5) *lákhats lákhats aní gám óved-et me-a-bayet óvedet me-shama óvedet kól a-zmán*
pressure pressure I also work-1SGF from-the-house work-1SGF from-there work-1SGF all the-time

*shishí lakhútṣ **fi** tkufá **qal-et-lī** a-yaldá má má*
kará gám ba-bayét
Friday stressed **there is** period **tell-3SGF-me** the-girl what
what happened also at-home
át keìlú kól a-yóm b-a-makhshév gám át megi'-á meukhár
má kará
you that is all the-day on-the-computer also you get-2SGF late
what happened
*má la-'asót **kill-u** kashé zé má shi-ṣaríkh shúm davár ló kál*
what to-do **all-it** hard this what that-needed no thing no easy

"The pressure is immense; I work both at home and elsewhere consistently, even on Fridays. There was a moment when my child questioned, "What's happening? You're always on your computer, arriving home late. What's going on?" It's challenging; I tackle what needs to be done, and nothing comes easy."

Applying Intersubjective Tactics to the Golan Heights Druze

The conversational data, complemented by additional interview data and surveys, prompted a natural comparison to the situation in Alsace. Alsace, a region that has shifted between German and French control, experienced attempts by both Germans and the French to instill their respective nationalism and language. However, the people of Alsace managed to forge their unique proto-national Alsatian identity and language, distinct from French and German.

Before the emergence of the 'Golan secret deal' theory, the Syrian dimension held significant prominence in the collective identity of the Golan Druze. However, since the theory gained traction in 2011, the salience of the Syrian component appears to have gradually diminished. Consequently, a new collective identity is taking shape. By employing intersubjectivity tactics (Bucholtz & Hall 2004), it becomes apparent that, through the tactic of adequation, the Druze of the Golan Heights are fostering political organization and alliances, temporarily setting aside potentially divisive differences between pro-Israeli and pro-Syrian voices. They are consolidating a unified, seemingly denaturalized, and undefined identity using the tactic of distinction.

This process of distinction, establishing an alternative to either pole of the dichotomy, combined with authentication, is giving rise to a new authentic proto-national 'Hadbawi/Jūlani' identity that transcends both Syrian and Israeli affiliations. Simultaneously, a new dialect is evolving, distinct from Arabic and Hebrew,

known as Hadbawi/Jūlani. Preliminary analysis indicates that this emerging dialect features a blend of English and Hebrew elements and structures, region-specific terminology and slang, a lenition process affecting Arabic emphatic phonemes ([tˤ], [sˤ], [dˤ], [zˤ]), merging with their non-emphatic counterparts ([t], [s], [d], [ð]), and emphatic vowel lengthening. These structures, among others yet to be thoroughly explored, contribute to the distinctiveness of the Hadˤbawi/Jūlani dialect. As authorization can also function as a local practice to contest or confirm dominant forms of power, this linguistic variety may confer an 'alternative legitimacy' to its speakers.

Language and Identity among Israeli Druze: Transitioning from Composite Codeswitching to a Mixed Variety and the Emergence of a Collective 'Israeli Druze' Identity Towards a 'Druze' Ethnonational Identity

Since collective identity is dynamic and affects and is affected by the evolving political and social forces within the state and outside it (Rohana 1997,4), this study investigates the impact of Israel's controversial nation-state law on the political consciousness of Israeli Druze participants and its potential influence on collective identity. Criticized for its perceived racism and undemocratic nature, the nation-state law diminishes minority rights and downgrades the status of the Arabic language in Israel. Notably, all Druze representatives in the Knesset, except Ayub Kara, voted against the Nation-state Law, and some high-ranking military and police officers resigned in protest, expressing their disappointment and demotivation to serve the country further. The majority of participants in this study identified themselves as Israeli Druze, considering it as their collective identity, which aligns with similar findings in studies by Amara and Schnell (2004), Halabi (2006; 2014), and Kheir (2023), which show that a majority of the Druze participants place significant importance on both their religious identity (Druze) and their Israeli citizenship. However, a recurring element for almost all participants was the Druze identity component, extending beyond the religious/ethnic sense. In terms of linguistic practices, recent studies (Kheir 2019; Kheir 2022) have indicated that the language of the Israeli Druze community is undergoing convergence and composite matrix language formation, resulting in a mixed variety based on Myers-Scotton's matrix language turnover hypothesis (Myers-Scotton1998; Myers-Scotton 2002) and Auer's (Auer 1998; Auer 1999) and Myers-Scotton's (Myers-Scotton 2003) models of mixed languages. This aligns with the present study, where the mixed variety was observed to be the predominant unmarked mode of

communication. Notably, it was observed that codeswitching and mixing were much more widespread among the Israeli Druze compared to the Israeli Arabs, who predominantly utilized borrowings and mono-lexemic switches (Kheir 2023; Kheir forthcoming). The data were categorized into five main groups, from which five participants were sampled respectively:

a) 'Salient Israeli identity component,' with unmarked mixed variety (15%)
b) 'Israeli Druze,' with unmarked mixed variety (35%)
c) 'Druze/Arab,' ranging from average codeswitching to marked mixed variety (10%)
d) 'Druze,' with unmarked mixed variety (25%)
e) 'Israeli Druze,' with a predominantly Hebrew speech (15%).

Example (6) is extracted from the dialogue of a female participant in her 30s. This participant identified strongly as Israeli, emphasizing that this sentiment goes beyond mere citizenship—it embodies her profound sense of belonging and love for the state:

"I feel Israeli at my core being. It mirrors my identity and upbringing; it feels like my inherent way of being. The Druze community has consistently maintained a unique connection with the state, feeling an inseparable bond."

When questioned about her perspective on Israel's controversial nation-state law, which has provoked significant disappointment and anger, particularly among Druze and Arabs who perceive it as racist and undemocratic, she expressed her lack of understanding about the controversy, asserting that it reflects a pre-existing reality. Israel, she noted, has always been predominantly a Jewish state, and the inferior status of Arabic to Hebrew existed even before the law's enactment:

"I don't see what the fuss is all about. It's just putting into law something that has always been the case. Israel has always been a Jewish state, which, in my opinion, is excellent; at least it is a democracy. The Druze in Israel live in a much better situation than those in Arab countries, that's for sure. The fact that Israel is a Jewish state is what distinguishes it from Arab countries. I'm grateful to be here, and this law hasn't changed anything for me. In my view, people have just misunderstood it, that's all."

The participant, whose speech seamlessly blended Arabic and Hebrew elements, held a highly favorable view of Hebrew. She considered the mixed variety to be her default mode of communication:

"When I'm abroad and engage with people from Arab countries, attempting to speak pure Arabic, I find myself very aware of my speech. It's like speaking a foreign language as if I'm making an effort because the mixture is my natural way of speaking. It flows effortlessly and comes naturally to me. That's my way of speaking, my language."

The process of iconization (Irvine and Gal 2000) is applicable in this context, where linguistic features become the ideological index of a social group's essence. A mixed variety serves as an iconic style, denoting either a state or mixed identity. It is embraced by those who aim to highlight that identity as their iconic style (Kheir 2022). In Example (6), the mixed variety is notably evident in the systematic tense mixture of the Hebrew future form and Arabic past progressive form to convey a past progressive sense, as seen in "kan-ye-sté" ('was deviating') and "kan-ye-stór" ('was contradicting'). These verb phrases blend the Arabic auxiliary "kān" ('was') with Hebrew future forms of the verbs "ye-sté" ('will deviate') and "ye-stór" ('will contradict'), respectively. In Hebrew, a similar construction would use the auxiliary "hayá" ('was') with the present forms of the verbs, resulting in "hayá soté" ('was deviating') and "hayá sotér" ('was contradicting'). Conversely, in Arabic, the equivalents would be "kān ye-neħref" and "kān y-naqed," respectively. Additionally, the pronoun "hoū" ('he') merges both the Arabic pronoun "hōwi" ('he') and the Hebrew pronoun "hú" ('he'). Such usages were consistently observed in the data from all Israeli Druze participants.

(6) *qult-ilo fi tsvi'út mesuyem-et qal-i āh hai meaa-akhúz hoū*
1SG-PST-tell-him there is hypocrisy certain-F 3SGM-tell-me yeah this hundred-percent he
kaman ***kān-ye-sté*** *men el-'inyán* ***kān-ye-stór*** *et 'atsmó b-šaghlát*
also **was- deviating** from the-matter **was-contradicting** ACC himself in-things

"I pointed out a degree of hypocrisy to him; he agreed, acknowledging the presence of it, but simultaneously, he was deviating from the issue and contradicting himself in certain respects."

Example (7) is excerpted from a male participant in his 40s, identifying as Israeli Druze. He expressed a perspective on the intricate challenge the Israeli Druze

face regarding identity and language:

"The Israeli Druze grapple with a profound dilemma of identity and language, akin to schizophrenia. On one hand, they are not Arabs; their native language isn't Arabic. Conversely, they are not Jewish, and their language isn't Hebrew. It's a blend of both—speaking both Arabic and Hebrew in a singular language. Even our education system diverges from both Arab and Jewish frameworks; it's distinctly Druze. Acknowledged in academic circles, there is a recognized challenge concerning our identity and language. It's like the Hebrew saying, 'yoshev ʻal hagader, regel po, regel sham' [sitting on the fence, one foot on this side and one on the other]...The Druze lack a fixed identity. Historically, coerced much like the Jews, their survival strategy involved assimilation—' in Jordan, I am Jordanian; in Syria, I am Syrian; in Israel, I am Israeli; in Lebanon, I am Lebanese,' et cetera—forming a 'nation without an identity.' Concealing their true identity, they lived in secrecy. It was only revealed about [1,006] years ago. Even then, they acquired a definitive identity, but the vestiges of that survival strategy linger perhaps a genetic legacy."

When queried about the nation-state bill, he remarked, "It neither signifies nor alters anything; it simply reaffirms the Jews' status in their homeland. It doesn't diminish the status of the Druze." Expanding on his viewpoint, he added, "Some assert that Arab and Left parties instigated the Druze against it to dissuade them from supporting the right-wing parties as they typically do. The reality is that the Druze in Israel constitute a minority, akin to their status in Arab countries. However, unlike in Arab countries, the Druze here enjoy a significantly better position: residing in a democracy, they relish freedom of speech and can voice grievances against prominent Jewish figures, whether presidents or prime ministers."

To underscore his argument, the participant elaborated that they hold representations in the government, Knesset, aviation, elite combat units in the military, and various other spheres. He emphasized, "None of the Arab countries can match the democracy in Israel, none! Every minority in the world encounters discrimination. Even the Jews face discrimination in other regions, but they acknowledge their minority status and reconcile with it. At least, we are a minority under a democracy, unlike the Druze minorities in Arab countries."

In terms of language practice, the participant's default mode of communication was the mixed variety, as evident in Example (7) in "b-yekákh" 'takes,' where the Hebrew future form "yekákh" 'will take' is suffixed to the Arabic habitual indicative morpheme b-, denoting the mixed imperfective form. In Arabic, the

correct form would be b-yākhod 'takes,' whereas in Hebrew, it would be lokeákh 'takes.' The participant also inflected a Hebrew masculine noun with the Arabic feminine plural suffix -āt typically suffixed to the feminine singular stem of nouns in Arabic. The result was "kibuts-āt". In Hebrew, the plural suffix -ìm is added to masculine singular nouns; thus, the standard term would be kibuts-ìm 'collective settlements.' Notably, this common hybrid plural form (a Hebrew noun with the Arabic feminine plural suffix -āt) is only used when the Hebrew singular noun is masculine. When the noun is feminine, it is either entirely in Hebrew (a Hebrew noun with the Hebrew feminine plural suffix -ót), as in bakhor-ót 'ladies,' the plural form of the Hebrew singular feminine noun bakhor-á 'lady,' or entirely in Arabic (an Arabic noun with the Arabic feminine plural suffix -āt), as in ħanafiyy-āt 'taps,' the plural form of the Arabic singular feminine noun ħanafiyye 'tap.' There was also an instance in which the Arabic content morpheme w 'and,' usually prefixed to Arabic morphemes, was prefixed to the Hebrew passive construction "me-tupál" 'taken care of.'

(7) *harì bi-ruħ el-lakokh-ót taba'-ono*
fì-l-kibuts-āt
that is IND-3SG-go the-cient-PL POSS-3SGM
in-the-collective settlement-PL
b-yekákh *men* ***el-kibuts-āt***
w-me-tupál *hetev*
IND-3SGM-take from **the-collective settlement-PL**
and-PASS-take care-3SGM very well

"That is, he visits the collective settlements, and his clients come from there. He takes clients from the collective settlements, and he is very well taken care of."

Example (8) is extracted from a female participant in her 40s. The participant, who identifies as Druze, "not in a religious sense but beyond that," expressed profound distress due to the nation-state law:

"They took away an integral part of our identity. The Druze have always had a deep connection to the state, and now, it is as if we are being cast away from our Israeliness. I do feel much less Israeli now than I did before, for sure. It is as if we are no longer included there. I hope that Bibi [the Prime Minister of Israel who passed the law] will be ousted."

Regarding her language practices, the participant, who held a negative attitude

towards Hebrew, exhibited slightly less frequent mixing than the average participant in certain utterances, even though the mixed variety was her default. She believed that language, to some extent, determines identity and mentioned consciously limiting the integration of Hebrew elements into her speech, as it sounded more elegant without them. However, she acknowledged that mixing was inevitable, as illustrated in Example (8). This mixing was mainly evident in the recurrent use of the mixed DP construction and tense mixing, such as in "b-a-tlabésh" 'get dressed,' where the Hebrew future form a-tlabésh 'will get dressed' is suffixed to the Arabic habitual indicative morpheme b-, forming the mixed imperfective form. In Arabic, the correct form in such a case would be b-albes 'get dressed,' while in Hebrew, it is me-tlabésh-et 'get dressed.' According to Eckert (2004,45), 'prestige and stigma have come to be the primary social meanings associated with variables, and formality brings a focus on prestige and an attempt to avoid stigma.' In the sociopolitical context of the present study, codeswitching into Hebrew and the mixed variety are associated with 'Israeliness' or a mixed identity. They can be viewed as a stigmatized variant to be avoided by those who wish to distance themselves from that identity. Additionally, since linguistic means can keep one's ethnicity salient rather than assimilating fully into the dominant culture (Myers-Scotton and Bolonyai 2001), the participant attempted to make the mixed variety her marked mode of communication rather than the default.

(8) *yomet-ha kān fi iriúa' keìlú pridá la-hada* ***el-menahél***
el-kodém *taba'-na*
day-that was in event that is farewell to-this the-manager the-previous POSS-1PL
issa kān et-taqes helu w-ana dayman ***b-a-tlabésh***
tóv w-bemyukhád la-kull
now was the-weather nice and-I always IND-1SG-get dressed well and-especially for-all
el-iru'-ìm ***el-kshur-ìm*** *b-esh-shughul*
the-event-PL the-related-PL in-the-work

"On that day, there was a farewell party for our previous manager. The weather was pleasant, and I always make an effort to dress up, especially for all work-related occasions."

Example (9) is from a female participant in her 40s who identified as Druze. The participant held a neutral stance towards the nation-state law: "I'm not entirely sure about this whole thing. There are both supporters and opponents of it among the Druze. Some say it downgrades the Druze status in the state, while others argue that Leftist politicians are manipulating the uncertainties surrounding it to incite the Druze against Bibi and the right-wing parties. It's unclear, and before we see its actual impact on the Druze, we cannot judge it as either good or bad. The Druze are Israelis at their core, and I don't believe that this law is going to affect that in any way. Their love for the state is stronger than that. But you can never know; we shall wait and see."

The participant held Hebrew in very high regard, and this is reflected in her unmarked mixed variety, as in *'am-b-ya-ʦdìk* 'is justifying,' in Example (9), where she combines the Hebrew future form of the verb with an Arabic present progressive form an auxiliary to denote a present progressive sense. The verb phrase *'am-b-ya-ʦdìk* is a combination of the Arabic auxiliary 'am (am/is/are) and the Hebrew verb le-haʦdìk (to justify). In Hebrew, the correct form would be maʦdìk 'justify/PRS,' whereas, in Arabic, it would be 'am-bi-barrier 'is justifying.' This conforms to Myers-Scotton's (1993) notion that unmarked codeswitching—or, in this case, a mixed variety—can practically indicate intergroup harmony. Additionally, the participant exclusively used the merged pronoun "hoū" or 'he' throughout her speech, which is a mix of both the Arabic pronoun hōwi 'he' and the Hebrew pronoun hú 'he.' The merged pronoun hoū is followed by an entirely Hebrew clause, which includes yet another merged morpheme -ya'ní 'that is,' which also has the variation ya'nú. The morpheme "ya'ní" is originally an Arabic word that was borrowed into Hebrew and then re-borrowed from Hebrew and is often used in both of its variations, ya'ní, and ya'nú, in the mixed variety.

(9) *b-tij-i la-zurúf el-beit keìlú el-wahad mish*
'am-b-ya-ʦdìk *avál* ***hoū***
come to-circumstances the-house that is the-one not
AUX-IND-3SGM/FUT-justify but he
apáti keìlú avál én má le-hashvót ***ya'ní***
ét-am bekhlál
apathetic that is but there not what to-compare **that is**
ACC-3PL at all

'You go back to the situation at home; that is, I am not trying to justify it, but he is apathetic. But you cannot really compare it to them at all.'

Example (10) is from a male participant in his 20s. The participant, identifying as Israeli Druze, expressed a strongly negative stance towards the nation-state law. However, he believed that it had actually strengthened the Druze sense of belonging to the state, emphasizing the historic Druze connection. He stated,

"Those who thought that this extremely racist and undemocratic law would take away our Israeliness are mistaken. We now feel more Israeli than ever before, and we are displaying it publicly. Bibi represents only himself and his followers." To reinforce the Druze connection to the state, he added, "No one can deny the Druze contribution to the state that started even before its establishment. We have fought wars with the Jews and helped them win wars they would have lost without us. We are an integral and inseparable part of the state, and if people were unaware of our contribution, now everyone knows. They will have to revere us and amend the law to fix our status."

Regarding his linguistic practices, his speech was predominantly Hebrew, with very few switches into Arabic. In Example (10), he uses almost exclusively Hebrew morphemes, except for two instances of mixtures: "hoū" 'he,' a mix of the Arabic pronoun hōwi 'he' and the Hebrew pronoun hú 'he,' and "ya'ni" 'that is,' originally an Arabic word borrowed into Hebrew, which can count as a mix. This aligns with Bucholtz and Hall's (2004) notion of authentication, as the participant's language preference was the national language, used as a vehicle for authentication to index ways of being in and belonging to the nation-state.

(10) ***hoū*** *kafé-mis'adá* *ka-zé* *ve-hém* *os-ìm* *t-a-kafé* *itsl-ám*
ya'ni *anì* *mamásh* *obév* *ta-makóm* *a-zé*
he café-restaurant like-this and-they do-2PL ACC-the-coffee at-them
that is I really love the-place the-this

'It is like a coffee-restaurant, and they brew the coffee on-site. I really love this place."

Applying Intersubjective Tactics to the Israeli Druze

The conversational data, interview data, and surveys underscore the distinctive identity and linguistic practices within the Israeli Druze community. Before the enactment of the nation-state bill, the Israeli dimension in the collective iden-

tity of Israeli Druze was prominently featured and proudly embraced. However, since the bill's implementation in 2018, the Israeli component has diminished in salience, potentially giving rise to a new collective identity.

Applying Bucholtz and Hall's (2004) tactics of intersubjectivity, it appears that Israeli Druze are using the tactic of adequation to seek socially recognized commonality and build coalitions across differences. This involves setting aside potentially divisive issues related to the 'more Israeli'/'more Arab' dichotomy sparked by the nation-state law and consolidating a unified Druze identity through the tactic of distinction. This Druze identity extends beyond religion or ethnicity to become a national one. Consequently, Israeli Druze are seemingly establishing an alternative to both poles of the dichotomy, cultivating a new authentic, national Druze identity that is neither Israeli nor Arab. Simultaneously, they are developing a language variety that is neither Hebrew nor Arabic but a distinct mixture of both, as thoroughly examined in Kheir's studies (2022, 2023).

They use the tactic of adequation to position themselves within both identity frames while maintaining their distinctiveness through the tactic of distinction. Salient differences between Israeli and Arab identities are produced and realized through binary logic, differentiating along multiple axes simultaneously. Unlike Druze in most Arab countries, the democratic context allows the local Druze to claim an authentic, collective, national Druze identity. Through the tactic of authentication, the mixed variety indexes ways of being and belonging to the nation-state, illustrating the interconnectedness of these elements. Concurrently, the adoption of mixed languages by ethnic groups often signifies a desire to distinguish themselves from other groups collectively, forming a unique identity that sets them apart from both the Israeli Arab and Jewish communities they engage with (Kheir 2019).

Conclusion

Given the interconnected nature of language, sociopolitical circumstances, and identity, this study investigates the correlation between codeswitching, mixed language varieties, sociopolitical conditions related to the case study, and identity. It presents a comparative analysis of the Druze communities in the Golan Heights and Israel. The study employed theories and concepts from intersubjective contact linguistics and indexicality to illustrate how communities caught between different influences forge new quasi-national identities and linguistic varieties.

In the context of the Druze in the Golan Heights, the examination of con-

versational data, supplemented by additional interviews and surveys, reveals parallels with the situation in Alsace. Alsace, a region that has shifted multiple times between German and French control, has witnessed attempts by both powers to instill their respective national consciousness and language in the local population. Nevertheless, the locals have developed their own distinct proto-national Alsatian identity and language.

Applying Bucholtz and Hall's (2004) tactics of intersubjectivity, it becomes evident that, through the tactic of adequation, the Druze of the Golan Heights are forming alliances by downplaying their significant differences related to the pro-Israeli vs. pro-Syrian struggle. This struggle, reignited by the Israeli Syrian Golan secret deal theory, is a focal point. They are consolidating a unified, seemingly denaturalized, undefined identity through the tactic of distinction. However, by employing the tactic of distinction, which involves establishing an alternative to both poles of the dichotomy, alongside the tactic of authentication, a novel authentic proto-national identity, labeled Hadʿbawi/Jūlani, is taking shape. This process coincides with the emergence of a new dialect, potentially providing an alternative legitimacy to its speakers.

In the context of the Israeli Druze, applying the same tactics (Bucholtz and Hall 2004) reveals that, through the tactic of adequation, they seek social recognition and establish coalitions by downplaying differences stemming from the 'more Israeli' vs. 'more Arab' dichotomy, notably reignited by the nation-state law. The Israeli Druze are thus solidifying a unified quasi-national Druze identity through the tactic of distinction. Consequently, this tactic of distinction enables the Israeli Druze to foster a novel, authentic, quasi-national Druze identity, and a newly developed mixed linguistic variety.

Residing in a democratic country facilitates a process where the Israeli Druze can assert an authentic, collective, quasi-national Druze identity. Through the tactic of authentication, the mixed linguistic variety becomes an index of their ways of being and belonging to the nation-state. Simultaneously, the use of mixed languages by ethnic groups serves as a means to collectively distinguish themselves from other groups, forming a distinct identity (Bakker 1997). The Israeli Druze, situated between the Arabs and Jews, creates a unique mixed variety and identity, marking them as a distinct group separate from both groups whose languages they speak (Kheir 2019).

The language-mixing features observed in both the Israeli Druze and the Druze of the Golan Heights underscore the significance of developing a mixed

language for sandwiched communities. This serves as a mechanism for these communities to differentiate themselves from the groups on either side of the dichotomy.

In conclusion, despite the commonalities in the processes and outcomes of identity construction and language change experienced by the Golan Druze and Israeli Druze, the transition of the Golan from a dictatorial regime to a democracy appears to exert a distinct influence. The Israeli Druze readily and proudly integrates the Druze identity component—beyond its religious and ethnic dimensions—as a default in their identity repertoire. They also freely engage in language mixing. In contrast, a significant portion of the Golan Druze, influenced by the first-generation elders who were 'not allowed' to identify as Druze, display greater reluctance in incorporating this aspect into their identity.

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