

Ethnolinguistic Identity and Lexical Knowledge among Children from Amharic-Speaking Families

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Abstract

The relation between the ethnolinguistic identity of 80 children aged 4;0–6;0 from Amharic-speaking families and their lexical knowledge in Hebrew was tested using sociolinguistic questionnaires designed for bilingual preschool children, and two naming tasks that targeted both nouns and verbs in Hebrew. The children, who were divided into two age groups (4;0–5;0 and 5;1–6;0), demonstrated bicultural identity despite their preference for Hebrew and limited abilities in Amharic. Yet, stronger linguistic abilities in Hebrew contributed to the consolidation of Israeli identity. Older children performed better than younger ones on the various lexical measures in Hebrew, albeit achieving lower scores on verbs as compared to nouns, as expected for bilinguals. The language scores were similar to those of age-matched Russian-Hebrew bilingual children with a shorter length of exposure, and significantly lower than those of monolingual children. While Ethiopian/Amharic measures correlated both with each other and with the attitude toward code-switching from Hebrew to Amharic and from Amharic to Hebrew, they did not correlate with lexical knowledge in Hebrew.

Key words: Child bilingualism, Ethnolinguistic identity, Lexicon, Amharic-Hebrew, Length of exposure

1. Introduction

Migrant children, sequential or successive bilinguals, as well as children of immigrants, whose home language differs from the societal language, face a dual challenge in preschool years. First, the transition from home to preschool is accompanied by a transition in identity toward that of society at large. Second, they must attain the norms of the host society's language in order to integrate successfully and be able to achieve academic success. Of the different linguistic abilities, lexical

knowledge is the most challenging in the bilingual setting and is expected to continually evolve and change over time with increased exposure to the second language (Armon-Lotem, Gagarina, & Walters, 2011).

While the language and identity of English-Hebrew and Russian-Hebrew bilingual children has been studied extensively in recent years (Armon-Lotem et al., 2011, Burstein-Feldman, 2007; Schwartz, Kozminsky, & Leikin, 2009, among others), the study of the lexical knowledge and sociolinguistic identity of preschool children whose families emigrated from Ethiopia is rather limited; be that as it may, more and more research is emerging. Recent studies of children from Ethiopian backgrounds examined narrative, literacy skills, and related sociolinguistic variables among parents (Stavans, 2012), development of written text production (Schleifer, 2003), and emergent literacy skills, as well as other predictors of academic success (including syntax and lexicon) among preschoolers (Shany, Geva, & Melech-Feder, 2010) and school-age children (Shany & Geva, 2012).

The present study investigates the sociolinguistic identity and lexical abilities of the children of Ethiopian immigrants. The research aims were:

1. to explore the relationship among the lexical knowledge of preschool children from Amharic-speaking families, their attitudes toward Amharic and Hebrew use, and their ethnolinguistic identity;
2. to explore the impact of internal child-based factors reflecting the child's time-related experience with Hebrew (e.g., chronological age, age of Hebrew onset, and length of exposure) on lexical development in children from an Amharic-Hebrew bilingual setting.

In order to explore whether early-childhood bilingual lexical development is related to social and linguistic identity in early childhood in the same way as it is in adult bilinguals or second-language learners, and how these relations develop, the study participants consisted of 80 Hebrew-speaking preschool children from Amharic-Hebrew backgrounds, who were divided into two age groups: 4;0–5;0 and 5;1–6;0. The children's sociolinguistic identity was evaluated by means of a series of sociolinguistic questionnaires originally designed for bilingual children (Walters,

Armon-Lotem, Altman, Topaj & Gagarina, 2014). Lexical abilities in Hebrew were measured by two naming tasks used with children—one testing only nouns and the other testing both nouns and verbs. These lexical categories were chosen since they are universals and serve as the building blocks of the child's incipient lexical development. The influence of sociolinguistic identity as well as background factors (e.g., length and amount of exposure, parents' education and occupation) on lexical knowledge were further evaluated.

2. Social and linguistic identity of bilinguals

Language is a marker of group membership, and as such has an impact on the creation of personal and of group identity, which in turn affects language attitudes and use. Therefore, any contact between two groups is actually a contact between two different languages and different sets of values and cultures. The identity of any ethnic community is essential to its members, who prefer to view themselves as distinct by using their own language (Florack & Piontkowski, 1997). Ethnolinguistic Identity Theory (ELIT) (Berry, 1997; Bourhis & Landry, 2008; Giles & Johnson, 1981, 1987; Rosenthal & Hrynevich, 1985) suggests that people are inclined to preserve a positive social identity that derives from membership in a particular ethnolinguistic group. This changes when a member of the minority group is in contact with people from a dominant majority. Interethnic relations can cause a member of the minority group to identify with the majority group, thus leading to assimilation and acculturation (Allard & Landry, 1992), with a transition from unicultural minority identity to unicultural majority identity. These interethnic relations can also lead to the acquisition of an additional identity, namely, transition into bicultural identity, i.e., integration. Such bicultural identity enriches the immigrant's societal experience and improves his self-perception due to his positive sense of belonging to both groups in the particular society (de Korne, Byram, & Fleming, 2007). ELIT also suggests that people like to perceive themselves in a positive manner, and that such positive regard is largely determined by society at large (Allard & Landry, 1996; Clément & Noels, 1992). To this end, Giles and Johnson (1981, 1987) explain that when individuals perceive themselves as group members, an intergroup social comparison occurs. Social

comparisons are based on languages that group members consider vital for maintaining their identity. Favorable comparisons are made by the group members in order to satisfy positive ingroup identity needs. When ingroup identity is positive and language is perceived as a core of identity, the ingroup members utilize strategies of "psycholinguistic distinctiveness" to express ingroup alliance (Giles, Bourhis, & Taylor, 1977).

Positive self-image has a significant impact on the identity and vitality of a group. Linguistic strategies that boost positive self-image include using the home language more frequently or code-switching into the home language while using the majority language. These findings support the theory that identity and language use are reciprocal; in other words, the identity of a group affects language attitudes and usage, and vice versa. Crucially, language use and ethnolinguistic identity are navigated not only by linguistic abilities but also by sociolinguistic needs and practices such as group inclusion, intimacy, and so on.

When immigrants and their families arrive in a new country such as Israel, they are faced with a dilemma: on the one hand, they want to become part of the host (Israeli) society; on the other, they wish to preserve their culture and heritage language. Immigrants must constantly switch between the language and culture of their country of origin and those of the host country. These switches require an ongoing change in language and behaviors as well as in identity.

Armon-Lotem, Joffe, Oz-Abutbul, Altman, & Walters (2014) conducted a study with English-Hebrew and Russian-Hebrew bilingual children, in which they investigated the relationships among the children's ethnic identities and their linguistic abilities in Hebrew—the language of the host society. They found that the linguistic abilities of the English-Hebrew bilingual children were poorer in comparison to those of Russian-Hebrew bilingual children. Regarding ethnic identity, English-Hebrew-speaking children preferred to define themselves as Israelis regardless of their linguistic abilities or their length of exposure to Hebrew. A positive correlation was found between the length of exposure to Hebrew and the linguistic abilities of Russian-Hebrew-speaking children.

Another positive correlation was found between the length of exposure to Hebrew and the ethnic identity of Russian-Hebrew-speaking children (*ibid.*, 2014). The authors maintained that the English-speaking immigrants in the study came to Israel by choice for ideological, religious, and national reasons. As such, their Jewish and Israeli identities were consolidated prior to their arrival, and the acquisition of Hebrew did not affect, and was not affected by, the adoption of an Israeli identity. In contrast, their Russian counterparts, an immigrant group that was disenfranchised, came to Israel in order to ameliorate their economic and social situations as well as develop their Jewish and Zionist identities. Despite the impression that Russian immigrants are largely separatist and culturally segregated (Lissak & Leshem, 1995), Russian-Hebrew bilingual children make a great effort to integrate into Israeli society, and their linguistic abilities are related directly to their cultural identity.

The Ethiopian community is like a thread woven into the ethnolinguistic tapestry of ethnic groups in Israel. Its two languages, Amharic and Tigrinya, contribute greatly to its uniqueness as an ethnolinguistic group as well as to its identity and culture (Stavans & Goldzweig, 2008). Among all the immigrant groups in Israel, the Ethiopian community is the least researched. In recent years, however, there has been growing interest in the study and understanding of this group. Ideologically-driven Ethiopian immigrants came to Israel in two waves—in the 1980s and the 1990s from Addis Ababa and Gondar. Most of them suffered from severe culture shock since the gaps between their 'old' world and the 'new' one were wide (Bar-Yosef, 2001; Stavans & Goldzweig, 2008). They underwent a lengthy process of adjustment to their new surroundings in order to bridge the various cultural, technological, and educational gaps. Since many Ethiopian immigrants had between five and twelve years of schooling, and no knowledge of Hebrew, they were placed in educational programs in order to enhance their language skills. As they learned Hebrew, the maintenance of their heritage languages, Amharic and Tigrinya, was particularly important for them (Bar-Yosef, 2001; Stavans & Goldzweig, 2008; Stavans, Olshtain, & Goldzweig, 2009).

Ethiopian immigrants live in enclaved communities or neighborhoods where the majority of the population is Ethiopian, and therefore maintenance of the home

language should be possible (Azaria, 2002; Benita, Noam, & Levi, 1993; Stavans & Goldzweig, 2008). In most cases, the home language is Amharic, which parents speak to each other as well as to other adults in their neighborhoods. Nonetheless, Ethiopian immigrants perceive their language and community to be inferior to those of other immigrant groups, and hope for improvements in the cultural status of their language of origin and their ethnic group (Stavans & Goldzweig, 2008). Due to issues of power, policy, and status, the societal attitude is generally inhospitable toward the Ethiopian ethnolinguistic community and its language—in contrast to their fellow immigrant communities from the US and Russia. Amharic is perceived as a language of low prestige and therefore gains little communal and institutional support to preserve it (Azaria, 2002).

In most cases, children of Ethiopian origin are exposed to some degree of biculturalism/bilingualism from birth; they are exposed to Amharic at home and acquire Hebrew from the host society (Stavans, Olshtain, & Goldzweig, 2009). Stavans and Goldzweig (2008) indicated that Ethiopian immigrants are significantly more pro-bilingualism and pro-home language than their Russian counterparts. Maintenance of the Ethiopian minority languages continues during the preschool years. Shany et al. (2010) found that most Ethiopian parents (84%) report using a mixture of Amharic and Hebrew at home; however, since the children speak mainly Hebrew, the status of their bilingualism is at risk. This was evidenced, for example, by the significant gap in their lexical knowledge: they performed twice as well in Hebrew, their second language, than in Amharic, their home language.

Stavans, Olshtain, and Goldzweig (2009) posited that Ethiopian families introduced Hebrew at home despite the fact that 45 percent of the parents could not speak Hebrew fluently and were not properly equipped to provide Hebrew scholastic language support. The turning point occurs when schooling begins. Although parents stress the importance of retaining the home language, Amharic, as part of their children's identity, culture, and family ties, they deliberately support their children's development of Hebrew, since maintenance of the home language becomes secondary once the children enter school (ibid., 2009).

Stavans and Goldzweig (2008) argued that positive attitudes toward either or both languages intensify the integration process. Ben-Rafael, Olshtain, and Geijst (1995) claimed that a better command of Hebrew enhances self-confidence, exposure to the influence of society, social involvement, and the level of ambition with respect to integration into the majority culture. Successful integration into the host society includes the acquisition of the target language, development of literacy skills, and acculturation into the new society. Therefore, successful integration is often influenced by factors related to bilingualism (Stavans, Olshtain & Goldzweig, 2009).

Despite these linguistic, social and cultural obstacles, Ethiopian immigrants have made every effort to integrate and assimilate into Israeli society (Azaria, 2002). In this immigrant community, to a greater extent than in the others, the acquisition of Hebrew has been the key to survival in the Israeli setting. Yet, when Schleifer (2003) compared the narratives of Ethiopian children and adolescents with those of non-Ethiopian Israelis from low socioeconomic backgrounds, she found that while the Hebrew language and Israeli culture were dominant in the everyday life of children and adolescents of Ethiopian origin, their narratives revealed a set of values that were typical of the Ethiopian community. She detected a strong Israeli identity in childhood and early adolescence with a transition to a strong Ethiopian identity in later adolescence: this was reflected in the insults, social ostracism, and alienation reported in their narratives.

3. Lexical knowledge of bilingual children

Monolingual and bilingual children follow similar patterns in their early linguistic development. Genesee (2008) contended that simultaneous bilinguals' language acquisition is as natural as that of their monolingual peers—it is systematic, and includes the same essential milestones. Simultaneous bilingual children face the same communication challenges as monolingual children, even though communicating in two languages entails the challenges of code-switching, language choices, and other considerations (Genesee, 2008; Grosjean, 1982).

The bilingual lexicon in each language separately is usually smaller than that of monolinguals (e.g., Bialystok, Luk, Peets, & Yang, 2010). This assertion is based on empirical tests that perceive the bilingual lexicon as complying with the monolingual end-state rather than as being another system altogether. Thus, for example, Shany et al. (2010) identified a significant difference in receptive vocabulary in the Hebrew of Israeli preschoolers of Ethiopian background as compared to Israelis from non-Ethiopian backgrounds. Yifat and Blum-Kulka (2011) reported a developmental increase in the lexicon of immigrant preschool children in Israel, but identified a similar significant discrepancy as concerns monolingual norms.

Oller, Pearson, and Cobo-Lewis (2007) suggested that while bilingual children know fewer words in each language than their monolingual peers, if both vocabularies are taken together as a whole, they are equal to or greater in size than the vocabulary of monolingual children. Oller et al. (2007) claimed that bilingual children must divide the time allotted to language learning between two languages, and it is possible that certain words occur in contexts in which they only use one of their languages (*ibid.*, 2007). Bilingual children rarely learn their two languages in similar contexts (Yan & Nicoladis, 2009), and their vocabulary items can be distributed across their two languages (Pearson, 1998).

Yet, the composition of the bilingual lexicon is governed by more general syntactic principles. While monolinguals find verbs more difficult to acquire than nouns (Maguire, Hirsh-Pasek, & Golinkoff, 2006), bilinguals face even greater difficulty since the meaning of verbs and their syntactic properties are less similar across languages than the meaning of nouns (Gentner, 2006). Moreover, it has been observed that verbs are more difficult to remember (Davidoff & Masterson, 1995/6), and memory for verbs is more dependent on semantic context than is memory for nouns since the meanings of verbs change in different contexts (Kersten & Earles, 2004). This is reflected in findings reported by Kambanaros, Grohmann, and Michaelides (2013), for example, who found a significant difference between action (verbs) and object (nouns) naming in bilingual Cypriot Greek-Modern Greek-speaking children.

Similarly, Jeuk (2003) found that Turkish-German preschoolers had a higher proportion of nouns in their lexicon than did monolinguals, while Klassert, Gagarina,

and Kauschke (2014), using the same noun–verb naming task employed in the present paper for testing Russian-German bilingual preschoolers, identified a naming deficit among bilingual children, with an advantage for noun naming in German, their second language; they also found an age-specific influence. Kambanaros et al. (2013) further discovered that the noun–verb gap was wider among preschoolers (3–5-year-olds) than among first graders (6–7-year-olds), suggesting that with age, children begin to resolve the processing dilemmas related to the conceptual differences between the two grammatical word classes. While the noun–verb gap was found to be subjected to typological differences in early acquisition (Kim, McGregor, & Thompson, 2000), studies of Hebrew, the societal language, demonstrate that nouns precede verbs in early monolingual (Dromi, 1987) and bilingual (Berman, 1978) acquisition. Moreover, the typological variety of languages (Romance, Germanic, Slavic, and Turkic) employed in the above studies of bilingual children of different ages suggests that the noun–verb gap is not an artifact of the properties of a particular language.

Internal factors, such as chronological age, age of onset (AoO), and length of exposure (LoE), serve as robust predictors of the lexical development of sequential bilingual children. Chondrogianni and Marinis (2011) conducted a study exploring the extent to which internal and external factors affect the performance of English monolinguals and successive bilingual children from a Turkish-English background. They showed that almost 50 percent of participants' performance on vocabulary tests was predicted by a combination of AoO and LoE. This finding implied that bilingual children's vocabulary develops with greater exposure. AoO was also predictive of the bilingual children's performance: children with later AoO had higher scores on vocabulary tests. However, Armon-Lotem et al. (2011) suggested that while lexical tasks generate the steepest acquisition slopes of all other language measures as a function of AoO, children who are exposed to the societal language within the critical period for language acquisition (up to age three or four) do not manifest an influence of AoO.

Golberg, Paradis, and Crago (2008) found that children older than 5;0 who began to learn English as their second language accumulated an English vocabulary more rapidly than children who began to learn English prior to age 5;0. Children's rapid

accumulation of vocabulary could be explained by their cognitive maturity (*ibid.*, 2008). However, Chondrogianni and Marinis (2011) found that there was no correlation between an older AoO and longer exposure on the one hand and bilinguals' ability to reach age-appropriate norms on the other. In fact, only a third of the study participants reached age-appropriate norms.

External factors such as parents' education and occupation (measures of Socio-Economic Status—SES) are also reported to exert a major influence on lexical development, although this is not unique to bilinguals. Oller and Eilers (2002) found that school-age children of professionals are more successful in the societal language than children from working-class families, despite the importance both populations attribute to that language. They asserted that while low SES parents encourage acquisition of the societal language as the key to academic success, they do not support it at home.

Similarly, Armon-Lotem et al. (2011) found a strong correlation between SES (measured by parental education and occupation) and the societal language (German) of Russian-German bilingual preschool children. The families in that study presented a wider range of SES, including unemployed mothers and parents with limited education; furthermore, children of mothers and fathers with more professional occupations outperformed the children of unemployed mothers and semi-skilled fathers.

In Israel, Schwartz, Kozminsky, and Leikin (2009) demonstrated that the level of parents' education and experience with education in Israel could explain variability in lexical knowledge in Hebrew. This well-recorded influence of SES could be traced to the quality of input in higher SES groups (Ravid, 2009) on the one hand, and to parents' proficiency in the societal language, on the other (Oller & Eilers, 2002). This is precisely what Shany et al. (2010) showed for children from Ethiopian families, where children of more literate mothers (with more years of education in Israel) had a more extensive Hebrew vocabulary.

4. Research questions and hypotheses

As seen above, previous studies found that a greater command of the societal language enhances self-confidence, exposure to the influence of society, social involvement, and the level of ambition with respect to integration into the majority culture. However, they failed to test whether this directionality of relations applies to preschool children. Similarly, while studies of the lexical knowledge of children from bilingual backgrounds showed that they knew fewer words in each language than their monolingual peers, with a discrepancy between nouns and verbs, these studies did not explore the relation between this restricted lexical knowledge and ethnolinguistic identity. Likewise, although it has already been shown that internal and external factors impact linguistic development in general and lexical development in particular, this has never been weighed against ethnolinguistic variables. Against this background, the present study seeks to focus on preschool children from Amharic-speaking families and explore:

1. ethnolinguistic identity including attitudes toward the two languages and cultures;
2. lexical knowledge, including the reported difference between nouns and verbs, and the impact of internal child-based factors on this knowledge;
3. the relation between ethnolinguistic variables and lexical knowledge;
4. the relation between ethnolinguistic variables and attitudes toward lexical code-switching.

In order to achieve these aims, the following research questions are addressed:

1. Will children from Amharic-speaking backgrounds present a balanced bicultural identity or a unicultural identity? Will they display a different attitude toward Amharic and Hebrew? Will they report different uses of Amharic and Hebrew? Will there be a relation between these variables? What will be the impact of internal factors on identity and attitudes?
2. How well will children from Amharic-speaking backgrounds perform on a lexical production (naming) task? Will there be a difference between nouns

and verbs? How are they compared to Hebrew-speaking monolinguals and to children from other bilingual backgrounds? What will the impact of internal factors on lexical development be?

3. How are the sociolinguistic variables (e.g., ethnolinguistic identity, attitude toward home and societal language) related to reported language use and lexical knowledge?
4. How are attitudes to code-switching related to the sociolinguistic variables?

To this end, the following predictions are evaluated in this study:

1. Based on the Ethnolinguistic Identity Theory (ELIT), we predict that:
 - a. Children from Amharic-speaking backgrounds will demonstrate a preference for Hebrew use, reflecting its status in society and their acculturation and integration process as well as the perceived importance of Hebrew for education;
 - b. Children from Amharic-speaking backgrounds will present either a unicultural pro-Israeli identity of a minority group that identifies with the majority group, or a balanced bicultural identity;
 - c. A change in these variables is expected with chronological age reflecting the growing contact with people from the majority group.
2.
 - a. Children from Amharic-speaking background will perform better on nouns than on verbs (e.g., Kambanaros et al., 2013);
 - b. Owing to the widespread use of Hebrew in the homes of children from Amharic-speaking backgrounds (Shany et al., 2010; Stavans et al., 2009), which leads to exposure to the societal language within the critical period, age of onset (AoO) and length of exposure (LoE) will not impact on attitudes toward Amharic and Hebrew use, ethnolinguistic identity, or lexical development;
 - c. A change in lexical knowledge is expected with chronological age, reflecting the growing contact with people from the majority group;

- d. Children from Amharic-speaking backgrounds will achieve lower scores than Hebrew-speaking monolinguals (e.g., Bialystok et al., 2010) and children from other bilingual backgrounds, due to lower SES and limited home literacy (Shany et al., 2010).
3. a. Positive correlations will be found among integration into society (measured by pro-Israeli identity), reported use of Hebrew, and command of lexical knowledge in Hebrew (cf. Ben-Rafael et al., 1995);
- b. More reported use of Hebrew and a more positive attitude toward Hebrew will correlate positively with lexical knowledge in Hebrew. The attitude toward Amharic and reports of its use will correlate negatively with lexical knowledge in Hebrew;
4. a. A positive attitude toward code-switching (as a strategy of "psycholinguistic distinctiveness") will be found among children who report the use of the home language and a positive attitude toward it;
- b. Children with a negative attitude toward the home language will avoid code-switching;
- c. A decrease in ingroup/home (Ethiopian) identity will correlate with a decrease in code-switching, as children refrain from distinguishing themselves from the outgroup.

5. Methods

A cross-sectional study of 80 Hebrew-speaking preschool children with typical language development from Amharic-Hebrew backgrounds, divided equally into two age groups (4;0–5;0 and 5;1–6;0), will be used to test the above predictions, employing three qualitative measures for evaluating ethnolinguistic identity and lexical knowledge. The focus on lexical measures in preschool years is motivated by the susceptibility of the lexicon to the quality and quantity of input, which varies between monolinguals and bilinguals and within the bilingual community. As such, lexical abilities are more sensitive to SES and parental ethnolinguistic attitudes.

Moreover, attaining the monolingual norms of the lexical abilities requires longer exposure than other linguistic domains; therefore, focusing on the lexicon affords a better opportunity to observe developmental changes. With the developmental process being longer, lexical abilities are more likely to shed light on the relation between language acquisition and ethnolinguistic transition, which in itself is not sudden. The use of a cross-sectional model facilitates this developmental perspective on both identity transition and lexical acquisition.

5.1. Participants

Eighty children (41 girls) with typical language development, ages 4;0 to 6;0, attending Hebrew-speaking kindergartens, participated in the study. The children were equally divided into two age groups (4;0–5;0 and 5;1–6;0, N=40 in each) that were matched on all demographic variables but age. The children were all recruited from families of Ethiopian origin, in which Amharic was one of the languages spoken at home. Although all parents had been born in Ethiopia and (apart from two mothers) spoke Amharic as their first language, they all reported using both languages at home with their children. The children were either second-generation immigrants, brought to Israel at a very young age, or born into families who had immigrated to Israel since 1991.

Background information including age, gender, child linguistic status, and home language as well as birth order, family size, and parental education is presented in Table 1. The distribution of parents' occupation is presented in Table 2, using the classification and ranking of the *European Social Survey* (2010).

Table 1: Demographic variables of the participants

	<i>Demographic information (N=80)</i>
Age (in months)	M=61.12, range 48-72, SD=7.56
Gender	39 males
Child language status	71/80 Hebrew monolinguals
Birth order	25 first-born
Family size	M=5.4, range 3-13, SD=2.01
Mother's education (in years)	M=8.85, range 0-18, SD= 5.04
Father's education (in years)	M=9.8, range 0-18, SD=4.62
Parents occupation	See Table 2

As seen in Table 1, most of the children (91%) were reported to be Hebrew monolinguals. Very few of them were simultaneous bilinguals, despite the reported bilingual homes. Since all children are exposed to Hebrew from birth, AoO and LoE are not reported. Family size was relatively large, and parental education, on average, was less than 10 years, with 18 mothers and 13 fathers reporting no formal education (apart from Hebrew Ulpan). Forty-four mothers and 55 fathers had full high-school education, but among these, only six mothers and five fathers had any academic education beyond high school. This is reflected in their professions (Table 2).

Table 2. Parents' occupations

<i>Parents' occupations</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>
Professional and technical occupations	3%	5%
Higher administrative occupations	4%	0%
Clerical occupations	0%	5%
Sales occupations	1%	4%
Service occupations	9%	18%
Skilled workers	13%	6%
Semi-skilled workers	8%	11%
Unskilled workers	49%	44%
Agricultural workers	0%	0%
Unemployed	15%	8%

As seen in Table 2, almost half of the parents worked as unskilled workers (cleaners, cashiers, doorkeepers, factory workers, etc.), while very few had professional and technical occupations (teachers, electricians, etc.). Eight mothers reported being single with no evidence of a father. This demographic information characterizes the studied population as possessing a relatively low SES, and will be addressed when discussing the findings.

5.2. Tasks

Since this study is a cross-sectional quantitative study, multiple measures were employed in order to collect data on social identity, sociolinguistic attitudes, and lexical abilities. These measures are described in detail below.

Sociolinguistic identity and attitudes. The participants' social and linguistic identities and attitudes were examined by means of a series of sociolinguistic measures designed for bilingual children and tested with over 200 Russian-Hebrew and Russian-German preschool children, ages 4–7 (Walters et al., 2014) as well as English-Hebrew preschool children (Armon-Lotem et al., 2014). The tasks consisted of questions targeting the children's social and linguistic identities, attitudes toward and preferences for languages, as well as their proficiency in Amharic and Hebrew, their situated proficiencies/communication skills in Amharic and/or Hebrew, and their interpersonal communication networks. The sociolinguistic measures consisted of three open-ended questions (addressing ethnic self-labeling, ethnolinguistic self-labeling, and sociolinguistic preferences) and 24 questions utilizing a 5-point Likert scale graphically disguised as a magic ladder. These questions were divided into five sections: (I) ethnic identity (3), (II) ethnolinguistic identity (4), (III) interpersonal communication networks (5), (IV) self-rated proficiency (2), and (V) situation-dependent expressive proficiency and communication skills (10) (see appendix for the full list of items from the social and linguistic identity task using a 5-point Likert scale).

Targeting their identity, for example, children were asked the open question: "*What do you say when people ask you who/what you are?*" "*I am an... Ethiopian/Israeli/Both.*" The same information was also obtained by the use of the 5-point magic ladder, asking the child to repeat a statement, for example: "*I'm Ethiopian/Israeli*", and then asking, "*How much do you agree with this?*" Likewise, for exploring the linguistic and social preferences of their close surrounding family or community, they were asked the open question: "*Do you have friends who speak both Amharic and Hebrew very well?*" In addition, children were asked questions regarding their linguistic and social attitudes and preferences for Amharic/Hebrew using the 5-point graphic rating scale, for example: "*How much do you like people who speak Amharic?*" The children were also asked about their interpersonal communication networks, their proficiency in Amharic and/or Hebrew, their attitude toward code-switching to Hebrew/Amharic while speaking the other language, and their situation-

dependent expressive proficiency and communication skills in their languages, for example: *"How easy/difficult is it for you to ask someone for a toy in Amharic?"*

This task was deemed suitable for the studied population since it did not require previous acquaintance with the testing measures, nor did it measure skills that might not be supported by the home community. The experimental task began with a warm-up exercise so as to introduce the child to the rating scale. In order to rate each of the questions, the child was asked to place a button on the 5-point graphic scale, introduced as "the magic ladder", with endpoints marked by a sad face for 'not-at-all' or 'very-hard', and a happy face for 'a-lot' or 'very-easy' (Armon-Lotem et al., 2014). The child was asked to place the button on one of the rungs of the ladder. He/She responded to 'warm-up' items such as *"How much do you like ice-cream/onions/soup?"* The children were encouraged to use the entire range of the scale and not only the extremes (for similar tasks and more references including measures of reliability, see Altman Burstein-Feldman, Yitzhaki, Armon-Lotem, and Walters, 2013). While these tools are rather innovative in the study of preschool children's sociolinguistic perceptions, similar methods have been successfully employed by Surber (1982) and Grueneich (1982), showing that children are capable of providing reliable and valid reports using such a scale. The reliability of the present task is further supported by the high correlations within the sections that address ethnic identity (I), ethnolinguistic identity (II), self-rated proficiency (IV), and situation-dependent expressive proficiency and communication skills (V), reported in the Findings section.

Lexical abilities in Hebrew. The lexical abilities of monolingual and bilingual children from Amharic-Hebrew bilingual backgrounds were tested and assessed by means of two naming tasks. The first was the SHEMESH naming task (Biran & Friedmann, 2004; 2005), in which participants were asked to label colorful drawings of 100 nouns (animals, food and drink, clothes, body parts, etc.) in Hebrew. The second was Kauschke's Noun-Verb naming task (Kauschke & Stan, 2004; Kauschke, 2007), in which participants were asked to name pictures of 35 black-and-white drawings of objects—biological and man-made—and 36 transitive and intransitive activities in Hebrew (L2). This task was adapted to Hebrew for the study of other

bilingual populations (Armon-Lotem et al., 2011), taking into consideration cultural and age-dependent variations, and tested for reliability employing the test-retest method at the time of adaptation. The experimental task began with two warm-up pictures.

Language abilities in Amharic. In order to examine the participants' language abilities in Amharic, the children were asked to follow instructions (e.g., "*Move the chair away from the table*") and tell a short story based on a shorter sequence of six pictures (Gagarina, Klop, Kunnari, Tantele, Välimaa, Balčiūnienė, Bohnacker, & Walters, 2012). This was administered by an Amharic-speaking research assistant in order to support the use of the home language. It is important to note that these last two tasks were administered with only half of the participants and then discontinued, since the success rate was negligible due to the fact that most of the children were unable to follow even simple instructions.

5.3. Procedure and data analysis

The tasks were presented in the following order: the participants and their parents were first interviewed separately so as to obtain background information. This was followed by the sociolinguistic tasks. Lexical abilities were tested next with the Noun–Verb naming tasks (Kauschke, 2007; Kauschke & Stan, 2004) and with the SHEMESH naming tasks (Biran & Friedmann, 2004; 2005). Finally, a short assessment of Amharic abilities was conducted.

Prior to data collection, the first author visited the children's homes in order to administer parental questionnaires and receive the parents' written consent to their children's participation in the study. This was achieved with the assistance of a well-respected and reliable community member. The questionnaires were used to gather background information about the participants themselves as well as their families.

The children were interviewed in their preschools, and the data were collected from each child separately in a quiet room. Prior to the data collection, ten minutes were spent conversing with each child so as to enable him/her to feel at ease. All responses were audio-recorded. The responses to each item were also manually recorded on a response sheet. The participants were interviewed individually in two or three

sessions, with a break in between to allow for greater concentration. There were no time limits and no feedback was offered, except for encouraging the participant to continue and focus his/her attention on the task at hand. The children found the tasks enjoyable and simple to perform, and there was no need for further explanation of the procedures beyond the warm-up process.

The information obtained from the five parts of the sociolinguistic questionnaire was transformed into five sociolinguistic variables: Ethiopian/Israeli identity, attitude toward Amharic/Hebrew, reported Amharic/Hebrew use (with family members and friends), self-rated Amharic/Hebrew proficiency (in comprehension and production in a variety of situations), and attitude toward code-switching. A score was generated by giving the same weight to all the questions that constituted each variable and averaging out the scores, retaining the same 5-point scale. Performance on the lexical tasks was calculated as a percentage of correct responses.

A descriptive analysis was followed by ANOVAs, as well as the calculation of correlations and regressions, in order to examine main effects and interactions among the study variables.

6. Results

Results are presented for each of the four research questions in order to allow the predictions for ethnolinguistic identity, lexical abilities and composition, the relation among ethnolinguistic identity, lexical knowledge, and background variables, and code-switching to be tested. Since all children were exposed to both languages from birth, it was not possible to examine the impact of AoO and LoE. Descriptive statistics are presented for the two age groups separately in order to permit a developmental perspective, while correlations are presented for the group as a whole.

6.1. *Ethnolinguistic identity*

Table 3 presents the scores for the sociolinguistic variables: Ethiopian/Israeli identity, attitude toward Amharic/Hebrew, reported Amharic/Hebrew use, and self-rated Amharic/Hebrew proficiency, for the two age groups: 4;0–5;0 (Fours) and 5;1–6;0

(Fives). Table 4 presents a within age-group comparison for each of the four sociolinguistic variables using *Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Tests*.

Table 3 – Descriptive statistics for sociolinguistic data: Ethnolinguistic identity, attitudes, reported use and self-rated proficiency (on a 1-5 rating-scale)

<i>Age Group</i>	<i>Task</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Min.</i>	<i>Max.</i>
Fours	Ethiopian identity	3.5	1.3	1.00	5.00
	Attitude toward Amharic	3.1	1.07	1.00	5.00
	Reported Amharic use	2.8	.96	1.00	4.40
	Amharic proficiency: Self-rating	2.2	.92	1.00	4.10
	Israeli identity	3.5	1.21	1.00	5.00
	Attitude toward Hebrew	3.8	1.06	1.00	5.00
	Reported Hebrew use	3.8	.70	1.90	5.00
	Hebrew proficiency: Self-rating	4.2	.63	2.65	5.00
Fives	Ethiopian identity	3.7	1.21	1.00	5.00
	Attitude toward Amharic	3.0	1.21	1.00	5.00
	Reported Amharic use	2.8	.97	1.00	5.00
	Amharic proficiency: Self-rating	2.5	1.08	1.00	4.35
	Israeli identity	4.0	.85	1.35	5.00
	Attitude toward Hebrew	4.2	.69	2.50	5.00
	Reported Hebrew use	3.9	.59	2.65	5.00
	Hebrew proficiency: Self-rating	4.3	.64	2.50	5.00

Table 4 – Within-group comparisons for the sociolinguistic variables

<i>Age Group</i>		<i>Ethiopian/ Israeli Identity</i>	<i>Attitude toward Amharic/ Hebrew</i>	<i>Reported Amharic/ Hebrew Use</i>	<i>Amharic/ Hebrew Proficiency: Self-Rating</i>
Fours	Z	-.076 ^a	-2.171 ^b	-3.783 ^b	-5.303 ^b
	Asymp. Sig.	.940	.030	.000	.000
Fives	Z	-1.183 ^b	-3.619 ^b	-4.701 ^b	-4.857 ^b
	Asymp. Sig.	.237	.000	.000	.000

The children exhibited a significant pro-Hebrew attitude for both age groups, as well as more reported use of Hebrew and higher self-rated proficiency in that language, despite a relatively balanced identity (albeit with a tilt toward Israeli identity in the older group). No significant difference was found between the two age groups for all sociolinguistic measures using two-tailed Mann-Whitney tests. Trends toward significance were found only for Israeli identity ($Z = -1.593$, $p = .051$) and attitude toward Hebrew ($Z = -1.453$, $p = .14$), where the Fives scored higher. As a result, the two age groups were collapsed for further correlational analyses.

6.2. Lexical production in Hebrew

Table 5 presents the children's level of performance in percentages for both naming tasks for the two age groups. Since the children were unable to perform any of the tasks in Amharic, linguistic tasks are presented for Hebrew only.

Table 5 – Descriptive statistics for naming tasks (in percentage)

<i>Age Group</i>	<i>Task</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Min.</i>	<i>Max.</i>
Fours	SHEMESH	.67	.12	.35	.88
	Kauschke: Nouns	.73	.11	.51	.94
	Kauschke: Verbs	.49	.12	.11	.69
	Kauschke: Total	.61	.10	.32	.76
Fives	SHEMESH	.72	.11	.42	.91
	Kauschke: Nouns	.79	.10	.57	.97
	Kauschke: Verbs	.55	.12	.31	.75
	Kauschke: Total	.67	.10	.44	.85

Significant differences were found between the two age groups for all lexical measures (nouns and verbs): $F(1,78) = 4.24$, $p = .043$, $\mu^2 = .052$ for SHEMESH nouns, $F(1,78) = 6.408$, $p = .013$, $\mu^2 = .076$ for Kauschke: Nouns, $F(1,78) = 6.163$, $p = .015$, $\mu^2 = .073$ for Kauschke: Verbs, and $F(1,78) = 7.739$, $p = .007$, $\mu^2 = .091$ for Kauschke: Total. For the noun–verb task, a significant within-group difference between nouns and verbs was found for both ages groups: $F(1,78) = 5.505$, $p = .022$, $\mu^2 = .066$ for the Fours, and $F(1,78) = 4.747$, $p = .032$, $\mu^2 = .057$ for the Fives.

A comparison with monolinguals, using monolingual raw norms for the Hebrew SHEMESH test [Fours: $M = 81$, $SD = 4.3$, Fives: $M = 88$, $SD = 5.2$ (Friedmann, p.c.)] to compute Z-scores, shows that both age groups lag behind monolingual norms: $M = -3.72$, $SD = 2.45$, *Range* $-10.7 - 1.16$ for the Fours, and $M = -3.05$, $SD = 2.15$, *Range* $-8.85 - 0.58$ for the Fives. Inspection of the individual scores shows that 37 of the Fours and 33 of the Fives scored more than one standard deviation below the monolingual mean.

A comparison with age-matched bilingual children was only possible for the Fives, employing data from 44 Russian-Hebrew bilingual children, ages 5;1–6;0 from a previous study (Armon-Lotem et al. 2011) ($M = .72$ for Kauschke: Nouns, and $M = .58$ for Kauschke: Verbs, $M = .66$ for Kauschke: Total). A two-way ANOVA for repeated measures investigating effects of age group and linguistic category (Nouns/Verbs) shows a significant effect of category, $F(1,82) = 149$, $p < .0001$, $\mu^2 = .375$, with verbs being more difficult than nouns; as well as a group x category interaction, $F(1,82) = 9$, $p = .0035$, $\mu^2 = .118$, but not a significant group effect $F(1,82) = .5$, $p = .48$.

6.3. Correlations between sociolinguistic variables and lexical knowledge in Hebrew

Table 6 presents the correlations between the four sociolinguistic variables (Ethiopian/Israeli identity, attitude toward Amharic/Hebrew, reported Amharic/Hebrew use, and self-rated Amharic/Hebrew proficiency) and the four measures of lexical production in Hebrew (SHEMESH nouns, Kauschke: Nouns, Kauschke: Verbs, and Kauschke: Total) using Spearman Rho tests.

Table 6. Correlations between lexical richness in Hebrew and the sociolinguistic measures

	<i>SHEMESH</i>	<i>Kauschke:</i>		
		<i>Nouns</i>	<i>Verbs</i>	<i>Total</i>
Ethiopian Identity	.034	-.040	.195	.086
Israeli Identity	.207	.222*	.295**	.293**
Attitude to Amharic	-.141	-.056	.105	.037
Attitude to Hebrew	.366**	.255*	.104	.191
Reported Amharic Use	-.111	-.012	-.008	.005
Reported Hebrew Use	.270*	.194	.271*	.252*

	<i>SHEMESH</i>	<i>Kauschke:</i>		
		<i>Nouns</i>	<i>Verbs</i>	<i>Total</i>
Amharic Proficiency:	-.111	-.123	-.019	-.071
Self-Rating				
Hebrew Proficiency:	.400**	.349**	.300**	.357**
Self-Rating				

* Correlation significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

** Correlation significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 6 shows that moderate yet significant correlations were found between the lexical measures in Hebrew and the pro-Hebrew/Israeli measures: Israeli identity, attitude toward Hebrew, and reported use of Hebrew, while the correlations with self-rating of Hebrew proficiency were significantly high. No significant correlations were found between lexical knowledge in Hebrew and the pro-Amharic/Ethiopian measures.

Focusing on the pro-Hebrew/Israeli measures, a stepwise regression was conducted to test which of the sociolinguistic variables (Israeli identity, attitude toward Hebrew, and reported use of Hebrew) best predicts Hebrew proficiency. This was done for self-rating of Hebrew proficiency as well as for the different lexical measures (SHEMESH nouns, Kauschke: Nouns, Kauschke: Verbs, and Kauschke: Total). Attitude toward Hebrew accounted for 17.8% of the variance in self-rating of Hebrew proficiency, reported use of Hebrew for an additional 6%, and Israeli identity for 5% more [$F(3,76) = 10.198, p < .0001$]. Similarly, attitude toward Hebrew accounted for 11.7% of the variance in the SHEMESH score, and reported use of Hebrew for an additional 5% [$F(2,77) = 7.843, p = .001$], while identity was excluded. For Kauschke: Nouns, attitude toward Hebrew was still the best predictor of all three, but it accounted for only 7.4% of the variance. For Kauschke: Verbs, and Kauschke: Total, a different picture emerges. Attitude toward Hebrew is excluded, while Israeli identity and reported Hebrew use together account for 14.4% of the variance in Kauschke: Verbs [$F(2,77) = 6.5, p = .002$], and 12.9% of the variance in Kauschke: Total [$F(2,77) = 5.709, p = .005$].

6.4. Correlations among pro-Amharic/Ethiopian measures and code-switching

While objective evaluation of Amharic knowledge was not possible for our study group, the sociolinguistic questionnaire allowed us to explore the relations among the different pro-Amharic/Ethiopian measures (Ethiopian identity, attitude toward Amharic, reported use of Amharic, and self-rating of Amharic proficiency) and between each of them and attitudes to code-switching. It was predicted that a positive attitude toward code-switching (as a strategy of "psycholinguistic distinctiveness") would be found among children who reported more use of the home language and a positive attitude toward it, while children with a negative attitude toward the home language and a reduced ingroup (Ethiopian) identity were predicted to correlate with less reported code-switching.

Table 7 presents the correlations among the four sociolinguistic pro-Amharic/Ethiopian measures and between these and attitude toward code-switching to Amharic and Hebrew, using Spearman Rho tests.

Table 7. Correlations between Code-switching and Pro-Ethiopian/Amharic Sociolinguistic Measures

	<i>Attitude toward Amharic</i>	<i>Reported Amharic Use</i>	<i>Amharic Proficiency Self Rating</i>	<i>Code- switching to Amharic</i>	<i>Code- switching to Hebrew</i>
Ethiopian Identity	.242*	.179	.369**	.304**	.318**
Attitude toward Amharic	-	.406**	.305**	.213	.366**
Reported Amharic Use		-	.442**	.140	.364**
Amharic Proficiency: Self-Rating			-	.274*	.386**
Code-switching to Amharic				-	.488**

* Correlation significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

** Correlation significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Among the significant correlations observed in Table 7, self-rating of Amharic proficiency correlated with all other measures. Regarding attitude toward code-switching, a positive attitude toward code-switching to Amharic correlated with stronger (ingroup) Ethiopian identity and with Amharic proficiency. Code-switching to Hebrew correlated significantly with all pro-Amharic/Ethiopian measures. This finding is even more meaningful, since no correlations were observed between code-switching to Hebrew and any of the pro-Hebrew/Israeli measures. In other words, children whose Ethiopian identity was stronger and rated their Amharic proficiency higher reported bidirectional code-switching. Children who reported using more Amharic at home reported more code-switching into Hebrew. In addition, a high correlation was found between a positive attitude toward code-switching in one language and a positive attitude toward code-switching in the second language.

5. Discussion and conclusion

The first goal of the present study was to explore the relationship between ethnolinguistic identity (including attitudes toward Amharic and Hebrew) and the lexical knowledge of kindergarten children from Amharic-speaking families. The second goal was to identify the internal factors reflecting the child's time-related experience with language (chronological age, age of Hebrew onset, and length of exposure) that could influence the lexical development in this group of bilingual children.

The first major finding of this paper states that preschool children from Amharic-speaking homes exhibit a greater preference for and use of Hebrew in contrast to Amharic in both age groups, with no significant difference between the two age groups. This could be explained by the fact that parents deliberately support their children's development of Hebrew, since maintenance of their home language becomes secondary once their children enter school (Stavans, Olshtain, & Goldzweig, 2009). Better command of Hebrew also enhances self-confidence, exposure to the influence of society, social involvement, and the level of ambition with respect to integration into the majority culture (Ben-Rafael et al., 1995). This is enhanced by the

considerably less prestigious status of Amharic as opposed to other immigrant languages spoken in Israel.

The second finding posits that both age groups demonstrate bicultural identity despite their preference for Hebrew and limited abilities in Amharic, which can be explained by the fact that previous studies found this community to be more pro-bilingualism and pro-home language than their Russian counterparts (Stavans & Goldzweig 2008). This pro-home language attitude is evident in their self-rating of Amharic proficiency and its correlation with all other Ethiopian/Amharic sociolinguistic measures. This finding is of particular interest as the participants were unable to produce or even comprehend Amharic in the experimental setting. This gap suggests that the children perceive their home language as an integral part of their ingroup identity, even though it is not supported by their community (unlike the Russian-Hebrew or English-Hebrew communities). However, a nearly significant difference between the groups was found in relation to Israeli identity, which grew stronger with age. Such a transition is expected at this age as they move from home to preschool: the longer the time spent in the new environment is, the stronger the child's identification with the dominant society is expected to be. This occurs at the expense of the sense of belonging to the minority group, and, in turn, increases his/her chances of having better command of and preference for the majority language (Liebkind, 1993; Liebkind, Kasinskaja-Lahiti, & Solheim, 2004).

The third finding states that overall, the Fives performed better than the Fours on the different lexical measures in Hebrew; this is apparently attributable to chronological age and greater length of exposure. Moreover, as cognitive maturity is represented by chronological age and impacts second language acquisition (Chrondrogianni & Marinis, 2011; Golberg et al., 2008), it also impacts the acquisition of the lexicon. Nevertheless, their performance was more than 3SD below the monolingual norm for their age, supporting the findings of Shany and Geva (2012), and with no significant difference from Russian-Hebrew sequential bilinguals matched for age, but with shorter exposure to Hebrew. These low scores could be explained by the relatively low SES of these children, as is evidenced by the demographic information provided for these participants. As mentioned in the participant section, family size was

relatively large and parental education, on average, was relatively low (only six mothers and five fathers had academic education beyond high school), as is typical of low SES families. Since low SES is associated with reduced literacy, and reduced literacy is held responsible for limited lexical abilities (Shany et al., 2010), the similarity of this group of Hebrew monolingual speakers to speakers of Hebrew as a second language is not surprising.

The similarity of the children from Amharic backgrounds in this study to bilinguals is also evident in the discrepancy between the low scores on verbs as compared to nouns that has been reported for bilinguals only by Kambanaros et al. (2013) and Klassert et al. (2014), but is not expected for monolinguals with typical language development at this age. The data analysis demonstrated that both age groups performed better on the noun naming tasks than on the verb naming tasks. While this is reasonable for second language learners, the population studied here seemed to be acquiring its first language/Amharic as if it were their second language (Meisel, 2007), with Hebrew constituting their dominant if not their only language. Thus, given the more monolingual nature of the tested sample, this noun–verb gap is rather alarming and might be attributed to the low SES of the participants as evidenced by parental education and occupation.

A positive correlation was found across the board between the pro-Israeli/Hebrew values of the sociolinguistic measures and lexical knowledge, while no correlations (either positive or negative) were observed with the pro- Ethiopian/Amharic measures. The attitude toward Hebrew was found to be the strongest predictor not only for self-rated proficiency, but also for knowledge of nouns (both on the SHEMESH task and on Kauschke's task). While the former relation with self-rated proficiency is internal to the sociolinguistic questionnaire and could be interpreted as a confounding variable, the latter relation with knowledge of nouns suggests the relation between attitude and proficiency to be more robust.

In contrast, Israeli identity and reported Hebrew use emerged as the best predictors of verb knowledge. Crucially, while these findings support the reciprocal relation among identity, attitude, and linguistic performance, they cannot in themselves indicate the direction of the causal relation among them. They do show that the pro-societal

identity of a group affects societal language attitudes and usage and vice versa. However, pro- Ethiopian/Amharic measures have no effect on success in Hebrew, the societal language. Thus, for example, while the amount of reported Hebrew use at home correlated positively with the knowledge of Hebrew lexicon, the amount of reported Amharic use at home did not yield significant negative correlations. Once again, these findings could be explained by the limited variability in the use of Amharic by all children on the one hand and by the parents' support of Hebrew at home on the other. Conversely, a pro-Amharic attitude, despite the limited abilities in Amharic, is further related to the children's desire to use Hebrew at home, integrate into society at large, and perceive themselves as Israelis, while maintaining their ingroup identity. Such attitudes form the basis for the development of bicultural identity.

While pro-Israeli/Hebrew measures did not correlate with the attitude toward code-switching, pro-Ethiopian/Amharic measures correlated both with each other and with the attitude toward code-switching from Hebrew to Amharic and from Amharic to Hebrew. Despite the general pro-Israeli identity, children with a stronger Ethiopian identity and higher self-rating of Amharic proficiency reported bidirectional code-switching. As expected, a positive attitude toward code-switching (as a strategy of "psycholinguistic distinctiveness") was found among children who reported the use of the home language and a positive attitude toward it, while children with a negative attitude toward the home language and exhibiting a lower ingroup (Ethiopian) identity correlated with reports of less code-switching. In other words, a positive attitude toward code-switching is a feature of a more bicultural identity, which provides space for both languages employed by the community. Moreover, children who reported using more Amharic at home and who perceived Amharic more positively also reported more code-switching into Hebrew.

This unidirectionality of code-switching is a natural outcome, since the children's use of Amharic was very limited. Since code-switching is influenced by vocabulary size as well as social context [the Sociopragmatic Psycholinguistic processing model of bilingualism (Walters, 2005)], they were bound to switch into Hebrew, their dominant language when trying to use Amharic with bilinguals like their parents or siblings

who spoke both languages. Moreover, a positive self-image, exemplified by reports of more frequent home language use, or code-switching into their home language while using another one, had a significant impact on the identity of the children, yielding a more bicultural identity.

In conclusion, the children's lexicon was affected by many different factors, ranging from sociolinguistic factors to internal ones. While the Hebrew language and Israeli culture were dominant in the lives of children from Ethiopian backgrounds, there was still an effect of the home life during the preschool years, although a change can be seen among school-age children in other studies. While the children reported using Amharic at home, there was no evidence for their linguistic abilities in that language. Such reports are more of a measure of their empathy with the ingroup identity. Conversely, reporting the use of Hebrew at home conformed with their lexical abilities.

The major factor in lexical growth, however, is chronological age, that is, length of exposure. This finding also highlights the impact of schooling and the potential of intensive language intervention during preschool years as a way to narrow the gap between children from Amharic-speaking homes and their monolingual peers. There is no relation between measures of the home language and identity of the home and linguistic abilities in Hebrew, except for the degree of use of code-switching. This connection is only natural since it is plausible for Hebrew to be integrated when speaking Amharic in a bilingual home; on the other hand, there is only a very small probability that Amharic will be integrated into speech in a monolingual setting. The lack of a relation between measures of the home language and identity on the one hand and linguistic abilities in Hebrew on the other further suggests that preserving the ingroup identity does not jeopardize the integration into the societal language when this is supported both by the community and the schooling system. Nonetheless, linguistic abilities in Hebrew (as expressed in lexical richness) help consolidate an Israeli identity.

Finally, the similarity found between monolingual children from Amharic-speaking homes and sequential bilinguals (e.g., Russian-Hebrew) raises the possibility that while monolingual assessment measures are inadequate for this population, measures

that are geared toward bilingual populations might be preferable for assessing their linguistic ability.

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Appendix – List of items from the social and linguistic identity task using a Likert scale

I. Ethnic identity definition and attitudes

1. How much do you agree with this?
 - a. "I'm **Ethiopian**."
 - b. "I'm **Israeli**."
 - c. "I'm **Jewish**."
2.
 - a. How much do you like to be **Ethiopian**?
 - b. How much do you like to be **Israeli**?
 - c. How much do you like to be **Jewish**?
3. How much do you agree with this?
 - a. When I grow up, I want to be **Ethiopian**."
 - b. "When I grow up, I want to be **Israeli**."

II. Ethnolinguistic identity

4.
 - a. How much do you like people who speak **Amharic**?
 - b. How much do you like people who speak **Hebrew**?
5.
 - a. How much do you like to speak **Hebrew**?
 - b. How much do you like to speak **Amharic**?
6.
 - a. How do you feel when most of your friends at the gan/kindergarten speak **Hebrew**?
 - b. How would you feel if most of your friends spoke **Amharic**?
7.
 - a. How important is it to you to speak **Amharic**?
 - b. How important is it to you to speak **Hebrew**?

III. Interpersonal communication networks

8. What is the name of your best friend?
 - a. How much does he/she speak to you in **Amharic**?
 - b. How much does your best friend speak to you in **Hebrew**?
9. What is the name of your brother or sister who is closest to you?
 - a. How much does he/she speak to you in **Amharic**?
 - b. How much does he/she speak to you in **Hebrew**?
10.
 - a. How much does your mother speak to you in **Amharic**?
 - b. How much does your mother speak to you in **Hebrew**?

11. a. How much does your father speak to you in **Amharic**?
b. How much does your father speak to you in **Hebrew**?
12. a. How much does your grandmother speak to you in **Amharic**?
b. How much does your grandmother speak to you in **Hebrew**?

IV. Self-rated proficiency

How much do you agree with this:

13. a. I speak **Amharic** very well.
b. I speak **Hebrew** very well.
14. a. I understand **Amharic** very well.
b. I understand **Hebrew** very well.

V. Expressive situation-dependent proficiency and communication skills in Amharic/Hebrew

How easy/difficult is it for you to:

15. a. Ask someone for a toy in **Amharic**?
b. Ask someone for a toy in **Hebrew**?
16. a. Ask someone for a book from the top shelf in **Amharic**?
b. Ask someone for a book from the top shelf in **Hebrew**?
17. a. Count the children in your class in **Amharic**?
b. Count the children in your class in **Hebrew**?
18. a. Talk on the phone in **Amharic**?
b. Talk on the phone in **Hebrew**?
19. a. Explain how to play your favorite game in **Amharic**?
b. Explain how to play your favorite game in **Hebrew**?
20. a. Tell someone in **Amharic** about an argument/a fight you had with a friend?
b. Tell someone in **Hebrew** about an argument/a fight you had with a friend?
21. a. Talk about your family (parents, brothers or sisters) in **Amharic**?
b. Talk about your family (parents, brothers, or sisters) in **Hebrew**?
22. a. Tell someone in **Amharic** which interesting cartoon have you seen lately?
b. Tell someone in **Hebrew** which interesting cartoon have you seen lately?
23. a. Tell someone in **Amharic** what happened today at the kindergarten?
b. Tell someone in **Hebrew** what happened today at the kindergarten?
24. a. Tell someone about a dream you had in **Amharic**?

b. Tell someone about a dream you had in **Hebrew**?

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