Breaking the Barriers of a "Silenced Identity": Teacher Trainees' Attitudes towards Children's Book Written in Hebrew and Amharic

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Abstract

The current study investigated the attitudes of students in a teacher training college training regarding the bilingual presentation of children's literature -- in Hebrew and Amharic. A questionnaire on the importance of bilingual books was used with a group of students of Ethiopian descent (of the Beta Israel community) and a group of students who do not belong to this community, with the expectation that a substantial difference would be found between the attitudes of the two groups. The study population (156), students training to be literature teachers, was aware of the qualities that make "a good story". The main findings emphasize that participants have a substantial understanding of the significance of bilingual books, both in terms of its function in the curriculum and in building a cultural narrative in order to break out of the "silenced identity" and eliminate cultural visibility. Bilingual literature is a practical manifestation of the notion of multiculturalism and helps to create a society in which differences and the multiple voices are legitimized, so one should consider the emergence of bilingual children's literature to be a first indication that the process of change is underway.

Keywords: *List a few (3-5) key words here*

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Theoretical Background the Ethiopian Community in Israel

The community of Jews of Ethiopia is searching for the "right" place for it in the Israeli social fabric as regards its dimension of visibility or invisibility (Ben Ezer, 2010). On the one hand the group aspires to be visible and at the same time to be invisible. On the one hand it seeks to become an integral undifferentiated part of the society it has come into, and therefore also a process of an attempt to integrate into the society has been started by the immigrants, however on the other side it seeks to preserve its uniqueness. That is to say the group seeks to continue to maintain important aspects of its previous existence, from its social cultural past (Ben Ezer, 2010)

According to data retrieved from Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics, at the end of 2010, 119,700 residents were members of the Ethiopian community in Israel; of these, approximately 78,900 were born in Ethiopia and 40,800 were born in Israel to Ethiopian parents. In the academic year of 2009/10, 35,344 children of Ethiopian descent were enrolled in grades 1-12; of these students, 59% were Israeli born and the rest had been born in Ethiopia. In the same academic year, there were 2,201 students of the Ethiopian community studying in higher education institutes, while the total number of students enrolled in higher education programs was 286,000.Many studies (Mirsky, 2005,Resnick, 2010) documented the social and cultural lives of members of the Beta Israel community (Ben Ezer, 2007), as well as the social changes, the challenges, and the difficulties these immigrants encountered in trying to adapt to life in Israel's modern and individualistic society (Shabtai & Kassan, 2005). While the community's effort to integrate into Israeli society continues, there is a sense that the community has yet to find "its proper place" in the fabric of Israeli society, in terms of the community's cultural visibility or invisibility (Ben Ezer, 2010). The community aspires to be simultaneously visible and invisible: on the one hand, it aims to become an integral –and therefore indistinct-part of the host culture, to be treated equally, like any of the other members of society, i.e., to become invisible, while on the other hand, as these immigrants are being absorbed into the host culture, they wish to preserve their uniqueness, to continue practicing certain aspects of their previous lives, to retain parts of the community's social and cultural past (Ben Ezer, 2010).

Berry's theory of cultural matching (Barry, 2003) considers the social context of immigration to be an intercultural meeting ground: this encounter can either lead to a process of cultural preservation, whereby the immigrants wish to preserve their identity and suspend the processes of cultural adaptation, or it can lead to a process of cooperation, whereby the immigrant group seeks to interact with the host society. According to Barry (2006), in the latter process of interacting with the host society, four strategic patterns can emerge from the intercultural encounter: (a) integration, i.e., preservation of the culture of origin and acceptance of certain elements of the new culture; (b) separation, i.e., purposeful preservation of the culture of origin and suppression of the new culture; (c) assimilation, i.e., abandoning the culture of origin in favor of the new culture; (d) marginalization, i.e., abandoning the culture of origin without accepting the new culture. Following this approach, Mana & Mana (2007) and Mana, Or, & Mana (2004) studied the absorption of the Ethiopian community into the host society, focusing on the adaption to Israeli Jewish society. Based on their findings, these researchers referred to the identity of the Beta Israel community in Israel as comprised of the following types: those with an expanded identity, who consider immigration a personally and communally enriching experience that does not involve relinquishing the culture of origin; those who adopt an adversarial identity, as they consider the culture of origin to be better than the local culture and demand that their culture be recognized as a legitimate part of the existing social fabric; and those with a separatist identity, who detach from the local culture while simultaneously preserving the culture of origin. The Israeli concept of multiculturalism, which is still in its developing stages, stresses that a life worth living and the development of a personal identity are both based on cultural communities, whose rich traditions were formed over a period of many years (Nachtomy, 2003; Sagie, 2003). Hence, the emerging concept of multiculturalism in Israel, which matches that of Western multiculturalism, underscores the importance of cultural uniqueness and of cultural groups (Ben Rafael, 2008).

The Diverse Nature of Multiculturalism

An underlying assumption shared by most of the studies that examined the immigration processes of the Beta Israel community (the term favored by members of the Ethiopian community) was based on an ideological conviction, namely, that these immigrants wished to be integrated or even assimilated into Israel's mainstream society (Sever, 2001). In the first decades after the State of Israel was established, it was guided by a social and educational policy called "the gathering of the Diaspora" or, following the example of the policy of the U.S., "the melting pot" (Sever,2007). The goal of this policy was to eliminate the cultural visibility of the immigrant groups; in effect, however, the policy

resulted in a phenomenon of negative visibility, as immigrant cultures were derided and their members were subjected to years of discrimination (Resnick, 2010).

The desire of the Beta Israel community, which arrived in Israel in two separate waves of immigration, in 1984 and in 1991, was consistent with the policy of the host country, which encouraged covert assimilation alongside overt assimilation. Ever since the early days of Israel existence, the goal of covert assimilation was to distance Jews from Islamic countries from their cultural communities and integrate them into what was termed "Israeli culture", i.e., the dominant hegemonic culture, a variant of the culture of the Ashkenazi elite (Sever, 2001). Over time, this approach was substituted by a policy of overt assimilation, which was based on the view that particularistic and inferior cultures of minority groups should disappear (in contrast to the monistic approach which advocates for pluralism, i.e., the acceptance of many and varied cultural groups within a single sociopolitical entity. In recent years, the Ministry of Education, which controls educational policies and related activities in Israel, has announced that it is adopting a policy of multiculturalism and plans on implementing it throughout the educational system (Amendments to the Law Regarding Educational Goals, 2000 and henceforth).

Portera (2008) mentions several problems and limitations regarding the use of the term *multiculturalism*, especially in the field of education. According to Portera (2008) when the term *multiculturalism* is used by teachers and educators in their work with children, the term is perceived as something fashionable. Although teachers mean to introduce the idea of multiculturalism in their classrooms, in effect they end up celebrating an exotic culture. In addition, teachers often plan projects without thoroughly examining the educational value they convey. Thus, it appears that while they do have respect for other cultures, their traditional approach to teaching the subject remains unchanged and they are unable to examine, critique, or detach the discussion from their own personal attitudes. In light of Portera's critique (2008), two questions emerge: (a) the importance of bilingual texts of children's literature in the curriculum, especially since literature is recognized as a tool that contributes to the structuring of one's identity; (b) the effect that these bilingual texts have on the visibility of the Beta Israel community. In this context, it is important to bear in mind the view of Banks & McGee-Banks (2001), i.e., that the goal of an educational reform that promotes multiculturalism is to create a system-wide change, so that groups which vary in terms of gender, ethnicity, or culture will enjoy equal opportunities at school.

The Association between Language and Identity – The Bilingual Criterion

We all think we know what identity symbolizes; hence, we rely on identity even when it conveys the opposite of what we mean: 'Anyone who assumes a complex identity finds himself marginalised' (Ma'aluf, 2010, p.11) One's identity is comprised of numerous and varied affinities, different spheres that together make up the whole identity (Shaked, 2006).

Identity is a relatively accurate term, which should not lead to misconceptions. Is a careful analysis truly necessary to prove that no two people are or could be--identical? Affinity with a religious tradition, a nationality, or a combination of the two, belonging to an ethic or linguistic group, to a more or less extended family, to a profession or an institution, or to a particular social group -- these are all components of the system that constitutes one's identity (Ma'aluf, 2010). Of course, not all of these affinities are equally important, at least not at any given moment; however, no single component is completely insignificant.

Individuals have the option to express themselves using different voices and thus reveal different aspects of their personalities at different times and according to the situation they face; however, it is important to note that the term voice also bears social and political implications, which should not be overlooked. The quality of the voice can be an indicator of owning the right to speak out, and of the type of speech, whether contextual, public, or promotional speech (Boa, 1999). According to Bakhtin (1981), every utterance is a unique expression of a socio-linguistic interaction within a particular social context: every utterance is dialogic and therefore it is defined by past utterances and the manner in which those were received by others. The dialogue is between two voices which may represent different social classes, ideologies, eras, or genres. Consequently, the literary text in its bilingual presentation no longer represents only the single hegemonic voice, in this case, Hebrew; rather, the text creates a dialogue of voices, if only due to its graphic presentation of both languages on the pages of the book. The dual representation, i.e., the duplication of illustrations as well as textual content, functions as an objective correlative for the establishment of identity. Content conveyed through graphic representation, in a non-verbal process, becomes a clear and distinct body of knowledge for a reader unfamiliar with the other culture, since it can be immediately translatable into one's own language (Hebrew). The body of knowledge is important, since previously it had been based on a combination of theory and facts, but in the bilingual text it is acquired through basic learning

(Zamir, & Baratz, 2010).When dealing with issues related to processes of immigrant absorption, it is necessary to examine the relationship between a successful process, as perceived by the immigrant and by the host society, and the identity that is formed through the social dynamics in which the immigrant and the host society are involved. In Israel, society's approach is to assimilate the immigrant's native language (Sever, 2007). Sever reviews the reasons behind an assimilation process that includes annihilating the native language of the newcomers, while explaining the vital importance of allowing immigrants to preserve their native languages.

Following Grant (1997), Sever (2007) reviewed the reaction patterns of various societies towards the languages in their midst, whereby language was considered a marker of identity used by an endangered culture as a means of preserving its identity. Based on language-related findings, Grant distinguished between a homogenous society, a geographically concentrated lingual minority, a disparate lingual minority, a large lingual minority, and a lingual-fragmented society. According to this typology, the Ethiopian community in Israel would be classified as a dispread minority, i.e., a lingual minority that is not geographically concentrated and thus does not form a local majority anywhere within the mainstream society, in this case -- the Israeli hegemonic society. This type of minority is particularly vulnerable in terms of the preservation of its native language, since it must function within an environment in which the written and spoken language preserves the dominant language. Consequently, the minority language lacks the social support that it can gain when used by a geographically concentrated lingual minority.

Sever (2007) noted that a pluralistic policy acknowledges the importance of minority languages and indeed uses them for various purposes, among these as a teaching tool. Preserving the native language of the immigrant student is considered one of the responsibilities of a host society that implements a multicultural approach to the absorption and adaptation policies. Use of the immigrant's native language to teach the host language has been shown to improve the self-image and scholastic achievements of foreign language speakers (Garcia & Baker, 1995).

A silenced identity

The "dialog" is between two voices which may represent different social classes, ideologies, eras, or genres. Hence, the intersection of any two utterances imbues each with a unique presence and "voice". This is also true of the relationship created by the encounter that takes place in the bilingual literary text written in Hebrew and Amharic. In this bilingual text, one of the voices present has hitherto been silenced, due to its exclusion from the mainstreams social dialog (Mutzafi Heller, 2005). Does this presence empower the silenced voice to break through the barriers of silence? According to Mutzafi Heller (2005), it is important that these voices be heard, but how can the gap between the voice's presence in the text and its absence from the main social discussion be bridged, especially when subjected to a policy of silencing? In this particular case, there exists a bilingual children's literature in Hebrew and Amharic, but it has yet to be integrated into the education system. The consequence of this method of silencing is to emphasize the visibility of the Ethiopian community. The meaning of the word "silenced" here is twofold: in one instance, when a force from the outside imposes silence on the subject, or in sociological terms, the subject is rendered invisible; in the other instance, the subject chooses to remain silent, knowing full well that visibility means risking another instance of silencing.

The Goal of the Study

The educational system regards that textbooks are one of the most important instruments for communicating ideological message (Helinger & Brooks, 1991). So, this study aims to examine and compare two groups of students training to become literature teachers, one of students who are members of the Beta Israel community and the other of students who do not belong to this community, in terms of the participants' attitudes towards a children's story printed in a bilingual format in Hebrew and Amharic. The story describes the cultural life of the Ethiopian community in Israel.

This goal raises the following questions:

(a) How does the bilingual presentation help eliminate the visibility of the members of the Beta Israel community?
(b) What is the relationship between the reader's identity and the attitude the reader develops towards the issue of bilingual literary texts?

Methodology

This study uses both a qualitative and a quantitative methodology to explain the attitudes of students attending a teacher training college regarding the overall importance of bilingual literary texts in Hebrew and Amharic. The study included 156 participants from two different teacher training

colleges; their age range was from 25 to 55 years old (most of them are females). Of the study population, 87 participants were from the Beta Israel community, and the rest were Israelis who are not members of the Beta Israel community. All participants had completed at least the first year of training and hence had already taken a course on the narrative form, in which they learned to identify the characteristics of the short story and of "good literature; thus, they were equipped to analyze a text using the principles of literary criticism.

Instruments

In the quantitative approach, a survey was conducted among the participants of both groups, using a questionnaire of 44 items, on which participants were asked to indicate on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) the degree to which they agreed with the content of each item. In addition, the questionnaire included an open-ended question requesting that they add any comments they might have regarding the topic. This questionnaire was based on the Al-Hazza, & Bucher (2008), which examined the attitudes of teachers in the U.S. towards bilingual books in English and Arabic. The questionnaire was translated into Hebrew and adapted to refer to the particular bilingual story selected. At the end of the questionnaire, an open-ended question was added, asking participants to write a verbal comment as they saw fit. The qualitative data that were analyzed based on it. The adapted questionnaire was validated by two experts (trainers of teacher trainers) in the field of education and who had close knowledge of the Ethiopian community.

The story "The Tagao Springs" by Naomi Shmuel year?, which describes the cultural life of the Ethiopian community, was selected for the purposes of this study, since it also qualifies as "good literature" (De Malach, & Poise,2006), according to three criteria: the psychological criterion which assesses the story's implications in terms of the reader's personal experiences formed during the reading process; the moral criterion, which assesses the didactic implications of the story; and the aesthetic criterion, which is an objective assessment of the story as a work of art, based on its form.

Thus, in terms of the aesthetic-poetic criterion, the story uses familiar concepts that fit in with the child's world and knowledge. The didactic experience is not imposed, that is, neither the processes described nor the emotional world conveyed by the story represent an adult perspective; hence, they create a feeling of containment and safety. The story raises a moral question related to the Ethiopian culture, regarding the preservation of tradition and the role of tradition in a community that aspires to integrate into the host culture. In terms of the reading experience, the story is intended to address the psychological realm and has a didactic element; aimed to impart values such as social integration, free choice, and an understanding of its own needs.

Findings of the current study were analyzed using the grounded theory method, described by Glaser and Strauss (1967).In terms of the study's qualitative methodology, the goal was to understand the students' (trainees') attitudes towards the selected story, in order to enhance our understanding of the results of the quantitative analysis. This was enabled by the inclusion of a qualitative element in the questionnaire, namely, the open-ended question asking students to express their general impressions after reading the story. These impressions were analyzed according to themes and then grouped based on shared topics that were contextually related to the study questions (Shakedi, 2003).

Data Analysis

This phase included a quantitative and a qualitative analysis. The closed items on the questionnaire were statistically analyzed using the SPSS 18 software program. The statistical exploration included factor analysis and principal component analysis for factor extraction, using Varimax orthogonal rotation and direct Oblimin rotation. The descriptive statistical analyses included a dispersion test of background variables within the study population and a descriptive analysis of the items prior to the factor analysis. To compare means in the independent samples, independent samples t-tests were performed, as well as a one-way ANOVA. Reliability analysis of scale and the internal consistency among questionnaire items were measured using Cronbach's alpha. Analysis of the open-ended question revealed units of similarly-styled textures, creating categories based on the salience principle (Pritzker, 2000). Analysis was conducted in a cyclical manner (Guba & Lincoln, 1989), the statements was conducted in three stages: discovery, examination, conclusion drawing (Weber, 1985).In the first stage, comments were entered on the margins of the text regarding anything that caught the readers' attention and seemed relevant. In the second stage, statements were collected according to their relevance to a particular theme. In the third stage, a new array of meaningful factors was constructed, by establishing the existence of repeating linkages and relationships between units of meaning, identified via repetition of statements in the data, statements which converged to create a common perception with similar features, a perception which the participating trainees evidently shared.

Findings

In figure one is shown the attitude of student to children's book written bilingually, and how is help to eliminate the visibility of the members of the Beta Israel community.

Table 1. Exploratory factor analysis (number represents the item's number in the questionnaire) -- three statistical factors extracted

The Factor	Item on Questionnaire	Item No.	1	2	3
Personae in the story are characterized in a manner that alludes to the Beta Israel community	The characters are typical of the Ethiopian community	V14	.813		
	The story reveals emotions of the Ethiopian culture	V17	.807		
	The story reveals the mindset of Ethiopian culture	V16	.806		
	The story refers to historical information related to the Ethiopian community	V18	.685		
	The story reveals the life story of the Ethiopian community	V13	.668		
	Problems raised in the story are solved in the spirit of the Ethiopian culture	V21	.658		
	The description of the female persona reflects the female image in the Ethiopian culture	V23	.600		
	The idea presented in the story gives the reader insight into the Ethiopian culture	V24	.590		
	The author provides authentic insights into Ethiopian culture	V26	.581		
	The facts in the story are relayed precisely as they happened in real life	V19	.545		
	The narrator is a reliable representative of the Ethiopian community	V34	.518		
	The story increases one's esteem for the Ethiopian community	V29	.457		
The Story's Impact on Forming an Image of "the Other"	This story should be included in the curriculum	V40		.800	
	To what extent is the message conveyed in this story strong relative to other children's stories	V36		.769	
	As a teacher, I would read this story to my pupils	V38		.753	
	The message of this story is universal	V41		.712	
	Compared to a children's story I read recently, this one aroused my interest	V35		.696	
	The story helps eradicate prejudices	V39		.609	
	An idea conveyed in the story leads the reader to identify with the character in the story	V25		.492	
	The personae are described accurately	V20		.357	
	The characters in the story are not stereotypical	V27		.323	
The Role/Importance of the Story Within the Curriculum	Every teacher in Israel should be familiar with bilingual books	V44			.769
	It is important to publish bilingual books to increase (society's) understanding of minority groups	V42			.753
	It's important to encourage children to read bilingual books as a way of encouraging them to connect with others	V43			.731
	The story is written according to the principles of "a good story"	V15			.521
	Problems raised in the story are solved in the spirit of Israeli society	V22			.449
	The illustrations are free of stereotypes and generalizations	V33			.321
	Cronbach's alpha reliability		.887	.848	.629
	The number of items	V14	12	9	6

The exploratory factor analysis revealed that 27 of the 44 items on the questionnaire formed three main groups (Table 1). The remaining 17 items did not form a significant factor; hence they were

excluded from the statistical analyses. Following a careful examination of the contents of each group of items, the wording for the name of each factor was decided. The following three factors were identified.

1. **The "personae" in the story are characterized in a manner that alludes to the Beta Israel community**. This factor contained 12 items, with an internal reliability of 0.887 Cronbach's alpha, indicating a good internal consistency.
2. **The story's impact on forming an image of "the other"**. This factor included 9 items, with an internal reliability of 0.845 Cronbach's alpha, indicating a good internal consistency.
3. **The importance of the story within the curriculum**. This factor included 6 items, with an internal reliability of 0.629 Cronbach's alpha, indicating a moderate internal consistency. However, given the small number of items, this internal reliability may be considered acceptable.

Following the extraction of factors, these are subsequently referred to as the *dependent variables*.

Table 2. Comparing the three dependent variables in the two population groups (Ethiopian descent and others)

	Group	Prevalence	Mean	S.D.	t
Characterization of the Ethiopian Community	Non-Ethiopian	69	2.73	0.93	2.079*
	Ethiopian	87	2.46	0.67	
The Story's Impact on Forming an Image of "the Other"	Non-Ethiopian	69	3.00	0.99	2.875**
	Ethiopian	87	2.59	0.77	
The Importance of the Story Within the Curriculum	Non-Ethiopian	69	3.20	1.04	9.014***
	Ethiopian	87	2.04	0.54	

p <.05* p <.01** p <.001***

Table 2 presents a comparison between the mean scores of the two groups, the Ethiopian participants and the non-Ethiopian participants, for each of the dependent variables identified in the analysis. A group's mean score is the average of the scores indicated on the questionnaires for all of the items pertaining to a particular variable.

- Dividing the scale from 1-5 into 3 equal parts renders the following ranking: a score of 1 - 2.33 indicates weak agreement; a score of 2.34 – 3.67 indicates moderate agreement; and a score of 3.67 – 5 indicates strong agreement.
- A comparison of the standard deviations suggests that the scores of the non-Ethiopian group were heterogeneous relative to those of the Ethiopian group.
- The findings show that the mean scores of the non-Ethiopian group were significantly higher than the mean scores of the Ethiopian group for each of the three variables.
- Given that on the questionnaire, a higher score indicates strongerAgreement, the results indicate that the Ethiopian group expressed a weaker agreement on all three variables compared to the non-Ethiopian participants. The most significant difference between the groups was on the third variable regarding **the importance of the story within the curriculum**. In view of the items pertaining to this variable, the agreement expressed by the Ethiopian participants was much stronger than that expressed by their non- Ethiopian peers.

Table 3. Representative statements of comments that participants added made by participants in their comments

Population	Summary	Statements
Perceptions of Ethiopian Students	Supportive Attitude	"…An interesting story, it took me back to my cultural roots; a good story that ought to be taught at school…"(a BettaIisreali student) "…I was very happy to find this story, because it will surprise many who think we have no children's stories – good job…' I believe stories about the Ethiopian culture should be taught to other ethnic and cultural groups, to make them aware of the Ethiopian culture…" "It's high time that something related to our community be the focus… the story is a brilliant idea…"
	Critical Attitude	"…The small pronunciation mistakes, even the way the names are written, simply ruins the experience for the Amharic reader and lessens our respect for the story…" "…The story's nice, but there's room to add a lot more about the Ethiopian community…" "…For someone unfamiliar with the culture, this story would seem unrealistic…"
	Supporters draw conclusions	"…the book is very moving…every school should seek to teach it to its pupils…" "...there are many more interesting things about the Ethiopian culture… it's very interesting and enlightening to learn about them…" "This story could be about any culture, ethnicity, or era. If ot told the tale about an Arab child or a Russian child, the message would be the same…"
Perceptions of non-Ethiopian Students	Disinterested	"…I don't know much about the culture ot community of Ethiopians…" "The story is incredibly boring…"
	Apologetics	"…I don't know enough about the Ethiopian community to be able to provide an honest answer on any of the questions…" "…This was a bit difficult, since I am not familiar with the Ethiopian culture…"
	Literary Critiques	"...The story was very interesting because of its writing style and because it describes emotions…" "In my opinion, it's a really beautiful story…" "…At first the Amharic typography isn't recognizable and looks like an illustration taken from some ancient scroll…" "… Although I did not understand the story's message, I did understand the literary devices used by the author…" "…The story doesn't invite stereotypical notions; it tells a global story…"
	A Reticent Attitude	"…The story was presented to a mixed population, therefore asking about their traditions and customs seems out of place…" "In my opinion the author is expressing personal prejudices…" "I wouldn't tell this story to a kindergarten, even if I knew it was fictional, because it conveys a bad (negative message: a gentile persecuting a Jew…"…"(a BettaIisreali student) "The story doesn't necessarily have to represent the Ethiopian community; the Amharic could be replaced by a different language, and the story would still hold up…"

Comments made in response to the open-ended question can also be grouped according to populations: Ethiopian and non-Ethiopian. Statements by Ethiopian students in support of the story indicated a wish to familiarize the entire population with the Ethiopian culture: using their intimate knowledge of the community and its culture, they suggested ways to make the familiarization process more effective. Supporters who offered critiques and those who drew conclusions were also in favor of familiarizing the entire population with the Ethiopian culture; they understood the significant impact of this story, and their conclusions regarding the familiarization process were drawn mostly from the text.

Comments made by non-Ethiopian students can be grouped as follows: students with a reticent attitude understood the significance of the story and were critical nonetheless. Those who referred to the story's literary devices attended to the qualities of the text as a work of art, while ignoring the message and its significance. Students who conveyed an apologetic attitude were unable to evaluate the story, due to their lack of knowledge about the community and its culture. Finally, those who demonstrated a disinterested attitude were similarly unfamiliar with the community and its culture, but this lack of knowledge did not compromise their worldview in any way.

Discussion

To contribute an interpretation on the silencing phenomenon in the Beta Israel community, i.e., the subject of the study presented herein, requires that we relate also to the factors that provide the grounds for this phenomenon to occur, namely, a reality characterized by the absence or, certainly, the paucity of bilingual children's books in Hebrew and Amharic. We believe that this existing reality is at the root of all of the findings presented here, and it is this reality that drives the implications derived from such findings. The paucity of bilingual children's books is an accurate reflection of the cultural

reality, and the fact that these books are not part of the school curriculum is a direct outcome of a political or ideological policy, which contributes to visibility. According to the current study, visibility is the kernel from which the silencing phenomenon develops. It should be noted that some bilingual books in Hebrew and Amharic have been published under the auspices of the Ministry of Education. In the current context, when the need to imbue society with a multicultural ethos is gradually entering into public discussion and there is a growing awareness of the validity of diversity and multiplicity of voices, bilingual children's books may be a first overt sign that the process of change is indeed underway. The appearance of bilingual books is significant because literature, and particularly children's literature, has been shown to function as a socialization factor (see the Theoretical Introduction), and children's literature has been shown to play a significant role in shaping a self-awareness that emphasizes the idea of "multiculturalism" (Baratz & Zamir, 2011).

The possibility of a connection between a silencing policy and the shaping of a silenced identity is demonstrated in the various statements presented in the Results section of this article. These statements indicate that students in the process of training to become educators are aware that an educational process that exposes students to culturally-textured content can lead to a conscious change in learners' perceptions of the minority community's identity, as well as to a change in the definition of self-identity of the learners who are exposed to this topic.

Responses to the questionnaire items indicated that students belonging to the Beta Israel community saw the text related to the Ethiopian culture as a means for reinforcing readers' attitudes. This finding is in line with the findings of Al-Hazza and Bucher (2008), who examined the role of the bilingual story in English and Arabic. Moreover, students' verbal responses to the open-ended question and the findings derived from them reveal their perceived need to integrate stories similar to the one studied into the school curriculum. In this context, a salient difference was evident between the insights expressed by students of the Ethiopian group and those expressed by the non-Ethiopian group in relation to questions that probed emotions compared to questions that were knowledge based. It is clear that students of the Ethiopian community related in emotional terms to a textual pattern that is supposedly didactic in nature. This response intensifies the sense that for readers of Ethiopian descent, the story's inclusion in the curriculum serves as a tool for expressing their cultural identity, which in itself encompasses an intricate web of emotions. Hence, the manner in which readers of Ethiopian descent related to these books can be considered a means of unraveling these emotions, an experience that has the potential not only to strengthen and clarify their sense of identity but also to establish positive visibility, which is the fabric of cultural existence. This phenomenon indicates the community members' desire to reveal their cultural identity through the book, perceived as a cultural agent, and hence to see a shift in the multicultural policy pattern currently employed by the Ministry of Education, moving away from an assimilation model and towards the preservation of unique cultural elements, which are introduced into and form an integral part of the educational sphere. Including books that promote the cultural milieu of the Ethiopian community in the framework of didactic literature facilitates the dissolution of negative visibility, whereas literary separateness heightens it. The fact that members of the Ethiopian community wish to integrate "their" literature into the "general" literature demonstrates that they consider their cultural heritage important, on the one hand, and wish to integrate into the host society without emphasizing their visibility, on the other hand (Lev-Ari, & Laron, 2012). This desire embodies the will to break out of the silenced identity, but in a manner that does not create negative visibility.

Analysis of the responses to the questionnaire demonstrates a gap between the perceptions of Ethiopian and those of non-Ethiopian students. This gap strengthens the implicit desire of the community members to reveal their unique cultural narrative to society at large and integrate it within the overall social narrative, in a manner that preserves their uniqueness, which is based on the importance they attribute to their own narrative, while simultaneously legitimizing their connection to the general narrative and thus dissipate the negative visibility. The gap mentioned is related to the culturally-bound content that emerges through the story's plot and the historical content presented in the text. Students of the Ethiopian community who had intimate knowledge of the story's cultural background identified their own narrative in the text and mentioned that they had an emotional response to the subject. This process creates the need to burst out of the "silenced identity" and make the community's specific cultural knowledge part of the public domain. The theory presented by Portera (2008) regarding the implementation of a multicultural approach in the education system helps clarify how this need arises, in light of the issue of the immigrant's visibility. Dissolving the visibility can be considered from two extremes: at one end, it is possible that introducing the subject and learning about it can help the image of the other appear less foreign, while at the other end, which represents the view of many members of the Ethiopian community, if the subject is not discussed, this might be a sign that it simply does not require attention. These opposing perspectives can be discerned from the Ethiopian

students' desire to make their cultural knowledge accessible to the general public. Community members who infuse their unique story with a universal dimension reveal their wish to have their exclusive cultural narrative be appropriated by society at large, and thus diffuse the negative visibility.

In terms of the personal story, the responses of the Ethiopian students indicate a sense of communality and sharing. There is no denial or sense of alienation, although the story speaks to the first generation of immigrants rather than directly to theirs. Thus, the responses of the students belonging to the Beta Israel community were homogeneous compared to the responses of the peer group. This may be due to the fact that although the Ethiopian students might prefer not to be conspicuously visible, they do share a familiar community spirit.

The bilingual presentation in Hebrew and Amharic helps establish the culture of the Beta Israel community, regardless of whether the reader is a member of the community and has intimate knowledge of the culture or is encountering this body of knowledge for the first time. Children's literature in Hebrew or in Amharic, presented in either one or two languages, is perceived as a tool for forging reciprocal social relationships, which in turn help form a structural code for organizing social conceptions and, more importantly, for breaking the boundaries of social exclusion and giving voice to the silenced identity.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Given the desire/need/efforts to imbue Israeli society with a multicultural ethos, to create a society in which differences and the multiple voices are legitimized, we consider the emergence of bilingual children's literature to be a first indication that the process of change is underway. This is because literature, as a socializing medium, formulates self-consciousness, and bilingual literature is a practical manifestation of the notion of multiculturalism. Telling the story of the Beta Israel community helps both members of the community and native Israelis to accept the self and the other, accordingly, and understands the significance of the individual within the comprehensive social arena. A close examination of cultural differences can help develop sensitivity and openness towards the other who is affiliated with a culture other than one's own. In addition to the aesthetic pleasure derived from bilingual children's literature, a didactic goal is achieved. The topics of these stories, which are relevant to the community's past and present, are conveyed by means of the plot, in a tone suited to the universal world of the child. Reciprocal writing of the stories in Hebrew and Amharic helps legitimize the culture of the Beta Israel community for readers who are members of the community and hence are familiar with the culture, as well as for readers who are learning about the community for the first time. Bilingual children's literature, by virtue of its joining two languages, serves as a tool for establishing a relationship of social reciprocity. This relationship, in turn, contributes to the structuring of a cultural code that serves to organize social meaning and to establish the individuals' identity. This type of literature no longer represents a single (Hebrew) voice, namely, that of the hegemony.

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