**Absence of morphological case and gender marking in Contemporary Hasidic Yiddish worldwide**

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**Abstract**

This paper demonstrates that the language of the post-War generations of adult Haredi (i.e. strictly Orthodox), primarily Hasidic, speakers (18 to 87) of Yiddish in the major Hasidic centres worldwide lacks morphological case and gender. Elicited spoken and written data from native Haredi speakers of Yiddish from Israel and the United States, and limited additional evidence from Canada and Belgium reveals a complete absence of distinction between masculine, feminine, and neuter genders as well as between the nominative, accusative, and dative cases. While some speakers make use of a variety of morphological definite determiner and attributive adjective forms, their use is not determined by case or gender distinctions. These speakers have an invariable determiner pronounced as /dɛ/ or /di/, and the earlier case and gender suffixes on attributive adjectives have been reanalysed as a single attributive marker, /ɛ/. These findings are consistent with our previous work on the loss of case and gender in the Hasidic Yiddish of London's Stamford Hill, and support our proposal that the Yiddish spoken in (primarily Hasidic) Haredi communities can be considered a distinct variety of the language known as Contemporary Hasidic Yiddish.

**Keywords**

Yiddish, case, gender, inflectional morphology, language change

## 1. Introduction

The aim of this paper is to demonstrate that the post-War generations of Yiddish speakers in the main Hasidic communities worldwide (Israel, the New York area, Montreal, and Antwerp) have complete absence of morphological case and gender from their grammar. The paper follows on from our research into the present-day Yiddish of Hasidic speakers in London's Stamford Hill (Belk, Kahn & Szendrői 2020a), which found that this variety of Yiddish had completely lost morphological case and gender within two generations starting with speakers who acquired their language in the immediate post-War period. In this respect our findings resemble those of Krogh (2012, 2015, 2018), Assouline (2014), and Sadock and Masor (2018), who have conducted research on the morphological case and gender of Hasidic Yiddish speakers in New York and Israel. However, while these authors interpret their findings as evidence of case syncretism or 'extensive loss of gender and case morphology' (Krogh 2015: 383), our elicited spoken and written data point to a much more far-ranging phenomenon: the total loss of morphological case and gender and its complete absence from full noun phrases in the present-day language. As argued in our work on Stamford Hill Hasidic Yiddish (Belk, Kahn & Szendrői 2020a), this variety represents a significant and rapid change which has taken place since World War II, as Hasidic speakers and writers of Yiddish who came of age in the pre- and inter-War period have the same case and gender system as their non-Hasidic counterparts and roughly the same tripartite system as that found in Standard Yiddish (see Jacobs 2005: 166–8 for discussion of noun gender in Standard Yiddish and 172–5 for discussion of determiners and case)[1]. This system is exemplified in Table 1 below.

[1] The case and gender system outlined in Table 1 is subject to some limited variation in the traditional spoken dialects. For example, in some local varieties the Standard Yiddish distinction between the accusative and dative in feminine and definite neuter shown in Table 1 is not always strictly maintained (Weinreich 2007: 333–4). This has been observed in the language of Yiddish speakers who grew up in Eastern Europe before the Second World War, as documented in the *Language and Culture Atlas of Ashkenazic Jewry,*

| | NOM | ACC | DAT |
|---|---|---|---|
| Masculine | דער גוטער<br>*der guter*<br>'the good' | *dem*[2] *gutn* דעם גוטן | |
| Feminine | *di gute* די גוטע | | *der guter* דער גוטער |
| Neuter (indefinite) | *(a) gut* גוט (א)<br>'(a) good' | | |
| Neuter (definite) | *dos gute* דאס גוטע | | *dem gutn* דעם גוטן |
| Plural | *di gute* די גוטע | | |

Table 1: Nominal case and gender marking in Standard Yiddish (after Kahn 2017: 675–676)

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. In section 2 we provide a historical background of contemporary Hasidic Yiddish, including its relation to the most relevant pre-War dialects of the language. Section 3 outlines the present study, describing the participants and the design of the research tasks. Section 4 summarizes the findings of each task, while sectiion 5 provides discussion and analysis of them. Section 6 concludes.

an audio corpus made in the 1960s (see Wolf 1969: 129–39). Sometimes the accusative was used in contexts where Standard Yiddish required the dative, and sometimes the opposite pattern occurs. These variations seem to be more common with human than nonhuman nouns. Moreover, the Northeastern (Lithuanian) dialect region of Yiddish traditionally had only two genders, masculine and feminine, as opposed to three; see Jacobs (1990). Nevertheless, overall the case and gender system of spoken Eastern Yiddish before the Second World War is relatively similar to Standard Yiddish, especially as compared to Contemporary Hasidic Yiddish.

[2] The דעם *dem* form of the determiner can be contracted with many preceding prepositions, resulting in forms such as אויפֿן *oyfn* 'on.the', מיטן *mitn* 'with.the' and פֿאַרן *farn* 'before.the'.

## 2. Historical background

Hasidism emerged as a spiritual movement within Judaism in the late 18th century in an area corresponding to present-day Ukraine. Over the course of the 19th century, the movement proliferated and gained a large following among Eastern European Jews. Hasidic rebbes, or spiritual leaders, became the heads of dynasties which were generally named after the locations in which they were founded; well-known dynasties include Belz, Karlin, Lubavitch (also known as Chabad), Satmar, and Vizhnitz. Like other Eastern European Jews more broadly, adherents of the Hasidic movement were overwhelmingly speakers of Eastern Yiddish,[3] which can be divided into three chief dialects, called Northeastern, Mideastern, and Southeastern. Most of the Hasidic dynasties were located within the Mideastern and Southeastern Yiddish dialect regions (corresponding to present-day Poland, Hungary, Romania, and Ukraine), and hence their adherents mainly spoke Mideastern and Southeastern Yiddish. By contrast, Hasidism was less prevalent in the Northeastern Yiddish dialect regions (corresponding to present-day Lithuania, Latvia, and Belarus. Yiddish speakers in the Northeastern dialect area were more typically associated with a non-Hasidic Haredi variety of Jewish education and practice, and as such, the Yiddish term Litvish, meaning 'Lithuanian', has come to be commonly used with specific reference to non-Hasidic Haredi Jews, in addition to the more general geographical meaning. (Adherents of this type of non-Hasidic Haredi Judaism may also be referred to by the Yiddish term 'yeshivish' or are covered by the more generic term 'Haredi'; see Heilman and Skolnik 2007). However, some Hasidic dynasties (most prominently Chabad and Karlin) were based in the Northeastern dialect region, and hence adherents of those

[3] Eastern Yiddish can be contrasted with Western Yiddish, the variety of the language spoken in Western Europe (chiefly Germany, the Netherlands, and Switzerland). Use of Western Yiddish began to decline in the 18th century and it became largely moribund over the course of the subsequent two centuries. See Fleischer (2018) for an overview of Western Yiddish.

groups have traditionally spoken Northeastern Yiddish. Nevertheless, despite their Lithuanian geographical origin, such Hasidic speakers of Northeastern Yiddish may not identify themselves as Litvish because of the strong association between this term and non-Hasidic Haredi Judaism.

Until World War II, the Yiddish spoken by adherents of the Hasidic movement resembled that of non-Hasidic Jews with respect to its morphological composition, with Hasidic and non-Hasidic users of Yiddish employing the same tripartite gender and case system (with the exception of Northeastern Yiddish, which has only two noun genders; see Jacobs 1990), as well as with the Standard form of Yiddish based on the literary language (see Belk, Kahn & Szendrői 2020a for further discussion of case and gender in historical varieties). However, there were some instances of case syncretisms between accusative and dative in the spoken dialects, especially for non-human nouns (Wolf 1969), which could be seen as the starting point for later developments (see also Krogh 2012 for the same conclusion). The Holocaust and concomitant dispersal of the surviving Hasidic communities from their pre-War Eastern European centres led not only to a catastrophic decrease in the numbers of Hasidic Yiddish speakers, but also to a rapid realignment whereby survivors from different geographical locations and traditional Hasidic groups (as well as non-Hasidic Haredi, or strictly Orthodox, Jews) were brought together in new locations, chiefly Israel, Antwerp, the New York area, London's Stamford Hill, and Montreal. The Hasidic population of these new Yiddish-speaking Haredi centres was generally much larger than its non-Hasidic Haredi counterpart, and there was greater interaction between the two groups as they became increasingly united in contrast to the majority secular societies (see Heilman and Skolnik 2007). This situation led to substantial dialect mixing and, crucially, native Yiddish speakers were joined by an influx of L2 speakers who became part of these newly established primarily Hasidic communities, and over the subsequent several decades the language developed rapidly. In this paper we claim

that this unusual and rapid geographical and sociolinguistic transformation resulted in a complete loss of the pre-War morphological case and gender system, to the extent that contemporary speakers have a total absence of these morphological elements. Having demonstrated this to be the situation with respect to the Yiddish of London's Stamford Hill Hasidic community (see Belk, Kahn & Szendrői 2020a), in the present paper we evaluate the speech and writing of multi-generation Yiddish speakers in the other main Hasidic centres worldwide. We demonstrate that the same process has taken place in the language of these communities as well, so that it is now possible to speak of a global variety of Yiddish used by Haredi, and chiefly Hasidic, speakers which completely lacks morphological noun case and gender.[4] We call this variety of Yiddish 'Contemporary Hasidic Yiddish'.

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1 Participants

Our analysis of morphological case and gender in the contemporary Hasidic Yiddish of speakers between the ages of 18 and 87 (median: 28 years; one third of participants over 40) is based on interviews with 40 native Yiddish speakers who were born and raised in Haredi communities worldwide.[5] We worked with 13 Israeli participants (three female) between the ages of 20 and the 87. The Israeli participants grew up in communities such as Bnei Brak, Ashdod, and in and around Jerusalem. An additional 22 participants (nine female) between the ages of 18 and 72 are from the New York area (including a range of Haredi neighbourhoods in Brooklyn, as well as several Haredi communities in upstate New York). In addition, three

[4] Note that the pronominal system of contemporary Hasidic speakers of Yiddish has some case and gender distinctions, like English does, though the pronominal paradigm is simplified compared to pre-War and Standard varieties of the language; see Belk, Kahn, Szendrői & Yampolskaya (under review).

[5] The age distribution of our participants is provided in Chart A1 in the Appendix.

participants (two female) are from the Montreal area and are between the ages of 18 and the early 40s and two participants (0 female) are from Antwerp between the ages of 20 and 30.[6]

Our participants do not differentiate varieties of Yiddish based on the historical dialects (e.g. Northeastern, Mideastern or Southeastern) and rarely do so in any geographical terms (e.g. Polish, Hungarian, Russian, Lithuanian, American, Israeli). We therefore do not do so here. Rather, most speakers identify as speaking Hasidic Yiddish, and often differentiate between those who speak 'vos' (i.e. with a vowel profile most closely matching that of the traditional Northeastern dialect and who therefore pronounce the word וואס 'what' as [vɔs]) and those who speak 'vus' (i.e. with a vowel profile most closely matching that of traditional Mideastern and Southeastern dialects and who therefore pronounce the word וואס 'what' as [vʊs]). Those who speak 'vos' include speakers from Chabad, speakers of a dialect known as Yerushalmer or Jerusalem Yiddish, as well as those non-Hasidic Haredi speakers who refer to themselves as 'Litvish' Yiddish speakers.[7] Those who speak 'vus' comprise most other Hasidic affiliations,

[6] Given these sample sizes, the Montreal and Antwerp data should be viewed as some indication that the changes we describe are generalized, but more data would be necessary to get a more reliable picture. We are in the process of collecting further data from communities in Montreal and Antwerp.

[7] Note that Jerusalem Yiddish is often considered a separate variety; it is historically Northeastern Yiddish but has been developing independently in Palestine/Israel since the Ottoman period (Assouline 2017). Not all Yiddish speakers who grow up in Jerusalem speak Jerusalem Yiddish. There is in fact disagreement about who should be considered a Jerusalem Yiddish speaker. While the first Jerusalem Yiddish speakers were non-Hasidic Haredim, there has been a continuous community of Hasidic Jerusalem Yiddish speakers since well before World War II. Assouline (2010) includes only the non-Hasidic Haredi community in her discussion of Jerusalem Yiddish. However, many of our participants consider the Hasidic (sub-)communities with the particular cultural and linguistic characteristics of the Yerushalmer community as speakers of the dialect. We discuss Jerusalem Yiddish alongside other traditionally Northeastern dialects in more detail in section 5.

including Belz, Dushinsky, Karlin, Pupa, Satmar, Skver, Tosh, Tsanz, Vizhnitz, Vizhnits-Monsey and so-called 'klal Hasidish', i.e. non-specific/general Hasidic. It is important to note also that while some Hasidic sects are associated with one pronunciation or the other (e.g. Satmar and Belz are associated with 'vus' while Chabad and Karlin are associated with 'vos'), individual speakers inside those communities might differ. Our sample includes 26 speakers of 'vus' (12 female), 10 speakers of 'vos' (2 female), and four who speak a 'mixed' phonological variety (usually one where וואס 'what' is pronounced [vʊs] but e.g. דריי 'three' is pronounced [draɪ] rather than [draː]). The mixed speakers often attributed this fact to their being exposed to both 'vos' and 'vus' during their formative years, whether in the family, in educational institutions, or in the wider community. Five of the 'vos' speakers are from the New York area and five from Israel.

Our interviews with participants reveal that there is significant mobility between geographical communities of speakers and even between Haredi sects. For fewer than half of our participants, both of their parents grew up in the same location (e.g. Israel, the New York area, etc.) as the participant. In most cases, one or more parents grew up in a different geographical location. The participants' grandparents come from a much wider variety of locations, including Romania, Hungary, Switzerland, Poland, the UK, and Israel. Most of the participants come from multi-generational Yiddish-speaking backgrounds, but a small number are the first generation (fewer than five speakers) or second generation of speakers (fewer than 10 speakers), with their parents or grandparents having acquired the language as L2 speakers. Likewise, most of the participants come from multi-generational Hasidic backgrounds, but in some cases one or more parents or grandparents came from a non-Hasidic Haredi background and in a relatively large minority of cases the Hasidic affiliation of either the participant or the participant's family changed over the years (for instance, as a result of marriage or changes in the preferences of the head of the family unit). Interview data indicate that there is much less

mobility between Chabad and other Hasidic communities than between non-Chabad Hasidic communities. This may be due at least in part to the somewhat different orientation of Chabad, which places a great emphasis on outreach activities among non-observant Jews and therefore has considerable involvement in secular society, from most other Hasidic groups, which tend to interact much less with non-observant Jews (see Wodziński 2018, especially 214–17). Similarly, there is relatively little mobility between non-Hasidic Haredi and Hasidic communities, due to the traditional religious and historical differences between these groups, and because the former (like Chabad) generally have more interaction with secular and non-Jewish society (Heilman and Skolnik 2007: 349).

All of our participants were raised in Yiddish-speaking homes and were largely educated in Yiddish, particularly in the early years. For teenagers, there is a gender distinction in schooling whereby to a larger extent than boys, girls receive some degree of instruction in secular subjects in a co-territorial language. The Israeli participants received secular instruction in Hebrew,[8] with the New York and Montreal participants receiving it in English, and the Antwerp participants receiving it in Flemish-Dutch. In addition, the Montreal participants received some instruction in French as a Second Language, and typically reported being much less comfortable using French than English. Instruction for religious subjects was typically received in Yiddish for both genders. Boys, by contrast, attend *yeshivas,* or Talmudic academies, following a curriculum focused on the classical religious Jewish texts with an emphasis on the Babylonian Talmud, composed largely in Aramaic, and its commentaries, composed largely in Hebrew. However, the language of instruction and discussion in the *yeshivas* is typically Yiddish with increasing use of *loshn koydesh* (the traditional Yiddish term for pre-modern Hebrew) in the later years. Many of the participants use Yiddish on a regular

[8] In some communities, for instance Belz in Israel, secular subjects are increasingly also taught in Yiddish, even for girls, but the textbooks are more commonly in Modern Hebrew.

basis in their present-day life, including with their spouse, children, and friends. Others, by contrast, employ it only on occasion (e.g. when talking with one or both of their parents). Some speakers also employ English, Modern Hebrew, and/or French (depending on the location) on a regular basis due to employment outside of the community. All participants are comfortable reading and writing in Yiddish, though not all of them regularly employ the language in these ways.

### 3.2 Description of tasks

Our examination of the status of morphological case and gender in Contemporary Hasidic Yiddish is based on elicited spoken and written data. The tasks used to elicit the data are described below.[9]

Task 1 is a sequence of open biographical questions asked in Yiddish about the participant's cultural and linguistic background including Hasidic affiliation, family, schooling, attitudes towards Yiddish, and use of Yiddish in everyday contexts. This task allowed the researchers to gather a corpus of free speech including use of case and gender.

Task 2 is an online translation task comprising a short text provided in both English and Hebrew and controlled for case, gender, definiteness, animacy, and the presence of attributive adjectives. Participants could choose the version they are most comfortable with and were asked to read the text quietly sentence-by-sentence and then translate each sentence into

[9] Published data, as utilized in our previous study of case and gender in Stamford Hill Hasidic Yiddish (Belk, Kahn & Szendrői 2020a), have not been used for the present paper because many of the Hasidic Yiddish publications in widespread circulation in Israel, Montreal, and Antwerp are published in New York, and these have already been extensively analyzed by Krogh (2015), who also found that there is 'extensive loss of gender and case distinctions' (Krogh 2015: 383) in New York-based Hasidic publications but does not provide a detailed quantitative picture.

Yiddish out loud. The task allowed the researchers to record the participants' phonological realization of determiners and adjectival endings, which in turn provided us with the ability to assess their morphological case and gender in a controlled narrative context as opposed to the free speech of Task 1.

Task 3 is an image-based writing task whereby participants were shown 33 pictures relating to eight singular and three plural nouns in each of the three genders. Some of the nouns were taken from the Swadesh list (Swadesh 1971: 283), while the remainder were chosen because they are high-frequency, highly imageable, and reflect a mix of the Germanic, Semitic (in this case, Hebrew rather than Aramaic), and Slavonic lexical components of Yiddish. The inclusion of vocabulary from the Hebrew component of the language is particularly important for the Israeli component of our study because Israeli Yiddish speakers are generally bilingual in Hebrew, which has morphological noun gender. As such, we wanted to be able to determine whether our participants had more of a sense of the gender of nouns deriving from the Semitic component than for other Yiddish nouns, due to their familiarity with gender in Modern Hebrew.[10] Each image was accompanied by a ד, the first letter of all forms of the Yiddish definite article and representing /d/, followed by a blank line. Participants were asked to fill in the blank line by completing the definite article and writing in the word for the image. The task was designed to prompt the participant to provide the 'dictionary' (i.e. nominative) form of the definite article along with each noun, allowing the researchers to analyse their gender morphology separate from considerations of case and number.

[10] This point has been examined in more depth in our paper on the Semitic component of contemporary Hasidic Yiddish; see Belk, Kahn & Szendrői (2020b). In that study we found no correlation between a noun's morphological gender in Modern Hebrew or *loshn koydesh* and the Yiddish definite determiner forms speakers with that noun.

Task 4 is a dictation task in which carrier sentences containing the same 33 nouns as in Task 3 are read out to the participant in Yiddish by a speaker of Contemporary Hasidic Yiddish, so using the spoken *de -e* pattern throughout. The nouns appear in each of the three pre-War and Standard Yiddish case environments, preceded by a definite article and accompanied by an attributive adjective. Participants are asked to "write down the sentences that they hear", with no further instruction given on the form of the definite article or morphological ending on the adjective. This task allows the researchers to ascertain whether an participant varies the form of the definite article according to the noun phrase's role in the sentence (i.e. case morphology). Comparison with the answers provided in Task 3 allows for further insight into the consistency of gender morphology. The task was administered in a Latin square design so as not to overburden the participants: each noun was presented to some participants but each participant saw a third of the nouns (equally distributed for gender) from Task 3.

Task 5 is a copy-editing task whereby participants were presented with a paragraph written in Yiddish. The text was selected from a Hasidic Yiddish newspaper publication but it was adjusted to include a balanced number of nouns in the three Standard cases and genders, as well as forms that do not conform to Standard Yiddish.[11] In addition, distractor errors in the form of potential typographical errors and phonological spelling were included, such as שיל for שול *shil*/*shul* 'synagogue'. The participant was told that the article was taken from a Stamford Hill newspaper, and reflected Yiddish usage there. The participant's task was to find any mistakes in the text or point out anything they would say or write differently. The point of this task was to investigate our participants' sensitivity to different, sometimes inconsistent, case or gender morphology.

[11] The text reflects written Hasidic Yiddish as found in the *Tribune*. Further details of case and gender marking in this publication are discussed in Belk, Kahn & Szendrői 2020a.

Task 6 is a judgment task, whereby participants are shown groups of four or five sentences, with each sentence using a noun chosen from a gender-balanced subset of the 33 nouns used in Tasks 3 and 4. Each group of sentences involved the tested noun in either subject, object, or P-object positions. The group of sentences were minimal sets, varying in their use of the four different possible definite articles (five articles where the contracted preposition + determiner form, e.g. מיטן *mitn* from מיט דעם *mit dem* 'with the' is available). For each sentence, participants were asked to indicate which version(s) they find acceptable, find unacceptable, or are unsure about. In a language with morphological case or gender marking, participants would be expected to accept one correct form of the definite article and reject the rest, but in a language without morphological case or gender, more variation or uncertainty would be expected. This task therefore gives a direct insight into participants' knowledge of and attitudes towards morphological case and gender. Comparison with the answers provided in Tasks 3 and 4 allows for further analysis of participants' strategies in selecting determiner and adjective forms.

The participants were presented with each of the tasks in the order listed above. Arranging the tasks in this order allowed us to begin with the most open task and to end with the forced-choice one, in order to avoid influencing participants' answers as much as possible. In addition to the completion of the tasks, the interviews also included periods of metalinguistic and sociolinguistic discussion, which serve to supplement our analysis of the data collected.

## 4. Findings

In what follows we report the results of the tasks, taking each in turn, starting with the two oral tasks and continuing with the four written tasks.

### 4.1 Task 1: Free speech

In Task 1 (free speech), the overwhelming majority of the 40 participants who completed the task consistently employed a single definite article. For most speakers from Chabad backgrounds and for those who identify themselves as speaking 'Litvish' (i.e. Lithuanian non-Hasidic Haredi) or 'Yerushalmer', i.e. Jerusalem, Yiddish (all of which communities traditionally spoke a Northeastern variety of the language), this form was [di] but all other speakers (the majority of our participants) used the novel form [dɛ] or [də]. The novel form [dɛ] (and its optional reduced variant [də]) has also been documented as the only definite article employed by Stamford Hill Hasidic Yiddish speakers (see Belk, Kahn & Szendrői 2020a). Along with the definite article /dɛ/ or /di/, almost all participants employ a single form of attributive adjectives, marked by the suffix [-ɛ] or the reduced variant [-ə]. (Mideastern Yiddish and some geographical communities of Contemporary Hasidic Yiddish have unstressed vowel reduction e.g. צוריק *tsurik* [tsərik], זיך *zikh* [zəkh]). This suffix was the marker for feminine nominative and accusative attributive adjectives in pre-War and Standard varieties of Yiddish, but has been reanalyzed as an attributive marker in Contemporary Hasidic Yiddish (see Belk, Kahn & Szendrői 2020a). Like the definite article, this attributive marker is attested in the speech of participants from all the communities under investigation. Thus, the Contemporary Hasidic Yiddish definite article and adjective paradigm is as shown in Table 2. This applies to all nouns, both singular and plural, regardless of their gender and case in pre-War and Standard Yiddish.

| Definite article | Attributive adjective ending |
|---|---|
| [di]/[dɛ]/[də] | [-ɛ]/[-ə]<br>(e.g. [*gutɛ*]) |

Table 2: Definite article and attributive adjective ending in spoken Contemporary Hasidic Yiddish

### 4.2 Task 2: Oral translation

The results of Task 2 differ somewhat from those of Task 1. While in Task 1 participants very rarely use forms other than ע-... די *di* …-*e*, a minority of speakers make use of other forms when translating a story into Yiddish during Task 2. As Table 3 illustrates, around 70% of the 37 participants who completed this task use a single invariant form of the determiner in Task 2, or use an invariant form for all but a small handful of exceptions. Fewer than 10% (a total of three speakers) use forms other than ע-.. די *di* …-*e* regularly throughout their translation. The remaining approximately 20% of speakers tend to use an invariant form throughout, but use other forms with some regularity. These patterns hold of all geographical communities. These results are summarized in Table 3.

| | **Israel N=12** | **New York N=20** | **Antwerp N=2** | **Montreal N=3** | **Total N=37** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Invariant form** | 58.3% | 75% | 100% | 66.7% | 70.3% |
| **Intermediate** | 33.3% | 15% | 0% | 33.3% | 21.6% |
| **Variable forms** | 8.3% | 10% | 0% | 0% | 8.1% |

Table 3 Proportion of participants providing invariant, variable, and intermediately variable forms in Task 2

Age, gender and geographical location did not seem to be good predictors of an participant's behaviour in Task 2.[12] Speakers using invariant forms ranged in age from 18 to over 80, came from all communities represented in our sample, and were equally represented

[12] Note, however, that our sample for this task did not include any female speakers of 'Litvish', Chabad, or Jerusalem Yiddish over the age of 45, so the conclusions we can draw about this subset of speakers are limited.

in each gender. Similarly, speakers using a variety of forms ranged from around 30 to their mid-70s and were represented in three of the four communities in our sample, as well as each gender. Speakers from traditionally Northeastern Yiddish-speaking communities did not differ in their behaviour from other speakers. Rather, the greatest predictor of use of a variety of definite determiner forms was active engagement with and interest in the Yiddish language as adults. This interest took a number of forms: involvement with secular Yiddish-speaking organizations such as theatres and Yiddish teaching, study of aspects of the grammar of the language (e.g. etymology), and regular consumption of Yiddish-language written media. This type of speaker can be contrasted with those who reported using Yiddish as their vernacular but not having a particular interest in it from a linguistic or literary perspective.

However, none of the speakers in our sample exhibited Standard-like case or gender morphology, or patterns of morphology similar to pre-War varieties of Yiddish. Even those speakers who used the fewest ע-... די *di* …*-e* forms (and therefore the most variant forms) are sometimes inconsistent in the gender they assign to a given noun, or make use of mixed agreement patterns. Furthermore, although the three speakers who used the largest number of variant forms were all from traditionally Northeastern-speaking communities (one is 'Litvish', one is Chabad, and one speaks Jerusalem Yiddish), each made use of adjectival forms with a null ending. Such forms are associated with the neuter gender (traditionally only in indefinite neuter noun phrases) and are therefore unexpected in speakers of Northeastern Yiddish, which traditionally had only masculine and feminine grammatical genders.

The variant forms used included set phrases such as אין א קליין שטעטל *in a kleyn shtetl* 'in a small shtetl' or אין דער היים *in der heym* 'at home' and contracted prepositional forms such as נאכן רייכן וועטשערע *nokhn raykhn vetshere* 'after the abundant dinner' and נאכן שבתדיגע סעודה *nokhn shabesdike sude* 'after the Sabbath feast'. The latter was often used also with nouns that are feminine in Standard Yiddish. Sometimes the semantic gender of a noun denoting a human

male was reflected, as in דער זון *der zun* 'the son' or דער מאן און די פרוי *der man un di froy* 'the man and the wife'. In some cases, the masculine dative form of the article was used, as in בעטן פון דעם ארעמע מענטש *betn fun dem oreme mentsh* 'to ask the poor man', נעבן דעם אויוון *nebn dem oyvn* 'next to the oven', and אויף דעם שוואַרצן היטל *oyf dem shvartsn hitl* 'at the black hat'. As above, however, this form is also found with Standard Yiddish feminine nouns, as in, for instance, צו דעם אלטן פרוי *tsu dem altn froy* 'to the old woman'.

As we demonstrate below, use of variant forms in Task 2 did not correlate with Standard-like performance in the other tasks. Rather, we analyse these findings as resulting from an association between the use of variant forms and a more formal, story-telling register. This idea is exemplified by the fact that many participants who used an invariant form in the rest of their translation nonetheless translated the scene-setting phrase 'in a small village' (akin to 'once upon a time' in English) as אין א קליין דערפל *in a kleyn derfl*, which lacks the attributive adjective marker and is what would be expected in Standard Yiddish and many pre-War varieties. This analysis explains why participants who used a variety of forms relatively often in Task 2 used them much less in the free speech of Task 1. It also explains why they are inconsistent in gender assignment for particular nouns, both within Task 1 and across other tasks: awareness of the existence of forms other than ע-... די *di ...-e* does not necessarily correspond to an awareness of their use as case and/or gender markers.[13]

Taken together, the results of Task 1 and Task 2 indicate an absence of true case or gender morphology on full nominals from the spoken language of our participants. The definite determiner appears almost exclusively as the novel form /dɛ/ (or /di/ for 'vos' speakers), while

[13] We see a parallel in this respect with use of English *whom* vs. *who*, a well-known example of a grammatical virus (see e.g. Schneider 1992, Lasnik and Sobin 2000, Boyland 2001). Indeed, Schepps (2010) demonstrates that speakers who place greater value on speaking 'correctly' are more likely to hypercorrect *who* to *whom* in prescriptively incorrect contexts.

attributive endings are uniformly marked with the attributive marker /-ɛ/. Some fossilized forms reflecting earlier case and gender morphology persist in the language, but they are not used consistently or productively in everyday speech and may represent a more formal, story-telling register. Speakers who take an active interest in the Yiddish language as adults were more likely to use the story-telling register involving variable gender and case forms.

### 4.3 Task 3: Written picture naming

In Task 3, which required participants to provide the citation form of a noun with the definite article in response to a picture of that noun, responses from all 38 participants who completed this task matched Standard Yiddish gender assignment for masculine and feminine nouns 45.8% of the time. Given that the large majority of participants did not use דאס *dos* at all, if they were to randomly use דער *der* and די *di* across all nouns we would expect their performance to be Standard-like 50% of the time. Thus, overall performance on Task 3 was roughly at chance, suggesting that participants do not use different forms of the definite determiner as markers of morphological gender. Table 4 summarizes the results of Task 3 across all participants, and demonstrates that the rate of usage of particular definite article forms does not correspond to Standard Yiddish morphological gender. Rather, a general pattern, irrespective of the noun's gender in Standard Yiddish, is that speakers use דאס *dos* or דעם *dem* very infrequently; they use innovative forms such as דע *de* or ד׳ *d'* about 10% of the time; and that they overuse די *di* and underuse דער *der*.

| N=38 | Standard Masculine | Standard Feminine | Standard Neuter | Standard Plural |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **דער *der*** | 17.2% | 13.2% | 14.8% | 0% |
| **די *di*** | 65.7% | 74.2% | 66.5% | 93.3% |
| **דאס *dos*** | 2.9% | 1.5% | 6.2% | 0% |
| **דעם *dem*** | 2.3% | 0.5% | 1.9% | 0% |
| **דע, ד׳, ד *de, d', d*** | 11.3% | 10.4% | 9.7% | 6.7% |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Other**[14] | 0.6% | 0.2% | 0.8% | 0% |
| **TOTAL** | =100% | =100% | =100% | =100% |

Table 4 Distribution of definite determiner forms for nouns in each of the three Standard Yiddish genders, and plurals in Task 3[15]

| **N=38** | **Standard Masculine** | | **Standard Feminine** | | **Standard Neuter** | | **Plural** | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Men** | **Women** | **Men** | **Women** | **Men** | **Women** | **Men** | **Women** |
| **דער *der*** | 24.2% | 5.5% | 16.5% | 7.8% | 19.9% | 6.3% | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| **די *di*** | 61.6% | 72.4% | 74.7% | 73.4% | 65.8% | 67.7% | 100% | 77.8% |
| **דאס *dos*** | 3.7% | 1.7% | 0.8% | 2.6% | 5.6% | 7.3% | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| **דעם *dem*** | 3.4% | 0.6% | 0.8% | 0.0% | 1.9% | 2.1% | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| **דע, ד', ד *de, d', d*** | 6.7% | 18.8% | 6.8% | 16.2% | 6.2% | 15.6% | 0.0% | 22.2% |
| **Other**[16] | 0.3% | 1.1% | 0.4% | 0.0% | 0.6% | 1.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| **TOTAL** | =100% | =100% | =100% | =100% | =100% | =100% | =100% | =100% |

Table 5 Breakdown of the distribution of definite determiner forms used for nouns in each of the three Standard Yiddish genders and plurals in Task 3 for speaker gender

Some interesting patterns emerge if we look at the breakdown of the results for speaker gender, as given in Table 5. Here we see that women generally use דער *der* less than men.[17] Women also use more innovative forms compared to men. One way to explain this pattern is that women have a preference to represent the invariable spoken article with a form in writing that is phonologically most faithful to the spoken form, to the detriment of attempting to use the variety of forms available in pre-War and Standard Yiddish. At least some men show the opposite tendency: they prefer to use not only די *di* but also דער *der* and, to a lesser extent, דאס *dos* and דעם *dem* and they make use of innovative forms somewhat less, and therefore are less

[14] Other forms include indefinite determiners and demonstratives, neither of which indicate grammatical gender.

[15] Here and in the remainder of this article, forms corresponding to Standard Yiddish are highlighted.

[16] Other forms include indefinite determiners and demonstratives, neither of which indicate grammatical gender.

[17] A two-tailed *t*-test showed that the difference between men and women in the proportion of דער *der* responses approached statistical significance ($t$= -1.91, $p$=.06).

faithful to the spoken pronunciation.

The breakdown of the data for the different locations revealed less pronounced differences. A table is provided for the interested reader in the Appendix. The only small difference was that New York speakers in general disprefer innovative forms, and tend to use די *di* instead. This would point in the direction that Israeli speakers are more innovative in their written usage compared to New Yorkers.

Looking at individual participants, two patterns of response emerged: the first we call the 'homogeneous pattern' and the second one the 'mixed pattern'. Participants with the homogeneous pattern did not attempt to use the three article forms דער *der*, די *di*, or דאס *dos*. Rather, they do not differentiate the form of the definite determiner for any noun in citation form. The choice of definite determiner form appears to be phonological: participants try to match the phonological shape of the spoken /dɛ/ or /di/ to a familiar written form. In Task 3, 50% of participants fit the homogeneous pattern, with most almost all of those using די *di* as their preferred written definite determiner. This roughly patterns with the results of Task 2, where approximately two thirds of participants used an invariant form of the determiner in an oral translation. (Not surprisingly, given the breakdown of results for speaker gender provided above, most women fall in the 'homogeneous' pattern. Also, again, in line with the breakdown of results above for location, no New York speaker uses an innovative form of the article as the single form they use, while several Israeli speakers do.) These results are summarized in Table 6. Participants' codes in this table and throughout the paper follow the following convention. The first letter refers to the speaker's gender F=female, M=male; the second letter refers to the speaker's location I=Israel, N=New York area, M= Montreal area, A= Antwerp; the following digits identify the speaker uniquely in their gender-location group. So, for instance FI1 refers to N$^{o}$1 Israeli Female Speaker. Additional relevant information may be provided in a subscript. In Table 6, the subscript identifies the relevant forms of the article the

speaker used in Task 3. Those participants who gave a variety of forms in Task 2 more than a handful of times are underlined.

| N=38 | Closer to Standard | Homogeneous strategy | Guess pattern | Further from Standard |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Israel** | | | | |
| Female | | FI1$_{d}$<br>FI3$_{di}$ | FI2 | |
| **Male** | MI1<br>MI8 | MI7$_{d'}$<br>MI5$_{di}$<br>MI9$_{di}$<br>MI3$_{di}$ | MI4<br>MI6 | |
| **New York** | | | | |
| Female | FN6 | FN1$_{di}$<br>FN2$_{di}$<br>FN4$_{di}$<br>FN7$_{di}$ | FN9 | FN3$_{di, d}$<br>FN5$_{di, de}$<br>FN8$_{di, d, dos, der}$ |
| Male | MN5<br>MN6<br>MN7<br>MN8 | MN1$_{di}$<br>MN12$_{di}$<br>MN10$_{di}$<br>MN13$_{di}$<br>MN2$_{di}$ | MN3,<br>MN4, | MN9$_{di, d, de}$<br>MN11$_{di, der, de}$ |
| **Antwerp** | | | | |
| Female | | | | |
| Male | | MA2$_{der}$ | MA1 | |
| **Montreal** | | | | |
| Female | | FM1$_{di}$ | FM2 | |
| Male | MM1 | | | |

Table 6 Patterns of responses broken down for speaker gender and location for Task 3

Participants with the mixed pattern can be subdivided into three groups: those furthest from pre-War and Standard varieties, those operating roughly at chance, and those closest to pre-War and Standard varieties. Participants whose responses were least Standard-like made use of novel determiner forms like דע *de* and ד *d*. Those operating roughly at chance used a mix of דער *der* and די *di* forms alongside a smaller number of דאס *dos* and even דעם *dem* forms, but

often favoured one form and used others more sparingly.[18] Those whose responses were most Standard-like used a variety of forms in more equal proportion, and used them in Standard-like contexts more often than would be expected at chance.

No participants provided a full set of responses that would be expected in pre-War or Standard varieties of Yiddish, with the most Standard-like participant nonetheless providing non-Standard-like responses for approximately 20% of both masculine and feminine nouns.[19] By contrast, speakers of languages with morphological case and/or gender can be expected to make speech errors in this morphology at a rate of about 1-4% (Luzzatti and de Bleser 1999; Schmid 2002; Belk, Kahn & Szendrői 2020a). At the same time it is noteworthy that greater use of a variety of forms in Task 2 largely correlated with more Standard-like performance in Task 3: nine out of 11 of the participants who used a non-דיִ *di* form more than a handful of times in Task 2 were in the mixed groups in Task 3; similarly, three quarters of the most Standard-like participants in Task 3 used a variety of forms of the determiner with at least some regularity in Task 2. Nevertheless, participants were not consistent in their use of gender morphology for particular nouns across the two tasks, with individual Standard-like participants in Task 3 providing the same noun with different gender morphology in the two tasks. Note, however, that this pattern is not indicative of a system of morphological gender, but rather suggests that speakers are relatively consistent in belonging to either the mixed or the homogeneous group across tasks.

Once again, the strongest predictor of Standard-like responses in Task 3 was not age,

[18] Note that דעם *dem* does not exist as a definite determiner form in the nominative case in pre-War or Standard varieties of Yiddish and thus represents a novel usage in a task requiring participants to give citation (nominative) forms of nouns.

[19] This participant, a speaker of Jerusalem Yiddish, did not provide any דאס *dos* forms as would be expected in a variety based on Northeastern Yiddish.

gender, phonological profile, or geographical location, but interest in the Yiddish language. Such an interest appears to lead to an awareness of the existence of a variety of definite determiner forms (acquired through engagement with written sources, particularly historical and non-Hasidic ones) without an awareness of their use as morphological gender markers. We suggest that this is because these speakers lack the concept of morphological gender in their mental grammars of Contemporary Hasidic Yiddish.

The findings reported here are confirmed by metalinguistic discussion with participants, who reported unfamiliarity with the difference between the various historical forms of the determiner and uncertainty regarding which to use in the written tasks. For example, FI2 commented that she would always use the (novel) form /dɛ/ in speech, and that she did not know which form to select for each lexical item in Task 3. This remark is very instructive as an explanation for FI2's motivation in selecting different forms of the determiner for Task 3: while she did vary her choice of determiner for the 33 nouns, she did so not out of an innate familiarity with the gender of each noun, but rather out of an awareness that different variants of the determiner existed in the written language and should be used. However, as her inconsistent usage reveals, she does not have a knowledge of an actual gender (or case) morphology system regulating the use of these forms. Similarly, even some participants whose results were most Standard-like in Task 3 did not seem to be aware that Yiddish might have grammatical gender or had it at some point in its history. MI8, for instance, is a speaker of Jerusalem Yiddish who also speaks Modern Hebrew, a language with morphological gender. He expressed surprise at the idea that nouns in Yiddish might have grammatical gender, despite being comfortable with the concept in Modern Hebrew.

### 4.4 Task 4: Dictation

Task 4, a dictation task, allowed participants much more flexibility in their responses.

Participants were asked to 'write down what they hear' as a speaker of Contemporary Hasidic Yiddish dictated full sentences containing definite noun phrases modified by an attributive adjective. The results reflect this greater flexibility, with participants providing a much wider range of responses and a larger number of innovative forms compared to pre-War and Standard varieties of Yiddish. In fact, participants used a total of 20 different determiner/adjective combinations, of which only five are attested in pre-War and Standard Yiddish, with the rest being innovative.

Table 7 summarizes the results of Task 4 for the nominative case. Across the three Standard genders and plurals, the proportion of each form is approximately the same. Between 70-80% of responses in the nominative case used ע-... די *di ...-e* forms regardless of the noun's gender or number in pre-War and Standard varieties of Yiddish. Between 5-15% of responses used the innovative form ע-... דער *der ...-e* across all Standard genders and in the plural. Less than 10% of responses used ער-... דער *der ...-er* (expected in Standard Yiddish masculine nominative and feminine dative) and a similar proportion used ה(ע)-... די *di ...-(e)h* (an innovative form using a Hebrew-like spelling variant of ע-... די *di ...-e*). Again, these numbers hold across all Standard genders and the plural. Remaining responses were split between the innovative forms ע-... דע *de ...-e* (<5%), ער-... די *di ...-er* (<5%) and other forms including demonstrative determiners and forms lacking an attributive adjective marker (<5% altogether). The Standard Yiddish neuter nominative ע- דאס *dos -e* and masculine (and neuter) accusative/dative ן- דעם *dem -n* forms were never used. These results are comparable to those of Task 3, summarized in Table 4 above, and strongly suggest that morphological gender plays no role in participants' selection of definite determiner and attributive adjective forms.

| N=31 | Article and adjectival ending forms | Standard Masculine | Standard Feminine | Standard Neuter | Standard Plural |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| St an - | דער... -ער<br>*der ...-er* | 8.6% | 3.3% | 2.2% | 3.8% |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | ע-... די<br>*di …*-e | 71.0% | 76.9% | 77.4% | 79.8% |
| | ע-... דאס<br>*dos ...-e* | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% |
| | ן-... דעם<br>*dem ...-n* | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% |
| **Innovative forms** | ע-... דע<br>*de ...-e* | 2.2% | 1.1% | 2.2% | 1.0% |
| | ע-... דער<br>*der...-e* | 11.8% | 9.9% | 10.8% | 5.8% |
| | ער-... די<br>*di ...-er* | 1.1% | 2.2% | 3.2% | 1.0% |
| | ה(ע)-... די<br>*di ...-(e)h*[20] | 4.3% | 5.5% | 3.3% | 6.7% |
| | Other<br>(ע-... דעי, ∅-... די, ∅-... דער<br>*dey ...-e, di ...-∅, der ...-∅*) | 1.1% | 1.1% | 1.1% | 2.0% |
| | TOTAL | =100% | =100% | =100% | =100% |

Table 7 Distribution of forms used for modified nouns in the nominative case for Standard Yiddish masculine, feminine and neuter gender and plurals in Task 4

The results also demonstrate that participants do not perceive a link between the form of the definite determiner and that of the attributive adjective. While they are by far most likely to provide matching ע-... די *di ...-e* forms, they apparently do so because this is perceived to be the closest written form to the novel spoken determiner /dɛ/ and the attributive marker /-ɛ/. However, they are more likely to provide mismatching forms like ע-... דער *der ...-e* than they are to provide the matching form ער-... דער *der ...-er*. Indeed, overall participants write attributive adjectives with an ending matching the pronunciation /-ɛ/ (i.e. ע- *-e* or ה(ע)- *-(e)h*) more than ten times more often than they provide attributive adjectives ending in either ער- *-er* or -∅. These results show that, regardless of the form of the definite determiner, speakers of Contemporary Hasidic Yiddish mark attributive adjectives almost uniformly with an ע- *-e* ending, corresponding to the spoken attributive marker /-ɛ/.

[20] This is an orthographic variant of ע- *-e*.

For this reason (and for the sake of clarity), we present the results of Task 4 for the accusative and dative cases in Table 8 according to the form of the definite determiner only. These results show that participants overwhelmingly provide די *di* forms for plurals, although some participants provide דער *der*, דע *de*, and even דעם *dem* forms in the plural as well, especially for dative plurals. For singular nouns, the proportion of each determiner form is roughly stable across cases and Standard Yiddish morphological gender, with די *di* being used between around 80% of the time, דער *der* being used between 5-15% of the time, דעם *dem* being used less than 5% of the time, and דע *de* being used less than 3% of the time. No participants provided any דאס *dos* forms in any case or gender.

| N=31 | Standard Masculine | | Standard Feminine | | Standard Neuter | | Standard Plural | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **ACC** | **DAT** | **ACC** | **DAT** | **ACC** | **DAT** | **ACC** | **DAT** |
| **דער *der*** | 11.0% | 14.0% | 12.0% | 11.9% | 7.2% | 12.2% | 2.8% | 3.9% |
| **די *di*** | 86.8% | 78.5% | 86.9% | 84.8% | 87.9% | 81.6% | 97.3% | 89.3% |
| **דאס *dos*** | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% |
| **דעם *dem*** | 2.2% | 0% | 0% | 1.1% | 2.4% | 3.6% | 0% | 1.0% |
| **ן– *-n*** | 0% | 4.3% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 1.2% | 0% | 0% |
| **דע *de*** | 0% | 1.1% | 1.1% | 2.2% | 1.2% | 1.2% | 0% | 1.9% |
| **Other** | 0% | 2.1% | 0% | 0% | 1.3% | 0% | 0% | 3.9% |
| **TOTAL** | =100% | =100% | =100% | =100% | =100% | =100% | =100% | =100% |

Table 8 Distribution of forms used for the determiner with modified nouns in the accusative case and prepositional dative case for all Standard Yiddish genders and plurals in Task 4

These results confirm participants' overwhelming preference for די *di* as an invariant definite determiner in all cases and genders, as it is used between five and 10 times as often as

any other form.[21] דעם *dem* is used somewhat more often in the accusative and dative cases (in all genders) than it is in the nominative, but the effect is very small. Speakers do not provide דאס *dos* forms in any case or gender. For many speakers, די *di* appears to be the preferred invariant definite determiner because it is closest to their pronunciation of that form. As Table 9 reveals, a strong preference for using די *di* for all nouns irrespective of case and gender was especially true for women and to a lesser extent for Israeli speakers irrespective of gender.

| | **Speaker Gender** | | **Location** | | **ALL** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Women (n=12)** | **Men (n=19)** | **Israel (n=7)** | **New York (n=20)** | **(n=31)** |
| **דער *der*** | 2.3% | 16.8% | 6.0% | 14.2% | 11.2% |
| **די *di*** | 96.4% | 78.8% | 86.8% | 83.7% | 85.5% |
| **דאס *dos*** | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| **דעם *dem*** | 0.0% | 1.4% | 1.5% | 0.6% | 0.9% |
| **ן- *-n*** | 0.2% | 0.6% | 0.4% | 0.6% | 0.5% |
| **דע *de*** | 0.7% | 1.8% | 4.6% | 0.4% | 1.4% |
| **Other** | 0.4% | 0.7% | 0.7% | 0.5% | 0.6% |
| **TOTAL** | =100% | =100% | =100% | =100% | =100% |

Table 9 Breakdown of different determiner forms used for modified nouns (of all Standard Yiddish genders and cases) for speaker gender and speaker location in Task 4

[21] A caveat to this comes from nouns referring to humans. Although we did not test such nouns explicitly, there were some nouns whose meaning denotes (stereotypically) male or female entities in our sample. For the word מאמע *mame* (NOM) we had only 10 examples, but 10 out of 10 times participants used די *di*. Results were mixed for stereotypically male nouns like דאקטער *dokter* (NOM) and צייַנדאקטער *tseyndokter* (NOM) with 34% (27/77) appearing with די *di*; 61% (47/77) with דער *der* and 5% (4/77) with דע *de*. For דאקטער *dokter* (DAT): we again had only 10 examples of which two were used with דעם *dem*, three די *di*, two ן- *-n*, one דע *de*, and one די ן- *-n di*. These findings are consistent with those of Belk, Kahn & Szendrői (2020b), where we argue that some, often male Israeli, speakers have a tendency to use the written form דער *der* for human males and for items or concepts perceived to be important (e.g. ספר *seyfer* 'religious book). In many cases, these two categories overlap (e.g. חתן *khosn* 'groom', מלך *meylekh* 'king'. This tendency is not pervasive enough to consider it part of a system of morphological gender marking and, as in the present study, does not factor in their spoken language.

The speakers who provided forms other than דִי *di* appear to be somewhat aware of the correlation between variant determiner form and singular noun number: speakers provided a smaller variety of forms and fewer variant forms for plural nouns. This correlation is not perfect, however, as some participants nonetheless provided forms other than דִי *di*, including innovative forms, for plural nouns. Overall, the results demonstrate that participants have no association between definite determiner form and morphological case or gender, suggesting that their mental grammars of Contemporary Hasidic Yiddish lack such concepts.

Comparing Task 4 to previous tasks, we see that individual participants were not necessarily consistent across tasks. While the vast majority of those who gave invariant forms in Tasks 2 and 3 tended also to do so in Task 4, some introduced variant forms in this task. In the other direction, however, there was less consistency. About half of the participants who used variant forms in Task 2 or Task 3 used a single invariant form in Task 4. Furthermore, even the participants who were most Standard-like in Tasks 2 and 3 were not always consistent in the morphological gender they assigned to particular nouns, both across tasks and, occasionally, within Task 4. These participants also made use of mixed morphological forms such as דִי *di* ...-ער, which are unexpected in pre-War and Standard varieties of Yiddish. This pattern is inconsistent with the idea that these speakers have morphological case and gender, and rather suggest that speakers are aware of the existence of a variety of definite determiner and attributive adjective forms but are unaware of their use as morphological case and gender markers.

### 4.5 Task 5: Copyediting

In Task 5, participants were asked to correct a written text, originally derived from the Stamford Hill *Tribune*. This text had been doctored to ensure a roughly equal number of masculine,

feminine, and neuter nouns in each of the three cases, as well as roughly equal numbers of Standard-like and non-Standard-like definite determiner and attributive adjective forms including mismatched morphological endings. Overall, the text included 16 non-Standard-like forms.

On average, participants made 3.3 corrections to case or gender forms in Task 5, with a range of 0–13 and a median of 2. Four out of 31 participants made no corrections to case and gender forms, while every participant corrected some spelling or other distractor errors. Two participants made more than eight corrections. Many corrections did not make the text more Standard-like, particularly the large number which corrected an attributive adjective to an ɤ- *-e* form that did not match the accompanying definite determiner. Several participants corrected Standard-like forms to innovative or non-Standard-like forms. These results are summarized in Table 10.

| **N=31** | **0 corrections** | **1-4 corrections** | **5-8 corrections** | **>8 corrections** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Israel** | | | | |
| Female | | FI1<br>FI2<br>FI3 | | |
| **Male** | MI4<br>MI9 | MI3<br>MI7 | MI6 | |
| **New York** | | | | |
| Female | FN2 | FN1<br>FN4<br>FN8<br>FN9 | FN5<br>FN7 | $FN6_{13}$ |
| Male | MN2 | MN1<br>MN3<br>MN9<br>MN10<br>MN11<br>MN13 | MN5<br>MN6<br>MN8 | |
| **Antwerp** | | | | |
| Female | | | | |
| Male | | MA1<br>MA1 | | |

| **Montreal** | | |
|---|---|---|
| Female | FM1 | |
| | FM2 | |
| Male | | MM1[9] |

Table 10 Number of corrections to case and gender morphology provided in Task 5 by participant

A number of corrections involved harmonizing mismatched case and gender morphology, although these were not always in the direction of pre-War or Standard varieties of Yiddish. Furthermore, many corrections introduced mismatched morphology, for instance where the attributive adjective was corrected to an ע- *-e* form regardless of the form of the definite determiner. Some participants also offered two options for a particular correction; for example, one participant corrects פון דער נייעם בארג *fun der nayem barg* 'from the.ER new-N mountain' to פון דער נייעם אדער די נייע בארג *fun der nayem oder di naye barg* 'from the.ER new-N or the.I new-E mountain'. Participants also occasionally introduce novel forms, for instance correcting אינעם וואנט *inem vant* 'in.the.N wall' to אין ד וואנט *in d vant* 'in the.∅ wall'. Most participants also ignored inconsistencies in the gender assignment of particular adjectives.

The participants making the most corrections in Task 5 (FN6 and MM1, as well as MN5, MN6, and MN8) were among the participants using variable forms with some regularity in at least two of Tasks 2, 3, and 4. At the same time, many of these participants provided invariant forms in at least one of Tasks 2, 3, and 4. Thus, for all of these participants the use of case and gender morphology was not consistent across these four tasks, and certainly not consistent for specific lexical items. Rather what this group of participants has in common is an active interest in the Yiddish language, which in Task 5 is reflected in a more proactive approach to the copyediting task.

Overall, these results are consistent with those of earlier tasks in suggesting that participants do not have a concept of morphological case or gender in their mental grammars.

They are particularly striking in that they demonstrate that most participants do not consider inconsistent use of case or gender morphology to be errors that need correcting, and those that do feel a greater desire to make case- and gender-related corrections nevertheless do not exhibit a grammar with more case and gender marking.

### 4.6 Task 6: Written judgments

In Task 6, participants are presented with 18 sets of sentences which act as carriers for nine of the nouns targeted in Tasks 3 and 4 in each of the three Standard morphological cases. For each set, they are asked to indicate which of the Standard forms of the determiner (i.e. דער *der*, די *di*, דאס *dos*, דעם *dem*) they would use or sound natural to them, which they would not use or sound unnatural to them, and which they are not sure about. For datives, all of which were prepositional, the additional option of the contraction of the preposition and definite determiner was also provided. In Standard Yiddish there is only one prescriptively correct answer per set for the nominative and accusative cases and up to two for prepositional dative (i.e. אויף דעם *oyf dem* and the contraction אויפן *oyfn* are both expected for 'on the' in masculine and neuter datives), and native speakers of a language with morphological case or gender would be expected to be relatively certain in their responses.

Overall, participants accepted Standard-like forms 61.4% of the time (i.e. slightly better than chance), with individual participants ranging from 22.7% to 87.8%. However, participants rejected non-Standard-like forms only 28.4% of the time (range: 16.4%–40.4%), suggesting that they are more permissive than would be expected in pre-War and Standard varieties as they do not reject forms diverging from Standard and pre-War Yiddish use. Furthermore, participants were undecided 25.3% of the time (range: 21.1%–29.2%), which does not resemble what would be expected in a language with morphological case or gender. These results are summarized in Table 11.

| N=33 | Average | Range |
|---|---|---|
| **Acceptance matching Standard (e.g. acceptance of דער *der* for Standard Yiddish masculine nominative nouns)** | 61.4% | 22.7%-87.8% |
| **Rejection matching Standard (e.g. rejection of די *di*, דאס *dos* and דעם *dem* for Standard Yiddish masculine nominative nouns)** | 28.4% | 16.4%-40.4% |
| **Undecided (i.e. '?')** | 25.3% | 21.1%-29.2% |

Table 11 Average proportion of acceptance, rejection and undecided judgments matching Standard Yiddish gender and case; range of proportions for all gender and case combinations

Table 12 provides another perspective on these findings, summarizing participants' responses by noun gender regardless of the case the noun is expected to appear with in pre-War or Standard varieties. If Contemporary Hasidic Yiddish had lost only case and not gender, participants might be expected to consistently choose the form of the definite determiner according to morphological gender only and disregard the noun's case. The results suggest that this is not so. Proportions of acceptance, rejection and 'not sure' responses for each of the determiner forms are stable across the three Standard Yiddish genders. Participants accept די *di* at a very high rate (80–90%) and reject or are unsure about דאס *dos* at a relatively high rate (30–40% and 40–45%, respectively). The contracted form of prepositional datives is very frequently accepted (80–90%), regardless of noun gender. דער *der* and דעם *dem* fall somewhere in between these extremes.

| N=33 | | Acceptance | Rejection | Undecided (i.e. '?') |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Standard** | דער *der* | 38.9% | 28.5% | 32.2% |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **feminine** | די *di* | 89.4% | 2.0% | 8.6% |
| **nouns** | דאס *dos* | 17.9% | 40.7% | 41.4% |
| | דעם *dem* | 37.6% | 36.1% | 25.8% |
| | ן- *-n* | 84.9% | 9.1% | 6.1% |
| **Standard** | דער *der* | 46.3% | 27.1% | 26.7% |
| **masculine** | די *di* | 81.8% | 3.0% | 15.2% |
| **nouns** | דאס *dos* | 17.6% | 40.0% | 42.4% |
| | דעם *dem* | 46.6% | 37.5% | 15.9% |
| | ן- *-n* | 89.4% | 4.6% | 6.1% |
| **Standard** | דער *der* | 44.2% | 24.5% | 30.8% |
| **neuter** | די *di* | 83.8% | 3.0% | 13.2% |
| **nouns** | דאס *dos* | 20.5% | 34.4% | 45.1% |
| | דעם *dem* | 46.9% | 31.0% | 22.1% |
| | ן- *-n* | 80.3% | 4.6% | 15.2% |

Table 12 Distribution of participants' responses for modified nominals matching Standard Yiddish gender assignment, irrespective of case in Task 6

Participants therefore do not pattern with what would be expected in a language with morphological gender. They are permissive of a range of forms and exhibit relatively high levels of uncertainty. These results confirm the findings of previous tasks in suggesting that participants recognize די *di* as an invariant definite determiner and that other forms are accepted to a lesser degree. The findings also demonstrate that the contracted form of the determiner is widely permitted in all genders, with acceptability levels similar to די *di*, suggesting that this form has become fossilized when used with a relevant preposition and is no longer associated with particular morphological genders. Furthermore, the findings confirm a dispreference for

דאס *dos*, which is consistent with the results of previous tasks.

Table 13 summarizes participants' responses by noun case, regardless of noun gender. If Contemporary Hasidic Yiddish had lost morphological gender and retained morphological case, we might expect one form of the determiner to be associated with a particular morphological case. Again, the results suggest that this is not the case. Participants accept די *di* at a high rate (80–90%) in all case contexts and reject or are unsure about דאס *dos* at a lesser but still noticeable rate (between approximately 30–55% and 35–50% respectively). Where available (i.e. in the dative case), participants demonstrate a strong acceptance rate for the contracted form of the determiner (85%). Participants accept דער *der* marginally more in the nominative case than they do in the accusative or dative and accept דעם *dem* much more in the accusative and dative than they do in the nominative. However, acceptance rates for both דער *der* and דעם *dem* are no higher than 60% in any case and fully 28% of participants are not sure about using דעם *dem* in the dative case in addition to the 14% who reject it outright.

| **N=33** | | **Acceptance** | **Rejection** | **Undecided (i.e. '?')** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Nominative** | דער *der* | 52.6% | 14.1% | 32.8% |
| | די *di* | 85.8% | 4.1% | 10.2% |
| | דאס *dos* | 22.5% | 28.3% | 49.2% |
| | דעם *dem* | 13.2% | 74.7% | 12.1% |
| **Accusative** | דער *der* | 36.8% | 33.7% | 29.1% |
| | די *di* | 86.8% | 1.5% | 11.7% |
| | דאס *dos* | 20.3% | 33.5% | 46.2% |
| | דעם *dem* | 60.3% | 15.8% | 23.9% |
| **Prepositional dative** | דער *der* | 40.0% | 32.4% | 27.7% |
| | די *di* | 82.3% | 2.5% | 15.2% |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| דאס *dos* | 13.2% | 53.4% | 33.5% |
| דעם *dem* | 57.6% | 14.1% | 27.8% |
| ן- *-n* | 84.8% | 6.1% | 9.1% |

Table 13 Distribution of participants' responses for modified nominals matching Standard Yiddish case assignment, irrespective of gender

Again, these results are not consistent with a language that has morphological case. Participants are more permissive and report higher levels of uncertainty than what would be expected in a such a language. די *di* is used as an invariant definite determiner regardless of noun case, although contracted forms of the determiner are accepted alongside it in the dative case. While there is a higher acceptance rate for דער *der* in the nominative case and, conversely, a higher acceptance rate for דעם *dem* in the accusative and dative, these forms are accepted alongside די *di* rather than instead of it. Rather than suggesting that Contemporary Hasidic Yiddish has a productive system of morphological case, the results suggest that awareness of דער *der* and דעם *dem* as case forms is vestigial, along the lines of the *who/whom* distinction in English (see e.g. Schneider 1992; Lasnik and Sobin 2000; Boyland 2001; Schepps 2010). The contracted form of the determiner, on the other hand, appears to be a fossilized form accepted in all prepositional dative contexts regardless of noun gender.

However, the overall results obscure a noteworthy effect of speaker gender.[22] Table 14 presents the results of Table 13 broken down by speaker gender. Here it is evident that, while

[22] When the data are broken down by location, we can see that acceptance of דאס *dos* was somewhat higher by Israeli speakers compared to New Yorkers, while acceptance of די *di* patterned the other way around. Israeli speakers accepted דעם *dem* more in the accusative and dative and less in the nominative than New Yorkers did, while rejection of דעם *dem* in the nominative was similar in the two locations. But all these were relatively minor differences.

men and women behave the same in some respects, in others their behaviour varies. Men and women accept, reject, and are unsure about די *di* at similar rates across all cases, and also behave similarly with respect to the contracted form of the preposition and determiner in the dative. However, men are much more likely than women to accept דער *der* in all three cases. For their part, women reject דער *der* at a much higher rate than men in all three cases. Men are more likely than women to accept דעם *dem* in the accusative and dative cases. However, men and women reject דעם *dem* at very similar rates in all three cases. Unlike with דער *der*, which women rejected at a higher rate than men, women are more unsure about how natural דעם *dem* sounds in the accusative and dative. Furthermore, men reject דאס *dos* at a higher rate than women in all cases while women are more unsure than men about using דאס *dos*.

| **N=33** | | **Acceptance** | | **Rejection** | | **Undecided (i.e. '?')** | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Men | Women | Men | Women | Men | Women |
| **Nominative** | דער *der* | 71.1% | 25.7% | 3.5% | 29.5% | 24.6% | 44.9% |
| | די *di* | 84.0% | 88.5% | 5.9% | 1.3% | 10.1% | 10.3% |
| | דאס *dos* | 16.0% | 32.1% | 38.0% | 14.1% | 46.1% | 53.8% |
| | דעם *dem* | 12.6% | 14.1% | 75.7% | 73.1% | 11.7% | 12.8% |
| **Accusative** | דער *der* | 49.2% | 18.0% | 22.8% | 50.0% | 27.2% | 32.1% |
| | די *di* | 85.7% | 88.5% | 2.5% | 0.0% | 11.8% | 11.6% |
| | דאס *dos* | 19.4% | 21.8% | 41.1% | 21.8% | 39.6% | 56.4% |
| | דעם *dem* | 67.2% | 50.0% | 14.2% | 18.0% | 18.6% | 32.1% |
| **Prepositional dative** | דער *der* | 51.2% | 23.1% | 20.6% | 50.0% | 28.3% | 27.0% |
| | די *di* | 80.0% | 85.9% | 4.2% | 0.0% | 15.8% | 14.1% |
| | דאס *dos* | 10.1% | 18.0% | 62.2% | 39.8% | 27.8% | 42.3% |
| | דעם *dem* | 69.9% | 39.8% | 13.3% | 15.4% | 16.9% | 43.6% |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ן- *-n* | 86.7% | 82.0% | 6.7% | 5.1% | 6.7% | 12.8% |

Table 14 Breakdown of distribution of participants' responses for modified nominals matching Standard Yiddish case assignment, irrespective of gender for speaker gender

Perhaps surprisingly, those speakers who were most likely to use variant forms in previous tasks, and who therefore might be expected to most closely approximate pre-War and Standard varieties of Yiddish, were nonetheless very permissive in Task 6. Conversely, the least permissive speakers in Task 6 consistently used invariant forms in earlier tasks. In fact, these results are not surprising if our analysis thus far is correct. Homogeneous speakers are expected to accept only forms that approximate the spoken form of the definite article, just as they produce such forms in writing. On the other hand, if mixed speakers use a variety of forms not because they have a productive system of morphological case and gender but rather because they are familiar with these forms and know that they are often used in writing, they are expected to accept a range of forms when presented with alternatives.

Overall, we find that women are more innovative in their choice of determiner: they prefer a single, invariant form especially and either reject or unsure about forms that men accept. On the other hand, men accept a wider range of forms across all cases and are more conservative in that they have a somewhat stronger association between דער *der* in the nominative and דעם *dem* in the accusative and dative. (The latter is also true for Israeli speakers irrespective of their gender, which would identify them as more conservative speakers for case assignment.) These patterns are in line with general sociolinguistic tendencies, which hold that women are innovators of linguistic change (Labov 1990). Furthermore, women's choice of determiner seems to be more strongly associated with the phonology of the spoken definite determiner, whereas men make greater use of forms that differ in their pronunciation from the spoken determiner. However, regardless of speaker gender, determiner choice does not seem

to be determined by morphological case or gender.

## 5 Discussion

To sum up, all of our participants appear to lack a morphological gender or case-marking system in their mental grammars. Some speakers are aware that historically there were four article forms in Yiddish, i.e. דער *der*, די *di*, דאס *dos*, and דעם *dem*, and matching agreement endings ער- *-er*, ע- *–e*, ן- *-n*, and produce a variety of definite determiner and attributive adjective forms in both written tasks and in the oral storytelling register, albeit in a way that is very different from Standard Yiddish. In contrast, other speakers use one consistent form of the article, which they perceive as phonologically closest to the spoken /dɛ/ or /di/ form of the article and the /-ɛ/ attributive adjectival suffix. In judgment tasks, speakers behave largely uniformly, accepting a much wider variety of forms than would be expected in pre-War or Standard varieties and, in the case of the homogeneous group of speakers, a wider variety than their production would suggest.

While most speakers were consistent in their mixed or homogeneous use of morphology, other speakers' behaviour differed across tasks. MN5, MN6, and MI8 were consistently the most mixed in their behaviour, with MI6, MM1, MN4, FN6, and MN8 all using mixed forms in more than half of the tasks. The remaining speakers, numbering 32 or 80%, were mostly or entirely homogeneous in their behaviour.

The factor that most strongly predicted this behaviour was not speaker age, gender, or location, but rather the speaker's active engagement with and interest in the Yiddish language. Some of the mixed speakers were teachers of Yiddish (either in secular or Haredi contexts), while others enjoy study of the grammar and etymology of the language for its own sake or take an interest in Yiddish-language media (again, either secular or Haredi). However, even the most consistently mixed speakers do not appear to have a productive system of

morphological case and gender in Yiddish, as demonstrated by inconsistent use of morphology across tasks and permissive behaviour in Tasks 5 and 6. We therefore argue that Contemporary Hasidic Yiddish lacks morphological case and gender on full nominals, and that its speakers do not have such concepts in their mental grammars of the language.

While Task 6 in particular revealed a preference (specifically among men) for דער *der* forms in the nominative over the accusative or dative (regardless of noun gender) and a related preference for דעם *dem* forms in the accusative and dative over the nominative (again, regardless of noun gender) this numerical tendency does not seem to indicate that they have a productive case and gender system. Rather, this tendency seems akin to the knowledge that contemporary English native speakers report about the use of the *who* vs *whom* distinction or whether one should use *I* or *me* in sentences like *It is I* or *He visited John and me*. Such use is not, however, indicative of a systematic grammatical distinction, but appears to be the vestigial awareness of an older stage of the language. This is true both of English and of Yiddish.

Our findings are supported by metalinguistic discussion with participants. Very few participants thought that determiner and attributive adjective forms might be associated with grammatical gender and none associated them with case. Often, participants thought of the different determiner forms as spelling variants, rather than grammatical distinctions.

One somewhat surprising finding concerns differences in speakers of 'vos' and 'vus' dialects. Older 'vos' speakers, including 'Litvish', Chabad, and Jerusalem Yiddish speakers, are much more likely to use variable case and gender morphology than older 'vus' speakers. The oldest speaker in our sample, MI10, is aged 87 and is a speaker of 'vus'. However, in Tasks 1 and 2, he uses a single spoken definite determiner form, /dɛ/, and the invariant attributive adjective form /-ɛ/. His partial results from other tasks suggest a similarly non-Standard-like use of morphology. Similarly, FI3, a 'vus' speaker in her late 50s, consistently uses an invariant form, is permissive in Tasks 5 and 6, and in metalinguistic discussion expressed surprise that

different forms could be associated with morphological gender or case. Both MI10 and FI3 are fluent speakers of Modern Hebrew and are thus familiar with the idea of morphological gender.

The speakers who most consistently used a variety of forms, MN5, MN6, and MI8, are all 'vos' speakers between the ages of 50 and 75. All three grew up in consistently 'vos' speaking environments in 'Litvish', Chabad, or Jerusalem Yiddish communities. Given that these communities trace their roots back to Northeastern Yiddish, which had only two genders and thus a simpler morphological paradigm, they could perhaps be expected to have maintained morphological case and gender distinctions longer than the descendants of speakers with a three-way gender distinction. However, even these speakers do not appear to have a productive morphological case and gender system and rather appear to be making use of forms that they know to exist according to some other system (or use them in free variation). Furthermore, all three speakers use and accept morphological forms associated with neuter gender, underlining the distinction between their use of morphology and that found in Northeastern Yiddish. Note, however, that MI7, a speaker of 'vos' in his 50s who grew up in a mixed 'vos'- and 'vus'-speaking environment, consistently uses invariant case and gender morphology while being permissive of other forms in Tasks 5 and 6.

These results suggest that the loss of morphological case and gender perhaps happened a generation later among 'vos'-speaking Chabad, Litvish and Jerusalem Yiddish communities. This would explain why older 'vos' speakers appear more aware of and more likely to use variant morphological forms than either younger 'vos' speakers or older 'vus' speakers. We believe there are two main factors contributing to this finding: speakers in these communities traditionally tended to be more isolated from other Yiddish-speaking groups, and the morphophonological inventory of this dialect made survival of a variety of forms more likely.

In Belk, Kahn & Szendrői 2020a we argue that one contributing factor to the loss of morphological case and gender in Stamford Hill Hasidic Yiddish is the fact that, in the years

after the Holocaust, Hasidic Yiddish-speaking communities including in Israel, the USA, and the UK contained a much wider range of geographical dialects and possibly a larger number of L2 speakers than they did in pre-War communities in Eastern Europe. Different geographical dialects might assign different morphological gender to particular nouns, or have varying patterns of syncretism. These mixed communities therefore provided less consistent input on the use of case and gender morphology to children acquiring the language.[23] Jerusalem, Chabad, and 'Litvish' Yiddish-speaking communities were not subject to the same linguistic pressures at this time, although for different reasons. The Jerusalem Yiddish-speaking community is traditionally insular and mixed very little with outsiders, both traditionally and today. Many contemporary Chabad Yiddish speakers are children of so-called *shluchim* (Jewish outreach wokers as part of the Chabad mission), who use Yiddish as a lingua franca to communicate with family members but use other languages in other contexts. 'Litvish' Yiddish speakers did not traditionally have much contact with Hasidic Yiddish speakers, as there is very little intermarriage between Hasidic and non-Hasidic Haredi communities, compared to intermarriage between (non-Chabad) Hasidic sects. Furthermore, use of Yiddish is much less widespread amongst 'Litvish' communities than it is among Hasidic communities. Thus, for the older generation of speakers, their linguistic input was a relatively homogeneous Northeastern-derived dialect.

However, the older generation of 'Litvish', Chabad, and Jerusalem Yiddish speakers represented in this study now regularly speak Yiddish with other (usually 'vus'-speaking) communities. The younger generation have similar levels of contact with Hasidic Yiddish

[23] Further support for this claim comes from MI10. He was born in the Austro-Hungarian Empire and spoke Yiddish at home. He moved to Israel as a child, shortly before the outbreak of World War II, and lived in a non-Jerusalem Yiddish speaking community. Rather, he grew up in a 'mixed' dialect community of recent immigrants and uses invariant case and gender morphology.

speakers and are often educated in mixed or 'vus'-speaking institutions. Younger 'vos' speakers from the same communities behave no differently than their 'vus'-speaking counterparts. We believe that this mixing of traditional dialects is thus a major factor in driving the loss of morphological gender and case in the Yiddish of contemporary Haredi speakers. Furthermore, we argue that the process of change that has taken place in both 'vos'- and 'vus'-speaking communities has reached the same point: a complete lack of productive morphological case and gender system in speakers' mental grammars. For this reason, and because the change seems driven by contact with Hasidic speakers, we feel justified in using the term Contemporary Hasidic Yiddish for both 'vos' and 'vus' speakers of any Haredi affiliation.

The second factor relates to the distinct morphophonological profile of Northeastern Yiddish. Speakers of 'vus' pronounce די *di* with a vowel ranging between [ɛ] and [ə], whereas speakers of 'vos' use /i/. For both groups of speakers, דער *der* is pronounced with [ɛ], meaning that the vowels in the two forms of the determiner are further away in the vowel space of 'vos' speakers than they are for 'vus' speakers. Additionally, many historical Mid- and Southeastern varieties had processes of /r/ vocalization or elision, rendering the distinction between these two forms of the definite determiner even less conspicuous. Several historical dialects already had some case and gender syncretisms along these lines. Taken together, these factors mean that the distinction between the דער *der* and די *di* forms of the pronoun are more perceptually salient in varieties related to Northeastern Yiddish than in other varieties.

In addition to the generational and dialectal issues, other sociolinguistic factors also seem to play a role. Specifically, speaker gender appears to affect choice of written definite determiner and attributive adjective morphology. Women appear to be more innovative, making greater use of innovative written forms such as דע *de*, ד' *d'* and ד *d*. They appear to prefer forms that more closely match their pronunciation, whereas men are more likely than

women to accept and provide such forms. These numerical trends are somewhat clearer in the written language, as very few speakers make consistent use of a variety of definite determiner and attributive adjective forms in spoken Yiddish.

Perhaps unexpectedly, the country in which the participants grew up did not appear to affect their use of definite determiner and attributive adjective forms. This is important because some of the co-territorial languages, e.g. Modern Hebrew and French, have morphological gender marking. Nevertheless, Contemporary Hasidic Yiddish speakers uniformly lack such distinctions in their Yiddish, suggesting that the loss of case and gender morphology is not the result of external influence from the co-territorial languages, but rather an internal change, which conclusion was also reached by Krogh (2012, 2015).

Note that this rapid development is also not an inevitable result of a minority language situation: as discussed in Belk, Kahn & Szendrői (2020a), Pennsylvania German and Volga German as spoken in Kansas have retained morphological case and gender in spoken and (for Pennsylvania German) written forms over a much longer period than Hasidic Yiddish (see Huffines 1989, Ferré 1991, and Stolberg 2015 for discussion of Pennsylvania German, and Khramova 2011 for discussion of Volga German in Kansas).

## 6 Conclusion

This paper has shown that there is a complete absence of morphological case and gender from the noun phrase of the spoken and written Yiddish of multi-generation Haredi speakers in four main Hasidic centres worldwide (Israel, the New York area, and to a lesser extent, Antwerp, and Montreal). One of the reasons that we wanted to compare speakers from the different communities was to ascertain whether there was an effect of the co-territorial languages (chiefly English, Modern Hebrew, and French) on participants' Yiddish case and gender. This

is important because some of these co-territorial languages, e.g. Modern Hebrew and French, have morphological gender marking. Crucially, our findings show that Hasidic Yiddish speakers in all geographic locations uniformly lack such distinctions in their Yiddish.

In speech, our participants from all communities uniformly employ an invariable form of the determiner, /dɛ/ or /di, for all nouns, regardless of the gender and case that they would have had in the pre-War and Standard varieties of Yiddish. They almost invariably employ an invariable form of adjectives, with the pre-War and Standard Yiddish feminine nominative and accusative suffix ע- *-e* having been reanalyzed as an attributive marker. When asked to produce the written form of the determiner along with a noun in the dictionary (nominative) form, speakers employed a variety of strategies, one of the most common being to select the variant די *di* – traditionally the feminine singular nominative and accusative determiner, as well as the plural determiner – across the board. This is likely due to the fact that in the communities in question this is the traditional determiner whose sound most closely resembles the spoken variant /dɛ/ or /di/. (This strategy can be contrasted with that found in London's Stamford Hill community, where participants commonly select the variant דער *der* – traditionally the masculine nominative – as it corresponds more closely with their pronunciation of the oral variant /dɛ/ (see Belk, Kahn & Szendrői 2020a for discussion of this point). A smaller group of speakers employs a mixed pattern in their written data, which nevertheless reveals a highly inconsistent use of the different forms of the determiner and attributive adjectives, corresponding to the lack of distinction between these forms in spoken language. Metalinguistic discussion confirms speakers' unfamiliarity with the rules governing the selection of one determiner as opposed to another in any given instance, reflecting the absence of such forms in the speakers' mental grammar and the lack of systematic instruction in their use in written language in school. A prominent reason for this rapid change in the grammar of Contemporary Hasidic Yiddish may be the large-scale destruction of the traditional Eastern

European Hasidic Yiddish speaker base and the subsequent geographic dispersal of most surviving speakers, which led to a major change in the demographics of Hasidic Yiddish-speaking communities, increased dialect mixing, greater contact between Hasidic and non-Hasidic Haredi speakers, a large influx of L2 speakers, and the emergence of a koiné variety of the language that became prevalent in all post-War Hasidic centres worldwide. This koiné variety exhibits a new nominal system that does not exhibit morphological case and gender. Our findings, based on analysis of data from native Yiddish speakers from the main Haredi (primarily Hasidic) centres on three different continents, reveals this caseless and genderless system to be a firmly entrenched characteristic of their language. These changes appear to have been driven by developments among Hasidic speakers, leading to a new variety of the language, Contemporary Hasidic Yiddish. This variety not only encompasses all Hasidic communities globally, but has also led to significant change in the way Yiddish is spoken throughout the entire Haredi world.

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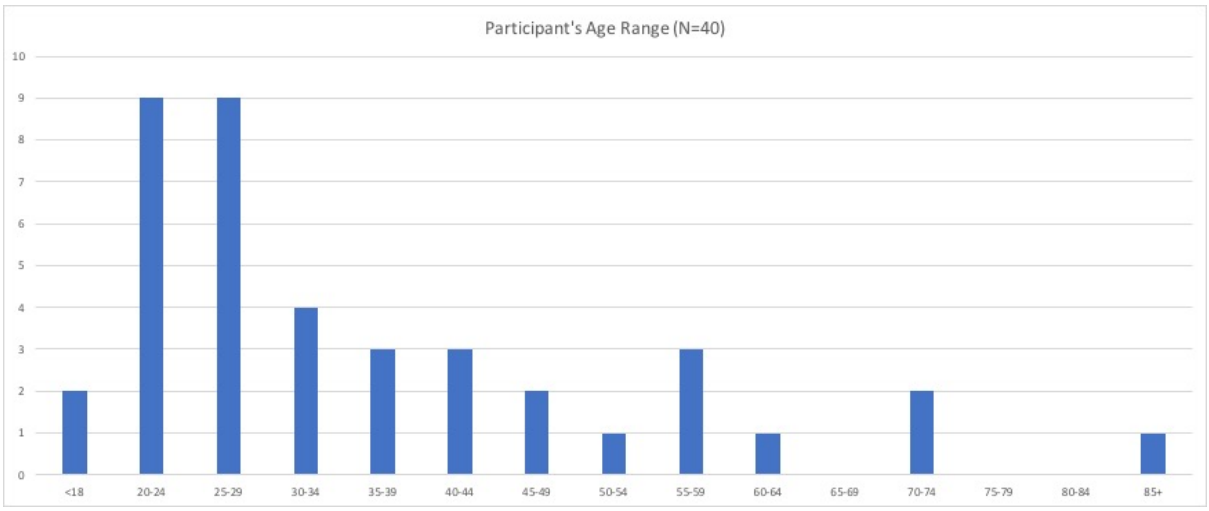
**Appendix**




| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| $FM1_u$ | $FI1_u$ | $MI5_m$ | $FN2_o$ | $FN1_u$ | MI2 | $MI1_o$ | $MI8_o$ | $MN6_o$ | $FN3_o$ | | $MN5_o$ | | | $MI10_u$ |
| $MN13_u$ | $MI3_u$ | $FN4_u$ | $MI6_o$ | $MN2_u$ | $MN4_o$ | $FN6_u$ | | $FI3_u$ | | | $MN7_u$ | | | |
| | $MN1_u$ | $FN5_u$ | $MN12_u$ | $MI4_m$ | $MM1_m$ | | | $MI7_o$ | | | | | | |
| | $MN3_u$ | $MN8_u$ | $FN9_u$ | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | $MN9_u$ | $MA1_u$ | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | $MN10_u$ | $FN7_u$ | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | $MN11_u$ | $FI2_u$ | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | $FM2_u$ | $FN8_u$ | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | $MA2_u$ | $MI9_o$ | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Chart A1 Participants' age distribution (Participants' codes follow the following convention. The first letter refers to the speaker's gender F=female, M=male; the second letter refers to the speaker's location I=Israel, N=New York area, M= Montreal area, A= Antwerp; the following two digits number identifies the speaker uniquely in their gender-location group. So, for instance MI6 refers to Nº 6 Israeli Male Speaker. The subscripts indicate whether the speaker speaks a 'vos' pronunciation, which is indicated by the subscript $_o$, a 'vus' pronunciation, indicated by $_u$, or a mixed pronunciation, indicated by $_m$.)

| **N=38** | **Standard Masculine** | | **Standard Feminine** | | **Standard Neuter** | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Israel** | **New York** | **Israel** | **New York** | **Israel** | **New York** |
| **דער *der*** | 17.3% | 14.2% | 10.3% | 10.5% | 20.0% | 10.1% |
| **די *di*** | 59.4% | 73.8% | 70.1% | 81.4% | 58.7% | 73.4% |
| **דאס *dos*** | 0.0% | 2.2% | 0.0% | 1.8% | 1.3% | 5.8% |
| **דעם *dem*** | 2.3% | 1.9% | 0.0% | 0.9% | 0.0% | 2.9% |
| **דע, ד', ד *de, d', d*** | 20.3% | 7.5% | 18.8% | 5.0% | 18.7% | 7.2% |
| other[24] | 0.8% | 0.4% | 0.9% | 0.5% | 1.3% | 0.7% |
| TOTAL | =100% | =100% | =100% | =100% | =100% | =100% |

Table A1. Breakdown of the distribution of forms used for the different singular nouns with

[24] Other forms include indefinite determiners and demonstratives, neither of which indicate grammatical gender.

feminine, masculine and neuter gender in Standard Yiddish in Task 3 for speaker location (Montreal and Antwerp speakers are omitted)