

Innovations in Contemporary Hasidic Yiddish pronouns

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Outline

- 1 Introduction
- 2 Personal pronouns
- 3 Possessives
 - Dependent possessives
 - Independent possessives
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Contemporary Hasidic Yiddish (CHY)

- Native and daily language of <1,000,000 Haredi (largely Hasidic) speakers
- Major centres include the New York City area and upstate New York, various communities in Israel, Stamford Hill (London) and Manchester in the UK, Antwerp and the Montreal area
- Grammatically distinct from pre-War and Standard varieties → absence of morphological case and gender in full nominals (Belk et al., 2020, Under review)

‘Vos’ vs. ‘vus’

- Most participants do not use geographical terms to describe their dialect
- Rather, they distinguish between those who speak ‘vos’, and those who speak ‘vus’
 - ‘Vos’: Northeastern vowel profile (i.e. וואס ‘what’ pronounced /vɔs/); spoken by Chabad, ‘Litvish’ and Yerushalayimer¹ speakers.
 - ‘Vus’: Mid-/Southeastern vowel profile, (i.e. וואס ‘what’ pronounced /vus/); spoken by most other speakers
 - Some speakers use a mixed vowel profile
- ‘Vos’ and ‘vus’ speakers’ grammars are much more similar to each other than they are to pre-War varieties (Belk et al., Under review); we consider them both part of CHY

¹This term refers to a distinct dialect of Yiddish dating back ~200 yrs with roots in NE Yiddish. It is spoken in Jerusalem, but not all Yiddish speakers from Jerusalem speak this dialect.

This study

- 29 native CHY speakers from the New York area (15), Israel (5), Stamford Hill (5), the Montreal area (2), Antwerp (2)
- Wide range of Hasidic and non-Hasidic Haredi affiliations
- 3 native speaker consultants, from Stamford Hill and Israel
- Oral translation from English or Modern Hebrew to CHY
- Total of 151 items split over three lists
- Items target personal pronouns in all case, gender, person and number contexts, dependent and independent possessives of all persons, dependent and independent proximal and distal demonstratives in all case, gender and number contexts, as well as some other factors not discussed here
- Interviews transcribed in ELAN by native or fluent Yiddish speakers

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Standard Yiddish

Table: Case and gender marking on personal pronouns in pre-War/Standard Yiddish

		Singular			Plural	
		NOM	ACC	DAT	NOM	ACC DAT
1st		<i>ikh</i>	<i>mikh</i>	<i>mir</i>	<i>mir</i>	<i>undz</i>
2nd	FAM	<i>du</i>	<i>dikh</i>	<i>dir</i>	<i>ir</i>	<i>aykh</i>
	HON	<i>ir</i>	<i>aykh</i>			
3rd	MASC	<i>er</i>		<i>im</i>		
	FEM		<i>zi</i>	<i>ir</i>		<i>zey</i>
	NEUT ²		<i>es</i>	<i>im</i>		

(Adapted from Kahn 2016)

²3N has been replaced by a 3INAN pronoun. We do not discuss this issue here as data are pending.

Contemporary Hasidic Yiddish

Table: Mixed 'vus' paradigm

		Singular NOM	OBJ	Plural NOM	OBJ
1st		<i>ikh</i>	<i>mikh/mir</i>	<i>undz</i>	
2nd	FAM	<i>du</i>	<i>dikh/dir</i>	<i>enk/aykh</i> ³	
	HON	<i>ir</i>	<i>aykh</i>	<i>ir</i>	<i>aykh</i>
3rd	MASC	<i>er</i>	<i>em</i>	<i>zey</i>	
	FEM	<i>zi</i>	<i>ir/zi</i>		

³We have relatively little data on speakers who use *aykh* in the second person. There appear to be some speakers who use *aykh* as a 2HON pronoun, in contrast to 2PL.FAM *enk*. On the other hand, there appear to be some speakers who use it as a 2PL pronoun; we have limited data on the 2HON for these speakers.

Innovations

- No ACC/DAT distinction anywhere
- No NOM/OBJ distinction in PL or, for some speakers, 3FS
- Variation in pronoun inventory (e.g. *enk/aykh*, *ir/zi*, *mikh/mir*, *dikh/dir*)
- SY *im* is *em* for all ‘vus’ speakers

Contemporary Hasidic Yiddish

Table: 'Vos' paradigm with 1PL *mir* and 2PL *ir*

		Singular NOM	OBJ	Plural NOM	OBJ
1st		<i>ikh</i>	<i>mir</i>	<i>mir</i>	<i>undz</i>
2nd	FAM	<i>du</i>	<i>dir</i>	<i>ir</i>	<i>aykh</i>
	HON	<i>ir</i>	<i>aykh</i>		
3rd	MASC	<i>er</i>	<i>em, im</i> <i>ir</i>	<i>zey</i>	
	FEM	<i>zi</i>			

Innovations

- More conservative than ‘vus’ speakers
 - 1PL *mir* in NOM
 - *ir/aykh* rather than *enk* or *aykh/aykh*
- Single 1SG and 2SG objective form (although see Jacobs 2005 for a suggestion that this already existed in NE Yiddish)
- *Zi* in NOM, *ir* in OBJ
- most speakers use *em* for 3MS rather than more conservative *im*; one speaker produces some tokens of *im*

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Standard Yiddish

Table: Pre-War/Standard Yiddish dependent possessive pronouns

		Sg. possessor		Pl. possessor	
		Sg. possessum	Pl. possessum	Sg. possessum	Pl. possessum
1st		<i>mayn</i>	<i>mayne</i>	<i>undzer</i>	<i>undzere</i>
2nd	FAM	<i>dayn</i>	<i>dayne</i>	<i>ayer</i>	<i>ayere</i>
	HON	<i>ayer</i>	<i>ayere</i>		
3rd	MASC	<i>zayn</i>	<i>zayne</i>	<i>zeyer</i>	<i>zeyere</i>
	FEM	<i>ir</i>	<i>ire</i>		
	NEUT	<i>zayn</i>	<i>zayne</i>		

Contemporary Hasidic Yiddish

Table: Contemporary Hasidic Yiddish dependent possessive pronouns

		Sg. possessor		Pl. possessor	
		Sg.	Pl.	Sg.	Pl.
		possessum	possessum	possessum	possessum
1st		<i>mayn</i>	<i>mayne</i>	<i>undzer</i>	<i>undzere</i>
2nd	FAM	<i>dayn</i>	<i>dayne</i>	<i>enker/ayer</i>	<i>enkere/ayere</i>
	HON	<i>ayer</i>	<i>ayere</i>	<i>ayer</i>	<i>ayere</i>
3rd	MASC	<i>zayn</i>	<i>zayne</i>	<i>zeyer</i>	<i>zeyere</i>
	FEM	<i>ir</i>	<i>ire/zire</i>		

Innovations

- Singular/plural possessum distinction surprisingly robust; differs from attributive adjectives and definite determiners, neither of which inflect for number (or case or gender)
- 2PL *enker*:- existed in pre-War dialects, but now nearly universal among ‘vus’ speakers
- 3FS *zir*- attested but much rarer (largely only among those who use objective *zi*, i.e. a subset of ‘vus’ speakers)

Standard Yiddish

Table: Pre-War/Standard Yiddish independent 1 SG possessive pronoun forms

	MASC	FEM	NEUT	PL
NOM	<i>mayner</i>	<i>mayne</i>	<i>mayns</i>	
ACC	<i>maynem</i>	<i>mayne</i>	<i>mayns</i>	<i>mayne</i>
DAT	<i>maynem</i>	<i>mayner</i>	<i>maynem</i>	

Contemporary Hasidic Yiddish

Table: Independent possessive pronouns in Contemporary Hasidic Yiddish

		E-forms		S-forms	
		Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
1st		<i>mayne</i>	<i>undzere</i>	<i>mayns</i>	<i>undzers</i>
2nd	FAM	<i>dayne</i>	<i>enkere</i> (<i>ayere</i>)	<i>dayns</i>	<i>enkers</i> (<i>ayers</i>)
	HON	<i>ayere</i>	<i>ayere</i>	<i>ayers</i>	<i>ayers</i>
3rd	MASC	<i>zayne</i>	<i>zeyere</i>	<i>zayns</i>	<i>zeyers</i>
	FEM	<i>ire (zire)</i>		<i>irs</i>	

Innovations

- Two distinct forms, but no differentiation in terms of case, gender, number, etc.
- Most speakers use both forms in seemingly free variation
- Others (primarily Israelis and ‘vos’ speakers) use only the -e forms
- None use only -s forms
- Very few tokens of \emptyset forms

Innovations in Contemporary Hasidic Yiddish possessives

Distinct patterns for dependent and independent possessives:

- Dependent

- Distinguish between singular (-Ø) and plural (-e) possessa
 - unlike attributive adjectives

- Independent

- No case/gender morphology
- Do not distinguish between singular and plural possessa
- Two variants, often used interchangeably: -e and -s

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Standard Yiddish

Table: Pre-War/Standard Yiddish proximal demonstratives

	MASC	FEM	NEUT	PL
NOM	<i>der</i>	<i>di</i>	<i>dos</i>	
ACC	<i>dem</i>	<i>di</i>	<i>dos</i>	<i>di</i>
DAT	<i>dem</i>	<i>der</i>	<i>dem</i>	

Table: Pre-War/Standard Yiddish distal demonstratives

	MASC	FEM	NEUT	PL
NOM	<i>yener</i>	<i>yene</i>	<i>yens</i>	
ACC	<i>yenem</i>	<i>yene</i>	<i>yens</i>	<i>yene</i>
DAT	<i>yenem</i>	<i>yene</i>	<i>yenem</i>	

Demonstratives

Table: Patterns of demonstrative use in Contemporary Hasidic Yiddish

	Dependent	Independent NOM	OBJ
Pattern 1	<i>deye</i> <i>yene</i>		<i>deye</i> <i>yene</i>
Pattern 2	<i>deye/dey</i> <i>yene</i>	<i>deys</i> <i>yens</i>	<i>deye</i> <i>yene</i>
Pattern 3	<i>deye/dey</i> <i>yene</i>	<i>dos</i> <i>yens</i>	<i>deye</i> <i>yene</i>
Pattern 4	<i>di/der/dem</i> <i>yene/yener/yenem</i>	<i>dos</i> <i>yene/ yens</i>	<i>dos/dem</i> <i>yene/yenem</i>

Innovations

- *D*-stems are much more widespread than English *this*, Modern Hebrew *(ha)ze*, *(ha)ele*; *y*-stems are used primarily for contrast
- ‘Vos’ speakers usually use more conservative Pattern 4, i.e. no distinct *d*-stem
- ‘Vus’ speakers have innovative dedicated *d*-stem — some variation in actual stem (although see Krogh 2012; Assouline 2014 for mention of this stem)

Innovations

- Dependent demonstratives:
 - have no case, gender or number distinctions
 - unlike dependent possessives
 - have variable *-e* suffix on *d*-stem
 - unlike attributive adjectives
- Independent demonstratives:
 - have a case distinction: *-s* forms are used only in the nominative, most participants use *-e* forms only or mostly in objective
 - look like pronouns
 - have no gender or number marking
 - have no bare form

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Summary

- Simplification of personal pronoun paradigm
 - Except second person, which features innovative 2PL/2HON split
- System appears to be in flux: inter- and intraspeaker variation
- Possessives
 - Dependent possessive morphology largely unchanged, some innovations in stems
 - Independent possessives have lost case/gender inflection but reanalysed some inflectional endings (particularly -s) as a marker of independent/dependent distinction
 - Number marking in dependent but not (consistently) in independent possessives

Summary

- Demonstratives
 - Innovation of distinct ‘distal’ demonstrative stem, some variation in form
 - Absence of consistent case/gender/number marking on all demonstratives
 - Distal/proximal distinction unlike that of English, Modern Hebrew or pre-War varieties
 - Independent possessives look like pronouns, dependents are distinct from determiners, attributives, possessives
- Younger ‘vos’ speakers look more like ‘vus’ speakers than their older counterparts (consistent with Belk et al. Under review)
- **None of these innovations appears to be due to contact!**

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