

Revival of Hebrew Language: Misinterpretation and Causes

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Abstract: The revival of Hebrew language at the turn of the 19th century and 20th century has been regarded as the “miracle” in the field of sociolinguistics due to its uniqueness and unrepeatability. Such interpretation generates three misunderstandings requiring to be clarified: Hebrew revival is the renaissance of the dead Hebrew language; Ben-Yehuda plays a decisive role in the process; and there is a sustainable support from the nation-level language policy. The analysis of these misconceptions demonstrate dual-dimensions of the revival of Hebrew language. The first dimension is a sacred one, i.e. the linguistic heritage protected by Jewish tradition. The second dimension is a secular one, which is epitomized in the language practice in Israeli communal farms and the impact of Zionist ideology. Both dimensions function as the primal impetus throughout the revival process, revealing the dynamic identity construction of the Jewish people in a new historical context.

Keywords: revival of Hebrew language; misinterpretation; Judaism; language practice; Zionism