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950 North Main Street, 2nd Floor
Findlay, OH 45840

Mailing Address:
PO Box 479
Findlay, OH 45839

419-434-4200

Biblical Hebrew Teaching Methods:
What Helps Learners Retain the Language?

A Project Report

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By

Katie M. Erickson

Winebrenner Theological Seminary

Findlay, Ohio

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Abstract

This project focused on Biblical Hebrew and how multiple teaching methods used in seminaries affect learners' retention and continued use of the language. The goal of any teaching is for students to learn, retain, and continue using the skills they gain. What is the relationship between the teaching method for Biblical Hebrew and continued use by seminary graduates?

This research used a qualitative methodology. Current Biblical Hebrew instructors were interviewed to determine a baseline for teaching methods and practices. Individuals who had learned Biblical Hebrew within the last ten years were interviewed to determine how they were taught the language, current usage of the language, and how much they estimate to have retained.

The sample size of learners who did not experience the Grammar-Translation Method was small, and the highest retention percentage was found in those who were taught with the Second Language Acquisition (SLA) method. However, those learners took Biblical Hebrew courses within the last four years. It can be provisionally concluded that SLA produces the highest retention rate, realizing that a larger data set is needed for a definitive conclusion.

The findings of this research demonstrate that the instructor's philosophy of teaching is a more important factor for retention and continued use of the language than which formal pedagogic method was used. The instructor being relatable and approachable, making class time enjoyable, providing opportunities to use the skills students are learning, and providing supplemental resources appear to be more important for student success than which formal pedagogical method is used. The learner's motivation also has a significant impact, as does the length and structure of the course as a whole. While an "ideal" Biblical Hebrew teaching method for optimum retention remains elusive, the conclusions from this research provide guidance to instructors to improve language retention and continued usage for their students.

Acknowledgments

When I was twelve years old, I made up my own language that was based on analyzing English sounds and then giving them other sounds. I became quite fluent in it, though sadly, no one else did. I took three years of Spanish classes in high school and one year in college, and it came very easily to me. A few years later, I was afraid to take Biblical Greek as I was preparing to start seminary for my Master of Divinity degree, hearing many horror stories of its difficulty. Multiple relatives strongly encouraged me to make sure I got help as soon as I began to struggle even a small amount. That struggle never came. The next year, I began studying Biblical Hebrew. Sometime during my first term of Biblical Hebrew, God finally revealed it to me: He gave me a gift for languages! At the same time, He revealed a new dream job to me: teaching biblical languages in a seminary setting. That looked nothing like my current career at the time as an electrical engineer!

After completing my Master of Divinity in 2010 with a specialization in Biblical Languages, having taken every language course available and then creating some, I immediately wanted to work on my doctorate so I could pursue teaching at the master's level. But God had other plans. First, God arranged for me to begin teaching Biblical Hebrew to a young man in high school, which accelerated my passion for Biblical Hebrew and gave me confidence and a greater passion for teaching in general. In a great lesson of patience and trust in Him, God made me wait until the summer of 2020 to begin this endeavor. I could hardly believe that after ten years, God was finally giving me the green light to begin my Doctor of Ministry degree! But it was very clear that this was God-ordained and God-orchestrated, as He worked together multiple pieces in my life to allow this to happen. This project stems from two areas I am passionate about: Biblical Hebrew and teaching. I pray that God will open the doors for me to continue to

use these two passions simultaneously to help others grow in knowledge and love for His Word as I have through this beautiful language and opportunities to share it with others.

I am very thankful to everyone at Winebrenner Theological Seminary, where I have found a home and a family since 2007—first, as a master’s student terrified of embarking on this degree, then as a writing stylist for other DMin students from 2008-2020, then as an alumnus who just would not leave even after graduation, then as the alumni coordinator since 2014, and now as a doctoral student. All those who have been a part of the faculty and staff at Winebrenner throughout the years have made this journey an exciting one, and I hope to continue this relationship with the seminary in the years ahead. Special thanks are due to Dr. Jim Davison for teaching me Greek, to Dr. Gary Staats for teaching me Hebrew, and especially to Dr. Kathryn Helleman for her unending patience with me as I progressed through this doctoral journey.

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Chapter One

Introduction to the Problem

“I have often advised you to learn the Hebrew language and not to neglect it so. For even if this language were useless otherwise, one should still learn it out of thankfulness.... In it we hear God speak, we hear how the saints call upon God and achieve the mightiest deeds.”¹ This quote from Martin Luther in 1532 provides his perspective on the importance of learning the Biblical Hebrew language. However, have things changed in the last five centuries since Luther was alive? Is Biblical Hebrew still important today? Do students who have taken courses in Biblical Hebrew still employ this language in their lives or work? If this language is still important today, what is the best method that can be used to teach and learn it?

The Importance of Biblical Hebrew

Every English Bible is a translation, whether directly from Hebrew and Greek or from another language. Because of the abundance of English Bible translations, some Christians may dispute one or another version and grab hold of another. Many Christians do not realize why there are differences among English translations, and awareness of the original languages that are the source of many of these translations could alleviate that misunderstanding.² However, not everyone needs to be a linguistic expert. “It is important to emphasize up front that not everyone needs to know the biblical languages, even though all should seek to know God.... Linguistic

¹ Ewald M. Plass, ed., *What Luther Says: A Practical In-Home Anthology for the Active Christian* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1959), 729.

² Bruce K. Waltke, “How I Changed My Mind About Teaching Hebrew (or Retained it),” *Crux* 29, no. 4 (December 1993): 14.

skill also does not necessarily result in deeper levels of holiness or in greater knowledge of God.”³

So, why should anyone learn Biblical Hebrew? DeRouchie provides four reasons for using the biblical languages: they promote God’s word as foundational because of God’s wisdom in giving His word in book form, they help people study God’s word with greater certainty of the author’s original meaning intended by God, they help people practice God’s word and develop Christian maturity, and they assist in preaching and teaching God’s word and in defending its truth.⁴ Howell, Merkle, and Plummer provide three overall reasons for the benefits of studying Biblical Hebrew: it helps us to interpret the Bible correctly, it is a time-saver for ministry when learned well enough to use it effectively, and it emphasizes the value of God’s word.⁵ This does not mean that English translations are ineffective; rather, the numerous English and non-biblical language translations that exist today point to the need for people to continue to be able to accurately evaluate the source from which they were translated.⁶

In all matters of faith and practice these Scriptures (i.e. the Greek and Hebrew Scriptures) are to govern our approach.... With a knowledge of the languages we are able to read and interpret the Scriptures in the God-given languages without so much dependence on translations and commentaries. No generation of Christians can be content to rest on the legacy of the past in regard to biblical study. We have an obligation to search the Scriptures for ourselves, and to go back yet again to the source of our Christian faith and practice. Detailed and accurate study of those sources can only be done using the Greek and Hebrew Scriptures.⁷

³ Jason S. DeRouchie, “The Profit of Employing the Biblical Languages: Scriptural and Historical Reflections,” *Themelios* 37, no. 1 (2012): 33.

⁴ DeRouchie, 34.

⁵ Adam J. Howell, Benjamin L. Merkle, and Robert L. Plummer, *Hebrew for Life: Strategies for Learning, Retaining, and Reviving Biblical Hebrew* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2020), 5-9.

⁶ DeRouchie, 38.

⁷ Allan M. Harman, “The Place of the Biblical Languages in the Theological Curriculum,” *The Reformed Theological Review* 50, no. 3 (Sep-Dec 1991): 94.

Chisolm asserts that studying the original texts “provides exegetical accuracy and theological depth, which in turn should give substance to the various facets of ministry and stimulate spiritual growth.... One cannot preach credibly and competently from the Old Testament without a working knowledge of Hebrew and basic exegetical skills.”⁸ While there are many tools available for assisting with language skills (exponentially more today than when Chisolm published this work in 1998), and one could argue the role of the Holy Spirit in preaching a credible and competent sermon, the available tools do not automatically give one a competent level of knowledge.⁹ Language study resources and tools are extremely valuable, but one must have a level of language proficiency in order to adequately use them. Fields provides additional reasons for mastering tools for studying the Old Testament, including that studying Hebrew is valuable for studying both the Old Testament, which then influences one’s understanding of the New Testament.¹⁰ Bruggemann agrees that the two testaments come together as a key component of the Christian faith, pointing to Jesus as the Messiah. The goal of students of the Bible studying Hebrew is not simply to learn the language; “the end goal of studying Hebrew is to know the God who has revealed himself through His word.”¹¹

However, some believe that studying the original languages of the Bible is a waste of time. Mel Lawrenz argues that pushing the belief that Hebrew and Greek are required to study the Bible is “tragic” because the word of God is available to everyone. He warns that the Christian community may become divided into those “elites” who know the original languages

⁸ Robert B. Chisolm, *From Exegesis to Exposition: A Practical Guide to Using Biblical Hebrew* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 8, 10.

⁹ Chisolm, 10.

¹⁰ Lee M. Fields, *Hebrew for the Rest of Us: Using Hebrew Tools without Mastering Biblical Hebrew* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 8.

¹¹ Howell, Merkle, and Plummer, 2.

and everyone else who becomes dependent on them for in-depth study of the Bible. However, Lawrenz does agree that it is valuable for Bible scholars to use Hebrew and Greek to create our English translations and commentaries.¹² Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart assert that discovering the original, intended meaning of the biblical text (exegesis) is the primary task of anyone who reads the Scriptures. This task can often require assistance from an “expert” who is trained in the language and context surrounding the text, but that is not required to do good exegesis.¹³ Fee and Stuart note that the Holy Spirit is a key aspect of the process of exegesis in discovering the intended meaning of a text and applying it to our present situation.¹⁴

Howell, Merkle, and Plummer provide objections that people have to studying Biblical Hebrew: it is a difficult language, those in ministry can serve God without it, and it is not practical. But they also provide evidence that those objections do not need to stand in the way of a person studying this language.¹⁵ “The objection that Hebrew is difficult is true! However, something being difficult doesn’t mean that it is impossible—or that it’s not worth every moment of effort devoted to it.”¹⁶ While many translations and commentaries are available, the point of individuals learning Biblical Hebrew is to understand why others have translated and commented on the Bible in the ways that they have. Learning Hebrew is practical because it can provide

¹² Mel Lawrenz, “Do We Need to Know Hebrew and Greek in Order to Properly Study the Bible?” BibleGateway Blog, May 26, 2016, <https://www.biblegateway.com/blog/2016/05/do-we-need-to-know-hebrew-and-greek-in-order-to-properly-study-the-bible/>.

¹³ Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 23-24.

¹⁴ Fee and Stuart, 30.

¹⁵ Howell, Merkle, and Plummer, 9-15.

¹⁶ Howell, Merkle, and Plummer, 11.

personal spiritual benefits, those who preach and teach the Bible gain confidence, and it helps people defend the gospel truth and stand up against false teaching.¹⁷

While the case can be made that many good resources and translations of the Bible are available in English, it can be shown that the study of the biblical languages, including Hebrew, is valuable for continued study and exegesis of the Bible.

Teaching Methods

If a person desires to learn Biblical Hebrew, how does one go about doing so? One common way, though by far not the only way, is through a graduate-level theological seminary education, which will be the focus of this study.

Many techniques have been used over the centuries to teach languages, including imitation, repetition, using a limited vocabulary initially, helping students practice reading and speaking, and teaching through pictures. As general foreign language teaching moved into the twentieth century, additional approaches emerged, including the grammar-translation method, direct method, reading approach, audiolingualism, cognitive code, affective/humanistic approach, and a functional approach. The grammar-translation approach focuses on grammatical parsing and learning vocabulary with little speaking in the target language. The direct method is opposed to the grammar-translation method in that none of the student's native language is spoken; actions and pictures are used to teach. The reading approach focuses solely on reading comprehension in the target language. Audiolingualism focuses on listening and speaking, with reading and writing occurring much later. Cognitive code uses the learning of rules to learn a language rather than habits; perfection is not expected but rather becoming more native in

¹⁷ Howell, Merkle, and Plummer, 12-17.

language use. The affective/humanistic approach emphasizes meaningful verbal communication and interaction with peers to support learning. Finally, the functional approach focuses on what usage is relevant for the students learning the language, perhaps in a specialized field.¹⁸

According to McQuinn, these can be summarized into two fundamental approaches to teaching a language: using the language and analyzing it.¹⁹ Typical biblical language instruction at the seminary level occurs in the analyzing category, often using the grammar-translation approach. This process happens in the students' native language, not in the language to be learned. The emphasis is placed on memorization of grammatical forms and the analytical process involved in rote memorization of forms, vocabulary, and rules. The other approach is for students to learn the language through use of the language, which is the way humans naturally learn their first language and how foreign languages were taught throughout earlier history—informally and by usage rather than analytically. Often, the teaching of language has fluctuated between these two extremes rather than attempting to employ both for more well-rounded language acquisition.²⁰

There is a common belief that second language acquisition happens best at younger ages, and there are scientific studies that support this belief and studies that refute it. Research such as Singleton and Ryan present indicates that early exposure to a second language may provide some advantages in the long run. Given the proper learning environment, adults who are middle-aged

¹⁸ Marianne Celce-Murica, "Language Teaching Methods from the Ancient Greeks to Gattegno," *MEXTESOL Journal* 4, no. 4 (1980): 3-5.

¹⁹ Scott J. McQuinn, "Toward a Principled Communicative Methodology for Teaching the Biblical Languages" (Master's thesis, Fresno Pacific University, 2017): 11.

²⁰ McQuinn, 8-16.

or elderly can be as successful in learning a second language as younger students.²¹ Therefore, the fact that learners of Biblical Hebrew are typically adults should not affect their capacity to learn, given appropriate learning conditions.

Learning in general, including for languages, happens when the student makes a connection with a concept that has been previously learned. To retain language memorization long-term, elements such as spatial and visual patterns, building on previous knowledge, emotional engagement, physical engagement, and where the information is stored in the brain are critical. Applying the concepts learned and doing self-assessment are key to helping adults learn new concepts well.²² Biblical language instruction in a graduate setting may not include all of these critical elements or this style of a learning community, so the overall approach may or may not match up with how the brain acquires, comprehends, and retains languages. Listening to lectures, working through translation exercises, and test-taking do not necessarily result in deep learning of biblical languages, so a radical approach may be needed.²³ Marysia Johnson agrees that a major shift in the understanding of second language research needs to occur. Many current models are linear and focus on knowing a language rather than being able to competently use the language. Her desire is to solve this problem by providing an approach that focuses on performance within social contexts rather than simply ending with knowing the basics of a language.²⁴

²¹ David Singleton and Lisa Ryan, *Language Acquisition: The Age Factor*, 2nd ed. (Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters LTD, 2004), 227.

²² MaryKate Morse, "Enhancing the Learning and Retention of Biblical Languages for Adult Students," *Teaching Theology and Religion* 7, no. 1 (2004): 46-47.

²³ Morse, 47.

²⁴ Marysia Johnson, *A Philosophy of Second Language Acquisition* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004), 3-5.

Problem Statement

Students who take at least one Biblical Hebrew course are spending time and energy to be taught this language. But are they applying that knowledge after the course is over and the grades have been submitted? Have students realized any value of Biblical Hebrew in their lives and work? Does the method of teaching employed in a Biblical Hebrew course help or hinder the student's further use of this language?

The first goal of learning any additional language is comprehension of that language, and the next goal is to use it in some meaningful way. The researcher has been unable to locate a statistic to determine what percentage of students who have taken a Hebrew course continue to use those skills within certain time frames after gaining those skills. This research will generate that data for a sample population of seminary graduates.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this research is to gather data and to learn from experiences regarding how instructors have taught Biblical Hebrew, how students have learned Biblical Hebrew, and how they are (or are not) using it after they have completed their coursework. A primary goal for learning any language is to retain it for further use. However, students need to be well-equipped to use the languages after their formal education so they may yield a better return for the time and money invested in their studies, even if they only take introductory courses in the languages. Biblical language courses should provide students with critical thinking skills regarding the Bible, not just grammatical information.²⁵ Thinking critically is the goal of language

²⁵ Rolf A. Jacobson, "Learning Hebrew by Writing in English," *Teaching Theology and Religion* 14, no. 2 (2011): 126-127.

comprehension, with the sister goal of retention that is required for students to continue to use these skills beyond required coursework.

Research Question

The research method will be described in further detail in Chapter Three. The research question that will be addressed is: What is the relationship between the teaching method for Biblical Hebrew and continued use by seminary graduates?

As with any subject, there are multiple teaching methods available to provide Biblical Hebrew instruction. It is important to note that there is not one teaching method that is ideal for all students. A universal method that works well for every learner does not exist, and each student or instructor may have preferences that suit their learning or teaching style better.²⁶ The goal of this research is first, to identify various teaching methods that are used in seminaries, and second, to determine if there is a relationship between each teaching method and continued use of the language by seminary graduates.

Delimitations

This research is limited to teaching methods for the Biblical Hebrew language, though there are applications of the findings with other languages and other fields of study. Research participants are limited to instructors and students from institutions accredited by the Association of Theological Schools (ATS). These students are further limited to those who have taken at least one class in Biblical Hebrew grammar within the last ten years.

²⁶ Marie Roubalová, Roman Králik, and Peter Kondrla, "Importance and Method of Teaching Biblical Hebrew and Aramaic in Religious Education of Children and Adults," *Journal of Education Culture and Society* no. 1 (2021): 65.

Assumptions and Bias

The primary underlying assumption of this research is that the Biblical Hebrew language is valuable for studying the Bible. This researcher believes that knowledge of the biblical languages is beneficial to any person who desires to understand the Bible at a deeper level than English translations can provide. The researcher agrees with Waltke, who states, “The logic of this Christian theology, that God revealed himself through the Scripture, inescapably led me to the conclusion that the authenticity of that knowledge rested on a precise understanding of the biblical languages.”²⁷

The researcher brings bias to this study in that she has a passion for the language of Biblical Hebrew and sees its value in understanding the Bible as a whole. As an evangelical, the researcher holds Scripture in high regard. It is this researcher’s goal to minimize the influence of these biases on this study. It is also to be noted that the researcher has not received any formal instruction in the field of educational or teaching theories. In addition, the researcher has not yet had an opportunity to teach at the graduate level, though she has taught in non-academic settings.

²⁷ Waltke, 11.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

This literature review will look at Scriptural support for the teaching and learning of Biblical Hebrew, a historical theological perspective, a contemporary theological perspective, and theories of learning. Primary theories of teaching Biblical Hebrew will be discussed, along with other approaches for teaching and learning this language. A sampling of resources for teaching Biblical Hebrew will be analyzed as well.

Theological Warrant

There is a theological warrant for the study of language. God created us in His image,²⁸ and one of the many abilities that God has given to people is our ability to use language. Mankind is the only animal that uses language to its fullest capabilities – not only spoken but also written. God used language to create everything that exists out of nothing,²⁹ and language has a special place in His creation. “Among all the works or gifts of God the most outstanding is the faculty of speech, for by this activity alone man is set apart from all animals.... Therefore this fact is itself a proof that the word is of a most exalted nature.”³⁰ The purpose of God’s creation is to bring glory to God, and mankind has the ability to use language to do that. Mankind should desire to use all language to bring glory to God. One way that can be accomplished is through learning, studying, and retaining skills in the languages in which God chose to communicate His word.

²⁸ Genesis 1:26-27. Note that all Scripture passages quoted are NIV.

²⁹ Genesis 1:1-3.

³⁰ Plass, 727.

Scriptural, Theological, and Historical Support

The study of the sacred texts of Scripture is an essential component of orthodoxy and orthopraxy. Believers today stand on the shoulders of those who have gone before; therefore, it is important to look at the historical theological perspective of studying the Bible in its original languages.

Scripture as a Primary Source for Orthopraxy and Orthodoxy

When consulting literature regarding Biblical Hebrew, one of the first books to start with is the Bible—the primary source of Biblical Hebrew that exists today. The goal of learning and teaching Biblical Hebrew is typically to read the Bible. As established in Chapter One, while many good resources and translations of the Bible are available in English, the study of the biblical languages, including Hebrew, is valuable for continued study and exegesis of the Bible.

There is no Scripture passage that says, “You shall learn and study Biblical Hebrew.” However, the Scriptures contain multiple passages that point to its inherent value. For example, Psalm 18:30 says, “As for God, His way is perfect: The LORD’s word is flawless; He shields all who take refuge in Him.”³¹ “The Lord’s perfections are those qualities by which He relates to His creation. He is full of ‘integrity’ to those who respond to Him with ‘integrity.’ His word, likewise, is ‘tested’ and found to be ‘flawless.’ Flawlessness is that quality of perfection the silversmith or goldsmith is only able to obtain after repeating the process of refining to obtain

³¹ Psalm 18:30.

90+ percent of purity. God’s word is ‘pure’ without trials and therefore dependable.”³² Later in the Psalms, it is written, “Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.”³³

The figures of lamp and light express the blessings of Yahweh, the guidance that He provides by means of His word, that is, the Law; my feet and my path are synonyms, meaning the psalmist’s behavior, his conduct, his life as a pious Israelite. A lamp to my feet means a light that lights up the path I walk on. In some languages, it will be necessary to make explicit the function of the light, that is, to shine; for example, “a light to shine on my path” or “a light to shine in the place where I walk.”³⁴ These verses indicate that God’s word is valuable—it is flawless, and it lights the way for those who follow it. The words translated as “word” in each of these passages specifically refer to a spoken utterance,³⁵ but today the Church has those spoken utterances in written form.

In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus taught the crowds that hearing His words and putting them into practice shows that they are like a wise man who built his house on the solid rock foundation instead of a foundation sand that will shift.³⁶ This passage comes at the very end of what is known as the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus taught many concepts during this sermon, and this passage emphasizes that it is not enough for the people to hear Jesus’ teachings, but they need to put them into practice as well. “Verses 21-23 contrast ‘saying’ and ‘doing;’ these verses

³² Frank E. Gaebelein and J. D. Douglas, eds., *Expositor’s Bible Commentary* (Olive Tree Bible Software), “Psalm 18:30-36.”

³³ Psalm 119:105.

³⁴ Robert G. Bratcher and William D. Reyburn, *UBS Old Testament Handbook Series: Psalms* (American Bible Society; Olive Tree Bible Software), “119:105-106.”

³⁵ William D. Mounce, ed., *Mounce’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Olive Tree Bible Software), [614].

³⁶ Matthew 7:24.

contrast ‘hearing’ and ‘doing,’ not unlike James 1:22-25; 2:14-20. Moreover, the will of the Father (v. 21) becomes definitive in what Jesus calls ‘these words of mine’ (v. 24): *his teaching is definitive.*”³⁷ Similarly, it’s not enough for students of the Bible to simply read the text, but it must be put into practice. The words of Jesus need to be put into practice; to do so, the words must first be understood, and that understanding can happen in a deeper way through studying the Bible in its original languages.

Reformation theologian Martin Luther believed that the gospel and doctrinal integrity would perish without continued use of Biblical Greek and Hebrew, and he passionately believed that Scripture is the authority over the Church. While one of Luther’s main areas of focus was to provide a translation of the Bible in the everyday language of the people (German in this situation), Luther actively promoted Greek and Hebrew as valuable. God revealed the Scriptures to mankind in those languages; therefore, they should be treasured and learned well. Teachers of God’s word should understand the original languages in order to clearly understand the word themselves, to protect correct doctrine, and to teach others. In fact, the original languages were pivotal to Luther starting the Reformation.³⁸

John Calvin preached from the original languages and considered them essential for education in the Bible. While preaching, he would translate from the original language directly, not even using notes but relying on his previous study.³⁹ Calvin’s skill and knowledge of the

³⁷ Gaebelein and Douglas, “Matthew 7:24-27.”

³⁸ Peter Goeman, “The Reformers and the Original Languages: Calvin and Luther on the Importance of Greek and Hebrew in Theology and Ministry,” *The Master’s Seminary Journal* 28, no. 1 (Spring 2017): 8-10.

³⁹ Goeman, 10.

Biblical languages formed the heart of his ministry—his preaching and the commentaries that he wrote.⁴⁰

The author of Hebrews writes, “For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.”⁴¹ This phrase, “the word of God,” is only used in one other place by the author of Hebrews (13:7), and that shows that it can be either spoken or written. The word of God is God speaking to us, both through Jesus and through the Scriptures. Hebrews 4 demonstrates some of the functions of God’s word, including penetrating a believer to his or her very core. “‘Living and active’ shows that there is a dynamic quality about God’s revelation. It does things.... The word of God is unique. No sword can penetrate as it can. ... What the author is saying is that God’s word can reach to the innermost recesses of our being.”⁴² It is not a stagnant book but one that is alive and active; therefore, those who study the Bible should desire to read and teach in the most accurate form possible.

Orthopraxy

The Scriptures, and thus Biblical Hebrew, are important for orthopraxy in the Church. The apostle Paul shared the importance of the Scriptures with Timothy in his letters. Paul wrote, “Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching.”⁴³ This was Paul’s charge to Timothy, and the principle of this text applies to the Church today as well. Those in the Church today should also be devoted to the public reading, preaching, and

⁴⁰ Michael A. G. Haykin, “Calvin and the Biblical Languages,” *Puritan Reformed Journal* 1, no. 1 (January 2009): 216.

⁴¹ Hebrews 4:12.

⁴² Gaebelien and Douglas, “Hebrews 4:12.”

⁴³ 1 Timothy 4:13.

teaching of Scripture. “Until Paul came, Timothy was to devote himself ‘to the public reading of Scripture.’ ... He was also to give himself to ‘preaching.’ This is an important part of every pastor’s duties. He must not only read the word of God to His people but also exhort them to obey it.”⁴⁴ “The word should be heard and read above all else. It is the vehicle of the Holy Spirit.”⁴⁵

In Paul’s second letter to Timothy, he wrote, “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”⁴⁶ This passage explains multiple uses for the word of God, with the end goal of equipping God’s servants to do His work. “The purpose of all this is that ‘the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.’”⁴⁷ All of these uses, including being equipped for every good work, may be accomplished better if the one using Scripture has a deeper understanding of it through the original languages. While Biblical Greek is clearly necessary for this understanding as well, the focus of this research is specifically Biblical Hebrew.

Luther and other Reformers had reasons for such a strong appeal to the original languages. Throughout the Middle Ages, most Christians in Western Europe had no knowledge of Greek or Hebrew. Instead, they based their religious beliefs on a Latin translation known as the Latin Vulgate. And some poorly translated passages in the Vulgate were used to support the

⁴⁴ Gaebelein and Douglas, “1 Timothy 4:13.” Note that while the researcher believes that the pastoral role is for both men and women, the source quoted uses only the masculine pronoun in this instance.

⁴⁵ Plass, 1462.

⁴⁶ 2 Timothy 3:16-17.

⁴⁷ Gaebelein and Douglas, “2 Timothy 3:17.”

very practices and beliefs that the Reformers' protested. This impacted his whole understanding of salvation, of justification by faith and of the grace of God.⁴⁸

Orthodoxy

However, there are some historical figures in the Church who did not support the continued study and use of Biblical Hebrew. Marcion, a heretic of the second century, believed that the message of the gospel was love and not the law. Therefore, he rejected the Old Testament, Judaism as a whole, and the Hebrew language.⁴⁹ This researcher was unable to locate any non-heretical historical voices who do not value the study of Biblical Hebrew, thus strengthening the argument that knowledge of the biblical languages assists theologians in upholding sound doctrine.

While historical Church fathers appear to consider the original languages of great importance, the ability to accurately interpret God's word continues to ensure the orthodoxy of preaching and teaching.

The institutional instructions that are the focus of this project are evangelical in theology. "All evangelicals hold to the authority of Scripture as the only sufficient guide in matters of faith and practice. If there is one doctrine which would determine whether one is evangelical or not, it would have to be the authority of Scripture."⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Benjamin Hawkins, "Reformers Urged Learning of Biblical Languages," Baptist Press, February 20, 2017, <https://www.baptistpress.com/resource-library/news/reformers-urged-learning-of-biblical-languages/>.

⁴⁹ André Villeneuve, "On the Importance of Biblical Hebrew in Catholic Seminaries and Academic Institutions," ResearchGate, January 2017, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/315835729_On_the_Importance_of_Biblical_Hebrew_in_Catholic_Seminaries_and_Academic_Institutions, 2.

⁵⁰ David L. Smith, *A Handbook of Contemporary Theology: Tracing Trends and Discerning Directions in Today's Theological Landscape* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 45.

It is important for scholars today to study the Old Testament because it was the Bible of the early church. It was the “source book for preaching (cf. Acts 2:14-36 and 3:12-26) and public readings.”⁵¹ The New Testament highlights and quotes many different aspects of the Old Testament, and Jesus was prophesied as the Messiah in it. The themes of Christ in the Old Testament were the foundation for the salvation message as preached to both the Jews and the Gentiles in New Testament times.⁵²

It can be intimidating to begin to study the Bible in its original languages. “Studying the Old Testament is a monumental task, but proper preparation can help the student to reap a rich harvest.... God’s revelation did not come in the English language or through Western culture. As a result, we may have to work harder to receive the message clearly.”⁵³ While this thought in its context is specifically pointing toward needing to understand the culture of the Old Testament world, it also applies to understanding the original language of the Old Testament. “Translators do their best to keep our Holy Scriptures available and accurate for us in our mother tongue. And their ‘best’ is the very best—no age and language have been as blessed in devout and skilled translators as ours. But there is nothing quite like working with the original languages on their own unique terms. A translation is still a translation.”⁵⁴ The nature of language is that it must be interpreted to be translated, so a fundamental problem exists that every translation is a commentary on the text.⁵⁵

⁵¹ Andrew E. Hill and John H. Walton, *A Survey of the Old Testament*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 743.

⁵² Hill and Walton, 746.

⁵³ Hill and Walton, 21.

⁵⁴ David W. Baker and Elaine A. Health, *More Light on the Path: Daily Scripture Readings in Hebrew and Greek* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 5.

⁵⁵ Roubalová, Králik, and Kondrla, 63.

John Piper writes of the necessity of Biblical Greek and Hebrew for pastors:

Another result when pastors do not study the Bible in Greek and Hebrew is that they, and their churches with them, tend to become second-handers. The harder it is for us to get at the original meaning of the Bible, the more we will revert to the secondary literature. ... secondhand food will not sustain and deepen our people's faith and holiness. Weakness in Greek and Hebrew also gives rise to exegetical imprecision and carelessness. And exegetical imprecision is the mother of liberal theology.⁵⁶

Piper goes on to explain that if the study of Greek and Hebrew is left to the academics in the seminaries and not those who are weekly teaching the Bible, the languages are one step removed from where they are most needed. Pastors need to be strong in the word, which they will be by studying the original languages, to become skilled in exegesis of the original meaning of the Scriptures.⁵⁷

Theories of Learning

The learning sciences is a broad field that encompasses all forms and processes of learning, from formal education at all ages and stages of development to how people learn through informal means. When education was first organized, the predominant theory was to provide students with knowledge as a collection of facts transmitted by a teacher. Success was demonstrated by testing to determine how many facts the student had acquired. In the 1970s, emerging theories in psychology, sociology, and other disciplines began to develop a new science of learning that focuses on a deeper understanding of concepts rather than simply memorizing a list of facts. Students must participate in their own learning in more active ways to

⁵⁶ John Piper, *Brothers, We Are Not Professionals: A Plea to Pastors for Radical Ministry* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2002), 83-84.

⁵⁷ Piper, 83-85.

gain this deeper understanding. This includes making connections to real-world problems through a proper learning environment, building on prior knowledge, and self-reflection.⁵⁸

Five learning methods influence this new multi-disciplinary science of learning: constructivism, cognitive science, educational technology, sociocultural studies, and the nature of knowledge work. Constructivism is built on the work of Jean Piaget, who contended that while children have less knowledge than adults, their knowledge is qualitatively different. Where a student is coming from and what they already know is essential to assist in their learning of new material. Learning new concepts requires building or constructing on concepts that were previously learned.⁵⁹

Cognitive science delves into how the mind works by modeling mental processes. The mind contains representations of knowledge that is modularized, similar to how computers function. The more expertise that is gained, the better the person is able to reflect upon themselves including planning and criticizing. Problem-solving and higher-order thinking skills are additional aspects of the field of cognitive science that are still being studied and developed.⁶⁰

Educational technology refers to the use of computers and the Internet in the learning process, which has grown significantly over the last few decades. On the other hand, sociocultural studies refer to learning through experiencing life in a particular culture. It can encompass learning a language while among native speakers, learning cultural norms, learning how to work in a team of people, etc. The nature of knowledge work builds on the concept of

⁵⁸ R. Keith Sawyer, "Introduction: The New Science of Learning," in *The Cambridge Handbook of the Learning Sciences*, ed. R. Keith Sawyer (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 1-2.

⁵⁹ Sawyer, 5-6.

⁶⁰ Sawyer, 6-8.

sociocultural studies as it encourages collaborative work in real-world situations to encourage learning.⁶¹

Learning also involves multiple processes: scaffolding, externalization and articulation, reflection, and moving from concrete to abstract knowledge. Scaffolding has a foundation in constructivism, and it provides clues to help a learner discover knowledge on their own by building on what he or she already knows. Externalizing and articulating allow the learner to process as the learning is happening, making discoveries while verbalizing the process. Reflection happens after a student has articulated to solidify the knowledge, and it relates to thinking about the learning process. Finally, Piaget also determined that the learning process moves from concrete concepts that are more tangible to the abstract; being able to make abstract concepts more concrete can aid in learning.⁶²

The learning theory of constructionism is related to constructivism, but rather than simply building on knowledge structures, it adds personal and social dimensions to learning. Children learn their native language and cultural cues through assimilation of personal and social interaction; therefore, the culture in which knowledge is learned is important. Constructionism places equal value on the abstract and the concrete, ideally providing the learner with objects to be used for teaching abstract concepts. It is a project-based approach that is both individual and social in nature, with a goal of learning and creating something useful.⁶³

Another learning theory that has proven useful in many situations is that of cognitive apprenticeship. This method employs observation, coaching, and practice between one teacher

⁶¹ Sawyer, 8-10.

⁶² Sawyer, 11-13.

⁶³ Yasmin B. Kafai, "Constructionism," in *The Cambridge Handbook of the Learning Sciences*, ed. R. Keith Sawyer (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 35-45.

and one or two students. Knowledge is applied to real-world problems, focusing on learning methods and being able to apply them to diverse settings. Knowledge is more generalized rather than connected to a specific situation. The goal of the learning environment is to provide content (knowledge required for the task), methods (promoting the development of skills), and sequencing (ordering learning, increasing complexity and diversity) in an environment where application is encouraged. The goal is for the learner to think or plan, then do the action that has been learned, then reflect on how it went.⁶⁴

In the process of teaching a language, there are four ways in which an instructor assists the student: “(1) input; (2) explicit instruction; (3) production practice; and (4) negative feedback.”⁶⁵ Input assists the student in learning the syntax and structure of the language through various methods that highlight these elements. This may include changing the instructor’s voice inflection at a key place, highlighting or color-coding text, structured activities to learn various aspects, or giving the student an abundance of data that includes the target syntax or structure. Explicit instruction will likely follow input, with the instructor providing detailed explanation of the concept to be learned. The student will generate rules and connections in his or her brain to learn these concepts. Production practice, also referred to as output, is where the student uses what he or she has learned to generate the target language. This can be done through speaking, writing, translation, or even simple drills. Production is more than rote memorization and recall; it involves the student analyzing the target language. Negative feedback is provided by the instructor when the student’s output requires correction. This should include the correct

⁶⁴ Allan Collins, “Cognitive Apprenticeship,” in *The Cambridge Handbook of the Learning Sciences*, ed. R. Keith Sawyer (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 47-58.

⁶⁵ Jennifer E. Noonan, “Teaching Methods for Biblical Hebrew,” in *Where Shall Wisdom Be Found? A Grammatical Tribute to Professor Stephen A. Kaufman*, eds. H el ene Dallaire, Benjamin J. Noonan, and Jennifer E. Noonan (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2017), 318.

linguistic elements, not simply stating what the student did incorrectly, in order to facilitate additional learning of the correct practices.⁶⁶

Burrhus Frederic Skinner approached learning by identifying the following elements: 1) small steps where learning progresses in a linear fashion from one piece to the next, 2) overt responding where responses are either reinforced or corrected, 3) immediate feedback for those responses, and 4) self-pacing.⁶⁷ These steps can be applied to L2 learning as happening in small steps rather than large leaps, responding then receiving immediate feedback, and progressing at the student's pace. Edwin Ray Guthrie identified the theory of practice improving performance based on looking at acts and movements making up a skill.⁶⁸ While Guthrie's theory is directed toward physical skills, the concepts of practicing to obtain skills may apply to learning a language and the amount of practice needed to recognize and understand the language in a meaningful manner. While some teaching methods focus on rote memorization of grammatical rules and vocabulary words, Max Wertheimer's research led him to the conclusion that when learning is based on understanding, it is deeper and more generalizable than simply rote memorization. The language student must understand the language to achieve comprehension rather than simply memorizing words and structures.⁶⁹

Theories of Language Acquisition

Simply put, language acquisition is the way a person acquires a particular language. The detailed neurology of how a person internalizes a language is beyond the scope of this research,

⁶⁶ Noonan, "Teaching Methods for Biblical Hebrew," 318-321.

⁶⁷ Matthew H. Olson and B. R. Hergenhahn, *Introduction to Theories of Learning*, 9th ed. (New York: Psychology Press, 2013), 109.

⁶⁸ Olson and Hergenhahn, 195.

⁶⁹ Olson and Hergenhahn, 259.

but it is important to note the distinction between a person acquiring his or her first language and acquiring a second language.

There are three main theories for language acquisition: linguistic/psycholinguistic, cognitive, and socio-interactive.⁷⁰ Linguistic or psycholinguistic approaches focus on describing language and its elements and processes. The most common linguistic approach is the generative approach. “The generative approach attempts to characterize learner competence in terms of formal operations and underlying representations (syntactic, lexico-morphological, semantic, and so on).”⁷¹ The role of the first language is essential in determining how the learner processes and connects grammatical elements of the second language. The second common linguistic approach is a functional approach, which focuses more on the meaning and function of the language rather than the general structure or form. Generative approaches commonly rely on reading, whereas functional approaches rely on communication. Another common approach is known as processability theory, which characterizes language acquisition into a hierarchy of procedures that build on one another: the learner begins with words, then phrases, then sentences, then clauses.⁷²

Cognitive approaches include an emergentist position and skill theory. An emergentist believes that all learning uses the same neurological architecture. Language learning, for example, uses the same framework as learning any other skill. Knowledge of language emerges over time as the brain is exposed to it, recognizing connections between elements and frequency of patterns that occur. Skill theory states that language is a skill that is acquired like any other

⁷⁰ Bill VanPatten, “Language Acquisition Theories,” in *Manual of Language Acquisition*, ed. Christiane Fäcke (Berlin, DE: DeGruyter, 2014): 103.

⁷¹ VanPatten, 104.

⁷² VanPatten, 104-108.

skill, such as riding a bicycle or playing chess – through learning how to do that skill and practicing it. However, skill theory generally emphasizes behavior rather than knowledge, so it is less concerned with the structure of language in the brain and more concerned with using language.⁷³

Socio-interactive theories are those that embed learning in some form of social context. These theories look at how learners help themselves through the process of learning language, how the context and other participants shape language learning, and what tools the learners use in that context. The premise is that all learning occurs in some form of social culture and, therefore, that culture has an effect on learning. The focus is primarily on the observable behaviors of linguistic interaction, though a person's inner dialogue is also formed by his or her social and cultural contexts.⁷⁴

Second Language Acquisition

Second Language Acquisition (SLA) is the theory of learning an additional language in a natural method, such as how one learns his or her native language as a small child. The field of SLA grew rapidly in the 1970s and 1980s, causing a shift in how modern, spoken languages are taught in the classroom.⁷⁵

There are many unanswered questions today about how the brain processes and acquires a second language. Generally, researchers believe that there are multiple stages of development that build on one another. Many believe that the process of SLA is primarily implicit, guided by the learner's continued interaction with the language in a variety of ways. Explicit learning of

⁷³ VanPatten, 108-109.

⁷⁴ VanPatten, 109-110.

⁷⁵ Noonan, "Teaching Methods for Biblical Hebrew," 317.

specific rules may turn into implicit internalization after enough interaction. Input, interaction, and output are all key factors in SLA. Input refers to the learner being exposed to the language through hearing or reading it. Interaction involves having a conversation with another person with the intent of correcting the learner's spoken or written language through clarification requests and comprehension checks. Output is the learner producing the language through oral or written means. Practicing output improves fluency, allows the learner to check accuracy, helps the learner focus on the form of the language, finds gaps in the learner's knowledge, and creates automaticity with the language.⁷⁶

Another theory is the monitor theory, which suggests that adults have separate systems for learning a second language – subconscious acquisition and conscious learning. This theory attests that fluency occurs through subconscious acquisition, but conscious learning is needed to make corrections and improve accuracy with the language.⁷⁷ There is a spectrum of second language learners, from “overusers” who feel they must know every grammatical rule to “underusers” who have no desire for the rules but rather pick up the language intuitively. An optimal user lands in the middle of this spectrum, using grammatical rules to fill in gaps in their subconsciously acquired learning.⁷⁸ SLA is affected by both aptitude for learning a language and the student's attitude toward learning. Some students possess greater language aptitude, which can be measured by standardized linguistic tests. This aptitude is composed of inductive language skills, sensitivity to grammar, and verbal intelligence. Attitude relates to why the

⁷⁶ Alessandro Benati, “Second Language Acquisition,” in *Manual of Language Acquisition*, ed. Christiane Fäcke (Berlin, DE: DeGruyter, 2014): 185-190.

⁷⁷ Stephen D. Krashen, *Second Language Acquisition and Second Language Learning* (Oxford, UK: Pergamon Press Inc., 1981), 1-2.

⁷⁸ Krashen, 4.

student is learning the second language and how strongly he or she is motivated to do so, as well as what opportunities he or she has to use the language. Personality is also a factor of attitude, whether the student is insecure or self-confident.⁷⁹ Additionally, the learning environment relates to the monitor theory in that some students will learn better in informal, conversational environments, whereas others will learn better in formal situations. Krashen conducted studies on this monitor theory, and the result was that “subconscious language acquisition is nevertheless the central means by which adults internalize second languages, a position supported not only by research but also by the practice of successful language teachers who emphasize communicative activities in the classroom.”⁸⁰ Additionally, when considering children versus adults acquiring a second language, Krashen found that there are distinct differences in their potential, but there is no biological barrier to adults successfully acquiring a second language naturally.⁸¹

Historical Biblical Hebrew Teaching Methods

Ancient rabbis knew Biblical Hebrew well, and evidence shows that the Biblical Hebrew language continued even when it died out as a commonly spoken language. The rabbis would begin by teaching young children using the Torah and then evolve into vernacular Hebrew. Latin and Greek were also taught in this manner in the early first millennium, using texts to teach a language. Using texts to teach a language in this manner predominantly uses input from the target language rather than explicit instruction of grammatical rules.⁸²

⁷⁹ Krashen, 19-23.

⁸⁰ Krashen, 77.

⁸¹ Krashen, 81.

⁸² Noonan, “Teaching Methods for Biblical Hebrew,” 321-322.

The Grammar-Translation Method (GTM) was first seen in the medieval period in Europe with Latin as it became a scholarly language rather than a commonly spoken one. The GTM was used extensively starting in the 18th century for instruction in multiple languages, including Latin, Biblical Greek, and Biblical Hebrew, and today it is still the most common method for formal Biblical Hebrew instruction. The GTM relies heavily on explicit instruction—students learn grammatical terms and rules for the target language in the student’s native language. Vocabulary is learned through memorization of lists of words connecting words in the native and target languages. It is a systematic and deductive process with an emphasis on reference materials. Instruction is focused on talking *about* the target language rather than talking *in* the target language. A student’s level of comprehension is demonstrated by translation.⁸³

According to Noonan, the Inductive Method (IM) was introduced by William Harper in his book *Introductory Hebrew Method and Manual*, published in 1881. In this method, basic linguistic elements such as the alphabet, vocabulary, syntax, and grammar are learned as the student encounters them in a text. Grammar may be occasionally discussed explicitly, but learning occurs primarily through reading many texts in the target language and flooding the student with the language itself rather than rules about the language. The focus in the IM is on reading and translating from the target language into the student’s native language.⁸⁴

The philosophy of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) developed in the 1960s. As its name implies, it focuses on communicating in the target language rather than learning syntax and grammar. Real-world conversation is used to assist students in contextualizing and internalizing the language. Many instructors who utilize CLT provide an immersion experience

⁸³ Noonan, “Teaching Methods for Biblical Hebrew,” 322-323.

⁸⁴ Noonan, “Teaching Methods for Biblical Hebrew,” 323-324.

or as close as possible to one. This is a philosophy of teaching rather than a method, so instructors have great liberty in setting up a course structure. Grammatical rules and syntax may be taught in this method; however, that instruction often occurs in the target language.⁸⁵

Total Physical Response (TPR), developed by James Asher in the 1970s, is related to CLT in that the target language is used in an immersive sense. The instructor provides commands and directions in the target language that relate to the student moving his or her body in some way, and the student demonstrates comprehension by appropriately following the directions. The commands become more complex as the student learns, and eventually, the student is also able to give commands in the target language. While IM relies on written input, TPR relies on auditory/verbal input. A subset of TPR, known as TPR storytelling, combines commands with acting out a written story to incorporate reading and writing skills.⁸⁶

SLA has been discussed in general previously in this chapter, but here it will be addressed specifically in the context of Biblical Hebrew. While SLA is common and useful for spoken languages, Biblical Hebrew has a different goal as a “dead” language—understanding a particular text, not partaking in natural dialogue and conversation.⁸⁷

Paul Overland of Ashland Theological Seminary did a study to determine if communicative methods from SLA would enhance Biblical Hebrew language acquisition, using a course in the summer of 2002 as the research subject. He employed an immersion environment as much as possible, used instructional songs, used TPR when possible, and cultivated a relaxed environment for learning. Objective results of the study included a high retention rate of students

⁸⁵ Noonan, “Teaching Methods for Biblical Hebrew,” 324-325.

⁸⁶ Noonan, “Teaching Methods for Biblical Hebrew,” 325.

⁸⁷ Noonan, “Teaching Methods for Biblical Hebrew,” 317.

continuing on in the language and an average cumulative grade of 92.6 percent for the course. Subjectively, students identified immersion and using a variety of media, particularly songs, as the course's greatest strengths.⁸⁸ Overland notes, "As with their modern language counterparts, students of an ancient language who achieve a measure of communicative competence embed that language at a deeper level than would a classmate attaining only grammatical competence."⁸⁹ However, one key drawback to this method is the instructor; the instructor must be equipped with sufficient Biblical Hebrew language skills to be able to provide an adequate immersion experience. A variety of learning materials was also shown to be essential in this course, which requires additional effort on the instructor's part.⁹⁰ Many Biblical Hebrew instructors are only expected to be scholarly experts and are not at all fluent in conversational Hebrew, contrary to SLA teachers who have often been trained in a language immersion environment and have developed fluency.⁹¹

Using Writing for Biblical Hebrew Instruction

When learning a language natively, writing is considered the last skill to be learned. Small children first learn to listen, then speak, then read, then write. However, for adult learners of a second language, writing can be used as a tool to assist in language acquisition as well as a diagnostic tool to determine learning progress. Reading, writing, listening, and speaking all

⁸⁸ Paul Overland, "Can Communicative Methods Enhance Ancient Language Acquisition?" *Teaching Theology and Religion* 7, no. 1 (2004): 51-55.

⁸⁹ Overland, in *Teaching Theology and Religion*, 56.

⁹⁰ Overland, in *Teaching Theology and Religion*, 56-57.

⁹¹ Rahel Halabe, "The Introduction to Biblical Hebrew on a Pendulum Swing: But What's Next?" *Hebrew Higher Education* 24 (2022): 114.

reinforce one another in the language acquisition process.⁹² As noted above, writing is a key form of output that allows the learner to become more fluent and internalize the language. Learners of a second language are often frustrated by the gap that occurs between what they can say in their native tongue versus what they have the vocabulary and skills to say in the target language. This gap is more apparent in writing than in reading, listening, or speaking. Providing writing assignments that are appropriate to the level of the learner can encourage creativity and imagination while reinforcing every element of the language.⁹³

Noonan argues that a meaning-based approach is ideal for proficiency, so reading must not be the only goal; speaking, listening, and writing must also be included in the instructional process. Both input (reading and listening) and output (writing and speaking) are needed for automaticity and proficiency. These four skills will mutually reinforce one another throughout the learning process. For example, all language has a phonological component in the brain, so auditory skills such as listening and speaking reinforce reading and writing skills. Specifically, writing involves the learner using the additional skills of planning, evaluating, and revising to compose a text while simultaneously invoking the student's knowledge relating to vocabulary, grammar, and syntax.⁹⁴

According to seminary professor Rolf A. Jacobson, students invest time and money in learning the Biblical Hebrew language, and both teachers and students generally feel that there is not a great enough return on that investment. His method is to incorporate critical thinking

⁹² Adina Ofek, "Why Write If You Don't Have To: A Rationale for Writing in the Hebrew Language Classroom," *Shofar* 9, no. 3 (Spring 1991): 83-84.

⁹³ Ofek, 89-90.

⁹⁴ Jennifer E. Noonan, *A Handbook of Second Language Acquisition for Biblical Studies: Insights of Modern Language Instruction for Teaching Biblical Languages* (Wilmore, KY: GlossaHouse, 2022), 110-113.

regarding Biblical Hebrew: “The course should focus not merely on the identification and translation of forms, but on thinking critically about the Bible with and by means of new language skills.”⁹⁵ One way to encourage this critical thinking is to teach students to write critically about Biblical Hebrew in their native language—in this case, English. Writing, more than speaking, allows a persona to critically analyze his or her thoughts and view them from a different point of view. Jacobson uses English writing assignments in his introductory Biblical Hebrew seminary class to both foster students’ critical thinking and gauge their progress with the language. This critical thinking serves as scaffolding on which students build further language skills.⁹⁶

Jacobson provides four guidelines for creating these writing assignments:

1. Limit the assignments to one question or problem. Multiple prompts create confusion.
2. Implicitly or explicitly, give students a proposition to explain, defend, criticize, or modify. (This can be in the form of a thesis to analyze, a question from a hypothetical learner that they need to answer, a piece of data to explain, and so on.)
3. Supply an organizing principle for students, either implicitly or explicitly. (This can be in the form of a dialogue for which they need to write both sides, a role play that they are asked to write a monologue for, a concept that they are expected to summarize, and so on.)
4. Give a precise word limit. (Short means short; generally, two hundred and fifty to three hundred words is a good limit.)⁹⁷

In Jacobson’s experience, this strategy has increased students’ awareness of how language functions—how it is constructed, how it functions, and what challenges exist when moving between languages. It is appropriate for introductory learners as there is not the initial hurdle of learning a multitude of vocabulary and syntax of the target language.

⁹⁵ Jacobson, 127.

⁹⁶ Jacobson, 128-129.

⁹⁷ Jacobson, 129.

Learning Biblical Hebrew Vocabulary

A major focus of learning any language and across all methods is the need to learn vocabulary. It is commonly believed that when focusing on one particular text, i.e., the Hebrew Old Testament, the learner should learn vocabulary words in order of frequency, focusing on the words that occur most frequently. Often, a somewhat arbitrary line is drawn, such as learning words that occur one hundred times or more, as in *A Book-by-Book Guide to Biblical Hebrew Vocabulary*. This allows students to recognize a significant portion of words throughout the Hebrew Bible. This particular guide provides an overall frequency list and then frequency-based lists for each book of the Old Testament for the purpose of focused study in a particular book.⁹⁸

Whether reading, listening, speaking, or writing, words must be associated with meaning in order to facilitate communication. In the past, linguistics researchers have considered vocabulary to be individual words and have often encouraged students to learn root forms along with meaning; however, this becomes complicated when determining what words are considered necessary to learn, especially when irregular forms are concerned. Vocabulary may therefore be better defined as vocabulary items rather than vocabulary words, focusing on both form and meaning for each item. Scholars are divided over whether passive recall (recognizing a word in the target language) or active recall (recalling a word in the target language) is preferable. Often, textbooks group related words together, but this lack of distinction can cause learners to mix them up.⁹⁹

⁹⁸ William R. Osborne and Russell L. Meek, *A Book-by-Book Guide to Biblical Hebrew Vocabulary* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Academic, 2020), 1.

⁹⁹ Jeremy Paul Thompson, “Learning Biblical Hebrew Vocabulary: Insights from Second Language Vocabulary Acquisition” (PhD diss., University of Stellenbosch, Stellenbosch, South Africa, 2011), 12.

But what does it mean to truly learn a vocabulary word or item? This includes more than simply associating a meaning with a form. “Learning vocabulary involves learning an item’s meaning(s), written form, spoken form, grammatical behavior, collocations, register, associations, and frequency.”¹⁰⁰ This has great implications for traditional methods of teaching and learning Biblical Hebrew vocabulary that focus simply on associating a word with a meaning. Some of these additional aspects to consider a vocabulary item as “learned” can be learned implicitly, and not all of these aspects will be learned at the same time. Additional aspects will be learned as the student progresses in his or her acquisition of the language. A student may initially recognize a word form but not be able to recall it from memory, but as the student grows in knowledge, recall will occur more easily.¹⁰¹

Noonan agrees with Thompson’s theory of learning vocabulary in that truly learning involves the form, meaning, and use of the word. Learning may occur first by phonological knowledge of the spoken form and then through orthographic knowledge of the word, including its spelling and variants that may occur. The meaning of the word is more difficult, as many words have a wide range of meanings depending on context. The use of the word relates to the syntax of the language and when certain words or forms may be used. Learning vocabulary is strongly linked to the amount of repetition and practice. When a meaning connection is made in the student’s brain, that can easily be erased if repetition does not occur.¹⁰²

In Thompson’s study of how vocabulary items are learned, he identified nine strategy categories for learning vocabulary: (1) strategies involving authentic language use, (2) strategies

¹⁰⁰ Thompson, 28.

¹⁰¹ Thompson, 28-29.

¹⁰² Noonan, *A Handbook of Second Language Acquisition for Biblical Studies*, 139-141.

involving creative activities, (3) strategies used for self-motivation, (4) strategies used to create mental linkages, (5) memory strategies, (6) visual/auditory strategies, (7) strategies involving physical action, (8) strategies used to overcome anxiety, and (9) strategies used to organize words. Some of the strategies overlap multiple categories. These strategies consist of actions, behaviors, techniques, thoughts, or steps used by a learner to truly learn all aspects of the vocabulary item to be equipped to engage in passive recall, if not active recall, as well. It is important to note that not all of these strategies will work well for all students, in all target languages, or for all vocabulary items in that language.¹⁰³

Thompson evaluates some existing materials for teaching Biblical Hebrew, and his findings are similar to this researcher's experience. Vocabulary is presented as individual words linking a word with one or more meanings and typically does not include multiple-word vocabulary items.¹⁰⁴ Introductory grammars typically focus on grammatical behavior and associations and ignore collocation (words that commonly occur together). The focus is on learning paradigms, but that neglects how words occur in syntax in the Hebrew Bible.¹⁰⁵ Thompson makes the generalized statement that vocabulary knowledge in introductory grammar books is through explicit means, not through implicit learning through reading the text. In addition, if implicit learning activities are included, they are not adequate for significant learning.¹⁰⁶ Noonan identifies two primary methods of teaching vocabulary: direct and indirect teaching. Direct teaching (conscious focus on associating meanings with vocabulary words) can

¹⁰³ Thompson, 42-43.

¹⁰⁴ Thompson, 72.

¹⁰⁵ Thompson, 74-75.

¹⁰⁶ Thompson, 77-78.

be very effective, especially when combined with some indirect teaching (learning the meaning of specific words from context while focusing on the meaning of the overall text). Direct vocabulary instruction allows the brain to store that information in a way that is accessible through implicit and explicit means.¹⁰⁷ Noonan agrees that including implicit learning activities, such as instantiation and imaging, strengthen retention of vocabulary meanings.¹⁰⁸ Any kind of variety that can be added to vocabulary memorization techniques will improve retention, retrieval, and automaticity of the language. While rote memorization through flash cards is a standard, some examples of vocabulary learning methods include recycled words, using pictures on flash cards, or telling a story.¹⁰⁹

The goal of learning Biblical Hebrew vocabulary is to provide a framework to read with understanding a Biblical Hebrew text. However, this could mean learning over one thousand words, depending on the length and context of the desired text. Thompson proposes learning the vocabulary of one particular text; the book of Joshua was chosen for his study after analyzing its linguistic characteristics. Reading Joshua with adequate comprehension would require learning only 335 vocabulary items.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ Noonan, *A Handbook of Second Language Acquisition for Biblical Studies*, 144-145.

¹⁰⁸ Noonan, *A Handbook of Second Language Acquisition for Biblical Studies*, 142-143. Instantiation involves recalling a specific experience or example of the word's meaning, which may include picturing an item associated with a word or a personal experience with it. Imaging involves creating a particular visual image that is associated with the word.

¹⁰⁹ Noonan, *A Handbook of Second Language Acquisition for Biblical Studies*, 146-156. Recycled words is a teaching method that includes five stages: pre-reading activities (building a vocabular list), oral reading, focused word studies, evaluating through quizzes or tests, and collaborative writing.

¹¹⁰ Thompson, 96-98. While the 335 vocabulary items Thompson proposes for comprehension of Joshua are not the 335 most common vocabulary items in the Old Testament, they do provide for 95% coverage of the text. If a student were to learn the first 335 words on a frequency list (in which the most frequent words are learned first), the reader would not be able to have adequate comprehension of the book.

Thompson's theory fits with the theories of learning discussed earlier in this chapter that demonstrate how students learn best when they are able to make connections between material. When students learn a list of isolated vocabulary words without any context surrounding them, they have to create their own mental connections to build on. While that may work well for languages in the same overall family, creating connections between an ancient semitic language and a modern romantic language may prove difficult. When vocabulary items are learned in the context of a passage of Scripture, for example, the students can construct their mental scaffolding of the vocabulary items around the context of the narrative and within the syntax of the sentences.

Learning vocabulary should be a prominent part of Biblical Hebrew instruction, but the line between what is considered vocabulary and what is considered grammar is much less clear than many scholars currently believe; multi-word items and how words fit together and function in syntax blurs these lines.¹¹¹

Comparison of Biblical Hebrew Learning Theories

GTM is the most common method used for teaching Biblical Hebrew today, but SLA is gaining traction in some classrooms. This section will provide some comparison of these two key methods, noting that often a particular teaching method will use components of each rather than one method or the other exclusively.

GTM is generally concerned with grammatical competence, viewing language as a set of rules and forms that must be memorized and learned, while SLA focuses on competence in

¹¹¹ Thompson, 184.

communication.¹¹² Both are excellent methods that have their strengths and weaknesses. Rahel Halabe has provided an excellent analysis of these two methods in an article for *Hebrew Higher Education*. Halabe states that SLA research into Biblical Hebrew specifically is a fairly new field without developed standards for assessing learning. The general goal of any introductory Biblical Hebrew course is reading and interpretation of biblical texts with the use of aids such as a lexicon.¹¹³ How well do GTM and SLA methods fulfill this goal?

GTM courses are academically rigorous and require a great deal of time and effort to learn basic vocabulary, syntax, paradigms, and how to use a scholarly lexicon, all in an alphabet that is likely very foreign to their native language. GTM is often taught with dry grammatical lectures detached from context and authentic biblical examples. “Overfeeding students with linguistic minutiae hinder the achievement of the major objective: accessing content rich, formative biblical texts.... Learning BH through GTM is difficult, and despite the enormous amount of information imparted, students do not necessarily reach the objective of attaining a high level of reading, comprehension, and the ability to study the Hebrew Bible by and beyond the end of the course.”¹¹⁴ However, GTM is the best way to demonstrate some level of proficiency in the short amount of time generally allotted for a Biblical Hebrew grammar course.

Based on these negatives of GTM, some instructors are swinging the pendulum the other way toward SLA as the “opposite” of GTM. SLA pedagogy often includes games, songs, and mnemonic vocabulary tips and it attempts to address a variety of learning styles. Emphasis is placed on listening, communicating, and reading large amounts of text, similar to how a child

¹¹² Overland, in *Teaching Theology and Religion*, 51.

¹¹³ Halabe, 99.

¹¹⁴ Halabe, 101-102.

learns his or her native language. However, when grammar is ignored in favor of conversational communication, a relatively short course does not accomplish the goal of even basic proficiency to read a biblical text.¹¹⁵

Halabe concludes that “In my view, based on my recent experience, communicative or audio-visual components used for practice can support BH curricula when they are used in addition to, not *instead of* the systematic, though learner-friendly, presentation of *needed* grammar and the considerable input of authentic biblical text.”¹¹⁶ Additionally, Halabe states that language teaching should be comprehensible, authentic, and meaningful. Being comprehensible is often difficult given the great differences between English and Hebrew, so some instructional methods ignore authenticity and meaning by providing simple stories that are in Biblical Hebrew but are not from the Bible itself. Instead, some grammar books offer portions of verses to attempt to address comprehension while retaining authenticity and meaning.¹¹⁷

While listening, reading, speaking, and writing are all key elements of SLA, Halabe asserts that reading is the only one that is truly key to Biblical Hebrew teaching methods. Instructors should focus on comprehension of the text rather than on producing Biblical Hebrew, whether conversationally or written. Every theory used from traditional SLA methods should be modified according to this goal of reading the biblical text.¹¹⁸ Halabe sees neither GTM nor SLA as an ideal method, but both can be excellent resources for teaching Biblical Hebrew.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁵ Halabe 102-105.

¹¹⁶ Halabe, 105.

¹¹⁷ Halabe, 105-107.

¹¹⁸ Halabe, 107.

¹¹⁹ Halabe, 116.

Another perspective is offered by Scott McQuinn in his master's thesis regarding how to communicate when teaching the biblical languages. McQuinn addresses two fundamental approaches to teaching Biblical Hebrew: analyzing the language and using the language. GTM falls under the heading of analyzing the language, as learning happens through mastering the rules that allow the learner to translate texts from the target language into his or her native language. McQuinn describes this as "a deductive, bottom-up process, whereby learners begin with the smallest units of the language (i.e., letters) and then work up, piece by piece, towards the whole (i.e., sentences and texts)."¹²⁰ The process of learning via GTM as demonstrated in many textbooks involves first the alphabet, then rules for syllabification, then nouns and the verbal system. Vocabulary lists, often void of any particular biblical context, are generally included throughout the book for the learner to memorize. The general characteristics of GTM are that it is taught in the learner's native language, focuses on grammatical forms, translates for meaning into the native language, uses bits of authentic text early in the process, and results in analytical skills of the target language. A learner is taught to translate and analyze a text rather than fluency in reading.¹²¹

McQuinn notes the same pendulum swing as Halabe, that language teaching fluctuates over time between using and analyzing the language.¹²² Currently, the pendulum appears to be swinging toward SLA and a communicative method to language instruction. This method promotes fluency before accuracy through interaction and communication in the target language. The majority of the instruction is implicit, though some explicit grammatical instruction is

¹²⁰ McQuinn, 11.

¹²¹ McQuinn, 11-14.

¹²² McQuinn, 16.

provided to provide context. The communicative method uses reading, writing, listening, and speaking from the very beginning to create an efficient learning process.¹²³

McQuinn states that talking about the target language in the learner's native language does not lead to acquisition because there is little input in the target language, which is essential. Teaching the target language in the target language can also result in a similar framework to GTM with teaching one grammatical concept at a time through explicit instruction, even if that instruction occurs in the target language. Even if instruction requires the learner to write in the target language, there is generally no spoken interaction; there may be input, but there is not sufficient output for fluency.¹²⁴ "The GT approach cannot integrate language skills because reading is the only skill taught. Consequently, adult learners of the biblical languages are deprived of the mutual reinforcement of other modes of learning that more effectively develop automatic word recognition and syntactic parsing, which are both necessary for reading fluency."¹²⁵ GTM has been rejected by modern SLA research for many reasons, including that it focuses too much on form rather than meaning and on accuracy rather than fluency. GTM has been used for ancient languages since the nineteenth century, primarily because it is assumed that no other approach is feasible. However, more resources are being published that promote CLT principles for learning Biblical Hebrew.¹²⁶

GTM focuses on explicit knowledge, while SLA focuses on implicit knowledge. The question is whether implicit (SLA), explicit (GTM), or a combination of the two is ideal. Most

¹²³ McQuinn, 73-74.

¹²⁴ McQuinn, 75-78.

¹²⁵ McQuinn, 80.

¹²⁶ McQuinn, 86-88.

language experts agree that true proficiency comes from implicit knowledge rather than explicit, as the brain can access implicit knowledge more readily and more automatically than explicit rules that have been learned. There are a variety of theories regarding the method of both implicit and explicit learning. Some believe that these types of knowledge are stored in different areas of the brain and, therefore, they do not interact, but both are useful. Others believe that the learner gradually moves toward internalizing and explicit rules, so they become more automatic and proficient over time.¹²⁷ These approaches relate to instruction based on their focus: implicit knowledge lends itself to meaning-focused instruction, whereas explicit knowledge lends itself to form-focused instruction. Meaning-focused instruction uses language for communication, whereas form-focused instruction stresses grammatical accuracy. Regardless of the instruction method used, most learning occurs while practicing the language in some manner. This practice could be controlled grammatical exercises where rules or forms are practiced until they are internalized (relating to GTM and explicit knowledge), or it could be repetition or free practice in the context of meaning-focused communicative tasks (relating to SLA and implicit knowledge). Developing automaticity with a language relies on significant repeated practice of some form.¹²⁸

Selected Biblical Hebrew Resources

There is a plethora of resources available to help in both the teaching and the learning of Biblical Hebrew today, from many textbooks to websites, online videos, and curriculum programs. This research is by no means exhaustive of those resources, and in fact, it only addresses the tip of the iceberg. The researcher's goal was to investigate a variety of resources

¹²⁷ Noonan, *A Handbook of Second Language Acquisition for Biblical Studies*, 19-21.

¹²⁸ Noonan, *A Handbook of Second Language Acquisition for Biblical Studies*, 30-37.

available that may have some unique characteristics for promoting Biblical Hebrew language acquisition.

The first category to analyze is grammar books. Introductory grammar books are the most prevalent, though there are some that go deeper to an intermediate level. Some commonly used examples of traditional GTM-based textbooks include *A Practical Grammar for Classical Hebrew* by Weingreen,¹²⁹ *Basics of Biblical Hebrew Grammar* by Pratico and Van Pelt,¹³⁰ *Beginning Biblical Hebrew* by Futato,¹³¹ *Introducing Biblical Hebrew* by Ross,¹³² and *A Handbook to Biblical Hebrew* by Kelley et al.¹³³ All of these texts rely heavily on GTM through their presentation of grammatical rules, parsing and translating exercises, and vocabulary lists to memorize. Weingreen's grammar is a standard text for many generations of Hebrew scholars, and it is very thorough in its approach. Many newer grammars exist than Weingreen, but the vocabulary and parsing have not changed for this ancient language, though Weingreen's use of old English pronouns (thee, thy, etc.) may cause a struggle for modern learners. Pratico and Van Pelt's grammar book includes a CD for additional practice and lessons beyond what is found in the printed book. Futato's grammar is used as the basis for video lessons provided on the Daily Dose of Hebrew website.¹³⁴ These GTM-based books present grammatical elements in slightly

¹²⁹ Jacob Weingreen, *A Practical Grammar for Classical Hebrew*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1959).

¹³⁰ Gary D. Pratico and Miles V. Van Pelt, *Basics of Biblical Hebrew Grammar*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007).

¹³¹ Mark D. Futato, *Beginning Biblical Hebrew* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2003).

¹³² Allen P. Ross, *Introducing Biblical Hebrew* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001).

¹³³ Page H. Kelley, Terry L. Burden, and Timothy G. Crawford, *A Handbook to Biblical Hebrew: An Introductory Grammar* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994).

¹³⁴ "Learn Biblical Hebrew," Daily Dose of Hebrew, accessed January 18, 2023, <https://dailydoseofhebrew.com/learn/>.

different orders, but overall, they cover the same aspects: the alphabet, pronunciation descriptions, syllabification, nouns, pronouns, adjectives, strong verbs, weak verbs, etc. They provide useful charts for many grammatical elements so the student may easily reference the paradigms. Vocabulary is presented with a handful of words in each chapter so the learner can memorize them, often in sets of similar words—family members, numbers, strong verb roots, etc.

The First Hebrew Primer by Simon, Resnikoff, and Motzkin is based in GTM, but it has some unique attributes.¹³⁵ As with other grammars, vocabulary is presented in order of frequency, including words that occur two hundred or more times. At the end of chapter eight (roughly twenty percent through the grammatical lessons of the text), the first of a handful of tall tales is provided. These are Biblical Hebrew versions of folk tales, including The Boy Who Cried Wolf, Sleeping Beauty, Hansel and Gretel, Rapunzel, and Daedalus and Icarus. While an adapted version of the book of Ruth is included throughout the grammar, these additional stories may make learning Hebrew more entertaining for the student. They also provide reinforcement for grammatical concepts, sentence structure, and vocabulary, along with the opportunity to read large portions of text. Definitions for any vocabulary words that the student has not yet encountered up to that point are included with each story. Simon, Resnikoff, and Motzkin use some non-traditional terms for grammatical concepts, which they believe will help the student's learning, and a list of those is provided in the book. Spelling charts are provided for many verbs and nouns, rather than only providing a few paradigm charts as an example.

¹³⁵ Ethelyn Simon, Irene Resnikoff, and Linda Motzkin, *The First Hebrew Primer*, 3rd ed. (Berkeley, CA: EKS Publishing Co., 2021).

Biblical Hebrew: A Living Language by Dallaire is one of a few textbooks that uses SLA methods for presenting Biblical Hebrew.¹³⁶ The stated goal of the book is “to develop reading competency in the Hebrew Bible at the intermediate level.... Secondary objectives include proficiency in listening comprehension, writing, and speaking”¹³⁷ Each chapter starts with a devotional with audio and a song (downloadable from the companion website), three cartoon characters (Micah, Tamar, and Rabbi Shlomo) who review previous concepts, review exercises, new concepts (which have related PowerPoints files that the instructor can download), exercises to be done in-class or as homework, new vocabulary words, and additional exercises for assignments. The book provides instructors with helpful phrases for giving instructions in Biblical Hebrew to aid in conversational aspects. The structure of the book is very similar to GTM, except more emphasis on speaking and listening to Biblical Hebrew in a conversational manner.

Learning Biblical Hebrew Interactively by Overland is another textbook that focuses on the SLA method.¹³⁸ Overland saw students struggle with GTM, so he sought a different method that employed CLT and students communicating directly with one another. He founded the Cohelet Project to develop materials applying SLA research to Biblical Hebrew language teaching.¹³⁹ A student edition and an instructor edition of the book are available, where the instructor edition provides additional notes about teaching the material. As with Dallaire’s SLA grammar book, lessons are structured around grammatical concepts, but the concepts are

¹³⁶ H el ene Dallaire, *Biblical Hebrew: A Living Language* (United States: printed by the author, 2017).

¹³⁷ Dallaire, i.

¹³⁸ Paul Overland, *Learning Biblical Hebrew Interactively* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Phoenix Press Ltd, 2016).

¹³⁹ Paul Overland, “The Cohelet Project,” accessed January 18, 2023, <https://sites.google.com/a/ashland.edu/cohelet/home>.

demonstrated using the biblical story of Jonah. Illustrations are provided along with the text to demonstrate the story and introduce vocabulary and syntax. Conversation prompts and other activities are included in the book to help students develop their communication skills and to further cement the grammatical concepts presented in that lesson. Lessons are also interspersed with informational sections about Hebrew historical, archaeological, or cultural items. Biblical texts outside of Jonah are also presented that reinforce the concepts; rather than just a chapter and verse reference, a brief context of the verse or phrase is presented as well. The accompanying website provides additional lectures, video, and audio resources to supplement the textbook.¹⁴⁰

Other Biblical Hebrew resources do not have textbooks. One example is the YouTube channel “Aleph with Beth,” presented by Andrew and Bethany Case.¹⁴¹ Biblical Hebrew is presented entirely in Biblical Hebrew. The majority of Biblical Hebrew resources are geared toward those who speak English natively, which can be a hindrance for non-native English speakers. There is a resource guide that is available in English for free as a supplemental resource, but it is not required. Some of the posted advantages of this method are that the learner learns as a child by seeing and hearing and that the learner may go at his or her own pace. The Cases believe that Biblical Hebrew should be accessible for everyone to learn, not just pastors, and it should be a part of regular discipleship. Biblical Hebrew is often seen as inaccessible due to intimidating methods of teaching it, insufficient technology in parts of the world where the

¹⁴⁰ Paul Overland, “Learning Biblical Hebrew Interactively,” accessed January 18, 2023, <http://www.learningbiblicalhebrewinteractively.com/>.

¹⁴¹ Andrew and Bethany Case, “Aleph with Beth,” YouTube Channel, accessed January 18, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/c/alephwithbeth>. The website <https://freehebrew.online/> accompanies the YouTube channel.

culture is oral rather than literary, and expensive when paying for textbooks and/or classes. Their mission is to make those obstacles disappear through their YouTube channel and website.¹⁴²

Biblical Language Center (BLC) is another online resource that uses SLA methods to teach Biblical Hebrew.¹⁴³ BLC was created by Dr. Randall Buth, who worked in Bible translation and has a background in linguistics that led to the development of this program.¹⁴⁴ The stated vision of BLC is “to promote and develop a living knowledge of Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic, so that anyone can fluently read and understand the Bible in its original languages, being capable of conversing in the languages, and that there may be teachers who can reproduce these skills in others.”¹⁴⁵ SLA is fully embraced in this threefold goal of reading the Bible, conversing, and teaching this method. BLC provides a self-study curriculum online, but it can also be used as a group classroom tool. The curriculum includes picture lessons, instructional videos, hours of audio material, a variety of quiz options to check progress, and additional reference materials. BLC proclaims that “one ‘plays’ with the language, so that it can be felt, intuitively understood and, best of all, internalized for good.... No other curriculum for biblical languages applies these principles as thoroughly as the ‘Living Biblical Languages’ method.”¹⁴⁶

¹⁴² Andrew and Bethany Case, “Let It Go: Aleph with Beth” (lecture, Greek and Hebrew for Life Conference, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY, July 30, 2021).

¹⁴³ “Biblical Language Center,” accessed January 18, 2023, <https://www.biblicallanguagecenter.com/>.

¹⁴⁴ “Background & History,” Biblical Language Center, accessed January 18, 2023, <https://www.biblicallanguagecenter.com/background-history/>.

¹⁴⁵ “The Vision,” Biblical Language Center, accessed January 18, 2023, <https://www.biblicallanguagecenter.com/blc-vision/>.

¹⁴⁶ “Why It Works,” Biblical Language Center, accessed January 18, 2023, <https://www.biblicallanguagecenter.com/why-works/>.

Biblingo is another online plan to help a learner become fluent in Biblical Hebrew.¹⁴⁷ Biblingo provides “bite-sized lessons, interactive exercises, immersive images and videos, and smart technology to make language learning more effective and efficient.”¹⁴⁸ It uses a variety of second language acquisition techniques to accomplish these goals, including custom learning plans for each student. It provides strong Bible reading tools to assist the learner in reading the text in context from the start. Biblingo appeals to a wide audience of people who want to learn Biblical Hebrew due to its ease of use and flexibility.

Bible Online Learner (Bible OL) is a more interactive GTM resource.¹⁴⁹ It is a learning program that provides the Hebrew text of the Old Testament in a way that allows the learner to play with the text and easily identify vocabulary and grammatical concepts. The online platform of My Biblical Hebrew Moodle is used as a GTM curriculum, where students then practice the concepts in Bible OL.¹⁵⁰ Bible OL can be used to generate grammatical exercises for a specific subject. Online parsing and translating allow students to get real-time feedback to aid in their learning. Each grammatical task is encountered in the larger context of an authentic passage of Scripture text, and the student can explore that context easily using the tools available. Bible OL can work with other curricula besides My Biblical Hebrew Moodle as well.¹⁵¹

Many other online resources exist for Biblical Hebrew, and it seems that more are being generated each day. In addition, new versions of textbooks and new styles of textbooks are

¹⁴⁷ Biblingo, accessed February 9, 2023, <https://biblingo.org/>.

¹⁴⁸ Biblingo.

¹⁴⁹ “Bible OL,” Bible OL: Classical Languages Around the Globe, accessed January 18, 2023, <https://bibleol.3bmoodle.dk/>.

¹⁵⁰ “My Biblical Hebrew Moodle,” accessed January 18, 2023, <https://mbh.3bmoodle.dk/>.

¹⁵¹ Halabe, 108-109.

continually getting published. This review has covered only a very small sampling of the resources that are available today.

Conclusion

There are significant amounts of literature available regarding the study of language acquisition in general, Biblical Hebrew language acquisition specifically, and resources to accomplish this task. Along with establishing the theological warrant for investing in the study of Biblical Hebrew, this chapter has looked at only an overview of how adult students learn a second language such as Biblical Hebrew. While the goal of much Biblical Hebrew instruction is to read and understand the Old Testament, others extend that goal to communicative fluency. Scholarly opinions are divided as to which goal is the ideal—whether simply to learn grammatical rules or to achieve fluency to make reading the Old Testament easier. Regardless of the teaching method used, students often invest significant time and effort to learn this language. This research will further explore the relationship between the teaching method and whether the student's investment pays off with continued use of Biblical Hebrew after coursework has been completed.

Chapter Three

Research Method

The research question for this project is: What is the relationship between the teaching method for Biblical Hebrew and continued use by seminary graduates?

The overall research design of this study utilizes conducting and analyzing interviews for a grounded theory qualitative design.¹⁵² The first step in this research was to identify multiple seminaries accredited by the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) that offer at least one Biblical Hebrew grammar course to their graduate-level students. This was done primarily through the search and filter functionality on the ATS website (ats.edu). The next step was to locate instructors who teach Biblical Hebrew and set up interviews with them. After those were completed, the next step was to locate students or graduates who have learned Biblical Hebrew and set up interviews with them.

Research Sample

This research used a convenience sample of instructors and students from ATS-accredited institutions that offer at least one Biblical Hebrew grammar course at the graduate level.¹⁵³ Due to the specific criteria of this study, a random sample is not appropriate. Creswell and Creswell provide a guideline of an appropriate sample size based on the type of qualitative research being done; for grounded theory, their guideline is 20-30 participants.¹⁵⁴ The sample is

¹⁵² John W. Creswell and David J. Creswell, *Research Design*, 5th ed. (Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publications, 2016), 13. In grounded theory, the research derives a theory regarding a process that is grounded in the participants' views. It involves multiple data collection phases and discovery of relationships between categories of data.

¹⁵³ Michael S. Lewis-Beck, Alan Bryman, and Tim Futing Liao, eds, *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Social Science Research Methods* (Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publications, 2004), 994. A convenience sample is one in which participants are chosen based on availability and meeting certain criteria and not through random means.

¹⁵⁴ Creswell, 186.

considered adequate when data is replicated, and ideas are heard multiple times.¹⁵⁵ Simply put, “Saturation is reached when no new data appear, when the researcher has ‘heard it all.’”¹⁵⁶

Vasileiou et al researched the concept of when saturation may occur by investigating various research studies, and one conclusion they found is that there is no specific number of interviews for when saturation occurs. Rather, saturation is guided by the characteristics of the study and the quality and richness of data.¹⁵⁷

The first phase of research involved laying the groundwork for the concept of teaching methods for Biblical Hebrew through conducting interviews of instructors. As those participants do not address the idea of retention in the research question, a smaller sample size is adequate. The researcher believed that a sample size of five to ten instructors would provide saturation in this area. The second phase of research involved those who have learned Biblical Hebrew. This necessitated a larger sample size given the variety in teaching methods. The researcher found that ten to fifteen learners provided saturation in this area.

Instructor Interviews

The research process began by looking at schools within a 200-mile radius of the researcher’s home in Findlay, Ohio. The researcher then attempted to locate the appropriate instructor(s) who would potentially teach Hebrew by using each school’s website. When sufficient responses from schools that were geographically convenient were not received, the researcher expanded to a nationwide search. Over the course of this process, instructors from

¹⁵⁵ Lewis-Beck et al, 996.

¹⁵⁶ Lewis-Beck et al, 996.

¹⁵⁷ Konstantina Vasileiou, Julie Barnett, Susan Thorpe, and Terry Young, “Characterising and Justifying Sample Size Sufficiency in Interview-Based Studies: Systematic Analysis of Qualitative Health Research over a 15-Year Period,” *BMC Medical Research Methodology* 18, no. 148 (2018): 15.

fourteen institutions were contacted, and seven instructors agreed to be interviewed. Only two interviews were able to be completed in person, and the rest were conducted via video chat using the Zoom platform. These interviews took place during August and September 2022.

The questions asked in each of the instructor interviews were as follows:

- How many years have you been teaching Biblical Hebrew?
- What types of Biblical Hebrew courses do you teach currently, or have you taught in the past? (i.e., grammar, exegesis, etc.)
- What textbook(s) do you typically use for Hebrew grammar classes?
- What does a typical Hebrew grammar class session look like in your classroom?
 - Follow-up questions were more specific regarding lecturing on grammatical concepts, teaching or reviewing vocabulary words, doing grammatical exercises, reading Scripture aloud, and/or speaking Hebrew conversationally.
- What factors influence your chosen teaching method?
- How do you evaluate students' comprehension of the language?
 - Follow-up questions were regarding taking written and/or oral tests and how those tests are created.
- What else would you like to share with me about your teaching method of Biblical Hebrew?

Learner Interviews

The first step in conducting interviews for learners of Biblical Hebrew was to locate people who met the criteria and were willing to participate in this research. The criterion for each learner was that he or she must have taken at least one graduate-level Biblical Hebrew class within the last one to ten years. The researcher began this phase by contacting each of the

instructors who had been interviewed to ask for contact information of students they had taught, with the student's permission; ten interview participants were identified through these requests. Six instructors at additional institutions were also contacted to request former students to interview, but no responses were received from those requests. A Facebook group was also used to locate additional interview subjects¹⁵⁸ as was a personal connection.¹⁵⁹ Sixteen students were contacted, and fifteen interviews were conducted.¹⁶⁰ Only three learners were geographically accessible to interview in person; the rest of the interviews were conducted via Zoom. These interviews took place during September and October 2022.

The questions asked in each of the learner interviews were as follows:

- During what calendar year(s) did you take a Biblical Hebrew course(s)?
- What specific courses did you take? (i.e., grammar, exegesis, etc.)
- What did a typical Hebrew grammar class look like?
 - Follow-up questions were more specific regarding lecture topics, learning vocabulary words, doing grammatical exercises, reading Scripture aloud, and/or speaking Hebrew conversationally.
- Why did you take courses in Biblical Hebrew?
- Of the knowledge you gained during your Hebrew course(s), whether learning during class time or outside of class, approximately what percentage do you believe that you have retained?

¹⁵⁸ The researcher posted a request in the Facebook group titled "Things they didn't teach us in Seminary!" (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/110049045697089>). Four participants were located through this group.

¹⁵⁹ The researcher contacted the pastor of a family member, and he agreed to be interviewed. The researcher had no other connection to this pastor.

¹⁶⁰ One participant initially agreed to be interviewed then had to decline due to a medical emergency with a close family member.

- Do you consider yourself to be currently serving in ministry? If so, how long have you been serving in ministry? What is your current role or occupation?
- How do you currently use Hebrew, whether for personal study or in your vocation?
 - If the participant responds that s/he does not use it, follow-up questions included:
 - What is your main reason for not using Hebrew?
 - Did you use Hebrew at one time after taking the course(s)? If so, how? What led you to change that practice?
- [If the previous question is answered in the affirmative] Approximately how many times per month do you use Biblical Hebrew?
- If you could change one thing about the Hebrew course(s) you experienced to provide you with greater foundational knowledge, what would it be?
- What aspect of your Hebrew course(s) helped the most in your understanding and learning of the language?
- What was your favorite part about your Hebrew course(s)?
- What was your least favorite part about your Hebrew course(s)?
- Other than time spent in class, what other methods of learning Hebrew did you employ?
 - Follow-up questions were asked regarding studying with a group, utilizing a tutor, utilizing other resources such as websites, etc.
- What else would you like to share regarding your experience of learning Hebrew and continuing to use it?

Processing the Interviews

All interview participants reviewed and signed an informed consent form indicating their voluntary participation in this process. Each was informed that they could stop the interview at any time if they desired, and none desired to do so.

Every interview was recorded. Only audio was recorded for the in-person interviews, but both video and audio were recorded for the Zoom interviews. Each audio file was first run through the transcription feature on Microsoft Word to create a rough transcript. A transcriptionist was hired to fix up and correct that rough transcript, so it accurately matched the recording. All original audio and video recordings and transcripts have been kept confidential, and transcript data will be anonymized if it is to be directly included in the project. This research method, including the specific interview questions, was approved by the Institutional Review Board in June 2022.¹⁶¹

All of the interview transcripts were coded. Coding is the process used to turn qualitative data generated in the transcripts into data points that can be analyzed and then used to draw conclusions and meaning from that data. The researcher used the Dedoose software program to assist in coding and analyzing the data.¹⁶² The goal of this coding is to organize the data so that relationships become apparent between the teaching method used and the learner's experience and retention of the language. The process of coding points toward common aspects and specific elements of teaching methods that appear to work well for the learners.

Several passes of coding were used. The first pass of all interviews involved in vivo coding – discovering trends in the language used between interview subjects. Examples of codes

¹⁶¹ Refer to Appendix D for that approval.

¹⁶² The Dedoose software package can be found at www.dedoose.com.

common to both instructor and learner interviews related to biblical texts read, textbooks used, types of Hebrew courses, how students are evaluated in their learning, various elements of a class session, and vocabulary. For the instructor interviews, the second pass involved discovering and using codes relating to various teaching methods and each instructor's philosophy of education in greater detail. Emotion coding was added in the third pass to indicate whether the participant felt positively, negatively, or neutrally toward a particular topic, or whether that aspect was an ideal they desired, but not the reality of their teaching.

For the learner interviews, additional codes were created to track the student's assessment of how much of the language they have retained, if and how they currently use the language. The number of courses a student took, how long ago those courses were taken, and his or her current role or occupation were also coded. Emotion coding was also added to indicate the participant's feelings toward that particular aspect of his or her Biblical Hebrew experience.

The researcher believes saturation has been reached with the sample sizes of seven instructor interviews and fifteen learner interviews. While less overlap was seen among the instructors' teaching methods, enough repetition in pedagogical methodology was found to believe that no new information would be revealed in additional interviews.

The sample size for qualitative research may be evaluated using three principles:

1. The broader the scope of the study, the greater the amount of data that is needed.
2. The better the quality of the interviews, the fewer interviews that will be needed.
3. There is an inverse relationship between the amount of data obtained from each participant and the number of participants.¹⁶³

¹⁶³ Lewis-Beck et al, 996.

While there are many lifestyle and personality factors that influence whether a learner continues to use a language, this study has a somewhat narrow focus on the specific relationship between the teaching method for Biblical Hebrew and its continued use. The questions asked in the interviews generated a great deal of useful data through quality responses from the participants. There was repetition of themes among the learner interviews, indicating that saturation was reached. Therefore, the researcher believes that the sample size of fifteen learner interviews was appropriate for this study.

Limitations

The interview subjects were limited to people who had taken at least one graduate-level Biblical Hebrew grammar class within the last one to ten years (2012 through 2022) from an ATS-accredited institution.

During this process of conducting interviews, some limitations were discovered. Each of the instructors interviewed comes from a unique perspective and teaches at a unique institution. While there were some common elements among them, there were many differences due to these unique situations, which limits the amount that their data can be synthesized as a whole. There was great variety among the learner participants as well, especially in their current ministry roles, age range, and motivation for keeping up with the language. Addressing every unique factor among them is outside the scope of this study, as the focus is on the relationship between the teaching method and continued use of Biblical Hebrew.

Conclusion

The researcher gained much knowledge during this process regarding a variety of teaching methods that instructors are currently using for teaching Biblical Hebrew. The researcher also became aware of multiple other resources, both online resources and additional

textbooks, which would be helpful for teaching this language. Gaining perspective from others who are in different circumstances and different phases of life has been very valuable. Further insights gained from the coding of the interview data will be presented in the next chapter.

Chapter Four

Research Results

As previously discussed, the research question for this project is: What is the relationship between the teaching method for Biblical Hebrew and continued use by seminary graduates? More details regarding the methods used to complete this research can be found in Chapter Three. In summary, interviews were conducted with seven Biblical Hebrew instructors and fifteen learners. Two of the instructor interviews and three of the learner interviews were conducted in person, and the rest were done via video chat using the Zoom platform due to geographic limitations. The resulting transcripts were coded using the Dedoose software program.¹⁶⁴

This chapter will present the data gathered from the interviews and provide some analysis. First, some aspects of the data will be explained, and then descriptive data will be presented. Next, this chapter will explore four areas of interest—instructional methodology, motivation for learning Biblical Hebrew, insights regarding resources, and Biblical Hebrew language retention—based on data from the interviews. Note that interview participants are confidential, so each individual is referenced with a title (“Instructor” or “Learner”) and a letter. Locations for in-person interviews will only identify the state in which that interview was conducted to preserve this confidentiality.

Explanation of Data

While the research method of the project was qualitative, some information was collected that is best reported in numeric format. Accordingly, certain aspects were modified or translated

¹⁶⁴ Information regarding Dedoose can be found at www.dedoose.com.

into numerical data or ranges. For the instructors, the primary numeric data related to the overall teaching method used. These were categorized into Grammar-Translation Method (GTM), Second Language Acquisition (SLA), or a blend of the two (BL). For the learners, some of the numeric data included the time frame in which the learner received Biblical Hebrew instruction (measured in number of years previous), the number of courses taken, the percentage retained to the present day (self-reported), his or her frequency of using the language at the time of the interview, and the method of instruction received (GTM, SLA, or BL). However, one inconsistency was found when compiling the data regarding the number of courses taken. The participant was simply asked how many courses they took, and this question did not anticipate how greatly courses differ in length and instructional models, such as intensive versus weekly meetings, length of academic terms, etc. Therefore, in order to compare this data among different institutions, information gathered for the number of courses was recalculated into hours of instruction.¹⁶⁵

Descriptive Data

Descriptive data was collected and compiled for both the instructor interviews and the learner interviews. The interview participants included seven Biblical Hebrew instructors and fifteen learners. The learner data is presented below, while the instructor data will be reviewed under the Methodology section.

¹⁶⁵ The calculation used for this was to multiply the number of hours a course would meet in a week by the number of weeks in a term by the number of terms. This data was gathered from the interviews and/or publicly available course information from institutional websites.

Instructor Descriptive Data

The seven instructors interviewed included five males and two females. Their instructional experience in teaching Biblical Hebrew ranged from two years up to twenty-eight years. This descriptive data can be seen in table 1 below.

Table 1. Instructor descriptive data

Instructor	Gender	Years Teaching	Method
A	Male	7	GTM
B	Male	4	GTM
C	Male	11	SLA
D	Female	28	GTM
E	Female	5	BL
F	Male	2	GTM
G	Male	10	GTM

Learner Descriptive Data

See table 2 for the breakdown of learner descriptive data, including the gender and the instructional method experienced by each learner.

Table 2. Learner descriptive data

Learner	Gender	Method
A	Male	GTM
B	Female	GTM
C	Male	GTM
D	Female	GTM
E	Male	GTM
F	Female	BL
G	Female	SLA
H	Male	SLA
I	Female	GTM
J	Female	GTM
K	Female	BL
L	Female	GTM
M	Male	SLA
N	Female	GTM
O	Male	GTM

Of the fifteen learners interviewed, six were male (40%) and nine were female (60%). GTM was the dominant instructional method experienced by the learners, making up two-thirds of the total.

Another important factor is the time frame in which Hebrew instruction was received relative to when the interview was conducted. This data was categorized into ranges, as seen in figure 1 below.

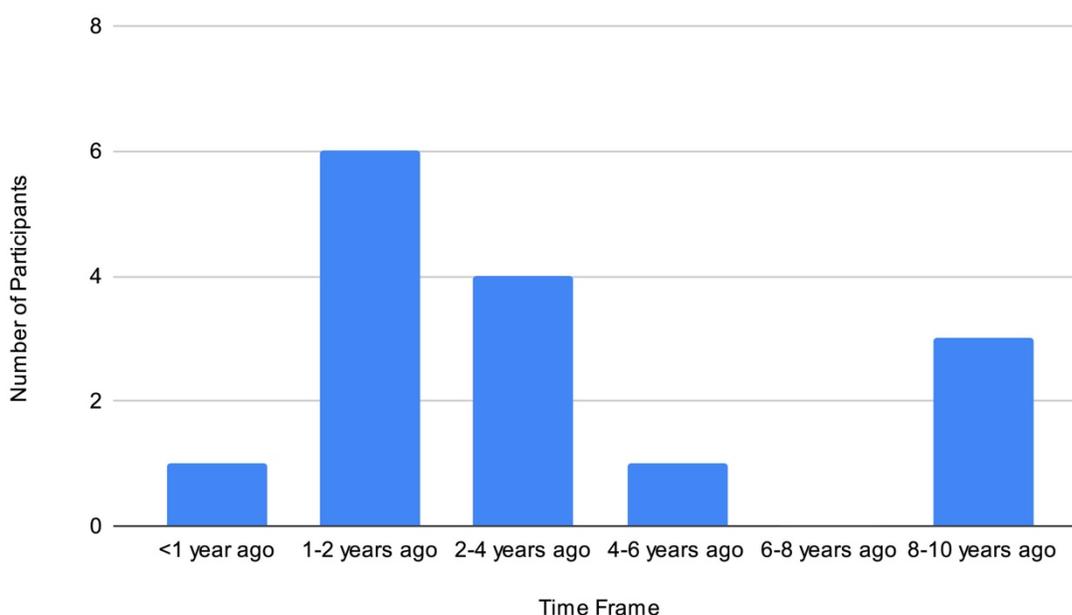


Figure 1. Time frame of Biblical Hebrew instruction

Each participant was asked to self-report the percentage of Biblical Hebrew knowledge that they estimated to have retained since the instruction was received. This data is reported in figure 2 below.

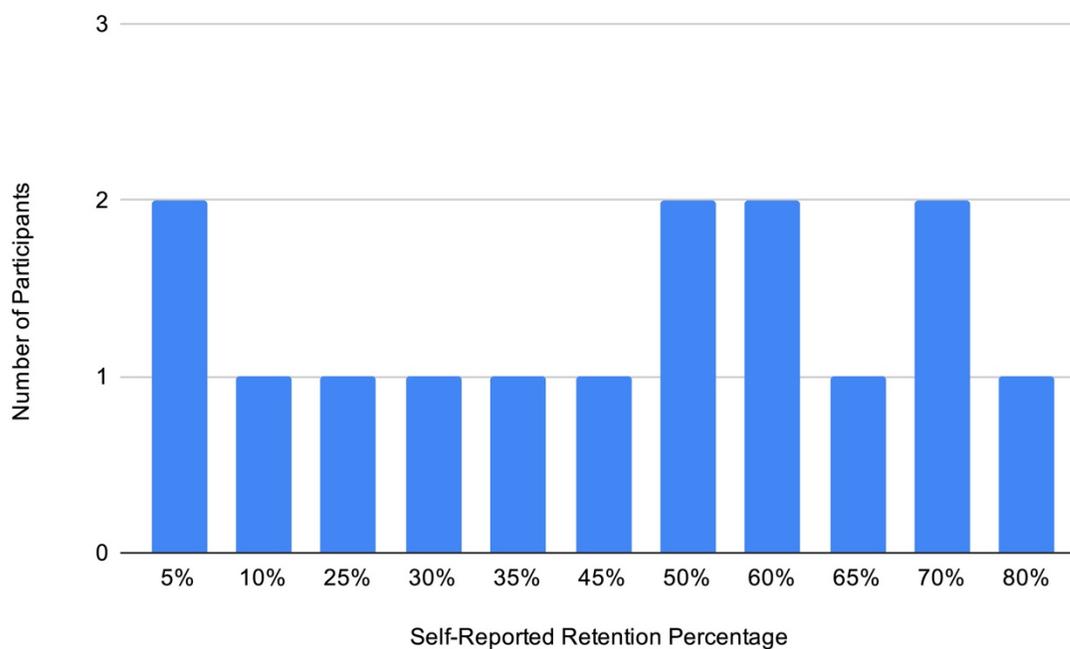


Figure 2. Self-reported retention percentage

Another aspect of retention is the frequency with which the learner continues to use Biblical Hebrew in some capacity. This may include personal study, sermon preparation, etc. The question was open-ended, but if the participant appeared unsure of how to respond, the researcher provided the options listed above as examples. This data was categorized into ranges and is reported in figure 3 below.

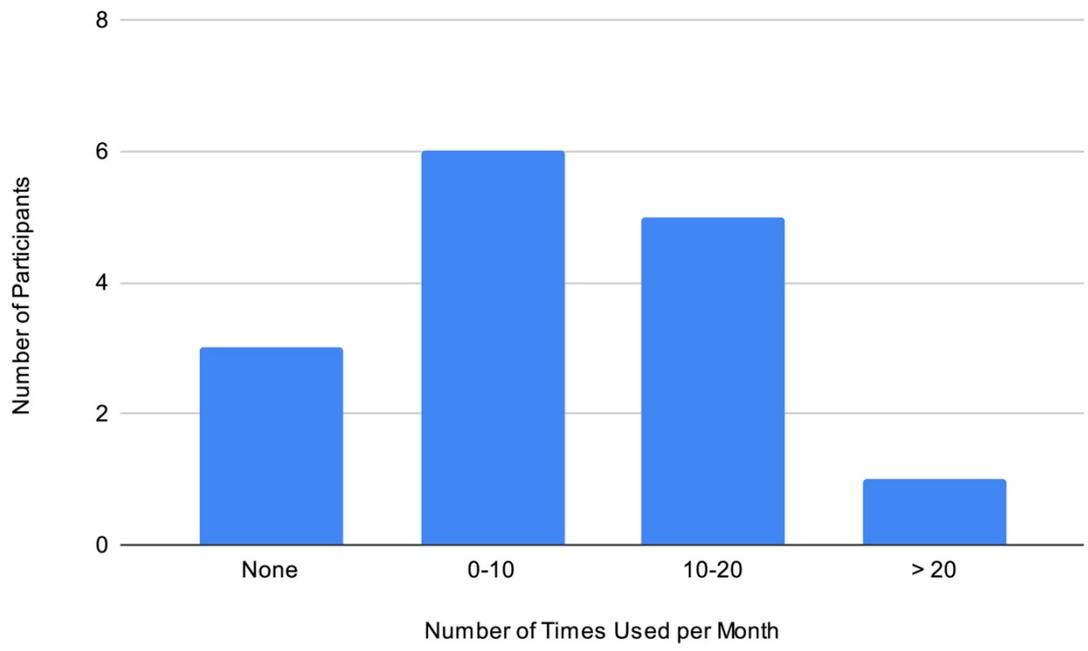


Figure 3. Frequency of using Biblical Hebrew

One factor that affects current usage is the person’s occupation. Five of the participants are still students at some level, seven are serving in a pastoral role, two serve as teachers in some capacity, and one has secular employment, as shown in Figure 4.

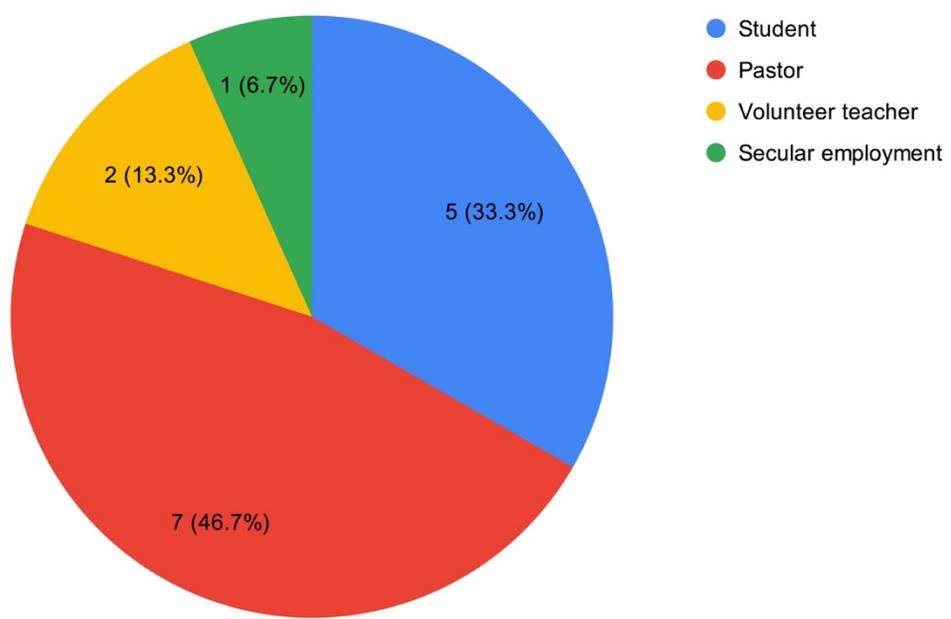


Figure 4. Occupation of learner interview participants

After the number of courses was recalculated into a quantity of instructional hours as described above, that data was tabulated and averaged. Instructional hours ranged from 32 hours up to 320 hours, depending on the institution, the course format, and the number of courses taken.¹⁶⁶ The average number of instructional hours among participants was 162. The assumption was made that the learner participated in all the instructional hours, and these hours do not include time spent on homework or studying outside of class time.

A summary of key descriptive information regarding the learners is presented in table 3 and in figure 5 below.

Table 3. Learner descriptive data summary

Student	Gender	Method	Occupation	Hours of Instruction
A	Male	GTM	Student	192
B	Female	GTM	Student	120
C	Male	GTM	Pastor	32
D	Female	GTM	Volunteer teacher	64
E	Male	GTM	Pastor	64
F	Female	BL	Volunteer teacher	120
G	Female	SLA	Student	195
H	Male	SLA	Student	195
I	Female	GTM	Student	192
J	Female	GTM	Pastor	120
K	Female	BL	Pastor	320
L	Female	GTM	Pastor	320
M	Male	SLA	Secular employment	195
N	Female	GTM	Pastor	120
O	Male	GTM	Pastor	192

¹⁶⁶ These high and low data points deserve additional explanation. The learner with only 32 instructional hours took two semesters of Biblical Hebrew in an asynchronous model, where one hour of pre-recorded lecture was provided each week. The two learners with 320 hours each took Biblical Hebrew as an eight-week intensive course at different institutions.

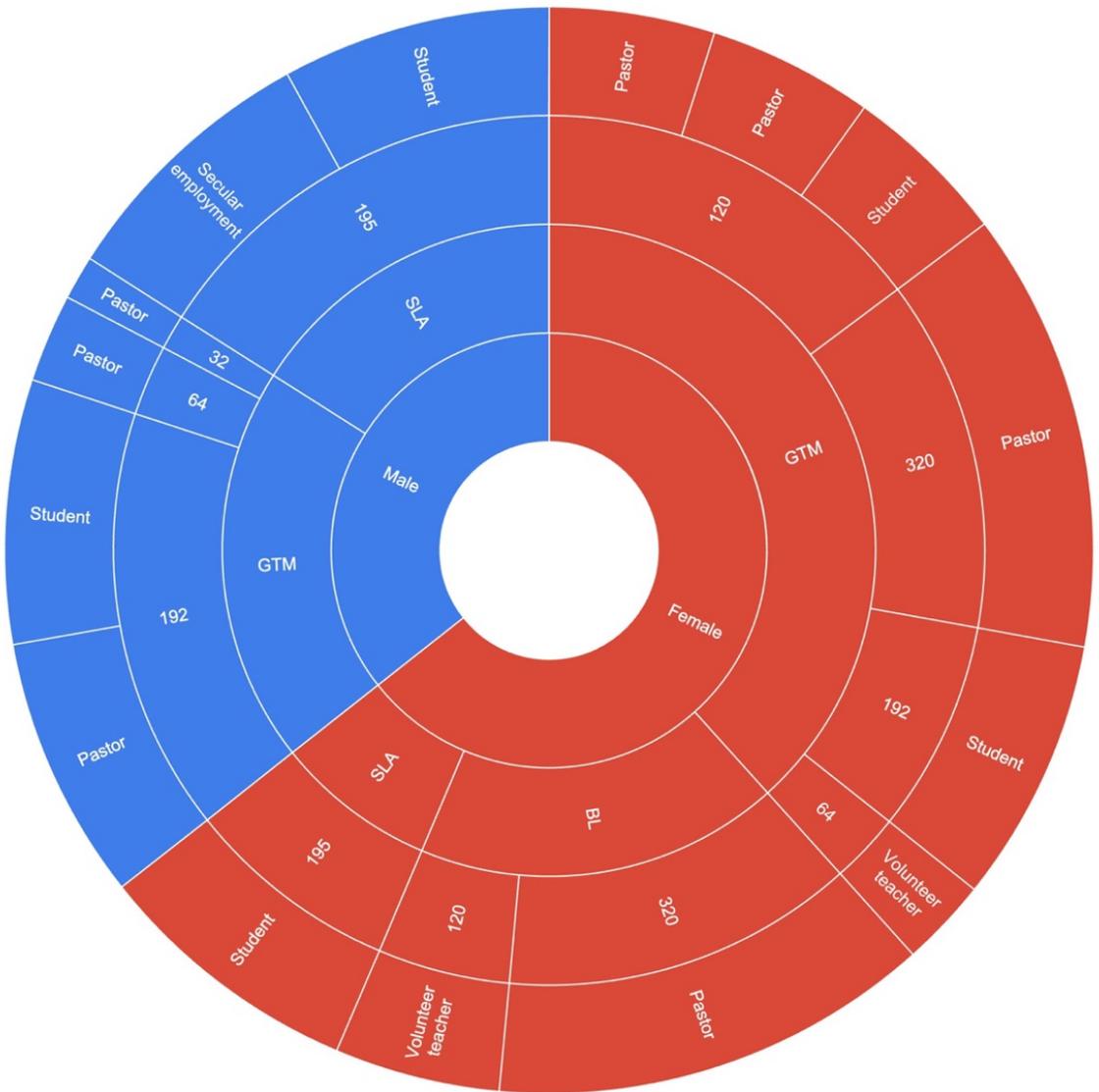


Figure 5. Learner descriptive data summary

Analysis of Learner Descriptive Data

As the focus of this research is on retention and continued use of Biblical Hebrew, this section will investigate the categorized data gathered compared to the learner’s self-reported retention rate. Table 4 below shows the hours of instruction and the retention rate for each learner.

Table 4. Hours of instruction and self-reported retention rate

Student	Hours of Instruction	Retention Rate
A	192	35%
B	120	5%
C	32	5%
D	64	65%
E	64	45%
F	120	50%
G	195	60%
H	195	70%
I	192	60%
J	120	25%
K	320	10%
L	320	30%
M	195	70%
N	120	80%
O	192	50%

Student C took two semesters of Biblical Hebrew in an asynchronous model, where one hour of pre-recorded lecture was provided each week. Student C stated, “The actual content was delivered by recorded weekly lecture-type sessions to be done at our own pace and then we had required lessons to accomplish.... [The lecture] was more like directing us to the exercises and then reviewing the exercises.”¹⁶⁷ He further stated, “From a language/tool point of view, nothing was functional, and it was such a disappointment because you invest so much time.... Teach me the tools and I’ll make some progress and I’ll look put them to use. But all this other stuff, building up the grammar from the base, and trying to expect us to learn these words, it just didn’t work for someone like me.”¹⁶⁸

Students K and L each took Biblical Hebrew as an eight-week intensive course at different institutions. The shortened time frame of the intensive model may have negatively

¹⁶⁷ Student C, interview by researcher, online via Zoom video chat, October 19, 2022.

¹⁶⁸ Student C, interview by researcher, online via Zoom video chat, October 19, 2022.

affected their retention rates. Student K had very negative feelings regarding the intensive model: “No intensive courses. I mean, seriously, I would never do that again. That was terrible. However, it was the only time they offered it for two years. I had to do it. There was no choice. So, I took it, but I would never do it again because I’d want a little bit more time to absorb it.”¹⁶⁹ She also compared her intensive time with Biblical Hebrew to an immersion experience with Spanish: “It would be different if it were Spanish because then you’d be speaking it all the time and it would be total immersion. Hebrew, you’re not in immersion. It’s different when you were doing the grammar and stuff because it’s just not saying it. I would have been fine doing a Spanish intensive immersion. An ancient language, it just probably isn’t a good idea to do immersion.”¹⁷⁰ Student L shared similar dissatisfaction with the intensive format, particularly regarding learning vocabulary: “I don’t think that’s an effective way to actually learn a language. It’s a way to get familiar with a whole bunch of terms really quickly. I think learning that much vocab at that pace doesn’t really serve the foundation of learning the language.”¹⁷¹

Table 5 below shows the number of years that have passed since the learner studied Biblical Hebrew and their retention rate.

¹⁶⁹ Student K, interview by researcher, online via Zoom video chat, October 20, 2022.

¹⁷⁰ Student K, interview by researcher, online via Zoom video chat, October 20, 2022.

¹⁷¹ Student L, interview by researcher, online via Zoom video chat, October 17, 2022.

Table 5. Number of years past and self-reported retention rate

Student	Number of Years	Retention Rate
A	< 1	35%
B	1-2	5%
C	2-4	5%
D	2-4	65%
E	2-4	45%
F	8-10	50%
G	1-2	60%
H	1-2	70%
I	2-4	60%
J	1-2	25%
K	8-10	10%
L	4-6	30%
M	1-2	70%
N	1-2	80%
O	8-10	50%

Table 6 below shows the number of times per month that the learner currently uses Biblical Hebrew and their retention rate. Using Hebrew refers to any time the learner uses the language, including but not limited to for personal study, group Bible study, sermon preparation or delivery, other teaching opportunities, and seminary coursework. As each participant gave an approximate value for this and many provided ranges, the usage data per month was categorized into none, less than ten times per month, ten to twenty times per month, and greater than twenty times per month. In some instances, it appears that those who use Biblical Hebrew more frequently have greater retention.

Table 6. Current monthly usage and self-reported retention rate

Student	Monthly Usage Range	Retention Rate
A	None	35%
B	< 10 times	5%
C	None	5%
D	< 10 times	65%
E	10-20 times	45%
F	None	50%
G	10-20 times	60%
H	> 20 times	70%
I	10-20 times	60%
J	< 10 times	25%
K	< 10 times	10%
L	< 10 times	30%
M	10-20 times	70%
N	< 10 times	80%
O	10-20 times	50%

Instructional Methodology

Based on information gathered in the interviews, it was determined that five of the instructors teach primarily using GTM, one has a strong blend of both GTM and SLA, and the other teaches primarily in SLA. This was determined based on code count for their interviews, based on the textbook and/or online resources chosen by the instructor, and through what they shared regarding how they teach class sessions and their general pedagogical theories. The teaching method code count for each instructor is shown in table 7, with the largest number in each column shown in bold. One anomaly is Instructor E, whose highest code count falls under SLA. However, when analyzing the other factors of her teaching method, there is a much stronger GTM focus, though she does incorporate SLA elements to her classroom. Our conversation focused more on the unique SLA elements of her teaching, thus driving her SLA code count higher, even though her method is a blend of GTM and SLA. The GTM, BL, and SLA codes were assigned based on characteristics of each instructor's description of their teaching methods. For example, GTM was assigned to mentions of focusing on grammatical

instruction, not speaking Biblical Hebrew conversationally in the classroom, using textbooks that align with GTM, or teaching vocabulary based on lists from a grammar book; SLA was assigned when discussing conversing in Biblical Hebrew in the classroom or using actions to help learn vocabulary words; BL was assigned when an instructor attempted to merge the above methods.

Table 7. Teaching method code counts by instructor

Instructor	GTM	BL	SLA
A	6	1	1
B	10	2	9
C	5	2	34
D	8	3	4
E	5	4	16
F	2	0	1
G	9	1	6

Part of the coding process involved assigning the emotional codes positive, neutral, negative, or ideal but not reality.¹⁷² When looking specifically at teaching methods from the instructors' data, the co-occurrence of emotion codes and teaching method codes can be found in table 8 below. This data indicates that the majority of instructors view SLA in a positive light, though it is also seen as an ideal but not a reality in the classroom for GTM instructors. The most common example of the "ideal but not reality" code occurred when instructors who primarily teach GTM were asked about speaking Hebrew conversationally in the classroom. Four out of the five GTM instructors responded to indicate they desired to use more conversational Hebrew in their classroom, as noted by the majority of ideal but not reality code co-occurring with the SLA code. Often, the reason for not implementing this was the instructor stating his or her lack of personal knowledge and skill in that area.

¹⁷² The "ideal but not reality" code refers to wishful thinking. This code was applied when an instructor referred to a method that s/he wished to occur in his/her classroom but that was not currently being implemented.

Table 8. Teaching method and emotion code co-occurrence for instructors

	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Ideal Not Reality
GTM	10	7	11	0
Blend	8	0	1	2
SLA	38	2	10	7

Table 9 shows the co-occurrence of emotion codes and teaching method codes from the learners' data. The fact that the positive emotion showed the highest quantity of codes for each method implies that students were generally satisfied with the instruction that they received regardless of the method. SLA received the most positive and the most negative codes from learners. Learners were generally either positive or negative and not neutral regarding the instruction received. The low number of occurrences for the ideal but not reality code indicates that students have not necessarily thought about other teaching methods than what they had experienced.¹⁷³

Table 9. Teaching method and emotion code co-occurrence for learners

	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Ideal Not Reality
GTM	15	1	8	3
Blend	4	1	0	0
SLA	16	0	12	3

The teaching methodology of every instructor involves multiple elements, including reading and/or speaking Biblical Hebrew, studying Biblical texts, incorporating games, music, or other fun activities into class sessions, presenting vocabulary, and evaluating learning. Regardless of the method employed, every instructor indicated that they incorporate reading

¹⁷³ The code count of zero for negative emotions regarding a blended teaching method is due to the fact that no learners indicated anything negative specifically about a blended model. The researcher did not specifically ask learners regarding their thoughts on other teaching methods.

biblical texts into the classroom setting. The most commonly used biblical text for these instructors was the book of Jonah, specifically mentioned by three instructors. Two instructors stated that they use the book of Ruth. One instructor requires memorization of passages in Hebrew starting in the second semester of instruction.

In the next sections, information will be presented for the three teaching methods from both the instructor and learner interviews.

Grammar-Translation Method

As previously noted, five instructors interviewed use GTM, though each deviates slightly from what could be considered classic GTM.

Instructor A is a classic example of GTM. He teaches vocabulary from the textbook and promotes rote memorization, quizzing the students weekly. He provides grammatical lectures and some reading of the Hebrew Bible in each class session, at least for pronunciation if not translation. He provides some class time for group exercises from a workbook. His students primarily go on to pastoral ministry, so memorization is less important than overall knowledge of the language. He stated, “Reading and being able to figure out context and being able to exegete with the dictionary is maybe more important than being parsing machines.”¹⁷⁴ Student B learned from Instructor A, and she appreciated that “he came up with little funny things to remember what the word meant,” though she ranks her retention at “maybe 5%.”¹⁷⁵ Student N, also a student of Instructor A, felt that one year of Hebrew courses (amounting to 120 hours of instruction) is not enough for true learning. She stated, “It was rush, rush. I think it would have

¹⁷⁴ Instructor A, interview by researcher, Michigan, August 10, 2022.

¹⁷⁵ Student B, interview by researcher, Michigan, October 14, 2022.

given me a better foundation and I would have held the principles a little bit better if it hadn't been so rushed."¹⁷⁶ She desires to take further classes to learn the language better: "As a pastor who loves to teach and preach the Bible, I think [Biblical Hebrew] is imperative to have. I feel that I need more of it, so I do not feel anywhere near an expert. I still feel like an amateur at it. There's just so much that is there and so much learning still needed. I am still heavily using commentaries. I mean, studying it has enriched me, but I still need more of it, definitely."¹⁷⁷

Instructor B uses significant amounts of repetition of grammatical exercises to aid in memorization.¹⁷⁸ He previously taught English in Slovakia and successfully used repetition as his key teaching method there, which carries over into his Biblical Hebrew classroom. He stated, "I taught English in Slovakia for a few years, and we use the direct method, which is a lot of repetition. I would ask a question twice quickly and then pull the answer out of them. Now, I don't speak Hebrew unfortunately, so I can't do that, but as much as possible we're going to read through the examples.... Because that's how you learn. We look at the same sentences over and over and over."¹⁷⁹ While he desires to include more SLA elements in his class, he admitted that he does not have the skill level to accomplish that at this time and desires to further his knowledge with additional training. He incorporates songs that quote the Psalms, which he encourages his students to listen to repeatedly. He stresses frequency of use to his students—if you do a small amount every day, you will retain the language more readily. He illustrated this

¹⁷⁶ Student N, interview by researcher, online via Zoom video chat, October 15, 2022.

¹⁷⁷ Student N, interview by researcher, online via Zoom video chat, October 15, 2022.

¹⁷⁸ Instructor B, interview by researcher, Indiana, August 4, 2022.

¹⁷⁹ Instructor B, interview by researcher, Indiana, August 4, 2022.

with the mobile game Flappy Bird that was highly popular in 2014:¹⁸⁰ “I also have a Flappy Bird GIF in my lecture where the Flappy Bird is your Hebrew comprehension. Every time you tap it, it’s a day. If you don’t hit it every day for a few minutes you just go poof.”¹⁸¹

Student A and Student I learned Hebrew from Instructor B. Student A, who took Hebrew less than a year prior to the interview, noted regarding usage and retention, “Currently I don’t use any Hebrew.... I would say probably around 30 to 40% [retention rate].”¹⁸² Student I said that her retention of Hebrew is “probably 60% or so ... but I’m pretty familiar still with sentence construction and things like that.” She described her Hebrew usage as “at least a couple times a week ... so 10 to 12 times a month at minimum.”¹⁸³ Based on this very small sample of these two students, Instructor B’s theory of frequency holds true.

Instructor D began her journey into Hebrew by learning modern Hebrew in order to travel to Israel, but her teaching style is solidly in GTM.¹⁸⁴ While the focus is on a grammatical textbook, she promotes repetition and encouraging the students with positive reinforcement that they can do this, and if they struggle, she will help. She said, “I usually try to just encourage them that, ‘If you do what I ask you will end up learning Hebrew. If you find that you’re doing what I told you to do, and you’re still not learning, then come and talk to me because we have to change the method. There’s more than one good way to do this. You just need some traction.

¹⁸⁰ Flappy Bird is a simple mobile game where the user controls a bird. The user must constantly tap the screen to keep the bird in flight and to avoid obstacles in its path. See <https://flappybird.io/> to play online.

¹⁸¹ Instructor B, interview by researcher, Indiana, August 4, 2022.

¹⁸² Student A, interview by researcher, online via Zoom video chat, October 19, 2022.

¹⁸³ Student I, interview by researcher, Ohio, October 18, 2022.

¹⁸⁴ Instructor D, interview by researcher, online via Zoom video chat, August 22, 2022.

Doing it over and over the same way is not working. Let's change it.”¹⁸⁵ In-class reading is not graded, but near daily quizzes and exams are graded, and they are primarily vocabulary and some other grammatical concepts. Her department offers free tutoring services to students, which she encourages them to use for extra practice. She reported:

I tell people, “Look. Contact the tutors even if you're not having trouble, because it could make you learn faster, find answers, and have somebody to talk to while you're doing homework. Just work together in small groups, make it work for you, and enjoy it. So, you don't have to be desperate.” So, that seems to work really well. We have tutors who are meeting with people who are struggling, and people who are thriving and just want to know more, want to be able to ask more questions than they have time for in class or they don't want to interrupt or whatever. So, then if they're in a tutoring session, then they can go over whatever they wish and that seems to work really well.¹⁸⁶

Instructor F offers a unique approach among the instructors interviewed, while realizing the limitation of only teaching one semester of Hebrew and meeting once a week. While his methodology and textbook are GTM, his primary focus is to teach his students about various resources, especially Accordance Bible Software.¹⁸⁷ As he noted, “I teach an intro class that is basically an overview of the language with a special attention to how to use software. Most of the people taking the class are going to be pastors. So, I would say we think a lot about matters of interpretation for preaching, stuff like that, versus comparative semantics or something like that.”¹⁸⁸ He further elaborated that “Most of my students self-select that they're interested in languages because [Hebrew] is not required for them. But they are interested in matters of interpretation. How can I bring a little Hebrew into my sermons? How can I bring a little Hebrew

¹⁸⁵ Instructor D, interview by researcher, online via Zoom video chat, August 22, 2022.

¹⁸⁶ Instructor D, interview by researcher, online via Zoom video chat, August 22, 2022.

¹⁸⁷ Accordance Bible Software may be found at <https://www.accordancebible.com/>.

¹⁸⁸ Instructor F, interview by researcher, online via Zoom video chat, August 22, 2022.

into my adult forums and Bible studies?”¹⁸⁹ Students learn grammatical and parsing rules and some frequently occurring vocabulary, and they read biblical texts aloud in class. He notes that “language learning, particularly for seminary students, is a place where people can get very frustrated, and it can cause them to doubt their sense of call.”¹⁹⁰ His desire is not to frustrate his students but to liberate them to be able to use tools as they generally go on to pastoral ministry.

Students D and E learned from Instructor F. Student D shared positive experiences and that the tools and concepts she learned help her as she teaches adult Bible classes.¹⁹¹ Despite Instructor F’s desire to help his students focus on the practicality of using software, Student E was frustrated with the lack of focus on grammar. He commented that “it was hard to be motivated to do as much work as I would normally do because in the end, we would just look at the answers in Accordance.”¹⁹² The success of Instructor F’s teaching method appears to depend on the student’s motivation and what he or she desires to get out of a Biblical Hebrew class.

Instructor G, however, sets the bar much higher for his students, and his institution requires four semesters of Hebrew. He states, “It’s difficult to get an A in this class. You’ve got to work like a slave.”¹⁹³ He requires significant memorization of paradigms and vocabulary, and he also requires memorization of Scripture passages in Hebrew in the more advanced courses. “In my second semester, they do their first memory work, so they have to memorize a biblical passage.... They have to memorize the whole thing, and it’s hard, but they really work at it. And

¹⁸⁹ Instructor F, interview by researcher, online via Zoom video chat, August 22, 2022.

¹⁹⁰ Instructor F, interview by researcher, online via Zoom video chat, August 22, 2022.

¹⁹¹ Student D, interview by researcher, online via Zoom video chat, September 13, 2022.

¹⁹² Student E, interview by researcher, online via Zoom video chat, September 27, 2022.

¹⁹³ Instructor G, interview by researcher, online via Zoom video chat, August 31, 2022.

when they're done, the feeling of pride is overwhelming sometimes."¹⁹⁴ He incorporates reading aloud, repetition, and jokes to make lecture more interesting. When teaching students from a variety of international backgrounds, he realizes the complexity of going from Hebrew to the student's native language to English, and he encourages them to find resources in their native language to assist in their learning. "I require international students to use their original languages and that means, isn't there anything written in Korean on what we're studying here? Or what about Spanish?... And then I moved from that to requiring if you speak another language, I want at least one, I prefer two, references written in Chinese on the topic that you were discussing."¹⁹⁵ While he sets the standards high, he shows his passion for the language and does what he can to keep the teaching atmosphere lighthearted. However, the researcher was unable to interview any of Instructor G's students to confirm this.

Blended Method

Instructor E teaches using a blended method. She primarily uses a GTM textbook but has incorporated SLA within the last couple of years. She uses a conversational style to present some verb forms and other grammatical elements, including a focus on pronunciation. "What I dislike [about the GTM textbook] is that you ... don't get to the verb for quite a while. So that's also one of the reasons why I integrate some second language integration and so that I can teach some verbs ... and they can learn a few verbs so that we can say things. It also helps, I think, with pronominal suffixes, which is a really challenging topic. ... I think it also helps because teaching pronunciation in the abstract is tough."¹⁹⁶ Vocabulary is presented from the GTM textbook, but

¹⁹⁴ Instructor G, interview by researcher, online via Zoom video chat, August 31, 2022.

¹⁹⁵ Instructor G, interview by researcher, online via Zoom video chat, August 31, 2022.

¹⁹⁶ Instructor E, interview by researcher, online via Zoom video chat, August 29, 2022.

she uses a variety of toys and props to introduce and reinforce as many vocabulary words as possible while only speaking in Biblical Hebrew, which is then followed by a traditional grammatical lesson. She also provides her students with simple games to play with one another to reinforce the concepts they are learning. She feels as though she is venturing into new territory trying to combine the two methods and stated she is continuously revising her lesson plans based on students' feedback. She often has students in Greek class first, which she teaches purely with GTM, and when the students experience her blended method for Hebrew, she stated that it is well-received, and the students are excited that they feel they can speak the language early on. Her main reason for the blended approach is because "the grammar-translation model isn't as beloved by our younger ages. And the second language acquisition is becoming more helpful, but I do a modified approach because I still think for exegesis you do need to know grammar."¹⁹⁷ She felt that people who focus on GTM are looked down upon by people who employ SLA, that they do not truly "know" the language. "I found that making this transition, it really did a service to students.... [SLA] is a good approach, and it really helps with pronominal suffixes and other syntactic features if I pre-teach it enough. My students did the best this year that I've ever had on the exam that has pronominal suffixes, questions, and all those little words."¹⁹⁸

Two learner participants experienced a blended teaching method, though not from Instructor E. The Hebrew courses taken by Student F were heavily focused on reading and translating various biblical texts. While vocabulary was presented in a manner congruent with GTM, there was very little lecture and most class time was spent reading aloud and translating. While SLA is typically comprised of using Biblical Hebrew in a conversational way, significant

¹⁹⁷ Instructor E, interview by researcher, online via Zoom video chat, August 29, 2022.

¹⁹⁸ Instructor E, interview by researcher, online via Zoom video chat, August 29, 2022.

amounts of reading were used as the input mechanism for learning Biblical Hebrew. Student F had an advantage in that she was already bilingual and fluent in both English and Spanish prior to taking Hebrew. She shared an “aha” moment that occurred when reading the narrative of Abraham almost sacrificing Isaac from Genesis 22: “It suddenly clicked about how the language worked and operated and how the story was unfolding. Not as just a rote biblical story that we’ve read many times, but I was reading the text with fresh eyes, and I really relished that feeling! I enjoyed it so much.”¹⁹⁹ For Student F, the blend of grammatical work along with significant reading was beneficial for her spiritually and in her future use of the language through teaching in a variety of settings:

The main way that I use [Hebrew] is when it comes up in teaching settings, in biblical studies classes when we’re teaching the Old Testament. Especially translation issues.... In Honduras, for example, I work in a church setting that’s very conservative and so it’s nearing fundamentalist in its kind of interpretation. I personally am the opposite of that, like almost to the other pole on the fundamentalism scale. And so, the common phrase is, ‘Well, the Bible says...’ So, that exegesis kind of helps me have some authority to say, ‘Well, maybe it says that, or we’ve interpreted it to say that, but what if it says this other thing, which is another legitimate possibility?’ So, I think that without the knowledge of the language I would have a lot fewer tools in my anti fundamentalism tool belt.²⁰⁰

The experience of Student K was similar to Student F in that she received GTM instruction with significant oral work. Her instructor drilled the students orally on grammatical concepts so they would experience listening to and speaking the language, along with reading biblical texts. They also engaged in writing through transcribing biblical passages. Her Hebrew courses were taught in a very intensive manner—eight hours a day, five days a week, for eight weeks. While she indicated that she retained very little from the instruction as the schedule was too rigorous, she learned an overall understanding of the language and learned the tools to look

¹⁹⁹ Student F, interview by researcher, online via Zoom video chat, October 19, 2022.

²⁰⁰ Student F, interview by researcher, online via Zoom video chat, October 19, 2022.

up parsing and vocabulary words for future use. She sees the value in using Biblical Hebrew for her work as a pastor: “And when you start reading those ancient Hebrew words and you pick that apart, you realize the truth. That’s why I think it’s so valuable. We’ve lost so much in translation. I really appreciate having this knowledge so that I can pick at it and be able to do interpretation for my people that is more authentic.”²⁰¹

Second Language Acquisition

Instructor C teaches using the Biblical Language Center curriculum, which promotes fluency in Biblical Hebrew through conversational communication skills.²⁰² This method involves teaching Biblical Hebrew in Biblical Hebrew, though Instructor C does use English to explain concepts, especially more toward the beginning of the class. But his goal is to teach 90% of the class in Hebrew. This method “doubles or triples the amount of Hebrew that students are being exposed to, and you draw on your whole body instead of just your eyes for the learning process. And so, it’s much closer to how a student would learn—or anyone would learn—a foreign language in a foreign culture.”²⁰³ He uses props and pictures to teach vocabulary as well as the students performing actions (stand up, sit down, point to an object, etc.). Early exposure to reading texts involves pictures and focusing on words they have already learned. Stories that are not biblical but use Biblical Hebrew phrases and syntax are read and discussed by the students in class, including the students being required to summarize the story using Biblical Hebrew. Assessment of the students’ skills occurs in Biblical Hebrew. According to Instructor C, “The

²⁰¹ Student K, interview by researcher, online via Zoom video chat, October 20, 2022.

²⁰² “The Vision,” Biblical Language Center, accessed January 18, 2023, <https://www.biblicallanguagecenter.com/blc-vision/>.

²⁰³ Instructor C, interview by researcher, online via Zoom video chat, September 2, 2022.

BLC curriculum does have quizzes built into their online Moodle interface, and so we incorporate that into our assessment.... Say they've read a vocabulary story, then you can have a short answer quiz, homework assignment, or multiple-choice quizzes about the content.... How do I tell that they're getting it in class? I can ask questions. And then if they give me the right answer in Hebrew, then they're understanding."²⁰⁴

Reading fluency increases greatly using this method, though this does take significant work. Instructor C stated, "It's a lot more arduous to work up to spoken competence, so it's a lot harder, but it's way more rewarding and it's a lot more fun. And I can see the difference. So, it's the type of thing where you see it working and you're not going to go back to the old way of doing things."²⁰⁵

Learners who experienced this method were generally positive toward it. Student G stated, "It was honestly really, really, really fun because you just get to learn."²⁰⁶ When asked about her favorite parts of the course, she said:

Reading Bible stories was really cool. I was just noticing a lot more details in the text. Being able to read the Psalms and actually appreciate what the author is kind of doing. We write on Genesis 22 in one of our courses and I think that was interesting when Isaac asks Abraham, 'Where's the sacrifice?' And he says, 'The Lord will provide it, my son.' I was like, 'Oh my gosh, this is a play on words.' I've never noticed this before. Maybe I could have in English, but it definitely slows you down to see, even how ridiculous this story is. For instance, Jonah is so much funnier in Hebrew.²⁰⁷

She also stated that repeated practice and having class every day was very beneficial to her learning:

²⁰⁴ Instructor C, interview by researcher, online via Zoom video chat, September 2, 2022.

²⁰⁵ Instructor C, interview by researcher, online via Zoom video chat, September 2, 2022.

²⁰⁶ Student G, interview by researcher, online via Zoom video chat, October 5, 2022.

²⁰⁷ Student G, interview by researcher, online via Zoom video chat, October 5, 2022.

We're just speaking Hebrew every day and you just have to know it, otherwise you're lost.... There were grammar parts where we'd explain prepositions or stuff like that. It was very much built in, so like verbs and stuff, [the professor] would command us to do this and then we're like, OK.... And then he'd use different examples of—if he wanted two of us to do it, he'd use that pronoun. And he'd get us to repeat that.... Then he got us to say stuff in the present tense, and then he'd switch to the past tense later on in the classes. So, then you get to repeat what you're doing in the present, or someone else in the class would.²⁰⁸

Student H expressed similar sentiments by stating that it was helpful to be able to read the language at a basic level. The most beneficial aspect was “100% the reading Scripture.... Going through and seeing the actual word patterns up close and being able to work with them, seeing how they're used. And trying to work from the Masoretic text, but also getting the hands-on experience that way I think was probably the most beneficial thing. Like you can learn all the grammar in the world, but actually knowing how to spell words in the language, works by reading it really, really closely. Nothing quite works like it.”²⁰⁹ Further, he stated that, “Learning any language is very difficult, so it's hard to pick like a favorite part, because it's always tough in the moment. But then you finish and then you're like, oh, this wasn't too bad.”²¹⁰

Student M “found it very rewarding actually, in going to the Bible and really being able to read in Hebrew and being able to understand.”²¹¹ He appreciated that the curriculum incorporated Hebrew songs, giving the students the opportunity to hear and sing in Hebrew. “One of the biblical languages ... had a few recorded Hebrew songs. I'd say that was the favorite. My favorite was hearing and actually singing Hebrew.”²¹² His least favorite aspect was

²⁰⁸ Student G, interview by researcher, online via Zoom video chat, October 5, 2022.

²⁰⁹ Student H, interview by researcher, online via Zoom video chat, October 10, 2022.

²¹⁰ Student H, interview by researcher, online via Zoom video chat, October 10, 2022.

²¹¹ Student M, interview by researcher, online via Zoom video chat, October 13, 2022.

²¹² Student M, interview by researcher, online via Zoom video chat, October 13, 2022.

“the 10 minutes of reading homework. It was helpful, but somehow it wasn’t really my favorite.”²¹³

However, Student G expressed some negative sentiments toward this SLA method compared to her other language experience. She shared, “There wasn’t much focus on having to know the grammar rules and stuff. I did French immersion before in high school, so I was kind of used to that. I think it was even more so, ‘don’t worry about grammar,’ actually, than my French immersion. It was just us in class learning how to identify something in Hebrew and speak it.”²¹⁴ She stated that she was confused when presented with grammatical rules during class lectures, particularly for irregular forms and expressions. She said, “I felt like I was always guessing. The different rules were confusing. I think because they were irregular, too, but you had to put it in the course somehow and that kind of made it difficult.”²¹⁵ She also expressed that if she could change one thing regarding her learning experience, “I would just go back to the grammar part in my later courses, just explaining the English equivalent a little bit more and explaining what grammar is in English and how you could equate that to Hebrew understanding.”²¹⁶ Her responses indicated that while she appreciated the SLA method, she would also appreciate more GTM ideas incorporated into the class time.

²¹³ Student M, interview by researcher, online via Zoom video chat, October 13, 2022.

²¹⁴ Student G, interview by researcher, online via Zoom video chat, October 5, 2022.

²¹⁵ Student G, interview by researcher, online via Zoom video chat, October 5, 2022.

²¹⁶ Student G, interview by researcher, online via Zoom video chat, October 5, 2022.

Course Length

The length of the course is another element of instructional methodology. Along with the total number of instructional hours varying from one institution to another, the lengths of courses were sometimes significantly different, as noted in table 10.

Table 10. Length of courses for learners

Student	Method	Hours of Instruction	Length of Course(s)
A	GTM	192	(4) 8-week sessions
B	GTM	120	(3) 10-week sessions
C	GTM	32	(1) 16-week semester
D	GTM	64	(1) 16-week semester
E	GTM	64	(1) 16-week semester
F	Blend	120	(2) 16-week semesters
G	SLA	195	(4) 13-week semesters
H	SLA	195	(4) 13-week semesters
I	GTM	192	(4) 8-week sessions
J	GTM	120	(3) 10-week sessions
K	Blend	320	8-week intensive
L	GTM	320	8-week intensive
M	SLA	195	(4) 13-week semesters
N	GTM	120	(3) 10-week sessions
O	GTM	192	(4) 16-week semesters

While the number of instructional hours in an intensive setting may be significantly greater than over the course of a semester or two, that does not necessarily provide enough opportunity for students to internalize the material. This will be explored in greater detail in Chapter Five.

Motivation for Learning Biblical Hebrew

All of the instructors interviewed expressed their passion for the language and teaching it to their students. Instructor G shared that “Teachers’ enthusiasm for a subject is contagious.”²¹⁷ Instructor B stated, “I very much want them to internalize it, I want them to be able to use it and be excited about it and things like that.... For me once I got into the Bible, it was like, ‘Oh, this is really, really exciting!’”²¹⁸ Instructor F acknowledged the difficulty and potential stress involved in learning Biblical Hebrew in seminary, stating that “But language learning, particularly for seminary students, is a place where people can get very frustrated, and it can cause them to doubt their sense of call.... I think people enjoy taking Hebrew with me specifically because I try to remove that stressful part of the equation.”²¹⁹

The instructors are motivated and passionate to teach Biblical Hebrew, or else they would likely not be in that role. But why did each of these learners decide to learn Biblical Hebrew in the first place? Over half of them (eight out of fifteen) specifically stated that their reason was it was required by their program. Two of those also shared that they desired to take it anyway to serve as a tool for better exegesis. Either Hebrew or Greek was required for Student E, but he chose Hebrew. He stated that, “A biblical language just seemed to me to be part and parcel of theological education.... I think we should go back to the original texts and the original languages.”²²⁰ Student M also indicated that he went to seminary specifically for the goal of

²¹⁷ Instructor G, interview by researcher, online via Zoom video chat, August 31, 2022.

²¹⁸ Instructor B, interview by researcher, Indiana, August 4, 2022.

²¹⁹ Instructor F, interview by researcher, online via Zoom video chat, August 22, 2022.

²²⁰ Student E, interview by researcher, online via Zoom video chat, September 27, 2022.

learning the original languages. Two students commented that learning Hebrew brought the Old Testament to life and gave it deeper meaning for them.

Everyone except Student C seemed to enjoy their experience with Biblical Hebrew. Student C was not satisfied with his experience due to an entire year's worth of Hebrew being condensed into one semester and that his institution only provided recorded lectures rather than a "live" professor, though there were tutors available in person. He commented, "Surely there's a way to get the human brain to acquire some kind of functional knowledge [of Hebrew], and I think that our institutions are just so traditionally bound by whatever it takes academically that we just haven't made the switch."²²¹

Resources

Along with the methodology of teaching, the resources used in a Biblical Hebrew class are vitally important. These resources are predominantly textbooks, but learners often use other resources as well to assist in learning and retaining the material.

Grammar textbooks used by the instructors categorized as GTM or blended include Pratico and Van Pelt, Ross, and Seow.²²² Overall, the instructors spoke favorably of these textbooks, and they relied on the textbook for vocabulary lists, the order of language aspects taught, and practice exercises. The SLA instructor used the Biblical Language Center curriculum.²²³ The learners primarily experienced the same resources as the aforementioned

²²¹ Student C, interview by researcher, online via Zoom video chat, October 19, 2022.

²²² Gary D. Pratico and Miles V. Van Pelt, *Basics of Biblical Hebrew Grammar*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2019), though one instructor indicated a marked preference for the 2nd edition of Pratico and Van Pelt, published in 2007. Allen P. Ross, *Introducing Biblical Hebrew* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001). C. L. Seow, *A Grammar for Biblical Hebrew* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1995).

²²³ "Biblical Language Center," accessed February 22, 2023, <https://www.biblicallanguagecenter.com/>.

instructors; however, two participants did not remember the textbook that was used, and one indicated that her instructor only provided handouts rather than using a full textbook.

However, resources used for learning Biblical Hebrew go beyond a textbook. Each learner was asked what resources they used outside of class. Some examples included flash cards, studying with a group, resources found online, and other books. Figure 6 below shows the number of learners who reported using various types of other resources, outside of course textbooks and required homework assignments. Anecdotally, learners who indicated using additional resources shared that they were helpful in learning and retaining the language.

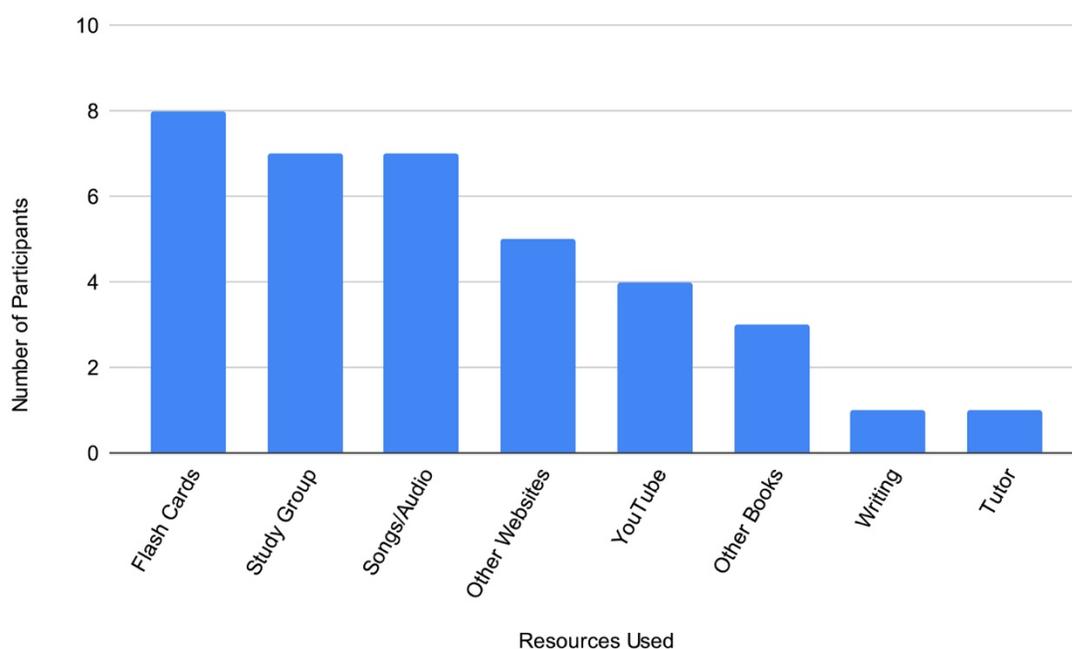


Figure 6. Other resources used by learners

The other resource that all learners accessed was the instructor of their course. Eleven of the fifteen learners brought up their instructor during the interview, and all of them had positive comments about him or her. None of them made any negative comments about their instructor. Instructors were described as motivational, inspirational, passionate, great at explaining, exhibiting grace to their students, not making them feel embarrassed, patient, knowledgeable,

fun, and encouraging. Multiple learners mentioned the instructor as their favorite aspect of the class. The positive emotion code occurred most often for learners in conjunction with comments regarding their instructor. This appears to be a key factor in learners retaining and continuing to use Biblical Hebrew.

Retention of the Language

The key question in this research is how (or if) a learner's retention of Biblical Hebrew is related to the teaching method that they experienced. Each learner's self-reported retention percentage, along with the teaching method they experienced, is shown in table 11 below. This data is also presented as a box and whisker plot in figure 7 below.

Table 11. Teaching method and self-reported retention percentage data

Student	Method	Retention
A	GTM	35%
B	GTM	5%
C	GTM	5%
D	GTM	65%
E	GTM	45%
F	BL	50%
G	SLA	60%
H	SLA	70%
I	GTM	60%
J	GTM	25%
K	BL	10%
L	GTM	30%
M	SLA	70%
N	GTM	80%
O	GTM	50%

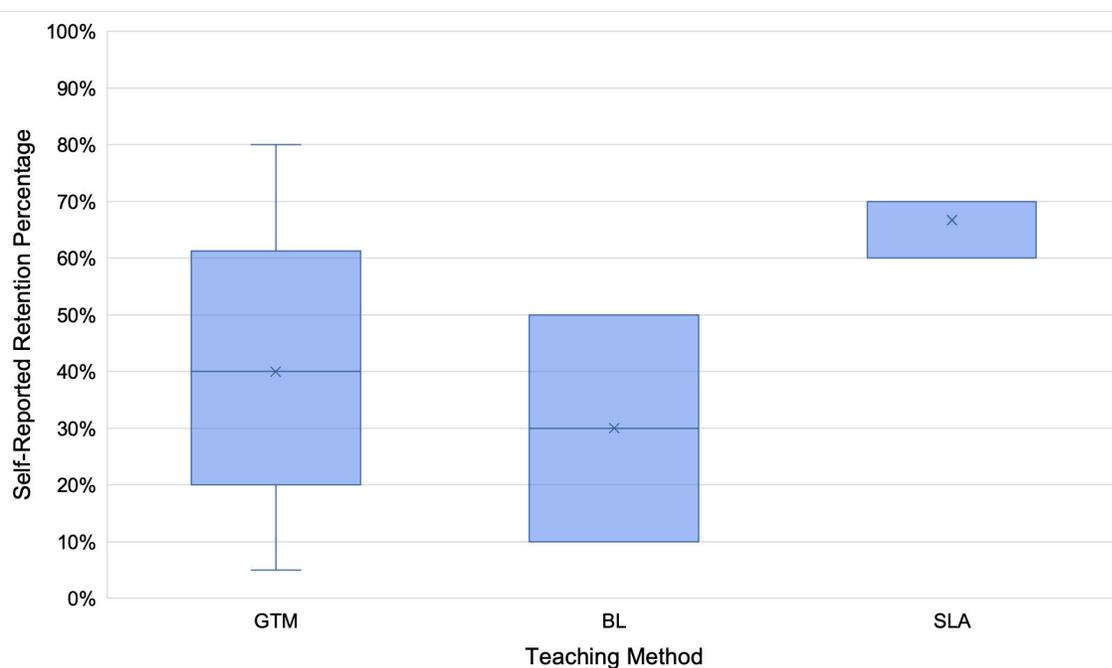


Figure 7. Teaching method and self-reported retention percentage

The overall average self-reported retention rate of these learners is 44%. When separated out based on teaching method, the average self-reported retention rates can be found in table 12 below.

Table 12. Self-reported retention rate by teaching method

	Average Retention Rate
GTM	40%
BL	30%
SLA	67%

Based on this data, the highest self-reported retention rate is found with the Second Language Acquisition teaching model, and the lowest is found with a blended model.

Potential Concerns with Retention Results

While the data in table 12 seems straightforward, there are some key factors with the data that must be identified that may have skewed the data.

The three participants who experienced the SLA method were relatively recent students, having learned Biblical Hebrew within two years prior to the interview. As one's ability to recall anything, especially a language, diminishes over time, this may lead to a higher self-reported retention rate simply because of the recentness of their learning.

It was difficult for this researcher to locate students who experienced the SLA method in their classroom, as the researcher could not find many seminary courses that employ that model. Even a blended method was difficult to find, as this researcher discovered that the majority of seminaries teach using GTM primarily. The researcher recognizes that a very small sample size was used for this research. The sample size of seven instructor interviews and fifteen learner interviews was deemed adequate when ideas were replicated among those interviewed.

Conclusion

Additional conclusions and recommendations based on this data will be presented in Chapter Five. But as Instructor D noted, "I am utterly convinced that there's more than one good way to do most things. Certainly, teaching a language is one of them, and I'm glad to have options."²²⁴

²²⁴ Instructor D, interview by researcher, online via Zoom video chat, August 22, 2022.

Chapter Five

Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Biblical Hebrew is an essential part of seminary education for many students. Some are excited about the opportunity to learn this ancient language, while others dread this required endeavor. Seminary professors strive to impart knowledge to their students for the amount of time allotted to them by their institution. This dynamic of the way instructors teach this ancient language and the way students learn and retain knowledge of it beyond the time of their coursework has been the study of this project.

This chapter will present a summary of the project, findings from the research data, conclusions based on these findings, and recommendations based on these conclusions.

Summary of the Project

This project began with establishing the importance of learning Biblical Hebrew. While some scholars do not see the value in this language, many scholars recognize that learning this original language of the Old Testament provides a firm foundation upon which to build one's Scriptural exegesis. Biblical Hebrew helps people interpret the Bible correctly, promotes correct doctrine, and emphasizes the value of God's Word. While it is generally considered to be a difficult language for modern English-speaking people to learn, many tools are available to assist in this endeavor, such as commentaries and software programs. Many believe that learning the nuances of the language for oneself provides spiritual benefits of deeper faith and more confident teaching of the Bible to others.

There is a theological warrant for studying Biblical Hebrew, as the Bible is the primary source of orthodoxy and orthopraxy for Christians, and the Bible itself speaks to its value in these areas. The words and message of the Bible must first be understood in order to be applied

in correct doctrine and practice. Many historical and contemporary theologians have considered Biblical Hebrew (and Biblical Greek) to be essential in theological education, as discussed in Chapter Two.

While there are many places and ways that one can learn Biblical Hebrew, the focus of this study is on graduate-level seminary education, specifically at seminaries accredited by the Association of Theological Schools (ATS). The problem addressed in this project is that students who take at least one course in Biblical Hebrew are spending time and energy to learn this language. However, they are not necessarily continuing these skills after their required coursework has ended. A lack of retained language skills implies that their time and effort may not have been valuable, and the institution's time and expenditure are not worthwhile if the students do not receive value from this aspect of their education. What can be done to increase Biblical Hebrew retention among graduate-level seminary students to provide more value to their efforts? One possible solution that this research employed is to address the teaching method. If the language is taught in a manner that is more conducive to students retaining that language, their time and effort will be better spent, as it will result in greater comprehension of the language and likely greater usage in the future. This project has proposed to answer the question of whether the teaching method for Biblical Hebrew is related to its continued use by seminary graduates. Over the course of the research, retention has become more of a focus than continued use, but those two concepts are closely related.

It is important to note that the researcher has not yet had the opportunity to teach at the graduate level, nor does she have any formal training in the field of education. The researcher began this study because of her passion for this language and her desire to teach Biblical Hebrew in the future, so that more students may experience this ancient language in a way that grows

their faith in the God of the Bible. This bias has been noted and the research has attempted to minimize it throughout the course of this project.

General theories of learning and more specific theories of language acquisition were explored in Chapter Two to provide a foundation for this research. There are multiple approaches to how a language is learned, but many believe that input (taking in the language through reading and/or hearing it) and output (practicing the language through speaking and/or writing it) are both essential in order to fully learn a language. Input and output can be experienced in a variety of ways depending on the learner's context and the language to be learned. The grammar-translation method (GTM) incorporates primarily reading, while the method of second language acquisition (SLA) attempts to incorporate all four methods—reading, writing, listening, and speaking—into the environment, thus allowing for the natural learning of a language, similar to small children learning language in their early years.

When applied specifically to Biblical Hebrew, many teaching methods have been used over the course of history. GTM is considered the oldest method, and it still continues today as described in Chapter Two. GTM relies on explicit instruction of grammatical rules and vocabulary, rather than a goal of more internal input and output methods as with SLA. A comparison of GTM and SLA was presented in light of Biblical Hebrew acquisition and comprehension as goals. According to language scholars, both methods have advantages and challenges.

With that content as a foundation, the research method was developed and conducted. The details of the research method can be found in Chapter Three. A total of twenty-two interviews were completed involving seven instructors and fifteen learners. The goal of the instructor interviews was to determine and categorize each individual's teaching style, which

would provide a basis to assess how students learn Biblical Hebrew. In the learner interviews, participants were asked questions to determine which teaching style they had experienced and about their current usage of Biblical Hebrew. Each learner was asked to gauge his or her retention rate since he or she completed their studies. The interview data was then transcribed and coded. Many unique factors play a part in how much of a language any given person retains, and this research was limited in only being able to address a few of them.

Chapter Four presented the results of the data gathered in the interviews along with some analysis. These findings will be summarized in the next section.

Findings from the Research Data

The majority of the instructors interviewed employ GTM in their classrooms, and the majority of learners interviewed experienced GTM to learn Biblical Hebrew. One instructor and two learners were categorized as using a blend of GTM and SLA, and one instructor and three learners interviewed taught/experienced SLA. Each GTM instructor brought additional elements into his or her classroom setting beyond what would be considered traditional GTM (lecture, grammatical practice, vocabulary list memorization, etc.). See Chapter Four for specific data on these items.

All of the instructors considered SLA to be a positive advance in teaching Biblical Hebrew, although each GTM instructor did not feel confident enough in incorporating those skills in his or her classroom. For example, Instructor B stated, “I desperately want to take a conversational Hebrew class just so that I can take it further because this is not how I learned

English.”²²⁵ Instructor D shared regarding this topic, “I’m reluctant to try to do that because our time is so compressed. I’m not sure I could make it work.”²²⁶

One interesting finding was that Student G, who experienced an SLA classroom, indicated that she desired more grammatical rules to be taught.²²⁷ Generally, GTM-based learners seemed satisfied with how they were taught. Student C, who had an asynchronous GTM learning experience, was disgruntled with how he was taught and felt that he learned very little. He noted, “It was like you had to learn all this stuff. And for a person like me, I don’t even know grammatical terms in English... [Hebrew grammar] was so useless to me that it just didn’t stick, and I felt like it was a colossal waste of money and time.”²²⁸ One instructor interviewed teaches with a focus on using tools to assist with GTM; one of his students appreciated the emphasis on tools very much and another of his students felt that method was not challenging enough, and he did not learn enough grammar, as reported in Chapter Four.

The researcher went into this project with an assumption that SLA would produce a higher retention rate among students, and the findings supported that. As reported in table 12 in Chapter Four, among these participants, the blended method had an average retention rate of 30%, GTM had an average retention rate of 40%, and SLA had an average retention rate of 67%. The average retention rate of all learners was 44%. However, the sample size of blended method and SLA students was small, as the majority of graduate-level classrooms appear to follow GTM. One important concept that was not directly investigated in this project was what specific

²²⁵ Instructor B, interview by researcher, Indiana, August 4, 2022.

²²⁶ Instructor D, interview by researcher, online via Zoom video chat, August 22, 2022.

²²⁷ Her thoughts on this topic can be found in Chapter Four.

²²⁸ Student C, interview by researcher, online via Zoom video chat, October 19, 2022.

aspects of Biblical Hebrew were retained by learners and how that relates to each learner's goals. If the learner's primary goal is to develop exegetical skills but his or her retained knowledge focuses on conversational words, then his or her retention would be less valuable than retaining more specific grammatical knowledge such as verb parsing or root vocabulary words.

Conclusions from the Data

What conclusions can be drawn from this data? Is there a relationship between the teaching method for Biblical Hebrew and retention for seminary graduates? While the sample size of learners who were taught with a non-GTM method was small, the highest retention percentage was found in those who were taught with SLA. However, those learners also took Biblical Hebrew courses relatively recently, within the last four years. The researcher was unable to find learners who experienced SLA a greater number of years ago. Thus, it can be provisionally concluded that SLA produces the highest retention rate, realizing that a larger data set would be needed to make this conclusion more definitively.

Interaction Is Important

One conclusion that can be drawn from the learner who experienced an asynchronous teaching method is that interaction is important. That learner reported very minimal retention and very minimal current usage of Biblical Hebrew, and he attributed that solely to the teaching method. He was completely overwhelmed early during his first semester and was unable to get the help that he needed to learn the language well. He stated, "When I realized I was getting snowballed and just could not keep up, I asked for an extended schedule. He asked for a proposal that I did, and he granted that to stretch it out because the pace was just too much for me."²²⁹ He

²²⁹ Student C, interview by researcher, online via Zoom video chat, October 19, 2022.

worked hard to pass the course, but he was so disenchanted with the process that he has almost no desire to use Biblical Hebrew in his pastoral ministry. When asked what he would change about the course, he replied, “Well, I just think they’ve got the wrong structure. Like, if they had a more practical, non-academic approach to it for those who weren’t so into it as the language, but maybe like more practitioners to help people learn how to apply it. I think the model just needs to be changed to somehow make it functional.”²³⁰ This conclusion is also supported by how many of the other learners interviewed cited their instructor as one of their favorite aspects of the course, and nearly all of them spoke about their instructor in a positive light. Student B stated, “The thing that helped the most was the professor knew how to be fun.... He came up with little funny things to remember what words mean.”²³¹ Student O shared, “What assisted me in learning [Hebrew] is to be motivated; [the professor] was good at motivating us to learn it because of his own experience. So, I would say that’s what helped me learn it. And he was always willing to help. If I ever needed anything, he’d always be willing to work through it with me.”²³² The interaction that the students were able to have with their instructors made their Biblical Hebrew courses more enjoyable, and generally speaking, that enjoyment encouraged them to continue using the language.

Course Length Matters

Another conclusion is regarding the length of Biblical Hebrew courses. Two learners interviewed were taught Biblical Hebrew in an eight-week intensive format. These learners concluded they were given too much information too quickly. Student K shared, “My Hebrew

²³⁰ Student C, interview by researcher, online via Zoom video chat, October 19, 2022.

²³¹ Student B, interview by researcher, Michigan, October 14, 2022.

²³² Student O, interview by researcher, Michigan, October 20, 2022.

was a summer concentrated course, and it was eight hours a day for about eight weeks.... That was terrible. However, it was the only time they offered it for two years. I had to do it. There was no choice. So, I took it, but I would never do it again because I'd want a little bit more time to absorb it."²³³ When Student L was asked what she would change about her Hebrew experience, she stated, "It would have been easier for me, more meaningful perhaps, if I had taken it after taking Old Testament, and also not trying to cram everything into eight weeks. But had I not done that, I may not have been able to take Hebrew at all."²³⁴ Both reported low retention rates and low usage, as they did not have the time that they desired to truly learn the material on a deeper level and practice it during their coursework.

While the intensive courses afforded more hours of instruction than semester-long courses, the greatest retention percentages occurred when the learning was more spread out. Multiple learners who experienced non-intensive courses also reported that more courses would be preferable for greater learning and building their skills. Student N said, "I think it needed another semester to make it a full year of study. The terms were about 11 weeks, and we had other classes. It was rush, rush. I think it would have given me a better foundation and I would have held the principles a little bit better if it hadn't been so rushed."²³⁵ Student I shared a similar perspective: "Grammar is so fast in our program. So, I think if I could change that and make it into a semester course where we can really slow it down, that would be kind of nice.... Slowing it down I think would help a ton with implementing other things like Scripture reading."²³⁶

²³³ Student K, interview by researcher, online via Zoom video chat, October 20, 2022.

²³⁴ Student L, interview by researcher, online via Zoom video chat, October 17, 2022.

²³⁵ Student N, interview by researcher, online via Zoom video chat, October 15, 2022.

²³⁶ Student I, interview by researcher, Ohio, October 18, 2022.

Motivation Has an Impact

Most learners indicated that their motivation for taking courses in Biblical Hebrew was because it was required for their academic program, though a few took it because they genuinely wanted to learn it. Student I took Biblical Greek first out of a fascination and curiosity for the biblical languages, and after a good experience with Greek, she changed to a Master of Divinity degree program and took Hebrew as well.²³⁷ Student C shared his motivation as follows:

I think we should go back to the original texts and the original languages. And I don't think that's too big of an ask for graduate work. A lot of people feel like it's too hard and I get it. Languages aren't everyone's thing, and I certainly have a bias as someone who's trilingual myself, but I think people should at least have a working knowledge that maybe goes beyond [Bible software]. My concern is that people, instead of thinking for themselves, will all too often go into commentaries or to, you know, the theologian du jour rather than reading the Bible and thinking for themselves within the basis of our confessional heritage. A biblical language just seemed to me to be part and parcel of theological education.²³⁸

Student D chose to take Biblical Hebrew because, "I felt like my weakness was the Hebrew scriptures, Old Testament and I feel like our history is incredibly important in order to better understand. As you read any of the New Testament scripture you don't fully understand unless you understand what they're referencing. When the audience already knows the stories, this small, nuanced portion that is given, brings full memories to people that have lived in the depth of those scriptures. And I didn't have that."²³⁹ A learner's motivation is also key when analyzing future usage and retention, as a person is more likely to continue using and is more likely to retain skills that they enjoy. This area was not considered in great detail for this study as it was outside of the scope, but it is important to note motivation as a factor.

²³⁷ Student I, interview by researcher, Ohio, October 18, 2022.

²³⁸ Student C, interview by researcher, online via Zoom video chat, October 19, 2022.

²³⁹ Student D, interview by researcher, online via Zoom video chat, September 13, 2022.

Instructors who do not currently teach using SLA generally acknowledged in some way that they do not consider their method to be ideal. The interview questions did not specifically ask what each considered to be an ideal teaching method for greater retention, but multiple professors who teach in GTM indicated they believe that conversing in Biblical Hebrew in the classroom would help their students learn the language better. Instructor B shared, “I desperately want to take a conversational Hebrew class just so that I can take it further because this is not how I learned English.... Having taught English conversationally, I’m trying to apply those principles because I want it to be more than just the dead language of their reading. I want it to be something living and vibrant ... so they can internalize it, because I want them to be excited and continue to use it.”²⁴⁰ Instructor D and Instructor G both shared how a knowledge of modern Hebrew helped them internalize the language better, and they connected that skill with speaking Biblical Hebrew conversationally, though they do not personally use conversational Hebrew in their classrooms.²⁴¹

While it was not explicitly asked why they do not include conversational Biblical Hebrew as part of their teaching, there may be multiple answers. The instructors were asked what factors influenced their chosen teaching method, and the most common response was that they teach the language how they were taught. For example, Instructor A shared, “Looking back with Hebrew and with Greek and what worked for me, I certainly found ... working together being more effective than having paradigms drilled into me. So, I’ve tried to model it on what worked for me as a student, and then also at the same time try to be aware that other people learn in different

²⁴⁰ Instructor B, interview by researcher, Indiana, August 4, 2022.

²⁴¹ Instructor D, interview by researcher, online via Zoom video chat, August 22, 2022. Instructor G, interview by researcher, online via Zoom video chat, August 31, 2022.

ways, and I don't want to completely tailor it to myself."²⁴² If they did not learn Biblical Hebrew in a conversational manner, they may not have the confidence or skill to teach that way without further education and practice. Generally, most saw their own learning experience in a positive light, though a few instructors noted that they changed their teaching methods to be better than how they initially learned the language. Instructor D had fluency in modern Hebrew prior to teaching Biblical Hebrew, but she still teaches using GTM due to requirements of her academic department. Her department has multiple instructors who teach Biblical Hebrew over the course of the two-year language requirement, so they all need to teach in generally the same manner, so institutional restrictions may also be a factor.

An Ideal Method Remains Elusive

One conclusion the researcher initially hoped to gain from this study was to determine an “ideal” teaching method for Biblical Hebrew that would result in the greatest retention. However, that has not been decisively determined through this research data. There are students in all of the teaching methods represented who have retained and continued to use their Biblical Hebrew skills, and there are students who have not done so. This leads the researcher to believe that while the teaching method is important, there are likely other factors related to the classroom experience that play a stronger role in whether the learner continues to use and retain the language as they move forward beyond their seminary education.

²⁴² Instructor A, interview by researcher, Michigan, August 10, 2022.

Recommendations

What should be done with these findings and conclusions? There are two primary areas where this study applies: academic institutions such as seminaries and for Christians in general. Some potential areas for future study will also be suggested.

For Instructors in Academic Institutions

While an “ideal” teaching method for greater retention of Biblical Hebrew has not been discovered in this project, there are insights gleaned from this project that instructors can incorporate into their classrooms. A few of these insights are as follows.

Be relatable and approachable to the learners. The most common occurrence of the positive emotion code was regarding learners’ feedback about their instructor. The learners most often spoke about the instructor rather than the course content, specifically their enthusiasm, passion, grace, and care for the students. The instructor’s attitude and approach to the language is significant in the classroom, as is their approach to the students in general. Student C, who overall had a very negative opinion of his Hebrew experience due to the intensity of having an asynchronous learning experience, said that his Hebrew professor was “One of my favorite professors; he’s a really amazing professor, and I took more courses from him than anybody at the seminary.”²⁴³ Student K shared, “I formed a very strong relationship with the professor. That was probably my favorite part. Although it really was extremely stressful, it was incredibly cool to be learning ancient text. And she brought in pictures of manuscripts, just all kinds of neat things and artifacts for us to see. She was a really well-rounded professor and didn’t make us feel

²⁴³ Student C, interview by researcher, online via Zoom video chat, October 19, 2022.

bad when we couldn't understand."²⁴⁴ When asked about her favorite part of her Hebrew courses, Student D shared, "Honestly, it's the professor and his passion for the language. It's infectious and just makes you want to learn."²⁴⁵ Student I shared that her professor, "did an awesome job of pouring into us and making it interactive."²⁴⁶ Two specific examples she shared were playing with dreidels around Hanukkah time and how the professor gave each student a yod cutout on a stick as a memento.

Make it fun. In the interviews, many learners pointed to fun or unique things that their instructor did beyond grammatical lectures and testing. Student M appreciated having a TA who would sing Hebrew songs in the classroom, and he sought out websites where he could find the psalms sung in Hebrew.²⁴⁷ In Student G's SLA classroom, one common exercise was to converse in Hebrew about daily life. She shared this anecdote: "The fun things will help you remember the most, right? For example, I remember one time someone was trying to say, 'I drank milk this morning.' But he didn't know what the word for milk was, so he said, 'mayim para.' My teacher was like, 'Cow water? That's disgusting!'"²⁴⁸ Multiple students expressed delight in their instructors' ability to add humor to the classroom.

Give students plenty of opportunities to apply the language that they are learning. Another commonly mentioned favorite part of Hebrew courses was digging into the Scriptures and being able to read the Old Testament in its original language. Reading in Biblical Hebrew requires slowing down versus reading in English, and many learners reported discovering

²⁴⁴ Student K, interview by researcher, online via Zoom video chat, October 20, 2022.

²⁴⁵ Student D, interview by researcher, online via Zoom video chat, September 13, 2022.

²⁴⁶ Student I, interview by researcher, Ohio, October 18, 2022.

²⁴⁷ Student M, interview by researcher, online via Zoom video chat, October 13, 2022.

²⁴⁸ Student G, interview by researcher, online via Zoom video chat, October 6, 2022.

nuances and elements of the text they had not previously seen. Student F, who learned in a blended classroom, related this story regarding the value of reading in Hebrew:

I just found it really joyful to read. The text we read in our intensive was the sacrifice of Isaac on the mountain, which I just remember the feeling like when we were reading it in Hebrew and suddenly getting that it was a suspenseful, nail-biting story. Like, he has a knife in his hand, and it keeps repeating, “He had the knife in his hand...” It suddenly clicked about how the language worked and operated and how the story was unfolding. Not as just a rote biblical story that we’ve read many times, but I was reading the text with fresh eyes, and I really relished that feeling and enjoyed it so.²⁴⁹

Student G, who learned in an SLA classroom, shared that, “Reading Bible stories was really cool. I was just noticing a lot more details in the text.”²⁵⁰ Student O shared that his favorite part of the course was “to be able to read the Hebrew. I mean, just to go through it and know this is what they’re saying.”²⁵¹ Reading the Old Testament in Hebrew is the goal of most students who take a language course, and being able to read the Scriptures through their coursework was noted as being of great value to many.

Allow more time to learn the language. When asked what one element they would change about their Hebrew learning experience if they could, the most common response from learners was to allow more time to learn the language. Students who experienced intensive courses expressed that the concentrated nature was both positive and negative; they were able to learn the language better by being solely focused on it for that time, but it was also overwhelming. Students who experienced a more traditional academic term also desired to have longer terms or additional courses to further their learning. While it may not be practical for institutions to offer additional courses or to slow down the pace, one learner shared how her

²⁴⁹ Student F, interview by researcher, online via Zoom video chat, October 19, 2022.

²⁵⁰ Student G, interview by researcher, online via Zoom video chat, October 6, 2022.

²⁵¹ Student O, interview by researcher, Michigan, October 20, 2022.

instructor offered opportunities each term where interested students could meet to read Biblical Hebrew together. Any person learning a foreign language will improve given additional time and practice; however, at the master's level, Biblical Hebrew is just one aspect of a much larger degree program and time is not unlimited. The students who self-reported the highest retention levels were those who completed courses with just under 200 hours of instruction suggesting that there may be a 'sweet spot' that could be further researched in a larger study.

Encourage learners to use additional resources. As previously shown in figure 6, the learners interviewed used a variety of other resources to supplement required textbooks, class time, and assigned homework. Flash cards were the most common, generally used for memorizing vocabulary words. The next most common resource was to study in a group. Student D shared that she participated in a group of anywhere from three to eight people who translated Old Testament passages from the Revised Common Lectionary on a monthly basis and shared insights with one another from their translations.²⁵² Student G appreciated having other students for accountability and self-discipline.²⁵³ Study groups specifically mentioned by interview participants were formed organically among students rather than assigned or forced. Learners who did not share that they participated in group study reasoned that they study better individually or did not have time for a group. Other resource options to assist learners are a myriad of videos on YouTube (many are in modern Hebrew, but they could still be helpful) including songs where biblical texts are sung in Hebrew. There are multiple websites that can be utilized for Biblical Hebrew, some of which have been mentioned in this project and are listed in

²⁵² Student D, interview by researcher, online via Zoom video chat, September 13, 2022.

²⁵³ Student G, interview by researcher, online via Zoom video chat, October 6, 2022.

Appendix A. Students learn in different ways, and it is recommended that instructors suggest multiple types of resources so each learner can find what helps him or her the most.

Numerous Biblical Hebrew grammar books and other resources have been reviewed over the course of this project. Some of them are described in Chapter Two, and additional resources are listed in Appendix A. Resources geared toward a GTM classroom are structured differently than for an SLA classroom, and some resources attempt to blend the two. The interview subjects, both instructors and learners, used a wide range of resources. The most commonly used GTM textbook among interview participants was Pratico and Van Pelt, followed by Ross, then Seow.²⁵⁴ Each of these textbooks has strengths and weaknesses, and this researcher does not have enough data to recommend a specific textbook based on this project, as that was not the focus of this research. The only SLA resource specifically mentioned was the Biblical Language Center curriculum.²⁵⁵ Multiple interview participants discussed using the Accordance Bible Software,²⁵⁶ and Instructor F focuses his teaching on helping students learn that package. While tools such as Accordance can be useful for students as they learn the language, students must still gain knowledge of the nuances of the language and be able to read passage in context to truly become proficient at accurate exegesis.

While the specific concepts and teaching methods addressed in this research were surrounding Biblical Hebrew, there is application for teaching Biblical Greek as well. These languages are often taught in a similar manner in seminary education, and these courses have the

²⁵⁴ Gary D. Pratico and Miles V. Van Pelt, *Basics of Biblical Hebrew Grammar*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2019), though, as noted earlier, one instructor indicated a marked preference for the 2nd edition of Pratico and Van Pelt, published in 2007. Allen P. Ross, *Introducing Biblical Hebrew* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001). C. L. Seow, *A Grammar for Biblical Hebrew* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1995).

²⁵⁵ “Biblical Language Center,” accessed February 22, 2023, <https://www.biblicallanguagecenter.com/>.

²⁵⁶ Accordance Bible Software can be found at <https://www.accordancebible.com/>.

similar goal of encouraging students to learn to read the Bible in its original languages. The conclusions noted above would also apply to Biblical Greek seminary classrooms.

For Christians in General

While this researcher believes that Biblical Hebrew is beneficial for all Christians who desire to learn it, the focus of this research is those who learn Biblical Hebrew as part of a graduate-level seminary education. Many people who graduate from a seminary go into various aspects of ministry, often as pastors, teachers, or ministry leaders. Those who preach and teach God's word are held to a higher standard, as they are helping to guide and shape the faith of others.²⁵⁷ Paul urges Timothy in his second letter:

In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.²⁵⁸

Those who preach and teach are not simply to share their own opinions and thoughts but to preach the truth of the Scriptures no matter what. How can one preach the truth of the Scriptures unless one knows the Scriptures? Multiple learner interview participants agreed with this sentiment that learning Biblical Hebrew is essential for being able to understand the Bible with greater depth in order to preach and teach it to others. As one learner said, “I want people to

²⁵⁷ “Not many of you should become teachers, my fellow believers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.” James 3:1.

²⁵⁸ 2 Timothy 4:1-5.

experience the richness of it and experience the beauty that's found with unveiled Scripture when you can read it beyond English."²⁵⁹

There are many options for self-study of Biblical Hebrew to be found online. Some are available for free while others require a one-time payment or a recurring subscription. Many of these resources are listed in Appendix A. These are accessible to anyone who wishes to utilize them, and one does not have to be enrolled in an academic program to benefit from them in learning Biblical Hebrew. However, multiple interview participants stated the benefits of accountability, having a professor to interact with directly, and studying with other students, which would be more difficult in a self-study environment.

Areas for Future Study

One area for future study would be to locate more participants who experienced a blended or SLA teaching method to see if the retention percentage remains higher for SLA. As time passes, it would be interesting to see if the SLA participants interviewed still retain as much Biblical Hebrew knowledge as when they had recently taken the courses.

Another area for future study would be to locate students who experienced an SLA teaching method in an intensive format, rather than over the course of a full academic term. Does SLA provide better comprehension when a student is more immersed rather than a traditional classroom format of meeting a few hours a week? Similarly, a comparison between the language retention of GTM-based intensive courses and SLA-based intensive courses could provide interesting results for whether or not an intensive format is a better option.

²⁵⁹ Student I, interview by researcher, Ohio, October 18, 2022.

Conclusion

Martin Luther wrote in 1524, “For though the Gospel has come and is daily coming through the Holy Spirit alone, we cannot deny that the languages were the means through which it came. Through them it increased its influence, and through them it must also be preserved... Let us, then, foster the languages as zealously as we love the Gospel.”²⁶⁰ The message of the Bible has not changed since Luther wrote that, and neither should our desire as Christians to study the original languages of the Bible. Regardless of the teaching method used, as we desire to teach sound orthodoxy and orthopraxy at the seminary level, these languages should continue to be taught in such a way that promotes their further use and retention in graduate-level seminary education.

The conclusions presented in this project are applicable to many areas of teaching and learning outside of Biblical Hebrew. While the focus of this research was specifically regarding methods of teaching Biblical Hebrew, the researcher believes that it is important for all teachers in all subject areas to be relatable and approachable to the learners, to make learning fun, to give opportunities to use the skills that are being developed in the classroom, to allow adequate time to learn the necessary skills, and to make use of additional resources. There are nuances of all these recommendations that apply specifically to Biblical Hebrew, but the reaches of these principles are much wider and apply to all who are teaching those seeking to learn.

²⁶⁰ Plass, 730-731.

Appendix A

List of Hebrew Grammar Resources

This appendix contains a list of Biblical Hebrew teaching resources compiled by the researcher. This is not an exhaustive list, but it is more comprehensive than the sources discussed in Chapter Two.

Arnold, Bill T., and John H. Choi. *A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

“Biblical Language Center.” Accessed January 18, 2023.
<https://www.biblicallanguagecenter.com/>.

Case, Andrew and Bethany. “Aleph with Beth” YouTube Channel. Accessed January 18, 2023.
<https://www.youtube.com/c/alephwithbeth>.

_____. “Free Hebrew. Forever.” Accessed May 13, 2023. <https://freehebrew.online/>.

Chisolm, Robert B. *A Workbook for Intermediate Hebrew: Grammar, Exegesis, and Commentary on Jonah and Ruth*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic & Professional, 2006.

Cook, John A., and Robert D. Holmstedt. *Intermediate Biblical Hebrew: An Illustrated Grammar*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2020.

Dallaire, H el ene. *Biblical Hebrew: A Living Language*. United States: H el ene Dallaire, 2017.

Dobson, John H. *Learn Biblical Hebrew*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014.

Fields, Lee M. *Hebrew for the Rest of Us: Using Hebrew Tools without Mastering Biblical Hebrew*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008.

Futato, Mark D. *Beginning Biblical Hebrew*. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2003.

_____. *Basics of Hebrew Accents*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2020.

Garrett, Duane A., and Jason S. DeRouchie. *A Modern Grammar for Biblical Hebrew*. Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2009.

_____. *A Modern Grammar for Biblical Hebrew Workbook*. Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2009.

- Grebe, Charles. "Animated Hebrew." Accessed May 13, 2023.
<https://www.animatedhebrew.com/>.
- Green, Jennifer S., G. Brooke Lester, and Joseph F. Scrivner. *Handbook to A Grammar for Biblical Hebrew*. Rev. ed. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2005.
- Howell, Adam J., Benjamin L. Merkle, and Robert L. Plummer. *Hebrew for Life: Strategies for Learning, Retaining, and Reviving Biblical Hebrew*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2020.
- Kelley, Page H., Terry L. Burden, and Timothy G. Crawford. *A Handbook to Biblical Hebrew: An Introductory Grammar*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994.
- Kelley, Page H., Daniel S. Mynatt, and Timothy G. Crawford. *The Masorah of Biblical Hebraica Stuttgartensia*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998.
- Kutz, Karl V., and Rebekah L. Josberger. *Learning Biblical Hebrew: Reading for Comprehension: An Introductory Grammar*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018.
- _____. *Learning Biblical Hebrew Workbook: A Graded Reader with Exercises*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018.
- "Learn Biblical Hebrew." Daily Dose of Hebrew. Accessed January 18, 2023.
<https://dailydoseofhebrew.com/learn/>.
- Long, Gary A. *Grammatical Concepts 101 for Biblical Hebrew*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013.
- Osborne, William R., and Russell L. Meek. *A Book-by-Book Guide to Biblical Hebrew Vocabulary*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Academic, 2020.
- Overland, Paul. *Learning Biblical Hebrew Interactively*. Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Phoenix Press Ltd, 2016.
- _____. "Learning Biblical Hebrew Interactively." Accessed January 18, 2023.
<http://www.learningbiblicalhebrewinteractively.com/>.
- Parsons, John R. "Hebrew for Christians." Accessed May 13, 2023.
<https://www.hebrew4christians.com/>.
- Pratico, Gary D., and Miles V. Van Pelt. *Basics of Biblical Hebrew Grammar*, 2nd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007.
- Reymond, Eric D. *Intermediate Biblical Hebrew Grammar: A Student's Guide to Phonology and Morphology*. Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2018.

- Roberts, Jonathan. "Learn Biblical Hebrew." Ancient Language Institute. Accessed May 13, 2023. <https://ancientlanguage.com/biblical-hebrew/>.
- Ross, Allen P. *Introducing Biblical Hebrew*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001.
- Scott, William R. *A Simplified Guide to BHS: Critical Apparatus, Masora, Accents, Unusual Letters & Other Markings*, 3rd ed. Richland Hills, TX: BIBAL Press, 1987.
- Seow, C. L. *A Grammar for Biblical Hebrew*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1995.
- Simon, Ethelyn, Irene Resnikoff, and Linda Motzkin. *The First Hebrew Primer*, 3rd ed. Berkeley, CA: EKS Publishing Co., 2021.
- Van Pelt, Miles V. *Biblical Hebrew: A Compact Guide*, 2nd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2019.
- Van Pelt, Miles V., and Gary D. Pratico. *Graded Reader of Biblical Hebrew: A Guide to Reading the Hebrew Bible*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006.
- _____. *The Vocabulary Guide to Biblical Hebrew*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003.
- Weingreen, Jacob. *A Practical Grammar for Classical Hebrew*, 2nd ed. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1959.

Appendix B

Informed Consent

This project employed two informed consent forms—one for instructor interviews and one for learner interviews. Both may be found below. A signed informed consent was required prior to each interview. Forms were signed by hand for interviews conducted in person, and a fillable PDF was sent via email to accept digital signatures for interviews conducted via Zoom video chat.

Informed Consent Form—Instructor Interview

Date:

Primary researcher: Katie Erickson, (419) 206-1114, ericksonk@winebrenner.edu

Purpose of the research: The purpose of this research is to gather data regarding how instructors have taught Biblical Hebrew, how students have learned Biblical Hebrew, and how they are (or are not) using it after they have completed their coursework. The goal of this interview is to explore how the interviewee has taught Biblical Hebrew.

Description of the research procedures: The interviewer has prepared questions to prompt discussion regarding the teaching method(s) that the interviewee has used in a classroom setting, why s/he has chosen those method(s), and how students' comprehension is evaluated. Additional follow-up questions will be asked to clarify or explore ideas further as they come up. The interview will be audio recorded and a typed transcript will be produced by the researcher or a hired transcriptionist.

Time associated with research: Approximately one hour.

Potential risks: Minimal social and privacy risks are present but will be mitigated through anonymization and confidentiality of the audio recording and transcript.

Potential benefits: The findings of this research will provide insight into a potential relationship between teaching method and retention for Biblical Hebrew adult language acquisition. This may inform future instructors of an ideal teaching method that would result in a higher likelihood of future use of the language by the students.

Confidentiality of data: All personally identifying data will be anonymized during the transcription process, and only appropriately anonymized data will be shared in any published form. You will have opportunity to review any portion of your interview that may appear in the final project. Original audio recordings and notes will be kept confidential.

Costs and/or compensation for participation: None.

Contact persons: For more information concerning this research or if you have further questions about your rights as a research subject, please contact Katie Erickson at (419) 206-1114. If you have questions or comments regarding the research project as a whole, please contact project chair Dr. Joel Hamme at (626) 200-9847.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION: Participation in this research is voluntary. You are free to participate or to withdraw at any time, for whatever reason. In the event that you do withdraw from this study, the information you have already provided will be kept in a confidential manner.

CONSENT: Federal regulations require precautionary measures to be taken to insure the protection of human subjects on physical, psychological, social, and other issues. This includes the use of “informed consent” procedures.

I, _____ (PRINTED NAME OF SUBJECT), have been adequately informed regarding the risks and benefits of participating in this research. My signature also indicates that I can change my mind and withdraw my consent to participate at any time without penalty. Any and all questions I had about my participation in this research have been fully answered. I understand I will receive a copy of this consent form for my records.

SUBJECT SIGNATURE: _____ DATE

Informed Consent Form—Learner Interview

Date:

Primary researcher: Katie Erickson, (419) 206-1114, ericksonk@winebrenner.edu

Purpose of the research: The purpose of this research is to gather data regarding how instructors have taught Biblical Hebrew, how students have learned Biblical Hebrew, and how they are (or are not) using it after they have completed their coursework. The goal of this interview is to explore how the interviewee has learned Biblical Hebrew and any ways in which s/he has used or currently uses the language.

Description of the research procedures: The interviewer has prepared questions to prompt discussion regarding how the interviewee has learned Biblical Hebrew, ways in which s/he serves in a ministry context, and how s/he has used or currently uses the language. Additional follow-up questions will be asked to clarify or explore ideas further as they come up. The interview will be audio recorded and a typed transcript will be produced by the researcher or a hired transcriptionist.

Time associated with research: Approximately 90 minutes.

Potential risks: Minimal social and privacy risks are present but will be mitigated through anonymization and confidentiality of the audio recording and transcript.

Potential benefits: The findings of this research will provide insight into a potential relationship between teaching method and retention for Biblical Hebrew language acquisition. This may inform future instructors of an ideal teaching method that would result in a higher likelihood of future use of the language by the students.

Confidentiality of data: All personally identifying data will be anonymized during the transcription process, and only appropriately anonymized data will be shared in any published form. You will have opportunity to review any portion of your interview that may appear in the final project. Original audio recordings and notes will be kept confidential.

Costs and/or compensation for participation: None.

Contact persons: For more information concerning this research or if you have further questions about your rights as a research subject, please contact Katie Erickson at (419) 206-1114. If you have questions or comments regarding the research project as a whole, please contact project chair Dr. Joel Hamme at (626) 200-9847.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION: Participation in this research is voluntary. You are free to participate or to withdraw at any time, for whatever reason. In the event that you do withdraw from this study, the information you have already provided will be kept in a confidential manner.

CONSENT: Federal regulations require precautionary measures to be taken to insure the protection of human subjects on physical, psychological, social, and other issues. This includes the use of “informed consent” procedures.

I, _____ (PRINTED NAME OF SUBJECT), have been adequately informed regarding the risks and benefits of participating in this research. My signature also indicates that I can change my mind and withdraw my consent to participate at any time without penalty. Any and all questions I had about my participation in this research have been fully answered. I understand I will receive a copy of this consent form for my records.

SUBJECT SIGNATURE: _____ DATE _____

Appendix C

Instructor Interview Participants

Below is the anonymized list of instructors who were interviewed for this project. This list shows each instructor's academic qualifications in their field.

Table 13. Instructor interview participants

Instructor	Title at Current Institution	Education
A	Student Support Manager, Instructor	DMin in progress from South African Theological Seminary
B	Assistant Professor of Biblical Studies	Ph.D. in Hebrew Bible from Chicago Theological Seminary
C	Assistant Professor of Biblical Studies	Th.D. from Harvard University
D	Professor of Old Testament Studies	Ph.D. & Th.D. from Dallas Theological Seminary
E	Associate Professor	Ph.D. from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School
F	Professor of Old Testament and Semitic Languages	Ph.D. from Florida State University in Religions of Western Antiquity
G	Associate Professor of NT and Early Judaism	Ph.D. from McMaster University in Religious Studies

Appendix D

Institutional Review Board Approval Letter



Institutional Review Board

Research Proposal Recommendations

Principal Researcher: Katie Erickson

Proposed Research Title: Biblical Hebrew Teaching Methods and Retention

Dear Katie:

Congratulations! Upon review of your research proposal and related materials, the Winebrenner Institutional Review Board has approved your research proposal indicating that you may begin to implement your research procedures according to the timeline established by you and your research advisor.

Upon review of your informed consent form, I do recommend that you consider the purpose of keeping your audio recordings and notes upon the completion of your research versus destroying the contents. Is there a purpose for continuing to keep the confidential information? If so, how will you store the confidential information? These are only questions for you to consider. Secondly, I recommend an additional note in the VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION section of your informed consent form that states *neither yourself nor the researcher will be penalized if you choose to withdrawal from the research*, and note if you determine to destroy information upon the completion of your project.

Once again, congratulations and best wishes upon implementing your research. May God grant you His wisdom, knowledge, understanding, strength, and persistence as you carry out this work. In all, may He be gloried.

Please contact me if you have any questions (iiames@winebrenner.edu).

Best wishes,

Dr. Mary Steiner Iames

Winebrenner Theological
Seminary Institutional
Review Board Chair

Appendix E

Institutional Review Board Report

May 18, 2023

Dear Dr. Helleman,

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval letter that I received from Dr. Mary Iames on June 14, 2022, does not state any requirement regarding the need to submit a final IRB report.

However, while reviewing the IRB approval letter, I noticed two recommendations that I did not complete. My intent is to destroy all interview data after this project is complete, including audio/video recordings, transcripts, and informed consent forms. Before beginning each interview, I verbally reminded each participant that s/he may withdraw from this process at any time with no negative consequences. No participants chose to withdraw from an interview.

Sincerely,

Katie Erickson

Appendix F

List of Codes in Instructor Interviews

Below is the list of codes that were used for the instructor interviews. Initial codes were generated prior to the first pass of the coding process, and additional codes were generated and incorporated during a second pass of coding.

Table 14. Instructor interview codes

Code	Description/Usage
biblical texts	What biblical texts were referenced
class elements	Aspects of the classroom, such as lecture, reviewing homework, etc.
class size	Number of students in a class
course length	The length of time a course lasted
course types	Grammar, exegesis, syntax, etc.
education	The instructor's educational experience
emotion	Parent code for various emotions
ideal not reality	Wishing this were the case, but it is not happening in their reality
negative	Negative emotion toward something
neutral	Neutral emotion toward something
positive	Positive emotion toward something
end result	The goal of teaching Hebrew
evaluation	How the instructor evaluates learners' comprehension
length of teaching	How long the instructor has been teaching
pedagogy	General code for pedagogy; later refined into more specific codes
philosophy of education	Parent code for various philosophy of education aspects
ambivalent	Similar to neutral emotion, the instructor is ambivalent regarding this aspect of their philosophy of education
attitude toward teaching	The instructor shares their attitude toward teaching in general
identity as instructor	How they see themselves as an instructor
motivation	What is the instructor's motivation for teaching Hebrew?
passionate	Phrases that indicate the instructor's passion for the language
why they teach that way	The instructor explaining their teaching method
previous experience	Experiences the instructor had as a student
quotable	Potential quotable quotes
retention	Learners retaining knowledge from their courses

teaching methods	Parent code for various teaching method aspects
activities	Using creative activities in class
blended	Items indicating a blended teaching method
fun	Making teaching fun in various ways
games	Using games in class
grammar-translation	Items indicating a GTM teaching method
methodology	General methodology comments
music	Using music in class
reading/speaking	References to reading of speaking the language in class
repetition	Using repetition in class
second language acquisition	Items indicating a SLA teaching method
textbook	Textbooks used for their courses
vocab	How they teach and encourage retention of vocabulary words/phrases

Appendix G

List of Codes in Learner Interviews

Below is the list of codes that were used for the learner interviews. Initial codes were generated prior to the first pass of the coding process, and additional codes were generated and incorporated during a second pass of coding.

Table 15. Learner interview codes

Code	Description/Usage
biblical texts	What biblical texts were referenced
class elements	Parent code for aspects of the classroom
grammatical lecture	Lecture on grammatical topics
homework	Homework assignments
review concepts	Reviewing grammatical concepts
course length	The length of time a course lasted
course types	Grammar, exegesis, syntax, etc.
emotion	Parent code for various emotions
ideal not reality	Wishing this were the case, but it is not happening in their reality
negative	Negative emotion toward something
neutral	Neutral emotion toward something
positive	Positive emotion toward something
end result	The goal of learning Hebrew
evaluation	How the learner's comprehension was evaluated
learning methods	Parent code for various learning methods
group study	Studying in a group / with other students
lecture	Experiencing lecture
other books	Using other books to aid in learning
rote memorization	Memorizing, usually relating to vocabulary
software	Using computer software to aid in learning
tutoring	Utilizing the services of a tutor
videos	Using videos to aid in learning
motivation for Hebrew	Why did the learner desire to learn Hebrew?
number of courses taken	Parent code for identifying the number of courses taken
1 course	The learner took 1 Biblical Hebrew course
2 courses	The learner took 2 Biblical Hebrew courses
3 courses	The learner took 3 Biblical Hebrew courses
4 courses	The learner took 4 Biblical Hebrew courses
>4 courses	The learner took more than 4 Biblical Hebrew courses

passionate	The learner shared a passion for Hebrew
quotable	Potential quotable quotes
retention	Parent code for the learner's self-reported retention percentage
0-10	The learner reported retaining between 0-10%
10-20	The learner reported retaining between 10-20%
20-30	The learner reported retaining between 20-30%
30-40	The learner reported retaining between 30-40%
40-50	The learner reported retaining between 40-50%
50-60	The learner reported retaining between 50-60%
60-70	The learner reported retaining between 60-70%
70-80	The learner reported retaining between 70-80%
80-90	The learner reported retaining between 80-90%
90-100	The learner reported retaining between 90-100%
role or occupation	The learner's current role or occupation in life
teacher as a person	Comments relating to the instructor's personality
teaching methods	Parent code for teaching methods experienced by the learner
activities	Activities were used in class
blended	Items indicating a blended teaching method
fun	Aspects of class that the learner considered to be fun
games	Games were used in class
grammar-translation	Items indicating a GTM teaching method
methodology	General statements regarding the teaching method
music	Music was used in class
reading/speaking	References to reading of speaking the language in class
repetition	Repetition was used in class or for personal learning
second language acquisition	Items indicating an SLA teaching method
textbook	Textbooks used for their courses
time frame	Parent code for when the learner took Hebrew courses
<1 yr	The learner took courses less than 1 year prior to the interview
1-2 yrs	The learner took courses 1-2 years prior to the interview
2-4 yrs	The learner took courses 2-4 years prior to the interview
4-6 yrs	The learner took courses 4-6 years prior to the interview
6-8 yrs	The learner took courses 6-8 years prior to the interview
8-10 yrs	The learner took courses 8-10 years prior to the interview
use frequency	Parent code for how often the learner currently uses Hebrew
<10x/mo	The learner uses Hebrew less than 10 times per month on average

10-20x/mo	The learner uses Hebrew 10-20 times per month on average
>20x/mo	The learner uses Hebrew more than 20 times per month on average
consistent	The learner consistently uses Hebrew
none	The learner does not use Hebrew at all
variable	The learner has variable usage of Hebrew
vocab	How they learn or were taught vocabulary words/phrases

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