

MEET ISRAEL'S MOST BELOVED SPEAKER OF HEBLISH

In a year with so little to smile about for many Israelis, few interviews on national TV have brought as much to so many as the one conducted by Rafi Reshef with Effie Hercky, an 81-year-old American bubbe from Givatayim.

To showcase the return to (relative) normalcy after Israel reopened its gyms in late February following months of lockdown, one TV channel turned to the New Jersey-born great-grandmother and volunteer nurse who was fully vaccinated.

The three-minute interview, conducted mostly in Hebrew, opened with Hercky hitting the treadmill decked out in makeup, large earrings and a shirt reading "BADGIRLS."

Given the huge cultural gap that still exists between North American Jews and Israel, Effie's moment of fame became a wonderful bridge. Israelis and diaspora Jews alike felt warmth and fascination towards a woman who so seamlessly mixes Hebrew and English into every sentence. No matter your level of understanding in either language, you'll understand what Effie is saying.

Watch the interview here:

[https://www.facebook.com/
216443748511822/videos/
541709846772165](https://www.facebook.com/216443748511822/videos/541709846772165)

(Turn on captions for English
Subtitles)





DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think this interview went viral with both Hebrew and English Speakers in Israel in the first week after it was posted?
2. Do you think the interview would have generated the same reaction if it was an older man speaking this way to a younger female TV journalist?
3. Did Effie's response to the questions posed by Rafi remind you of any American Jews or Israelis you know in your life?



ACTIVITY

SHARON AVNI is a professor of Linguistics and Academic Literacy at CUNY. She is the co-author of *Hebrew Infusion: Language and Community at American Jewish Summer Camps*, which won the 2020 National Jewish Book Award in education and Jewish identity.

In [this piece](#), she explains: "When Reshef asks "ve'ech hakosher?" [what kind of shape are you in?], and Hertzke responds "Oh my god! Ata rotze lirot et ha muscles sheli?" [Do you want to see my muscles?], she is engaged in what linguists call 'translanguaging'.

Coming out of bilingual education scholarship, translanguaging describes the ways that bilinguals, multilinguals and indeed all users of language use all available linguistic resources to communicate effectively with others. Instead of viewing bilingualism as strictly separated languages in the individual's mind, translanguaging approaches language in a more dynamic way, seeing it as the natural and authentic way in which people move fluidly between languages — sometimes, as with Hertzke, within the same sentence."

- Write three phrases or sentences that you would like to see on a t-shirt that have a mix of Hebrew and English words translanguaged together. Here's an example:



 WATCH

Followup Interview with Effie and Comedian Benji Lovitt in English
<https://www.facebook.com/Plus61J/posts/1735523333286051>

ISRAEL MFA Video with Effie for Yom Haatzmaut: Israel 73rd Birthday
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sYRzi_rbDwc

I24 News: Israel's New Favorite Celebrity: 81-year-old US Native Effie Hercky
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uft2BiJu-Ko>

 REFLECTIONS

In many of the [interviews with Effie](#) she shares fascinating anecdotes about aliyah, how the country has changed over the 50 years since she made Israel her home, and the challenge of maintaining optimism in the face of adversity.

What lessons do you think people who don't live in Israel can learn from Effie about what they could expect if they ever choose to make the Jewish State their home?

