Immigrant Adjustment in Israel:
Literacy and Fluency in Hebrew and Earnings
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Abstract
This paper is an analysis of the determinates of Hebrew language speaking and writing skills and the determinates of earnings among adult male Jewish immigrants in Israel, using the 1972 Census of Israel. Among other findings, Hebrew speaking skills and Hebrew literacy are shown to increase with level of schooling and duration in Israel, but to decrease with age at migration and if many others in the area in which the respondent lives speak the same origin language. Country of origin and family structure also matter.

Earnings are found to increase with level of schooling, duration in Israel, pre-immigration labor market experience and proficiency in both speaking and writing Hebrew. Those who speak Hebrew on a daily basis as a primary or only language and who can write a letter in Hebrew earn about 20 percent more than those who do neither. Controlling for these variables, as well as country of origin, English speakers earn about 15 percent more and Arabic speakers earn 2 percent less than Hebrew speaking immigrants who speak neither of these languages.

Comparisons are made to a study of immigrants in the 1983 Census of Israel, and immigrants in other countries. Estimates of the rate of return to the investment in language training are presented.