ISRAELI CULTURE, TECHNOLOGY AND LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION: THE STORY OF
HANNAH SENESH A HEROINE (H)

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The use of computers as an interactive multimedia to enrich the teaching of languages has attracted increased interest as a creative way to engage students. The project presently reported involves a short version of the true story of an Israeli heroine, Hannah Senesh, a poet who volunteered to be a secret agent for the British fighting the Nazis during World War II. She was caught but, despite torture, refused to reveal members of her spy network. Hannah was executed at the age of twenty-four.

My goals for this project were to make the story accessible to students of Hebrew classes and to familiarize them with two poems of Hannah Senesh as well as to introduce historical elements such as the British Mandate, life on a kibbutz of the period, and to bring relevant geographical locations such as Caesarea, The Hannah Senesh museum, and kibbutz Sedut-Yam to the attention of students.

The use of computer technology has made it possible to read the text of the story at two different levels, one introductory and the other more advanced, and has allowed students to listen to the melodic sounds of her poem, “ELI, ELI” sung by students. Particularly exciting is the visual tour of the museum of Hannah Sensh for which I obtained permission to video and digitize.

Students are assigned to extend their general knowledge by adding their research to the project for future classes. For example, students need to find more information in English, through the internet or other sources which connects to the story of Hannah Senesh or that particular period and then translate it to Hebrew using a simple paraphrase.

The great versatility of multimedia technology has allowed me to create fourteen different projects dealing with various aspects of Israeli culture all of which aim to make materials accessible to students with a wide range of backgrounds and abilities, allowing them to develop listening, pronunciation, orthographic and grammatical skills in ways that are both linguistically supportive and historically informative.