Committee for the Evaluation of Linguistics Study Programs

Tel Aviv University
Department of Linguistics
Evaluation Report

March 2013

Contents

Appendices: Appendix 1 – Letter of Appointment
                 Appendix 2 - Schedule of the visit

Chapter 1- Background

At its meeting on November 13th 2012, the Council for Higher Education (CHE) decided to evaluate study programs in the field of Linguistics during the academic year of 2013.

Following the decision of the CHE, the Minister of Education, who serves ex officio as Chairperson of the CHE, appointed a Committee consisting of:
- Prof. Stephen Anderson- Department of Linguistics , Yale University, USA – Chair
- Prof. Ruth Berman, Department of Linguistics, Tel Aviv University, Israel
- Prof. Elly Van Gelderen- Department of English, Arizona State University, USA
- Prof. Barbara Partee- Department of Linguistics , University of Massachusetts at Amherst, USA
- Prof. Joshua Wilner- Departments of English and Comparative Literature, City College and The Graduate Center - CUNY, USA
- Prof. Shuly Wintner, Department of Computer Science, University of Haifa, Israel
- Prof. Draga Zec- Department of Linguistics, Cornell University, USA
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Ms. Alex Buslovich was the Coordinator of the Committee on behalf of the CHE.

Within the framework of its activity, the Committee was requested to:[1]
1. Examine the self-evaluation reports, submitted by the institutions that provide study programs in Linguistics, and to conduct on-site visits at those institutions.
2. Submit to the CHE an individual report on each of the evaluated academic units and study programs, including the Committee's findings and recommendations.
3. Submit to the CHE a general report regarding the examined field of study within the Israeli system of higher education including recommendations for standards in the evaluated field of study.

The entire process was conducted in accordance with the CHE's Guidelines for Self-Evaluation (of October 2010).

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[1] The Committee's letter of appointment is attached as **Appendix 1**.

Chapter 2-Committee Procedures

The Committee held its first meetings on March 10, 2013 during which it discussed fundamental issues concerning higher education in Israel, the quality assessment activity, as well as Linguistics Study programs in Israel.

In March 2013, the Committee held its visits of evaluation, and visited Tel Aviv University, Bar Ilan University, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Ben-Gurion University of the Negev. During the visits, the Committee met with various stakeholders at the institutions, including management, faculty, staff, and students.

This report deals with the Department of Linguistics at Tel Aviv University. The Committee's visit to the University took place on March 11-12,2013

The schedule of the visit is attached as **Appendix 2**.

In view of the fact that Professor Ruth Berman is an emeritus faculty member at Tel Aviv University, and in order to prevent the appearance of a conflict of interest, Professor Berman did not participate in the evaluation of the Department of the Linguistics at Tel Aviv University.

The Committee thanks the management of Tel Aviv University and the Department of Linguistics for their self-evaluation report and for their hospitality towards the committee during its visit at the institution.

Chapter 3:

Evaluation of Linguistics Study Program at Tel Aviv University

This Report relates to the situation current at the time of the visit to the institution, and does not take account of any subsequent changes. The Report records the conclusions reached by the Evaluation Committee based on the documentation provided by the institution, information gained through interviews, discussion and observation as well as other information available to the Committee.

1. Executive Summary

The Committee was quite impressed with the department as a well-run and highly effective unit, indeed, something of a model Department of Linguistics. Among other things, we were struck by the collegiality and the spirit of mutual respect and affection between the faculty and the students. Our overall conclusion is that we can identify no structural problems in need of remediation by the department.

The department's most serious need at present is for a position in the centrally important area of Language Acquisition, to replace retired Prof. Ruth Berman.

There are chronic problems regarding physical facilities, including lack of office space for TAs, lack of any common meeting area for students and faculty of the department, and shared and cramped faculty offices. The recent allocation of space for a joint research laboratory is a positive development that can be expected to enhance research activity.

There are many areas in which relatively small amounts of additional funds, if these could be made available, would be very helpful to the maintenance and extension of the department's activities. These include small matters such as support for visitors, local conferences, and the like, as well as travel support that would allow graduate students to present papers at conferences and similar expenses.

2. <u>Organizational Structure</u>
- <u>Observation and findings</u>

The administration's view of Linguistics in the University
The administrators view Linguistics as one of the best departments in the Humanities, with a tradition of recruiting excellent faculty, attracting excellent students, and carrying out very high quality research and teaching. We concur with that judgment.

Connections with other disciplines
Linguistics has both official and unofficial connections with other disciplines. The department offers two interdisciplinary structured programs for the first degree: Computational Linguistics, a double major B.A. track in Linguistics and Computer Science; and an even newer program in Neurobiology of Language, a single-major B.Sc. track in Biology and Linguistics within the School of Neuroscience. They also anticipate closer interactions with Psychology once they have succeeded in hiring someone in language acquisition/ psycholinguistics. They have close ties to the Cognitive Studies of Language Use Program chaired by Orna Peleg, and have recently gotten approval for laboratory space for a laboratory that will serve phonetics, psycholinguistics, and neurolinguistics, with equipment contributed by research funds of several programs. Individual faculty members have collaborative relations with faculty in other departments both within the university and in other universities. New opportunities for collaborations are continually explored and are to be encouraged wherever they can grow organically out of the strengths of the department.

Linguistics in the Humanities
The committee raised the question of whether Linguistics at TAU, as the field is presently developed, belongs in the Humanities, and asked where, if not, it might belong (in an ideal world)? The response from the administrators was that such a move would not be unprecedented, since both Psychology and Geography have moved out of the Humanities in the past, but that it would not necessarily be advantageous for Linguistics, which is regarded as one of the best departments in the Humanities. The department had not so far discussed such a possibility; they consider that they are being treated relatively well where they are.

Effects of organization on measures of quality
Organizational details sometimes have effects on statistical measures of faculty and student quality. For example, Linguistics students currently measure second in the Humanities in admissions data (psychometric and bagrut scores); but the "biology and linguistics" students do not go into the Humanities statistics but into the School of Neuroscience statistics; otherwise the Linguistics students' scores might well be the highest in the Humanities.

<u>Recommendations</u>
        <u>Long term (until the next cycle of evaluation)</u>
The committee encourages the administration to continue to recognize the distinctive characteristics of Linguistics within the Humanities and the excellence of the department, and to support the department where possible in areas such as faculty positions, student financial support, and the allocation of space.

3. <u>**Mission and Goals**</u>
- <u>Observation and findings</u>

Mission as articulated by the Department
The Department aims to educate future researchers and teachers in the main sub-disciplines of the scientific study of language at a variety of levels, and to conduct original research in these areas. They aim to prepare their best students for PhDs and for positions in academia, and to help train professionals in related theoretical and applied domains, including hi-tech natural language processing, education, clinical work in the remediation of language disorders, and a variety of other language-related career paths. Both in teaching and in research, they measure themselves against the best departments in the world.

Coverage of subfields and diversity of approaches
Linguistics is a field with great internal diversity, spanning a great many quite different sub-fields. Each of these has its own distinctive body of problems, research methods and established results. They include not only traditional humanistic areas such as the analysis of metrical verse or the internal coherence of texts and discourse, but also work that falls under the social sciences (psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics and the study of the acquisition of language), the exact sciences (computational linguistics and natural language processing, the acoustic structure of speech) and the biological sciences (neurolinguistics, the analysis of speech articulation, the study of the evolution of the human language faculty). Some traditional core areas, such as the study of meaning (semantics) and "grammar" (syntax and morphology) have developed in ways that are highly formalized and require control of methods drawn from mathematics and formal logic.

Only the very largest departments could hope to cover all aspects of the study of language, and very few actually do; the relatively small size of this one precludes such an all-encompassing approach. They have no one working in sociolinguistics, for instance, an area which is a major focus of some other programs. Historical and comparative linguistics, one of the traditionally important branches of the field, is not represented in the Department, nor is the anthropological tradition of close description of a wide variety of "exotic" languages. Work on the structure of discourse is likely to disappear with the imminent retirement of a current faculty member. This is not necessarily problematic; probably no top linguistics department covers all of these subfields.

It is also the case that within many subfields, a considerable diversity of approaches exists, each with a claim to distinctive insights. Syntax, for example, generally regarded as a core subfield, has engendered a number of theoretical approaches which differ from one another sometimes in minor ways, sometimes enough to constitute different "schools" that do not easily communicate with one another. Perhaps the biggest contemporary divide is between "formal" linguistics, a description that can be applied within many subfields and that is the dominant approach in many leading linguistics departments, and linguistics that is either non-formal (as in some older traditions) or even anti-formal.

Against this background, the Department aims to cover what they see as the core areas: specifically, phonology, syntax and semantics, all approached in formal ways. To this core they add work in related areas: the study of phonetics in the domain of sound, morphology (the study of the structure of words) at the interface of phonology and syntax, and pragmatics at the interface of meaning and context. They have developed joint programs that connect pure linguistics with other disciplines: a double major in computational linguistics, in connection with Computer Science, and a program in language and biology (more specifically, neurolinguistics) in conjunction with the new school of Brain Studies.

The particular selection of areas represented by the faculty of the department is a coherent one, and one that allows them to deal with the central problems of the field at a high level. In making future hires, the department should consider ways to broaden the theoretical perspectives represented by the current faculty.

The gap in coverage of language acquisition, and other needs
The department feels that its biggest gap, or near-gap, is in the study of language acquisition, the field of their distinguished retiree Ruth Berman. Professor Berman retired in 2004; since then the department has managed to keep language acquisition in its program only by a combination of post-retirement activity by Professor Berman, the employment for a number of years of two teaching fellows, Galit Adam and Irena Botwinik, and the inclusion of some material on language acquisition in some of the other courses in the department, not a sustainable solution. Professor Berman continues to get research grants and to work with graduate students in her now-smaller research lab, but it is already nine years since her retirement. Language acquisition crucially connects with other areas the department covers and continues to have high student demand. The department's clear first and most urgent priority for strengthening all aspects of their program is a new hire in language acquisition, a sentiment on which the department is unanimous. This committee strongly concurs.

Over the longer term, there are other subfields that could very beneficially be added or reinforced, but there is at this point no consensus among either the faculty or this committee about the prioritizing of further desirable appointments by subfield.

Outreach to non-linguists
Apart from training students in their field and conducting their own research, the department recognizes the importance of outreach to non-linguists. At one level, within their BA programs, they aim to train students in a style of rigorous thinking that characterizes linguistics but is quite applicable to a much broader range of problems. They are also interested in offering courses that will serve to raise the level of sophistication in the understanding of language on the part of a broader public, and the recent introduction of a Corner Stone program in the university will offer the opportunity to develop courses of this sort for students in other disciplines.

Degree of success in attaining goals
The degree of their success in attaining these goals is confirmed by a number of measures. Research associated with the department is highly visible through publication in significant venues (books, refereed journals, conference publications) internationally and within Israel. Members of the department attend a variety of international meetings, and scholars from abroad come to Israel for meetings as well. Their graduates generally find appropriate employment in Universities and elsewhere: TAU PhDs make up a major part of the faculty at other linguistics departments in Israel. Graduates of their BA and MA programs are accepted by major departments in other countries. The students they attract to these programs are among the best in the University.

Recommendations
        Intermediate (~ within 2-3 year)
The department's clear first and most urgent priority for strengthening all aspects of their program is a new hire in language acquisition.

4. Study Programs
   - Observation and findings

Programs offered
The Department of Linguistics offers a strong set of programs: a B.A. in Linguistics (double or single major), a double major B.A. in Computational Linguistics, an M.A. in Linguistics with a research track (with thesis) and a theoretical track (with final exam), and a Ph.D. program administered by the School of Cultural Studies. The department also participates in a single-major B.Sc. program in Neurobiology of Language within the School of Neuroscience.

Innovative programs
The department has started two new interdisciplinary majors, namely a single-major B.Sc. program in Neurobiology of Language within the School of Neuroscience and a double major BA in Computational Linguistics in Computer Science and Linguistics. These programs attract excellent students and appear to be good

extensions of the strengths of the department. Since they are new, especially the program in Neurobiology of Language, there is not very much basis for evaluating them. All signs appear to be promising.

Visibility
The programs are highly regarded by the dean and the rector. The department is seen by the higher administration as functioning extremely well. The chair also has ideas about making linguistics more visible to the outside world, e.g. to high school students.

The MA (including the complementary MA) attracts excellent students who often go on for a PhD at TAU or abroad. One problem brought up that is beyond the department's control is that the university imposes tuition fees for any courses that students take beyond the required number. The faculty and students deplore this rule, since the fees are often unaffordable for the students, depriving them of additional coursework that would be beneficial to their programs.

Variety of classes
The department has good coverage in core areas of linguistics: phonology, syntax, and semantics. It also has pragmatics, discourse analysis, and computational linguistics. Students mentioned classes that they would like, e.g., sociolinguistics and second language acquisition, classes that are not currently taught.

Students who do well enough in the BA program to be permitted to enroll in graduate classes sometimes find that there are not enough different classes left for them to take when they join the MA program. We suppose that that is a minor problem.

Some students considered that the course "Foundations of Theoretical Linguistics" was redundant and might be wasting precious course hours. The problem they report is that since that course is required of the single major students and not of all Linguistics students, the material in it has to be included in later courses anyway. The department might want to give some thought to this curricular question.

Language of instruction
The language of instruction is Hebrew. There are two faculty members who teach only in English, but they do not teach any first-year courses. The use of Hebrew in the first year is felt to be a real advantage, easing students into work in English. Most of the reading in later courses is in English, and optionally (but encouraged) much of the writing. In seminars, an instructor might switch to teaching in English if a non-Hebrew speaking guest happens to be present. PhD students write their dissertations in English and this is not seen as problematic although they say that their advisors spend a lot of time on drafts.

There have been discussions about how having Hebrew as the language of instruction prevents international students from coming to TAU. The department

considered proposing an English-instruction MA track for an international clientele, but the administration discouraged the idea. The department is conscious of the fact that having Hebrew as the language of instruction does make the student body a less linguistically diverse group than is common in U.S. or European graduate programs in linguistics, where diversity of native languages is a great asset both in the classroom and in research projects.

Connected to this issue is the need for students in linguistics to be exposed to a wide variety of language data. There was a field methods course in the past, but this course was discontinued for a variety of reasons (lack of funding, a perceived difficulty in legally hiring speakers of lesser known languages, and the shortening of the MA). Some exposure to lesser-known languages is included in other classes.

Counseling
Students feel their course of study is clear. For instance, all courses in the B.A. are obligatory in the first year and hence not a source of confusion, and all requirements are explicitly spelled out on the web. The students feel very much supported by the faculty after the second year in the B.A. and in the M.A. and PhD.

Recommendations
        Long term (until the next cycle of evaluation)
The department might review whether the course "Fundamentals of Linguistic Theory", if not required of all students in Linguistics, may be redundant.

5. **Human Resources / Faculty**

- Observation and findings

Present senior faculty and teaching load
The department has 10 senior faculty members, all of highest quality and international visibility. Due to a university wide hiring freeze that started in 2000 and lasted almost a decade, the department lost 5 lines as no new positions were opened to replace retirees. This led to serious attrition, and prior to 2010 the department was reduced to 7 faculty. However, a very positive trend started in 2010, with two new hirings: Evan Cohen in phonetics and Roni Katzir in computational linguistics. This trend continued in 2012, when Aya Meltzer-Asscher was hired in neurolinguistics. With these new hirings, the ranks are now distributed rather evenly. The department has four full Professors (Ariel, Giora, Horvath, Landman), two Associate Professors (Bat-El, Siloni), two Senior Lecturers (Kadmon, Meltzer-Asscher) and two Lecturers (Cohen, Katzir).   All senior professors have full teaching load, with 6 weekly hours per semester taught by full Professors, and 8 hours taught by lecturers, senior lecturers and associate professors.

Adjunct faculty and their status
The department has also had to rely on adjunct faculty because the number of faculty is not sufficient to cover all classes in the program; at this point there are two

adjuncts on the faculty, Galit Adam and Irena Botwinik, who have been teaching language acquisition (of phonology and syntax respectively) for quite a number of years, filling in since the retirement of Ruth Berman.

The senior faculty appreciate having adjuncts who can teach those courses, and more generally appreciate having adjuncts to fill in as sabbatical replacements and for other short-term needs. But the faculty are very concerned about potentially exploitative uses of adjuncts in higher education more generally, not only because of their higher teaching load, which is 8 to 10 weekly hours per semester, but also because of the difficulties that come with their temporary employment status.

Faculty specializations and coverage of subfields
The department has quite good coverage of linguistic subfields, considering their total numbers: 2 faculty each in phonology, syntax, semantics and pragmatics, 1 in computational linguistics, and 1 in neurolinguistics.

Priorities in new hiring
The faculty all feel that the next appointment should be in language acquisition, a subfield that was represented by Ruth Berman before she retired. In addition to this strong hiring priority, further needs were mentioned in our meeting with the faculty. The upcoming retirement of Rachel Giora suggests that a need will arise for an appointment in pragmatics. There is also a strong sense that some fields that are already represented should be reinforced with further hires, in particular, computational linguistics and neurolinguistics, to continue the department's tradition of fostering collaboration among the faculty. There is consensus about the area in which the next hire should be, but deciding what is most needed after that remains for the future.

Hiring procedures
The faculty are largely content with the current hiring procedures, which have been formalized in recent years to include broad advertising and a pool of candidates to choose from. The faculty also feel that in extraordinary circumstances they should have the option to ask for a position without a search if a special opportunity arises to recruit an exceptional candidate. The department faculty have their PhDs from a broad range of highly visible linguistics departments from all institutions. We note that 40% of the faculty, including two out of the three most recent hires have their PhD's from Tel Aviv University.

Recommendations
        Intermediate term (~ within 2-3 year)
The department's clear first and most urgent priority is a new hire in language acquisition.

6. **Students**

Applications and admissions
The self-evaluation report contains tables about numbers of students who apply, are admitted, and enroll, and their psychometric and bagrut scores. A problem with that data (and most of the statistical data asked for in the S-E reports) is that no comparative data is asked for or given, so the committee had no idea from reading the report whether the cited data was 'good' or 'bad'. We learned on inquiry that the students admitted to the Linguistics programs are among the best in the Humanities.

Dropout rates between first and second year
The committee wondered about the approximately 30% dropout rate by the beginning of the second year of undergraduate study. We were told that this is not an unusual rate, and as noted in the S-E report, it is partly a result of the fact that university applicants do not always understand what linguistics is and how much analytical and formal aptitude it can require. Admittees who are strong by university-wide standards are not always able or motivated to continue in Linguistics; some drop out and some switch to other fields, including language departments and Philosophy. The department has no authority to change admissions standards, and no staff to oversee special admissions requirements if it could. The administration is not concerned with this dropout rate; the department continues to explore ways to make prospective applicants better informed so they can do better self-selection.

The committee encourages even more outreach to high school students and the general public for this and other reasons, perhaps including sponsorship of International Linguistics Olympiad events for high school students (but that requires time, which is already stretched.)

The students who do continue are extremely committed and generally do well, and do generally finish the three-year program in three years.

Populations of the undergraduate programs
The diversity of the populations of the undergraduate programs is evident in the choices of second majors in the double major track. Besides the two structured double majors, with Computer Science and with Biology, second majors for Linguistics students include Mathematics, Philosophy, Psychology, Sociology, Education, Arabic, Literature, and others.

The M.A. students

A significant proportion of M.A. students come from the department's own B.A. programs, and the two main two-year M.A. programs, with and without thesis, are designed with those students in mind. It is common for those students to have done their army service even before starting the B.A., and many have jobs and family responsibilities they have to juggle with their studies. The department tries to arrange the schedule of courses so that an M.A. student can take all their courses on two days in the week, to help accommodate students' outside work schedules.

There are also a number of students who enter the M.A. programs from outside – from a different field and/or from a different university. Many of these students, unless they can show equivalent training to a TAU linguistics B.A., must begin with the "complementary M.A. program", a year and a half program consisting of B.A. courses, to catch them up to the level required to enter the regular M.A. program. Taking these courses can be logistically challenging, since not every required course is offered every semester, and since the course schedules may require coming to school five days per week. But the faculty report that the students are often excellent ones, and their diverse backgrounds enrich the program, and a significant number succeed and go on to successful work in the regular M.A. programs.

M.A. students who intend to pursue a Ph.D. must do the M.A. with thesis. The M.A. without thesis is for those who do not intend to go on to the Ph.D., or who are unable to complete a thesis.

The MA students are generally excellent and very committed to their studies, research, and – in the case of Teaching Assistants – to their teaching. They specialize in the areas that the faculty is strongest in, e.g. phonology, syntax, semantics, experimental phonology and semantics. The lack of funding for MA (and PhD) students slows students down, and although it is in principle possible to finish the MA in two years, it is more likely to be three to four years, struggling with the time and financial demands of work and often family. Because MA students are not usually funded, they take TA positions or other jobs and sometimes both. Although TA positions are seen as very beneficial in terms of their intellectual growth, they can be very time-consuming, and perhaps students should be given better guidelines as to how to control the time they spend on teaching. There is no formal TA training inside the department, but there is generally guidance available both from the faculty and from the more senior TAs, and there is a university-wide TA training program which the TAs may not have taken advantage of. Faculty are perceived as trying to be as helpful as possible.

The Ph.D. students
The Ph.D. students most often come from the Department's M.A. program. They do their degrees in a range of specialties corresponding to the faculty's specialties, and tend to get professional positions in their field, either in academia (most often in Israel; in linguistics or related fields) or in jobs in language processing or clinical linguistics.

Resources for graduate students
Ph.D. students do get some funds for travel and some other expenses. MA students do not. The committee heard about how a group of energetic MA students organized at TAU the Second International Graduate Student Conference on Diverse Approaches to Linguistics (IGDAL), but had to find PhD students to "officially" count as organizers in order to have access to web hosting and some funding and facilities for putting on the conference. Of course MA students rarely receive much research support in any university, but it would have been nice if there had been the flexibility to reward and encourage their initiative and enterprise. The committee recommends that the university help the department find ways to provide some funding for MA as well as PhD students for their professional development activities.

Alumni
We met with a small group of program alumni who illustrated rather diverse future paths. Three were MA's and one a PhD from the program. The PhD is now employed at Bar Ilan, and had previously worked as a TA and as an Adjunct in various places; he is now on a regular tenure track path. The MAs told us that most MAs do not go on to academic careers, and that many go into fields other than linguistics, where their linguistics training may be directly useful or not. One, who had come into the MA program after a BA in Physics, is now at Bar Ilan in a Neuroscience PhD program; one is working in language processing and sometimes employs current TAU linguistics students; one was working for a newspaper before her studies and is working there again now as an editor, with hopes to pursue something "more linguistic" at some time in the future.

The S-E report includes an impressive list of TAU Linguistics alumni who have gone on into internationally respected PhD programs and/or have good positions in academia or in linguistics-related companies of various kinds. There is no official tracking of alumni by the department or the university, but many faculty members remain in touch with former students, and some have continuing collaborations with them.

The recent great increase in the number of colleges in Israel has provided a good job market for PhDs, and many Linguistics PhDs are now teaching in the Colleges. The Colleges do not generally have Linguistics Departments *per se*, but do have programs that need some linguists, including Speech Therapy, Communication Disorders, and teacher training for Hebrew or English. BA and MA alumni may get jobs in hi-tech industries.

General remarks:
We would like to see statistics to confirm our impression that it is more common for students to come from other Israeli universities into the TAU graduate programs than the reverse. When TAU MA students go elsewhere for the PhD, it is more often to the US or Europe, it seems. And among those faculty in the four Linguistics

programs in Israel who got their PhD degrees from Israeli universities, more than half are from TAU.

The students themselves who we spoke to were all very positive about the program, both their training and what they felt as a highly supportive and student-centered atmosphere.

The faculty emphasized to us how much they care about their students. The students emphasized to us how much the faculty care about them; and the TAs in turn were clearly influenced by this spirit to give great attention to their own students (and might benefit from more structured support in how to preserve time for their own research.) The morale in the department seems to be very high in spite of recognition of very real problems with constraints on time and on resources.

<u>Recommendations</u>
      <u>Long term (until the next cycle of evaluation)</u>

The committee encourages more outreach to high school students and the general public to help educate the public about what linguistics is.

The committee recommends that the university help the department find ways to provide some funding for MA as well as PhD students for their professional development activities (travel, conference hosting, etc.).

7. <u>Teaching and Learning Outcomes</u>
- <u>Observation and findings</u>

Admissions, enrollment, and attrition
In consequence of the demanding curriculum, there is a significant filtering process that takes place among undergraduates, informally in the course of the first year and formally in the transition from the first to the second year. The net result is an unusually capable cadre of majors whose performance measures up to the expectations of the faculty, and a faculty reinforced in its goal of providing high-quality instruction in linguistics. As the department works to increase awareness of the specificity and challenges of linguistics as a discipline, so that the student body at large increasingly becomes aware of the rigors of the program, one hopes that the need for this sorting out process will diminish. A countervailing factor, however, is the need for the department to maintain higher enrollments in the first year in order to generate tuition revenue for the university, and the comparatively low admissions requirements of the Faculty of Humanities as a whole.

Assessment of students

The primary formal means for measuring student attainment appear to be grades, as these reflect performance on examinations and problem sets (in the introductory coursework) and term papers (in the more advanced coursework). The department may wish to consider developing protocols of assessment that are more programmatic and less directly tied to student grades, though given the overall strength of the program, grades appear to be reliable measures of student achievement.

Assessment of teaching

It is clear, both from the self-evaluation and from discussion with senior faculty, junior faculty, alumni and students, that the department is actively involved in monitoring the quality of instruction, particularly among junior and untenured faculty, in intervening with effective guidance where it is required, and in acknowledging outstanding teaching (the former to some extent guided by the University's Center for Excellence in Teaching, and the latter a reflection of broader university practice). Though the department scores high across the board on student surveys, we encountered warranted skepticism about the value of these surveys, particularly since they are conducted online, which lowers the response rate and, in the view of some junior faculty, conduces to a "ratemyprofessor.com" attitude on the part of some students. When the question was discussed, a preference was expressed for a paper and pencil process (as is already the practice for the mid-semester surveys whose use the department encourages, while not requiring.)

Issues concerning means of instruction

The faculty is satisfied with the mix of lecture vs. discussion and exams, problem sets, and term papers of varying lengths it has established as means of instruction and evaluation. It is unhappy with the university-wide reduction in the number of credits required for the MA, though this pertains more strictly to the course of study than to pedagogical method. At the undergraduate level, the TAs clearly bear the burden of being available to students for feedback and follow-up in the obligatory courses, though this seems more a function of student diffidence and deference to institutional hierarchies than a lack of readiness of senior faculty to engage one-on-one with students in the earlier stages of their coursework. (The six BA students with whom we met, however, praised the availability of senior faculty, especially when compared to their experience in some other departments.) Those graduate students who have the opportunity to serve as TAs have a keen appreciation of the degree to which this opportunity, however ill-compensated in other ways, contributes to their educations.

The procedure for the Ph.D. degree

The members of the committee had some interest in the fact that the Ph.D. is not bestowed at the departmental level, because this is not a common practice internationally. After discussions with administrators, faculty, and alumni, however, we were satisfied that this is largely a bureaucratic arrangement which does not

dilute the department's identity or its authority in passing judgment on quality of doctoral theses. Some doctoral students did, however, express frustration with the delays and complications that arise from this arrangement. We gather that this is not a problem unique to the Linguistics program; their students are especially sensitive to it, however, given the exemplary efficiency with which the Department and its office, headed by universally praised secretary Tal Oded, functions.

<u>Recommendations</u>
 <u>Long term (until the next cycle of evaluation)</u>
The department may wish to consider developing protocols of assessment that are more programmatic and less directly tied to student grades; this may not be necessary, but the issue should perhaps be reviewed.

The university may wish to review the current internet-based teaching survey, whose reliability is widely questioned, and to find ways to improve it or replace it to provide more trustworthy ways of calibrating teaching effectiveness.

8. **Research**
   - <u>Observation and findings</u>

Faculty research
Members of the faculty of the department all maintain active research programs and have shown substantial research productivity over their careers. Their work is published in important international journals and by established scholarly presses; some of them serve on the editorial boards of such publication venues. They have been quite successful in obtaining competitive grants to fund their research. They have active research collaborations with scholars elsewhere in Israel and abroad, and participate regularly in international meetings and conferences in their respective fields.

Involvement of students in research
Faculty research programs in the department quite generally engage students in the MA and PhD programs (and even some in the BA programs), an activity which is both productive for the faculty and essential to the preparation of students for careers that involve research on their own.

Laboratory facilities and their impact on research
The recent allocation of facilities for new laboratories in the department will have an important effect on research productivity. The obvious benefit of this is that it will enable the faculty to conduct new investigations in a variety of areas of psycholinguistics, neurolinguistics and phonetics. In addition to enabling such research, however, the collaborative nature of this facility as the department envisions it will inevitably lead to increased cooperation in joint research projects across disciplinary areas.

9. <u>Infrastructure</u>
- <u>Observation and findings</u>

Office space
The Department of Linguistics is located on the 4th floor in the Webb building. Office space is barely adequate but not ample; faculty members share their offices with adjunct faculty and, on occasion, with their graduate students. One small office is shared by all TAs, and is used both for tutoring and as an office; TAs find this uncomfortable.

Laboratory space
Recently, space was allocated for two new laboratories: one in computational linguistics, and one in phonetics, psycholinguistics and neuro-linguistics. These complement Ruth Berman's lab. The Berman lab and the computational linguistics lab are physically small, and only modestly equipped. The new (shared) lab is expected to be larger, and to include eye-tracking devices, EEG, a sound-proof area, and several computers.

Library
The Library is viewed as excellent. On-line access to books and periodicals is outstanding, and physical holdings are also very good. Faculty and students alike feel that on-line access satisfies their needs.

Computer access
Students have access to a computer farm in the Webb building, as well as to an additional farm in an adjacent building. No specific needs were reported. Computing equipment and office supplies for faculty are not provided by the department, and have to be purchased from research (or personal) budgets.

Classroom facilities
Most instruction takes place in the Webb building or in two adjacent buildings. Classrooms are adequate and well-equipped (more so at Webb).

<u>Recommendations</u>
  <u>Short term/immediate (~ within 1 year)</u>

It would be beneficial to allocate some space for graduate students. A single shared office, perhaps with closets in which personal belongings can be safely stored, may very well increase the levels of cooperation among students and their sense of belonging to the department.

10. **Self-Evaluation Process**
- Observation and findings

The report was prepared by all members of the department, under the coordination of the current head, Prof. Outi Bat-El. The head felt that it was sometimes difficult to obtain data from other University units. Other parties, such as students, TAs, and alumni, were neither involved in the writing nor exposed to the final report. Department members find the preparation of the report time-consuming but rewarding, and appreciate the opportunity to inspect aspects of the study program that are not regularly evaluated. Still, they feel that they constantly evaluate their own quality, especially by comparing the department to other departments of linguistics worldwide. Some claimed that preparation of the report did not teach them anything they had not already known, but most saw value in it.

Recommendations
    Long term (until the next cycle of evaluation)

The committee will recommend to the CHE that certain ambiguous questions be disambiguated, and that some of the requests for data be modified to make the resulting data presentations more informative for the reader.

Chapter4:   Summary of Recommendations and Timetable

It is best if the recommendations appear according to levels of priority. We suggest that the approach to addressing these recommendations be viewed as short term, intermediate term, and long term.

Within the division of the recommendations according to the implemented timetables, it is possible to divide the recommendations according to the different parties which are responsible to the implementation (the departments, the CHE/PBC etc.).

Short term/immediate (~ within 1 year)

It would be beneficial to allocate some space for graduate students. A single shared office, perhaps with closets in which personal belongings can be safely stored, may very well increase the levels of cooperation among students and their sense of belonging to the department.

Intermediate (~ within 2-3 year)
The department's clear first and most urgent priority for strengthening all aspects of their program is a new hire in language acquisition.

Long term (until the next cycle of evaluation)

The committee encourages the administration to continue to recognize the distinctive characteristics of Linguistics within the Humanities and the excellence of the department, and to support the department where possible in areas such as faculty positions, student financial support, and the allocation of space..

The department might review whether the course "Fundamentals of Linguistic Theory", if not required of all students in Linguistics, may be redundant.
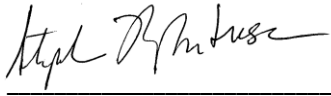
The committee encourages more outreach to high school students and the general public to help educate the public about what linguistics is.

The committee recommends that the university help the department find ways to provide some funding for MA as well as PhD students for their professional development activities (travel, conference hosting, etc.).

The department may wish to consider developing protocols of assessment that are more programmatic and less directly tied to student grades; this may not be necessary, but the issue should perhaps be reviewed.

The university may wish to review the current internet-based teaching survey, whose reliability is widely questioned, and to find ways to improve it or replace it to provide more trustworthy ways of calibrating teaching effectiveness.
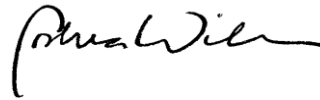
Signed by:

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Prof. Stephan Anderson, Chair

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Prof. Joshua Wilner

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Prof. Shuly Wintner

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Prof. Barbara Partee

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Prof. Elly Van Gelderen

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Prof. Draga Zec

Appendix 1: Letter of Appointment

שר החינוך
Minister of Education   February 2013
وزير التربية والتعليم

Prof. Stephen Anderson
Department of Linguistics
Yale University
USA

Dear Professor Anderson,

The Israeli Council for Higher Education (CHE) strives to ensure the continuing excellence and quality of Israeli higher education through a systematic evaluation process. By engaging upon this mission, the CHE seeks to: enhance and ensure the quality of academic studies, provide the public with information regarding the quality of study programs in institutions of higher education throughout Israel, and ensure the continued integration of the Israeli system of higher education in the international academic arena.

As part of this most important endeavor we reach out to world renowned scientists to help us meet the critical challenges that confront the Israeli higher education by accepting our invitation to participate in our international evaluation committees. This process represents an opportunity to express our common sense of concern and to assess the current and future status of education in the 21st century and beyond. It also establishes a structure for an ongoing consultative process among scientists around the globe on common academic dilemmas and prospects.

I therefore deeply appreciate your willingness to join us in this crucial enterprise.

It is with great pleasure that I hereby appoint you to serve as chair of the Council for Higher Education's Committee for the Evaluation of Linguistics. The composition of the Committee will be as follows: Prof. Stephen Anderson, Committee Chair, Prof. Ruth Berman, Prof. Barbara Partee, Prof. Elly Van Gelderen, Prof. Josh Wilner, Prof. Shuli Wintner and Prof. Draga Zec.

Ms. Alex Buslovich will coordinate the Committee's activities.

In your capacity as chair of the Evaluation Committee, you will be requested to function in accordance with the enclosed appendix.

I wish you much success in your role as the chair of this most important committee.

Sincerely,

Gideon Sa'ar
Minister of Education,
Chairperson, The Council for Higher Education

Enclosures: Appendix to the Appointment Letter of Evaluation Committees

cc: Ms. Michal Neumann, The Quality Assessment Division
        Ms. Alex Buslovich, Committee Coordinator

Tel-Aviv University
Department of Linguistics

Self Evaluation: Schedule of site visit

Monday, March 11, 2013
Webb 401

Time	Subject	Participants
9:30-10:00	Meeting with the heads of the institution and the senior staff member appointed to deal with quality assessment	▪Prof. Aron Shai (Rector) ▪Prof. Dina Prialnik (Vice Rector) ▪Prof. David Horn (Head of Academic Quality Assessment)
10:00-10:30	Meeting with the heads of the faculty of Humanities	▪Prof. Eyal Zisser (Dean) ▪Ms. Nira Shirman (Associate Dean for Administration)
10:30-11:15	Meeting with the chair of the Department of Linguistics	▪Prof. Outi Bat-El
11:15-12:45	Meeting with senior faculty and representatives of relevant committees	▪Dr. Evan-Gary Cohen (Teaching Comm.) ▪Prof. Rachel Giora ▪Prof. Julia Horvath (Teaching Comm.) ▪Dr. Nirit Kadmon (Teaching Comm.) ▪Dr. Roni Katzir (Head of Computational Linguistics program) ▪Prof. Fred Landman ▪Dr. Aya Meltzer-Asscher (Head of Linguistics -Biology program) ▪Prof. Tal Siloni
12:45-14:00	Lunch	
14:00-14:45	Meeting with junior faculty (TAs) and adjuncts	▪Netanel Haim ▪Hadass Zeidenberg ▪Julia Fadlon ▪Noa Brandel ▪Noa Karni
14:45-15:30	Meeting with Alumni	▪Dr. Lior Laks ▪Michal Gishri ▪Yael Mishani ▪Chen Gafni
15:30-16:00	Closed-door working meeting of the committee	

25

Tuesday, March 12, 2013
Webb 401

Time	Subject	Participants	
9:30-10:15	Meeting with B.A. students	▪Einav Kedar ▪Yael Firer ▪Nadav Pridan ▪Si Berrebi	▪Yodan Tauber ▪Yisraela Becker ▪Kayla Goldshtein
10:15-11:00	Meeting with M.A. students	▪Avi Mizrachi ▪Barak Paz ▪Moshe Ziat	▪Gal Belzitzman ▪Tali Arad ▪Hadas Yevarechyahu
11:00-11:45	Meeting with Ph.D. Students	▪Lior Almog ▪Lyle Lustigman	▪Elitzur Datner ▪Sefi Potashnik ▪Ofir Zusman
11:45-12:45	Tour of facilities (guided by Dr. Evan Cohen)		
12:45-13:30	Closed-door working meeting of the committee including lunch (on site)		
13:30-14:15	Summation meeting with heads of the institution and of the department	▪Prof. Aron Shai (Rector) ▪Prof. Dina Prialnik (Vice Rector) ▪Prof. Eyal Zisser (Dean of Humanities) ▪Ms. Nira Shirman (Associate Dean for Administration) ▪Prof. David Horn (Assessment Head, Academic Quality) ▪Prof. Outi Bat-El (Department's head)	