



Committee for the Evaluation of Linguistics Study Programs

**Ben-Gurion University of the Negev
Department of Foreign Literatures and Linguistics**

Evaluation Report

March 2013

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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

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).

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 Linguistics program of the Department of Foreign Literatures and Linguistics at Ben Gurion University of the Negev. The Committee's visit to University took place on March 17-18, 2013.

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

The Committee thanks the management of Ben-Gurion University and the Department of Foreign Literatures and 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 Ben Gurion 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; and information available to the Committee.

1. Executive Summary

While both the University administration and the Department would have preferred us to evaluate the Department as a whole, this would have exceeded both our mandate and our competence, which was to assess the Linguistics program. Fortunately, distinguishing this program from the rest of the Department was not difficult, because the Linguistics and Literature sides of the unit operate largely separately, with little in common apart from physical facilities, class scheduling and other administrative support.

We were asked to consider whether the "Foreign Literatures" side of the Department, which effectively concentrates its teaching and research in English and American literature for the most part, should broaden its scope. While responding to this question does not fall within the charge or the competence of the committee as a whole, we do not think that, given its size, the Literature track could further internationalize the range of its offerings without compromising the coherence of its degree program, and we believe the faculty has made the correct decision.

In addition to the distinguished members of the linguistics faculty, we were impressed with the quality of the students and the collegial and open atmosphere within the program. The facilities seem quite good, with the possible exception of perceived deficiencies noted by many in the library's collections.

With respect to the number of faculty in Linguistics, we feel that a group with the current size of eight, but no smaller, should be able to provide a basically adequate program. With the retirement of Prof. Tobin, they will no longer have any faculty in the areas of phonology, phonetics or morphology, and we agree with the Department that this should be their first priority in hiring, even if it requires more than one cycle of recruiting to find an appropriate candidate. Their next priority, psycholinguistics, is certainly an appropriate one, and it would be worthwhile to make an appointment in that area when resources are available.

Connections with the emerging Department of Brain and Cognitive Sciences will clearly play an important role in the future development of this Program. We understand that an appointment in this department is to be made in linguistics, and it would seem natural that the Linguistics program have an important voice in the selection of an appropriate candidate. Overall, it will be important to clarify and strengthen the relations between this new program and the current one in Linguistics.

Addressing broader issues within the university, we were impressed with the efforts being made, and their apparent success, to integrate Bedouin students into the academic community. We heard from multiple sources, and we agree, that a summer program providing additional preparation in English and other areas would be of great benefit to this group of students.

2. Organizational Structure

- Observation and findings

History

The Department of Foreign Literatures and Linguistics was established in 1978 as part of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, through a merger of what were at the time the departments of English Language and Literature and French Language and Literature. The French component has largely disappeared, except for “general courses” in French language still provided by the department. With the dwindling of the department’s French component, the name Foreign Languages and Linguistics has been the topic of some discussion. The literature faculty prefer to stay with the appellation Foreign, since even though most of their courses and research concern English and American literature, some of both involve foreign literatures.

Connections with other disciplines

The fact that the department is in a faculty which, uniquely in Israel, combines the Humanities and Social Sciences (with no fewer than 21 departments) makes it easier for students to do dual majors with, say, psychology, because they can do so in any two departments in the same Faculty. Within the Department, in addition to those pursuing the combined major with Literature, Linguistics students are engaged in double majors with Psychology (as indicated), Education and Hebrew Language.

The fact that linguistics is part of a department that (a) also includes literature and (b) teaches only in English helps double majors in the department who want to become English teachers – described to us as their “bread and butter” population. As the only department in the university that teaches in English, it is also accessible to overseas students.

Each program (Linguistics and Literature) has its own funding, thus easing issues of conflict in faculty appointments and replacements (for retirees). The undergraduate students are divided up fairly evenly between the two tracks. There is no direct cooperation between the two programs (termed “tracks” in the self-evaluation report) in either teaching or research.

Ideally, the linguists would like to be on their own, mainly in order to ensure higher-level students, because the two tracks share the same quite lax admissions requirements. But they realize this might mean their demise given the small number of their faculty and students.

The university has recently approved opening of an inter-Faculty School of Brain and Neuro-Sciences, but what the implications are for the linguists and the Linguistics program is not clear.

Also about to be established is a new Department of Brain and Cognitive Sciences – which will be the first inter-Faculty department – involving the fields of Philosophy, Linguistics, and Psychology from the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities. It is not entirely clear what the relation of these three departments is or will be to the larger Department – one proposal is that faculty would have half appointments. The plan is to hire five new faculty members, one of whom would be a linguist. This program would seem to allow both faculty and students of the Linguistics program opportunities for a larger variety of courses and interaction with related disciplines. On the other hand, it appears that the emphasis is on psychology and neuro-science, and the Linguistics program faculty feel that neither they themselves nor linguistics as a discipline play a central enough role in the new cognitive science program, contrary to what we were given to understand by the dean.

Relations with the Literature Track

According to the chair of the Linguistics track, although there is no shared content with the Literature track, they are happy to be part of the same Department: they are bigger and stronger as a result, and there are good personal relations between the two tracks. Originally all students were required to take Introduction to Linguistics and the Writing Workshop, but this is no longer obligatory for students to whom it is clear that they want to pursue only the Linguistics or only the Literature track, and who must take respectively either Introduction to Linguistics or the Writing Workshop.

3. Mission and Goals

- Observation and findings

The Linguistics track within the Department of Foreign Literatures and Linguistics aims to provide an introduction to the core areas of the field: syntax, semantics and phonology. They also hope to make connections in their teaching and research with related areas across several faculties: with Computer Science through computational linguistics, with Neuroscience through the cognitive neuropsychology of language, and with Cognitive Science through work on other topics in linguistics such as information structure and the lexicon, the acquisition of language and other aspects of psycholinguistics. With a relatively small faculty, the accomplishment of this ambitious set of goals is to some extent unrealistic, and so difficult choices must be made. The way they approach those choices will determine how many of their goals can be met.

The establishment of a new School of Brain Sciences, including a Department of Brain and Cognitive sciences, can provide an opportunity to address at least a part of this problem. It appears that at least one appointment in the cognitive science of language will be made within that Department, and it would seem natural for the existing linguistic faculty to have a voice in that appointment, so that it can be made in a way that complements their own strengths and solidifies their engagement with issues in cognitive science and in the neuroscience of language.

In similar ways, cooperation with the Departments of Computer Science and Psychology can enable them to develop the respective interface areas of computational linguistics and

psycholinguistics. In terms of teaching, this is already underway in the form of dual major (or major plus minor) programs with these departments. In terms of research, there are faculty in these (and other) departments with whom joint projects could well be developed.

Given the likelihood that significant expansion of the linguistics faculty per se will not occur, the goal of providing coverage of the core areas of the field must undoubtedly take priority in their planning. Given the existence of opportunities for connection with other units, however, and especially the University's initiative in the Brain Sciences, a creative approach can make it possible for them to address broader goals as well.

Recommendations

Short term/immediate (~ within 1 year)

Ensure that an anticipated appointment in the cognitive science of language within the new Department of Brain and Cognitive Sciences is made with substantial input from the existing linguistics faculty, and in such a way as to complement the existing teaching and research strengths of that program.

4. Study Programs

- Observation and findings

Programs offered

The department of Foreign Literatures and Linguistics offers four kinds of B.A. programs, (a) a 108 point B.A. in both linguistics and literature, (b) an 80 point B.A. (a major) for those who want to concentrate in either linguistics or literature, (c) a 54 point degree in either linguistics and literature, and (d) a 28 point concentration (minor). Track (a) is ideal for those students wanting to go into English teaching at the high school level. Track (b) is the most comprehensive, and it allows students to choose a minor in e.g. cognitive science, education, or philosophy. Track (c) provides a solid, but less comprehensive major at the B.A. level and allows students to choose 54 points in another department. Track (d) provides students with a foundation in linguistics (or literature). At the M.A. level, there are tracks with thesis and without and also a combined linguistics and literature M.A. There is a Ph.D. program in linguistics administered by the Kreitman School of Advanced Graduated Studies.

Innovative programs

A B.A. program in computational linguistics has been established with the Department of Computer Science. Students taking linguistics as their major in that program are required to take 40 points in computer science.

The university has approved a School of Brain Sciences and a Department of Brain and Cognitive Sciences and the rector sees a central role for linguistics in this school. The members of the linguistics faculty see their role in this new venture as more peripheral, since they do not feel they have been involved in its design. The relationship between this school and the program in linguistics needs to be clarified and possibly strengthened; see our recommendation in Section 3 above.

Visibility

The programs are visible from the administration's point of view. The department is seen as somewhere in the middle, not among the best and not among the worst in the faculty. This was stressed repeatedly by the administration. This assessment is based on the quality of the faculty and the number of students. As for the visibility of linguistics to a wider public, this is an issue that all of the linguistics programs in Israel could benefit by addressing.

Variety of classes

The faculty mentioned that it is not able to provide full coverage of all areas of linguistics but feels that the areas that it covers are covered in depth. Students similarly discussed that in the B.A. and M.A. there weren't enough classes to choose from. The syntax-semantics interface is covered very well but other areas less so. PhD students can take classes at other universities in Israel so are not as constrained. They only need two classes.

The department does manage to offer some classes of wider interest to students in other programs. For MA students in cognitive science they offer a core course in linguistics, "Language and Cognition". Occasionally they offer linguistic courses with a wide appeal, open to the entire University; a recent example was "Linguistics through Science Fiction".

Language of instruction

The language of instruction in the department is English. B.A. students whose first language is not English voiced some concerns about needing some help with English in the first semester. The department has been offering a writing workshop in the first year of the B.A. This is obligatory for literature students and optional but recommended for linguistics students.

The writing workshop is helpful and students discussed how much their English improves after even one semester. Bedouin students might benefit from summer programs in English proficiency before they start the program .

Advising, TA training, and Support

Comments in these areas were very positive. There is an orientation for incoming B.A. students that is felt to be satisfactory. TA training is available and actively encouraged at the university level and there are fellowships and teaching assistantships available.

Recommendations

Intermediate term (~ within 2-3 year)

Think of ways to diversify the course offerings at the BA and MA levels.

5. Human Resources / Faculty

- Observation and findings

Present senior faculty and teaching load

The Linguistics program within the Department of Foreign Languages and Linguistics has 8 faculty members. With the recent hiring of Olga Kagan and Elizabeth Ritter, Linguistics now has 3 Full Professors (Ritter, Shir, Tobin), 4 Senior Lecturers (Ben Shalom, Cohen, Landau, Rapoport), and 1 Lecturer (Kagan). The program lost Jeannette Schaeffer, who left in 2011. However, even though the current number is 8, the committee was informed that the de facto number is 7, as Kagan's position is a replacement for Tobin, who will soon be retiring.

Full teaching load for senior faculty is 6 weekly hours of teaching per semester, and two hours of supervised research and reading.

Adjunct faculty

The program relies on adjunct faculty in order to be able to provide adequate course coverage, which is not possible with current senior faculty numbers. Courses taught by adjuncts include Introduction to Linguistics, Language Acquisition, and Phonetics and Phonology. Adjunct faculty are hired on a temporary bases and have very little job security. An improvement in the status of adjunct faculty has recently been introduced, consisting of a guarantee for retaining the same teaching load for two years upon hiring.

Faculty specializations and coverage of subfields

The faculty's areas of expertise are mostly within the core areas of linguistics, and mostly in syntax and semantics. The program has 4 faculty members who focus on syntax, some with an interest in its interfaces with semantics or information structure, and 2 faculty specializing in semantics. The program also has 1 faculty member specializing in neurolinguistics, and 1 with a broad range of specialties, including phonetics, phonology, discourse analysis and translation theory.

Priorities in new hiring

In their meetings with the committee, the faculty named two areas of linguistics that they would like to add to the range of subfields represented in the program. One is phonology, currently taught by Yishai Tobin, whose impending retirement will leave this area uncovered. The other is psycholinguistics, the argument being that a hiring in this area would not only expand the current range of subfields represented by the faculty, but would also strengthen the experimental component within the department and create bridges towards cognitive disciplines. The committee agrees that a hiring in phonology would be essential. A hiring in psycholinguistics, while important for increasing the program's breadth, should be a less immediate priority.

Hiring and promotion procedures

Procedures for hiring new faculty include a job search, with a decision made by the department upon an open vote, and subsequent approval by the Appointments Committee, the Dean and the Rector. The Appointment Committee also has an important role in

promotion procedures. The faculty in the program received their PhD's from highly visible international departments and programs.

Faculty mentoring

The University has a formal mentorship program whose goal is to facilitate the integration of new faculty members into the Ben Gurion academic community. New faculty members are assigned mentors upon appointment both by the Dean and by the department. Those selected to serve as mentors go through a mentorship training program.

Recommendations

Short term/immediate (~ within 1 year)

One new position in phonology/morphology

Intermediate or long term.

Make an appointment in psycholinguistics when resources are available.

6. Students

- Observation and findings

Applications and admissions

Data concerning applications, acceptances, and enrollment were provided in the form of tables as specified by the CHE, and lacking comparative data to calibrate them by, it is difficult for our committee to judge whether those numbers are good, bad, or normal. In addition, the data for the BA students are not separated into linguistics and literature students. We were given to understand that the numbers are “middling”. Many of the BA students, and a number of the MA students, are aiming to be teachers, and intend to get a Teaching Certificate; those students often combine linguistics and literature. They often do not have the highest scores at admissions, but are motivated and eventually successful. An increasing number of students are interested in combining linguistics and psychology, and they are among the stronger students at admission.

Level of students

First year students, as elsewhere in Israel, are not always well-prepared for a degree in linguistics. The admission standards are set the same for both linguistics and literature. Raising the admission standards might reduce the numbers of students in linguistics, so it is a delicate issue.

The Linguistics program has negotiated an agreement with the Psychology Department so that students who enter Psychology with an interest in psycholinguistics may be admitted with a slightly lower profile than for other specializations within Psychology. The success of that arrangement was reported to be reflected in increasing numbers of students from the Psychology department in the Introduction to Linguistics course.

Ben Gurion University has a special mission to help Bedouin students be successful at university. Faculty members commented several times that the level of incoming (Bedouin) students had gone up substantially in the last couple of decades, and the university has a mentor system and a variety of initiatives aimed at helping them, including some funding for tutors within the Linguistics program who can offer extra help in the linguistics classes that Bedouin BA students are taking. (Other students have to pay for extra tutoring, while for Bedouin students it is subsidized, an arrangement that other students are supportive of.)

Bedouin students face a special challenge in the program under review since English is their third language. We support a suggestion that we heard from both students and faculty that a summer immersion course in English in the summer before starting at the University could be very helpful for Bedouin students, and could make them more ready to benefit from the subject-specific tutoring that will be available to them within the Department.

The B.A. students plan to go on to further graduate degrees, to psychology, teaching, editing, and translation. M.A. students have similar plans. PhD students attempt to get post-doc positions to situate themselves to get tenure-track or adjunct faculty positions.

Populations of the undergraduate programs

The undergraduate programs include a range of students, including prospective English teachers, some students whose interests span linguistics and literature, some who enter the department with an interest in one and then develop an interest in the other (in addition or instead), some interested in psycholinguistics, and a variety of others. We met with a lively and enthusiastic group of BA students whose programs ranged from Linguistics and Literature (the majority) to Linguistics and Arabic, Sociology, or Cognitive Science. Their professional goals included teaching, translation, and going on into academia.

The Bedouin students on the one hand form a distinctive population that receives additional much-needed support, and on the other hand they seem to be very well integrated into the department and are not felt to have any 'second-class' status. Faculty and administrators alike report on increasingly positive attitudes towards university education within the Bedouin community, caused in part by the success of highly able and motivated students who succeed in the University and in many cases return to teach and to be role models in the community.

The M.A. students

Some of the most able B.A. students go on to the M.A. At the M.A. level, the separation between the Linguistics track and the Literature track is nearly total. A joint Linguistics and Literature MA program was developed several years ago, but the students who tried it were not able enough, and the most able students did not choose it, so it is not an active program at this time.

MA students have entered the Linguistics program either from one of the BA programs here (sometimes with a combined Linguistics and Literature degree) or from elsewhere, in some cases in order to work with a specific professor. Some of them hope to go on to a Ph.D. degree, while others are improving their education for a career they already have, or planning

to go into teaching or some other linguistics-related career. Some wishing for an academic career fear that they would have to go abroad for a Ph.D. to have any chance of competing in the Israeli academic job market, even if they would otherwise prefer to do a PhD at BGU.

There reportedly are and have been a number of Bedouin students in the Literature MA program, but few if any in the Linguistics MA program.

The Ph.D. students

The Ph.D. students are few in number and each unique. Interestingly enough, the ones we met with all had backgrounds in both Linguistics and Literature, most here, some partly elsewhere. Given the depressed academic job market in Israel and elsewhere, they were understandably uncertain about their futures. Some anticipated that a future as an Adjunct Lecturer, teaching in a university but not competing for a tenure-track position, would not be a bad option at all and could let them enjoy working in a field they love without the competitive stress they sense that a tenure-track academic career entails. That offered us a different perspective on the perceived problem of the “exploited adjunct lecturer.”

Resources for graduate students

Some of the MA students have scholarships, but almost all have to work in addition. Their busy work lives give them less sense of community than is common among the BA students. Only the ones working as TAs have office space. Computer labs are accessible. Ph.D. students are supported on scholarships and/or on faculty research grants, and may have to work in addition.

Alumni

Appendix A of the SE report, on the current employment and/or studies of alumni (as of the time of the report, in late 2010) was missing from the report we received, but was provided to us during our visit. The alumni are not classified as graduates in Linguistics or Literature, and from the given information we cannot always tell. But among those listed who had completed or were in process of completing an PhD under one of the Linguistics professors, a few were employed as Adjunct Lecturers at BGU in Linguistics or in a language department, a few were teaching at one of the colleges, one or two were working in special education, and a few had moved into other fields.

General remarks:

Students at the BA and MA levels in Linguistics (actually in both tracks) often seem to wish that there were a wider variety of courses available, especially in the case of those who do both a BA and an MA here in the same department.

Students at all levels expressed very strongly positive feelings about the faculty as teachers and advisors. A warm and collegial spirit evidently prevails among faculty and students in the Department, in both tracks and between the two tracks. We did not get from any of the students any hint of tension between the two tracks, and among the BA students we did not even sense as big a separation between the two tracks as we perceived at the level of graduate students and faculty.

Recommendations

Short term/immediate (~ within 1 year)

We recommend instituting a summer immersion course in English in the summer before starting at the University for Bedouin students. Such a recommendation would of course be best implemented on a university-wide basis, not just for students aiming to study linguistics.

7. Teaching and Learning Outcomes

- Observation and findings

The S-E report contains a paragraph identifying in broad terms the learning outcomes specific to the Linguistics track, the Committee's focus per its charge by the CHE. As much of this section of the S-E report provides data and discusses practices without distinguishing between the Literature and Linguistics tracks, likewise some of our findings with regard to teaching and learning outcomes will apply generally. We believe it would be useful to the department if the university were able to differentiate grade distributions by track, as well enrollments at the undergraduate level (though the department has developed its own procedures for the latter purpose). We recognize that the granting of a single BA degree poses record-keeping difficulties in this regard. For this and other reasons, we thus ask whether it would not be possible for the department, while remaining a single department, to grant distinct degrees in Linguistics, in Foreign Literatures, and in Foreign Literatures and Linguistics (for the combined major).

Assessment of teaching

To evaluate teaching effectiveness, the department uses, without relying on, student surveys. Where the chair observes a pattern of negative evaluations, the matter is referred to the Teaching Committee for intervention. In our discussions with the faculty, the usefulness of the surveys was questioned: the response rate is low as a result of their online administration (a widely acknowledged problem with online students surveys), and the questions posed mix apples and oranges, limiting the meaningfulness of composite scores. While we cannot comment on the design of the survey, the university administration should consider measures for improving response rates, such as using a paper and pencil process.

We assume, though the S-E report does not mention it and the subject did not come up in discussion, that the department also conducts regular classroom observations of faculty eligible for tenure and promotion and that these observations form part of the basis for mentoring faculty and figure in tenure and promotion considerations. There is also a multi-faceted mentoring process for newly appointed faculty – both junior and senior. In addition, TAs in large lecture courses meet on a weekly basis to discuss both the material and pedagogical method. Though there is in principle an obligatory University-sponsored pedagogy workshop for new TAs, in practice participation is limited. While the opportunity to give a demonstration class before one's peers and receive their feedback was considered

valuable, it was agreed that a pedagogy workshop organized at the departmental level would be more helpful than the one currently provided on a university-wide basis.

Student attainment and instructional considerations

With regard to student attainment of the outcomes identified for the Linguistics track, beginning students' lack of familiarity with the actual character of the discipline (a common phenomenon), as well as their need in some cases to develop further the basic skills necessary for study at the college level, can make for slow-going in the early phases of study, though the faculty with whom we spoke reiterated the view expressed in the S-E report: "Those who graduate from the linguistics stream demonstrate knowledge of the basic concepts in the various linguistics subfields. In addition, students who graduate have consistently demonstrated vastly improved English writing and analytic skills." At the same time, the Linguistics faculty feel that their students would graduate with a better foundation and be better prepared for study at the MA level were they required to study the core areas (phonology/morphology, syntax, semantics) in both semesters of the second year, something which the present size and composition of the faculty prevents.

While allowing for the observed improvement of writing skills among graduates, we note that an introductory writing workshop previously required of both Literature and Linguistics students is no longer required of the latter group, though many enroll voluntarily. Given the comparatively weak writing skills of many entering students, the Linguistics faculty may want to consider re-instituting this requirement and ask the university to provide the necessary budgetary support. Though it appears that the workshop was previously tilted towards the interests and needs of Literature students, we heard conflicting views as to whether this is still the case. If it is still the case, the imbalance should be remedied.

The particular needs of Bedouin students were frequently discussed: their high school preparations are weaker and many are young women students – often aspiring teachers – who tend to begin their undergraduate studies at a younger age than most other students because they do not do military service. Faculty praised their abilities as a group and found that the level of their high school preparation was in fact improving as BGU graduates returned to their communities as teachers. We received on several occasions the recommendation that summer immersion programs with an emphasis on reading and writing be created for Bedouin students to ease their entry into the regular course of study.

Student responses

For their part, students – overall a very vivacious and articulate group - were unanimous in praising the open atmosphere of the department, and the faculty's approachability and active concern for its students. Although the relation of Ph.D. students to the department appears more attenuated on a day to day basis, as at least some live at a distance, they all report good relationships with their advisors, whom they found very helpful and supportive, and considered the administration of the Ph.D. degree by the Kreitman School to be handled efficiently. At the BA and MA level, students' high regard for the quality of instruction they received and personal sense of academic growth over the course of their studies was somewhat mitigated, particularly at the MA level, by the feeling that course offerings may sometimes repeat one another, even if nominally different. Among BA students, those

pursuing the combined major found that their coursework in Linguistics and their coursework in Literature definitely reinforced one another, though on the basis of connections they themselves made, rather than as the result of curricular coordination between the two tracks, a finding which argues for the benefits such coordination would yield.

Senior faculty and first-year instruction

Finally, we note that although senior faculty were not previously involved in first-year instruction (a situation reflected in the self-study report, which was prepared the year before last), they now are. We strongly endorse this change of policy, which exposes students and senior faculty to one another from the outset.

Recommendation

Short term/immediate (~ within 1 year)

The Linguistic faculty should consider re-establishing the writing workshop, suitably designed to address the needs of their students, as a first-year requirement, and the administration should provide the necessary financial support should they choose to do so.

The recycling of substantially identical offerings under different titles should be avoided.

The University should undertake to establish a summer preparatory program for Bedouin students.

Intermediate term (~ within 2-3 year)

At the BA level, coordination and integration of Linguistics and Literature offerings should be pursued.

For reasons mentioned in the introduction to this section, including making program evaluations more accurate, we recommend exploration of the possibility of granting distinct degrees in Linguistics, in Foreign Literatures, and in Foreign Literatures and Linguistics (for the combined major).

The university administration should consider measures for improving student survey response rates, such as using a paper and pencil process.

Organize a TA pedagogy workshop at the departmental level rather than or in addition to the one currently provided on a university-wide basis if it is agreed that the university-wide one is not meeting TA training needs effectively.

8. Research

- Observation and findings

Members of the linguistics faculty have established respectable (and in some cases, quite distinguished) research records, as confirmed by regular publication in major journals and

books produced by established scholarly presses, as well as participation in national and international conferences. Most of this work is in the areas of syntax and semantics, as well as in the theory of lexicon as an interface between these components of linguistic knowledge. In past years there has also been significant activity in the area of phonology, though a recent retirement has significantly endangered this field as a component of the program's research agenda. One member of the faculty has also been active in research in cognitive neuroscience, a potential area of collaboration with others in the university outside of the department.

Linguistics is a rather diverse field, and within each of the core areas there are a number of theoretical perspectives that differentiate departments and the research profiles of individual scholars. The linguists in the Ben Gurion Department of Foreign Literatures and Linguistics can all be characterized as pursuing their work within a generative framework, a uniformity of approach that makes sense given the need for coherence within a small group.

One aspect of their research that struck the committee was the absence of work uniting the linguists in the department with their colleagues in literature. The linguistics of literature is, in fact, a significant field of study that connects these disciplines. The syntactic and semantic characteristics of literary forms and styles, the phonological characteristic of metrical forms in poetry, and other such topics have a substantial research history and literature, and it would seem that linguists sharing a department with literary scholars would find it productive to explore this area. We were surprised to find little or no interest in this on either side of the department, with the exception of one member of the linguistics faculty who is on the point of retirement.

Since linguistics has historically been one of the leading disciplines in the emergence of the field of cognitive science, it is natural that much of the research of the Ben Gurion linguistics faculty is oriented in that direction. This trend can be expected to be even more important as the university focuses more broadly on the study of the mind and brain.

9. Infrastructure

- Observation and findings

Office space

The department is located in Building 74, a relatively new and modern building. Office space is ample: not only do faculty enjoy adequate and modern offices, but some space is also reserved for graduate students, both at the PhD and the MA levels.

Laboratories

The department includes two laboratories. The Laboratory of Cognitive Poetics is used for experiments in the Literature track. The Laboratory for Linguistic Research is run by Dorit Ben-Shalom and is used for experiments that do not require specialized equipment. It seems to satisfy the needs of the more empirical research conducted at the department. Experiments

requiring more expensive equipment are run in collaboration with the School of Brain Sciences and with the Soroka Medical Center.

Classrooms

Classrooms are located in several buildings. Most MA courses are conveniently conducted at the seminar room of the department. Other classrooms, whether new and modern or older, are all adequately equipped and comfortably furnished.

Library

The department does not have its own library, and is served by the central library. The collection is viewed by most faculty we spoke with as insufficient. This includes both physical holdings and access to on-line databases. However, we understand that the current administration is sensitive to the needs of the department (and the Faculty in general), that the library is viewed as “the lab of the humanities”, that more budget is allocated, and in particular that specific needs are usually answered effectively. Inter-library loans are common and efficient. The good personal relations between the library staff and the department liaison person also contribute to the overall satisfaction of faculty members and students.

Computer access

Several computer farms are available for the use of students; the students we met with did not feel a need in this regard. The campus is covered by an effective Wifi network, including Eduroam.

Recommendations

Long term (until the next cycle of evaluation)

Continue to view the library as an essential and crucial need of the humanities; expand access to on-line databases.

10. Self-Evaluation Process

- Observation and findings

Our visit to Ben Gurion University was overshadowed by an apparent discrepancy between the ways the committee and the reviewed department understood our mandate. While we were under the impression that only the linguistics program of the department was to be evaluated, and the Literature track was only to be reviewed as far its relations with and contribution to the Linguistics track were concerned, the department had expected us to evaluate both tracks with the same level of rigor.

This misunderstanding is reflected in the self-evaluation report, which discusses with the same level of detail both parts of the department. Consequently, several aspects of the report

are rather vague. Data on undergraduate students are only available for the department, not its parts; such a distinction is, however, provided for graduate students.

While it is obvious that the department had invested much time and effort in the preparation of the report, it is not clear to what extent this experience was beneficial. The authors of the report mention that they “found many details that we hadn't known about, regulations that were known but not implemented, and issues that need to be dealt with”, but do not specify what these issues are, or how they will be addressed.

Recommendations

Short term/immediate (~ within 1 year)

We recommend that the CHE clarify whether it evaluates departments or scientific areas. The decision should be applied consistently to all reviewed institutions in Israel.

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)

Ensure that an anticipated appointment in the cognitive science of language within the new Department of Brain and Cognitive Sciences is made with substantial input from the existing linguistics faculty, and in such a way as to complement the existing teaching and research strengths of that program.

One new position in phonology/morphology

We recommend instituting a summer immersion course in English in the summer before starting at the University for Bedouin students. Such a recommendation would of course be best implemented on a university-wide basis, not just for students aiming to study linguistics.

The Linguistic faculty should consider re-establishing the writing workshop, suitably designed to address the needs of their students, as a first-year requirement, and the administration should provide the necessary financial support should they choose to do so.

The recycling of substantially identical offerings under different titles should be avoided.

The University should undertake to establish a summer preparatory program for Bedouin students.

Intermediate term (~ within 2-3 year)

Think of ways to diversify the course offerings at the BA and MA levels.

Make an appointment in psycholinguistics when resources are available.

At the BA level, coordination and integration of Linguistics and Literature offerings should be pursued.

For reasons mentioned in the introduction to this section, including making program evaluations more accurate, we recommend exploration of the possibility of granting distinct

degrees in Linguistics, in Foreign Literatures, and in Foreign Literatures and Linguistics (for the combined major).

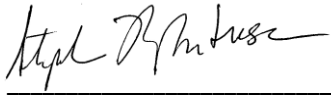
The university administration should consider measures for improving student survey response rates, such as using a paper and pencil process.

Organize a TA pedagogy workshop at the departmental level rather than or in addition to the one currently provided on a university-wide basis if it is agreed that the university-wide one is not meeting TA training needs effectively.

Long term (until the next cycle of evaluation)

Continue to view the library as an essential and crucial need of the humanities; expand access to on-line databases.

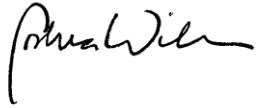
Signed by:



Prof. Stephan Anderson, Chair



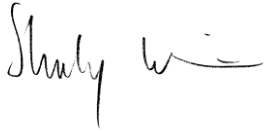
Prof. Barbara Partee



Prof. Joshua Wilner



Prof. Elly Van Gelderen



Prof. Shuly Wintner



Prof. Draga Zec



Prof. Ruth Berman

Appendix 1: Letter of Appointment



שר החינוך
Minister of Education
وزير التربية والتعليم

February 2013

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.

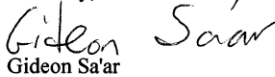
It is with great pleasure that I hereby appoint you to serve as chair of the Council for Higher Education's Committee for the Evaluation of Linguistics. The composition of the Committee will be as follows: Prof. Stephen Anderson, Committee Chair, Prof. Ruth Berman, Prof. Barbara Partee, Prof. Elly Van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

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כתובת אתר ממשל זמין: <http://gov.il>
כתובת אתר המשרד: <http://www.education.gov.il>

Appendix 2: Site Visit Schedule

**Foreign Literatures and Linguistics - Schedule of site visit
Ben-Gurion University of the Negev**

Tuesday, March 19, 2013 (Room 516, Building 74)

Time	Subject	Participants
10:00-10:30	Opening session with the heads of the institution and the senior staff member appointed to deal with quality assessment	Rector – Prof. Zvi Hacoheh Deputy Rector – Prof. Steve Rosen Dean – Prof. David Newman
10:30-11:15	Meeting with the Dean of the Humanities Faculty	Prof. David Newman
11:15-12:00	Meeting with the academic and administrative heads of the Department of Foreign Literatures and Linguistics	Dr. Ariel Cohen – Chair Prof. Barbara Hochman – Head of Literature program
12:00-13:30	Meeting with senior faculty and representatives of relevant committees (teaching/curriculum committee, admissions committee, appointment committee)	<u>Linguistics</u> : Prof. Idan Landau, Dr. Tova Rapoport, Dr. Olga Kagan, Prof. Nomi Shir, Prof Elizabeth Ritter <u>Literature</u> : Prof. Efraim Sicher, Dr. Aaron Landau, Dr. Yael Ben-Zvi, Dr. Eitan Bar-Yosef,
13:30-14:15	Lunch (In the same Room)	Closed Door Committee Meeting
14:15-15:00	Meeting with Junior faculty	<u>Linguistics</u> : Mr. Lavi Wolf (PhD), Ms. Lena Ibn-Bari (PhD), Ms. Tatyana Philipova (MA) <u>Literature</u> : Ms. Valerie Khaskin (PhD), Ms. Ilana Bergsagel (MA), Ms. Michal Slossberg (MA)
15:00-15:45	Meeting with Adjunct faculty	<u>Linguistics</u> : Dr. Aviya Hacoheh, Dr. Irena Botwink <u>Literature</u> : Dr. Hana Komy, Dr. Olga Kuminova
15:45-16:30	Closed Door Committee Meeting	

Wednesday, March 20, 2013 (Room 516, Building 74)

Time	Subject	Participants
10:00-10:45	Meeting with Bachelors students	<p><u>Linguistics</u>: Ms. Shimaa Mahajna, Mr. Dror Garbi, Ms. Auva Shahnovich, Ms. Idan Clein, Mr. Avi Swisa</p> <p><u>Literatures</u>: Mr. Nivi Mor, Mr. Omer Botenski, Ms. Yifat Eliason, Ms. Eman Aboayada Ms. Gal Noa</p>
10:45-11:30	Meeting with MA students	<p><u>Linguistics</u>: Ms. Ayala Kuriel, Mr. Ido Naor, Mr. Kalman Sutker</p> <p><u>Literatures</u>: Mr. Shimron Tubman, Ms. Shani Rozenblatt, Mr. Leonard Stein, Ms. Nevet Tachnai</p>
11:30-12:45	Meeting with PhD students	<p><u>Linguistics</u>: Ms. Zehavit Segal</p> <p><u>Literatures</u>: Ms. Danielle Rubin, Ms. Netta Bar-Yosef Paz</p>
12:45-13:30	Lunch	Closed Door Committee Meeting
13:30-14:30	Tour of departments facilities and library	<p>Cognitive Poetics Lab – Prof. Chanita Goodblatt</p> <p>Psycho/Neuro Linguistics Lab: Dr. Dorit Ben-Shalom</p> <p>Library: Prof. Chanita Goodblatt and Dr. Dorit Ben-Shalom</p>
14:30-15:15	Summation meeting with heads of department and institution	<p>Rector – Prof. Zvi Hacoen</p> <p>Deputy Rector – Prof. Steve Rosen</p> <p>Dean – Prof. David Newman</p> <p>Chair – Dr. Ariel Cohen, Prof. Barbara Hochman</p>