



Committee for the Evaluation of Linguistics Study Programs

Bar-Ilan University
Department of English
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
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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).

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 English at Bar-Ilan University. The Committee's visit to University took place on March 13-14, 2013

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

The Committee thanks the management of Bar Ilan 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 the Linguistics Study Program at Bar Ilan 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 Program in Linguistics at Bar Ilan University is vital, collegial, and highly regarded, with unusually warm and close relations between faculty and students. Among the faculty there are a number with very strong or emerging international reputations. The Program combines a strong theoretical core with a range of experimental and applied areas that build on that foundation. On that basis, they have developed outreach to other programs and areas in the Brain Sciences and elsewhere in an innovative and impressively interdisciplinary way.

With respect to the basic issue of the organizational position of the Linguistics Program and the Department of English more generally within the university, we have concluded that with minimal adjustments, the present arrangement with the programs in Linguistics and English Literature as a single department within the Faculty of Humanities is probably optimal. We strongly recommend, however, that the name of this department be changed to "Department of English Literature and Linguistics." Splitting the linguistics and literature programs into separate units would have a number of unfortunate consequences, and incorporating either program into the proposed larger School of Languages and Literatures (innovative as this may seem) does not appear to us to have intellectual advantages that would outweigh the negatives.

While there have been some limited improvements in infrastructure recently, there are still very many serious deficiencies in that area that need to be addressed. Some of these are described in sections below.

We recommend that the Department develop a strategic plan that would address matters such as future hiring priorities and the balance between the two programs that would reinforce the present cooperation.

2. Organizational Structure

- Observation and findings

History and structure of the program/department

Linguistics at Bar-Ilan University is part of the English Department, since Bernard Spolsky joined the faculty of the then all Literature department in the late 1970s. Currently, the Department of English, which is situated in the Faculty of Humanities, is divided fairly evenly between its Linguistics and Literature programs, with the chair of the department being selected from one of the two programs on a rotating basis and students able to major in either one or both of the programs as they please.

There are currently proposals for re-structuring the 11 departments that now form the Faculty of Humanities at Bar Ilan University into larger academic *cum* organizational units, so as to provide umbrella coverage for and prevent closing down of six smaller departments with few students and only three to five faculty members. Note that this does not apply to the Department of Hebrew and Semitic Languages, which is part of the separate Faculty of Jewish Studies. Various possibilities for organizational revisions have been considered, but as discussed below, the linguists we met were unanimous about staying inside an English Department with essentially the current structure, a conclusion which we support.

Contrary to what we might have anticipated, the members of the Linguistics Program are not only happy but even eager to continue as part of the larger English Department, divided as it is at present between Linguistics and Literature. They noted the harmonious relations and some research and teaching cooperation between the two programs, and cited as a major advantage the fact that this made Linguistics part of a larger, hence more visible and more powerful unit in the university. Another key advantage is that this makes it possible for them to teach and conduct department activities in English. In consequence, the program attracts foreign students, as well as Israeli students whose native language is not Hebrew.

Connections with other disciplines

In internal organization, the Department is increasingly in keeping with the multidisciplinary orientation argued for by the administration – since it divides up evenly between formal linguistics in the core areas of syntax, semantics, and phonology, on the one hand, and experimental linguistics including such domains as neurolinguistics, psycholinguistics, language pathology, and language acquisition and bilingualism on the other hand.

Visibility

There was general agreement that a change in the name from Department of English to Department of English Literature and Linguistics would significantly increase the visibility of the linguistics track. This change can be implemented at the University level without requiring approval from the CHE, and would mean that the degrees

granted by the Program continue to be registered as: B.A. / M.A. in English: Linguistics. (The Ph.D. is granted by the University, without specification of the particular domain).

Recommendations

Short term/immediate (~ within 1 year)

Change the name of the department from Department of English to Department of English Literature and Linguistics.

3. Mission and Goals

- Observation and findings
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Mission as articulated by the Department

The Program aims to train students in linguistics at the level of major international departments in the field. The foundation of this is training in the formal principles of linguistic structure in the core areas of semantics and syntax, with some work also in morphology and phonology. A distinctive feature of the Program's orientation is the considerable attention paid to other aspects of language, including the neural bases of language, psycholinguistics, acquisition, multilingualism, reading, clinical issues such as speech pathology, and others.

Special features

Because of its location within a Department of English, the Program conducts most of its teaching and research in English. This has facilitated the attraction of a more internationally and linguistically diverse pool of students than is generally characteristic of linguistics programs in the center of Israel. In particular, they have a substantial group of faculty and students who are involved in research on Arabic.

The faculty of the Program are divided between a formal group focusing on the core areas and an experimental group developing research and teaching in the other areas mentioned above. Faculty from each group have their own research programs and students, with considerable interaction and cross-fertilization among their various research and teaching activities.

Student preparation

In the training of students, the assumptions of the Program's BA and MA programs are that most of their students should be prepared for a variety of careers. These include language teaching, speech therapy, natural language processing, information sciences, and other "language oriented professions." A number of their graduates become teachers of Linguistics and related areas in the Colleges. Some of their students follow a path involving original research in one of the areas covered by the Program, and may proceed to further study toward the Ph.D., which in turn can prepare them for university careers as well.

Degree of success in attaining goals

The success of the Program in achieving its goals is confirmed by the broad range of research activities that have attracted funding, the impressive publication records of the faculty, and the success of their students in reaching their intended degrees within a generally reasonable time and finding satisfactory professions upon graduation.

4. Study Programs

- Observation and findings

Programs offered in Linguistics

The linguistics program in the English department offers strong degrees at the BA, MA, and PhD levels. The BA has several programs of study, a major, a minor, and an expanded major. Students may combine Linguistics and Literature within the English Department, or utilize programs that combine Linguistics with French, Hebrew, Information Science, Language Acquisition, Brain Science, and others; in addition to the single-discipline expanded program in Linguistics. At the MA and PhD levels, there is a balance between students who want to do formal linguistics and experimental linguistics.

The Program has recently developed a structured MA program in Clinical Linguistics and would like to make this more official but has encountered bureaucratic obstacles. While the program has been approved at all relevant levels within the University, it was not included in the 5-year plan submitted to the CHE in 2012, and as a result is not presently available to the CHE for the necessary approval. We urge that this omission be corrected as soon as possible, and that permission be requested for fast track approval of the Clinical Linguistics degree.

MA programs are intended to take two years, and students typically finish in two to three. The MA programs include both a thesis track ("Track A") and a non-thesis track ("Track B"), with specializations either within linguistic theory or in one of the experimental or applied areas.

The thesis (A) track is designed for students who know what they want to do research on and have the preparation to do it. The non-thesis (B) track is aimed at two types of student: those who have a goal that is not research, such as teaching at the college level or gaining added accreditation for their language-related profession; and those who come from a different background and need to do some make-up coursework in linguistics before they can have a choice of doing track A or B.

The PhD program, which is administered outside the Department at the University level (but with supervision within the Department) is officially a four year program, though in practice it ranges from 3 to 6 years.

The committee administering the evaluation and approval of this degree does not in general include a linguist. Thus linguists have no control over the choice of readers for the dissertation or other aspects of the procedure. The current chair has suggested a new structure with an internal committee including a member from the Department and one external advisor. This idea would have to be approved by the senate of the University.

Innovative programs

The department has an interdisciplinary outlook. They have initiated a new focus (clinical linguistics) at the MA level and are thinking of ways to do more with computational linguistics. The committee feels these developments are entirely in the right direction. We hope that the CHE's initiative that funds new interdisciplinary programs will help start a new class in computational linguistics for linguists.

Visibility

The programs in linguistics are clearly visible from the administration's point of view. The enhanced visibility of linguistics is due in part to the CHE review – a review that initially did not include Linguistics at Bar Ilan University, a program which other linguists in Israel consider to form an integral part of their community

The department is seen by higher administration as functioning extremely well. They have engaged in efforts to make linguistics more visible to the outside world, for instance by holding open days and lectures. We heard from many students that these open lectures had attracted them into pursuing a degree in linguistics.

Types and format of classes

The department's offerings cover the core areas of linguistics: phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics and extend into areas such as clinical linguistics and neurolinguistics. However, students mentioned scheduling issues and a lack of courses in phonetics, sociolinguistics, historical linguistics (at the undergraduate level). They also would like a greater variety of seminars at the graduate level. Whether these desires can be satisfied with the current faculty remains to be seen.

The faculty has started to think about insufficient preparation of entering undergraduates as a 'fact of life' and has piloted a writing class that will become an obligatory class. We heard from BA students that a class in technical or professional writing and a class in academic spoken English would also be helpful; they consider that their English comprehension becomes much better over the course of their BA program, but that their ability to speak fluently and understandably does not improve as much as it should.

This concern with their English was reinforced by some students who reported that in classes where students are required to make presentations of essential material, their English is sometimes difficult for other students to understand.

Language of instruction

The language of instruction is English and this is seen as a real asset. For instance, it is an equalizer for Hebrew and Arabic speaking students (because it is not the first language of either group) and it accommodates international students.

Recommendations

Short term/immediate (~ within 1 year)

We recommend that the University request that the Clinical Linguistics program be treated as part of their 5-year plan to the CHE despite its omission from the original document submitted in 2012.

Intermediate term (~ within 2-3 year)

Capitalize on the use of English as the language of instruction and advertise this fact to international students.

Encourage a course in computational linguistics for linguists, offered by the Department of Computer Science, probably funded by CHE's initiative for interdisciplinary courses.

5. Human Resources / Faculty

- Observation and findings

Present senior faculty and teaching load

The Linguistics Program is a strong academic environment, with 10 senior faculty members. Among these are a number with strong or emerging international reputations.

Over the last five years, three new faculty members joined the Program: Ben-Shachar (neurolinguistics) in 2008, Laks (phonology and morphology) in 2011, and Weidman Sassoon (formal and experimental semantics) in 2013. This has not only expanded the number of subfields represented in the Program, but has also improved the numbers of more junior faculty. The Program currently has three Full Professors (Fine, Rothstein, Walters), one Associate Professor (Saiegh-Haddad), three Senior Lecturers (Armon-Lotem, Greenberg, Waldman Sassoon), and three lecturers (Ben-Shachar, Danon, Laks).

All senior professors have a full teaching load, with 8 weekly hours per semester taught by all faculty ranks. A reduced load of 6 hours is offered to new young faculty, faculty over the age of sixty, and those advising at least 2 PhD or 4 MA students.

Adjunct faculty and their status

There are no adjunct faculty teaching in the Program, by University-wide policy.

Faculty specializations and coverage of subfields

The range of faculty specializations is quite broad. In addition to the core areas of syntax, semantics and phonology/morphology, the Program also covers experimental and applied areas including psycholinguistics, neurolinguistics, language acquisition, multilingualism, and language disorders. The coverage of core areas is fairly adequate, with 2 faculty specializing in semantics, 1 in syntax, and 1 in phonology and morphology. The coverage of experimental areas is quite strong, with 6 contributing faculty: 1 in neurolinguistics, 1 in experimental semantics, 2 in language acquisition and multilingualism, and 2 in language disorders.

Priorities in new hiring

The faculty all feel that the Program needs to be strengthened with new hirings. While no single priority emerged in the meetings, several preferences were clearly stated, most notably, a hiring in clinical linguistics as well as in computational linguistics, sociolinguistics and historical linguistics (possibly in combination with a core area).

Promotion procedures

There was agreement that the promotion procedures, which go through the Dean's office, should be more efficient and transparent than they are at present, with a mandatory inclusion of linguists in the promotion committee. (While two linguists are currently on the committee, this is only accidental, due to the committee's present set up.) Nonetheless, the faculty feel that the promotion procedures are objective, and that decisions regarding promotions have been fair.

Interactions among formal and experimental faculty

The committee observed a highly productive intellectual atmosphere among the faculty whose work is predominantly in formal areas and those that do experimental work. Close relations among the formal and experimental faculty is an important feature of the Program, and one of its crucial strengths. An overall interdisciplinary orientation among faculty with experimental and formal research foci is reflected in frequent co-authorships and joint grant proposals, as well as in joint student advising. The faculty as a whole clearly share research and teaching goals, and function very well in a harmonious and collegial atmosphere.

Faculty mentoring

While there is no formal mentoring of the more junior faculty members, their more senior colleagues are very supportive, and provide guidance and advice concerning academic issues such as teaching, grant proposals or publication venues.

Recommendations

Intermediate term (~ within 2-3 year)

We recommend that the Department develop a strategic plan that would address matters such as future hiring priorities and the balance between the two programs that would reinforce the present cooperation.

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'.

Level of students

The impression we have gotten from the prose of the S-E report and our visit was that the linguistics program does not get a large number of good students at the BA level. Bar Ilan does not get the best students overall for several reasons. These include the requirement of year-long courses in Jewish Studies, the fact that there is no interdisciplinary Honors degree in the Humanities, and competition with TAU and other colleges in Central Israel. It would seem that some students in the linguistics program at Bar Ilan are from the periphery and may have a somewhat weaker preparation. .

There is quite a lot of sorting out after admissions, with some students leaving the Linguistics major(s) either because the work involved turns out to be too difficult or because they realize that it is not what they wanted; and others entering it after discovering the field once they are at the University. The quality of the undergraduates is therefore better from the second year onwards .

It appears to be beneficial that Linguistics is inside the English department and that English is the language of instruction: numerous students with an interest in language seem to enter "English" and then discover linguistics there, and a number of those end up taking a Linguistics major or minor. Attempts to promote linguistics at the high school level have so far met with resistance; students are focused on passing exams, and teachers do not show any interest in linguistics. Changing the name of the department to include the word "Linguistics" should also be helpful for visibility among university applicants.

Populations of the undergraduate programs

There is some diversity in the population of the undergraduate programs, though perhaps not as much as in the graduate programs. The department attracts a certain number of foreign students, mostly at the graduate levels, but also some undergraduates. English language teaching is important for them, and is helpful for the native Arabic speakers.

The undergraduates we spoke with expressed a mixture of praise for the faculty, their quality, friendliness, and helpfulness, and complaints about some aspects of the program and the advising. Some complained of a lack of practical applications in courses and wished for more helpful advice about jobs for non-research-oriented students. Many mentioned the helpfulness of the departmental secretary in ways large and small. Quite generally BA students report that relations with faculty are really good, and that the faculty are very friendly.

Some students wished they could take some Computer Science courses more easily; the C.S. department's courses are generally closed to outside students and/or require too many prerequisites. But faculty did tell us of Linguistics students taking C.S. courses and C.S. students coming to take syntax courses, and they told us of one linguistics MA student doing a project comparing human and machine translation.

Students who combine Linguistics and Literature within English reportedly often get teaching jobs in the Colleges.

One student loved the first year courses but found the theory-oriented courses in the second year boring; too much about research-oriented work, not enough "about language".

The M.A. students

For track A students with a strong background who decide on their research topic in the first year, two-year completion of the degree is realistic. Progress to degree among Bar Ilan MA students is relatively steady.

At the MA level, there are a significant number of foreign students. There are also a significant number of native Arabic speakers (currently 11), and English language instruction is very important for them, since it puts them in an "equality" relation with native Hebrew speaking students. We heard this from the faculty and also from students.

The students who come for the new program (approved at the University Level but not yet by CHE) in Linguistics for Clinical Research are a different population, one for which there is a large potential pool and high demand. They are speech pathologists and speech therapists who can make great use of a good linguistics background. The Department has worked to organize a program for them that does not demand a BA in Linguistics or remedial work before starting an MA, but which has courses designed to teach linguistic theory in ways that are tailored to their interests and experience. They are highly motivated and capable students, often with tight time constraints because they are still working.

It was noted that clinical MA students have sometimes started in a non-thesis track and later discovered a love and talent for research and have moved into track A,

with projects in which they get valuable data from their patients and can sometimes do joint research with the faculty.

The Ph.D. students

The Ph.D. students are evidently of high quality and very motivated. They are sometimes supported on Presidential Fellowships and/or on faculty research grants, and are often involved in the faculty's research, across all the fields of the faculty's expertise. It was noted that the Presidential Fellowship is for four years and is not very large. Regulations reportedly forbid doing any substantial paid work to supplement a Presidential Fellowship. For some students, that rule unfortunately makes the Presidential Fellowship an unaffordable luxury, so instead they must work and study at the same time, which necessarily makes the Ph.D. take longer.

Resources for students

Ph.D. students on a Presidential Fellowship get some travel money for conferences; others depend on their advisors' grants.

Advising

While students do feel that the faculty care about their progress and are approachable and helpful, what seems to be a structural problem is that, at the BA and MA levels, students seem unaware that there is an undergraduate and a graduate advisor respectively. The SE report does not mention the existence of such advisors for the time when students are enrolling. Earlier advising for BA and MA students, and the publicizing of available advising, would probably be helpful.

Students at all levels reported that the secretaries are extremely helpful, and are often crucial sources of advice and help in the department as well as in navigating the University bureaucracy.

Alumni

Neither the department nor the University tracks alumni systematically, but the faculty remain connected with some of them, and we met with a number of alumni during our visit. As to where BA, MA, and PhD students go, we learned that clinicians often return to their clinical positions but with higher qualifications to build on. Many alumni become teachers; quite a number of PhDs go to the colleges, where there is a high demand for people who can teach linguistics in a number of language-related fields such as Education, English as a Foreign Language, Speech and Language Pathology. Some alumni return to, or go into writing or editing work. A few top Ph.Ds go on to post-doctoral research and possibly to University teaching.

General remarks:

The Vice Rector has met with students from all evaluated departments, and has sent reports of those meetings to the chairs. She reported to us that she observed that students of Linguistics are very proud of their department and of their teachers.

All graduate students are affected by the infrastructure problems, including lack of office space, lack of equipment, lack of funds for running experiments, and a shortage of funds for travel. Faculty research grants help fill some of these needs, but cannot fill all of them, and faculty on their own cannot solve the space problems.

Recommendations

Intermediate term (~ within 2-3 year)

Earlier advising for BA and MA students, and the publicizing of available advising, would probably be helpful.

The Department and the University are encouraged to continue to try to find ways to increase the visibility of linguistics and the BIU linguistics program to high school students and the public, and to help raise awareness of what linguistics really is, so as to increase applications by good students with appropriate backgrounds and interests.

Track alumni and possibly develop career advising for undergraduates.

Infrastructure improvements are needed in the areas of office space and equipment for graduate students, as well as funds for running experiments and for graduate students travel.

7. Teaching and Learning Outcomes

- Observation and findings

Teaching by senior faculty: advantages and disadvantages

In conformity with University policy, the Linguistics program makes no use of adjunct faculty. This brings the distinct advantage that students are taught by senior faculty in virtually all of their classes and that the senior faculty are, beginning with the earliest stages of undergraduate coursework, well-acquainted with their students' strengths and needs. Among the downsides are the following:

- Courses identified as seminars are sometimes too large to operate effectively as seminars;
- Large lecture courses offered by the department place significant burdens on both instructor and student because of the lack of discussion sections;
- Faculty have to contribute a lot of extra time outside of scheduled class hours working with students on a one to one basis, an excellent thing in itself, but also a hardship, since this additional time devoted to instruction does not (unlike registered thesis supervisions at the MA and Ph.D. levels) figure in workload calculations.
- Graduate students are deprived of the significant learning opportunities that working as a TA would provide.

Consequences of English as the language of instruction

Again worthy of note is the use of English as the language of instruction, a distinguishing feature of the Bar Ilan Linguistics Program among the Linguistics Programs/Departments in the center of the country. Though in the first instance a function of the Linguistics Program's situation in an English Department, the faculty believes this brings with it instructional benefits. First of all, it opens the program up and serves as a magnet for certain student populations who might otherwise be excluded or might be less inclined to pursue coursework in Linguistics, including International Students (allowing for the program's eventual participation in an Erasmus Mundi consortium). As noted in previous sections of this report, it also creates a "level playing field" for the Program's significant cohort of students whose first language is Arabic, an outcome in which the Program takes satisfaction. While the undergraduates with whom we met spoke English quite well for the most part, if with varying degrees of fluency, it appears that some classes involve an excess of student presentations that can be hard to understand and not a good use of class time.

Assessment of teaching

The formal means of evaluating teacher performance are on-line surveys completed by students and, for untenured faculty, classroom observations conducted by more senior faculty. While the department appears to score well on the first measure (data is complete for only two years, 2008-2009 and 2009-2010 and the report provides no norms for comparison), it does not find these surveys useful, both because of their design and because of the comparatively low response rate (as is common when such surveys are administered online rather than with a paper and pencil process). Much more weight is given to classroom observations, which are followed up with one-on-one guidance as needed. Junior faculty are also mentored in ways not immediately tied to classroom evaluation, including discussion sessions and workshops on specific teaching issues. More important than any of these formal arrangements, however, may be the informal discussions of teaching issues which take place among the faculty of the program, who impressed us as a close-knit and highly dedicated group of teachers.

With respect to channels for students to give faculty feedback about their concerns and wishes concerning the program offerings, students feel that the faculty are open to suggestions, but some students were not aware of any system for feedback; others, however, were aware of systems for feedback.

Learning outcomes and their assessment

Faculty are satisfied with the level of student achievement in relation to program outcomes at the MA and Ph.D. levels. Grade distribution graphs in the S-E report also indicate a high level of student achievement at the graduate level. Many graduates appear to obtain or already pursue work informed by their training in Linguistics, whether in speech pathology, industry, secondary education or, less frequently, the academy.

The picture at the undergraduate level is more mixed, however. A number of excellent students emerge over the course of the undergraduate program, but by the department's own acknowledgement "the standard of the students is such that it is not always possible to teach a class to the level desired by the teacher and the better students." This situation is not fully reflected in the S-E report's graphs of grade distribution since, again by the department's acknowledgement, some grade inflation occurs in response to various pressures, such as the criteria for the awarding of financial aid. The department attributes the difficulties experienced by some of its undergraduates to a variety of factors, including inadequate high school preparations, and, in the first semesters, a lack of understanding as to what the study of Linguistics entails.

Given these issues, the program may want to define the academic outcomes sought at the undergraduate level in less generic ways than it currently does and to develop more programmatic and targeted methods for assessing the general level of student achievement at the undergraduate level than individual grades provide. That said, the ongoing discussion that already occurs among the faculty of the program about their students and how best to address their needs as learners appears to us a real and important form of programmatic self-assessment and development.

Issues concerning means of instruction and advising

For their part the students, at all levels of instruction, consistently praised their teachers as caring, dedicated, and approachable. Both undergraduates and MA students, however, expressed the need for supplementary instruction regarding the more technical dimensions of the coursework and also for more advising. In the perception of the undergraduate students there is no departmental undergraduate advisor; while MA students acknowledged that there is an MA advisor, they experienced a gap between the advice they received and the difficulties they encountered when they actually sought to register for classes. Undergraduates sought more courses with a practical orientation and, perhaps more to the point, given the limitation on the number and kinds of offerings the program can provide, more career guidance. MA students found the variety of offerings effectively limited by overlapping scheduling. We understand that the logistical challenges in this regard may be insuperable but believe the finding warrants reporting.

The path to the Ph.D. degree

Ph.D. candidates and alumni alike praised the training and the supervision they had received and communicated considerable pride in their association with Bar Ilan and its doctoral program in Linguistics. When we asked whether the fact that the Ph.D. is not directly conferred by the department presented a problem, their only complaint concerned the amount of time it often takes for external readers to comment on theses sent them for review and the delay in the conferral of degrees that can ensue.

Recommendations

Short term/immediate (~ within 1 year)

Take steps to ameliorate the problems posed by undergraduate students with poor English speaking skills making class presentations.

Strengthen advising at the undergraduate and Master's levels

Provide career guidance to undergraduates

8. Research

- Observation and findings

Faculty research

Members of the faculty of the Department all maintain active research programs and have shown substantial research productivity over their careers. Their publications appear in internationally recognized journals and in books published by major scholarly presses. Within the core disciplines of formal linguistics, this work spans the range of pragmatics, semantics, and syntax, with attention to the interfaces among these and to experimental studies exploring theoretical results. With the recent addition of Dr. Laks, this work extends further into morphology and phonology.

On the experimental side, the research record is especially broad, covering neurolinguistics, psycholinguistics, a wide range of issues in language disorders and their remediation, studies of bilingualism and multilingualism, acquisition and others.

Involvement of students in faculty 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. Some BA students expressed disappointment that while experimental work was often discussed in class, there was little opportunity for BA students to actually do any.

Laboratory facilities and their impact

The direction towards experimental research has been greatly facilitated by the Gonda Multidisciplinary Brain Research Center, opened in 2002. The center

generously supports experimental research in linguistics and provides office and lab space.

Apart from physical lab space in the Gonda Center, support for research from the University in the form of startup funds is extremely rare. This is true across the Humanities, but the nature of linguistic research makes support of that sort more important here than in many other disciplines. Even a small budget for research would make a considerable difference.

9. Infrastructure

- Observation and findings

Criticism over the poor infrastructure dominated the self-evaluation report. The committee visit reaffirmed some very troubling observations.

Physical space in SAL and the Gonda Center

The Department is located in the SAL building, although some faculty members have offices (and Lab space) in the Gonda Center, on the north end of the campus. Although the Gonda Center space is ample and in excellent state of repair, the physical distance between SAL and Gonda creates an unnatural separation of some faculty members from the heart of the Department.

Physical conditions at SAL are horrendous. Faculty members share extremely small offices. It is enormously difficult for them to receive students, and some faculty members resort to reducing their time in the office so that their officemate could meet with students. This situation is detrimental to the research and teaching conducted in the Department. It also inhibits the recruitment of excellent students and, perhaps, also faculty.

The lack of elevators makes SAL inaccessible to students, faculty, and visitors with special needs. This is not only unacceptable, it is probably illegal. The state of repair is poor: furniture is broken, wiring is exposed, etc. Wifi reception in the building is weak and bandwidth is insufficient.

Laboratory facilities

The Department does not have its own laboratories, but researchers (primarily in the more experimental areas) have access to laboratories of the Gonda Center. This provides Department researchers with access to a range of sophisticated equipment, including fMRI, Diffusion Tensor Imaging, and Magnetoencephalography (which, we were told, is the only such facility in the Middle East, and one of only a very few in the world). The Gonda labs and equipment are used by senior faculty and graduate students alike.

Computer access

The recent purchase of eight new computers is a welcome improvement; previously, students had very limited access to computing facilities. However, the present location of the computers, in the library, means that they are only accessible during the limited library open hours. Computing equipment used by faculty was bought from personal research grants. More troubling is the fact that graduate students resort to buying various kinds of research equipment out of their own pocket.

Library

The Department has its own library, located in SAL. Faculty and students alike complain about the limited collection and the unavailability of on-line books and periodicals. We are under the impression that the library better serves the needs of the literature part of the department than those of linguistics. Because of staff cutbacks, library opening hours are very limited (9:00-16:00 on all but two days, when the hours extend to 18:00), and both students and faculty complained about that. The heroic librarian desperately needs more student help unless and until a second librarian can be reinstated. The library's budget is also insufficient to maintain licenses for some key databases.

IT and other infrastructure issues

A broader notion of infrastructural issues was expressed by several faculty members. It has to do with the support that faculty obtain from the administrative staff. It is felt that IT support is non-existent; for example, updates to the Department web site are prohibitively difficult to make and fixing computer problems can take days or weeks. Several administrative operations are so bureaucratically expensive that some faculty members avoid them altogether.

Recommendations

Short term/immediate (~ within 1 year)

The University should join Eduroam, the inter-university roaming alliance, and provide Wifi reception across campus, and in particular at SAL.

Additional computers should be provided for student use, and expanded access to existing computer facilities should be offered.

The librarian should be provided with additional help.

Intermediate term (~ within 2-3 year)

If the Department is to remain in the SAL building, they must be provided with more space, and conditions in the building must be significantly improved.

Handicapped accessibility must be brought up to legal standards.

Study the possible advantages of merging the departmental library with the general one and using the space that would be freed as office space for faculty, common rooms for graduate students, and research labs.

Explore ways to obtain library access to additional databases, either for the University or at the national level.

Long term (until the next cycle of evaluation)

Improve the University culture that makes it difficult for faculty members to make good use of administrative and support staff.

10 Self-Evaluation Process

- Observation and findings

The report was prepared by all members of the Department, under the coordination of Professor Susan Rothstein. Other parties, such as students, TAs, and alumni, were neither involved in the writing nor exposed to the final report. Obtaining data from the University was perceived as frustrating, mainly due to the fact the data are stored by department rather than by field of study. Furthermore, there were sometimes discrepancies between University data and the Department's own records.

The committee is under the impression that the Department is constantly and continuously conducting a productive and fruitful process of self-evaluation. Faculty members are constantly monitoring their current status, present challenges and future directions; many changes resulted from such reflections. Similarly, faculty consultations with students resulted in changes to the curriculum. Still, the self-evaluation process provided the Department with a special opportunity to take a closer look at some issues, and to better recognize both their strengths and their weaknesses. Furthermore, it increased the Department's visibility within the University and emboldened the Department to speak up and make requests in areas where they became more conscious of what bad conditions they had been living with for a long time. Specifically, it is felt that some renovation of furniture, provision of new computers and perhaps even the two recent hires may have been in part pre-emptive responses by the administration to the evaluation process.

The committee was also impressed with the explicit request of the Rector and the Dean for help in evaluating the future reorganization directions of the program, the Department and the Faculty of the Humanities in general. The Rector, the Dean, the Head of the Department and faculty members, all seemed enthusiastic to implement whatever recommendations are offered by the committee. We are therefore confident that those recommendations that do not require extraordinary sums of money will indeed be implemented effectively.

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

Short term [~ within 1 year]:

Change the name of the department from Department of English to Department of English Literature and Linguistics.

We recommend that the University request that the Clinical Linguistics program be treated as part of their 5-year plan to the CHE despite its omission from the original document submitted in 2012.

Develop a strategic plan to govern hiring priorities in the event new appointments become available.

The University should join Eduroam, the inter-university roaming alliance, and provide Wifi reception across campus, and in particular at SAL.

Additional computers should be provided for student use, and expanded access to existing computer facilities should be offered.

The librarian should be provided with additional help.

Intermediate term [~ within 2-3 years]:

Capitalize on the use of English as the language of instruction and advertise this fact to international students.

Encourage a course in computational linguistics for linguists, offered by the Department of Computer Science, probably funded by CHE's initiative for interdisciplinary courses.

We recommend that the Department develop a strategic plan that would address matters such as future hiring priorities and the balance between the two programs that would reinforce the present cooperation.

Earlier advising for BA and MA students, and the publicizing of available advising, would probably be helpful.

The Department and the University are encouraged to continue to try to find ways to increase the visibility of linguistics and the BIU linguistics program to high school students and the public, and to help raise awareness of what linguistics really is, so

as to increase applications by good students with appropriate backgrounds and interests.

Track alumni and possibly develop career advising for undergraduates.

Infrastructure improvements are needed in the areas of office space and equipment for graduate students, as well as funds for running experiments and for graduate students travel.

If the Department is to remain in the SAL building, they must be provided with more space, and conditions in the building must be significantly improved.

Handicapped accessibility at the SAL building must be brought up to legal standards.

Study the possible advantages of merging the departmental library with the general one and using the space that would be freed as office space for faculty, common rooms for graduate students, and research labs.

Explore ways to obtain library access to additional databases, either for the University or at the national level.

Long term [until the next cycle of evaluation]:

Improve the University culture that makes it difficult for faculty members to make good use of administrative and support staff.

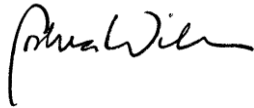
Signed by:



Prof. Stephan Anderson, Chair



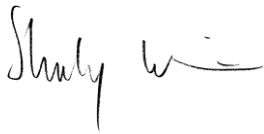
Prof. Barbara Partee



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 המשרד: <http://www.education.gov.il>

Appendix 2: Site Visit Schedule

Linguistics – schedule of site visit-Bar-Ilan University

ב' בניסן תשע"ג, Wednesday, March 13, 2013

Time	Subject	Participants
10:00 – 10:30	Closed Door Committee Meeting	
10:30 – 11:15	Meeting with the heads of the institution and the senior staff member appointed to deal with quality assessment	Prof. Haim Taitelbaum, Rector Prof. Miriam Faust, Vice-Rector In charge of Quality Evaluation
11:15 – 11:45	Meeting with the Dean of the Humanities Faculty	Prof. Joel Walters, Dean, Faculty of Humanities
11:45 – 12:15	Meeting with the chair of the department of English Language & Literature and with the Writer of the quality assessment report	Prof. William Kolbrener, chair of the department of English Language & Literature Prof. Susan Rothstein, Writer of the quality assessment report
12:15 – 12:45	Meeting with the Writer of the quality assessment report	Prof. Susan Rothstein, Writer of the quality assessment report
12:45 – 14:00	Closed Door Committee Meeting + Lunch	
14:00 – 15:00	Meeting with senior faculty and representatives of relevant committees (teaching/curriculum committee, admissions committee, appointment committee)*	Dr. Michal Ben-Shachar Dr. Gabi Danon Prof. Jonathan Fine Dr. Yael Greenberg Dr. Lior Laks Prof. Elinor Saeigh-Haddad Dr. Sharon Armon Lotem Dr. Galit Sasson
15:00 -16:30	Closed Door Committee Meeting	

Thursday, March 14, 2013 ג' בניסן תשע"ג

Time	Subject	Participants
10:00 – 11:00	Tour of campus (classes, library, offices of faculty members, computer labs etc.)	
11:00 – 11:45	Meeting with Bachelors students* ***	Ms. Ori Farjun-1st year Ms. Hadar Buda-1st year Ms. Nada hagab-1st year Ms. Chen Levy-1st year Mr. Maor Weinberger-2nd year Ms Michelle Cohen -2nd year Ms. Tikva Jacob-2nd year Ms. Virginia Amasis-3rd year Mr. Michael Priborkin-3rd year Ms Julia Markovicz -3rd year Ms. Rouba Maree-3rd year
11:45 – 12:45	Closed Door Committee Meeting + Lunch	
12:45 - 13:30	Meeting with Masters* ***	Ms. Maria Nikitin, without thesis Ms. Moria Ronen, with thesis Ms. Galit Schneider, without thesis Ms. Bridget Schwartz with thesis Ms Alina Bihovski with thesis, Clinical Linguistics Ms Nor Aboo-Mokch without thesis Mr. Nadav Neshar without thesis Ms Inbal Radai-Cohen Clinical ling with thesis Ms. Haguit Szpeker, without thesis, Clinical Linguistics
13:30 - 14:15	Meeting with PhD* ***	Ms. Keren Khrizman, Ms. Natalia Meir, Ms. Mona Saba, Ms. Lola Karsenti Ms. Ayman Jayusy Ms. Peri Iluz-Cohen Ms. Ekaterina Shagalov Ms. Areej Elouti
14:15 – 14:45	Meeting with Alumni	Dr. Efrat Harel Dr. Ruth Litt-Afori Dr. Amal kadry Dr. Zhanna Burstein

		Dr. Leor Cohen Ms. Sveta Fichman(MA)
14:45 – 15:15	Closed Door Committee Meeting	
15:15 – 15:45	Summation meeting with heads of the institution and of the department	Prof. Haim Taitelbaum, Rector Prof. Miriam Faust, Vice-Rector Prof. Joel Walters, Dean, Faculty of Humanities Prof. William Kolbrener, chair of the department of English Language & Literature Prof. Susan Rothstein, Writer of the quality assessment report
15:45 – 16:30	Closed Door Committee Meeting	