



Committee for the Evaluation of Linguistics Study Programs in Israel

General Report

Evaluation Report

March 2013

Contents

Chapter 1: Background.....3
Chapter 2: Committee Procedures.....4
Chapter 3: Executive Summary.....5

Chapter 4: Evaluation of Linguistics Programs in Israel.....6

Chapter 5: Summary of Recommendations and Timetable.....17

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. 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).

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 and also conducted a tour of the campus.

This report deals with the general state of Linguistics Programs in Israel.

Chapter 3: Executive Summary

This Report relates to the situation current at the time of the visit to the institutions, 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 institutions, information gained through interviews, discussion and observation as well as other information available to the Committee.

1. Executive Summary

Our committee found the state of Linguistics in Israel to be excellent, with several programs of very high quality presenting a diverse range of strengths. These programs are led by scholars with substantial international reputations, and are recognized for their value in the field overall.

Linguistics as a field has much to contribute not only to academia but to Israeli society more broadly. Work on the science of language is important for areas such as Computer Science, Cognitive Science, Neuroscience and clinical practice, as well as language teaching and broader curricular issues at a range of institutions. Linguists in the programs we visited are actively engaged in building connections to these other disciplines.

Individual programs present distinct challenges if this degree of quality is to be maintained and built on, and we have described these matters in the individual reports on particular programs. There are some generalizations that apply across the board, however.

The unfortunate decline in overall faculty sizes throughout Israeli universities over the first decade of the present century has resulted in considerable weakening of these strong programs through attrition and failure to replace important faculty. Given the internal diversity of the field of Linguistics, loss of a single faculty member can mean the disappearance of an entire area of study, and the current situation in the programs we visited presents important challenges if past and impending retirements are not replaced.

Physical facilities in several of the programs are substantially below the standard necessary to support world class scholarship, in some instances dramatically so. In addition, the amount of support for graduate study is inadequate, and impedes the progress of students.

The cost of supporting and maintaining a program of high quality in Linguistics is actually rather lower than in many other fields. It is therefore all the more incumbent on the CHE and university administrations to ensure that resources are made available to avoid compromising the established excellence of the existing programs in Israel.

Chapter 4: Evaluation of Linguistics Programs in Israel

Background: The Field of Linguistics

As an academic discipline that has emerged comparatively recently, the content and scope of Linguistics is not always well understood, and so we allow ourselves to provide a brief overview as introduction. This is a field with great internal diversity, spanning a great many quite different sub-fields. Each of these has its own distinctive body of problems, research methods and established results. They include not only traditional humanistic areas such as the analysis of metrical verse or the internal coherence of texts and discourse, but also work that falls under the social sciences (psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics and the study of the acquisition of language), the exact sciences (computational linguistics and natural language processing, the acoustic structure of speech) and the biological sciences (neurolinguistics, the analysis of speech articulation, the study of the evolution of the human language faculty).

Some traditional core areas, such as the study of meaning (semantics and pragmatics) and “grammar” (syntax and morphology) have developed in ways that are highly formalized and require control of methods drawn from mathematics and formal logic. The study of phonetics (and to some extent, phonology) calls for an understanding of physical acoustics and human (neuro-)physiology. In addition to its traditional and obvious focus on the properties of spoken languages, linguistic research in recent decades has been informed by the discovery that the signed languages of the Deaf are products of the same language faculty, further expanding the scope and complexity of the field.

Only the very largest departments could hope to cover all aspects of the study of language, and few if any actually do. The relatively small size of Israeli Linguistics programs precludes an all-encompassing approach, and individual programs concentrate their attention on limited areas. Historical and comparative linguistics, one of the traditionally important branches of the field, is represented in only one program, the “Structuralist track” in the Linguistics Department at The Hebrew University, which is also the only program attending to the anthropological tradition of close description of a wide variety of “exotic” languages. This is not necessarily problematic; probably no top linguistics department covers all of these subfields. It does not, however, absolve these programs from the need to provide some general context for the study of linguistics in addition to specific foci based on their individual strengths.

It is also the case that within many subfields, a considerable diversity of approaches exists, each with a claim to distinctive insights. Syntax, for example, generally regarded as a core subfield, has engendered a number of theoretical approaches which differ from one another sometimes in minor ways, sometimes enough to constitute different “schools” that do not easily communicate with one another.

Perhaps the biggest contemporary divide is between “formal” linguistics, a description that can be applied within many subfields, and is the dominant approach in many leading linguistics departments; and linguistics that is either non-formal (as in some older traditions) or even anti-formal. With respect to this difference, the programs we visited generally had a fairly clear orientation toward more formal approaches, again with the exception of the “Structuralist” track at The Hebrew University.

Linguistics is also increasingly seen as a discipline whose methods and results are relevant to others. Since the “cognitive revolution” of the 1950s and 60s, Linguistics has been at the heart of Cognitive Science, the study of the mind and its relation to the brain. Similarly, the study of the neuroscience of language has had great importance for neuroscience more generally. The linguistic study of language disorders plays an important role in clinical diagnosis and remediation. The desire for intelligent computer systems with which users can interact naturally through the medium of language has drawn computer scientists to the insights about linguistic structure that linguists can offer to improve speech recognition, syntactic parsing, and natural language understanding. From somewhat limited origins centering largely on philological problems, Linguistics has grown into a discipline with broad relevance across many areas.

Linguistics in Israel

To summarize our impressions, Linguistics is a lively and dynamic area of teaching and research in universities in Israel, and Israeli linguists are recognized and respected in the broader international community. Graduates of Israeli programs are successful in competing for places in graduate programs and faculty positions in American and European universities. Research by Israeli scholars is published in important international journals and by international presses. Israeli scholars attend and present papers at conferences around the world, and scholars from abroad participate in conferences in Israel such as the annual meetings of the Israeli Association for Theoretical Linguistics (IATL). Overall, Israeli linguistics enjoys an excellent reputation in international scholarship. Within Israel, graduates of linguistics programs contribute not only to the discipline but to related areas, including Computer Science, clinical practice, language teaching and teaching in the Colleges. This is not to say that there are no improvements possible – or indeed urgently required – and we will discuss those matters below, but the health of the discipline in general is excellent.

The Academic Basis of Israeli Linguistics

The committee visited four quite different linguistics programs, each following a different model and each presenting individual strengths. Organizationally, only Tel Aviv University has a straightforward, unitary Department of Linguistics. At The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, the Department of Linguistics represents

something of a forced marriage between a somewhat traditional program based on the close study of textual material in a range of languages and a more cognitively oriented “generative” program originally housed in the Department of English. Both Bar Ilan University and Ben Gurion University of the Negev have linguistics programs housed together with literature programs, in the Department of English and the Department of Foreign Literatures and Linguistics, respectively. At Bar Ilan, this cohabitation involves some significant interaction between participants in the two programs, while at Ben Gurion there seems little connection beyond shared support staff and facilities.

It should be noted that a comprehensive picture of the state of Linguistics in Israel must also involve consideration of the linguists on the faculty of the University of Haifa.* There is no specifically designated program in Linguistics at the BA, MA or PhD level at Haifa, although efforts are underway to develop a graduate program in Language Sciences that would bring together a number of linguists, some with international prominence, in the Departments of English, Communication Sciences and Disorders, Hebrew Language, Computer Science, and others. Courses in core linguistic areas are offered in the Department of English, and linguistics courses and research feature in the other departments mentioned above as well.

Linguists at Haifa are internationally prominent in the study of signed languages. This research, involving American and Israeli Sign Languages and the recently discovered Al-Sayyid Bedouin Sign Language in the Negev, is widely published in linguistics journals and books (CUP, Erlbaum, and forthcoming MIT), and has had continuous external funding since 1992 from the Israel Science Foundation, the U.S.-Israel Binational Science Foundation, the Germany-Israel Foundation, and two consecutive grants from the US NIH (shared with UCSD).

With respect to the focus of research and teaching within linguistics in the programs we visited, the great bulk of attention is concentrated on the areas of syntax, semantics and pragmatics. With respect to other traditional “core” areas of linguistics, only one program (Tel Aviv) has enough staff and course offerings to support substantial research in phonology and morphology. The other programs provide limited service courses in these areas, but generally do not go beyond that. Within syntax, semantics and pragmatics, however – and in particular “non-core” areas as well – each program has strengths and areas of particular interest that are different from the others.

* Our understanding of work at Haifa in Linguistics comes from sources other than the committee’s visit, together with contributions from one of our members, Prof. Shuly Wintner of the Haifa Department of Computer Science.

Connections with Other Disciplines

Linguistics as the field is constituted today (both internationally and within Israel) has natural links to a number of other sciences, as well as to other fields within the Humanities. Some of these links are being actively cultivated, with the development of joint programs and research overlap with Computer Science and with programs and laboratories in Psychology, Neuroscience and Cognitive Science. This activity should obviously be continued and promoted, both for the benefit of linguistics programs and for the valuable contributions linguists can make to these other areas.

One way to achieve this goal of enhanced collaboration is by offering a minor in Linguistics to non-linguistics majors. We recommend that the programs try to define (or develop) a small set of core undergraduate courses and offer them to majors in Psychology, Cognitive Science, Computer Science, etc. The recently established CHE policy promoting Humanities courses to non-Humanities students (offered under different names in some of the universities we visited) could perhaps be used for this purpose.

Somewhat more problematic, perhaps, are the relations between linguistics programs and language departments. Such collaboration is not as easy as it might appear, though, not only in Israeli institutions but elsewhere as well. As the central focus in linguistics has developed toward the cognitive nature of the human language faculty, connections with scholars more interested in the study of a body of literature expressed in a particular language have become more tenuous. While no doubt regrettable, and based more on mutual (mis)perceptions than on substance, we see this trend as a general one in academia around the world, and one that has no easy resolution.

The programs we visited would seem to have natural connections to language departments, and in fact departments of Hebrew Language, to take one example, often have faculty members whose research focus on language should make them natural collaborators with linguists. In fact, we found very little linkage between the linguistics programs we reviewed and faculty and programs in Hebrew (or other) Language departments. The dichotomy between Linguistics and Hebrew Language is not a necessary one, and several Hebrew Language departments have excellent linguists who, we believe, could also benefit from stronger ties with the linguistics departments.

Programs of Study

Despite their diverse organizational models and curricula, all of the units we visited offered very similar options to students with regard to degree programs: BA either as a unitary major or as part of a joint major, MA with or without thesis, and the PhD. Two aspects of these programs struck members of the committee coming from outside Israel as unusual: the role of the MA, and the administration of the PhD.

Our impression is that a somewhat larger proportion of MA students in Linguistics in Israel than in the US regard this as a terminal degree, and plan to go on from there to a career in teaching, clinical work, or industry for which the MA will be sufficient. Somewhat more surprising, however, is the role of the MA in the work of students who intend to go on for the PhD and pursue a career in academic linguistics. The theses prepared by these students are generally very substantial, serious works, requiring three to five years of study and research. Only at that point do they apply to and enter a PhD program, which requires a number of additional years of study, research, and writing. We note that with current staff levels, programs do not (and perhaps cannot) offer substantial amounts of coursework specifically for PhD students. It would be good if this situation could be improved.

Overall, the process seems somewhat more arduous than that of students in linguistics at US institutions, who commonly enroll directly in a PhD program after completing their undergraduate degree, and for whom the MA is usually just an intermediate milestone awarded on the basis of completing a certain subset of the requirements for the PhD. We did not in general find Israeli students in such a “direct” PhD track, although we know that this occurs in some disciplines. Somewhat more remarkably, given the total number of years required to obtain the PhD and the relatively advanced stage of life at which Israeli students begin their University studies, we did not hear from graduate students that they wished the process could be made more streamlined. On the contrary, PhD students expressed the opinion that the amount of effort they had expended in their MA programs provided valuable preparation for their PhD work, and that they did not regret the time it had taken.

We were also surprised to learn that PhD programs in the institutions we visited were not directly administered by the linguistics programs, but rather were under the control of university wide bodies. Although students’ research is of course supervised by members of the linguistics faculty, once they complete their thesis this is submitted to and evaluated by a committee that may include no members with expertise in the student’s area, or indeed in linguistics at all. Outside readers are chosen by this committee, with some names proposed by the program (though there is apparently no necessity that the readers be chosen from, or even include members of, this set). The outside readers then submit their evaluations to the committee, which decides on the acceptability of the thesis, and may or may not even communicate the identity of the readers to the candidate.

This seems very strange to most of us, although the faculty and Ph.D. students we interacted with had very few complaints, and felt that they had sufficient autonomy in ways that mattered most. Apart from anything else, this process appears to introduce unnecessary and sometimes inconvenient delays into the process, for reasons that do not appear grounded in real intellectual concerns. While we are of course well aware that linguists are not uniquely burdened with this system, which seems quite general with regard to the PhD in Israel, we must urge that if there is

any way to circumvent it and provide for direct administration of the degree by the academically appropriate department or program, it should be adopted.

The Language of Instruction

The basic language of instruction in universities in Israel is of course Hebrew. Internationally, work in linguistics is primarily based on English, and students wishing to do serious work in the field must be prepared to read and write in that language, and to speak it as well if they are to present their work to international audiences or go on to further study or employment in other countries. If graduate programs in Israeli universities are to attract students from outside the country, they must overcome the potential obstacle of Hebrew language instruction.

Some of the linguistics programs we visited represent quite an unusual situation in this regard. When a linguistics program is housed in a Department of English (as at Bar Ilan), or shares its departmental structure with a program focused on English literature, as at Ben Gurion, the language of instruction in the program is English rather than Hebrew. These institutions are potentially well placed to attract foreign students, although we do not have the impression that this has taken place to any significant extent. It is perhaps somewhat ironic that programs that could be expected to have considerable appeal for students from outside Israel such as the Department of Linguistics at Tel Aviv and the new LLCC at The Hebrew University, are just the ones where Hebrew is the primary if not the exclusive language of the classroom.

Those we talked with about this matter were in general satisfied with the way it plays out in each individual case. In those programs where English is used, this was felt to be advantageous for some students (especially those whose first language is not Hebrew, for whom it creates something of a level playing field). Where Hebrew is the basic language, students and faculty did not feel disadvantaged by this. Even in those programs where the language of instruction is Hebrew, a great deal of the assigned reading and much of the written work done by the students is in English, and most dissertations are in English. The annual meetings of the IATL are international in participation and all papers there are presented in English. Faculty in all of the programs maintain their international visibility by publishing regularly in English. There was little sentiment for moving to English based instruction in Tel Aviv; the way the staff of the LLCC is developing at The Hebrew University means that some courses are in fact offered in English, but there did not seem to be any movement to make this more general.

Considerations and Concerns for the Future

Faculty Issues

Almost without exception, the administrators we spoke with at the institutions we visited expected our committee to recommend (as committees of this sort are wont to do) that they allocate additional faculty positions to the programs under review. We have tried to be realistic in this regard: while we do feel that all of these programs could make excellent and productive use of additional faculty, we realize that very few resources of this sort are likely to be available.

It is not with faculty growth that we are primarily concerned, however, but rather with the maintenance and restoration of existing strengths. All linguistics programs in Israel are staffed at levels that barely allow them to maintain basic general coverage of the field while developing a small set of areas of general excellence. Given the diversity of research skills associated with the various subfields of linguistics already referred to above, faculty strengths in research and teaching are not fungible: when one person leaves and is not replaced, that generally entails the disappearance of an associated area of research and teaching, since other faculty cannot readily take over. And all of these programs have suffered losses in recent years that must be made up if the high level of Israeli linguistics is to be maintained.

We have learned that Israeli universities have recently come through a period of overall faculty contraction, with retirements and departures in many fields going unreplaced, and linguistics has certainly not been spared in this process. In a climate not of expansion but rather of recovery, we would hope that the potential damage inflicted on linguistics programs can be made up without substantial delay. In each of the programs we reviewed, recent or imminent departures threaten the integrity and creativity of research and teaching curricula, and we hope that replacement positions will be found.

It is also the case that each program has natural areas in which its activities could naturally expand, in the event additional resources are made available to them. Given the potential contribution of linguistics to the economy and society of Israel, as well as to the intellectual richness of academia in the country, we feel that such additional investment, if possible, would be well warranted.

Some of the programs, although not all, rely heavily on adjunct teachers. In a few cases these are experts who contribute specialized courses sporadically; but in most cases, adjunct faculty are a class of their own: they rely on teaching for their livelihood, yet they are employed under terms that differ greatly from the terms of employment of senior faculty members. They are not tenured, and only recently did they establish their right for benefits (such as pensions). While we did talk with some quite contented adjunct faculty members and with some graduate students who aspired to adjunct rather than tenure-track teaching positions, in general we

find the situation of reliance on adjunct faculty sub-optimal, and call upon the universities to find a sufficient number of lines to sustain the level of instruction expected from the departments. Adjunct teachers should be employed sparingly to supplement, not replace, the core faculty.

Facilities

The physical quality of the facilities available to the programs we visited varied widely. At one extreme were the lavish office and laboratory space in the recently established and (for now, at least) generously funded LLCC at the Hebrew University, as well as the Gonda Center at Bar Ilan University. Faculty offices and laboratories at Ben Gurion University were also quite adequate for the needs of that program. For those at Hebrew University and Bar Ilan not accommodated in these special centers, however, conditions are quite simply unacceptable, as we discuss in our reports on those programs, and much the same is true at Tel Aviv University. Issues include shared offices for faculty members (or for faculty and graduate students); lack of proper air-conditioning; unreliable wi-fi access; accessibility for the mobility-impaired; and lack of common areas for research assistants. The specifics are detailed in the individual reports, and we urge the CHE, together with the universities, to very quickly find solutions to the major infrastructural problems.

We mention this in part because serious research and teaching is imperiled when faculty and students are forced to work in unpleasant, cramped and insufficient space without adequate support. Even more pernicious as an influence is the emergence of effective “two class” systems at institutions where some faculty members are treated much more generously than others. Such contrasts inevitably exacerbate internal tensions that are not conducive to the harmonious operation of the programs involved.

We recognize that it would be difficult to raise the general standard of living of Israeli linguists to that of the LLCC at The Hebrew University, for example. Nonetheless, university administrations must attend to fact that if they are to continue to have world class work in linguistics going on at their institutions, they simply must take seriously the need for more and better space in which it is to be carried out, and more support (in locally appropriate areas, including staff, equipment, library resources, etc.) for those who constitute the strength of these programs.

One issue that is common to several of the programs is the low degree of satisfaction with library offerings, especially where on-line subscription to databases is concerned. Given the small size of the country and the small number of universities, we recommend that the CHE try to establish a single, centralized unit that could negotiate better terms for subscription to on-line databases on behalf of all the universities, thereby providing equal, and far more extended, access to such resources to all interested researchers.

Student Concerns

Students in Israel begin their university work at a somewhat more advanced stage of life than in many other countries. Having completed their obligatory military service, these students are in some respects more mature than the average undergraduate in the US or in Europe; the other side of this coin is that they frequently have a somewhat different range of non-academic concerns and obligations. University students in Israel are more likely to have families and non-academic jobs, and given the comparatively low level of financial support available to them, they are much more likely to have to devote substantial time to those concerns, time taken away from what might otherwise be available for their studies.

This means that they are likely to require more than the minimum amount of time to complete their programs, and the experience of students we spoke with confirms that this is quite generally the case. Programs that might be expected to require two years of full time effort quite generally take three or four or even more. This is not because the students are not well prepared, but rather because they have too many other demands that must be met. A significant improvement in this situation would require additional resources for student support.

In general, the level of support provided by the universities to graduate students is insufficient. This is particularly true for Masters students, where support is almost non-existent. Given that external funding is generously available in Israel, for example through the Israel Science Foundation, where over one third of the proposals are awarded funding, we urge faculty members to apply more frequently for external funding, using the money to cover graduate student scholarships (as well as other research needs).

University administrations must be sensitive to the need to provide adequate support for graduate students. Maintaining world-class programs in linguistics is actually considerably less costly than maintaining world-class programs in many other fields. Faculty in linguistics programs must also do even more than they presently do to attract research funding, although the effort required is obviously not trivial and merits administrative support. Beyond natural sources of funding like the Israeli Science Foundation and programs specifically directed at students such as the ISEF, linguistics certainly has the potential to attract attention from major funding sources such as the Israeli Centers of Research Excellence (I-CORE). An I-CORE program in Cognitive Science, centered at the Weizmann Institute of Science, already exists, but among the researchers from a number of institutions there are no linguists, despite the importance of the study of language for an understanding of the brain. We encourage Israeli linguists to work to pursue an I-CORE proposal (or something similar) that would unite the resources available in the country for a large scale research project devoted to the science of language in

its various aspects, and we urge the agencies in question to recognize the considerable potential value of such work.

We found some anomalies in student support that should be corrected. At Bar Ilan University, for example, there are prestigious Presidential Fellowships awarded to PhD students, covering four years of tuition and a stipend of 50,000 NIS per year. While highly competitive and quite prestigious, the stipend associated with them is not in fact adequate to provide full support for a student, especially not one with a family. These Fellowships have a requirement that the recipient must devote full time to study, and cannot hold another job at the same time. The result of this is that some students have had to turn down the Presidential Fellowship in favor of a non-academic job that would allow them to support themselves, at the expense of time spent away from their studies. This is obviously a very unfortunate situation, and one that should be corrected to allow excellent students to obtain as much support for their work as possible.

Another financially related anomaly we encountered concerned the cost of tuition, and appears to be rather general. When students take course work outside of the planned, required courses of their major, additional tuition charges are levied. This has the effect of inhibiting students from exploring connections between their field and others, and is particularly iniquitous in linguistics, where there are many such connections to be made and where such exploration should be encouraged. We hope that some mechanism can be found to avoid imposing financial penalties on students who go beyond the known and accepted boundaries of their subject in an effort to understand its relation to others.

The Visibility of Linguistics as a Field

Linguistics is quite young among the disciplines in the modern University, and an understanding of the content, methods and achieved results of the field is far from general. The study of language has evolved from a focus within the humanistic tradition on the philological details of textual material to become a science attempting to understand a rather abstract and elusive faculty of the Mind/Brain. Indeed, as something of a model discipline in the emergence of modern Cognitive Science, Linguistics has a claim to be at the very heart of the serious scientific study of the human mind.

Bad writing and the misinterpretation or distortion of claims about language are all too common in the popular literature. An attitude of "I speak a language perfectly well: what else should I have to know to have just as good an opinion about it as anyone else?" often seems to underlie the formation of opinions. In fact, however, like any other scientific field, linguistics is grounded in a considerable body of research methods and substantive results that are no more self-evident without serious background than those of physics or evolutionary biology. Linguists need to do much more than they have to educate the general public about the content and significance of the scientific study of language.

Apart from the general desirability of producing a better informed public in this regard, such efforts are important to enhance support for this work. Linguistic research is of great potential importance to areas of society and the economy such as the brain sciences, computer science and associated technology, and the creation of effective educational environments for all of the members of a complex and diverse society. Linguistics is a very strong field in Israel, with creative and potentially significant work being carried out at a level that is fully competitive internationally. Linguists are working to develop connections and synergies with other disciplines, and these are potentially very significant. Without an understanding of the nature and potential contributions of this work, however, the necessary support for carrying it out will not be available.

Within the university, linguists need to increase the overall level of appreciation for the field for more directly practical reasons. Probably the majority of students who consider studying linguistics have little or no sense of what the field is about. In this, they are in the company of those who, upon meeting one of us, respond “Oh, you’re a linguist – how many languages do you know?” Although the study of a variety of languages can contribute materially to an understanding of the nature of Language more generally, linguistics is not a matter of the accumulation of practical knowledge of as many languages as possible. Students who do not have at least some appreciation of the real content of the field will quickly find themselves disillusioned. This is a very real effect, and one that leads to rather high dropout rates, especially in BA programs.

So what can linguists do to improve this situation? Within the university, the development and promotion of general interest courses in language that introduce some of the results of linguistic science can have considerable value. Many models for such courses exist; they have been successful at many institutions, including in Israel, and they have the benefit of enhancing the overall level of literacy with respect to language among students who may never take another linguistics course. These courses do require teaching resources, though, and since the programs we visited were in general hard pressed to offer an adequate range of courses to their own students, a wider commitment within the university would probably be necessary to make it possible to provide such service courses.

We can also recommend that linguistics faculty offer popular lectures in high schools and teacher training colleges. Such events can be used not only to report on recent research results, but, more importantly, to convey a message about the kind of research that is conducted in Linguistics, and the level of rigor it assumes and requires. As another example, we recommend that linguistics faculty be involved in the organization of a linguistics olympiad in Israel, and train a team for participation in the International Linguistics Olympiads (<http://www.ioling.org>). In countries where participation in the Olympiads is a long-standing tradition, high-school pupils are exposed to Linguistics early on, and the discipline is much more visible to the general public.

Chapter 5: Summary of Recommendations and Timetable

Short term [~ within 1 year]:

In each of the programs we reviewed, recent or imminent departures threaten the integrity and creativity of research and teaching curricula. All of these programs have suffered losses in recent years that must be made up if the high level of Israeli linguistics is to be maintained. We urge that replacement positions be authorized in these cases without delay.

We urge the CHE, together with the universities, to very quickly find solutions to the major infrastructural problems discussed in our individual reports on the institutions. If Israeli universities are to continue to have world class work in linguistics going on in their institutions, they simply must take seriously the need for more and better space in which it is to be carried out, and more support (in locally appropriate areas, including staff, equipment, library resources, etc.) for those who constitute the strength of these programs.

Intermediate term [~ within 2-3 years]:

Development of links with other disciplines should be continued and promoted, both for the benefit of linguistics programs and for the valuable contributions linguists can make to these other areas.

We recommend that the programs try to define (or develop) a small set of core undergraduate courses and offer them to majors in Psychology, Cognitive Science, Computer Science, etc. The recently established CHE policy promoting Humanities courses to non-Humanities students (offered under different names in some of the universities we visited) could perhaps be used for this purpose.

Each program has natural areas in which its activities could naturally expand, in the event additional resources are made available to them. Given the potential contribution of linguistics to the economy and society of Israel, as well as to the intellectual richness of academia in the country, we feel that such additional investment, if possible, would be well warranted.

We recommend that the CHE try to establish a single, centralized unit that could negotiate better terms for subscription to on-line databases on behalf of all the

universities, thereby providing equal, and far more extended, access to such resources to all interested researchers.

We urge faculty members to apply more frequently for external funding, using the money to cover graduate student scholarships (as well as other research needs).

We encourage Israeli linguists to work to pursue an I-CORE proposal (or something similar) that would unite the resources available in the country for a large scale research project devoted to the science of language in its various aspects, and we urge the agencies in question to recognize the considerable potential value of such work.

Within the university, we encourage the development and promotion of general interest courses in language that introduce some of the results of linguistic science for the benefit of non-specialist audiences. In the same spirit, we recommend that linguistics faculty offer popular lectures in high -schools and teacher training colleges.

We recommend that because of the importance of English for work in linguistics, programs in linguistics examine the level of competence of their students in that language and explore additional steps that could be taken to improve it, if required.

We recommend that linguistics faculty, either in one of the programs or on the basis of a collaborative effort among several, be involved in the organization of a linguistics olympiad in Israel.

The committee encourages linguists in Israel who are not part of programs we reviewed to develop additional programs, based on local strengths and complementing the existing ones.

Long term [until the next cycle of evaluation]:

Several Hebrew Language departments have excellent linguists who, we believe, could also benefit from stronger ties with the linguistics departments.

We call upon the universities to find a sufficient number of lines to sustain the level of instruction expected from the departments. Adjunct teachers should be employed sparingly to supplement, not replace, the core faculty.

The administration of the PhD by committees having no necessary expertise in the subject matter should be examined. While we are of course well aware that linguists are not uniquely burdened with this system, which seems quite general with regard to the PhD in Israel, we must urge that if there is any way to circumvent it and provide for direct administration of the degree by the academically appropriate department or program, it should be adopted.

In general, the level of support provided by the universities to graduate students is insufficient. This is particularly true for Masters students, where support is almost non-existent.

We hope that some mechanism can be found to remove financial penalties (in the form of additional tuition charges) imposed on students in MA and PhD programs who go beyond the known and accepted boundaries of their subject in an effort to understand its relation to others.

We urge that the limitation on non-academic employment associated with certain PhD fellowships be eliminated or considerably liberalized, to allow students deserving of these fellowships to maintain an adequate standard of living.

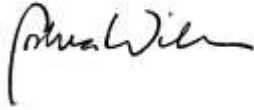
Signed by:



Prof. Stephan Anderson, Chair



Prof. Barbara Partee



Prof. Joshua Wilner



Prof. Elly Van Gelderen



Prof. Shuly Wintner



Prof. Draga Zec



Prof. Ruth Berman