



Committee for the Evaluation of Linguistics Study Programs

The Hebrew University of Jerusalem
Department of Linguistics
Evaluation Report

March 2013

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Chapter 1- Background

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

Following the decision of the CHE, the Minister of Education, who serves ex officio as Chairperson of the CHE, appointed a Committee consisting of:

- Prof. Stephen Anderson- Department of Linguistics , Yale University, USA – Chair
- Prof. Ruth Berman, Department of Linguistics, Tel Aviv University, Israel
- Prof. Elly Van Gelderen- Department of English, Arizona State University, USA
- Prof. Barbara Partee- Department of Linguistics , University of Massachusetts at Amherst, USA
- Prof. Joshua Wilner- Departments of English and Comparative Literature, City College and The Graduate Center - CUNY, USA
- Prof. Shuly Wintner, Department of Computer Science, University of Haifa, Israel
- Prof. Draga Zec- Department of Linguistics, Cornell University, USA

Ms. Alex Buslovich was the Coordinator of the Committee on behalf of the CHE.

Within the framework of its activity, the Committee was requested to:¹

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

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

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

Chapter 2-Committee Procedures

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

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

This report deals with the Department of Linguistics at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem. The Committee's visit to University took place on March 17-18, 2013.

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

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

Chapter 3:

Evaluation of Linguistics Study Program at The Hebrew 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 department has a number of distinguished faculty members and represents a combination of interests that is quite unusual. It attracts an excellent group of outstanding students. It surely makes a valuable contribution to the programs of The Hebrew University and to the faculty of the Humanities. It also forms a natural bridge between activities in the humanities and programs in other faculties.

With respect to its internal organization, it is divided into two rather different communities, who refer to themselves as structuralists and generativists, respectively. Within each group, relations between faculty and students are warm and mutually supportive. Although the two groups have some common activities, there does not seem to be much substantive interaction between them. The combination of the two programs into a single department may not have had in all respects the desired effect of eliminating a previous spirit of competition and conflict between them, and increasing cooperation. All agree, however, that the situation has improved over what obtained in the past.

Each track has its own program, and we address each of those briefly. The generative program is, in our opinion, coherent and able to meet its goals in research and teaching -- especially in interaction with other programs such as cognitive science, computer science, and especially the newly established Language, Logic, and Cognition Center (LLCC).

The program of the structuralists, on the other hand, does not seem to us to be viable in the long term as an independent entity, given the number of available positions. This is not a fact about intellectual substance, or student interest, but rather a matter of how they will be able to maintain a diverse enough range of offerings to provide a coherent program. The emphases and theoretical foci provided by this program provide an important complement to the program of the generative track, but we are not convinced that it can be sustained as a self-sufficient entity.

With respect to ways to develop the Department, we urge as a matter of some importance that the late Yehuda Falk be replaced with someone who can cover the core areas of phonology and morphology. As faculty from the structuralist track retire, we feel that the strength they bring to the program should be preserved: they should be replaced by people who continue the tradition of broad study of languages, covering the fields of historical/comparative linguistics and typology. The scholars chosen should be ones who represent not only a particular philological tradition, but also more general interests within this point of view, as typified by the recent appointment of Eitan Grossman.

With respect to the Department's programs, we feel the goal should be to provide a curriculum that bridges the two sets of interests, rather than separating them. It seems unfortunate, for example, that the combining of the departments has eliminated the possibility of doing a major in the one and a minor in the other. This might be addressed by providing students with a range of choices, including the current ones at either end of a spectrum that also allows for intermediate choices. This would encourage intellectual interchange between traditions, the replacement of competitive duplication by a more engaged dialog, the incorporation of more empirical work with languages into the experience of generative students and more comprehensive grounding in theoretical areas for students focusing on typological and comparative studies.

2. Organizational Structure

- Observation and findings

History and structure of the Department

Linguistics at The Hebrew University is described as part of the recently established (2008) School of Language Sciences within the Faculty of Humanities. The exact nature, role, and even constitution of the School is not entirely clear: It is listed on page 12 of the Self-Evaluation Report as consisting of two departments – Linguistics and Hebrew & Jewish Languages, but we were given the impression that it also incorporated other coursework in language areas if not entire departments, such as Arabic and Romance.

The Linguistics Department of The Hebrew University, the first and for many years the only one so-named in Israel (until the department at Tel Aviv University came into being in 1972), was established in 1953 by the late H.J. Polotsky (renowned for his work on Coptic and earlier Egyptian languages), with the chairmanship subsequently taken over by the late H. B. Rosén (an Indo-Europeanist who also wrote extensively on Modern Hebrew). Research and teaching were derived in the main from European structuralist linguistics, with an emphasis on the detailed description of languages (including many no longer spoken) and based largely on written texts – termed “original documented data” in the self-evaluation report. The original focus on mastery of language areas (Semitic, Egyptian, Celtic, Balto-Slavic, Germanic) has become less and less viable due to lack of suitably specialized faculty.

In 2008, the department “was made to incorporate” (self-evaluation report, page 22) the faculty members and course offerings that had formerly constituted the Language section of the English Department, which remained as a separate English Department in the School of Literatures of the Faculty of Humanities. This re-organization led to the re-structuring of the Department of Linguistics as consisting of two separate entities – the Structural and the Generative tracks. One consequence of this change was that courses formerly taught in English are now given in Hebrew, as the language of instruction common to the entire department. Each track has its own head, and the department as a whole has a common chair rotated between the tracks.

The two-track separation

Apart from an obligatory first year undergraduate course in Introduction to Linguistics provided by faculty from both tracks and the “gateway course” in Language, Thought, and Society provided by a member of the Generative track, the two tracks operate as largely separate entities. For example, the weekly departmental colloquium which would seem to be an obvious meeting-ground for students and faculty from both tracks in fact explicitly alternates between the two tracks in lecture topics and orientations (and to some extent, in participating audience). The tracks are distinct in all of the following respects: student population (students at present do not have the option of taking a dual major or even a major in one and a minor in the other track); research and teaching domains; faculty specializations and appointments; course offerings – with the exceptions noted earlier; location (and quality) of faculty offices; and outreach programs. Thus, faculty and students of the Structural track interact (currently more than in the past) with the department of Hebrew and Jewish Languages and to some extent also with language offerings in other departments such as Arabic and Romance. In contrast, faculty and students of the Generative track are closely involved with and form an integral part of the newly established Language, Logic, and Cognition Center (LLCC), which is intended to function as an interdisciplinary program attracting outstanding graduate students from linguistics as well as from other programs of interest and relevance to people in the Generative track (such as psychology, computer science, brain sciences, and the undergraduate cognitive science program).

Recommendations

Intermediate (~ within 2-3 year)

Work to reduce the present separation between the two tracks, so as to move toward a single department without strong internal boundaries.

3. Mission and Goals

- Observation and findings

The stated goal of a combined mission

The stated goal of the Department is to combine the missions of the two previous programs of the two tracks to offer a unique “combination of theoretical and methodological approaches.” In practice, however, the tracks continue to operate as “autonomous [units] within the department in terms of programs of study, the setting of goals and learning outcomes, evaluation processes, and – in principle – hiring; moreover, they are quite different in terms of academic culture.” There is very little effective coordination or interaction between them beyond the limits of administrative necessity.

The mission and goals of the Structural track

The Structural track focuses on the description of individual languages, based primarily on the study of texts, in their synchronic, diachronic, comparative and typological aspects.

The program of study within this track focuses on the study of a large number of languages, treating broader generalizations about language as emerging in the course of such study rather than as subject matter to be addressed directly in its own right. The members of this component of the Department see such study as “prejudice-free, non-aprioristic, and empirically- based.” While sometimes claimed to be atheoretical, this approach generally falls within what is otherwise known as functional/typological linguistics, a view that is characterized not so much by the lack of theory as by adherence to a theoretical perspective that differs from that represented here by the Generative track.

The mission and goals of the Generative track

The Generative track focuses, in contrast, on formal theoretical linguistics as the primary object of inquiry, with much less attention given to the study of a wide range of diverse languages or to considerations of a non-synchronic nature. The goal here is to understand the nature of human language as a cognitive faculty, based not on the study of texts or even necessarily on a survey of a wide range of languages, but rather on the intensive study of a small number of languages and the deduction from these of a limited set of basic principles governing human language (and the possibility of acquisition of particular languages) in general.

The challenge of merger

The opposition between these two approaches corresponds reasonably well to the broader conflict in the field between “functional” and “formal” approaches to linguistics. Most departments are heavily oriented in one way or the other; the decision to build a department on a dialogue between the two is unusual. This choice is in part the consequence of the historical origins of the Department in the merger of two quite disparate programs. If it could be carried out successfully, it might be very productive for the field, but the outcome of this and the resolution of the basic tension between the two component parts of the Department remains to be seen.

Recommendations

Intermediate (~ within 2-3 year)

Develop more genuinely joint courses between the two tracks within the Department, thereby both eliminating duplication of subject matter and encouraging constructive dialogue. One obvious area for this would be the courses in the history and development of the field.

Incorporate into the Generative track ways to ensure more potential exposure to a diverse range of languages, and into the Structural track a deeper understanding of general theoretical issues, at least as options in students’ programs.

4. Study Programs

- Observation and findings

Programs offered

Like everything else in the SE report, the programs are described separately for the Structural track and the Generative track, and with small (but encouraging) exceptions, the programs are disjoint.

Each track has its own study program leading to the BA and MA, and we begin with summary remarks about each of those. The Generative program is, in our opinion, coherent and able to meet its goals in research and teaching -- especially in interaction with other programs such as cognitive science, computer science, and in particular the newly established LLCC.

The emphases and theoretical foci provided by the program of the Structural track provide an important complement to the program of the Generative track, but we are not convinced that the Structural track can be self-sufficient in the long run. This is not a fact about intellectual substance, or student interest, but rather a matter of how they will be able to maintain a diverse enough range of offerings to provide a coherent program that meets their separate goals.

The programs offered are as follows:

Structural track: a BA major and a BA minor in structural linguistics, and an MA with thesis.

Generative track: a BA major and a BA minor in generative linguistics, and two MA programs, a research track with thesis, and a non-research track with two seminar papers, more elective courses, and no thesis.

Ironically enough, now that the two tracks are part of a single department, it is reportedly no longer possible for a student to follow a major in one of the tracks and a minor in the other. We understand that it would be possible to petition the appropriate authorities in the Faculty of Humanities to open up such a possibility, and we recommend that such an option be instituted as soon as possible. This small concrete change could make it easier for students to cross the divide between the tracks even without any other changes.

We have no data on the full range of majors and minors involving the Linguistics tracks that students actually make use of, but we encountered students combining a major or minor in the Structural track with a minor or major in Hebrew Language or the Humanities Interdisciplinary minor, and we encountered students doing an expanded major in the Generative track and students combining a major or minor in the Generative track with a minor or major in Philosophy or Psychology.

Innovative programs

The new Language, Logic and Cognition Center (LLCC) is a major new center for research and also for education: it offers several courses that serve students in Linguistics and

Cognitive Science, and it has students in an interdisciplinary program which will offer the PhD once this is approved by the CHE.

The LLCC has the potential to greatly strengthen existing interdisciplinary connections and to build new ones. We met MA students in both Linguistics and Cognitive Science who had come to The Hebrew University because they were attracted by the LLCC. This tells us that even though it is very new, the LLCC already has a strong reputation, probably in part because of the high reputation of its leader, Danny Fox, and probably in part because of the support the University is clearly putting into it.

A new introductory course in linguistics is being offered within the LLCC focused on the interests of cognitive scientists. The extent to which this course duplicates existing offerings in the Linguistics Department might warrant discussion.

We do not know very much in detail about the functioning of the LLCC, but our impression is that it is off to a strong and dynamic start.

Visibility

Both by virtue of having a department called “Linguistics” and by virtue of the strong reputations of present and former faculty in both tracks, the visibility of linguistics at The Hebrew University is good. Furthermore, it can be a good thing that the many students who enter the university in Linguistics without really knowing what linguistics is have two different directions they can go in once they get into the Department.

Variety of classes and connections with other programs

The programs in the Generative track, at both BA and MA levels, are built around a coherent core in syntax, semantics (formal and lexical) and pragmatics, which corresponds to the specializations of their faculty. Variety comes from the considerable range of topics that the core faculty can and do teach, plus the use of Adjunct faculty for Computational Linguistics and a postdoctoral fellow in LLCC for experimental syntax and semantics. Also within LLCC there is an introductory linguistics course for cognitive scientists. The program is currently weak in phonology and morphology, subjects taught this year by Noam Faust, an Adjunct Lecturer; phonology is not close to the center of interest or expertise of any of the current faculty in the Generative track, and is an area that needs strengthening.

The programs in the Structural track, at both BA and MA levels, seem to form a less coherent structure, with the content of what is offered depending heavily on what the few faculty in the program can teach, and with many of their courses being given at most once every two or three years. There is one non-shared introductory course in structural linguistics analysis. Central to the BA program as presently structured, and occupying by far the largest part of the program, each student must study four different languages for two years each in courses that emphasize the linguistic structure of those languages, often including issues of dialectology, text linguistics, and history.

Naturally with such a small number of faculty, the range of such language courses they can offer is limited, and somewhat idiosyncratic: for example, they have interesting

comparative courses in the closely related languages Dutch, Frisian, and Afrikaans, taught by a longtime Adjunct lecturer; they recently lost their offerings in Celtic languages by retirement. A non-linguist might imagine that they could simply send their students to language courses in other departments, but for the most part, the language courses in other departments are of a very different kind and do not include the kind of linguistic analysis, emphasis on written texts, and historical perspective required for the programs of the Structural track. A notable gap is the absence of an advanced course in Indo-European, a natural area for their track and one in which they were formerly distinguished, but which disappeared with one of their retirements. Some students in the Structural track wished there were more courses that brought everything together at advanced levels, e.g. text linguistics or discourse analysis. The development of a new typology course by Eitan Grossman and “Structural Grammar” by Eran Cohen were mentioned as good steps in that direction.

Courses in phonetic transcription and in the phonology of Modern Hebrew are offered through the School of Language Sciences, in part on a voluntary basis by retired Professor Asher Laufer, who has directed the Phonetics Laboratory since 1972.

Language of instruction

The language of instruction is Hebrew, with few exceptions. In the LLCC, there is one postdoctoral fellow, Luka Crnić, who teaches only in English. Departmental colloquia are most often held in English, and ability in written and spoken English, as well as written and spoken Hebrew, is required of all BA students.

Recommendations

Short term/immediate (~ within 1 year)

Take whatever steps are needed to make it possible for a BA student in Linguistics to major in one track and minor in the other. This change can be made independently of any others, and should be done as soon as possible.

Long term (until the next cycle of evaluation)

We strongly recommend that within the next five years or less the Department move to a curriculum that bridges the two sets of interests, rather than separating them, especially at the BA level and including an expanded major. This might be addressed by providing students with a range of choices, including the current ones at either end of a spectrum that also allows for intermediate choices.

5. Human Resources / Faculty

- Observation and findings

Present senior faculty and teaching load

The Department of Linguistics has ten senior faculty members, four in the Structural track and six in the Generative track. In 2011, the department was strengthened by two new faculty members: Eitan Grossman, whose position is 1/3 in the School of Language Sciences and 2/3 in Linguistics, and Danny Fox, with a joint appointment in Cognitive

Science and Linguistics. With these additions, the department has four Full Professors (Fox, Doron, Rappaport Hovav, Taube), one Associate Professor (Ziv), two Senior Lecturers (Cohen, Sawicki), and three Lecturers (Boneh, Grossman, Sichel). Since the two tracks within the department currently function as independent entities, it is relevant to list the rank distribution for each track. The Structural track has 1 Full Professor, 2 Senior Lecturers and 1 Lecturer, while the Generative track has 3 Full Professors, 1 Associate Professor, and 2 Lecturers. The department recently lost two faculty. Ariel Shisha-Halevy, member of the Structural track, retired in 2012, but continues to be active in the program. It is a great loss for the department that Yehuda Falk passed away recently.

Full teaching load for senior faculty is 6 - 8 weekly hours per semester.

Adjunct faculty and their status

As the department cannot cover all courses in the program with its current numbers, it relies on adjunct faculty. Among the courses in the Generative track currently taught by adjuncts are computational linguistics, psycholinguistics, phonology and morphology. Some of the courses taught by adjuncts used to be taught by Yehuda Falk. In the Structural track, a number of language courses are also taught by Adjunct faculty and graduate students.

Adjunct faculty can teach 2 - 4 weekly hours per semester, with an upper limit of 8 weekly hours per year.

Faculty specializations and coverage of subfields

The faculty members in the two tracks have very different outlooks on linguistics as a discipline, and employ very different methodologies in their research and teaching. These differences are also reflected in what areas they specialize in. Faculty in the Generative track stay within the range of the core areas of linguistics, with a strong emphasis on syntax and semantics: one specializes in syntax, three in syntax and semantics, one in lexical semantics, and one in pragmatics and discourse analysis. Some further branch into the syntax-discourse interface, or various interfaces with morphology. Faculty in the Structural track all work in descriptive linguistics, with further specializations ranging from historical linguistics and language typology to text-linguistics and language contact. In addition, each faculty member specializes in one or more specific languages or language families, currently Coptic, Semitic, Germanic, Slavic and Baltic.

Priorities in hiring

As mentioned in the Executive Summary, we urge as a matter of some importance that the late Yehuda Falk be replaced with someone who can cover the core areas of phonology and morphology. As faculty from the structuralist track retire, we feel that the strength they bring to the program should be preserved: they should be replaced by people who continue the tradition of broad study of languages, covering the fields of historical/comparative linguistics and typology. The scholars chosen should be ones who represent not only a particular philological tradition, but also more general interests within this point of view, as typified by the recent appointment of Eitan Grossman.

Hiring and promotion procedures

Hiring procedures, as well as promotion procedures, are decided at the level of the University and the Faculty, with a substantial input from the department, and with an increase in the transparency of the process.

The department faculty members in the Generative track have their PhDs from highly visible international linguistics departments and programs. Within the Structural track most faculty (three out of four) have their PhDs from The Hebrew University. We attribute this to the specific nature of this program, and to its ability to develop unique rapport with its own graduates. The inbred nature of the Structural faculty, however, is a factor in our pessimism about its long-term viability.

Interactions among faculty in the two tracks

The faculty in the two tracks work together on maintaining the department as a whole as an administrative unit. Beyond this, however, interaction across the tracks seems to be minimal. The committee has not observed any substantive intellectual exchange. There seems to be insufficient interest in either of the tracks in the research and teaching philosophies of those in the other track.

Nonetheless, there are indications that the overall situation may be changing in the direction of greater cooperation. Introduction to Linguistics, a gateway course offered by the School of Language Sciences, is co-taught by members of the two tracks. There have recently been some joint grant applications. In addition, the two tracks organize a weekly departmental seminar, with guest lectures sponsored alternately by the two tracks.

Support staff

The fact that a single secretary serves not only the Department but also two other units is clearly inadequate, given the responsibilities associated with this position. Faculty members resort to performing several administrative tasks that interfere with their research and teaching activities.

Recommendations

Short term/immediate (~ within 1 year)

Add one new position in phonology/morphology to replace Yehuda Falk's previous contributions to the program in these areas.

Expand the support staff available to the Department.

Intermediate term (~ within 2-3 year)

Retirements of faculty in the Structural track should be replaced along lines discussed above.

6. Students

- Observation and findings

Applications and admissions

The Generative track has observed that the quality of their entering BA students has gone up since they have become part of a department with Linguistics as its name. While there is considerable attrition from the first to the second year, students in both tracks who continue after that appear to be very good, highly motivated, and enthusiastic about the program.

Dropout rates between first and second year

The dropout rate in the Department between first and second year is fairly high, often around 30%, quite variable from year to year, and similar in both tracks. This is attributed in part to the fact that students often do not know what linguistics is when they enroll. It may help that there are the two tracks to choose from, but even so the problem persists. The faculty are making attempts to understand the reasons for attrition and ameliorate it. The Department hosts an open house for prospective students, and they also invite them to visit classes.

Populations of the undergraduate programs

There are about 100 BA students in the department at any time, approximately evenly divided between the two tracks. The interests of the students are quite varied. In the Generative track, we met two students with a single expanded major, a student minoring in Philosophy, and one minoring in Psychology. In the Structural track, we met two students minoring in Hebrew Language and two with the Humanities Interdisciplinary minor. From their varied descriptions of their interests, it was clear that each track had good, motivated, appreciative students in it who valued what that track had to offer. Some had come to linguistics from a love of languages, others from literature, from translating, or from other beginnings. Some hope to go on to an MA and a PhD, others not. At least one hopes to go on to the graduate program of the LLCC. The undergraduate students find the contrast between the two tracks “dialectically healthy”, as one put it, and it was the undergraduate students who persuaded the department to offer a jointly taught course in the history of the discipline, to help them understand the background to the different approaches of the two tracks.

The M.A. students

Most of the MA students in the Department come out of the BA program, and most of them plan to go on to a PhD, here or in the US or Europe. Quite a few of the Generative track MA students are in the LLCC program, where there are also MA students who have Cognitive Science as their departmental affiliation. Some mentioned the LLCC as the main reason they might stay here rather than seek a PhD program abroad.

MA students noted that while it was possible in principle to do the BA in one track and the MA in the other, it rarely if ever happened; but students said that students in one track did sometimes take advantage of courses in the other, in both directions.

We were under the impression that students in both tracks were pleased with the instruction and advising they were getting. One student was happy to have been able to switch to Cognitive Science for the MA because he wanted to be able to take a larger proportion of non-language courses.

The Ph.D. students

Each Ph.D. student has a different history; we met just two, and some of us know others from earlier years, but we are not in a position to make generalizations.

Resources for graduate students

Resources and office space for graduate students associated with LLCC and more generally with the Generative track seem to be considerably better than for those in the Structural track, which has fewer research grants. This disparity affects the overall atmosphere of the Department and students' sense of it as a single unit.

Advising

Advising in both tracks is mostly informal. With the relatively small numbers of students, at least beyond the first year of the BA, informal counseling appears to work well, and students and faculty both appreciate the warm and informal relations that hold among them all.

Alumni

According to the S-E study, out of the 31 students who had just then graduated with a BA degree, 11 were then enrolled as MA students in Linguistics, whereas the remaining 20 were enrolled as MA students in other programs, mostly within the Faculty of Humanities, a few outside.

There is no systematic data on record about where alumni end up. From personal knowledge, and from perusal of CVs at other universities in Israel, we know that quite a few go on to get a Ph.D. here or abroad and some end up with distinguished academic careers. There is a Hebrew University PhD from the Generative track in the Linguistics faculty of BGU, and three from the Structural track in their own Linguistics faculty.

Overall it seems that there is less coming and going across universities for alumni of the Structural track than of those of the Generative track. But both tracks are justifiably proud of their PhDs.

General remarks:

Students in both tracks at all levels are overall very satisfied with their education here, and the faculty are in turn very pleased with their students. Especially among students who progress beyond the first year of the BA, quality seems to be very high and the relation between faculty and students appears to be excellent.

7. Teaching and Learning Outcomes

- Observation and findings

Quality of students

A recurrent theme of our visit was the superior caliber of the students who major or pursue graduate study in Linguistics. One telling piece of evidence in this regard, already mentioned, was the sense of the faculty in the Generative track that they had seen a distinct improvement in the quality of their students since leaving English and joining Linguistics. In our own meetings with students, we were impressed by the degree of sophistication they brought to their studies, already in the early stages, and by their passion and commitment. Although we lack comparative data, and grades can be an unreliable indicator of student achievement, we note that on average students graduate from the BA and MA program with high cumulative GPAs. We lack sufficient information about the career placement of MA and Ph.D. students to draw conclusions in that regard.

Student evaluation of faculty and teaching

The students, for their part, were consistent in their high praise for the faculty (with one exception involving required introductory coursework outside the department and the school, to which we return below). With the exception of the Gateway lecture courses, where there are discussion sections, and three obligatory classes (one in the Structural track and two in the Generative track) with reported registrations of 37, 33, and 28 respectively, students benefit from small class-sizes and close interaction with senior faculty.

TAs and their training

The TAs with whom we met approach their responsibilities with zest and a high level of commitment. Indeed, as often happens with apprentice teachers, the time and energy they invest in their teaching can interfere with their studies. On the other hand, they emphasized the degree to which the opportunity to teach contributed to their understanding of the material they have been studying. TAs receive two day orientations at the beginning of the semester and also meet with the lead lecturers whenever new material is introduced. While they did not evince a need for it, we suspect that more regular meetings between lead lecturers and their TAs would be beneficial. In the case of the “Language, Thought, and Society” Gateway course, which is organized as a sequence of presentations by a range of different faculty members, a significant measure of the responsibility for ensuring the coherence of the course as a whole rests with the TAs, ~~if their account is to be relied on~~. While this is surely not the whole story, the TAs with whom we spoke clearly relished the additional degree of responsibility and independence that came with this situation, with the more experienced TAs serving as guides to those who were new to the course.

The use of adjunct faculty

The Department would like to rely on adjunct faculty for the teaching of some essential coursework less than it does, but all four of the adjunct instructors with whom we met were well-qualified for their responsibilities, and three had a long association with the Department – in two cases, twenty years each (both in the Structural track).

Formal tools for assessment of teaching

There are two formal instruments for the evaluation of teaching, online student surveys, and the observation of junior lecturers and adjunct faculty by senior faculty. Additional observations occur in connection with tenure promotion. According to the S-E report, the observation process and reports are taken seriously; the online surveys are viewed with distrust (though the department as a whole appears to score well on these surveys – again we have no comparative data and don't know how the survey is designed), principally because the response rate is low, especially when compared with a paper and pencil process. This is a known problem with online surveys of this kind; there are ways of addressing it – including returning to a paper and pencil process – but this is a matter that needs to be addressed at either a Faculty-wide or University-wide level.

Means for improvement of teaching

The Rector's office has recently introduced one-day seminars on teaching skills for new faculty. At the University level, workshops are organized for faculty with unsatisfactory teaching evaluations. Within each departmental track, faculty informally consult on teaching and provide feedback and help to each other.

Teaching objectives and the split into two tracks

In the S-E report, each track delineates its teaching objectives (or desired "outcomes") in some detail, particularly in the case of the Structural track, and each gives a thorough account of how its respective course of study contributes to the stated aims. While each has its own validity, we believe, as discussed elsewhere, that students in the Structural track would benefit from more exposure to the curriculum of the Generative track and vice-versa. That this view was, by and large, not shared by students was in fact a source of concern to us.

Concerns about the required University-wide reading and writing courses

As alluded to above, undergraduates registered sharp dissatisfaction with the teaching they received in the reading and writing courses in Hebrew and English required of all students who are not exempt on the basis of their performance on the psychometric exams. By the students' account, the quality of teaching in these classes is highly uneven and the material taught of variable value. We have no details to add, but call this finding to the attention of the administration, since the responsibility for this coursework lies outside the department.

Positive teaching and learning outcomes

This section of the report should properly end, however, where it began. This is a department with exceptional students and a devoted faculty. The challenges which confront the department notwithstanding, and which we believe can be addressed with an expanded and more flexible curriculum which draws on the strengths of both tracks, it is clear that the department's faculty and its students are working together at a high level of intellectual achievement.

8. Research

- Observation and findings

Faculty research

Most of the faculty of both tracks within the Department have established solid research records, involving continuing and substantial publication in reputable scholarly journals, books published by established scholarly presses, and regular participation in significant conferences in their respective fields both within Israel and abroad. They have also organized conferences of their own, attracting participation by international scholars. The committee identified no concerns in the area of broad research productivity that would need to be addressed.

In the future, we could hope that more research activity would unite members of the two tracks. At present, the research collaboration of this sort that exists is primarily at the level of joint sponsorship and administration, rather than actual joint investigation. This is a good start, but we can hope that as the faculty of both tracks evolve, topics can be found at the intersection of their concerns which could serve as a nexus of greater actual cooperation. This would involve more attention on the part of the Generative linguists to a broad range of diverse languages, and more attention on the part of the Structural linguists to the potentially explanatory role of abstract formal principles derived from intensive study of a few. Such work is to some extent at variance with the basic assumptions of the two communities, and so will only emerge on the basis of a serious effort to bridge the gaps between them.

The LLCC

The recently established Language, Logic and Cognition Center provides a virtually unparalleled environment for the development of inter-disciplinary research involving the relation of language to a variety of other fields: neuroscience, computer science, philosophy, traditional cognitive psychology, and other components of cognitive science. Realizing this potential will require active outreach from all sides, as opposed to complacent acceptance by each of their position in a generously funded research environment. Through genuinely joint research and teaching, the potential of the LLCC can be realized, and the initial prospects for such collaborative work are good, but the precedents furnished by other such interdisciplinary centers suggest that this is not a

given, and will require the establishment of genuine cooperation in ways that may not always be obvious from the outset.

Involvement of students in research

Faculty research programs in the Department quite generally engage students in the MA and PhD 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. The LLCC, recently founded to foster interdisciplinary study, states among its intellectual goals engaging graduate students in the Center's numerous scientific activities, and specifically encourages the participation of graduate students in LLCC research projects.

Recommendations

Intermediate term (~ within 2-3 year)

We recommend that LLCC members continue to seek ways to reach out to neighboring fields. Specifically, it would be beneficial for them to collaborate with scholars in the Department of Psychology and the School of Computer Science (in addition to Cognitive Science), with the purpose of establishing both research and teaching activities in psycholinguistics, language acquisition, computational linguistics, natural language processing, etc.

LLCC members should be encouraged to seek external research grants, both to expand their possibilities for research and training, and to justify the faith that the University administration has shown with their generous startup support.

9. Infrastructure

- Observation and findings

Office space

Members of the Department have offices either in the central building of the Mount Scopus campus, or at the LLCC, at the very end of the campus. Specifically, all members of the structuralist track are seated in the main building, whereas all members of the generativist track are seated at the LLCC. Since physical conditions are markedly better at the LLCC, this adds to the frustration of members of the structuralist track. Clearly, this division does not contribute to the unity of the Department and may very well be detrimental to an atmosphere of collaboration and cooperation.

The LLCC is a brand new facility. Office space is ample and adequate; office space for graduate students is impressively generous; and the computer farm and the lab are new, modern, and well-equipped. This is a physical environment that supports research. Offices in the main building, however, are older, and faculty members complain about the heating and cooling systems, which do not provide a comfortable working environment.

Laboratory space

Students have access to a Phonetics Lab in the Hebrew Languages Department. This facility is old and ill-equipped; in the future, modern equipment will have to be purchased and installed if research in phonetics is to be conducted at an appropriate level. The lack of material and IT support for this facility was striking.

The LLCC currently includes computers, but no specialized equipment. LLCC members have access to eye-tracking devices in a lab run by Ran Hassin.

Library

The Department does not have its own library. The central library is large, comfortable, and includes several areas for self-study. The collection is viewed by faculty members as somewhat unsatisfactory, although not prohibitively so. The main complaint of the Department library liaison people is that the library acquisition policy is opaque, and it is never clear what items will or will not be acquired. Better planning and more transparency will remedy this problem.

Computer access

Several computer farms are available for the use of students. Computing equipment at the LLCC is new and abundant. The entire campus is covered by an effective Wifi network, including Eduroam.

Recommendations

Short term/immediate (~ within 1 year)

Define clear and transparent criteria for library acquisitions.

Provide additional computer equipment and software for the phonetics laboratory.

Intermediate term (~ within 2-3 year)

Consider incorporating all members of the Department in the LLCC, including the allocation of dedicated office space for members of the Structural track.

In any case, improve physical conditions in all offices.

10. Self-Evaluation Process

- Observation and findings

The report was prepared by members of both tracks of the Department; indeed, it reflects the division between the two tracks in its organization, as in many sections it reads as two separate reports that were merged together. While the committee appreciates the time and effort that were obviously required for the compilation of the report, it notes that the faculty members found little benefit in the preparation of the report. The following statement, quoting from Chapter 5 of the report, summarizes the attitude of the Department: “the structure of the report is too complex and cumbersome, and the time it consumes could no doubt be used in a more efficient manner.”

Nevertheless, the committee was impressed with the University’s keen interest in solving the complex challenges posed by the recent restructuring of the Faculty of the Humanities. Our summary meetings with the Dean, the Rector and the vice-Rector and with the Chairs were candid and frank. We are confident that the University administration is honestly interested in the well-being of the Department of Linguistics, and that our recommendations will be taken seriously and, budget permitting, implemented.

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]:

Take whatever steps are needed to make it possible for a BA student in Linguistics to major in one track and minor in the other. This change can be made independently of any others, and should be done as soon as possible.

Add one new position in phonology/morphology to replace Yehuda Falk's previous contributions to the program in these areas.

Expand the support staff available to the Department.

Define clear and transparent criteria for library acquisitions.

Provide additional computer equipment and software for the phonetics laboratory.

Intermediate term [~ within 2-3 years]:

Work to reduce the present separation between the two tracks, so as to move toward a single department without strong internal boundaries.

Develop more genuinely joint courses between the two tracks within the Department, thereby both eliminating duplication of subject matter and encouraging constructive dialogue. One obvious area for this would be the courses in the history and development of the field.

Incorporate into the Generative track ways to ensure more potential exposure to a diverse range of languages, and into the Structural track a deeper understanding of general theoretical issues, at least as options in students' programs.

Retirements of faculty in the Structural track should be replaced, the strength they bring to the program should be preserved: they should be replaced by people who continue the tradition of broad study of languages, covering the fields of historical/comparative linguistics and typology. The scholars chosen should be ones who represent not only a particular philological tradition, but also more general interests within this point of view, as typified by the recent appointment of Eitan Grossman.

LLCC members need to continue to seek ways to reach out to neighboring fields. Specifically, it would be beneficial for them to collaborate with scholars in the Department

of Psychology and the School of Computer Science (in addition to Cognitive Science), with the purpose of establishing both research and teaching activities in psycholinguistics, language acquisition, computational linguistics, natural language processing, etc.

LLCC members should be encouraged to seek external research grants, both to expand their possibilities for research and training, and to justify the faith that the University administration has shown with their generous startup support.

Consider incorporating all members of the Department in the LLCC, including the allocation of dedicated office space for members of the Structural track. In any case, improve physical conditions in all offices.

Long term [until the next cycle of evaluation]:

We strongly recommend that within the next five years or less the Department move to a curriculum that bridges the two sets of interests, rather than separating them, especially at the BA level and including an expanded major. This might be addressed by providing students with a range of choices, including the current ones at either end of a spectrum that also allows for intermediate choices.


Signed by:



Prof. Stephan Anderson, Chair



Prof. Barbara Partee



Prof. Joshua Wilner



Prof. Ruth Berman



Prof. Shuly Wintner



Prof. Draga Zec

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.

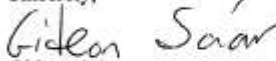
It is with great pleasure that I hereby appoint you to serve as chair of the Council for Higher Education's Committee for the Evaluation of Linguistics. The composition of the Committee will be as follows: Prof. Stephen Anderson, Committee Chair, Prof. Ruth Berman, Prof. Barbara Partee, Prof. Elly Van 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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Appendix 2: Site Visit Schedule

Linguistics-schedule of site visit- Hebrew University

Sunday, March 17, 2013

| Time | Subject | Participants |
|-------------|--|--|
| 10:00-12:00 | Closed Door Committee Meeting | Conference Room, First Floor, Room 411 Next to the Rector's Office |
| 12:00-12:30 | Meeting with the heads of the institution and the senior staff member appointed to deal with quality assessment | Menahem Ben Sasson - President Asher Cohen – Rector |
| 12:30-13:15 | Meeting with the Dean of the Humanities Faculty | Reuven Amitai |
| 13:15-14:00 | Lunch in the same room (Closed Door Committee Meeting) | |
| 14:00-15:00 | Meeting with the chair of the department of Linguistics | Moshe Taube, Edit Doron, Malka Rappaport Hovav |
| 15:00-16:30 | Meeting with senior faculty and representatives of relevant committees (teaching/curriculum committee, admissions committee, appointment committee)* | Danny Fox, Eran Cohen, Yael Ziv, Ivy Sichel, Lea Sawicki, Nora Boneh, Eitan Grossman |
| 16:30-17:15 | Meeting with Junior Faculty* | Rammie Cahlon, Efrat Miller, Luka Crnič, Tsdaf Golan, Ilona Spector, Adi Shamir, Noam Siegelmann, Dana Rubinstein, Galit Agmon, Galit Bary |
| 17:15-18:00 | Closed Door Committee Meeting | |

Monday, March 18, 2013

| Time | Subject | Participants |
|-------------|--|---|
| 09:30-10:00 | Meeting with Adjunct Faculty* | Larissa Naiditch, Mirjam Daniels, Noam Faust, Mori Rimon |
| 10:00-10:45 | Meeting with Bachelors students* *** | Elad Eisen, Shifi Vygoda, Gadi Avraham, Yotam Ben-Moshe, Shai Leifer, Ori Edelman, Bar Avineri Rosemary Yee, Ira Epstein Einat Shamir, Itai Bassi |
| 10:45-11:30 | Meeting with Masters Students* *** | Hagay Schurr, Nikolaus Wildner, Yaniv Gabbay-Mueller, Dana Minkovsky Daniel Margulis, Moshe Elyashiv-Levin, Dikla Abarbanel, Lumin Tao, Henry Brice |
| 11:30-12:00 | Meeting with PhD Students* *** | Gili Diamant, Tanya Benchetrit Anna Friedman |
| 12:00-12:30 | Closed-door working meeting of the committee | |
| 12:30-13:15 | Summation meeting with the Dean and with the heads of the department and the head of the School of Language Sciences | Reuven Amitai Moshe Taube, Malka Rappaport Hovav, Edit Doron |
| 13:15-14:15 | Lunch and Closed-door working meeting of the committee (in the same room as the meetings) | |
| 14:15-15:00 | Tour of facilities (classes, library, offices of faculty members, computer labs etc.) | Noam Faust, Eitan Grossman |
| 15:00-15:45 | Summation meeting with heads of the institution | Asher Cohen – Rector Oron Shagrir – Vice Rector |