Course name: Linguistics of Sign Language
Lecturer: Svetlana Dachkovsky
Prerequisites: none

Course description:

     Linguistics of Sign Language introduces students to sign language linguistics on the basis of Israeli Sign Language. The course has a double focus: 1) it emphasizes the universal properties of language in signed and spoken modalities, and 2) aims to elucidate the interaction of these properties with the physical modality of language transmission and with the nature of the language community. The course is divided into two parts. The first part addresses all the essential aspects of ISL linguistic structure: phonology, morphological means, realizations of tense and aspect, word order rules, the system of classifiers, and prosody. The second part provides a glimpse into the history of Israeli Sign language and of the Deaf community in Israel. It provides evidence for the intricate interaction between linguistic structure and the history of language, illustrating the discussion of diachronic processes in ISL with multiple examples from the most recent research. The goal of the course is to demonstrate the contribution of sign language research to various subfields of general linguistic theory.

Course content

Lesson 1. **Introduction**. Human language in two physical modalities: Similarities and differences between spoken and signed languages. Iconicity and arbitrariness in language.

Reading:
1)Sandler, Wendy. 2003. On the complementarity of signed and spoken languages. In Yonata levy and Jeannette Schaeffer (Eds.), *Language Competence across Populations*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Assoc., 389-409.
2) Sandler, Wendy and Lillo-Martin, Diane. 2006. *Sign Language and Linguistic Universals.* Cambridge University Press. Pp. 1-16.
3) Meir, Irit, Sandler, Wendy, Padden, Carol and Aronoff, Mark. 2013. Competing iconicities in the structure of languages. *Cognitive Linguistics 24*, 309-343.

Part I. Describing the Language: The Linguistic Structure of Israeli Sign Language.

Lesson 2. Phonology in the two language channels: minimal meaningless units. Formational characteristics of signs. Sequentiality and simultaneity in signed and spoken language.

Reading:
1) Brentari, Diane. 2002. Modality differences in sign language phonology and morphophonemics. In Richard P. Meier, Kearsy Cormier and David Quinto-Pozos (Eds.), *Modality and Structure in Signed and Spoken Language.* Cambridge University Press. Pp. 35-65.
2) Sandler, Wendy. 2012. Phonological organization in sign language. *Language*

and Linguistics Compass , 6(3): 162–182.

Lesson 3. The notion of 'word' in signed and spoken languages. Expressiveness of SL lexicon.

Reading:
1) Aronoff, Mark, Irit Meir, and Wendy Sandler. 2005. The paradox of sign language morphology. *Language , 81*(2): 301–344.
2) Johnston, T. and Schembri, I.M. 1999. On defining lexeme in a signed language. *Sign Language & Linguistics 2*, 115-185.

Lesson 4. Derivational processes in spoken and signed languages

Reading:
1) Meir, Irit, Aronoff, Mark, Sandler, Wendy and Padden, Carol. 2010. Sign language and compounding. In: S.Scalise and I. Vogel (Eds.), *Compounding.* John Benjamins. 301-322.
2) Schwager, Waldemar and Zeshan, Ulrike. 2008. Word classes in sign languages: Criteria and classification. *Studies in Language*, 32(3): 509–545.

Lesson 5. Grammar in space: The use of space in spoken and signed languages.

Reading:
1) Engberg-Pedersen, Elisabeth. 1993. *Space in Danish Sign Language: The semantics and morphosyntax of the use of space in a visual language .* Hamburg: Signum.
2) Friedman, Lynn A. Space, time, and person reference in American Sign Language. *Language 51*, 940-961.

Lesson 6. Reference and pronominal system in the two language modalities.

Reading:
1) Engberg-Pedersen, Elisabeth. 2003. From pointing to reference and predication: Pointing signs, eye gaze, and head and body orientation in Danish Sign Language.
2) In Sotaro Kita (Ed.), Pointing: Where Language, Culture, and Cognition Meet. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. Pp. 269-
3) Schlenker, Philippe. 2013. Temporal and modal anaphora in sign language (ASL). *Natural Language & Linguistic Theory 31,* 207–234.

Lesson 7. Verb agreement.

Reading:
1) Meir, Irit. 2002. A cross-modality perspective on verb agreement. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory 20*, 413-450.
2) Sandler, Wendy and Lillo-Martin, Diane. 2006. *Sign Language and Linguistic Universals.* Cambridge University Press. Chapter 3.

Lesson 8. Tense and aspect in spoken and signed languages.

Reading:

1) Brennan, M. 1983. Marking time in British Sign Language. In J. G. Kyle & B. Woll (Eds.), *Language in Sign: International Perspective on Sign Language*. London and Canberra: Croom Helm.

2) Meir, Irit. 1999. A perfect marker in Israeli Sign Language. *Sign Language and Linguistics 2*, 43-62.

Lesson 9. Shapes, location and movement in space. System of classifiers.

Reading:
1) Aronoff, Mark, Meir, Irit, Padden, Carol and Sandler, Wendy. 2003. Classifier constructions and morphology in two sign languages. In K. Emmorey (Ed.), *Perspectives on Classifiers in Sign Languages.* Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 53-84.
2) Supalla, T. 1986. The classifier system in American Sign Language. In Colette G. Craig (Ed.), *Noun Classes and Categorization.* John Benjamins. Pp. 181-215.

Lesson 10. Word order in spoken and signed languages. Topic-comment versus subject-predicate.

Reading:
1) Crasborn, Onno. 2007. How to recognize a sentence when you see one. Sign *Language & Linguistics 10*(2), 103–111.
2) Crasborn, Onno, van der Kooij, Else, Ros, Johan and de Hoop, Helen. 2009. Topic agreement in NGT (Sign Language of the Netherlands). *The Linguistic Review 26*. 355-370.

Lesson 11. Prosody in the two language modalities. The role of facial expressions and head movements.

Reading:

1) Dachkovsky, Svetlana, Healy, Christina and Sandler, Wendy. 2013. Visual intonation in two sign languages. *Phonology 30*, 211-252.
2) Nespor, Marina and Sandler, Wendy. 1999. Prosody in Israeli Sign Language. *Language & Speech 42.* 143-176.

Lesson. 12. Negation and interrogation in sign language.

Reading:
1) Meir, Irit. 2004 Questions and negation in Israeli Sign Language. *Sign Language & Linguistics 7*, 97-124.
2) McKee, Rachel L. 2006 Aspects of interrogatives and negation in New Zealand Sign Language. In U. Zeshan (Ed.), *Interrogative and Negative Constructions in Sign Languages.* 69-91.

Part II. The Language and its Community.

Lesson 13. ISL versus signed Hebrew.

Reading:
Meir, Irit and Sandler, Wendy. 2008. *A Language in Space: The Story of Israeli Sign Language.* Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. Ch. 11.

Lesson 14. The origins of the community: A few friends and a school.

Reading:
1) Meir, Irit, Israel, Assaf, Sandler, Wendy and Aronoff, Mark. 2013. Community structure and language structure. *Linguistic variation 12,* 309-343.
2) Meir, Irit and Sandler, Wendy. 2008. *A Language in Space: The Story of Israeli Sign Language.* Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. Ch. 11.

Lesson 16. Deaf society and culture today.

Reading:
Meir, Irit and Sandler, Wendy. 2008. *A Language in Space: The Story of Israeli Sign Language.* Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. Ch. 11.

Lesson 17. The impact of other sign languages on ISL.

Reading:
1) Lanesman, Sara and Meir, Irit. 2012. The survival of Algerian Jewish Sign Language alongside Israeli Sign Language in Israel. In U.Zeshan and C. de Vos (Eds.), *Sign Linguage in Village Communities: Anthropological and Linguistic Insights.* Sign Language Typology.
Meir, Irit and Sandler, Wendy. 2008. *A Language in Space: The Story of Israeli Sign Language.* Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. Ch. 12.

Lesson 18. Changes in ISL vocabulary.

Reading:
Meir, Irit and Sandler, Wendy. 2008. *A Language in Space: The Story of Israeli Sign Language.* Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. Ch. 13.

Lesson 19. Changes in SL grammar: agreement verbs, relative clauses, etc.

Reading:
1) Meir, Irit. 2003. Grammaticalization and modality: The emergence of a case marked pronoun in ISL. *Journal of Linguistics 39*, 109-140.
2) Meir, Irit, 2012. The evolution of verb classes and verb agreement in signed languages. *Theoretical Linguistics 38,* 145-152.
3) Padden, Carol, Irit Meir, Wendy Sandler, and Mark Aronoff. 2010. Against all expectations: Encoding subjects and objects in a new language. In *Hypothesis A/Hypothesis B: Linguistic explorations in honor of David M. Perlmutter* . Edited by Donna B. Gerdts, John C. Moore, and Maria Polinsky, 383–400. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
4) Sandler, Wendy, Meir, Irit, Dachkovsky, Svetlana, Padden, Carol and Aronoff, Mark. 2011. The emergence of complexity in prosody and syntax. *Lingua 121,* 2014-2033.

Lesson 20. Voices from the community: Personal stories of the Deaf in Israel.

Reading:
Meir, Irit and Sandler, Wendy. 2008. *A Language in Space: The Story of Israeli Sign Language.* Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. Ch. 13.

Course Assessment:

Homework, and quizzes -- 30%
Exam – 70%