

Academic year 2023-24 (תשפ"ד)

Course title (English): Why and How does a language change?

Course title (Hebrew): מדוע ואיך משתנה השפה?

Course number:

Course slot (semester/s, weekday/s, hours): Spring Semester

Lecturer: Dr. Ruti Bardenstein

Lecturer's conference hour and contact details:

Office hour: Available via appointment, Zoom.

Course description & objectives:

If we all speak and understand each other perfectly well, why does a language have to change? And when it does, how does that happen? Do languages change differently or similarly? The course will untangle the reasons for linguistic change as well as the 'universal' mechanisms that are involved in it. It will provide an overview of the most updated discussions regarding the issue (involving languages such as Arabic, French, English, Hebrew etc.) and encourage students to see that even though languages are different 'on the surface', they are motivated and driven by similar factors and mechanisms.

Course requirements:

Attendance is required (80% of the sessions).

The course includes a mid-term assignment and a final test.

Grade composition:

Attendance and participation: 10p.

Mid-Term assignment: 30p.

Final test: 60%.

Topics & bibliography

Topics:

1. Introduction

a. The creation of Negation, some puzzles: French *pas*: How does 'a step' become 'not'? Arabic *ishi/sh*: How does 'a thing' become 'not', Italian *mica*: How does 'a crumb' become 'not'? What about Hebrew?

b. Motivators and mechanisms for meaning change: style, socio-cultural, language contact etc.

c. **Different but Same-Same: English** *at least*, Arabic *ala alakal* على الأقل and Hebrew *lefaxot* לפחות.

2. Politeness and the evolution of apologies. English *excuse me?! Hebrew* *slixa* סליחה?!

3. Speaker's stance: From a question to an Exclamative. English *How-X!/What (a)-X!* and Hebrew *ma pito'm* מה פתאום 'way'!, *ela ma* מה 'אלא' 'what else' and *eize* איזה 'such (a)-X

4. Argumentation: From an exceptive to negation privative: The case of Hebrew *bilti* בלתי

5. Persistence: When meaning changes, what stays on?

6 .Cyclicity of Change: The Jespersen Cycle in different languages.

Bibliography:

Bardenstein, Ruti. 2020b. Persistent argumentative discourse markers. The case of Hebrew rectification-marker *be-šecem* בעצם ('actually') *Journal of Pragmatics*, 172, 254-269.

Bardenstein, Ruti. 2022. Constructionalized Rhetorical Questions: From Negatively Biased to Negation Polarity The case of Hebrew *lo mi yodea ma*, לא מי יודע מה, *Journal of Historical Pragmatics*.

Bardenstein Ruti and Ariel, Mira. 2023. Hebrew *mamash* ממש , truth-based intensifiers, and the missing link, *Studies in Language*.

Ladusaw, William A. 1993. Negation, indefinites, and the Jespersen Cycle. *BLS* 19.437- 46.