

Tel Aviv University  
School of Philosophy, Linguistics and Science Studies,  
Department of Linguistics

## THURSDAY INTERDISCIPLINARY COLLOQUIUM

Thursday 25/01/2024

16:15-17:45

Webb 103

Si Berrebi, Tel Aviv University

### Stress-epenthesis opacity in Judeo-Baghdadi Arabic

In phonology, opaque generalizations are generalizations that are not supported in certain surface forms. Cases of opacity have been central to theory comparison in phonology, as serial theories typically account for opacity through ordering, while parallel, surface-oriented theories like classical Optimality Theory (Prince & Smolensky 1993/2004) predict most opaque patterns to be impossible.

The focus of this talk is stress-epenthesis opacity, where an epenthetic vowel is systematically ignored in the calculation of stress. This interaction has proven particularly difficult to generate within parallel theories (Kiparsky 2000, Elfner 2016). A possible response to this difficulty is to deny that stress-epenthesis opacity exists: if the epenthetic vowel is acoustically distinct from all other vowels in the language, the surface pattern becomes transparent. In fact, this was shown to be the case in Lebanese Arabic (Gouskova and Hall 2009; Hall 2013). To the best of our knowledge, there hasn't been an acoustic study confirming the existence of stress-epenthesis opacity, where the epenthetic vowel has been found to be indistinguishable from the lexical vowel.

I will present a project examining the question of stress-epenthesis opacity through a production study of Judeo-Baghdadi Arabic (JBA), an endangered dialect of Arabic spoken primarily in Israel by Jews who immigrated from Iraq. JBA has lexical and epenthetic [ə]'s. A preliminary acoustic analysis suggests that the quality and duration of [ə] does not depend on its lexical status, making it a candidate for being a true example of stress-epenthesis opacity.

Click [here](#) to see the colloquium program.