

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

THURSDAY INTERDISCIPLINARY COLLOQUIUM

Thursday 05/06/2025

16:15-17:45

Webb 103

Evyatar Cohen, Tel Aviv University

Diachronic Variations Towards a New Native Accent

What does it take to be perceived as a native speaker? An accent is a perceived pattern of speech that indicates a speaker's linguistic background, shaped by phonetic, phonological, and prosodic features. While accents are intuitively identifiable by other native speakers, the acoustic and perceptual components defining a "native-like" accent remain complex and vary across languages and individual listeners. Identifying which features most reliably signal nativeness – and understanding how these features stabilize over time – is crucial to exploring both individual language acquisition and broader dialect formation processes.

Modern Hebrew emerged as a spoken language in the early 20th century, transitioning from a primarily written tradition to an actively spoken vernacular. However, the phonetic characteristics of its earliest native speakers remain sufficiently documented. This study analyzes authentic recordings of speakers born in the Galilee region between 1895 and 1924 to investigate early phonetic variation within emerging native Hebrew accents.

Employing acoustic analysis and perceptual evaluations by contemporary listeners, the study identifies the roles of various phonetic patterns in the perception of native-like pronunciation. Key findings highlight significant variability in rhotic production and vowel space organization. These results enhance our understanding of early Modern Hebrew phonetics and provide a foundation for future research into how initial phonetic variability influenced the stabilization of native Hebrew accents in subsequent generations.

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