**Universal Clines and Cycles of Meaning-Change**

**Ruti Bardenstein**

Ben-Gurion University, Israel

**Abstract**:

This talk will discuss linguistic clines and cycles of meaning change that are pragmatically and cognitively motivated, drawing a distinction between five types of initial motivations for change (why meaning change happens): external recruiting and mobilization to serve speakers' discursive needs, Bridging Contexts, internal 'linguistic conditioning' (similar to Bybee's 'automatization' (Bybee 2002)), processes of linguistic economical changes (shortenings) and lastly- language contact. In addition to the motivations for change, the mechanism of change (how change happens) is outlined. In the case of serving the speaker's needs, I argue, linguistic items change and become “polysemous” via a core function which is initially recruited and mobilized to serve one of the five basic speaker's needs and gradually might turn semantic. In the case of bridging contexts, states of affairs that are expressively realized might gradually be foregrounded by speakers of languages (both speakers and hearers).  In the case of linguistic conditioning, items change and become polysemous via the unification of two conditioned and linguistically realized states of affairs. In the fourth case, 'less form for more meaning' (Hopper and Traugott, 1993/2003) is displayed and lastly- in the case of language contact, meaning change is motivated inter-lingually (when mobilizing a certain form/function from language A into Language B) and then might undergo internal meaning changes just like any other language B item. In all five cases, a cycle may (or may not) begin. I define a linguistic cycle as a linguistic process that involves more than one cline occurring consecutively: either a cline that 'recurs' or one that 'recycles' (after gaining a new meaning) i.e., either as an 'onomasiological cycle' or a 'semasiological cycle', see Hansen 2018, 2020). All in all, cycles of meaning change tend to make the implicit explicit. I will discuss the typology of clines and cycles of change and argue that both their motivations and their mechanisms of change are quite predictable and similar cross-linguistically, and therefore can be referred to as 'universal'.