



# ***Breaking the Sound Barrier***

Professional translation is essential in a place like Israel, where large sectors of the population must overcome language barriers to avail themselves of basic services. For over thirty years, Bar-Ilan's Department of Translation and Interpreting Studies, ranked number five in the world, has played a central role in raising the standards of translation and interpreting (oral translation) for language minorities. This year, it is extending its reach further, by establishing Israel's first academically accredited program focusing on interpreting for the deaf and hearing-impaired.

Students entering the program will choose between professional certification alone or combining this with full-time studies towards a B.A. degree. Besides mastering their ISL skills, students will also learn about deaf culture.



Prof. Miriam Shlesinger

Director of the program. "However, until now there has been no system for evaluating practitioners' abilities. We hope to improve interpreters' professional level, and to empower members of the deaf community to function on an equal footing in society."

"The deaf community needs interpreters well versed in both Hebrew and Israeli Sign Language (ISL)," says Prof. Miriam Shlesinger, who serves as Academic



Yael Kakon

opportunity. "Israel is moving toward greater accessibility in all areas," says Kakon, herself a native signer, raised by deaf parents. "By creating this program Bar-Ilan is making sure that interpreting is not just about helping out at the courthouse; it is about ensuring that deaf and hearing-impaired people can take their rightful place in society."

Yael Kakon, a pioneer in the training of Israeli Sign Language interpreters who heads the program's teaching staff, agrees that translation holds the key to social