

2012-2013 Annual Program Assessment Report

Please submit report to your department chair or program coordinator, the Associate Dean of your College and the assessment office by Monday, September 30, 2013. You may submit a separate report for each program which conducted assessment activities.

College: Humanities

Department: Linguistics/TESL

Program: BA in Linguistics

Assessment liaison: Tineke Scholten

1. Overview of Annual Assessment Project(s). Provide a brief overview of this year's assessment plan and process.

In accordance with the 5-year plan for assessment, the Linguistics Department initially planned to assess in 2012-13 the extent to which BA students in the major were able to “describe key concepts from such fields as pragmatics, and discourse analysis and relate them to language data (BA SLO3” and “verbalize how sociocultural diversity manifests itself in language using methods and concepts from the field of sociolinguistics.” (BA SLO4). A plan for data collection was developed during the first Linguistics Advisory Committee in the Fall of 2012. Data were to be collected through embedded assignments from two 400 level courses offered during the 2012-13 academic year that addressed these SLOs. Difficulty in developing a suitable embedded assignment in one of the courses led to an adjustment of the assessment plan for the year as follows:

An ongoing question among the linguistics faculty has been whether our students are able to analyze and apply linguistic concepts to actual language data. This student outcome is part of the skills set expressed in BA SLO 1: “Express what linguists mean by ‘knowing a human language’ by demonstrating knowledge of such core fields as phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics.” In order to investigate our students’ ability to work with language data, suitable embedded assignments from two courses (LING 408, Semantics and Pragmatics and LING 402 Phonetics and Phonology) were selected and the performance of all BA students in the respective classes on these assignments was measured. More specifically, the following skills were targeted: 1. For concepts from the fields of Phonetics and Phonology, students were prompted to describe differences in phonemic inventories, rules of allophonic variation and syllable structure between two languages and to hypothesize how these differences manifested themselves in a non-native speaker’s reading of a text; 2. For concepts from the fields of Semantics and Pragmatics, students had to illustrate and/or identify specific politeness strategies, presuppositions and implicatures.

2. **Assessment Buy-In.** Describe how your chair and faculty were involved in assessment related activities. Did department meetings include discussion of student learning assessment in a manner that included the department faculty as a whole?

Assessment is a regular item on the agenda of the Linguistics Advisory Committee meeting. The Assessment Liaison generally initiates the discussion related to that part of assessment that involves the annual data collection and evaluation and all members of the committee weigh in on how to execute the data collection and analysis for any given year. All faculty, including the Chair and part time faculty, participate willingly in the execution of the annual assessment process. Assessment (whether driven by the annual data collection or based on anecdotal data from the teaching experiences of faculty) is a vital part of almost every Linguistics Advisory Committee meeting and has led to numerous curricular and other changes over the past years.

3. **Student Learning Outcome Assessment Project.** Answer items a-f for each SLO assessed this year. If you assessed an additional SLO, copy and paste items a-f below, BEFORE you answer them here, to provide additional reporting space.

3a. Which Student Learning Outcome was measured this year?

As mentioned above, the Department measured BA SLO 1: Express what linguists mean by “knowing a human language” by demonstrating knowledge of such core fields as phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics. Student performance was purposely measured with the help of tasks involving data analysis.

3b. Does this learning outcome align with one or more of the university’s Big 5 Competencies?

Reaching this SLO requires the student to have competencies in the following areas:

- Critical Thinking
- Oral Communication
- Written Communication
- Information Literacy

3c. Does this learning outcome align with University’s commitment to supporting diversity through the cultivation and exchange of a wide variety of ideas and points of view? In what ways did the assessed SLO incorporate diverse perspectives related to race, ethnic/cultural identity/cultural orientations, religion, sexual orientation, gender/gender identity, disability, socio-economic status, veteran status, national origin, age, language, and employment rank?

The Linguistics/TESL Department faculty requires that its students closely examine commonly held beliefs about language use and language acquisition that directly affect societal opinions about the merits of groups of language users. Knowledge of core concepts of Linguistics (SLO 1) allows students to recognize that many previously held opinions about language use and by extension about the language user are based on misconceptions. For instance, the particular skills-set targeted by this year's data collection prompts students to consider how speakers express their cultural, ethnic, racial and other identities through discourse conventions and accents. It also requires that students understand how a person's first language affects their ability to pronounce words natively in a subsequent language.

3d. What direct and/or indirect instrument(s) were used to measure this SLO?

Three embedded questions from a final exam were used for the data collection in LING 408 (Semantics and Pragmatics) and an 'Accent Study' that took the form of a brief term paper was used for data collection in LING 402 (Phonetics and Phonology). Rubrics were used to quantify student responses.

3e. Describe the assessment design methodology: For example, was this SLO assessed longitudinally (same students at different points) or was a cross-sectional comparison used (Comparing freshmen with seniors)? If so, describe the assessment points used.

The performance of all BA students in the two classes was assessed toward the end of each course. Considering the fact that students are exposed to new information in these courses, a pre-post comparison of performance was not meaningful. Moreover, the nature of the BA in Linguistics (size, lack of cohorts) does not currently lend itself to longitudinal or cross-sectional comparison of any of its program SLOs. As mentioned, all BA students in the two courses were included in the study. (24 students in all in each class)

3f. Assessment Results & Analysis of this SLO: Provide a summary of how the results were analyzed and highlight findings from the collected evidence.

The tables below summarize student performance for the tasks in question:

LING 402	Average (5 point scale)	Average (%)
Student provides an insightful discussion of transfer errors relating to phonemic inventory differences between English and the speaker's native language with accurate use of terminology introduced in the course.	4.43	88.7
Student provides an insightful discussion of transfer errors resulting from the application or omission of specific rules of allophonic variation with accurate use of terminology introduced in the course.	4.04	80.87
Student provides an insightful discussion of transfer errors resulting from syllable structure differences between English and the speaker's native language with accurate use of terminology introduced in the course.	4.35	86.96
Average of all responses:	12.83 (15 point scale)	85.81

LING 408	Average. (5 point scale)	Average (%)
Student can illustrate Brown's Politeness Strategies with relevant data	4.09	81.74
Student can identify entailments in provided data	3.03	78.70
Student can identify presupposition and implicatures in provided data	3.80	76.09
Average of all responses	11.83 (15 point scale)	78.84

Overall, these results were encouraging. Students in LING 402 surpassed the bench mark set in the 5 year plan of 80% accuracy (when converting rubric rating to percentage scale). Students in LING 408, as noted, scored only slightly below the bench mark of 80% accuracy. It should be noted that a comparison of the results in the two courses is only of limited value, since the embedded questions in each class were tailored to the course subject and were therefore not necessarily of equal difficulty.

An indirect measure that was added to the assessment process this year involved an exit survey targeting graduating BA Majors. In the survey, the students were asked to self-assess whether they had met each of the SLOs in the program. The response rate was somewhat limited (5 students), but there was nevertheless a noticeable trend in that students appeared to feel less confident that they had met

the SLO that pertained to LING 408 (Semantics and Pragmatics). Three responders affirmed that they had 'clearly' met this goal, while 2 did not. This was the case for only one other SLO (SLO2). For other SLOs 80-100% of this (limited) sample of students affirmed that they had clearly met the SLO.

In discussing the results pertaining to LING 408, faculty had several suggestions that could explain why the result from the direct measures were slightly below the benchmark and why the indirect measure indicated that students might feel less secure of their grasp of this subject matter. It was mentioned that concepts from the field of Theoretical Semantics, due to their highly abstract nature, present inherent challenges to our undergraduates. Moreover, while introductory concepts pertaining to phonetics and phonology (such as 'allophone' and 'syllable structure', which are both part of the embedded question in LING 402) are discussed in the introduction to linguistics that students receive, this is not the case for the corresponding semantic concepts (presupposition and entailment). It was also noted that LING 408 has been over-enrolled by up to 8 students over the past semesters, providing students with limited one-on-one support from their instructor.

3g. Use of Assessment Results of this SLO: Describe how assessment results were used to improve student learning. Were assessment results from previous years or from this year used to make program changes in this reporting year? (Possible changes include: changes to course content/topics covered, changes to course sequence, additions/deletions of courses in program, changes in pedagogy, changes to student advisement, changes to student support services, revisions to program SLOs, new or revised assessment instruments, other academic programmatic changes, and changes to the assessment plan.)

The faculty determined that these results do not warrant any major curricular or other changes at this time. More data are needed to verify that any relative weakness in students' ability to apply semantic concepts to language data indeed exists and requires intervention. Future exit surveys as well as direct data collection should be helpful and the department plans to compare future data to this year's assessment results. A smaller class size would allow students to receive more intensive support from the instructor and might be very helpful. However, budgetary constraints prevent such a measure.

4. Assessment of Previous Changes: Present documentation that demonstrates how the previous changes in the program resulted in improved student learning.

The Linguistics Department has made a number of modifications and additions to its course offering and structure over the past academic year that were prompted by ongoing assessment focused discussion, the effects of which won't be measurable until a few years down the line:

1. To raise overall entry level for 400-level courses and increase focus on data analysis in the curriculum, LING 300 Approaches to Linguistic Analysis was first offered in Fall of 2012.

2. To fill a previously identified gap in the undergraduate curriculum relative to SLO1, a new course LING 403 Morphology was proposed in the Fall of 2012 and has since been approved. It is being offered for the first time in the Fall of 2013.
3. To expand the overall depth and breadth of linguistic knowledge among graduating BA majors, a curriculum modification was approved in the Fall of 2012 to take effect in the Fall of 2013 (see also below)
4. Previous discussion has also highlighted the desirability to have BA majors take classes in a preferred order. The Chair and Graduate Advisor have worked closely with the School of Humanities' Undergraduate Advisor to promote this through advising. These efforts seem to pay off in that almost all BA students taking LING 300 in the Fall of 2012 were taking the course as their first linguistics course.

The department looks forward to a more systematic appraisal of student performance once these curricular and other programmatic changes have taken effect.

5. Changes to SLOs? Please attach an updated course alignment matrix if any changes were made. (Refer to the Curriculum Alignment Matrix Template, http://www.csun.edu/assessment/forms_guides.html.)

An updated Curriculum Alignment that reflects the revised BA curriculum has been attached as part of the Program Assessment Plan 2013-18. It includes the newly added core and elective courses of the current curriculum.

6. Assessment Plan: Evaluate the effectiveness of your 5 year assessment plan. How well did it inform and guide your assessment work this academic year? What process is used to develop/update the 5 year assessment plan? Please attach an updated 5 year assessment plan for 2013-2018. (Refer to Five Year Planning Template, plan B or C, http://www.csun.edu/assessment/forms_guides.html.)

The 5-year assessment plan has provided a useful template to ensure that the department assesses all its SLOs within a 5 year period. However, ad hoc changes in the plan should be expected and are not necessarily a negative. Each SLO encompasses a number of sub skills and the Department may find it relevant to change the order of SLO assessment or assess a particular aspect of an SLO when warranted. This year's modification of the planned assessment process led to useful information about the ability of our students to connect linguistics concepts and language data. Future modifications should be expected as the faculty develops concerns or questions about strengths and weaknesses of the program offering.

7. Has someone in your program completed, submitted or published a manuscript which uses or describes assessment activities in your program? Please provide citation or discuss.

No

8. Other information, assessment or reflective activities or processes not captured above.

Over the past years, the Linguistics Department had also modified its MA, now offering two MAs: an MA-TESL and an MA in Linguistics. This past year, the Department has completed the structure for assessing these programs in future years. A 5-year assessment plan for the MA-TESL and MA in Linguistics are also attached to this report.