Annual Assessment Report to the College 2010-11

College: Humanities

Department:

Program: Linguistics

Note: Please submit your report to (1) the director of academic assessment, (2) your department chair or program coordinator and (3) the Associate Dean of your College by September 30, 2011. You may submit a separate report for each program which conducted assessment activities.

Liaison: Tineke Scholten

1. Overview of Annual Assessment Project(s)

1a. Assessment Process Overview: Provide a brief overview of the intended plan to assess the program this year. Is assessment under the oversight of one person or a committee?

Following the 5-year plan for assessment of the BA program, the Linguistics Committee decided in the fall of 2010 to assess the extent to which students majoring in linguistics reached the goal formulated in SLO 1 (see below). Data collection took place in LING 402 (Phonetics and Phonology), LING 404 (Syntax) and LING 408 (Semantics and Pragmatics). All BA Linguistics majors would be asked to answer essentially the same question, slightly adapted for each class’ course content:

- How would you – with the knowledge about phonetics phonology (for 402)/syntax, morphology (for 404)/semantics, pragmatics (for 408) and linguistic theory that you have been developing – explain to a non-linguist what it is we maintain that humans know about the phonological structure (402)/morpho-syntactic structure (404)/meaning (408) of the language(s) that they have internalized? Using examples, select some illustrative concepts we have discussed and connect these to our view of the mental capacity of knowing a language.

The instructor of each class was to provide some form of credit for the assignment to ensure that students would seriously attempt to answer the question. A subcommittee of three faculty members (including the liaison) would subsequently rate the results on the basis of a rubric and the assessment liaison would process the results and present them to the Linguistics Committee in September of 2011 for discussion.

1b. Implementation and Modifications: Did the actual assessment process deviate from what was intended? If so, please describe any

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modification to your assessment process and why it occurred.

Logistical and time constraints made it impractical for an independent committee to rate the data. The assessment liaison therefore rated the data.

2. **Student Learning Outcome Assessment Project:**

2a. **Which Student Learning Outcome was assessed this year?**

Students graduating from the program will be able to “express what linguists mean by “knowing a human language” by demonstrating knowledge of such core fields as phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics.” *(SLO1)*

2b. **What assessment instrument(s) were used to gather evidence about this SLO?**

A three-part rubric was designed and used to evaluate all the data.

2c. **Describe the participants sampled to assess this SLO:** discuss sample/participant and population size for this SLO. For example, what type of students, which courses, how decisions were made to include certain participants.

All undergraduate Linguistics Majors in LING 402, 404 and 408 were included in the sample. These are required classes for Linguistics Majors and students are expected to meet SLO1 by taking all three of these classes. Sample size was 57.

2d. **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 current structure of the program does not allow for a longitudinal or cross-sectional comparison. Students do not take their LING courses in a set order and all currently required LING courses are upper division.

2e. **Assessment Results & Analysis of this SLO:** Provide a summary of how the evidence was analyzed and highlight important findings from the collected evidence.

The following rubric was used to evaluate the data:

1. The student’s response clearly and insightfully connects the discussed course concepts to a convincing characterization of the mental capacity of knowing a language. (3 points excellent, 2 points adequate, 1 point, marginal, 0 points: no attempted connection)

2. The student’s response reveals an excellent understanding of the perspective that language reflects a mental capacity (as opposed to a strictly cultural phenomenon). (3 points excellent, 2 points adequate, 1 point, marginal, 0 point: no mention of mental capacity)

3. The student’s description of course content provides clear evidence of excellent understanding of the course concepts that the student selected (3 points: detailed examples/accurately represented; 2 points: adequate examples/fairly clearly and accurately represented; 1 point: superficial examples/poorly represented or misrepresented, 0 points; no examples)

Results were averaged for each class separately to allow a comparison by subject matter taught. Students responded on average “adequately”

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to the question posed with some minor variation between the three classes.

2f. Use of Assessment Results of this SLO: Think about all the different ways the resulting evidence was or will be used to improve academic quality. For example, to recommend changes to course content/topics covered, course sequence, addition/deletion of courses in program, student support services, revisions to program SLO’s, assessment instruments, academic programmatic changes, assessment plan changes, etc. Please provide a clear and detailed description of how the assessment results were or will be used.

The Linguistic Committee discussed the results during their September 2011 meeting and reflected on how well the relationship between linguistic theory and cognition is made explicit in each of the courses. A broader issue that arose was, how to make sure that students in the major would graduate with an integrated understanding of linguistics rather than a patchwork view of the various subfields. The program intends to address this broader issue as part of a planned revision of the current undergraduate curriculum. (See below).

The committee also discussed ways to improve data collection in the future. Giving students the rubric for evaluation along with the embedded question was considered as a possible method to make sure that the students understood more clearly what was expected from them.

3. How do this year’s assessment activities connect with your program’s strategic plan and/or 5-yr assessment plan?

The program aims to assess each of its SLOs over a period of 5 years. In doing so, it hopes to prompt an evaluation of the efficacy of various components of the curriculum at reasonable intervals.

4. Overall, if this year’s program assessment evidence indicates that new resources are needed in order to improve and support student learning, please discuss here.

The program is currently unable to require students to take its linguistics classes in the most desirable order. Funding constraints prohibit us from offering courses frequently enough to do so. This also affects our ability to assess students’ incremental progress towards meeting the program SLOs.

Another issue is the extent to which the current curriculum provides students with sufficient opportunity to learn about key concepts in the field of Linguistics. The Program Committee has decided to revisit its current curriculum, also in light of the new course offerings that the program now provides. A subcommittee has been formed and is scheduled to propose a revised curriculum during the 2011-2012 academic year.

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5. Other information, assessment or reflective activities not captured above.

The program continues to look for ways to improve its BA program and address previously identified challenges. In doing so, the following issues have been addressed in 2010-2011:

1. New course development: After developing three new courses in 2009-2010 (LING 200, LING 310 and LING 250), the program committee has continued its efforts to update and expand the curriculum. Three additional courses (LING 300, LING 325 and LING 447) were developed during this academic year, two of which have received EPC approval. Approval of LING 300 is in progress.

2. The program has hired its first full-time Linguistics tenure-track faculty. The addition of Dr. Anna Joaquin to our program helps fill a long recognized need for an additional faculty member with expertise in TESL.

3. The Linguistics Committee has also long recognized the need for a clearly visible presence on campus and for opportunities for students and faculty members to share ideas outside the formal setting of classroom or meeting room. There has been significant progress in that respect over the past year:
   a. While still lacking a central office location exclusively dedicated to linguistics faculty (the Linguistics/TESL Program shares space with part time faculty from the College of Humanities), the program now has a bulletin board.
   b. Opportunities for students and faculty to share ideas have increased: The Student Linguistics Club has been extremely active and has, among other things, organized a very well attended Linguistics Speaker Series in the Spring of 2011. In addition, the program has organized two well-attended potlucks with invited speakers.
   c. The availability of GE LING classes has further increased the visibility of Linguistics on campus.

6. 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

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