

**Annual Assessment Report  
Undergraduate Program in Linguistics**

**Department or Program:** Linguistics

**Academic Year of Report:** 2017-2018

**Department Contact Person for Assessment:** Melissa Baese-Berk

**Section 1: Learning Objectives Assessed for this Report**

Our current major lists 5 learning objectives. We assessed the two below for this report:

1. Discover the phoneme inventory and basic phonotactic structure in a sufficiently large set of phonetically transcribed words
2. Analyze the morphological and syntactic constructions in a sample of glossed linguistic data

**Section 2: Assessment Activities**

For the two objectives above, we chose to use our two required courses that complete our phonology (LING450) and syntax (LING451) sequences for students. For both classes, we asked:

- How many students demonstrate satisfactory performance on specific question(s) that ask them to compare multiple theoretical approaches to analyzing a particular issue in a set of data?
- How many students demonstrate the ability to analyze unfamiliar data and accurately identify meaningful patterns in that data? Are they able to subsequently articulate their findings in an audience appropriate way?

We collected this data via grade distributions on the final exam, which answered the first question above, and on the final course grades, which answered the second question. In LING450 (Phonology) 70% of students achieved a B- or higher on the final, and 95% earned a B- or higher in the course. In LING451 (Functional Syntax I), 75% of students earned a B- or higher on the final and 80% of students earned a B- or higher in the course.

Additionally, the instructor for LING451, further separated out the scores on the final exam into two components. The first was analyzing a complex set of data and the second was an interpretive essay aiming to encourage students to synthesize data. Our students demonstrated very good performance on the analysis of complex data (95% earning an 80% or higher on this portion of the exam); however they struggled more on the interpretative essay (only 50% earning 80% or higher).

**Section 3: Actions Taken Based on Assessment Analysis**

Taken together, we believe our students are gaining strong analytical skills, though we would like to address these issues in other ways (i.e., student reports, etc.). In terms of synthesis of information, this is an area we would like to improve. Dr. Spike Gildea is teaching both LING450 and LING451 next term, and is planning to incorporate a variety of activities to help students engage in more theoretical thinking. We hope to reassess this plan in the next year.

**Section 4: Other Efforts to Improve the Student Educational Experience**

Our department is undergoing several rapid changes, including the addition of two new faculty this year and a new hire planned for next year. As such, our department identity is shifting. Therefore, we have formed undergraduate and graduate curriculum committees designed to reimagine our curriculum. We have two primary goals for this reimagining. The first is to provide students with interesting and engaging general education courses. As such, we are planning to propose a handful of new courses, and will revise other courses to meet the needs of our changing student body. The second is to provide students in the major with more

rigor and more options for completing their major requirements. We hope to complete our proposal for the revised curriculum during this academic year.

**Section 5: Plans for Next Year**

Our plans for next year are to continue to assess performance in LING450 and LING451 to get an idea of where our students end up near the end of their college careers. We hope to improve their performance on critical thinking skills and incorporate a broader range of metrics. In addition, we hope to begin to analyze performance in our introductory courses (LING301 and LING302) in an attempt to investigate how well these courses prepare students for the subsequent courses in our major. We are hoping to work with instructors of these courses to plan a basic assessment next year, and a more complex assessment the following year.

We also hope that next year we will propose revisions to our general education curriculum and to our major/minor. As such, we will revise our learning outcomes, and will shift our assessment plan to more directly examine these new objectives. There are no budgetary implications of our proposed actions.