

Program Assessment Activities for
 Undergraduate BA in English with Concentration in Linguistics
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In 2003, the Undergraduate Concentration in Linguistics submitted the following program objective: “Students will be able to collect original linguistic data, do linguistic analysis, and write up their findings in a formal presentation.” At the time, we were concerned with the level of writing that we were getting from the Linguistics concentration students and began to assess what changes we could make in the program to improve that level. We integrated writing formally into two of our courses, both of which are required courses. English 420: Introduction to Linguistics, and English 425: Language in Context. The table below is copied from the 2003 assessment report.

List all major learning objectives for this degree/ concentration	Academic year that objective was assessed or will be assessed	Methods/strategies used to assess this learning objective	Summary of findings about student outcomes	Use of findings to enhance program quality
1. Students will be able to collect original linguistic data, do linguistic analysis, and write up their findings in a formal presentation.	1. 2003-2004	1. Faculty will examine syllabi, reading lists, and student project assignments from courses in program that address this issue, including methods of instruction and how students demonstrate the relevant competence in each course. Faculty will examine representative samples of student projects from both classes and evaluate them for quality of data collection, quality of linguistic analysis and quality of presentation.	1. ENG 420 and ENG 425 assigned projects in which students needed to collect original data, do linguistic analysis, and present their findings in a written paper. Both courses included step-by-step instruction in methods of data collection and analysis of data. Evaluation of students’ projects from ENG 420 and 425 revealed that students were doing fine work in data collection and analysis, but needed more instruction in how to formally present their work.	1. ENG 420 and ENG 425 have been redesigned to include specific instruction in the steps needed to formalize linguistic analyses and present them in a scholarly paper. Students now do project proposals before they commence data collection, which helps them focus their work. Student projects will be reexamined in 2004 to determine whether changes in instruction have been efficacious.

Now, 10 years later, we have reassessed the writing component and have determined that, while much improved as a result of the changes we implemented, the level of writing is still not where we want it to be. In looking carefully at writing samples from English 420 and English 425, we have determined three areas where writing could still be improved — 1) incorporation of outside research into research papers to support original linguistic analyses, and 2) development and support of a linguistic *argument* rather than just a linguistic *explanation* of data, and 3) development of an appropriate ‘voice’ and field appropriate structure for a linguistics research paper.

As a Program Learning Objective, **we want all students in the program to have written at least on well-structured, well-supported, and well-argued linguistics research paper before graduating.** English 425 has been determined the appropriate course to focus on that objective.

Details on each component of the stated Program Learning Objective:

PLO 1: Incorporation of outside research into a final paper to support original linguistic analyses.

Incorporating outside research into a paper to support an analysis is probably one of the most difficult things for both undergraduate and graduate students to do. As we see the overall level of linguistic analysis improving, the overall lack of skill in being able to support the analysis with relevant research in the field stands out. Students are required to consult outside resources for their research, but are not specifically guided on how to approach that research with respect to their analyses. In order to address this gap in the curriculum, 1) more resources specific to literature review and literature incorporation will be added to the research project resources already available to students, 2) class time will be set aside to discuss how to approach a literature review and how to incorporate literature into a data-driven research paper, 3) models and examples will be provided for students to consider, 4) discussion of class readings will include a discussion of how outside literature was used to promote an argument or analysis. Finally, the rubric for grading and assessing will be changed to reflect the new expectations. **Assessment:** We will study the final research papers with this PLO in mind and assess whether or not the changes we have made to curriculum have been effective. (2013-2014)

PLO 2: Development and support of a linguistic argument rather than just a linguistic explanation of data.

As a program, we have been quite successful at training students to recognize patterns in language data and in coming up with analyses of these patterns. Taking it one step further, we would now like to focus on training students to recognize the difference between providing an explanation and providing an argument. This ties in with PLO 1. Again, similar adjustments to the curriculum will assist in achieving the desired results. Resources, models, and directed in-class discussion will be the main sources of training. Finally, the rubric for grading and assessing will be changed to reflect the new expectations. **Assessment:** We will study the final research papers with this PLO in mind and assess whether or not the changes we have made to curriculum have been effective. (2013-2014)

PLO 3: Development of an appropriate ‘voice’ and field appropriate structure for a linguistics research paper.

This has been a focus of the program for quite a while, but we are still not satisfied with the overall results. New resources will be made available to students that focus specifically on the structure and voice of linguistics research papers. Students are currently provided detailed guidelines for structuring their papers, but not many resources on what the various sections should look like. We hope that by providing more detailed descriptions for the purpose/structure of the subsections required in a linguistics research paper, students will be able to apply this information to their own papers. Finally, the rubric for grading and assessing will be changed to reflect the new expectations. **Assessment:** We will study the final research papers with this PLO in mind and assess whether or not the changes we have made to curriculum have been effective. (2013-2014)

Summary of 2013 Assessment of the Undergraduate Major in English with Concentration in Linguistics Program:

Program Learning Objective: All students in the Linguistics concentration program will write at least one data-driven, research-supported, logically-argued, and structurally-appropriate linguistics paper before graduating. (To be assessed in English 425 I, D)

Student Learning Outcome: All students in the Linguistics concentration program will be able to write a data-driven, research-supported, and structurally-appropriate linguistics paper before graduating. (To be assessed in English 425 I, D) Broken down, this means:

- 1. Students will be able to incorporate outside research into their data-driven research papers to support a linguistics analysis.**
- 2. Students will be able to develop a sound linguistic argument to support linguistic analysis of data.**
- 3. Students will be able to write a well-structured research paper using appropriate style/voice for the field of linguistics.**