



To: Department of Linguistics Faculty
From: Scott Jarvis, Professor and Chair
Cc: Office of Undergraduate Studies
Re: Learning Outcomes Assessment 5-Year Report
Date: 6 May 2021

Each undergraduate program at the University of Utah is required to submit 3-year and 5-year Learning Outcomes Assessment reports that are calibrated with the respective department's 7-year Graduate Council Review cycle. The Department of Linguistics is currently approaching the end of our fifth year within the current cycle. The information on the following pages constitutes our 5-year report, which has just been submitted to the Office of Undergraduate Studies.

To provide more context, the report on the following pages represents the results of our department's Learning Outcomes assessment process for the academic years 2019-2020 and 2020-2021. The present program-level Learning Outcomes and Learning Outcomes Assessment Plan for our undergraduate program were developed by Aaron Kaplan (then Director of Undergraduate Studies) in Fall Semester 2019 with input from the Department Chair (Scott Jarvis) and the Executive Committee (then MaryAnn Christison, Aniko Csirmaz, Ben Slade, and Aaron Kaplan). The plan was presented and discussed by the full faculty at the September, October, and November faculty meetings in 2019 and was approved by the faculty in November 2019. As described on the following page, the Learning Outcomes Assessment Plan was implemented through the collection of student-performance artifacts in Fall Semester 2019 and Fall Semester 2020. These artifacts were rated in Spring Semester 2021 by an ad-hoc committee consisting of four tenure-line faculty members: Shannon Barrios (as committee chair and Director of Undergraduate Studies), Aniello De Santo, Rachel Hayes-Harb, and Johanna Watzinger-Tharp. The ad-hoc committee also evaluated the entire Learning Outcomes process and has provided recommended improvements to both the Learning Outcomes Assessment Plan as well as to the wording of the Learning Outcomes themselves.

I wish to recognize the important work rendered by everyone involved in this process while offering special thanks to Shannon Barrios and the ad-hoc committee for the substantial work they have done in evaluating the existing plan and developing a set of proposals for improving the plan. The report on the following pages was produced entirely by Shannon and the rest of the ad-hoc committee.

Present Learning Outcomes

The Department of Linguistics has four learning outcomes which were approved by the faculty on 11/14/2019:

1. **Community** - Communicate original analyses of linguistic data in a field-appropriate medium (research paper, oral presentation, or poster) using commonly accepted formal frameworks (understood broadly). Engage collaboratively with other linguists, such as classmates or professors, to produce a coherent analysis.
2. **Knowledge & Skills** - Demonstrate command over formal frameworks (understood broadly) and research techniques in linguistics—i.e. students should be able to answer research questions via syntactic, semantic, or phonological analysis; by designing and executing a simple experiment; or by engaging in other kinds research used by linguists
3. **Transformation** - Participate in a meaningful learning experience that prepares the student to meet their goals after earning a linguistics degree.
4. **Impact** - Identify the import of one's own analyses for an understanding of language, people, and/or society as a whole.

Assessment Plan and Process

The data summarized in this document covers academic years 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 and reports on our initial attempt to assess all four of the learning outcomes above following the assessment plan (also approved by our faculty on 11/14/19). Artifacts were collected in Fall 2019 (final exams from 4 majors in LING 4010: Introduction to Phonetics and Phonology and final exams from an additional 5 majors in LING 4020: Introduction to Syntax) and Fall 2020 (final exams from 4 students in LING 4010: Introduction to Phonetics and Phonology and final papers from 4 students in LING 5900: Capstone in Linguistics). An Ad-Hoc committee of four tenure-line faculty (Johanna Watzinger-Tharp, Aniello De Santo, Rachel Hayes-Harb, and Shannon Barrios) was assembled to take part in the assessment process. Each of the artifacts was rated by two members of the committee on each of our four learning outcomes on a four-point rating scale. A score of 1 (Does not meet expectations) indicates that the student does not show evidence of progress toward meeting an outcome, 2 (In development) indicates that the student shows evidence of progress toward meeting an outcome but does not yet meet it, 3 (Meets expectations) indicates that the student meets the benchmarks specified in the outcome, 4 (Exceeds expectations) indicates that the student exceeds the benchmarks specified in the outcome.

Assessment Results

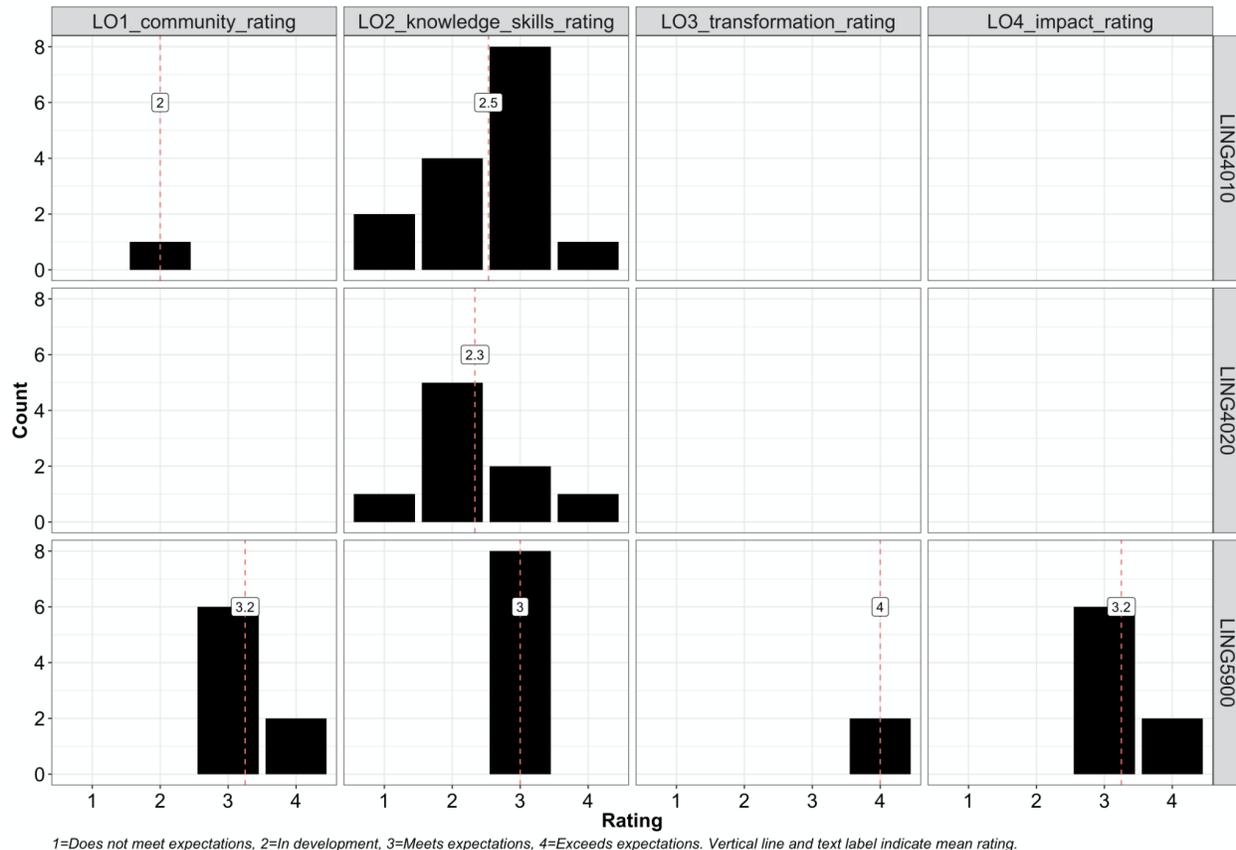
Learning Outcome 1 - Community

Regarding our first learning outcome (LO1), there was consensus among raters that final exams do not elicit “original analyses”, and the response format does not resemble the media listed. Moreover, the exam format does not lend itself well to collaboration (though some effort was made to address this in the final exam of one of the instructors from LING 4010 via peer review). As a result, the artifacts from LING 4010 and LING 4020 could not speak to this learning outcome (Not able to evaluate). The artifacts from LING 5900 consisted of final papers which provided opportunities for collaboration to produce original analyses presented in the form of a final paper (one of the listed formats). These 4 artifacts scored by two raters produced six ratings of 3 and two ratings of 4. The mean rating for LING 5900 for LO1 was 3.25, suggesting that Linguistics Capstone students are generally meeting our expectations for LO1. The distribution of ratings for each course is summarized as counts (and percentage of the ratings) in Table 1 and Figure 1.

Table 1: Counts of ratings by Linguistics Course for Learning Outcome 1

Rating (1-4)	LING 4010 (N = 15)	LING 4020 (N = 10)	LING 5900 (N = 8)
1	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
2	1 (6.67%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
3	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	6 (75.00%)
4	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	2 (25.00%)
Not able to evaluate	14 (93.33%)	10 (100.00%)	0 (0.00%)

Figure 1: Distribution of ratings assigned for each learning outcome and LING Course



Learning Outcome 2 - Knowledge & Skills

Each of the artifacts collected (final exams from LING 4010 and LING 4020 and final papers from LING 5900) could speak to this learning outcome. The majority of the artifacts (8 of 15) for LING 4010 received a rating of 3. Ratings of 2 (In development) were also relatively common. Ratings of 1 and 4 were also observed. The mean rating for artifacts collected from two semesters of LING 4010

was 2.5. The majority of the artifacts (5 of 10) received a rating of 2 (In development). Ratings of 3 (Meets expectations) were also relatively common. Ratings of 1 and 4 were also present. The mean rating for LING 4020 was 2.33. The artifacts from LING 5900 unanimously received ratings of 3 (Meets expectations). These data are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2: Counts of ratings by Linguistics Course for Learning Outcome 2

Rating (1-4)	LING4010 (N = 15)	LING4020 (N = 10)	LING5900 (N = 8)
1	2 (13.33%)	1 (11.11%)	0 (0.00%)
2	4 (26.67%)	5 (55.56%)	0 (0.00%)
3	8 (53.33%)	2 (22.22%)	8 (100.00%)
4	1 (6.67%)	1 (11.11%)	0 (0.00%)
Not able to evaluate	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)

Learning Outcome 3 - Transformation

The majority of the raters were unable to assess this learning outcome for the artifacts (final exams and research papers) provided from any of the courses. These data are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3: Counts of ratings by Linguistics Course for Learning Outcome 3

Rating (1-4)	LING4010 (N = 15)	LING4020 (N = 10)	LING5900 (N = 8)
1	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
2	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
3	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
4	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	2 (25.00%)
Not able to evaluate	15 (100.00%)	10 (100.00%)	6 (75.00%)

Learning Outcome 4 - Impact

The final exams provided for LING 4010 and 4020 did not speak to learning outcome 4 and could not be evaluated. The final papers from LING 5900 did provide evidence for LO4, with a rating of 3 assigned by most raters for most artifacts. Some ratings of 4 were also observed. The mean rating for LO4 for LING 5900 was 3.25 suggesting that Linguistics Capstone students are generally meeting our expectations for this learning outcome. Table 4 and Figure 1 summarize this data.

Table 4: Counts of ratings by Linguistics Course for Learning Outcome 4

Rating (1-4)	LING4010 (N = 15)	LING4020 (N = 10)	LING5900 (N = 8)
1	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
2	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
3	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	6 (75.00%)
4	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	2 (25.00%)
Not able to evaluate	15 (100.00%)	10 (100.00%)	0 (0.00%)

Proposed changes

This round of learning outcomes assessment revealed several limitations of our learning outcomes, rating scale, and assessment plan. In the next sections we describe these limitations and our plan for addressing each.

Learning Outcomes

Our current learning outcomes reflect the university’s mission, disciplinary standards, and our expectations of all program graduates. As a result, we are generally happy with our current learning outcomes. However, some changes are needed.

Learning Outcome 1 - Community

It is unclear what is intended by “original analyses”, “engaged collaboratively” and “field appropriate medium”.

Proposal: Engage in scholarly collaboration and effectively communicate their scholarship in an audience-appropriate manner within the discipline and to the public.

Learning Outcome 2 - Knowledge and Skills

Learning outcome 2 required inferences on the part of the raters about what the assignment was meant to assess (even when exams or assignment instructions were available), as well as knowledge of the framework that students have become familiar with. As a result, raters relied heavily on instructors' comments and the grade assigned for the assignment. In the future we will want to request that instructors provide more information about the knowledge and skills that are targeted in the course in general and, in particular, in the artifacts that they provide.

Proposal: Demonstrate command over theories and research methods in linguistics—i.e. students should be able to answer research questions via linguistic analysis, by designing and executing an experiment, and/or by engaging with the variety of other research methodologies used in the field of linguistics. Critically evaluate how knowledge and skills can serve to perpetuate or to root out inequity, injustice, and oppression.

Learning Outcome 3 - Transformation

While raters acknowledged that this is an important outcome, information about transformation will need to be measured by other means, such as writing assignments that explicitly ask students to articulate their career goals and reflect on experiences, and/or an exit survey that measures the extent of student engagement in our community, student experience, satisfaction, perception of their own learning, etc.

Proposal: Participate in meaningful learning experiences that foster students' contributions to society and their constructive reflections on how these experiences advance their personal, educational, and professional goals.

Learning Outcome 4 - Impact

Similarly, with what was observed with Outcome 3, raters agreed that this outcome should measure students' contributions as well as their ability to identify and articulate what they perceive as the impact of said contributions.

Proposal: Contribute meaningfully to an enhanced understanding of language, people, and society, and reflect constructively on how this understanding contributes to a more just and equitable world.

Rating Scale

Using the current rating scale in our evaluation, each of the ad-hoc committee members seemed to calibrate/adjust our expectations for a particular course/level (e.g., a score of [3] meets expectations for LING 4010 meant something different than for LING 5900). As a result, unsurprisingly, most LOs that could be assessed for the artifacts that instructors provided received scores of [3], suggesting that our students have met our expectations for a particular course. However, without fixed criteria specific to our program (as opposed to individual courses), the scores will not provide information about student progress in meeting our specific program level learning outcomes (e.g., we won't see that LO2 is "in progress" at time point 1 and "met" at point 2). If we mean to track students' progress through the curriculum, it will be useful to have a fully fleshed out rubric with statements for each cell that describe the types of behaviors that would reflect each rating.

Assessment Plan

This round of assessment also revealed limitations related to the artifacts themselves. It has become clear that final exams do not provide useful data for three of four of our learning outcomes (LO1, LO3, LO4). They do not provide opportunities for collaboration, the types of analyses that are submitted are not "original", nor are final exams, research papers, oral presentations, or posters. Moreover, none of the exams provided opportunities to elicit data around impact or transformation. Furthermore, some of the artifacts collected were difficult or impossible to rate due to legibility of a handwritten assignment or instructor comments and/or the scan quality was poor.

We believe these issues can be addressed by providing clear guidance for instructors about the types of artifacts that would (and would not) be useful for the learning outcomes assessment process and instructions about what to submit and how. We also expect that using some of the tools developed by UGS (e.g., The Assciater and The Reviewer) will be helpful for streamlining the artifact collection process.

Presently each artifact is rated twice, by two different raters. It's unclear that this is necessary. There was little variability across raters and because few raters were assigned randomly to relatively few artifacts it was not possible to compute interrater reliability.

Finally, each course in the Linguistics curriculum is expected to provide opportunities for our students to work toward all four of our stated program level learning outcomes and should be part of the learning outcomes assessment process. During the coming round of learning outcomes assessment, we intend to follow a cohort of majors through our curriculum.