

GERC 5-Year Assessment Report: ANTH/ENGL/LANG 1107—Objective 7

Department: Anthropology

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Course(s): ANTH/ENGL/LANG 1107

Anthropology/English/Language 1107 “Nature of Language” is an introductory course in linguistics, a subject that can prove challenging for many learners. It requires application of reasoning and logic to solving complex problems, including analyzing raw language data, often with incomplete or ambiguous data. It also requires thinking critically about not just the structure of language, but also how it is used by people in real-world settings, investigation and appreciation of language diversity, change over time, and current political and policy-related ideologies. As such, this course requires students to be introduced to, practice, and ideally learn how to apply critical thinking and problem solving skills. This course covers the following General Education Learning Outcomes under Idaho State University’s General Education Objective 7: Critical Thinking:

- 1 Formulate/frame problems and analyze how others do so
- 2 Recognize and apply appropriate practices for analyzing ambiguous problems
- 3 Identify and apply relevant information for problem-solving
- 4 Create, analyze, and evaluate/interpret diverse perspectives and solutions
- 5 Establish a reasoned framework for drawing conclusions and/or recommending solutions
- 6 Effectively articulate the results of a thinking process

Methods of Assessment

Assessment of the Gen Ed outcomes for objective 7: Critical Thinking was conducted according to the Approved Gen Ed Assessment Plan for the years 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, where possible. As the previous instructor of this course retired at the end of 2019, limited data was available for a retrospective assessment of GERC outcomes. Where possible, annual assessment report receipts and past course exams were used to complete the 5-year report. Two outcomes were assessed each year, as indicated below, using the methods described:

Year	Outcomes	Measure Instruments/Data Source
Fall 2016	1, 2	Annual assessment report receipt
Fall 2017	3, 4	Due to low number of exams available (n=3), outcomes were not assessed for this year.
Fall 2018	5, 6	Exam 2, specific questions identified
Fall 2019	1, 2	Annual assessment report receipt
Fall 2020	3, 4	Direct assessment: Standardized exam questions were developed to be reused annually. Indirect assessment measures were added. An end-of-semester student survey was developed asking students to identify their perceived level of achievement of each outcome, using a scale of ‘no experience’, ‘introduced’, ‘beginner’, ‘confidence’, using language accessible to students.

For fall 2017, data was not sufficiently available to assess the outcomes. For fall 2020, a set of standardized exam questions were used for direct assessment of measures and an indirect assessment instrument was developed to measure student perceptions of their achievement of each outcome (See appendix A). The exam questions were scored using a criteria outlined in Appendix B and using the scale of ‘does not meet expectations’, ‘approaches expectations’, ‘meets expectations’, and ‘exceeds expectations’. These methods were chosen to enable consistent comparison of outcomes across years,

objective assessment of student achievement of outcomes, and to enable both direct and indirect measures of the outcomes.

Explanation of Analysis

For years 2016-2019, student exam questions were scored to using a ‘not satisfactory’, ‘satisfactory’, or ‘exceeds expectations’ rubric. For fall 2020, outcome-aligned exam questions were scored using a criteria outlined in Appendix B. The criteria for each question were clearly articulated for each measure to enable consistent assessment regardless of assessor. Assessors scored each exam question response using the scale of ‘does not meet expectations’, ‘approaches expectations’, ‘meets expectations’, and ‘exceeds expectations’. The number of students achieving each score was calculated. The percentage of students achieving an ‘approaches’ or higher was calculated and compared to the target.

As this is an introductory class in linguistics, two targets were identified for the 2020 year, one including the ‘approaches expectations’ and another limiting the percentage to only those students scored ‘meets’ or ‘exceeds’ expectations/criteria. For many students in these classes, they may not achieve mastery of critical thinking outcomes. For some, this may be the first time they are introduced to critical thinking methods and skills, so expecting mastery in an introductory course may be unrealistic. Therefore, we expect that 75% of students in the course will at least approach the criteria/demonstrate beginning skills. We expect that 60% of students in the class may achieve the ‘meets’ or ‘exceeds’ criteria for each outcome/skill. Criteria and rubrics are listed in Appendix B.

Major Findings

For the years 2016-2019, an average of 63% of students earned a ‘satisfactory’ or higher for outcomes 1, 2, 5, and 6. For these years, outcomes 3 and 4 were unable to be assessed due to a lack of sufficient data (n=3). There were no target percentages identified for these years.

General Education Assessment - 5 Year for ANTH/LANG/ENGL 1107: Nature of Language										
Target:	75% of students will 'approach', 'meet', or 'exceed' criteria									
	60% of students will 'meet' or 'exceed' criteria									
Semester	Direct Assessment					Indirect Assessment				
	Sample size	Outcome	% meeting target	Outcome	% meeting target	Sample size	Outcome	% meeting target	Outcome	% meeting target
Fall 2020	(n=29)	3	65	4	93	(n=30)	3	97	4	97
Fall 2019	(n=28)	1	60	2	60	N/A	1	Not assessed	2	Not assessed
Fall 2018	(n=32)	5	40	6	68	N/A	5	Not assessed	6	Not assessed
Fall 2017	(n=3)	3	Not assessed	4	Not assessed	N/A	3	Not assessed	4	Not assessed
Fall 2016	(n=25)	1	90	2	70	N/A	1	Not assessed	2	Not assessed

For 2020, the percentage of students meeting the ‘approaches’, ‘meets’, or ‘exceeds’ criteria for outcomes 3 and 4 were 65% and 93%, respectively. The percentage of students rated as ‘meets’ or higher were 44% and 75%, respectively. While the percentages for outcome 4, “create, analyze, and evaluate/interpret diverse perspectives and solutions” were excellent, exceeding the targets for these outcomes, the percentages for outcome 3, “Identify and apply relevant information for problem solving”, did not meet the target.

Indirect assessment data of outcomes 3 and 4 for 2020 suggest that students feel they have at least been introduced to the skills needed to demonstrate these outcomes, with 96% of student survey respondents agreeing with statement that they had at least been introduced to these skills. In addition, 75% of student respondents felt they could now demonstrate that skill at the beginner level or higher for outcome 3 and 68% for outcome 4. However, while this confidence is a good sign, student perceptions of skills developments appears to be inflated compared to actual measured performance for Outcome 3--identify and apply relevant information for problem solving.

Changes Made and Recommendations

From 2016 to 2019, annual assessment report receipts indicate that no changes were made or planned for ANTH/ENGL/LANG 1107 based on the assessment of Gen Ed outcomes for Objective 7.

After assessing outcomes for 2020, the course has been revised to provide more opportunities to directly practice outcome 3 and to include metacognitive strategies for self-assessment of learning specific to this skill. This assessment was conducted using the updated assessment questions from the final exam.

The pandemic had an impact on student engagement. Students in this course completed an end-of-course survey and indicated that they faced the following challenges during the pandemic: sick with Covid-19 (19%), loved one sick with Covid-19 (31%), loved one died (3%-1 student), conflict with work schedule (47%), anxiety (44%), learning style while online (12.5%). Approximately half the class (47%) indicated they could not attend all Zoom classes due to increased work schedule/changed work schedule. Several students Zoomed to class from work. Over half the class said they preferred to have their cameras off at least some of the time due. Of those who preferred to have their cameras off, this was due to anxiety (38%), tech issues (22%), mess/dishabille (16%), or just plain didn't want to be in/participate in class (22%). The performance on outcomes of those with low attendance and/or low engagement (as indicated by camera off) was significantly lower than those who were present and engaged throughout the course.

While the course is still online due to the pandemic, activities encouraging participation and attendance have been increased in number. The course also offers flexibility for students who may need to miss class due to work or Covid-19, but cannot provide the same quality of learning opportunity for those students, due to the nature of the class subject matter and learning outcomes.

Access to assessment materials for the years 2016, 2017, and 2019 are not available, as the previous instructor retired in 2019. Assessment materials for 2018 are in the form of paper exams. These can be provided for review upon request. Access to the raw student survey data and exam responses for 2020 can be provided upon request, but would exceed the page requirement of this document.

Grade Distributions

Grade distributions for ANTH/ENGL/LANG 1107 are available for fall 2020 only.

1107 Grades Earned for fall 2020									
A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D	F
16	6	2	0	1	0	1	3	2	10

The grades for this semester likely reflect several issues specific to the pandemic. The course was moved online due to the pandemic. Given the many challenges faced by students this semester, several accommodations were made to enable success in the course, including:

- Flexibility in deadlines, with grace periods.
- Options to submit in multiple formats.
- Increased number of activities to earn points.
- Extra help sessions each week.

Given these accommodations, many students who chose to attend extra help sessions and turn extra assignments earned higher than average points. To even out the grade distribution, several changes have been made. While extra help is still available and grace periods for submitting remain, students can no longer earn an excess of extra points. Instead, they can drop several assignments in the case of illness or inability to attend class due to work conflicts.

Recommended Changes to the Assessment Process

In addition to the specific changes to course design indicated above, the assessment practices have been standardized for this class to allow for comparison across semesters. Starting in fall 2021, all outcomes will be assessed each year using a set of final exam questions that remain consistent from semester to semester.

To enable accurate and effective comparison of student achievement of GERC outcomes across years, identify trends, and more effectively and appropriately modify course instruction strategies, revision of the Approved Gen Ed Assessment Plan is being suggested.

Suggested revisions to the Approved Gen Ed Assessment Plan for ANTH/ENGL/LANG 1107 include:

- Assessing all outcomes each year.
- Using a standardized instrument consistent across assessment periods.
- Limiting the direct assessment instrument to the final exam of the class, to include a specific set of questions/measures clearly aligned one per outcome.
- Articulating clear criteria for each measure to allow for a clear rating of ‘approaches criteria’, ‘meets criteria’ and ‘exceeds’ criteria.
- Articulating clear targets for each outcome: 75% of students in the class will at least ‘approach’ the criteria. 60% of students in class will ‘meet’ or ‘exceed’ criteria.
- Including a standardized survey as an instrument for indirect measurement of student perception of whether they have met criteria. Target: 75% of students will indicate they have at least been introduced to the outcome skill. 60% of students will indicate they are able to perform the skill at a beginner or confident level.

Appendix A: GERC Assessment Alignment of Outcomes, Measures, Criteria, Targets, and Methods

ANTH/ENGL/LANG 1107 Nature of Language GERC Assessment Table Aligning Outcomes, Measures, Criteria, Targets, and Methods						
General Education Outcomes		Direct Measure	Target/Criteria	Method	Indirect Measure	Target
		Exam Question	75% of students will Approach, Meet, or Exceed Expectations on the criteria below:	Assessors will rate the responses using a scale of 'does not meet', 'Approaches', 'Meets' or 'Exceeds' criteria	Self-Assessment/Reflection Survey	75% of students will respond Meets or Exceeds Expectations
1	Formulate/Frame problems and analyze how others do so.	You are talking with a friend when they say "the way rappers speak is just bad English." Write a paragraph answering these questions: Why do you think your friend thinks this? How would linguists describe African American English and how is that different from how your friend thinks about it? Apply at least one theory from our class readings to help you explain your answer.	^Describe 2 ways of framing this issue. ^Apply one of the following ling/anth concepts: dialect, register, ideology, prescriptivism, descriptivism		<i>Applies to each outcome.</i> Please check the statement that reflects the degree to which you achieved this learning outcome: a) Does not meet expectations (I did not get exposed to or practice this outcome.) b) Approaching Expectations (I was exposed to it/got to practice it.) c) Meets Expectations (I can do this at a beginner level.) d) Exceeds Expectations (I feel confident that I can do this in many different settings.)	
2	Recognize and apply appropriate practices for analyzing ambiguous problems.	a) Using data set 1, are /t/ and /d/ distinct phonemes or allophones? Are /p/ and /b/ distinct phonemes or allophones?	Arrive at correct answer			
3	Identify and apply relevant information for problem solving.	b) In answering a) above, what information did you use? How did this information help you?	Identify the following information as useful: minimal pairs, environments for sounds			

ANTH/ENGL/LANG 1107 Nature of Language GERC Assessment Table Aligning Outcomes, Measures, Criteria, Targets, and Methods						
General Education Outcomes		Direct Measure	Target/Criteria	Method	Indirect Measure	Target
		Exam Question	75% of students will Approach, Meet, or Exceed Expectations on the criteria below:	Assessors will rate the responses using a scale of 'does not meet', 'Approaches', 'Meets' or 'Exceeds' criteria	Self-Assessment/Reflection Survey	75% of students will respond Meets or Exceeds Expectations
6	Effectively articulate the results of a thinking process.	c) How did you determine whether two sounds in a language are distinct phonemes or allophones? If you determined they were allophones, how did you figure out what the distribution of the allophones was?	^Explain the steps in their reasoning: ^identify minimal pairs, look for analogous environments/look for differences in meaning, determine how sounds interacted to change sounds ^look for different environments if meaning is the same			
4	Create, analyze, and evaluate/interpret diverse perspectives and solutions.	Write a paragraph answering this question: Describe the difference between prescriptivism and descriptivism. Describe a situation in which using a prescriptivist perspective would be beneficial. Describe a situation in which using a descriptivist perspective would be beneficial. Which perspective do you agree	^Define terms ^Create scenarios ^Argue and support with explanation			
5	Establish a reasoned framework for drawing conclusions or	Write a paragraph answering these questions: What is one misconception (wrong idea) do you think many Americans have about how language works or should work? Why do you think	^Identify a misconception ^Explain the framework informing this misconception or how this misconception creates a framework for others			

Appendix B: General Education Assessment 5 Year Report for ANTH/LANG/ENGL 1107

General Education Assessment - 5 Year for ANTH/LANG/ENGL 1107: Nature of Language											
General Education Objective: 7: Critical Thinking											
Outcomes:		1 Formulate/frame problems and analyze how others do so 2 Recognize and apply appropriate practices for analyzing ambiguous problems 3 Identify and apply relevant information for problem-solving 4 Create, analyze, and evaluate/interpret diverse perspectives and solutions 5 Establish a reasoned framework for drawing conclusions and/or recommending solutions 6 Effectively articulate the results of a thinking process									
Target:		75% of students will 'approach, meet, or exceed criteria'									
Semester	Direct Assessment					Indirect Assessment					Strategies for Improvement
	Sample size	Outcome	% meeting target	Outcome	% meeting target	Sample size	Outcome	% meeting target	Outcome	% meeting target	
Fall 2020	(n=29)	3	65	4	93	(n=30)	3	97	4	97	Student perceptions of skills developments appears to be inflated compared to actual measured performance for Outcome 3--identify and apply relevant information for problem solving. The course has been revised to provide more opportunities to directly practice outcome 3 and to include metacognitive strategies for self-assessment of learning specific to this skill. This assessment was conducted using the updated assessment questions from the final exam. In addition, while the course is still online, activities encouraging participation and attendance have been increased in number. The course also offers flexibility for students who may need to miss class due to work or covid, but cannot provide the same quality of learning opportunity for those students, due to the nature of the class subject matter and learning outcomes. **
Fall 2019	(n=28)	1	60	2	60	N/A	1	Not assessed	2	Not assessed	We intend to standardize our assessment process within the department so that this is much more straightforward
Fall 2018	(n=32)	5	40	6	68	N/A	5	Not assessed	6	Not assessed	Assessment data for these years for the purposes of the 5-year assessment was based only on available exam data.
Fall 2017	(n=3)	3	Not assessed	4	Not assessed	N/A	3	Not assessed	4	Not assessed	This particular exam indicated that students were not prepared for the questions directly assessing outcomes 5
Fall 2016	(n=25)	1	90	2	70	N/A	1	Not assessed	2	Not assessed	None