

Report of the Undergraduate Review Committee for the Department of Linguistics

Committee Members:

Patrick Farrell (Linguistics, UC Davis)

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Laurie Smith (Biology, UCSD), Chair

Introduction

On May 11 and 12, 2010, the Committee met to review the undergraduate program in the Department of Linguistics and the Linguistics Language Program (LLP). We met with the Department Chair (Andrew Kehler), the faculty Director of the LLP (Grant Goodall), and five other faculty. The Committee chair also met earlier in the year with two additional faculty who were on sabbatical at the time of the review. We also met with an Academic Coordinator for the LLP (Sanchez), 4 graduate students who have served as TAs in undergraduate courses, four undergraduate Linguistics majors, the MSO and undergraduate advising staff for Linguistics majors and the LLP, and Deans of Revelle and Eleanor Roosevelt Colleges, who frequently advise students seeking to fulfill these colleges' language requirements. In addition to the information provided by these individuals, the Committee also reviewed the self study reports of the undergraduate program and LLP submitted in January 2010 by Chair Kehler and Director Goodall, respectively, and a variety of data supplied mainly by AVCUE Barbara Sawrey's office including information on Linguistics courses taught and their enrollments, grade distributions, department funding, CAPE reviews, faculty workloads, degree requirements and courses taught, degrees granted, student retention rates and time to degree, and results of surveys administered in 2008 and 2010 gauging student satisfaction with the Linguistics majors and with language instruction offered through the Linguistics Department.

Background

Linguistics is a small department with 12 ladder-rank faculty, who normally teach 4 courses per year (typically 2-3 undergraduate and the remainder graduate courses), with course relief granted to faculty serving in labor-intensive administrative roles. Aside from language courses, which are taught mainly by graduate students, Academic Coordinators and Unit 18 lecturers, all other Linguistics courses are taught by ladder rank faculty with only rare, temporary exceptions. Teaching assignments are made by the Chair in consultation with the Curriculum Committee, which is composed of three faculty along with student representatives. This committee also periodically reviews the curriculum to determine whether it is meeting the overall objectives of the program, and whether certain courses should be revised (these issues are also discussed in faculty meetings). Majors are advised by a faculty member who serves as Undergraduate Advisor (as a regular committee assignment) and by two full time staff advisors who work with both undergraduates and graduate students. The Department offers majors in General Linguistics, Cognition and Language, Language and Society, and Language Studies, with a combined total of majors averaging around 100 over the review period, but climbing recently to the current 137. In '08-09, undergraduate Linguistics courses had annual enrollments (majors and non-majors combined) of 2,903 students, not including enrollments in LLP courses, which was another ~4,000 during the academic year with additional enrollments in the summer. The

number of undergraduate enrollments has remained roughly constant for the past 5 years, during which time the weighted Penner Parameter for the Linguistics Department (excluding the LLP) has varied from 0.79 to 1.18, with an average of 0.92. Although these Penner values are low relative to the Division of Social Sciences (average = 1.51), this is attributable to relatively low student credit hours for unit 18 faculty who teach heritage language courses, which are not part of the LLP (see below). The student credit hours per ladder-rank FTE in Linguistics averaged 838 over the review period, which is considerably higher than the average of 725 for the Division.

As implied by the numbers above, the majority of students taught in Linguistics courses are non-majors and indeed, the Linguistics Department serves a variety of students in addition to its majors. The LLP is the single largest language instruction unit on campus, and students in Revelle and Eleanor Roosevelt Colleges (along with students majoring in a variety of disciplines that require mastery of a second language) rely on it to meet their foreign language requirements. The LLP offers courses in Spanish, French, German, Italian, Portuguese, Esperanto, Arabic and American Sign Language. The Department also hosts a Heritage Language Program offering language instruction for students who have some knowledge of a second language from childhood or from speaking it to a limited extent at home (this program currently offers instruction in Arabic, Tagalog, Korean, Persian and Vietnamese). Many other Linguistics courses are open to non-majors, including four lower division courses that have been offered annually in recent years with enrollments ranging from 74-284 students, regular LIGN87 Freshman Seminars (16 in the last five years with combined enrollments of 289 students), and several upper division courses (with or without Linguistics prerequisites) that attract students from a variety of other majors. Indeed, many upper division Linguistics courses are interdisciplinary in nature such as LIGN170 “Psycholinguistics”, LIGN171 “Child Language Acquisition”, and LIGN172 “Language and the Brain”, all of obvious interest to Psychology and Cognitive Science majors. Linguistics also supports the International Studies - Linguistics major offered through the UCSD International Studies Program, which requires 8 upper division Linguistics courses. Linguistics faculty also teach large enrollment courses offered through interdisciplinary programs, e.g. HDP1 offered by the Human Development Program, and INTL101 offered by the International Studies Program, which have been taught occasionally over the past several years by Linguistics faculty.

Linguistics also makes an important contribution to the University’s goal to increase student participation in study abroad programs. The Department actively encourages its majors (particularly Language Studies majors) to study abroad, for example promoting this by demonstrating to students on the Department website how they can incorporate study abroad without lengthening their time to graduation. Moreover, Linguistics Prof. Sharon Rose is now the faculty advisor for the campus Programs Abroad Office, and Professor Moore has offered a popular Global Seminar in Spain for three years in a row.

Findings of the Review Committee

Since they are to some extent independent with distinct purposes and challenges, we will comment on the Linguistics Department Undergraduate Program and the Linguistics Language Program separately.

By all criteria we evaluated, the undergraduate program in Linguistics appears to be in excellent health. Given its size, the faculty does a remarkable job of offering an upper division curriculum for its majors and minors that is both strong in the core courses in general linguistics (syntax, phonetics, phonology, morphology, and semantics) and sufficiently comprehensive and varied in other areas as to adequately support its majors in concentrations in language and society, cognition and language, and language study. Its courses and faculty receive high marks across the board from students in CAPE reviews. Although the number of Linguistics majors responding to the 2008 UCUES survey is small (27, consistent with the small number of majors overall), their level of satisfaction with all aspects of the major and their experience as students at UCSD is considerably higher than the all-campus average. A survey of Linguistics majors administered in May 2010 by College Deans (with 49 respondents) also yielded very positive results, demonstrating that >80% of students responding were satisfied with the program, the faculty, and the advising system. The four undergraduates we spoke to also communicated an extremely positive view of the program and its faculty, the quality of the advising system and the information they received from it. Likewise, the graduate students we spoke to had only positive things to say about their experiences as TAs for undergraduate courses. They felt that they were treated fairly and had received adequate guidance and support from faculty.

The committee was particularly impressed by the emphasis in upper division Linguistics courses on developing skills in analytical thinking and problem solving, writing, and engagement with primary research literature. For example, all the undergraduate majors we spoke to said that they had taken multiple upper division courses involving reading and analysis of primary research literature, that most of their courses involved substantial writing assignments, and that some courses had required students to make oral presentations. These important and valuable elements, which are all too rare at UCSD where so many classes are very large, is made possible both by the relatively small size of many upper division Linguistics courses and the willingness of faculty to do the extra work involved. Moreover, it is impressive that such a high proportion of Linguistics majors are directly involved in research. Over the past five years, 68 students have participated in research through enrollment in LIGN199 (an average of 13.6 per year, which is about 1/3 of the number that graduated with Linguistics degrees each year during the same period). Students are made aware of research opportunities via postings on the Department website, emails sent to students by professors, announcements made in classes, and word of mouth. While the small size of the faculty makes it impossible for the program to offer an extensive range of advanced courses for its majors, majors who want to go further in a particular area of Linguistics are encouraged to enroll in graduate courses and many of them do so. This seems like a good way for a small department to balance the needs of advanced undergraduates vs. graduate students.

The Linguistics Language Program also appears to be serving its purpose well. Recommendations from the last review of Linguistics in 1999 focused entirely on concerns about the LLP. But these appear to have been either unfounded in the first place, or largely resolved since 1999. The way that language instruction is organized at UCSD is unusual. Although most first-year language instruction is offered through the LLP, various other departments and programs offer first-year language instruction for certain languages (e.g., Hebrew in Judaic Studies, Chinese in Chinese Studies, Japanese in Japanese Studies, and Russian in the

Department of Literature). Moreover, the Department of Literature, rather than the LLP, offers second-year and more advanced language study in some of the languages that are handled by the LLP, such as Spanish, French, Italian, and German. Historically, this has caused confusion among students and advisors regarding where language instruction is available and how placement is determined, and other problems arising from lack of coordination and communication among different programs offering language classes. This has improved recently with creation of a university-wide Language Instruction Coordination Committee (which LLP Director Goodall serves on) and a central website that provides an entry point for all students to find information about language courses available at UCSD.

Teaching in the LLP is carried out mainly by graduate students who teach multiple, small sections each quarter to enable the high level of interaction needed for effective language instruction. This is the standard approach to language instruction at major US universities. Graduate students teaching in the LLP receive extensive training before they start by participating in a 3 day training workshop. These workshops are run by Academic Coordinators responsible for different language areas. Subsequently, graduate student language instructors receive extensive guidance and detailed lesson plans from the Academic Coordinators, and meet regularly with these Coordinators, who directly observe their teaching during unannounced visits. Thus, the training and supervision of graduate students who do most of the teaching in LLP courses appears to be exemplary – much more extensive than that provided to graduate TAs in other departments and programs.

The LLP uses their own student survey to assess the quality of language classes and instructors rather than using CAPEs. The rationale for this is that this allows LLP to ask questions that are more meaningful in relation to the goals of the program than the generic CAPE survey. Use of this internally generated survey makes it more difficult for outside reviewers to judge the success of the program since there is no basis for comparison to anything else (e.g. other courses at UCSD, scores on same survey at other institutions, judgment of student proficiency via some kind of standardized measure). Nevertheless, student evaluations of course and instructor quality on the internal survey are generally quite positive (all were somewhere in the 3.0 to 4.0 range on a 4 point scale). Another metric provided to the committee was the results of a survey of all Revelle and Eleanor Roosevelt Students (who have to fulfill a second language requirement) administered by Deans of those colleges. This survey was not asking specifically about LLP courses, but rather about language instruction and advising as a whole at UCSD. This survey also showed a high level of student satisfaction with the methodology and outcome of the placement system, the quality and availability of courses, and the proficiency exam system as an alternative to taking language courses. Thus, while it was difficult for the committee to measure the success of the LLP specifically and compare it to other programs, we saw nothing during the review that raised serious concerns.

Recommendations

The recommendations of the committee are minor because we did not find serious problems or deficiencies needing to be addressed. These recommendations are as follows.

Linguistics Undergraduate Program:

1. If the Department aims to increase total undergraduate enrollments, the Committee urges them to make every effort to not do this at the expense of the upper division course offerings aimed primarily at majors whose relatively small enrollments now allow for emphasis on analytical and problem solving skills, writing skills, and engagement with primary literature.
2. The program should increase its efforts to make career information available to majors including better supporting the efforts of the student Lingua Society to learn about career options. This would likely help to stimulate interest in Linguistics majors and better serve existing majors. For example, the Department could have a “careers “ link on the undergraduate program home page that identifies careers for which Linguistics majors will be well prepared such as law and speech pathology. Information could be provided on these careers, what training is required beyond a bachelor’s degree, how the requirements of such programs could be satisfied locally in cases where UCSD does not offer required courses, and information about internship opportunities that would help students to learn about and prepare for these careers. Much of this work could be done by undergraduate advising staff.
3. Reconsider the definition of Heritage Language Program courses as upper division courses. Many students are interested in using these courses to satisfy their second language requirements (one HLP course is accepted by Revelle and ERC as satisfying the second language requirement) and are keen to do this early in their undergraduate careers. Moreover, College Deans have been asked by the Department to encourage freshman and sophomores to enroll, but normally College academic advisors tell students not to enroll in upper division courses as freshmen and sophomores so this creates a contradiction for them. Because they are UD, the Heritage Language courses require UD standing. In practice this requirement is routinely waived but students don’t necessarily know this, and even when they do know, it creates additional work for students and staff alike to go through the process of waiving this requirement. Moreover, HLP courses are generally taught by unit 18 lecturers who are not here over the summer so this makes it more challenging for students to get the UD standing requirement waived for fall courses. If the UD division standing requirement is routinely waived, perhaps they should not be upper division courses (at least not all of them). Reclassification as lower division courses would make them more accessible to freshmen and sophomores.
4. Communicate to students and college advisors more effectively what HLP courses are going to be offered when. It appears that no information is made available at the LLP or Linguistics website about what will be offered in the future beyond what is shown in the Schedule of Classes, which only shows offerings for next term. It is especially valuable to communicate to the colleges when languages won’t be offered so they can advise students not to wait. Currently it appears that certain courses are offered every quarter while others have not been offered for years. If there are patterns like this, at least these patterns should be explicitly communicated to students through all available channels so they know what to expect.

Linguistics Language Program:

5. Continue working with Language Instruction Coordination Committee to improve communication/coordination of language instruction on campus. At least occasionally, we recommend that the program collect and use feedback from students on their goals for the language courses they take. Also, we recommend that LLP gather and use feedback from the departments that require first year language instruction in LLP, e.g. Literature, to help shape first year language classes.
6. Put a conspicuous link on the LLP website referring students to the new, central website explaining all language offerings on campus. Also, the link from that central website to Linguistics should go straight to LLP, not to the Department homepage as it does now.
7. Consider offering more advanced ASL since there is nowhere else students can go for this.
8. Consider making student feedback on LLP courses available to students. The fact that CAPEs are not used means that students have no information at all about how LLP courses have been rated by students who have taken them before. A summary of results from the internally generated survey each year could be made available to students through the LLP website, or perhaps a customized CAPE survey could be designed for use with the new online CAPE system so that the results are available to students as well as to LLP. Regardless of how useful this information really is to students, they would appreciate having it and it might help them choose which language to take.

Departmental Response to the Report of the Undergraduate Review Committee

Department of Linguistics
University of California, San Diego

Prepared by Andrew Kehler (Chair) and Grant Goodall (LLP Director)

April 28, 2011

We begin by thanking the Undergraduate Review Committee for their service and hard work. We were very pleased by their overall assessment of the undergraduate program, and found their comments and recommendations to be very useful.

The committee offered four constructive comments about the undergraduate program, and four concerning the Linguistics Language Program. We respond to these in turn.

Linguistics Undergraduate Program

1. If the Department aims to increase total undergraduate enrollments, the Committee urges them to make every effort to not do this at the expense of the upper division course offerings aimed primarily at majors whose relatively small enrollments now allow for emphasis on analytical and problem solving skills, writing skills, and engagement with primary literature.

We appreciate and agree with this comment. We consider our emphasis on analytical writing and problem solving to be hallmarks of our program. They are not only crucial skills for being a successful linguist, but part of the reason why linguistics is such excellent preparation for law school and other careers that require first-rate logical reasoning and persuasive writing skills. It remains the case, however, that faculty put in considerable time to make this happen, often sharing a substantial grading burden with their teaching assistants. If pressure to grow enrollments rises and TA funding declines, the current state of affairs will be increasingly challenging to maintain.

2. The program should increase its efforts to make career information available to majors including better supporting the efforts of the student Lingua Society to learn about career options. This would likely help to stimulate interest in Linguistics majors and better serve existing majors. For example, the Department could have a “careers” link on the undergraduate program home page that identifies careers for which Linguistics majors will be well prepared such as law and speech pathology. Information could be provided on these careers, what training is required beyond a bachelors degree, how the requirements of such programs could be satisfied locally in cases where UCSD does not offer required courses, and information about internship opportunities that would help students to learn about and prepare for these careers. Much of this work could be done by undergraduate advising staff.

We concur with this recommendation, and will begin the process of constructing web-based resources. We will also continue working with our undergraduate society (LingUA), including offering faculty-led information sessions on careers and post-graduate school. Finally, we intend

to meet with the Deans of Advising in the different colleges (a visit to Muir has occurred thus far). The main reason is to provide information for attracting students to our courses and our major/minor; as part of this, literature on career options can be included.

3. Reconsider the definition of Heritage Language Program courses as upper division courses. Many students are interested in using these courses to satisfy their second language requirements (one HLP course is accepted by Revelle and ERC as satisfying the second language requirement) and are keen to do this early in their undergraduate careers. Moreover, College Deans have been asked by the Department to encourage freshman and sophomores to enroll, but normally College academic advisors tell students not to enroll in upper division courses as freshmen and sophomores so this creates a contradiction for them. Because they are UD, the Heritage Language courses require UD standing. In practice this requirement is routinely waived but students don't necessarily know this, and even when they do know, it creates additional work for students and staff alike to go through the process of waiving this requirement. Moreover, HLP courses are generally taught by unit 18 lecturers who are not here over the summer so this makes it more challenging for students to get the UD standing requirement waived for fall courses. If the UD division standing requirement is routinely waived, perhaps they should not be upper division courses (at least not all of them). Reclassification as lower division courses would make them more accessible to freshmen and sophomores.

We have begun having discussions about this. The issues that the committee draws attention to are well-taken. On the other hand, these courses presently contain considerable content that we consider to be upper-division, on topics relating to culture, society, and literature. The issues result from the fact that some students take these courses to fulfill language requirements (typically a lower-division endeavor), whereas others take them to fulfill upper-division requirements (a role that we would like the courses to continue to serve). Better communication with the advising staffs at the colleges might do much improve the situation with respect to the committee's concerns. We will continue our discussions on this matter.

4. Communicate to students and college advisors more effectively what HLP courses are going to be offered when. It appears that no information is made available at the LLP or Linguistics website about what will be offered in the future beyond what is shown in the Schedule of Classes, which only shows offerings for next term. It is especially valuable to communicate to the colleges when languages won't be offered so they can advise students not to wait. Currently it appears that certain courses are offered every quarter while others have not been offered for years. If there are patterns like this, at least these patterns should be explicitly communicated to students through all available channels so they know what to expect.

We will work on putting advance notice of future courses on the website. We will also talk to the college advisors to get a first-hand sense of what their concerns are. This issue should be fairly straightforward to rectify.

Linguistics Language Program

5. Continue working with Language Instruction Coordination Committee to improve communication/coordination of language instruction on campus. At least occasionally, we recommend that the program collect and use feedback from students on their goals for the language courses they take. Also, we recommend that LLP gather and use feedback from the departments that require first year

language instruction in LLP, e.g. Literature, to help shape first year language classes.

The LLP Director is an active member of the Language Instruction Coordinating Committee, so continued collaboration with that committee should be straightforward. As for gathering feedback from students, we have already conducted a survey of our Arabic students and shared the results with LICC, and we are making plans to conduct similar surveys of students in our other languages. We will also share these results with LICC and will use the occasion to continue dialogue with other departments and the colleges on the desired outcomes for students coming out of LLP courses.

6. Put a conspicuous link on the LLP website referring students to the new, central website explaining all language offerings on campus. Also, the link from that central website to Linguistics should go straight to LLP, not to the Department homepage as it does now.

These are excellent ideas and they should be very easy to implement.

7. Consider offering more advanced ASL since there is nowhere else students can go for this.

Providing enough advanced ASL courses is indeed a problem, and we will explore ways to remedy this. The situation is made difficult by the fact that the higher-level courses that we do have tend to be low-enrollment, so budget pressures make it hard to justify adding new courses. Perhaps with appropriate publicity and recruitment, however, we could boost the number of students and be able to expand our range of ASL course offerings.

8. Consider making student feedback on LLP courses available to students. The fact that CAPEs are not used means that students have no information at all about how LLP courses have been rated by students who have taken them before. A summary of results from the internally generated survey each year could be made available to students through the LLP website, or perhaps a customized CAPE survey could be designed for use with the new online CAPE system so that the results are available to students as well as to LLP. Regardless of how useful this information really is to students, they would appreciate having it and it might help them choose which language to take.

This is a very intriguing idea and one that we can definitely pursue. We will need to examine the situation carefully and decide what would be the most comprehensible and useful format for presenting this information to students and where we should place it on our website. Alternatively, we could consider making use of the CAPE system. This would perhaps make the results easier for students to find, though we would need to find a way to integrate CAPE with our more specialized department-internal course evaluation system.

August 31, 2011

PROFESSOR ANDREW KEHLER, Chair
Department of Linguistics

SUBJECT: Undergraduate Program Review: Department of Linguistics

Dear Professor Kehler,

On May 13, 2011, the Committee on Educational Policy and Courses (CEP) considered the review for the Department of Linguistics and the Linguistics Language Program, Program, which included the report of the Review Subcommittee that conducted a site visit with the Department and the Department's response. The CEP shares the Review Subcommittee's overall positive assessment of the Department. We note that the Subcommittee's recommendations offer suggestions for improving the Department's efforts but do not reflect any serious concern with the Department's curriculum. We find this commendable.

The CEP endorsed the recommendations of the Review Subcommittee, with exception of renumbering Heritage Language Courses to lower division status. The Department's response articulates reasons why this is problematic. Decisions of course status should be based on the level of preparation needed by students to engage in the academic content of the course, and we trust that the Department will assess what status is appropriate for these courses. The Committee was pleased to see in the Department's response that it intends to implement the remaining suggestions.

In conclusion, we wish to congratulate the Department for a positive and successful review.

Sincerely,



Mark Appelbaum, Chair
Committee on Educational Policy and Courses

cc: D. Hamann
G. Masters
B. Sawrey
M. Todd