General Education Annual Course Assessment Form

Course Number/Title  LING 20 Nature of Language  GE Area:  D1

Results reported for AY 2014-15  # of sections  4  # of instructors  4

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Department Chair:  Swathi Vanniarajan  College:  H&A

Instructions: Each year, the department will prepare a brief (two page maximum) report that documents the assessment of the course during the year. This report will be electronically submitted to <curriculum@sjsu.edu>, by the department chair, to the Office of Undergraduate Studies, with an electronic copy to the home college by October 1 of the following academic year.

Part 1

To be completed by the course coordinator:

(1) What SLO(s) were assessed for the course during the AY? ¹

GELO 2: Identify the dynamics of ethnic, cultural, gender/sexual, age-based, class, regional, national, transnational, and global identities and the similarities, differences, linkages, and interactions between them.

In one section, this GELO was assessed with two reflective papers that were based on readings and two videos, American Tongues and He Said, She Said. In these videos, students observed how the structural variation in English, based on region, ethnicity, and gender and manifested as different words, pronunciations, and accents, interacts with the speakers in social contexts and is associated with attitudes and stereotypes towards these varieties and the speakers.

In the other section, this GELO was assessed with the following exam question:

Background: In the excerpt on the exam below, Baugh is a bidialectical speaker of Standard American English and African American Vernacular English. The example takes place in an elementary school. Baugh had been ridiculing the English competence of a classmate who was a second-language learner of English.

Exam item 30: In “Linguistic Pride and Prejudice”, John Baugh explains how he tried to insult his teacher by speaking Standard English in an exaggerated way. Just previously, Baugh had been ridiculing one of his classmates by imitating the way the classmate spoke.

Question: What were the differences between Baugh imitating his classmates as opposed to imitating the teacher? Answer this question by answering (a) through (c) below. Discuss differences between standard and nonstandard English, and the different linguistic experiences of different people depending on their backgrounds.

   a) Why did the teacher notice when Baugh imitated his classmate but not notice when Baugh imitated the teacher? Your answer should focus on issues of how Baugh used language, and the teacher’s linguistic awareness. (Answer: A nonstandard use of English was noticeable because it was different than the norm that the teacher expected. For the teacher, standard English was just normal, not an option to be chosen.)

¹ The results reported reflect assessment data from Spring 2015. We were not able to retrieve data from two instructors who taught in Fall 2014 because of the retirement of one and of a medical leave of the other.
b) Why did the teacher consider it wrong for Baugh to imitate his classmate but not wrong to imitate the teacher? In your answer, talk about the difference in prestige that different ways of speaking have. (ANSWER: There can be no benefit in imitating a stigmatized dialect. The imitation can only be done to ridicule the stigmatized speakers. On the contrary, standard English is the ideal that students should try to attain.)

c) Why did Baugh’s black classmates notice that Baugh was trying to insult the teacher while the teacher himself didn’t notice? Focus on language. Formulate your answer in terms of linguistic awareness. (ANSWER: As speakers of a nonstandard dialect, the students were more aware than the teacher of the linguistic situation. For them, standard English was just another way of speaking, not an ideal. Speakers of nonstandard dialects are forced to deal with the standard, so they are aware of the contrast between the standard and their own dialect. By contrast, standard speakers may not think of nonstandard dialects as legitimate ways of speaking, so the standard speakers are not aware of nonstandard dialects as viable alternatives to the standard.)

(2) What were the results of the assessment of this course? What were the lessons learned from the assessment?

Although the two sections used different assessment methods, the results indicate that students performed generally well and showed an understanding of the dynamics of different identities and “the similarities, differences, linkages, and interactions between them”, thus fulfilling GELO 2.

In the reflective paper for the video, American Tongues, many students were able to identify (a) The tendency of people to rely on accent to stereotype others; (b) The significance of an accent (e.g. for identity or social function); (c) The origin(s) of accents/dialects (historical background); (d) The perpetuation/exaggeration of stereotypes (e.g. by movie industry, media, etc). Some were able to provide their own original examples in writing this reflective paper. Their grades range from B- to A. In the reflective paper for the video lecture He Said, She Said, many students were able to identify the difficulty of communication because of gender. Their grades range from B to A. The lesson learned by the instructor was that having read relevant articles prior to watching the videos was very helpful to the students since they could incorporate the facts from the readings into their analysis of the videos' content and their reflection.

The final exam question in the second section proved a fairly direct and rigorous test. About 90% of the students performed satisfactorily, and about 30% got full credit on the item. Although the success rate is not bad, the instructor thinks that the class performance can be improved, as expressed in (3).

(3) What modifications to the course, or its assessment activities or schedule, are planned for the upcoming year? (If no modifications are planned, the course coordinator should indicate this.)

No dramatic changes are planned to the course, the schedule, or the activities, as they all seem to generally work well for the students.

Reflecting on the exam question as an assessment instrument, the instructor points out that it is hard teach and test this kind of thing without telling the students what he wants them to think and then asking them to repeat it. He plans to revise the exam question by giving them the first two parts of the answer — i.e. (a) and (b) above, and asking them for (c).

Part 2

To be completed by the department chair (with input from course coordinator as appropriate):
(4) Are all sections of the course still aligned with the area Goals, Student Learning Objectives (SLOs), Content, Support, and Assessment? If they are not, what actions are planned?

In one section, the Greensheet mistakenly reflected an extra GELO. The error has been fixed. Otherwise, all sections are aligned with area goals, GELOs, content, support and assessment.

(5) If this course is in a GE Area with a stated enrollment limit (Areas A1, A2, A3, C2, D1, R, S, V, & Z), please indicate how oral presentations will be evaluated with larger sections (Area A1), or how practice and revisions in writing will be addressed with larger sections, particularly how students are receiving thorough feedback on the writing which accounts for the minimum word count in this GE category (Areas A2, A3, C2, D1, R, S, V, & Z) and, for the writing intensive courses (A2, A3, and Z), documentation that the students are meeting the GE SLOs for writing.

This course has an enrollment cap of 30 students and so the instructors are able to give individual attention to student writings.