Central Washington University  
Assessment of Student Learning  
Department and Program Report

Academic Year of Report: 2012-2013  
College: Arts and Humanities  
Department: World Languages

1. What student learning outcomes were assessed this year, and why?

No direct measures were used to assess student learning outcomes during the 2012-13 academic year because the Department Assessment Committee needed to lay the groundwork for what will be an intensive assessment of three student learning outcomes in three of our language programs this year. The committee began the 2012-13 academic year with the goal of increasing participation on the language majors’ exit survey, an indirect measure of learner outcomes, and succeeded in raising the number of participants from 5 to 30. Moreover, the committee expected the results of the survey to help identify areas in need of assessment and generate new categories of student learning outcomes based on survey questions 18-21 and 23 (see attached survey questions behind bar charts). The committee also collected data from composition instructors in French, Spanish, and heritage Spanish. However, the student learning outcome assessment plan preparation form, as it stood at the time, did not include a well-defined category for measurement of these data.

2. How were they assessed?  
A) What methods were used?  
B) Who was assessed?  
C) When was it assessed?

Students were assessed via an indirect measure, an exit survey. The survey was sent to all World Languages majors who graduated in 2012-2013. The survey was sent in June of 2013, shortly after graduation. We received 30 responses to the survey, 20 of whom answered all of the questions.

3. What was learned?

As previously mentioned, we achieved our goal of increasing the participation in our exit survey this year. Out of the 30 graduating seniors who participated, 20 completed all of the answers. Consequently, all comments are based on data garnered from the 20 participating students. What we learned focuses on the skill areas related to questions 18-21 and 23 in the survey. These quantitative data measure discrete language skills that are targeted in our program, specifically, listening (Q18), speaking (Q20), reading (Q18), writing (Q19, Q21), grammar (Q18), culture (Q21), and pronunciation (Q23), and those that most closely parallel the learner outcomes that we will be measuring in our new SLOP document from now on.

Results are represented in the attached bar graphs created by Dr. Bransdorfer in collaboration with Dr. Lefkowitz, the committee chair. In the survey, a Likert scale
ranging from **Strongly agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly disagree** was used to measure student responses. Q18 gives an overview of students’ grammar, listening comprehension, and reading skills. The average is 4 out of 5, suggesting a moderate to high degree of perceived attainment in those skills (see Figure 1: Q18). Q19 focuses on students’ ability to write for real world purposes, such as letters of application. The overall average here is 3.66 out of 5, implying a moderate degree of perceived attainment (see Figure 2: Q19). Q20 concentrates on students’ ability to speak in the target language on a wide range of topics. The average is 4.03 out of 5, indicating a moderate to high degree of perceived attainment (see Figure 3: Q20). Q21 emphasizes the ability to write for a variety of academic purposes that include knowledge of past, present, and future verb tenses, indicative and subjunctive moods, and hypothetical situations in academic and target language settings. It also includes an ability to discuss the target language culture. The average is 3.9 out of 5, pointing to a moderate to high degree of perceived attainment (see Figure 4: Q21). Q23 addresses pronunciation skills. The average is 4.2 out of 5, signaling a moderate to high degree of perceived attainment (see Figure 5: Q23). In fact, the overall average of all of these questions is 3.972 out of 5, signifying a moderate to high degree of perceived attainment in all measured skill areas (see Figure 6: Summary of language skills). We hope that the results of our newly created direct methods for measuring learner outcomes will match or exceed the level of satisfaction and accomplishment demonstrated by the results generated by our exit survey, an indirect measure.

4. **What will the department or program do as a result of that information?**

Now that the committee has made the necessary revisions to the Department Program Assessment Plan Preparation Form (PAP) and Student Learning Outcome Assessment Plan (SLOP) forms, we are moving forward this year with the goal of having a meaningful report assessing learning objective #2 ("Development of reading skills in target language in accordance with the American Council on Teaching Foreign Languages (ACTFL)") in the Japanese major, learning objective #5 (Development of pronunciation skills in target language and metalinguistic competence to employ terminology that describes oral production) in the Spanish major, and learning objective #6 ("Students will acquire an overview of historical and cultural features of the country/countries in which the target language is spoken") in the French major. Additionally, the assessment committee was asked to assess PAP #6 ("the department will develop and implement strategies in order to increase retention of students in the program and decrease the attrition rate").

5. **What did the department or program do in response to last year’s assessment information?**

When the committee received feedback on Dr. Bransdorfer’s previous year’s report, and it was determined that the newly created exit survey, an indirect measure, was not sufficient for our purposes, we found it necessary to revise the PAP and SLOP documents in such a way that would enable the committee to have more direct outcomes to work with. We discussed several possible changes that would lead to an increased list of more
quantifiable outcomes. The committee chair then contacted other departments in the college and compiled a number of assessment documents, rubrics, and reports in order to get a comparative view on assessment practices in various disciplines across the CAH. This was added to the assessment documents that the committee had already gathered from different institutions across the state.

6. Questions or suggestions concerning Assessment of Student Learning at Central Washington University:

Although this is neither a question nor a suggestion, we would like to mention that the Department of World Languages faces unique challenges in its ability to develop a systematic approach to assessment due to: the variety of distinctive features in each language (writing systems, phonology, etc.); the different rates of acquisition for each language; the divergent levels of attainment for each language; and the absence of cross-linguistic transferability between certain languages. These inherent dissimilarities pose difficulties in generalizing our assessment results across languages.