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

Given that the department was asked by the General Education Committee to account for how the department assesses writing within its four majors during this last academic year, we decided to focus this year's assessment on departmental student outcome #4 (Development of writing skills in target language at the intermediate level on the American Council on Teaching Foreign Languages (ACTFL) proficiency scale). This gave us an opportunity to sustain a year-long conversation about differences and similarities in how we teach writing across each of our four majors and to develop a common departmental writing rubric for writing in the target language at the intermediate level.

These outcomes were also assessed because they align with both our program outcome #3 (To offer students opportunities to engage in meaningful experience within their target language(s), and with at least two CWU Strategic Plan Outcomes (1.1.1 Students will achieve programmatic learning outcomes & 2.3.2 Increase the inclusion and integration of international cultural perspectives in the curriculum).

The data that we collected also gave us indirect information about the other SLOs due to the natural overlap that exists among all of them.

2. How were the student learning outcomes assessed?

A) What methods were used?

Assessment of WL SLO #4 in all four majors was carried out using the (attached) departmental writing assessment rubric, which includes four specific components (1. Vocabulary/Semantics 2. Grammar/syntax/mechanics 3. Structure/organization 4. Substance) each worth 25 points, for a total of 100 points. Students in each of the four majors were assessed on the basis of composition assignment using the departmental writing rubric. The writing rubric is primarily performance oriented. Students who receive between 0% and 76% do not meet expectation (DNME). Students who receive between 77% and 89% do meet expectation (ME). And those who receive between 90% and 100% exceed expectation (EE).

Students were also assessed via an indirect measure, an exit survey. The survey was sent to all World Languages majors who graduated in 2014-2015. The survey was sent in June of 2015, shortly after graduation. We received 4 responses to the survey, 3 of whom answered all of the questions.
B) Who was assessed?

A) Japanese: 8 students in Japanese 363: Composition, Conversation, and Grammar were assessed on the basis of composition assignment using the departmental writing rubric.

B) Spanish: 8 students in Spanish 342: Spanish Composition and Grammar were assessed on the basis of composition assignments using the departmental writing rubric.

C) Russian: 8 students in Russian 441: Advanced Composition and Grammar were assessed on the basis of composition assignments using the departmental writing rubric.

D) French: 6 students in French 363: Cultures of Francophone Africa were assessed on the basis of composition assignments using the departmental writing rubric.

C) When was it assessed?

Students were assessed during the Spring term in a writing-intensive course that majors and minors take typically towards the end of their degree plan.

3. What was learned?

The standards of mastery were met by 27 of the 30 students assessed. This establishes a base line from which we will continue to measure SLO #4 in the future (see attached WL Degree Program Student Learning Outcome Assessment Plan form).

Japanese 363  
DNME: 1  
ME: 6  
EE: 1  
Spanish 342  
DNME: 2  
ME: 4  
EE: 2  
Russian 441  
DNME: 0  
ME: 4  
EE: 4  
French 363  
DNME: 0  
ME: 5  
EE: 1

Out of 4 graduating seniors who participated, 3 completed all of the answers. Consequently, all comments are based on data garnered from the 3 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 are measured in WL SLO document.

Q18 gives an overview of students’ grammar, listening comprehension, and reading skills. The average this year is 3.475 out of 5, slightly down from the previous year's average of 3.875 out of 5 on the same question, suggesting a moderate degree of perceived attainment in those skills.
Q19 focuses on students’ ability to write for real world purposes, such as letters of application. The overall average here is 3.02 out of five, slightly down from the previous year's average of 3.55 out of 5 on the same question, implying a moderate degree of perceived attainment. Q20 concentrates on students’ ability to speak in the target language on a wide range of topics. The average is 3.66 out of five, slightly down from the previous year's average of 4.05 out of 5, indicating a moderate degree of perceived attainment. 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 3.72 out of 5, slightly down from the previous year's average of 4.15 out of 5, pointing to a moderate degree of perceived attainment. Q23 addresses listening skills, including ability to distinguish registerial and regional difference in the target language. The average is 2.99 out of 5, somewhat lower than the previous year's average of 4.26 out of 5, signaling a moderate to low degree of perceived attainment.

The overall average of all of these questions is 3.373 out of 5, somewhat lower than the previous year's average of 3.977 out of 5, signifying a moderate degree of perceived attainment in all measured skill areas.

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

In a broad sense, the process of collaborating across four distinct language programs to develop a common writing rubric has given us a clearer sense of shared and overlapping pedagogical practices for teaching writing in the target language among our faculty. We were able to note many of the challenges in teaching writing that are unique to each target language (i.e. teaching a new writing system in Japanese or a new alphabet in Russian). However, we also noted one shared factor that distinguishes our department's approach to "writing in the major" from that of other departments on campus, which is the fact that all of our language programs teach students culturally bound writing practices. Our students, in learning to write in the target language, learn an implicit set of cultural values. (Each linguistic tradition tends to value somewhat different ways of ordering information and framing arguments, among other things, and our majors are largely able to perform and/or demonstrate these values).

We have begun discussing the possibility of creating a capstone course at the end point for each of our four majors in such a way that might give us more meaningful assessment data. Since our learning outcomes are currently linked to the ACTFL proficiency scale, which is the gold standard for second language acquisition in the US, we discussed the possibility of administering real or mock ACTFL proficiency tests in the capstone and administering the survey as part of the capstone in order to ensure higher response rates. It will be logistically challenging given questions of staffing, cost, and curricular differences among our four majors but the interest and will to create a capstone are in large part there.

Finally, we would like to revisit the survey in order to place more emphasis on SLOs targeting critical reasoning skills and cultural/historic knowledge, which are at least equally important as language proficiency in a liberal arts major.

The committee will submit this report to the department:
- making recommendations for next year’s assessment plan, and
- developing and providing rubrics for the assessment of the major programs for the next assessment cycle (2016-17).

5. What did the department or program do in response to last year’s assessment?
The assessment committee's main activity in response to last year's assessment has been to work on creating common rubrics for all of our departmental learning outcomes. This process has opened up the way for productive conversations about differences and similarities in how we accomplish our shared learning outcomes across each of our four majors, conversations that have doubtlessly enriched our pedagogical practices.

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

We have none at this time.

Assessment Committee Members: V. Isakava, M. Johnson, A. Lee, L. Moshier. 8 December 2015.