2011 Gallaudet
Senior Language Assessment Project
Report: ASL Presentation

Dirksen Bauman, Coordinator, Office of Bilingual Teaching and Learning

Senda Benaissa, Gallaudet Research Institute

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Summary

In Spring 2011, the Office of Bilingual Teaching and Learning and the Gallaudet Research Institute combined to implement a pilot study for the ASL Presentation portion of the Senior Language Assessment Project. Samples of ASL presentations were solicited from graduating seniors from all majors. A total of sixteen presentations were ultimately collected from the Departments of English, Business and ASL and Deaf Studies. These presentations were scored each by two raters, based on the ASL Presentation Rubric attached as an appendix. While the size of the data collection is clearly too small to draw any conclusions or set benchmarks, the primary goal of the pilot project was to initiate the ASL portion of the SLAP in order to make recommendations for a much larger and more systematic approach to ASL Assessment that would align with the assessment of senior English writing skills. After presenting the findings of the study, this report makes a number of recommendations for the Institutional Committee on Learning Outcomes and the Faculty Senate to consider.

Call for this study

The Gallaudet University Mission Statement (2007; Appendix I) declares, in part,

> "Gallaudet University, federally chartered in 1864, is a bilingual, diverse, multicultural institution of higher education that ensures the intellectual and professional advancement of deaf and hard of hearing individuals through American Sign Language and English. Gallaudet maintains a proud tradition of research and scholarly activity and prepares its graduates for career opportunities in a highly competitive, technological, and rapidly changing world."

Undergraduate Student Learning Outcome 1 (2007; Appendix II) states, in part,

> "Students will use American Sign Language (ASL) and written English to communicate effectively with diverse audiences, for a variety of purposes, and in a variety of settings."

> 1.1. Demonstrate competence in academic ASL:

> - Select and use appropriate register for the setting and participants (which includes signing space, articulation of signs, sign choice).
>
> - Use appropriate syntax, facial grammar, transitions, eye gaze (for engagement and for turn taking), and pace.

> 1.2. Demonstrate competence in academic writing:
> - Choose appropriate words, phrases, and sentence and paragraph structure for the audience and purpose.
>
> - Demonstrate adequate command of mechanical conventions, including English grammar.

> 1.3. Demonstrate competence in receptive communication, comprehending written and signed material.

> 1.4. Present content coherently, which involves clarifying points, bringing together information in a well-organized way, and drawing logical connections among ideas.

> 1.5. Express ideas and information effectively in a variety of formats, including one-on-one, group settings, and through appropriate use of media.

Given that SLO#1 Language and Communication forms the cornerstone of achieving the bilingual mission, it is imperative that the University assess the outcomes of its students.

Goals

This report of the 2011 Senior Language Assessment Project: ASL Presentation is designed to accomplish two goals:

1. Initiate a process through which the University may assess students' proficiency in ASL so that benchmarks and targets may be set once larger data collection samples have been gathered.
2. Based on experience with and findings from the 2011 Senior Assessment and similar studies, recommend improvements to future assessments.
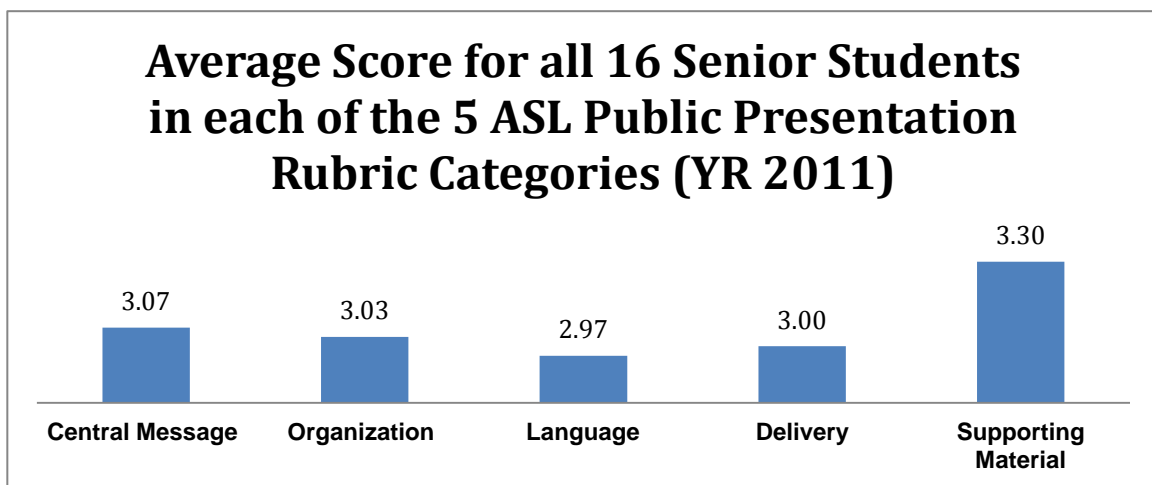
Previous Studies:

This study is the first attempt to assess graduating student proficiency in American Sign Language as a whole. Previous assessments have been conducted by the General Studies Program. These results, collected over three years, 2008-2011, were reported in the "General Studies Report to the Board of Trustees," Summer 2011 (Hafer, Rach, Buchko).
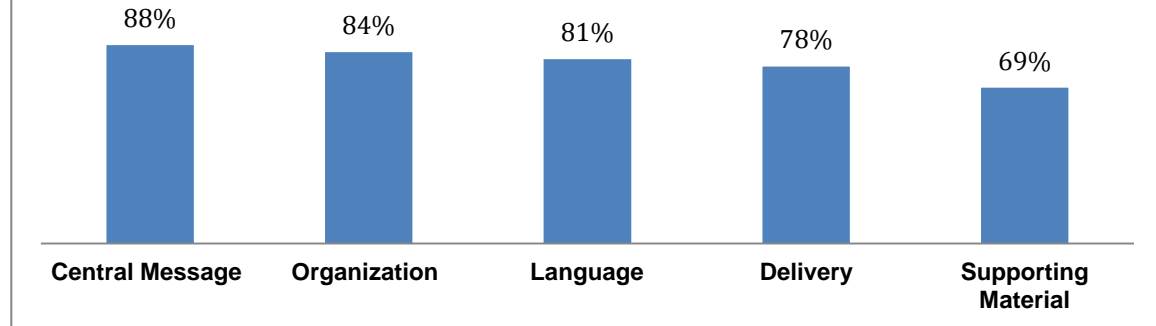
The current Senior Language Assessment Project Report cannot be directly compared with previous studies since a different rubric was used. The rubric that was used for the SLAP was developed during the summer of 2011 under the supervision of the Office of Bilingual Teaching and Learning. (See appendix)

Senior Language Assessment Results

In the five categories, on a scale of 0-4, the 16 seniors tested produced the following averages:

Average Score for all 16 Senior Students in each of the 5 ASL Public Presentation Rubric Categories (YR 2011)

Central Message	Organization	Language	Delivery	Supporting Material
3.07	3.03	2.97	3.00	3.30

Percentage of 3-or-Better Rating of ASL Public Presentation by 16 Senior Students (YR 2011)

Category	Percentage
Central Message	88%
Organization	84%
Language	81%
Delivery	78%
Supporting Material	69%

Observations

1) While the highest average score on the rubric was in the category of "Supporting Material"—i.e use of citations (3.3), the lowest percentage of students scored at 3 or better (69%). This apparent anomaly is explained in the fact that when students did cite sources, they did so meeting all the criteria, garnering higher than average scores; eight our of 16 students received the highest score of a 4. However, some assignments might not have required the citation of sources or the appropriate presentation format, resulting in a higher number of students (5) receiving a score of 2.

2) Lack of uniformity among assignments. Several of the students involved in this process were involved in a group presentation. This changes the dynamics considerably, resulting in questions about the reliability of the scores. Individual presentations are preferred as one student is responsible for the complete construction of the argument.

Recommendations:

1. The Faculty Senate has created an Institutional Outcomes Assessment committee which is charged with the responsibility for assessing outcomes. This committee needs to begin the process during the Fall 2011 semester by informing faculty that the SLAP is a requirement for both ASL and English, and that those faculty teaching Senior level capstone courses in Spring 2012 should incorporate both signed and written products as assignments within the course. Currently, there is no oversight

to ensure that faculty are designing courses in order to meet SLO#1: Language and Communication.

2. Standard Procedure for data collection: Unlike receiving papers in written English, OBTL, received video texts in a variety of formats—from DVDs, Youtube links, and mini-dv tapes. This resulted in very time consuming endeavor to assemble even such a small number of ASL presentations. A format should be agreed upon early in the process and communicated clearly to those responsible for data collection.   In the end, having videos available through links is helpful so that raters can rate during their own time, after having participated in a norming session.

3. It should be kept in mind that there are two separate forms of ASL assignments— one is the presentation and the other is a more formal ASL essay. Each requires a different rubric. In 2011, all ASL assignments were presentations, but the Institutional Outcomes Committee should discuss whether both kinds of ASL assignments should be used.

4. Several classes videotaped final presentations but these were group presentations. This data was unusable, since each member of the group was responsible for different sections of the presentation.

5. Office of Bilingual Teaching and Learning should create a sample of ASL presentations for students, faculty and staff to use as models of academic discourse in ASL.

6. Office of Bilingual Teaching and Learning create a resource base in support of the ASL rubrics, with samples and a version in ASL.

7. The Deans and Faculty Senate send an expectation to Departments that participation in SLAP is mandatory.

8. Both the English and ASL components to SLAP should be presented as part of the same project. Because each was administered by different individuals in 2011, the perception is that the two were not related as part of the same project. SLAP is in

support of Institutional outcome #1 and should be communicated as such to the University community.