

# Annual Report for Assessment of Outcomes 2011-2012 For English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)

## Self-Reflection and Cultural Awareness

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1. Describe **changes that have been implemented** towards improving students' attainment of outcomes that resulted from outcome **assessments carried out in 2010-2011**. These may include but are not limited to changes to content, materials, instruction, pedagogy etc.

The two outcomes addressed by our program last year were **communication** and **community and environmental responsibility**. Following the recommendations of last year's SAC assessment committee as well as the Learning Assessment Council, we did not implement major changes to the manner in which our department teaches communication skills as a result of our work in 2010-2011. We feel that the assessments strongly demonstrated that our program is effectively meeting the communication outcome. Also following Council recommendations, our program has continued to use the environmental speech assignment in Level 7 Communication classes. In addition, also as suggested, we normalized the rubric. We did this by videotaping some of the speeches given in this year's classes, and giving each member of the current committee the videotaped speeches along with the rubric used to assess them. We found the rubric produced similar results from instructor to instructor and thus was an accurate measure of the progress of our students and an effective tool for instructors to use in the future. We have kept the SAC informed as to the necessity of continuing this work in order to remain in compliance with this core outcome. We have also found that themes that emphasize environmental and community responsibility are commonly taught in even the lowest levels of our program. We have encouraged the continuation and expansion of these lessons.

2. Describe the assessment design (tool and processes) used.

This year we assessed the core outcomes of **self-reflection** and **cultural awareness** in Level 8 Reading, which is the last reading level of our program. Our students at this point have enough English to explore subtle themes in literature, and we feel that by this time, our students will have achieved a high level of success in the desired skills of these outcomes. In addition, the Course Outcome and Content Guide for Level 8 Reading includes mention of both of these outcomes already, and we were confident that our students would demonstrate a high level of success.

For this assessment, we chose a short piece of a memoir by Dick Gregory, entitled "*Shame*". This is a short story recounting two situations in which the author experiences shame. In the first, he reflects on a situation where he is made to feel shame due to his class and race. Then, later in life, he explores another where he unwittingly contributes to the shaming of another individual. The story is rich with history, racial strife, class conflict, and reflection on how one's actions affect the feelings of others—all themes that are essential to self-reflection, cultural awareness,

and the broader values of the ESOL program. We felt this story was a perfect match to assess the level that the students had achieved in these outcomes.

In order to evaluate students' levels of achievement of the core outcomes, students answered a set of short-answer questions about the story. A rubric was then created to classify the skills relevant to the two outcomes as "emerging," "developing," or "mastering." The assignment was given to 120 students in 7 classes district wide. Members of the committee used the rubric to assess each set of student responses. To ensure reliability, we then normalized the rubric by randomly selecting samples for each committee member to assess concurrently. We were pleased to find that the rubric held up to this process. All student and instructor identifiers were removed at the beginning of this whole process to ensure anonymity. The assignment and the rubric are below.

“Shame” by Dick Gregory

Answer the following questions as completely as possible using details from the story (short answer/paragraph format).

1. What does the word “shame” mean? Does it have the same meaning in every culture? Why not? Give examples of how and why Gregory feels shame in this story.
2. If you were Gregory in this story, what would you do in the situation with the teacher? How about the situation with the wino?
3. What are the differences in culture and class that are outlined in this story? Is Gregory from a different culture or class from his teacher? From the wino? How do you know? How might this affect the way the situations unfolded?
4. What are your cultural values regarding this situation? How does your culture treat poverty? Is there shame attached to being poor? What would the normal response be for someone from your culture in each of these situations?
5. How could the teacher have handled this without bringing shame into the equation? How could Gregory have handled it differently with the wino?
6. Dick Gregory is described as a “social activist”. What is an activist? How do you think these stories from his childhood might have shaped his future role in activism? Can you think of an example from your own life about how a negative experience turned into motivation for something positive?

**Rubric for Assessing Core Outcomes of Self-Reflection and Cultural Awareness**

**ESOL 2012**

	<b>Emerging:</b> Demonstrates a lack of self-reflection or cultural awareness	<b>Developing</b> Demonstrates some ability to reflect on self or some cultural awareness	<b>Mastering</b> Demonstrates a high level of self-reflection or cultural awareness
<b>Self-Reflection</b> Understands self as part of a community; measures beliefs against others	Can name own beliefs; examples missing or taken directly from reading	Can name values of self and/or cultures' values with limited examples	Writer can connect personal values to cultural values using examples and analysis
<b>Self-Reflection</b> Is accountable for actions and impacts of actions on others	Shows lack of empathy in responses	Shows some empathy with limited discussion	Writer expresses empathetic understanding of the consequences of actions
<b>Self-Reflection</b> Respects human rights and individual dignity	Ignores, disregards, or justifies occasions where human dignity has been violated	Expresses limited awareness of how dignity has been respected or violated in reading	Expresses empathetic awareness of how dignity is respected or violated in reading or life and explores redress of violations
<b>Self-Reflection</b> Monitors self-development	Fails to connect past experience to self	Shows some awareness of how past experiences affect self	Shows strong awareness of how past experiences affect self with original examples
<b>Cultural Awareness</b> Identifies and analyzes biased behavior	Does not name or describe biased behavior; does not identify or connect bias to a larger culture or historical context	Names instances of biased behavior but fails to connect it to larger culture or historical context	Names instances of biased behavior and connects it to a larger cultural and historical context
<b>Cultural Awareness</b> Identify cultural values of self and others	Identifies only one set of values; relies on stereotyping; examples taken directly from reading	Identifies more than one set of values; may show stereotyping in examples	Identifies, with examples, cultural values of self, home culture, and America

3. Provide information about the results (i.e., what did you learn about how well students are meeting the outcomes)?

The ESOL SAC expected positive outcomes to this year’s assessment activity. Our students live in a culture that is, to some degree or another, unfamiliar to them, and this experience invites self-reflection and a sharper awareness of both the cultural milieus they have left and those they are discovering. Furthermore, the ESOL program emphasizes the skills of self-reflection and cultural awareness. Many instructors hold the pedagogical philosophy that these two skills are intrinsic to language learning. In fact, we found that better than 80% of students are *developing* or *mastering* these skills by the last level of the program.

### Outcome 1: Self-Reflection

**Figure 1** below shows the percentages of student assignments rated as Emerging, Developing or Mastering the skill of **self-reflection**. Results are given for each of the subskills as well as the overall total. The assignments indicated high levels of competence. We found that **fully half** of students are *mastering* the skill of self-reflection overall.

Figure 1: Self-Reflection Outcomes

	<b>Emerging</b> Demonstrates a lack of self-reflection	<b>Developing</b> Demonstrates some ability to reflect on self	<b>Mastering</b> Demonstrates a high level of self-reflection	<b>Number of Responses</b>
<b>Self-Reflection Totals</b>	Average: 11.9%	Average: 38.0%	Average: 50.1%	n/a
<b>Self-Reflection Subskill 1</b> Understands self as part of a community; measures beliefs against others	7 14.5%	19 39.6%	22 45.8%	=48
<b>Self-Reflection Subskill 2</b> Is accountable for actions and impacts of actions on others	2 4.08%	21 42.8%	26 53.1%	=49
<b>Self-Reflection Subskill 3</b> Respects human rights and individual dignity	4 8.5%	17 36.2%	26 55.3%	=47
<b>Self-Reflection Subskill 4</b> Monitor self-development	8 20.5%	13 33.3%	18 46.2%	=39

### Subskill 1

**Subskill 1** In our ratings for this response, we looked for responses that compared the writer as an individual to either their home country or to the U.S. The questions were not set up to *require* this kind of response, yet many students responded in this fashion. We found that shorter responses – perhaps from students who took less time to write, or who were less competent in writing than their peers – were less successful than longer responses. Still, better than 85% of responses demonstrated that students are *developing* or *mastering* this skill.

## **Subskills 2 and 3**

We found particular strengths in **Subskills 2 and 3**, both of which are related to empathetic relationships and responses to others. This is heartening. At the outset of this exercise, we had discussed the possibility that students from highly hierarchical cultures (ones which correlate social standing to ancestry or virtue, for example) might fail to demonstrate empathy in their responses. There were in fact a small number of responses that hinted the “shameful” situations (fatherlessness, homelessness) were “deserved” in some sense. However, no student directly made this claim. In fact, surprisingly many responses illustrated that students were aware of this impulse in their home cultures, and several critiqued it explicitly.

These results were very interesting as ESOL instructors show a high degree of respect towards the great diversity of value systems our students arrive with; for example, no member of the committee would consider it appropriate to criticize students who espoused a Confucian or caste-based worldview. Yet we routinely assign readings that, we hope, encourage students to consider multiple possible frameworks. We believe these two results show that our students are evolving as they go through the program in a very genuine sense – student responses are not devised to superficially “satisfy” instructors but instead truly reflect their actual beliefs.

## **Subskill 4**

When raters examined **Subskill 4** we looked for a specific rhetorical form: comparison of student attitudes past and present. As with Subskill 1, this limited the number of responses we found successful. Fig. 1 shows that while almost all of the 49 student papers read had enough content to be rated for the other subskills, only 39 had enough content to be fairly rated for “monitoring self-development.” This suggests that the relatively poor student ratings for this area (a fifth were considered to demonstrate no more than *emerging skills*) are related to a writing weakness rather than a skill deficit. This may point the way to more careful correlation of questions to rubrics in the Assessment Committee’s future.

## Outcome 2: Cultural Awareness

**Figure 2** below indicates results for this outcome. Our requirements for a “Mastering the skill” ranking were more rhetorically stringent than those for Self-Reflection, and the results reflect this.

The reading “Shame” allows for two distinct interpretations: one that focuses primarily on the economic status of characters and one that takes into account the racial dimension of the situations described. The raters considered that responses that did not at least allude to the racial dimension did not demonstrate a “high level” of cultural awareness. Indeed, fewer than 40% of responses were considered to demonstrate a “high level” of cultural awareness.

However, results on average were even better overall than for the first outcome, with an impressive **92% Developing or Mastering the skill**.

Figure 2: Cultural Awareness Outcomes

	<b>Emerging</b> Demonstrates a lack of cultural awareness	<b>Developing</b> Demonstrates some cultural awareness	<b>Mastering</b> Demonstrates a high level of cultural awareness	<b>Number of Responses</b>
<b>Cultural Awareness Totals</b>	Average: 8.5%	Average: 53.2%	Average: 38.3%	n/a
<b>1. Cultural Awareness</b> Identify and analyze biased behavior	3 6.4%	24 51%	20 42.6%	=47
<b>2. Cultural Awareness</b> Identify cultural values of self and others	5 10.6%	26 55.3%	16 34%	=47

### Subskill 1

We found that nearly all responses successfully identified and analyzed bias in the reading. Many responses went further, and unprompted, compared instances of bias in students’ own lives to those Gregory described; many responses were sensitively written and insightful. However, to be rated as “Mastering” the skill, we looked for responses that “named instances of biased behavior and connected them to a larger cultural and historical context.” We found that all responses that looked only at *economic bias* failed to do so.

One possible reason for this is the methodology: *every Reading 8 instructor district-wide* was required to use this assignment. While instructors include readings on the history of race relations in the U.S. in many classes throughout the program, the African-American experience is not a part of the CCOG of any core class. Approved novels for Level 8 Reading include “To Kill a Mockingbird” and “The Secret Life of Bees,” both of which delve into the Civil Rights era, but also “The Joy Luck Club,” “Snow Falling on Cedars,” and “The Bean Trees” (Chinese-American, Japanese-American, and Native American experiences, respectively). Accordingly, students may not have been primed to respond to the racial dimensions of Dick Gregory’s memoir. On the whole we felt this was fair – by Level 8, we expect students to have a basic knowledge and sensitivity to recent American history, and we remain satisfied by the results overall.

## **Subskill 2**

Again, raters held high standards for the skill, considering responses that referenced the 1) student's culture, 2) Gregory's culture, AND 3) contemporary American culture as demonstrating a "high level" of cultural awareness. This accounts for the fact that this was the area with the fewest "Mastering" responses. Perhaps many ESOL instructors feel that our students benefit greatly from cultural competency; perhaps many of us hold a high standard for this skill. And, perhaps, our ratings for this skill were unnecessarily stringent. It's likely that our students, compared to their first few weeks of living in the U.S., have grown significantly in this regard. We feel that our students on the whole are demonstrating excellent outcomes for this subskill – and for the skill of Cultural Awareness overall.

### **4. Identify any changes that should, as a result of this assessment, be implemented to help improve students' attainment of outcomes. (These may include, but are not limited to, changes in curriculum, content, materials, instruction, pedagogy etc).**

Based on the results of this study students in level 8 Reading, the final level of reading in our program, are for the most part demonstrating moderate to high levels of success in the self-reflection and cultural awareness core outcomes. Less than 12% of the responses suggested that students possess only "emerging" skills in their abilities to self reflect, whereas 50.1% of student responses evidenced a "mastering" level of self reflection. Additionally, 8.5% of the responses suggested that students possess only "emerging" skills in their level of cultural awareness, while 38.3% of student responses demonstrated high levels of cultural awareness.

At every level, the ESOL program emphasizes aiding students in developing an understanding of how to succeed in the culture in which they live. The assignment that we used to demonstrate our meeting of this core outcome is a representative example of the type that most ESOL teachers in our program would implement in their classes. Although using a rubric to assess how well students are meeting the self-reflection and cultural awareness core outcomes is newer to our program, our results clearly reveal that the ESOL department is doing an exceptional job in raising cultural awareness and improving students' skills in self-reflection.

Overall, these results provide strong evidence that the ESOL program is successfully helping students to meet the core outcomes of self-reflection and cultural awareness and indicate that there is very little need to significantly alter the curriculum.

### **5. Reflect on the effectiveness of this assessment tool and assessment process. Please describe any changes to assessment methodology that would lead to more meaningful results if this assessment were to be repeated (or adapted to another outcome). Is there a different kind of assessment tool or process that the SAC would like to use for this outcome in the future? If the assessment tool and processes does not need to be revised, please indicate this.**

Overall, this assignment was an extremely effective assessment tool. It provides a strong example that could be adapted easily for other courses and levels of ESOL.

Cultural awareness is a topic close to the surface of daily living for most ESOL students. Their own ability to reflect on and identify differences between their original cultures and that of the US varies among individuals, of course, but is being consistently exercised in the language

learning process. This assessment worked very well as a tool to discuss in class and in writing their personal experiences of and reflection on cultural differences. The reading and associated questions elicited high quality written discourse focused on self-reflection and cultural awareness. The results show that most students have clear awareness of their own and others' cultural expectations and how to be respectful of those differences. However, some responses were ranked as weaker based on their rhetorical structure. Designing questions to better prompt the correct rhetorical structure in the answers will increase the accuracy of the outcomes.

While the reading that was used provides an excellent opportunity to compare cultural and class differences in the context of American history, ESOL instructors already use many books and stories that address issues of race and class in the US as well as other cultures. Using a reading more closely related to the subject matter being addressed in the rest of the course readings may lead to more accuracy in the assessment outcomes.

Another change that could lead to more meaningful assessment results in these areas would be for the instructors to use a similarly worded assignment at the beginning of the term and follow it up with a second exercise at the end of the term. The comparison of the two sets of answers might provide a more meaningful assessment of students' improvement of cultural awareness and self-reflection skills in this class. Similarly, cultural-awareness focused exercises could be instituted in Levels 3 or 4 and used as a comparison point against parallel assignments in Levels 7 or 8 to more accurately evaluate the effectiveness of the ESOL program as a whole in educating students in these skills.

This assessment fits easily into the curriculum of a reading course, but it could also be adapted into any other ESOL course with adjustments to match the curriculum at different levels. It could also be adapted to be used with a film clip to elicit written or spoken response in writing or communication classes. With the wealth of materials already in use, the SAC could create a bank of readings and resources such as films that could be used at different levels to further facilitate the students' mastery of cultural awareness and self-reflection and assessments to more accurately measure those outcomes.