

Connecting Learning Outcomes to Career Goals: What Can Students Do with a Degree in Linguistics?

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Background: Why do Students Choose Linguistics?

- **Issue:** Students don't know about Linguistics before coming to KU, and there is a trend toward fewer majors, with more students minoring, *despite* increasingly wide range of careers for undergraduates with Linguistics training.
- **How can we make the program's learning outcomes (LOs) more visible to students?** Critical for students to:
 - Decide to pursue Linguistics degree.
 - Leverage their Linguistics training when entering the workforce.
- **Main goals:**
 1. Understand student perspectives regarding Linguistics and how it relates to their career goals/options.
 2. Better communicate our LOs and career opportunities.
 3. Work with faculty/staff to enhance student experience.

Project Approach

1. Conduct Focus Groups with Introductory Linguistics Students and with Linguistics Majors/Minors:

- **Fall 2024:** Introductory Linguistics Students (N=61 students enrolled in LING 106/LING110).
- **Spring 2025:** Linguistics Majors and Minors (N=14).

2. Initial Department Actions: Increase Awareness of Learning Outcomes:

- Develop ways to increase undergraduates' understanding of how Linguistics LOs lead to diverse career opportunities by showcasing specific career pathways.

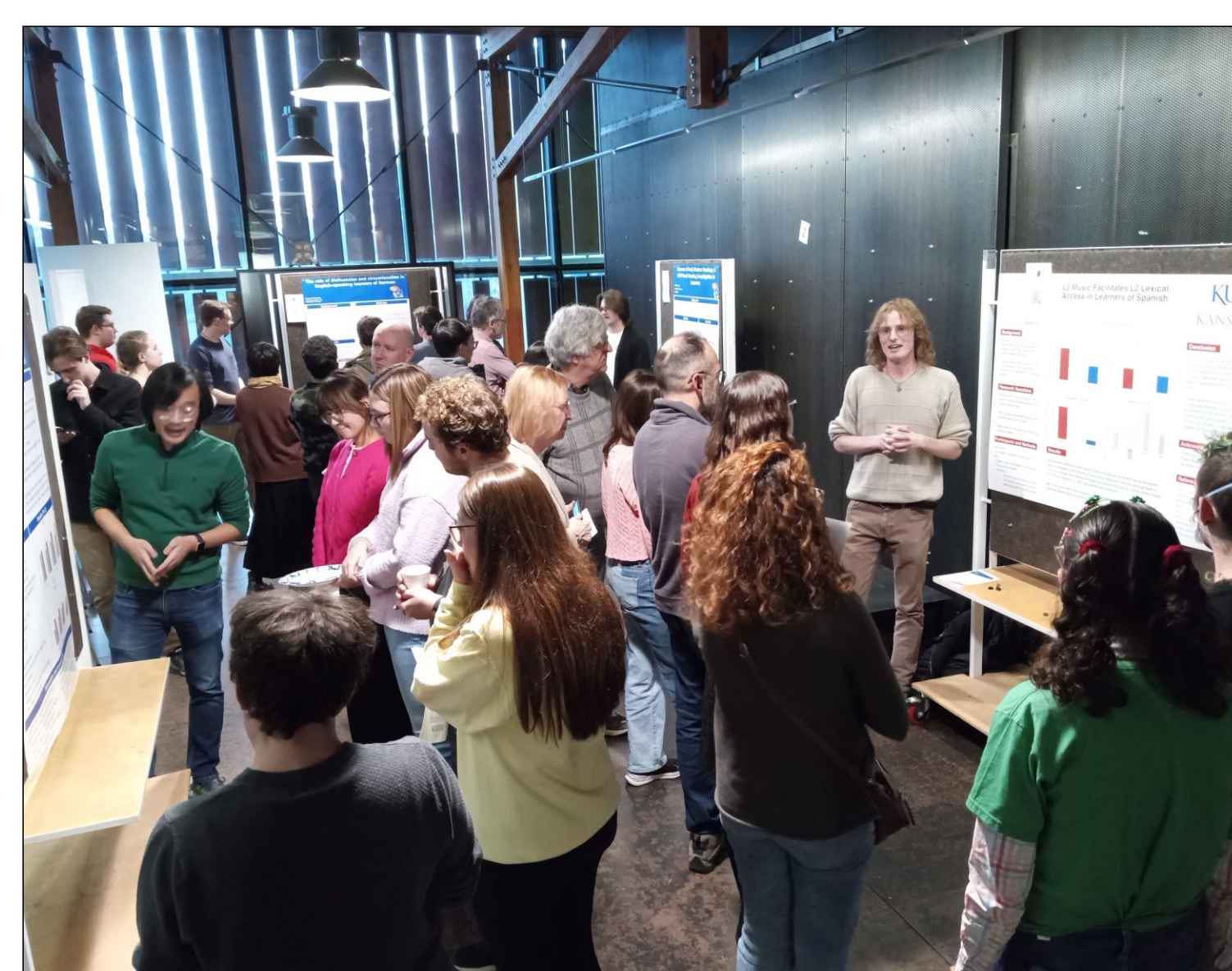
Project Findings and Actions

Findings from Fall 2024-Spring 2025 Focus Groups:

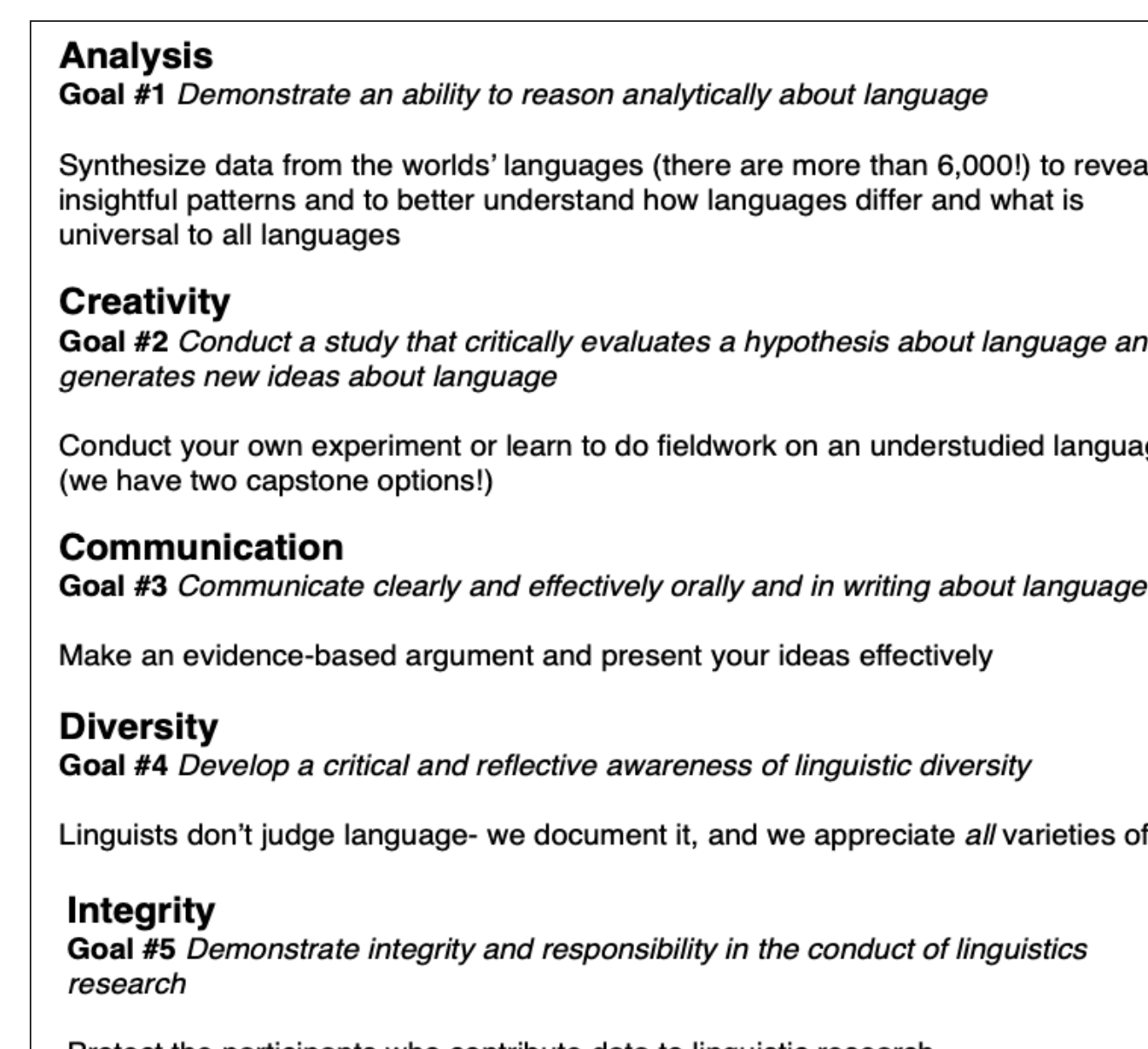
- Students were very positive about their experience in our intro courses and throughout the major/minor.
- However, they expressed that **they were unsure about what they could do with Linguistics training.**
 - *I have a tough time imagining roles where just a Linguistics degree is enough for a job. (Intro student)*
 - *I would like more practical examples directly related to linguistics and its applications. (Intro student)*
 - *I feel like it's a pretty flexible major, but I didn't know how it could apply to jobs until recently. (Current major/minor)*
- This also clearly **impacted students' likelihood of pursuing further Linguistics coursework:**
 - *...I like the class a lot, but I need to know more about careers before I take more. (Intro student)*
 - *Knowing potential career paths earlier might make it more attractive to major in Linguistics. (Current major/minor)*

Department Actions: Increasing Awareness of Linguistics LOs

- **Sharing Learning Outcomes** in the Department and at Department Events.
- **Fall 2024 Linguistics Celebration of Undergraduate Research:** Awarded all posters on best exemplified LO.



Fall 2024 Linguistics Celebration of Undergraduate Research



Linguistics Learning Outcomes Poster

Next Steps

- **Spring 2025 Ideas to Action Retreat (May 2, 2025):** Discuss findings from Fall 2024 and Spring 2025 Focus Groups to identify areas to improve and actionable items.
- **Develop intro-level assessment** to better understand students' needs *before* becoming Linguistics majors/minors.
- **Develop end-of-program assessment** to understand whether our graduating students know how Linguistics skills can apply in various careers.
- **Create ways to share info at the course/Dept. level:**
 - Make videos of Linguistics alums in different careers.
 - Host undergraduate professional development events: e.g., for developing LinkedIn pages or resumes.
 - Incorporate within classes practical applications of Linguistics skills in different settings, e.g.:
 - Use Linguistics skills on business/marketing task.
 - Characterize the speech of a patient in a speech clinic.
 - Address a legal issue using Linguistics knowledge.
 - Analyze computer speech processing/production.

Reflections

- Value of both **student input** as well as **faculty expertise** to understand student needs and directions for growth.
- Value of **working as a Department** to consider both the curriculum and student experience.
- Opportunities to learn from our **alumni** and other units at KU to enhance our program and the experience and outcomes for our undergraduate students.

This project was undertaken as part of CTE's Ideas to Action Program