



NOTAT FRA PROGRAMSTYRET ANGÅENDE PROGRAMSENSORRAPPORT I ENGELSK LINGVISTIKK FOR VÅREN 2019

Programstyret har mottatt rapport fra Programsensor for engelsk lingvistikk, Gjertrud Flermoen Stenbrenden, UiO. Rapporten omtaler to masteremner i engelsk lingvistikk, ENG345 og ENG349. Rapporten ble behandlet i programstyremøtet 15.04.2020.

Kommentarer fra programstyret

Siden programsensorens kommentarer om pensumlitteratur og karakterfordelingen gjenspeiler lingvistenes oppfatning, er programstyrets notat begrenset til kommentar om oppbyggingen av våre emnebeskrivelser. Faget selv er misfornøyd med den nåværende praksisen hvor masteremnene er omtalt i form av en passepartout tekst (med vurderingsform som den eneste variabelen) mens det faktiske innholdet i emnene varierer fra år til år. Faget er enig om å bytte til et annerledes system hvor de innholdsmessig forskjellige emnene får sine egne koder.

Fagkoordinator: Dagmar Haumann

Dato: 17.04.2020

Report from *programsensor* for linguistics at the University of Bergen

February 2020

Programsensor: Gjertrud Flermoen Stenbrenden, Associate Professor of English Language, University of Oslo

Courses evaluated: ENG345, ENG349

Scope of evaluation: spring 2017 to spring 2019

1. Introduction

I received the documents pertaining to the courses evaluated in December 2019. The documents submitted for each course were: online and written course descriptions, the teachers' course reports and literature lists, student evaluations, exam questions and exam statistics.

I will closely follow the *Retningslinjer for programsensor ved Universitetet i Bergen*, as outlined in the *Programsensormappe*. They suggest that my duties are to assess and evaluate the framework (*opplegg*) for and execution (*gjennomføring*) of courses offered in English language at the Department of Foreign Languages at the University of Bergen.

The aspects which the *Retningslinjer* specify for assessment and evaluation are:

- I. Syllabi, course structure, teaching;
- II. Forms of assessment, including the use of external examiners;
- III. The extent to which the *programsensor* has participated in discussions about quality development/improvement in the particular *studieprogram* in question;
- IV. Any special circumstances in the execution of relevant courses;
- V. The role and tasks of the *programsensor*.

Points I, II, IV call for an assessment of the courses themselves and their execution, including course descriptions, learning outcomes, syllabi, forms of assessment, exam results, etc., whereas points III and V ask the *programsensor* to self-evaluate and assess her role as such. This is my third annual report as *programsensor*, so questions III and V will be addressed very briefly here: I have not yet participated in discussions of quality or potential improvements.

In the following sections, I will evaluate and comment on the courses assessed this time, in terms of points I and II (and IV where relevant) as specified above (sections 2-3); my role as *programsensor* is assessed (section 4), and I take a final look at the courses as part of a larger context (section 5).

2. ENG345 English(es) in contact

This course is a 300-level course whose content may vary; when it was taught in the spring of 2019, it was called "English(es) in contact", and was concerned with contact between English and other languages to "produce such diverse outcomes as standard English, New Zealand English, the New Englishes of former British and American colonies, and pidgin and creole varieties" (from the teacher's report).

Course description, syllabus, structure, teaching and special circumstances

In terms of the knowledge gained, the students are supposed to acquire insights into methodological and theoretical approaches within the field. The students are further supposed

to be able to apply their knowledge and skills in teaching and disseminating research, and to be able to express themselves clearly in academic English.

The textbook was Schreier & Hundt 2013, and there was a list of further reading made available digitally.

Instruction was given in the form of two-hour seminars running for eight weeks, for a total of 16 hours of teaching. When the course was taught in the spring of 2019, the students had to present two texts each from the reading list. The final assessment is a four-hour written school exam.

Assessment

The online course description is clearly formulated, a couple of typographical errors notwithstanding; it is also somewhat vague, given that the contents of the course may vary. However, the description provided by the teacher and found under “Reading list” when the course was taught is very clear. The pensum is well-chosen, and there are no negative comments on the students’ part that suggest it is too difficult.

The course report written by the teacher is informative, and indicates no particular problems. One of the students comments that s/he would have liked to know earlier that the students would have to present syllabus texts, but it does not appear to have been much of an issue at all.

As for the student evaluations, they are generally very positive for both spring 2018 and spring 2019, but even more positive for 2019, which points to a good development. The course scores full points on availability of information about the course, level of difficulty, progression, syllabus, learning outcomes and relevance, and the quality of teaching is rated between 4 and 5, with 5 being the highest. Students have spent 2 hours a week on average on the course, which is low, but a common phenomenon.

As for the exam, the questions were pertinent and central to the topic; the three students who sat the final exam in spring 2019 were awarded a B, a C, and a D, respectively, for an average of C. A school exam is perfectly adequate, though one wonders whether a term paper or home exam might be better at this level. That is of course up to the teacher to determine.

3. ENG349 Words, words, words

As with ENG345, the contents of this course may vary; when it was taught in the spring of 2019, the working title was “Words, words, words”, and was concerned with “English morphology and morphological theory. It provides the descriptive, analytical and theoretical tools for studying the internal structure of words as well as the various processes by which words are formed and changed. Special emphasis is placed on the interplay between morphology and other components of the language system, such as phonology and syntax, as well as on diachronic and acquisitional aspects of English morphology” (from the teacher’s report).

Course description, syllabus, structure, teaching and special circumstances

The learning outcomes are identical to those specified for ENG345: in terms of the knowledge gained, the students are supposed to acquire insights into methodological and theoretical approaches within the field. The students are further supposed to be able to apply their knowledge and skills in teaching and disseminating research, and to be able to express themselves clearly in academic English.

The instruction was given in the form of seminars of two hours for eight weeks, for a total of 16 hours of teaching.

The textbooks were Bauer 2010 and Booij 2012, in addition to nine articles or chapters by various scholars collected in a compendium or available online.

The final assessment was a combination of a take-home exam asking the students to produce one long essay of 1500 words, and three short answers of 500 words each, and an oral exam based on the written exam.

Assessment

The online course description is somewhat vague, as the contents of the course may vary; but the description provided by the teacher (and found under “Reading list”) is precise and clear. The learning outcomes are formulated clearly.

The syllabus texts seem well-chosen, and the students do not seem to have found them difficult in the spring of 2019; in previous semesters, students have commented that the pensum is too extensive with too much to read.

Student reviews are generally very favourable for spring 2019, which points to a good development. The course scores full marks on availability of information, level of difficulty, progression, extent and relevance of the syllabus, and learning outcomes. The quality of teaching is very high, scoring 5 (out of 5) on teaching, in-course feedback and feedback on assignments. Only two students took the course, both have responded in the evaluation; one has spent two hours a week on average on the course, the other 5 or more hours. The students report that they liked the slides, tasks and discussions in class. One student suggests that they limit themselves to one theory rather than having to read about several theories, but at this level, students must expect to familiarise themselves with different models of language.

The exam questions posed in the spring of 2019 covered central topics in the syllabus. The teacher’s report states that 1 A and 1 B were awarded to the two students who sat the exam. The choice of a take-home exam combined with an oral exam seems like a good decision, although one of the students comments that it felt like having two separate exams.

4. The role and tasks of the *programmsensor*

Points III and V in the *retningslinjer for programmsensor* concern “the extent to which the *programmsensor* has participated in discussions about quality development/improvement in the particular *studieprogram* in question” and “the role and tasks of the *programmsensor*”.

Regarding the first point, I have not participated in discussions of the development of quality at the University of Bergen, but I consider this report and prior reports to *be* part of such a discussion, as they address the quality of the courses taught as well as potential improvements. If the University of Bergen and the Department would like me to, I am of course willing to participate more directly in such discussions.

The *programmsensor*’s role, in my opinion, is to address all the topics explicitly raised in the *retningslinjer*, and to offer suggestions for improvement, if relevant. Any such suggestions are advisory only, and it is up to the Department to implement them. The Department and teachers are very welcome to contact me if there are matters which are unclear.

5. Summing up

The two courses evaluated here seem to have worked very well, both at their intended level and as part of the totality of courses taught on English language and linguistics.

Challenges with the courses may be related to low student numbers, but that is a national trend for master's studies in English language, and little can be done to change it. Other, more course-specific, challenges seem to have been addressed satisfactorily by the teachers, as issues which are raised in student evaluations for 2017 and 2018 are not commented on in the evaluation for 2019.

The more precise course descriptions are found online only under "Reading list". I understand that this is due to the fact that the course content may vary although the course code remains the same, but I still wonder if it is possible to provide them in the general course description or make them more visible in some way.

Oslo, 13 February 2020

Sincerely,



Gjertrud Flermoen Stenbrenden