

ANALYZING THE PLACEMENT OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS IN
ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE FOR ACADEMIC PURPOSES (EAP) COURSES

By

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To Sharon, Aidan, Collin, & Sabrina

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ESL	English as a Second Language
EAP	English as a Second Language for Academic Purposes, usually refers to ESL at the college level.
Generation 1.5	Generation 1.5 students usually have come to the United States in their early teen or pre-teen years. They have often attended U.S. schools, and many of these students have even graduated from American high schools. While attending American schools, these students have had time to acquire informal English. Many of them use American idiomatic expressions, and some may even have American accents. Errors in their language are detectable, but they do not interfere with understanding, and these students are comfortable speaking English and do so with relative ease. Their reading, grammar, and writing skills on the other hand are usually behind that of their college-ready peers. They are not what you may consider true ESL students, but they are not true native English speaking students either.
LOEP	Levels of English Proficiency Test. Used to refer to the ACCUPLACER ESL battery of tests.

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The intention of this research was to increase the effectiveness of student placement tools and strategies used by community colleges to place nonnative English speakers into courses designed to teach English for future academic pursuits. More specifically, this research sought to analyze and improve placement practices at Valencia Community College in Orlando, Florida by identifying placement variables that best predicted success in various English as a second language (ESL) for Academic Purposes (EAP) courses. Locus of Control scale scores, a computed indicator of Generation 1.5 status, and results from four subtests of the ACCUPLACER Levels of English Placement (LOEP) Test were tested individually and within composite models for their ability to predict success as measured by final course grades and teacher evaluations of placement. These variables were tested for their ability to predict successful placement of first semester, self-identified nonnative English speakers into ESL classes covering four different skills (reading, writing, speech, and grammar) across five different levels of possible placement (EAP levels 2–6). Results indicated that the reading subtest was the best predictor of student final course grades. The essay subtest was the best predictor of teacher evaluation of placement, and individual subtests were preferred over composite models. Furthermore, both Locus of Control and the computed indicator of Generation 1.5 status were

found to be correlates of student success. Additional recommendations are suggested for how to improve placement practices.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Impetus for the Study

There has been a long standing need for accurate placement of nonnative speakers of English into academic programs. Program administrators and faculty have been concerned about this need for more than 50 years, as evidenced by Gibian (1951) and Ives (1953). The goals of admitting and placing students accurately into programs designed to develop their language skills to a level commensurate with their college-ready peers have led to a variety of testing instruments and English as a Second Language (ESL) programs nationwide. Unfortunately, many of the tests used by colleges and schools to place students were not originally designed for this purpose.

For admissions purposes, most schools use some form of language proficiency test, the most common being the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language). Although the TOEFL, much like the SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Test) and the ACT (American College Test), is a moderate predictor of overall success in college, it is not designed to serve as a placement tool. Many schools also employ other language proficiency tests for placement purposes, like the CELSA (Combined English Language Skills Assessment), the CELT (Comprehensive English Language Test), the Accuplacer LOEP (Levels of English Proficiency), and the Accuplacer CPT (College Placement Test). However, these tests are designed to assess proficiency and do not align language skills with individual course objectives and outcomes. More accurate placement would result from the analysis of test results and survey data designed to identify student characteristics aligned with course objectives and outcomes. This concept is supported by The College Board and Accuplacer developers:

ACCUPLACER tests are designed to assist institutions in placing students into appropriate courses. Given that institutions differ greatly with respect to composition of the student

body, faculty, and course content...each institution should establish their own cut scores to facilitate placement decisions based on factors and data unique to their institution (College Board, 2003)

However, most colleges do not have the budget required to administer a large battery of surveys and tests or to hire individuals who can identify student goals, prior experiences, background knowledge and abilities. Therefore, many schools simply rely on a few multiple choice tests to make placement decisions.

Another major problem with the current use of placement tests is the way they are administered. Students often take placement tests during the application or admissions process. For many students, this is a long day where they are required to stand in lines for lengthy periods of time. By the time they are given their placement tests, many students are frustrated, tired, hungry, or simply more interested in getting back to work or play than taking tests. Therefore, results on these tests may not be accurate representations of the true abilities of these students.

Another confounding factor is that many students feel pressured to take placement tests. Students are often unaware of established application deadlines and arrive late expecting to enroll in classes quickly. Rather than waiting and applying for a subsequent semester, they often feel an urgent need to complete prerequisite testing regardless of how it might affect placement. This pressure, in conjunction with disinterest in the test, presents a problem because many students are unaware that their results on these tests will affect their future placement into courses.

For nonnative English speaking populations, these problems are compounded in that nonnative speakers often have trouble understanding instructions and the processes involved in testing. These students may also be limited by time. Some international students are simply traveling in the United States visiting programs for which they may later seek student visas. They may not have the language skills to explain why they would rather come back and take a

placement test on another occasion. And, nonnative English speakers may end up taking multiple tests in a single day because schools often require one exam for admission and another for placement into programs.

Due to both an increase in ESL student populations and the inability of existing ESL programs to adequately prepare these students for college courses, post-secondary institutions around the U.S. have been developing multileveled preparatory programs for nonnative speakers of English. These programs are often significantly more complex than the typical two-level preparatory programs for native English-speaking high school graduates needing academic assistance in their transition to post-secondary education. For example, each community college in the state of Florida has been able to develop a program that best suits its unique needs. Given different populations and different needs, schools across the state of Florida have adopted different programs offering different courses and therefore requiring different placement criteria.

Due to budget constraints, timing issues, and lack of personnel, institutions have been forced to simply do their best in developing programs that provide for the needs of their diverse populations. A consortium of concerned ESL/EAP professionals has been working to address problems inherent in the state's EAP programs: the variety of needs present, exit testing, placement testing, and the special needs of Generation 1.5 students. Generation 1.5 is a term coined by Rumbaut and Ima (1988). It refers to students from non-English speaking backgrounds who typically have lived in the U.S. for some time, have aural/oral competence in English that is near native, but read and write at a level below average in English. (For more information on Generation 1.5 students, Chapter 2).

Although the consortium of ESL/EAP professionals is making strides to address many of the issues listed above, it has not been able to address and solve all of the problems. For

example, even though there are relatively standard courses across EAP programs, there are no common placement exams for entrance into these courses. In addition, even schools that use the same placement exams and offer the same courses have developed different cut-scores, i.e., scores that are used to make decisions about the level of a program in which a student will be placed.

At a consortium meeting in June of 2004 held at Valencia Community College (VCC), it was discovered that none of the 12 colleges present had empirically addressed the troublesome issue of placement, and to this date, little has changed. However, currently the consortium is entering Phase 3 of a statewide Council on Instructional Affairs (CIA) initiative to standardize how EAP students are placed in community college courses within the state. To facilitate this initiative, on February 9, 2007, the consortium chair presented recommendations to the CIA for changes to existing statutes. One recommendation was to adjust state statutes and administrative rules so that programs could elect to offer institutional credit for EAP courses. Another recommendation was that the administrative rules on college-level testing and placement be amended to read, "...Prior to the completion of registration, the EAP students' language proficiency shall be assessed by the College Board Accuplacer LOEP or the ACT Compass ESL." Members of the consortium have called for any research that could assist them in developing more accurate placement that would allow for a stronger match between student abilities and goals and the courses they require to achieve those goals.

Students are best placed into courses that challenge them but allow them to earn passing grades and achieve acceptable levels of understanding. Students are misplaced in courses that are either too difficult or too easy to provide any meaningful challenges. At many schools, students are often placed above or below their levels of ability, which may lead to high stress or extreme

boredom. This stress and boredom can in turn lead to low attendance, disruptive behavior in the classroom, failure to achieve, and poor grades. Students who feel high levels of stress may also not see success as a possibility, which can lead them to withdraw from a course or program. This is often the case with Generation 1.5 students.

Given the anecdotal and observed evidence identifying the inadequacy of current placement practices for EAP students at Valencia (See Chapter 2), there is a clear need to identify a more meaningful, comprehensive, and efficient system for placing students. This system should take into account student background, both personal and academic, student abilities, and any other factors that can be identified to affect placement (i.e., level of education & literacy in the native language, age, motivation, etc.).

In order to do this, a placement system needs to be established that could collect multiple sources of information through the use of survey and test results. However, identifying optimum placement is a challenging endeavor. The criteria that are most often used to judge effective placement are frequently influenced by variables other than student ability and performance. Teacher beliefs about students' true abilities are affected by attendance, participation, and student attitudes. Final course grades are also influenced by these same teacher beliefs and other factors like social promotion. In other words, relying solely on teacher judgment as a variable may tell us more about student/teacher relationships and teacher perception of student attitudes than it does about student abilities. However, using only final course grades might be too limited because it fails to account for students who lack skills or fail to complete work. These students are then passed on because teachers are afraid to have high numbers of failing students or simply do not wish to see those same students again the following semester. Therefore, in this study

both final course grade and teacher evaluation of placement were used to identify variables that best predict student success.

Purpose and Rationale

The intention of this research was to increase the effectiveness of student placement tools and strategies used by community colleges to place nonnative English speakers into courses designed to teach English for future academic pursuits. More specifically, this research sought to identify variables that predicted the successful placement of second language students into Valencia's EAP program. It was assumed that identifying effective predictors would provide the researcher and other decision makers with the necessary information to make decisions about existing placement mechanisms. It would also inform other institutions as to best practices.

In order to prepare students for college courses, many community colleges have developmental, or preparatory, reading and writing programs. These programs usually offer two levels of each skill prior to admitting students to the first level of college composition. These developmental courses are designed for native English speakers who do not have the reading and writing skills necessary for college courses. In contrast to programs designed for native English speakers, the EAP program at Valencia includes fifteen (15) courses spanning five (5) levels, covering up to four (4) different language skills per level. It should be mentioned here that EAP programs in the State of Florida can have up to 6 ability levels. However, faculty members at Valencia decided that allowing students with language proficiencies below the cut-off at level 2 might negatively impact Adult Education programs at the county level. Therefore, students demonstrating language proficiencies below level 2 are sent to Orange County for adult basic education. Given the large span of Valencia's 15 course EAP program, accurate placement of students is a significant concern. Students are currently placed into this matrix of courses based on an established formula for averaging scores from four parts of a placement test: one

holistically graded essay and three objectively graded subtests. (For more information, see Chapter 2)

In short, students currently take and receive scores for three objectively graded LOEP subtests (Reading, Sentence Meaning, and Language Use). The three objective scores are then averaged. This averaged score is then averaged with a number derived from the students' holistically scored essay and the average is used to place students. This, however, has not always been the method of placement at Valencia. From 2001 through 2003, essays were not used. The decision to not use essays was in large part due to requests by counseling and admissions personnel who wanted the ability to register, test, and assign students to classes in one day. EAP teachers agreed to a trial period, but as they noted more instances of misplacement of students, they asked to have essays reinstated. Prior to reinstating the reading of essays for placement, students were placed simply by the average of the three objectively graded subtests. Some believe Valencia should return to this older process; others believe the college should use individual subtest scores to place students in skills courses at different levels.

Research Questions

In addition to identifying descriptive information about Valencia's EAP, this research sought to identify the most effective aspects among several approaches to placing students into EAP courses at Valencia by finding answers to the following questions:

1. What are the student and teacher beliefs about placement at Valencia?
2. Which of the following three approaches best predicts student success as measured by final course grades and teacher evaluation of placement?

Model 1: Averaging the three objectively scored LOEP subtests, without the essay

Model 2: Using an equally weighted average of both the objectively scored LOEP subtests and the Essay test

Model 3: Using the four LOEP subtests as individual predictors

3. Which of all approaches best predicts success across different language skill courses (reading, writing, grammar, and speech) and language proficiency levels as measured by final course grades?
4. Which of all approaches best predicts success across different language skill courses (reading, writing, grammar, and speech) and language proficiency levels as measured by teacher evaluation of placement?
5. Do the student variables of Locus of Control and Generation 1.5 add to the prediction of placement in EAP courses as measured by final course grades and teacher evaluation of placement?

Variables

In addition to describing Valencia's EAP student population and eliciting both quantitative and descriptive feedback about placement at Valencia, this research employed multiple regression analyses to test the predictive abilities of a variety of independent variables on two different dependent variables.

Dependent Variables

Final Course Grades: Each course name (i.e., EAP 1640) represents the final course grades that students received in each course. Final grades have been assigned the following point values: A=4, B=3, C=2, D=1, and F=0. Each course number also gives information about the course. The first number, either a "0" or a "1," represents whether or not a course counts for credit ("1" indicates college credit). The second number, "2 through 6" indicates the level of a course, 6 indicating the highest skill level. The final two numbers indicate the type of course; 00 = Speech, 20 = Reading, 40 = Writing, 60 = Grammar, and 81 = Combined Skills.

Teacher Evaluation of Placement: During the summer of 2006, teachers were asked to rate the placement of their current EAP students. They were asked to identify students as either well placed or to recommend an alternate placement level. Using results from instructor surveys, students were placed into 7 different levels. Levels 2–6 correspond with the levels

offered at Valencia, and levels 1 and 7 signify the teacher belief that a student is either under or over prepared for Valencia's program.

Independent Variables

Locus of Control (LOCSCAL): This term stands for Locus of Control scale score. During the summer of 2006, 470 students took the Trice Locus of Control inventory as part of their student surveys. Scores ranged between 0 – 28.

Generation 1.5 (GN15CMPT): This term is a computed indicator of Generation 1.5 status. An attempt was made to validate a survey measure of the variable through correlation with the teacher judgment of the construct. During the summer of 2006, students and teachers took surveys. Students were asked a variety questions thought to relate to the construct as discussed in the literature on Generation 1.5 students (See Chapter 2). Teachers were asked to identify students in their courses who they thought were members of Generation 1.5.

Intercorrelations between student survey responses and teacher ratings of Generation 1.5 status as measured in the instructor surveys revealed that three survey questions demonstrated small to medium correlations (Cohen, 1988) with teacher evaluation of Generation 1.5 status: The grade students started school in the U.S. $r = -.35$ $p < .001$, students age $r = -.26$ $p < .001$, and if a student had gone to college outside the US $r = -.26$ $p < .001$. The formula for this indicator identified students as Generation 1.5 if they answered yes to two of the following three criteria: 1) if the student started school in the U.S. before 10th grade, 2) if the student was younger than 20, and 3) if they had not gone to college in another country. This variable is moderately correlated with teacher identification of 1.5 status, $r = .40$ $p < .001$.

LOEP Reading (LORC): This term stands for the Levels of English Proficiency reading test score, a score between 1 and 120. On this test, students read passages of 50 to 90 words and then answer questions about their reading. They may read about the arts, science, or history.

Half of the test questions ask about information that is stated in the passage. The other half asks students to identify the main ideas, fact vs. opinion, or the author's point of view.

LOEP Language Use (LOLU): This term stands for the Levels of English Proficiency language use test score, a score between 1 and 120. This test is designed to measure the students' understanding of the English vocabulary. The sentences come from a variety of different subject areas. Students are asked questions about basic and important idioms, particularly terms of beauty, age, greatness, and size, adverbs such as before, after, during, and prepositions of directions and place.

LOEP Sentence Meaning (LOSM): This term stands for the Levels of English Proficiency Sentence Meaning test score, a score between 1 and 120. Students are asked to fill in a blank with a word or phrase, or combine two sentences. The skills covered are writing skills including the proper use of nouns and verbs.

LOEP Essay (LOES): This term stands for the Levels of English Proficiency Essay test score, a score between 1 and 120. Students have 60 minutes to write an essay on a topic provided by the administrator. Students are asked to organize their ideas carefully and to present them in more than one paragraph. Trained readers at Valencia read each student's essay and rate it from 1 to 7. This number is then multiplied by 10 and added to the number 50.

LOEP Average (LOEPAVG): This term stands for the computed average of the three objectively scored LOEP subtests: LORC, LOLU, and LOSM. This represents the method used to place students during the two-year period that essays were not read.

LOEP Average with Essay (LPAVGWE): This is the current methodology used at Valencia Community College to place students. It is a composite score derived from the average of LOEPAVG and LOES.

Limitations

A primary limitation of all studies identifying the predictive characteristics of tests has been summarized by the College Board (2003), “There is no perfect measure of appropriate course placement.” There are a variety of reasons why students may not do well in courses including prior experience, motivation and background knowledge.

Another limitation of studies such as the current study is that the generalizations are somewhat restricted due to institution-specific data. Unless other institutions have matching populations and offer similar courses, the transferability of findings is limited. In this study, the demographics of the population and course descriptions are reported in detail.

Another limitation deals with regression analyses in general. In regression analyses, Schmidt (1971) suggested minimum case-to-predictor ratios ranging in value from 15-to-1 to 25-to-1. Using these ratios, this research would require anywhere from 15 to 100 students per regression. Nunnally (1978) stated that if there are only two or three independent variables and no pre-selection is made among them, 100 or more subjects would provide a multiple correlation with little bias. Haris (1975) recommended that the number of subjects be greater than 50 + the number of predictor variables.

Because it was unknown how many first semester EAP students would be taking courses during the time period the surveys were being administered, it was not possible to identify whether or not this research would have enough students to carry out reliable regression analyses. Therefore, two studies were proposed. The first would use LOEP subtest and final course grade data gathered on first semester EAP students attending Valencia for the three

academic years prior to the study. The second study would use data gathered from first time EAP students responding to the surveys during the summer of 2006. As it turned out, only 131 first semester students were in the survey group which would have led to critically low numbers in each course.

CHAPTER 2 REVIEW OF RESEARCH

Anecdotal reports from EAP instructors at Valencia have indicated that current placement practices are not effective. If evidence can be established that teachers' reports are valid and placement is ineffective, adjustments to placement procedures could be made now before Valencia begins to experience problems related to the forecasted growth of ESL populations. The Bureau of Economic and Business Research at the University of Florida projects a 10% increase in Spanish speaking populations in Orange and Osceola counties (Valencia's feeder counties) between 2005 and 2015. This population is expected to increase 17% by 2030. (BEBR, 2005) However, identifying valid and reliable placement mechanisms for placing students into language programs depends on properly operationalizing the construct or constructs being tested.

Language Competence

What exactly does it mean to be competent or fluent in the use of a second language, and how is competence determined? Structural linguists from the 1940's and 1950's often viewed language positivistically as a formal code that could be analyzed, taught, and tested. From their perspective, discrete point tests could distinguish competent use of language. Views began to change, however, in the late 1950's with Chomsky's (1957) distinction between competence and performance. The concept was further analyzed by Troike (1969) as receptive and productive competence and performance. Beliefs about language have continued to evolve over the past quarter of a century through the works of individuals such as Dell Hymes (1972). Hymes introduced the concept of communicative competence and argued that speakers of a language have to have more than grammatical competence in order to be able to communicate effectively in a language. Speakers also need to know how language is used by members of a speech community to accomplish their purposes. These beliefs have been expanded and have evolved

further through the works of Oller (1979), Canale and Swain (1980), Bachman (1990) and others.

Although Hymes introduced the concept of communicative competence, the work conducted by Canale and Swain (1980) became canon in applied linguistics. According to Canale and Swain (1980), communicative competence consists of four components: grammatical competence (sentence structure/syntax), sociolinguistic competence (appropriateness of language use), discourse competence (cohesion and coherence), and strategic competence (use of communication strategies). A more recent study of communicative competence by Bachman (1990) further expands the concept. In this view, communicative competence can be divided into two aspects: linguistic competencies which include phonology and orthography, grammar, vocabulary, and discourse; and pragmatic competencies which include functional, sociolinguistic, interactional, and cultural competence.

In Bachman's view, the linguistic aspects of communicative competence are those involved in achieving an internalized functional knowledge of the elements of a language. Individuals who have phonological competence have the ability to produce the distinctive and meaningful sounds of a language: consonants, vowels, tone and intonation patterns, rhythm patterns, stress patterns, and all other suprasegmental features that carry meaning. Orthographic competence is closely related to phonological competence; however, orthographic competence describes an individual's ability to decipher and encode the writing system of a language. An individual with grammatical competence has the ability to recognize and produce the distinctive grammatical structures of a language and to use them effectively in communication. Individuals with lexical competence have the ability to recognize and use words in a language in the way similar to that of native speakers using them. This includes understanding the different

relationships among families of words, idiomatic (non-literal) expressions, and the common collocations of words. Individuals with discourse competence have the ability to understand and construct oral and written messages from various genres: narrative, expository, persuasive, and descriptive. These individuals understand that different genres have different characteristics that help maintain coherence and perform various functions.

In Bachman's view, the pragmatic aspects of communicative competence are those that have to do with how language is used in communication situations to achieve the speaker's purposes. Individuals with functional competence have the ability to accomplish communicative purposes in a language, like greeting people or requesting assistance or information. Individuals with sociolinguistic competence have the ability to interpret the social context of linguistic utterances and to use language in socially appropriate ways for any communication situation. An individual with interactional competence knows how to interpret and apply the unwritten rules for interaction in various communication situations within a given speech community and culture. These individuals can initiate and manage conversations and negotiate meaning with other people while paying specific attention to body language, eye contact, and proximity. Individuals with cultural competence have ability to understand behavior from the standpoint of the members of a culture and to behave in a way that would be understood by the members of the culture in the intended way. In other words, these individuals use language appropriate to the social structure of a culture and the values, assumptions, and beliefs of the people.

Although Accuplacer LOEP developers do not describe or conceptualize the language of their tests in terms of Bachman's views of competence, the LOEP subtests currently offered at VCC do tend to focus more on the linguistic rather than pragmatic aspects of communicative competence. For example, because the test is written, test takers need some level orthographic

competence to decipher and encode the writing system of English. Knowledge of grammar and vocabulary is tested in that students are required to recognize and produce the distinctive grammatical structures of English and to use them effectively in communication. In addition, students need to recognize and use words in English in ways that are similar to the ways native English speakers use them. One could argue that knowledge of discourse is another underlying competency assessed in both the reading and writing tests because understanding of rhetorical patterns would enhance students' abilities to interpret reading passages and organize essays.

Phonology and the pragmatic competencies, on the other hand, are not as readily identifiable in the LOEP tests currently used at Valencia. Because Valencia does not give the LOEP Listening test, students are not assessed on their ability to interpret and produce the distinctive and meaningful sounds of English. This could be a major weakness considering the fact that these LOEP tests are used to place EAP students into EAP Speech courses. In addition to phonology, the LOEP Listening subtest could also add information about students' pragmatic competencies; the test purports to be a measure that

measures the ability to listen to and understand one or more people speaking in English. The conversations take place in academic environments such as lecture halls, study sessions, a computer lab, the library, the gymnasium, and the like; and in everyday environments such as at home, shopping, at a restaurant, at a dentist's office, listening to the radio, reading the newspaper, and performing tasks at work. (College Board, 2004)

Assessment of Language Competence

Bachman's expanded view of communicative competence may give a glimpse at why assessment of competence is so difficult. It is difficult enough to develop tests of discrete skills of language, and performance of discrete skills is not necessarily an accurate indicator of competence in language. Assessment of more integrative aspects of language is even more complex.

According to the American Educational Research Association, American Psychological Association, and the National Council on Measurement in Education (1999):

For all test takers, a test that employs language is, in part, a measure of their language skills. This is of particular concern for test takers whose first language is not the language of the test. Test use with individuals who have not sufficiently acquired the language of the test may introduce construct-irrelevant components to the testing process. In such instances, test results may not reflect accurately the qualities and competencies intended to be measured. ...Therefore it is important to consider language background in developing, selecting, and administering tests and in interpreting test performance. (p. 91)

Unfortunately not all institutions have completely understood the importance of language background and its affects on testing. Ortiz and Yates (1983) showed that Hispanic students were over-represented by 300% in classes for the mentally retarded. Oller (1992) was not surprised by this and added that this type of misdiagnosis may continue to go unnoticed due to what he calls "monolingual myopia" which he contends has been prevalent for more than a century and still pervades the American educational scene. In a study of within-group diversity of disproportionate representation of ELL students in Special Education (Artiles, Rueda, Salazar, & Higareda, 2005), it was found that ELLs identified by districts as having limited proficiency in both their native language (L1) and English (L2) showed the highest rates of identification in the Special Education categories investigated. These students were consistently overrepresented in learning disabilities and language and speech disabilities classes. Furthermore, these students had greater chances of being placed in Special Education programs. Other research has demonstrated how ELLs are negatively affected by content based assessment measures (Abedi, 2006; Abedi, Lord, Hofstetter & Baker, 2000; Abedi, Lord & Hofstetter, 1998; Abedi, Lord, Kim-Boscardin, & Miyoshi, 2000; Abedi, Lord, & Plummer, 1997).

Because tests have been shown to misdiagnose second language students, one begins to wonder if they can be used to accurately place these same students or predict their success in certain courses. Some would say no. In 1990, Goodman, Freed, and McManus found that even

the Modern Language Aptitude Test (MLAT) was not an accurate predictor of success in foreign language courses. They speculated that perhaps the failure of this test was the result of the fact that the test measured discrete points of language ability but that language teaching was moving toward integrative, holistic, approaches to language development.

In 1961, John Carroll suggested a distinction in language testing between discrete point and integrative approaches. With his Unitary Trait Hypothesis, Oller (1979) posited that language proficiency consisted of a single unitary ability. Oller himself later disconfirmed aspects of his hypothesis recognizing that the "the strongest form of the unitary trait hypothesis was wrong" (Oller 1983). Some have contended that discrete point methods are either better or at least equivalent to integrative methods (Rand, 1972); however, tests of discrete points such as syntactic rules have been shown to generate reliabilities in the range of .6 to .7 (Evola, Mamer & Lentz, 1980) while tests that are more integrative in nature generate reliabilities of .8 to .9 (Oller, 1972). In this light, how can the support for unitary language ability found in Oller and Perkins (1978, 1980); Oller (1992); and Carroll (1983) be explained? Does language testing, discrete or integrated, reveal information about a single trait or divisible competence? Oller (1992) posited that it is illogical to argue that tests that focus on particular rules of grammar will yield equivalent results to tests that require integrated whole grammars.

There is support for each side of the argument as to which hypothesis is correct, unitary language ability or divisible competence. Support for divisible competence includes Bachman and Palmer (1983); Farhady (1983); Fouly, Bachman, and Cziko (1990); and Upshur and Hombourg (1983). Support for unitary language includes Oller and Perkins (1978, 1980); Oller (1992); and Carroll (1983). However, Carroll might have summarized things best:

With respect to a unitary language ability hypothesis or a divisible competence hypothesis I have always assumed that the answer is somewhere in between. That is, I have assumed

there is general language ability but, at the same time, that language skills have some tendency to be developed and specialized to different degrees, or at different rates so that different language skills can be separately recognized and measured. (p. 82)

Summarizing the research of Lynch, Davidson, and Henning (1988) and Oltman, Stricker, and Barrows, (1990), Oller (1992) suggests that in the early stages of second language learning distinct dimensions of listening, writing, and reading ability may be observed and may even resolve into further sub-component traits, but as learners progress to more mature, native-like abilities in the target language, all factors tend to converge on one unitary trait.

Recent Research in Language Testing

Recent research into the predictive abilities of language testing has not yielded the most informative results. Lee (2005) asked the question, "To what extent does the CEEPT (Computerized Enhanced ESL Placement Test) predict international graduate students' academic performance?" In his study CEEPT scores were given ratings of 1–4 and these levels were correlated with GPA using Pearson product moment correlation coefficients. Lee found a correlation coefficient of .052 for the overall sample between CEEPT scores and first semester GPA. However, the direction and magnitude of correlation varied depending on the discipline. For language oriented disciplines there were positive relationships, such as Business ($r=.275$) and Humanities ($r=0.35$). In contrast there were negative relationships for non-language oriented disciplines, such as the Life Sciences ($r=-0.548$) and Technology ($r=-0.213$). Unfortunately, although Lee discussed how his qualitative data complemented his results, he failed to offer an explanation for the positive and negative correlations.

Research on the strengths of the relationships between self assessment and language test scores or abilities is mixed. Some studies have found moderate to strong relationships (Bachman & Palmer, 1989; Clark, 1981; Coombe, 1992; Leblanc & Painchaud, 1985). However, others have found weak relationships (Blanche & Merino, 1989; Moritz, 1995; Peirce, Swain & Hart,

1993). A meta-analysis of the validity of self-assessment as a means to predict future language performance by Ross in 1998 found weak to moderate links at best. In another study looking at second language placement testing, Phakiti (2005) looked at test taker's ability to predict success based on answers to questions on an English placement test designed by the English Language Institute at the University of Michigan. Phakiti's study found that, in general, participants tended to be overconfident in their test performance. He believes that overconfident test takers possibly stop engaging in cognitive tasks prematurely and under-confident test takers spend too much time on a task that has already been successfully completed. Phakiti found that beginners exhibited the poorest predictive ability, which supports Blance and Merio's (1989) findings. This could be further supporting evidence of distinct differences between beginners and more advanced students on placement tests. Research investigating these differences could support or refute Oller's (1992) suggestion that in the early stages of second language learning, distinct dimensions of listening, writing, and reading ability may be observed and may even resolve into further sub-component traits, but as learners progress to more mature, native-like abilities in the target language, all factors tend to converge on one unitary trait.

Assessment for placement is a challenging endeavor. Developing and standardizing tests that can accurately place students into a course, or a matrix of courses, is difficult at best. This can be seen by very low correlations between placement test scores and student achievement in courses. For example, the state of California requires that placement tests maintain at least a 0.35 correlation with course grades (College of the Canyons, 1994). The College of the Canyons also noted that it was not reasonable to expect placement tests to be very strongly related to course grades. Spann-Kirk (1991) concluded that students placed by advisors instead of placement tests achieved to the same degree. Smith (1983) came to the conclusion that student scores on

placement tests were less significant in placing students than high school grade point average, credit hours completed during a term, and age. Simply put, placement test scores alone may not be the most effective way of placing students. There is therefore a clear need for additional information to help in the placement decision-making process. In 1997, Culbertson found that multivariate prediction models could be used to increase the predictability of placement. As a result, this study also seeks to identify characteristics that can be used in this decision-making process.

It has been suggested that learning a second language is different in many ways than learning other subjects because in addition to the learnable aspects it is also socially and culturally bound, which makes it a social event (Dornyei, 2003). The social dimension may explain why the study of L2 motivation was originally initiated by social psychologists. In the first comprehensive summary of L2 Motivation, Gardner and Lambert (1972) considered the motivation to learn a second language the primary force behind enhancing or hindering intercultural communication and affiliation. Gardner's theory of "integrative" motivation laid the groundwork for other theories: self-determination theory (Deci and Ryan, 1985), goal theory (Tremblay and Gardner, 1995), and attribution theory (Weiner, 1992). According to Weiner, the attributions of motivation are generally described in three dimensions: (a) Locus, (b) Stability, and (c) Controllability.

Locus of Control

One variable that may offer important information about students is Locus of Control (LOC). LOC is a psychological construct developed from the social learning theory of Julian Rotter (1966) which refers to a generalized expectancy that people have regarding the degree to which they can control their own fate. LOC is concerned with whether individuals attribute the cause of something internally or externally. Individuals with an internal LOC believe that their

behavior is directly responsible for specific outcomes; internals believe they are the cause of the outcomes. By contrast, individuals with an external LOC believe that their behavior and the consequences are independent; they believe that events are controlled by luck, fate, and chance or powerful others. Research findings have been quite consistent over the years suggesting that students with an internal LOC were more likely to be successful in education than students with an external LOC (Ford, 1994; Lao 1980; Ogden & Trice, 1986; Park, 1998; Shepard, 2006; Trice, 1985; Trice, Ogden, Stevens, & Booth, 1987).

Recent research on Locus of Control has identified relationships between LOC and student use of technology (Rita, 1997; Wang, 2005). However, with the exception of one recent study (Estrada, Dupoux, & Wolman, 2005) there is a paucity of research investigating LOC scales among language minority students. Estrada et al's study addresses the effects of LOC and other predictors on the personal-emotional and social adjustment of community college ELLs. The study found that LOC was significantly associated with social and personal-emotional adjustment. Other research indicates that LOC may be sensitive to cultural differences; Reimanis (1980) found that personal control was similar among individuals from comparable cultures.

In 1975, Rotter posited that more precise predictions could be made from LOC instruments that were developed with specific behavioral areas than from generalized ones. The most widely researched specific LOC scale was developed by Crandall, Katovsky, and Crandall (1965). This scale measures school children's perceptions of their control in achievement/academic situations. Unfortunately, not many scales have been designed to be used specifically with college populations; the two that have been used with these populations (Clifford, 1976; Lefcourt, VonBaeyer, Ware, & Cox, 1979) have been described as giving short shrift to scheduling, class attendance, and competing activities (Trice, 1985). Trice indicated that these scales focused

exclusively on effort and studying. His scale was purported to predict a wider range of relevant college behaviors.

The LOC scale used in this study was developed by Trice to predict a wide range of behaviors related to college students. It was designed to have high reliability and construct validity with respect to Rotter's LOC scale (1966) and Smith's achievement motivation (1973), while simultaneously having high predictive validity with respect to academic performance. It is a 28-item, self-report inventory using a true/false response format. Low scores are associated with higher GPAs and high scores are associated with lower GPAs. The inventory is designed to measure beliefs in personal control over academic outcomes. The Kuder Richardson-20 reliability coefficient is reported at .70, indicating an adequate level of internal consistency. Also test/retest reliability over an interval of five weeks was .92, and discriminate and convergent validity data seem to be adequate for research purposes (Trice, 1985). Furthermore, this LOC scale has been shown to be predictive of such academic outcomes as class grades, class attendance, extra credit points earned (Trice, 1985), freshman GPA (Ogden & Trice, 1986), class participation, homework completion, and study time (Trice, Ogden, Stevens, & Booth, 1987).

Generation 1.5

The term Generation 1.5 was first used in the late 1980s to describe students who fit the description of neither first generation nor second generation Americans (Rumbaut & Ima, 1988). Generation 1.5 students usually have come to the U. S. in their early teen or pre-teen years. Often, they have attended U.S. schools, and many of these students have even graduated from American high schools. While attending American schools, these students have had time to acquire informal English. Many of them use American idiomatic expressions, and some may even have American accents. Errors in their language are detectable, but they do not interfere with understanding, and these students are comfortable speaking English and do so with relative

ease. Although these students develop oral fluency in English rather quickly, this oral fluency often hides difficulties with academic English (Ruiz-de-Velasco & Fix, 2000). Their reading, grammar, and writing skills are usually significantly below those of their college-ready peers (Goen, Porter, Swanson, & VanDommelen, 2002; Harklau, 2003; Myles, 2002; Roberge, 2002). Other academic skills, including critical thinking and general knowledge, are typically weak. Due to their lack of familiarity with formal registers of language, Generation 1.5 students may also lack ability required to discuss abstract concepts using appropriate grammatical or rhetorical structure. Generation 1.5 students' limited development of academic literacy might be due to prior lack of attention to problems and barriers that interfere with the students' abilities to demonstrate what they know in writing (Grant & Wong, 2003; Harklau, 2003). Myles (2002) suggested that a lack of prior instruction in writing for academic purposes could cause the students' lack of motivation for learning and create a negative attitude toward English.

Differences and difficulties

In many ways Generation 1.5 students are similar to native English-speaking college preparatory students. Interruptions in many immigrants' schooling upon arrival in the U. S. often produce gaps in the cultural and academic knowledge expected of college students that can take several years to remedy (Spack, 2004). Unfortunately two semesters in English speaking preparatory programs are insufficient to address the unique problems presented by Generation 1.5 students. Other research has shown that Generation 1.5 students' patterns of errors differ from those of international students, and, as a result, should lead to different placement testing and instruction (Reid, 1997). According to Thonus (2003) many Generation 1.5 students have lost or are in the process of losing their home languages without having learned how to write well in these languages or use them academically. Therefore, teachers need to use different teaching techniques for these students given that there are fewer first language skills on which to

scaffold new learning. Unfortunately, little has been done for this population given that the teachers who most often work with Generation 1.5 students, community college faculty, graduate students, and part-time instructors, are unlikely to have background knowledge and the material resources needed to carry out research and advocacy efforts for these students (Matsuda, Canagarajah, Harklau, Hyland, & Warschauer, 2003).

Literacy can be expressed in many different forms: functional, academic, workplace, informational, constructive, emergent, cultural, and critical (Wink, 1999). Swanson (2004) suggests that lack of a specific type of literacy is another reason for the lack of college readiness for Generation 1.5 students. Many high school programs have stand-alone ESL classes that teach language in discrete lessons that emphasize functional literacy (i.e., reading and writing) rather than critical literacy (i.e. understanding the social and political implications of written knowledge) which is what is commonly needed for success in college (Swanson, 2004). Academic preparation aside, the problem still remains; Generation 1.5 students do not fit perfectly into any of the traditional student categories, nor have they been a significant focus of research on students' learning to write in ESL (Harklau, 2003).

Community colleges are seeing increasing numbers of Generation 1.5 students. As of 1999, some schools even began to report that Generation 1.5 students were forming the majority of their second language students (Lay, Carro, Tien, Niemann, & Leong, 1999), and in 2002, other schools reported these same findings (Blumenthal, 2002).

Generation 1.5 students complicate the issue of initial placement, given that these students do not fit the mold of traditional EAP students or traditional college prep students. This question has been debated in the areas of ESL curriculum, program design, and placement, and is reflected in the different methods and materials used from institution to institution (Harklau,

2000; Smoke, 2001). Harklau, Losey, and Siegal (1999) have noted that EAP pedagogy and materials are geared toward students who have recently arrived in the U.S. as adults, often with sophisticated educational backgrounds. If curriculum and instruction have been developed with this type of student in mind, Generation 1.5 students placed into these EAP courses are clearly mismatched. Many teachers feel that the curriculum designed for traditional EAP students is often too slow for Generation 1.5 students, while the curriculum designed for preparatory students is often over their heads. They would likely benefit from working with EAP professionals, but if EAP classes are not a perfect fit for them, where should they be placed?

Valdes (1992) believes that it is necessary for secondary and post-secondary programs to develop criteria to distinguish between students who need ESL instruction and students (like Generation 1.5 students) who have problems with academic English but don't need ESL classes. Valdes labels these two groups incipient bilinguals and functional bilinguals, respectively, and suggests that functional bilinguals should be placed into mainstream courses but still be provided specific instruction that allows them to work on the fossilized aspects of their second language.

Harklau (2003) makes a variety of suggestions for working effectively with Generation 1.5 students. The most germane to this research is that it is important to be aware of students' prior academic literacy experiences because research has shown that high school students in low track classes receive different kinds of instruction from those in higher tracks (Harklau, Losey, & Siegal, 1999). For example, low track students focus more on substitution drills, dictation, short answer, and writing from models while high track students are taught argumentative and analytical writing and have experience writing research papers.

Program placement for generation 1.5

Bergan Community College in New Jersey has an American Language Program (ALP) which serves the same population as many EAP programs in Florida, college-bound, nonnative

English speakers. In the mid to late 1990s, Bergan began to notice a dramatic increase in the number of English language minority students who were graduates of American high schools and who didn't fit the traditional student molds (Miele, 2003). Realizing that these students did not fit neatly into the common three categories of college-ready students, preparatory students needing remedial English, and ESL students, faculty at Bergen developed special courses to deal with the Generation 1.5 students they labeled as crossover students. Students who had resided in the U.S. for at least eight consecutive years were given the standard placement test and either placed into preparatory English courses or college level courses based on their results. Students with fewer than three years in U.S. high schools who were nonnative speakers of English and/or students who had resided in the U.S. for fewer than eight consecutive years were assessed using the Comprehensive English Language Tests (CELT). If these students demonstrated significant ESL characteristics in their writing samples, had reading and sentence skill scores comparable with 8th or 9th grade students, spent three or fewer years in American high schools, and were nonnative English speakers predominantly exposed to another language at home, they were designated as crossover students. These students were then advised to take specifically designed crossover courses.

Another program hosted in the General College of the University of Minnesota uses principles of developmental education and content-based ESOL pedagogy to help Generation 1.5 students learn academic language (Moore & Christiansen, 2005). Their approach is believed to be more effective than stand-alone ESL because language is often learned best in the context of content area learning (Krashen, 1982; Zamel, 2004). Students are required to enter the program if they have been in the U.S. educational system eight or fewer years, have a home language other than English, and have test scores documenting a need for English support. Most of the students

in the program have been in the U.S. between two and eight years. This program has proven successful in both retention and successful progression of students into degree-granting programs (Christensen, Fitzpatrick, Murie, & Zhang, 2005).

The Need for Better Placement Procedures

There are currently 1,202 community colleges nationwide (AACCC, 2007), and two-year schools can expect an increase of nearly 20% in growth by 2010 (Gerald, 2000). Cohen (2002) estimated that more than half of the community colleges nationwide offered ESL/EAP programs. In the 21st Century even more community colleges will be required to offer ESL instruction. One of the major issues that will need to be addressed is proper student placement. For students to get the most out of their post-secondary education, they will need to be accurately placed into programs.

Unfortunately, as community colleges are scrambling to develop ESL/EAP programs, there appears to be a tendency for each college to reinvent the wheel in terms of assessment. Defining, measuring, and documenting the success of ESL/EAP students is a complex and difficult task that has rarely been attempted outside individual institutions (Ignash, 1995), and no two colleges seem to be using the same processes for placement and assessment. According to Blumenthal (2002), procedures and policies for assessment and placement of EAP students differ widely from college to college. In 2005, Florida's Division of Community Colleges and Workforce Education conducted a survey seeking responses to questions about developmental education in the Florida Community College System. This survey noted, "Clearly, there is not a standardized assessment and placement process for ESL students in institutions across the community college system."(Florida Department of Education, 2005). Table 2-1 below details the finding regarding placement practices at community colleges across the state.

Table 2-1. Number of Florida community colleges employing common practices in the placement of ESL students with many colleges using multiple practices

Test or Practice Utilized	Number of Colleges
CPT/Accuplacer College Placement Test	18
ACT/SAT	7
LOEP/TOEFL/English Placement Test/Celt	15
Use of writing sample	5
Consultation with an advisor	2
CASAS	4
TABE	2
No ESL course offerings/program	4

Note: Adapted from “Developmental Education in the FFCS”

While some colleges use holistic writing assessments, others use discrete point grammar tests. While some colleges require students to enroll in specific classes based on assessment results, others leave decisions up to students. This diversity is understandable given the varying nature of colleges and the variable demographics and needs of the student populations.

It is not only in the realm of ESL where schools have felt testing pressures. In Florida in the 1980s, minimum competency testing was established in the form of the College Level Academic Skills Test (CLAST). Students had to demonstrate ability on this exam before they could be awarded an Associate in Arts degree. Cut scores, or bench mark scores that indicate whether or not students have successfully demonstrated performance of some skill on the CLAST were a contested topic, and scores were raised incrementally until 1992 when they reached their current cut levels. Since January of 1996, further adjustments have led to the recognition of waivers for all sections of the CLAST. Students can receive waivers if they earn a 2.5 or higher on related course work or if they meet state mandated criteria on the placement tests as they enter the community college system. This adds to importance of reliable and accurate placement testing.

Another increase of testing pressures in the State of Florida occurred in May of 1997 when legislation required each institution to set its own course requirements and to implement a

standardized, institutionally developed test using state-developed items to serve as an exam needed to exit from preparatory programs. The state then developed various versions of a blueprinted exam to be used for these exiting purposes. However, they failed to mandate a statewide cut-off score to be used with the exit tests. The Southern Regional Education Board, which is a consortium of 16 southeastern states, has recommended the establishment of statewide standards for student performance and for placement of students into college courses (Abraham & Creech, 2002)

In addition, many schools are feeling increased pressure to place all students accurately. In August of 1997, full implementation of a major change in placement testing was mandated by the Florida legislature. In conjunction with Educational Testing Service, the state of Florida adopted a placement test and one acceptable score statewide for students entering community colleges. Students scoring below the cut-off are required to take and pass remedial courses in each area of deficiency: English, reading, and mathematics (Smittle, 1996). Students taking these remedial courses are required to pay identical fees, but do not earn credit toward graduation. Accurate placement into these remedial programs has become very important because these courses can not be applied to graduation credits. In addition, these remedial programs have a serious effect upon students, colleges, and the state because all three share the cost of these programs. Florida's House Bill 1545, which went into effect in July of 1997, requires students to pay "full instructional costs" after failing a first attempt in college preparatory courses. Another funding problem introduced around the same time was that as of the 1999-2000 academic year, community colleges would receive state funds based on program completions (Abstien, 1998). Whereas prior to this, funding had been dependent on program enrollment. In spite of the

obvious challenges resulting from this change, one significant benefit was the shift in focus to program outcomes. (Banta, Rudolph, Van Dyke, & Fisher, 1996; Grunder & Hellmich, 1996).

Section 1008.30(1) (formerly 240.117) of the Florida Statutes K-20 Education Code explains placement further:

The State Board of Education shall develop and implement a common placement test for the purpose of assessing the basic computation and communication skills of students who intend to enter a degree program at any public postsecondary educational institute (Florida Statutes Title XL VIII, 2003).

The following subsection 1008.30(2) detailed that the mandated test would assess basic competencies that are “essential to perform college-level work.” Students not meeting the criteria fall under a directive as outlined in 1008.30(4) (a):

Public postsecondary educational institution students who have been identified as requiring additional preparation pursuant to subsection 1 shall enroll in college-preparatory or other adult education pursuant to s. 1004.93 in community colleges to develop needed college-entry skills...A passing score on a standardized, institutionally developed test must be achieved before a student is considered to have met basic computation and communication skill requirements.

This focus on placement and testing led to additional challenges. As of the 1997-98 academic school year, the problems with placement criteria for entering freshmen at Miami Dade Community College, one of the largest post secondary institutions in the state of Florida, reached such a high level that a memorandum was issued by the school administration asking for assistance in developing and enhancing initiatives that would guarantee student success. In this memorandum, it was noted that approximately 72% of incoming students would require placement in preparatory reading classes, and 57% would require placement in preparatory writing courses (Padron, 1997).

When nearly 72% of an institution’s student body requires remedial training of some sort, there is clearly a problem. Increasing the number of preparatory courses seemed like a good solution to meeting the needs of these under-prepared students. For example, the State of Florida

increased the number of levels for ESL students from three levels of preparatory English to six levels of preparatory English. So as not to negatively affect county programs, Valencia only adopted five of the six levels. And, in order for an expanded preparatory program to function properly, there is again a reliance on proper placement.

Program Models

In 1973, John Upshur discussed the educational context of language testing with examples of different types of instructional programs. To illustrate the many problems faced by multilevel, multi-skill, preparatory programs, an abbreviated version of his discussion follows. Upshur started by discussing a simple program in which students enter the program, undergo instruction, and then leave. A visual of this can be found in Figure 2.1. The two major problems with this program model are that there is no indication of whether or not the program is appropriate for all who enter and no way of knowing if the instruction offered is effective.

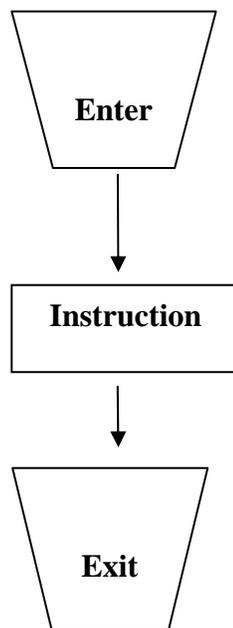


Figure 2-1 Upshur's simple program model: This figure illustrates the simple program model discussed by Upshur (1973). Students enter, receive instruction, and leave.

Extensions to the previous program model included adding tests at key decision stages. First, an exit test was added to solve the question of whether or not instruction was effective. However, this failed to identify whether the program was appropriate for all who entered. Next, tests were given prior to entrance. This solved the program appropriateness question, but introduced the problem of needing multiple equivalent versions of tests so that students would not simply be retaking the same tests at entrance and exit from the program. Upshur's most complex model (Figure 2-2) shows an example of a multi-level program with several different types of placement decisions being made. In this model the initial decisions of admission and placement in this program are made on the basis of a single test. If students are too low, they are not admitted into the program. If they are able to demonstrate mastery of the objectives of the courses, they are exempt. Those students who are at an appropriate level for the program can then be placed into one of three levels of instruction based on their test scores. At the completion of each level of instruction, students take an achievement test to determine if they can progress to the next higher level. If they pass, they move forward. If they don't pass, they are given remedial work based on their areas of weakness determined by scores on the achievement test. In this program, rather than being tested again after remedial work, students are simply moved forward to the next step of the program. Upshur noted, however, that it would be possible to test these students again.

Upshur's program models were designed to show the range of testing choices/placement decisions that need to be made in a program and to illustrate the complex assessment issues involved from entrance through exit in a program. They have been used here as a basis for explaining the importance of proper placement at Valencia.

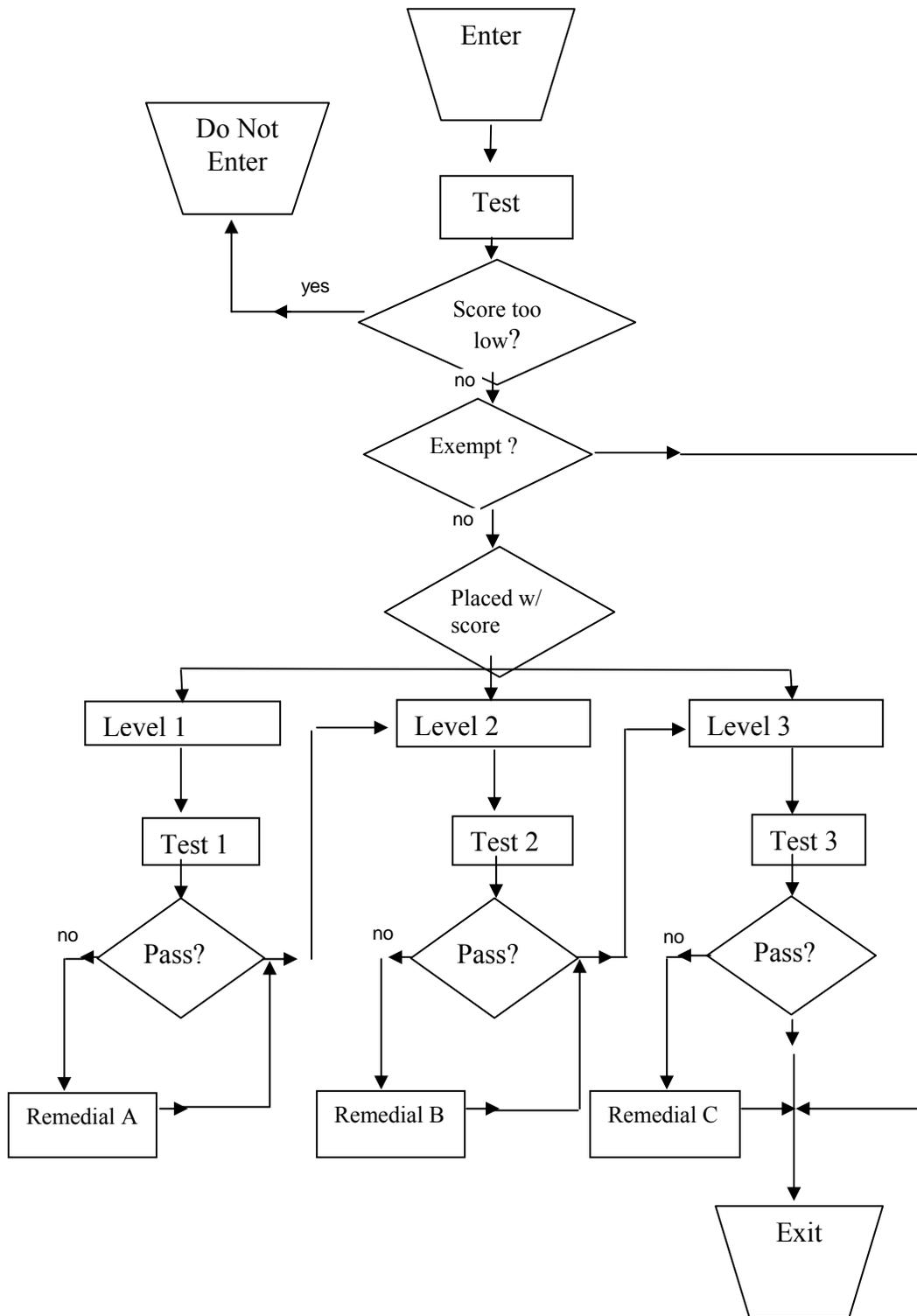


Figure 2-2 Upshur's complex model: This figure illustrates the most complex program model discussed by Upshur (1973). It is an example of a multi-level program with several types of decisions being made.

Like Upshur's complex model, students at Valencia are placed into the program on the basis of a test [Valencia's test actually includes 4 subtests]. However, while Upshur's model has 3 levels, Valencia's has 5 levels. Furthermore, at Valencia each of the five levels is subdivided again by language skills. Currently at Valencia students are tested and placed into all skills at one level. Some personnel at Valencia feel this is appropriate while others believe students should be placed into skills across levels based on individual subtest scores. This cross level skill placement based on individual subtest scores in each skill is also supported by The College Board (2003).

A complete model of Valencia's five-level program is beyond the scope of this discussion. However, the model in Figure 2-3 depicts what an improved model of Valencia's third level would look like with these additional assessment points. However, if the current process is efficiently placing students into appropriate skills and levels, some of the decision stages could be avoided. Currently Valencia does not employ diagnostic and achievement tests at the beginning and end of each skill course within each level. By enhancing the effectiveness of initial placement practices, Valencia may never need to develop these other testing measures. It should be stated here that it is not the intent of this study to analyze diagnostic and achievement measures. This study seeks to analyze and enhance current placement practices. Valencia's model has been added here to illustrate the number of decision stages and testing measures that could be avoided if students are placed properly at the time of admission.

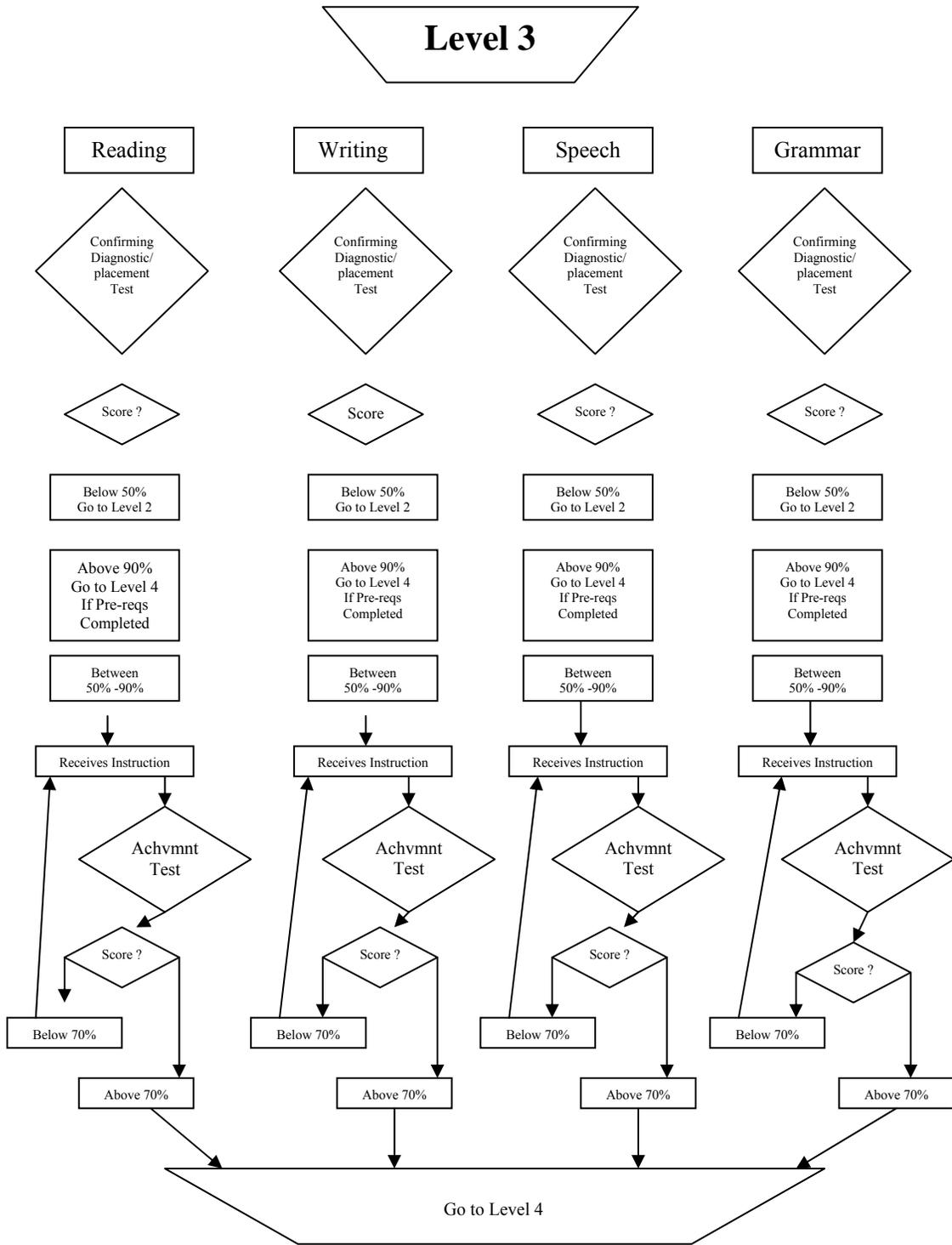


Figure 2-3 Possible improved model: This model illustrates the decision stages and types of tests that could be avoided by enhancing placement practices at VCC.

Current Placement Practices

Valencia Community College, like most other community colleges, has two tracks for students who are not ready to take college level reading and writing courses. Prep one and Prep two courses, have been developed to equip native English-speaking students with the academic reading and writing skills they will need to survive in college. These skills include identifying implied and stated main ideas; recognizing tone, bias, and fact or opinion; and understanding the rhetorical structure of a five-paragraph essay. Students are often placed into or exempted from these preparatory courses based on entrance, placement, or a combination of exams. Students scoring above established cut scores on placement exams are admitted directly to English composition; students scoring slightly under established cut scores are placed into Prep two; and students scoring significantly below established cut scores are placed into Prep one.

At Valencia, most students are admitted to the school using one of the following instruments: the SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Test), the ACT (American College Test), or the Accuplacer CPT (College Placement Test). Prospective students of Valencia who do not have satisfactory English and reading scores on the ACT or the SAT are required to take the state-approved CPT, a computer adaptive placement test. Moreover, students who do not have recent (within two years) ACT, SAT, or CPT scores are also required to take the CPT for proper placement (VCC College Catalog, 2007).

All entering freshmen who do not score sufficiently well on the Accuplacer CPT (College Board, 2003) for admission and who self-identify as nonnative English speaking students are given the Accuplacer LOEP exam (College Board, 2003). Prior to 2001, Valencia's cutoff scores for LOEP placement were based on placement information contained in the LOEP Coordinators Guide, which outlines high, intermediate, and low levels. However, after a curricular switch from three distinct levels of ESL to five distinct levels of EAP, a result of the state's initiative to

standardize community college level ESL programs in 2001, Valencia was forced to reevaluate placement cutoff scores. It was mutually agreed upon by faculty and staff that the new cutoff scores would be created by decreasing the intervals in the existing placement cutoff scores rather than performing expensive and time consuming statistical procedures to develop new cutoff scores. Other institutions across the state simply looked at Valencia as a model and adopted Valencia's new cut-scores. It was understood that this would increase error in placement; however, program coordinators were still able to make placement decisions about individual students based on a combination of results from both the objectively scored multiple choice questions and subjectively scored essay elements of the LOEP test. In addition, diagnostic testing was used at the beginning of each semester for each class. It was thought that if students were misplaced at entry into the program, it could be addressed at the time of diagnostic testing.

Subsequent decisions served to increase the error in placement of students into the EAP program at Valencia, thereby elevating the need to identify more accurate placement procedures. In 2001, in the interest of one-stop registration, an administrative decision was made that the writing sample of the LOEP would not be included as part of the entry assessment process for nonnative English-speaking applicants, as it delayed their placement and registration. The five ESL faculty members on the committee felt it pedagogically unsound to discontinue evaluation of the writing sample in placement because it was the only direct, productive measure of English. However, at the behest of personnel in the assessment office, supported by members of student services, the committee agreed to a trial period of one year for this procedure, secure in the belief that the departmental "diagnostic" exams, which at the time were given at the beginning of each course, would allow students who had been improperly placed in EAP courses to move into more appropriate courses.

Unfortunately, in 2002 course-based diagnostic testing and early movement of misplaced students were eliminated as options for EAP coordinators. In addition, in a review of the literature conducted by the author, it was found that Valencia was using the LOEP for placement in a manner inconsistent with that recommended by LOEP developers. (See LOEP and Its Recommended Use on page 54)

Pilot Study

In 2003, in response to complaints by EAP instructors at Valencia about misplacement of students, discussions began again about revamping the placement process. It was suggested that it might be more appropriate to place students into the different language skill classes (reading, writing, speech, and grammar) based on scores from the three objectively scored LOEP tests (Reading, Language Use, and Sentence Meaning) and a holistically scored essay. To examine the possible impact of these changes, a limited pilot study was conducted by the researcher. This study was simply a post hoc analysis of how differently students would have placed into levels if individual subsections of the LOEP were used rather than the aggregate scores. In the analysis, actual placement levels derived from the use of aggregate scores were compared to individual scores on each aspect of the LOEP test for each student in the sample population. The researcher (with the help of the Office of Institutional Research) obtained access to the placement test scores of 1,052 students in Valencia's database from June 2002 through August 2003. The analysis of differences between students' actual placement based on the aggregate score and their possible placement based on each individual skill test score (i.e., their LOEP Reading test score, LOEP Language Use test score, etc) found that if students were placed into levels solely on their LOEP Reading test scores instead of the aggregate of the three LOEP subtest scores, students would place one level above or below their aggregate placement level 51% of the time. It was also found that if students were placed into levels solely on their Sentence Meaning placement

test scores instead of the aggregate scores, students would place one level above or below their aggregate placement level 49% of the time. And, it was found that if students were placed into levels solely on the basis of their Language Use placement test scores instead of the aggregate scores, students would place one level above or below their aggregate placement level 50% of the time. Unfortunately, Essays were not being evaluated during this time period, so Essay scores were not included in this pilot study.

Although this pilot study revealed differences between placement levels derived from individual LOEP scores versus aggregate scores, it did not identify which subtests best predicted success. However, the study did provide decision makers with enough information to make a change. It was decided that essay readers would be trained, and evaluation of essays would once again be used in the placement process.

Currently, students are placed according to a formula that was agreed upon by a committee made up of faculty and decision makers from various departments at Valencia. The formula was selected because it was easy to add the necessary fields to the database and was simple to calculate. Furthermore, it gave counselors a number that they could compare to existing cut-scores, and it satisfied teacher requests that a written sample of student language performance be included in the placement of EAP students. However, prior to the current study, this method was not empirically tested for its ability to place students accurately. Table 2-2 lists the instructions and gives steps for placing a hypothetical student based on LOEP test scores.

The cut-scores Valencia employs only place students within levels. Students placed into level 5 are required to take reading, writing, grammar, and speech at that level. This presents problems when students score at different levels across the subtests. For example, if you look at the sample student's scores in table 2-2, the student scored a 5 (which converts to 100) on the

essay, a 106 on the reading, a 92 on the Sentence Meaning, and an 84 on the Language Use.

Based on this formula, this student would be placed into level 5 for all language skills.

Table 2-2. Explanation and an example for placing students into EAP courses at Valencia.

Steps	Example
1) Student scores on the three objectively scored LOEP tests (Reading, Sentence Meaning, and Language Use) are averaged.	LORC = 106
	LOSM = 92
	LOLU = 84
	Average = 94
2) A number is derived for the holistically scored essay. Trained readers read each student's essay and rate it from 1 to 7. This number is then multiplied by 10 and added to the number 50.	Essay Rating = 5
	Multiply by 10 = 50
	Add 50 = 100
	Derived Essay Score = 100
3) The average of the numbers derived from steps 1 and 2 is used to place the student into levels based on the Valencia's cut-scores.	Average = 97

Valencia Cut-Scores

Students scoring 65 or below are not admitted.
 Students scoring 66–75 are admitted to level 2.
 Students scoring 76–85 are admitted to level 3.
 Students scoring 86–95 are admitted to level 4.
 Students scoring 96–105 are admitted to level 5.
 Students scoring 106–115 are admitted to level 6.
 Students scoring 116 or higher are exempt.

Student placed in Level 5

However, if placed by individual scores, this student would be placed in level 6 for reading, level 5 for writing, and level 4 for grammar. Many of the faculty members at Valencia believe that placement across levels is more appropriate than placing a student into all skills at one level.

Furthermore, none of the currently used subtests addresses productive/receptive speech/listening skills. Therefore, some instructors feel a listening/speaking test should be added unless one of the other LOEP subtests is found to be a reliable predictor of success in speech classes.

The LOEP and Its Recommended Use

Currently at Valencia all students are required to take the Accuplacer CPT (College Board, 2003), a computer-based placement test. However, for EAP students, this exam is not used for actual placement purposes. CPT scores are simply gathered and kept on record because it is a requirement in Florida for community college students to take the CPT. Students who self-identify as nonnative English speakers are required to take the Accuplacer LOEP (Levels of English Proficiency Test). According to the LOEP Coordinator's Guide (2001), Valencia is currently using the LOEP in a manner that is inconsistent with what is recommended by LOEP developers. Skills tested by the LOEP are described below.

- **LOEP Reading Comprehension (LORC):** Students read passages of 50 to 90 words and then answer questions about their reading. The reading passages are about a variety of different topics. They may read about the arts, science, or history. Half of the test questions ask about specific information that is stated in the passage. The other half asks students to identify the main ideas, fact vs. opinion, or the author's point of view.
- **LOEP Language Use (LOLU):** This test is designed to measure the students' understanding of the English vocabulary. The sentences come from a variety of different subject areas. Students are asked questions about basic and important idioms, particularly terms of beauty, age, greatness, and size, adverbs such as before, after, during, and prepositions of direction and place.
- **LOEP Sentence Meaning (LOSM):** Students are asked to fill in a blank with a word or phrase, or combine two sentences. The skills covered are writing skills including the proper use of nouns and verbs.
- **LOEP Essay (LOES):** Although Accuplacer offers a computer graded writing assessment, LOEP Essay at Valencia an essay exam that is graded locally using trained readers and a holistic rubric. The holistic rubric used for grading the essay can be found in Appendix A. Students have 60 minutes to write an essay on a topic provided by test administrators. Students are asked to organize their ideas carefully and to present them in more than one paragraph.

Additional LOEP tests are available but are currently not used by Valencia. They include:

- **LOEP Listening:** for this test, a committee of college faculty and other educators defined the listening skills considered important for entry-level college students. Both literal comprehension and implied meaning were included, and seven listening skills were identified. Multiple-choice items were developed to measure the listening skills.

- Write Placer ESL: This is a direct measure of student writing using prompts and rubrics designed by ESL experts. Student essays are scored using the IntelliMetric artificial intelligence system, a computer graded system.

As noted above, students at Valencia are currently placed into one of five levels of courses by averaging their essay scores with the average of the three subtests of the LOEP test. This score is then compared with cut scores to place students into levels 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 (again, the cut-scores being 66–75, 76–85, 86–95, 96–105, and 106–115 respectively). Unfortunately, the cut scores being used were never normed to Valencia’s program or student population. The cut scores were instead taken from the LOEP Coordinator’s Guide and then manipulated to fit five levels instead of the three levels they were originally designed for by decreasing the spread in each cut score range. However, the LOEP Coordinator’s Guide actually did make recommendations [which led to the current research] as to how the LOEP should be used for placement of students.

The three components of LOEP may be administered singly or as a group. We recommend that institutions investigate which score combinations provide the greatest accuracy for their curricula, and establish cut scores and placement mechanisms accordingly. Particularly in the case of ESL, using individual test scores for placement in the various topical areas would be a necessary part of establishing a placement system using LOEP. Our purpose here, however, is to provide evidence that LOEP is valid... (College Board, 2001)

One can infer from these instructions that scores on the LOEP subtests should be used to place students into different skills at different levels. For example, the reading test should be used to place students into reading classes at different levels. If investigations at a particular institution found that reading subtest scores also predicted placement into other courses, like speech, then reading subtest scores could also be used to place students into those courses as well. One could assume that the Language Use and Sentence Meaning subtests might predict success in writing or grammar courses, but the College Board left it up to individual institutions to identify which

subtests or subtest combinations provided the greatest accuracy in placement. Valencia currently places students into one skill level regardless of differences in individual LOEP subtest scores.

Holistically Scored Essays

As mentioned above, holistically scored essays are currently being used as part of the placement practices at Valencia. Valencia's essay scoring rubric can be found in Appendix A. However, some administrators, in the interest of quicker placement testing, would like to return to using only the objectively scored LOEP subtests for placement decisions, and this issue remains a controversial one at VCC. An important benefit to using only the objectively scored tests is cost; no expense would be incurred by paying readers to score the essays.

When it comes to placement into composition courses, it has been suggested that a timed essay exam is the preferable placement measure if the only alternative is a multiple-choice test (Garrow, 1989; Wolcott & Legg, 1998; Zinn 1988). In addition, some studies have found that placing language and ethnic minority students using only multiple-choice tests can be problematic (Belcher, 1993; College of the Canyons Office of Institutional Development, 1996; Garrow, 1989; Jones & Jackson, 1991; White, 1990), timed essays have been found to be more predictive of final grades in writing courses when combined with multiple choice tests (Cummings, 1991; Cunningham, 1983; Galbraith, 1986; Garrow, 1989; Isonio, 1994; Wolcott, 1996; Wolcott & Legg, 1998). Therefore, based on the research, one could conclude that Valencia is doing the right thing by including both the essay and the objectively graded subtests in its placement practices. Whether these practices are actually making a difference and justifying the additional time and cost has yet to be determined.

CHAPTER 3 MATERIALS AND METHODS

Introduction

This research used survey data and data collected from Valencia Community College's Office of Institutional Research to examine characteristics that would lead to more efficient placement of students into EAP courses. It also sought to more accurately identify Valencia's EAP student population on Valencia's three major campuses and elicit student and teacher feedback about placement. It compared the predictive values of individual LOEP subtest scores with two composite models of LOEP subtest scores. In addition, it analyzed whether or not the variables of LOC or a computed indicator of Generation 1.5 status functioned to assist the prediction of successful placement of students into EAP classes.

Study Setting

Valencia is a fairly large community college. According to Valencia Community College Facts (2006), it is the third largest community college in the state of Florida with an FTE (Full-Time Equivalent) of 21,227 students. Fifty-eight percent (58%) of the student body is female; the national average is 59% female (American Association of Community Colleges, 2007). The student body of Valencia's EAP program, which includes approximately 80 sections during the summer and 120 during the fall and spring, is quite diverse, with students from different ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds as well as rural, urban, and suburban settings. Annual enrollment cost at Valencia is slightly lower than the national average, at \$2,100 per year as opposed to the national average of \$2,272. The average student age at Valencia is lower than the national average, at 24 and 29 respectively. On average though, Valencia is similar to the other 1,202 community colleges nationwide. Because only limited demographic data could be gathered through student records, more detailed demographic data were gathered through surveys to

inform the level of generalizability of the population. This information is reported in the Results section.

Participants

Participants in the survey part of this study were all consenting students and instructors taking part in EAP courses (levels 3, 4, 5 and 6) at Valencia's East, West, and Osceola campuses. During the 2006 Summer A & C semesters, 470 students and 19 instructors participated in the survey part of this research. With the assistance of Valencia's Office of Institutional Research, EAP student placement and final course grade data were gathered for all of the survey respondents. In addition, data were gathered for first time students in Valencia's EAP program over the previous three years (2003 – 2006), yielding complete LOEP placement test scores and final course grade information for an additional 1,030 students.

Materials and Data Collection

During the summer of 2006, the investigator visited and administered surveys in all regular EAP courses offered during the summer A & C terms at Valencia Community College. These surveys took place during the middle of the semester; teachers were asked to take an instructor survey, and students were asked to take a student survey.

The questions on the teacher survey were intended to yield information about teacher perceptions of placement effectiveness at Valencia. Questions 1-3 were Likert type questions asking teachers to: 1) rate how well Valencia does at placing students 2) explain how often they have students that they feel are misplaced and 3) determine how many students were misplaced during the semester of the survey. The fourth question was an open-ended question allowing teachers to qualify any of their answers or make comments. Teachers were given class rosters and asked to rate each current student as well placed or not well placed. If students were not well placed, instructors were asked to provide a placement level for them. Teachers received only one

survey, but the survey contained class rosters for all of the classes they were teaching during the summer semesters. The teacher survey can be found in Appendix B.

Teachers were also sent a description of Generation 1.5 students and another set of class rosters for all of the courses they were teaching. They were then asked to read the definition and indicate which students they felt were members of Generation 1.5. A copy of this survey has been included in Appendix B. Questions on student surveys were intended to provide information about demographics (questions 7–10, 12 & 24), academic history (questions 11 & 13–19), language use (questions 20–23), technical knowledge (questions 25–26), Locus of Control (Questions 27–54), and general feelings on placement (question 55–58). A copy of the student survey can be found in Appendix B.

To maintain consistency in the administration of the surveys, all surveys were administered by the investigator, and the same introduction script was used in each class (See Appendix B). Survey responses for both students and instructors were then entered into SPSS for analysis.

Procedures

The following represents the procedures for answering the research questions. Although not officially addressed as a research question, the researcher was interested in presenting a detailed description of the composition of Valencia's EAP population so that findings from this study might be generalizable to other community colleges and universities in Florida and the U.S. Student survey responses were entered into SPSS and the data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to find frequency distributions and measures of central tendency. Results are reported in Chapter 4.

One goal of this research sought to identify the predictive abilities of the LOEP subtests on final course grades; therefore, it was decided that only first semester students would be included in this part of the research because first semester students would have taken the LOEP subtests

immediately prior to attending their first courses at Valencia. However, because it was impossible to guess the number of first semester students taking courses during the time frame of the study, two studies were proposed to guarantee enough students for unbiased multiple regression procedures. The first study used test data from 1,030 first time students in Valencia's EAP program over the three-year period prior to the summer of 2006 (2003–2006). The second study used all willing EAP students taking courses at Valencia during the Summer A and C terms of 2006. However, only first-time students were used in the analyses. These studies were conducted in an effort to seek answers to the research questions:

1. What are the student and teacher beliefs about placement at Valencia?
2. Which of the following three approaches best predicts student success as measured by final course grades and teacher evaluation of placement: 1) Averaging the three objective LOEP subtests, 2) Using an equally weighted average of both the objectively and subjectively scored LOEP subtests, or 3) Using the four LOEP subtests as individual predictors?
3. Which of all approaches best predicts success across different language skill courses (reading, writing, grammar, and speech) and language proficiency levels as measured by final course grades?
4. Which of all approaches best predicts success across different language skill courses (reading, writing, grammar, and speech) and language proficiency levels as measured by teacher evaluation of placement?
5. Do the student variables of Locus of Control and Generation 1.5 add to the prediction of placement in EAP courses as measured by final course grades and teacher evaluation of placement?

Teacher comments qualifying their answers about placement were also analyzed descriptively following a simple method for coding qualitative data (Lofland & Lofland, 1995). After teacher responses were gathered, they were transcribed yielding 132 distinct comments. Each of the 132 comments was then run through an initial coding and focused coding process. Each comment was coded with a classifying label that assigned meaning to individual pieces of information within the token. The first pass through the data yielded 46 different codes. For

example, after reading the following sentence, “My opinion is that we should either offer a level 6 grammar class or reevaluate the standards by which students test out of EAP 1560,” it was initially coded “Advice.” However, teachers made a variety of comments giving advice. Therefore, on recursive passes through the data, this was given a focused code of “Advice on courses.” After initial coding, the other 46 original codes were reviewed in recursive passes through the data in an attempt to eliminate less useful codes, combine smaller categories into larger ones, and subdivide larger categories into more meaningful parts. Results are reported in Chapter 4.

The first study used data from Valencia’s Office of Institutional Research; complete LOEP placement test scores and final course grade information for 1,030 students who attended Valencia over the previous three years were entered into SPSS. Final course grades in each of the skill courses (e.g., Reading) at each of the proficiency levels (EAP Levels 2–6) were used as the dependent variable. Final course grades were weighted as follows (A = 4, B = 3, C = 2, D = 1, and F = 0). For this research, withdraws (W, WF, and WP) were not used. Separate regression analyses were conducted for each course using each of the three competing models as a predictor variable. When two models were found to significantly predict final course grades, an F-test was conducted to compare the regression models.

The second study used current student/teacher data to run similar analyses and check the predictive abilities of the three competing models. The current data also allowed for these analyses to be run using both final course grades as a dependent variable and teacher evaluation of placement as a second dependent variable. In addition, two new variables were analyzed for their predictive abilities: Locus of Control and Computed Generation 1.5 status.

As discussed earlier, an attempt was made to validate a survey measure of the computed Generation 1.5 variable through correlation with the teacher judgment of the construct. The computed variable of Generation 1.5 status was found to be moderately correlated with teacher identification of Generation 1.5 status $r = .40$ $p < .001$.

In addition, to investigate whether students who were computed as Generation 1.5 differed from students not computed as Generation 1.5 in their ratings by professors as being members of Generation 1.5, a Chi Square statistic was used. Results indicated that students computed to be members of Generation 1.5 are significantly different from non-members when rated as Generation 1.5 by instructors. $\chi^2 (1, N = 470) = 75.12, p < .001$. Students rated as Generation 1.5 in the computed model were more likely than expected by the null hypothesis to be rated as Generation 1.5 by professors than students who were not computed as Generation 1.5. Phi, which indicates the strength of the association between the two variables, is .40 and, thus, the effect size is considered to be medium to large according to Cohen (1998).

The methodology for the second study was similar to the first study: separate regression analyses were conducted for each course using each of the three competing models as a predictor variable and final course grades as the outcome variable. When two models were found to significantly predict final course grades, an F-test was conducted to compare the regression models. The same procedures were used with teacher evaluation of placement as the outcome variable. Finally, the two new variables (Locus of Control & Generation 1.5) were added to the prediction models to test their predictive values. Results are reported in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4 RESULTS

Survey Results

Because only limited demographic data could be gathered from student records, more specific demographic data were gathered through surveys to inform readers about the level of generalizability of results based on Valencia's population. Other questions on the student surveys sought to find answers to questions about academic history, language use, technical knowledge, and Locus of Control. This section reports the summarized results of survey responses to these types of questions. A complete list of results for the student and teacher surveys can be found in Appendix C.

Survey respondents spoke 37 different languages and came from 67 countries. The top five languages spoken at Valencia were Spanish, Creole, Arabic, Portuguese, and French. The top five countries of origin were Columbia, Haiti, Puerto Rico, Morocco, and Peru.

On all three campuses, nearly half of the students surveyed were from Columbia, Puerto Rico, or Haiti. In terms of major differences, however, most of the Haitian students attended the West Campus; In fact, 28.85% of the West Campus population was Haitian as opposed to 4.63% on the East Campus and 4.92% on the Osceola campus.

In terms of gender, there were slight differences between campuses, but school wide 59.5% of the respondents were female. The national average is 59% female (AACC, 2007). Of the students surveyed, 89% were in their first, second, or third semester at Valencia. The ages of survey respondents ranged from 17 to 59 with a mean of 26.86, a median of 23, and two modes, 19 and 21. More than 60% of respondents were below the age of 26.

The majority of survey respondents had been in the U. S. for five or fewer years, with the mean number of years in the U.S. being 6.1 and the median and mode being five and three

respectively. Fifty-nine percent of survey respondents entered the U.S. K-20 system at the college level, only 41% reported having attended U.S. K-12 schooling. Appendix C also contains information on year of graduation or GED completion.

In addition to demographic questions, students were also asked questions about academic history, language use, technical knowledge, and Locus of Control. When asked, “Are you the first person in your family to go to college?”, 72.26%, reported that they were not, with 50.51% of those reporting that their siblings/cousins had gone to college and 41.02% reporting that their parents or their parents’ siblings had gone to college. When asked, “Are you the first person in your family to go to college in the U.S.?”, 62.5%, reported that they were. Of those who were not the first in their families to go to college in the U.S., 82.31% reported someone from within the same generation, i.e., a sibling or cousin, to have been the first to go to college in the U.S. Of survey respondents, 39.22% reported having gone to college outside the U. S.; many of these respondents also reported having spent more than two years in colleges outside the U.S.

In addition to prior educational experience, students were asked questions about how often and how well they used English. Most students rated their abilities to write papers and do research in English as average. The majority reported that among their friends and peers with whom they did things with every week only a few were native English speaking, but most reported using English most of the time to speak with their friends. The majority also reported that their families did not often use English in the home. In response to the two questions about computers, 96% of respondents reported having a computer at home, and the majority of respondents rated their abilities to use the computer as above average or expert.

Finally, the complete descriptive statistics for student results on the Trice Locus of Control Index can be found in Appendix C. However, for the sample of 380 EAP students, scores ranged

from 1 to 20 with a mean score of 8.83 (SD = 3.44). Trice's original study (1985) looked at two sample populations: 107 sophomore and junior teacher education majors, with a mean score of 12.46 (SD = 4.32) and 82 freshman general psychology students, with a mean score of 13.22 (SD = 4.92).

Question 1

1. What are the student and teacher beliefs about placement at Valencia?

Student opinions

This section reports the results of analyses of student survey data eliciting students' opinions on how well Valencia is doing at placing them into the courses they need. When students were asked about their beliefs on placement, 21% felt that they had been misplaced.

Teacher opinions

In the teacher surveys, teachers were first asked to select a word that best describes Valencia's accuracy at placing students into the EAP courses they require. The choices were: (1) Poor (2) Below Average (3) Average (4) Above Average (5) Excellent. The general consensus was that Valencia does an average to above average job at placing students. Fourteen of the 19 teachers surveyed described Valencia's accuracy as "Average," the remaining 5 described Valencia's accuracy as "Above Average." Survey responses had a mean of 3.26 and a median of 3.

Teachers were then asked to comment on how often they have students in their EAP classes that they feel might be better placed in a different level. The response options were: (1) Never (2) Rarely (3) Sometimes (4) Often (5) Every Semester. Fourteen of the 19 respondents noted that students were "Sometimes" misplaced. One instructor responded that students were "Often" misplaced, and the remaining four responded that students are misplaced "Every Semester" Survey responses showed a mean of 3.47 and a median of 3.

Teachers were also asked to comment on how many of their students they felt should have been placed in a different level during the semester in which the surveys were being conducted. Their choices were: (1) None (2) A few (3) Several (4) Most (5) All. Two respondents indicated that “None” of their students should have been placed differently. Thirteen respondents indicated that “A few” should have been placed differently. Three respondents indicated “Several”, and one respondent indicated “Most.” Survey responses showed a mean of 2.16 and a median of 2.

Analysis of open-ended teacher responses

Finally, teachers were asked to provide any comments that qualified or explained their responses. Of the 19 participating teachers, 17 chose to add comments to their surveys. The coding of those comments produced 112 statements classified into eight major categories, each containing between one and five subcategories. The eight major categories were: 1) comments giving advice, which comprised 19.64% of the useful tokens; 2) comments about speech courses, 15.18%; 3) general comments on misplacement, 14.29%; 4) comments about Generation 1.5 students, 13.39% 5) comments on teaching problems, 11.61%; 6) comments on the LOEP, 8.93%; 7) comments about general placement procedures, 8.93% and 8) other placement comments, 8.04%.

Advice

The advice category was comprised of teachers giving advice on courses, teaching, placement, and pre/co-requisites. In giving advice on courses, teachers commented on the possibility of creating new courses, “My opinion is that we should either offer a level 6 grammar class or reevaluate the standards by which students test out of EAP 1560.” Others wanted to “combine EAP 1560 with EAP 1540.” Still others noted that courses should be made optional, “Make EAP 1500 optional and keep only EAP 300 and 400.” Advice on teaching yielded a few comments on using the labs to help students catch up and using existing Prep English resources.

Advice on placement included ideas such as placing by skills rather than by levels and using specific parts of the LOEP to help make decisions about placement into specific courses, “If students score into level 6 but have a weak U [LOLU] score on the LOEP, 1560 could be part of their mandate.” Some teachers commented on the need for trained counselors to make decisions about placement, while one teacher suggested adding a different type of test altogether “Where I taught in Oxford they used a 1-page CLOZE test as the only placement tool.” There were only two contributors to comments about pre/co-requisites, but one teacher felt quite strongly about creating a gate at level 5, “Students should stay in level 5 until language basics are mastered.” Another teacher made comments about limiting the movement from campus to campus while taking pre-requisites for classes, “It is OK to take 0340 and 0360 on West, pass the classes, and then take 0440 and 0460 on East, but it is not okay to take 0360 on East and 0340 on West.” Furthermore, “They [the students] should not be allowed to skip a couple of semesters and not take the prerequisite.”

Speech courses

The speech category revealed a variety of problems with placement into Speech courses within the program. The instructor quote that best summarized this issue was, “Speech is where all battles begin!” Another respondent said, “I believe misplacement often happens in speech classes.” Comments were also made revealing that Speech may not be the only area with problems, “I have had A students in Speech that have not passed Reading and vice versa.” One instructor posited that the reason for these troubles is that “There is no Speech component to the LOEP, and although we have started to read LOEP essays, I don’t think the process mirrors the intensity of the curricula.” If this is the case, it could explain why another instructor said, “There are at least 3 people in my classes now that would have done OK in the 1500 level (a higher level).” However, students are not always misplaced into classes that are too low for them.

Another teacher commented, “For my speaking class there is one girl that could use a lower level in speaking, but I had this girl in grammar 360 last semester, and she was one of the best.”

Another instructor said, “In the past, I have had students in EAP 1500 who I could barely understand. Then on the opposite side, I have had students in the EAP 300 level that could have done OK in a higher level.” Some teachers believed that speech may not be necessary for all students, “It seems that if academic speech is all a student needs, they would be better placed in a regular speech class or a prep speech class.” “I have quite a few students in 1500 who have no accent and who could make it in a regular college speech class.” Others placed blame on the difficulty of giving diagnostics in speech courses, “It’s difficult to evaluate speech on the first day of class like other subjects,” while another found that even existing diagnostics currently are not working, “I gave a diagnostic exam in 1500, and the results showed that no students should have been placed higher. However, regarding the oral production of some students, I think they’ve been misplaced.” Some instructors had issues with the course curriculum, “A few of my 1500 (and 400) students don’t need pronunciation work, and a very few of them (not this term) don’t even need listening work.” And another commented, “The linguistics section is not relevant to them.” Finally, not all comments about speech courses were negative, “...they ALL need to learn how to produce an academic speech,” and “They do benefit by learning to take notes on the lectures and they learn the components of a good speech.”

Misplacement

Teachers had a variety of things to say about the misplacement of students into their courses. “I have a number of students in my current classes whom I feel should have been placed in a different level. About 25% to 30% of my students this semester would have benefited more from another level.” Another teacher went on to say, “Last semester I had a handful of students who probably should have been in a lower level course than they were in. As a result, at least

partially, they struggled through the courses (and did not pass them).” Some teachers had clear beliefs about the misplacement phenomenon. “I believe that students who are misplaced are more frequently under-prepared than over-prepared. That is, most misplaced students belong in a lower level, not higher.” This idea was supported by others. “Sometimes we get students whom we feel should have been placed in a lower level.” “I had some... in level 3 who really belonged to level 2, but we didn’t have level 2, so they were placed in level 3.” However, this was not always the case. “Sometimes we get students that just seem way beyond the level of EAP,” and “The other one, I didn’t know why he was in third level. His abilities seemed higher.” One teacher noted that it’s not placement that is the problem, “9 times out of 10 they have come to us by being promoted through the levels.” Another teacher suggested why the misplacement leads to problems. “There are some students who substantially lack a high enough proficiency level to even understand instructions or a particular task. Language comprehension gets in the way.” And while one teacher mentioned what could be considered obvious issues with misplacement, “What I have noticed is that some are placed in this level because of poor oral skills and others because of poor writing skills,” another made comments one wouldn’t expect, “(We shouldn’t be) allowing students to exit level 5 without passing the final exams.” Another felt that, “The students who believe that they themselves are misplaced are often the students who aren’t” while another pointed out why we may not hear about student perspectives regarding misplacement, “I have found that students who are misplaced are often gracious and don’t complain about the placement.”

Generation 1.5

Generation 1.5, also yielded a healthy percentage of comments from teachers, “Once again, the problem arises with 1.5s; all other students are placed right.” Some commented on how Generation 1.5 students felt, “They (1.5s) were confused why they were in EAP” while others

commented on the reasons these students needed to be in the courses, “Writing, it’s tough. They (1.5s) think they don’t belong to their assigned levels because they were good at it in high school but then they can’t pass or barely pass the class.” “I bet half of the class thinks they should be moved to the next level and again the problem is with 1.5s—fluent, American accent, good vocabulary, but no structure: Can’t make complete sentences, most verbs are missing, etc.” Others made comments about why Generation 1.5 students were in EAP courses, “As not having a listening component to the LOEP, Generation 1.5 students are placed into 1500 especially often [, usually] not necessarily needing the course.” Some teachers asked questions while others made recommendations for how to deal with this population, “Should there be separate classes for 1.5ers?” “Some teachers think they are bored or misplaced and should be moved to a higher level.” “Maybe we should have 1.5s in level 5, 6 and send them straight to prep classes.” “Combine 1560 with 1540. It might be more meaningful for 1.5s.” There was, however, consensus that teaching Generation 1.5 students had its difficulties, “They are shocked the way we teach structure directly and sometimes they struggle with the method more than grammar itself.” “Most 1.5s are bored in grammar classes but rarely do they improve their grammar skills.” “Level 5 is the hardest of all to teach for us and to take for them: They are bored and we can’t (or it’s hard to) improve their speech skills.” “I don’t see much progress with 1.5s in EAP 1500.”

Teaching problems

When it came to problems with teaching, one instructor noted, “...I think my greatest difficulty as a teacher is to teach the necessary skills in a way that reaches all of the students.” Another expressed her belief in what happens when students fail to connect with her or the content, “There are 2 people in particular I can see getting bored.” Others didn’t see the content as the issue. One teacher responded that “...it is easy to cover material, but not so easy to diagnose why different groups of student don’t understand it, and how to reach the different

groups.” Another faculty member added to the difficulties of teaching to students with a wide range of ability levels, “It is uncomfortable—and sometimes embarrassing—to have completely native [English] sounding students in classes. I don’t feel I am necessarily meeting their needs.” A different teacher felt that the problems may stem from the diversity in students’ preparedness/needs, “The problem I have with writing is high school grads know essay organization but have problems with grammar and mechanics. On the other hand, other students aren’t familiar with any organization or mechanics or sentence structure. It’s hard to balance between two groups!” While one teacher commented on how EAP students are simply a difficult population to teach to, “Fossilization of mistakes is a major problem in adult ed,” another suggested that the students simply didn’t care, “When I point out grammar errors to them, I could be speaking Dutch as far as they are concerned.” Some teachers believed that what could be considered problems of placement were actually problems with the inability to move people, “(at my other school) it was easier to move people around during the first couple of weeks of term. The problem here is more that [sic], once misplacements are identified it’s hard to change it, especially if that student passed the lower level and got promoted.” This instructor went on to say, “Last year I had a 1540 who wrote not only like a NS [Native Speaker] but like a very good writer who was a NS. However, I couldn’t get her exempted from 1640 because she bombed the state exit multiple choice test.”

LOEP

In terms of LOEP placement, one instructor revealed a lack of knowledge about the test and how students are placed into the program, “I have never seen the instrument that was used—or is used—to place them.” Another instructor seemed to have quite a bit to say about the problems using the LOEP for placement:

First of all, I think the LOEP and the curricula are out of line [alignment]. In addition, the writing given at placement is too short to be of consistent value. Holistic training is haphazard college-wide. Inter-rater reliability is not consistently conducted. The absence of all of these controls weakens the use of the LOEP essays. In terms of reading, I don't know that the LOEP accurately reflects the type of skills being taught at the upper levels of EAP courses. In this case, I think the placement test is more rigorous than the exit tests.

Other instructors gave different reasons for the problems with the LOEP and placement. "Some reasons are averaging the LOEP scores, which can cause students to place too high in one area or too low in another." Another appreciated that LOEP essays were once again being read, "Anecdotally anyway, students seem to be better placed since we began reading LOEP essays. However, because we don't have placement by skill, some students are still in classes they may not actually need."

Placement in general

Not all of the comments about Valencia's placement of students were negative; some comments revealed that there are students being properly placed. "I believe that most students are well placed within the EAP program." In this instructor's opinion, the reason for this is, "The testing instruments do an excellent job, and the readers help to confirm the placement." Another instructor also commented about the importance of reading a sample of student work, "For the one gentleman, as soon as I saw his writing, I new [sic] he was placed right." In one teacher's eyes, Valencia is comparable other schools, "I don't think we're doing a better or worse job of placement than anywhere else." However, this instructor did go on to reveal that "I don't feel that any of the students are placed too low even if they are more advanced than the other students in the class. They still have to make adjustments in their knowledge." Another teacher qualified his positive comments about placement, "If this had been done last semester, it would have been much easier to answer question 3 (the number of students that should have been placed in a different level); at least at the present my students seem to be in the right place." He went on to

say, “In reference to question #3, I was, at first, concerned of [sic] a few of my students. However, after careful consideration, I realized that their achieving 75’s hardly constitutes struggling through the courses. I believe my students are in the right classes this time around.”

Other placement comments

The last category was comprised of comments about students and placement across language skills. For example, students might write like a NS but they did badly on reading, or vice versa, or they speak like a NS but can’t write. When it came to writing, one teacher commented, “Overall, most of my EAP 1640 students seem to be in the right place for their current skill level. However, there always seems to be one or two students who are much below the required skill level.” Others suggested exactly what those missing skills might be, “For example, several students in 1640 have never attended a grammar class.” Another teacher showed agreement with this by stating, “I have, however, noticed that some of my level 6 students who have placed directly into level 6 lack the grammar and sentence structure skills necessary to be successful in Advanced Comp. for nonnative speakers.” In terms of placement into grammar courses, however, there was an altogether different take, “Grammar: I never had grammar students misplaced.” In reading, teachers made the following comments. “In EAP 1520, even though many speak well, none of them are reading totally on grade level. I consider they all need 1520.” “For reading, most of the people can benefit from that class.” Finally, one instructor mentioned how her belief that no students were misplaced was later disproved by students exempting the next level. “Reading: I haven’t had any students misplaced; again, I had some who passed the exemption test at the end of level 5.”

Questions 2–5

This section reports the results within the two studies designed to answer the remaining research questions.

2. Which of the following three approaches best predicts student success as measured by final course grades and teacher evaluation of placement: 1) Averaging the three objective LOEP subtests, 2) Using an equally weighted average of both the objectively and subjectively scored LOEP subtests, or 3) Using the four LOEP subtests as individual predictors?
3. Which of all approaches best predicts success across different language skill courses (reading, writing, grammar, and speech) and language proficiency levels as measured by final course grades?
4. Which of all approaches best predicts success across different language skill courses (reading, writing, grammar, and speech) and language proficiency levels as measured by teacher evaluation of placement?
5. Do the student variables of Locus of Control and Generation 1.5 add to the prediction of placement in EAP courses as measured by final course grades and teacher evaluation of placement?

Study 1

The first study used an existing database of 1,030 first-time EAP students over the past three years. Multiple regressions were conducted to compare the abilities of three competing models at predicting success in EAP courses as measured by final course grades. The first model considered used only the average of the three objectively scored LOEP subtests: Reading (LORC), Sentence Meaning (LOSM), & Language Use (LOLU). The second model used a composite score computed by averaging the first model with the LOEP Essay Score. The third model considered used the four individual LOEP subtest scores as independent variables. The means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations can be found in Table 4-1.

Table 4-1. Means, standard deviations, and correlations for final course grades and predictor variables

Level/Skill	Variable	N	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	
2	Combined	EAP0281	66	2.91	.63	.23	.21	.24	.04	.16	-.02
3	Speech	EAP0300	96	3.42	.64	.24*	.12	.10	.31**	.09	-.16
3	Reading	EAP0320	95	2.91	.90	.16	.03	-.03	.36**	-.03	-.14
3	Writing	EAP0340	74	2.82	.83	-.14	-.09	-.03	.05	-.34**	.08
3	Grammar	EAP0360	81	2.79	.90	.03	-.18	.14	.04	-.13	-.19
4	Speech	EAP0400	179	3.07	.94	.32**	.11	.17*	.35**	.08	-.21**
4	Reading	EAP0420	184	2.56	.95	.19*	-.03	.06	.22**	.09	-.21**
4	Writing	EAP0440	157	2.44	.92	.18*	.08	.12	.17*	.07	-.12
4	Grammar	EAP0460	157	2.54	.94	.13	.08	.10	.11	.05	-.07
5	Speech	EAP1500	226	3.08	.86	.16*	.07	.05	.16**	.12	-.08
5	Reading	EAP1520	237	2.56	.98	.06	-.10	-.13	.25**	-.02	-.15*
5	Writing	EAP1540	194	2.66	.99	.02	-.07	.04	.05	-.07	-.09
5	Grammar	EAP1560	202	2.61	.94	.11	-.10	.06	.14*	.01	-.19**
6	Reading	EAP1620	213	2.60	1.11	.20**	.04	.06	.24**	.07	-.09
6	Writing	EAP1640	179	2.66	1.01	.07	.21**	.17*	.07	-.09	.16*
Predictor Variables											
1.	LOEPAVG (N=1030)	1030	95.91	14.32	-	.89**	.91**	.85**	.90**	.52**	
2.	LPAVGWE (N=1030)	1030	96.15	11.78		-	.83**	.72**	.81**	.86**	
3.	LOLU (N=1030)	1030	92.41	17.47			-	.63**	.77**	.52**	
4.	LORC (N=1030)	1030	95.52	15.94				-	.65**	.36**	
5.	LOSM (N=1030)	1030	99.80	14.95					-	.49**	
6.	LOES (N=1030)	1030	96.39	12.66						-	

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed) *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Because individual regressions needed to be conducted for each model in each of the 15 courses in the EAP program, the process of presenting the regression results is somewhat lengthy. Table 4-2 presents a summary of the performance of the three competing models.

For EAP 0281 (Combined skills at level 2), none of the competing models were significantly able to predict success as measured by final course grade: Model 1 (Average w/out essay) $R^2 = .05$; $F(1,64) = 3.58$, $p = .06$; Model 2 (Average w/ essay) $R^2 = .05$; $F(1,64) = 3.07$, $p = .08$; Model 3 (individual subtests) $R^2 = .09$; $F(4,61) = 1.49$, $p = .22$

Table 4-2. Summary performance of all competing models in study 1

Lvl	Skill	Course	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Subtests of Model 3 Significantly Contributing to the Model			
						LOLU	LORC	LOSM	LOES
2	Combined	EAP0281							
3	Speech	EAP0300	X*		X		X		
3	Reading	EAP0320			X		X		
3	Writing	EAP0340			X			X	
3	Grammar	EAP0360							
4	Speech	EAP0400	X		X*		X		
4	Reading	EAP0420	X*		X				
4	Writing	EAP0440	X						
4	Grammar	EAP0460							
5	Speech	EAP1500	X						
5	Reading	EAP1520			X	X	X		
5	Writing	EAP1540							
5	Grammar	EAP1560							
6	Reading	EAP1620	X*		X		X		
6	Writing	EAP1640		X	X*	X		X	X

* Indicates preferred model when two or more models both significantly predicted success.

For EAP 0300 (Speech at level 3), Models 1 and 3 significantly predicted success in the course as measured by final course grade: $F(1,94) = 5.65$, $p = .02$ for Model 1 (Average w/out essay) and $F(4,91) = 2.55$, $p = .045$ for model 3 (Individual subtests). However, in the third Model, LOEP Reading was the only variable significantly contributing to the prediction. Model performance and beta weights for the models are presented in Table 4-3. The R-squared values for the significant competing models are .057 and .101 respectively for Models 1 and 3. This indicates that 5.7% and 10.1%, respectively, of the variance in final course grades in EAP 0300 was explained by the models. According to Cohen (1988), this is a small effect for both models. The adjusted R-squared values are .047 and .061 respectively for Models 1 and 3. An F-test was used to test if the reduced model, Model 1, performed as well as the full model, Model 3. Because the R^2 -change was not significant $F(3,91) = 1.48$, $p = .224$, it is assumed that the reduced model performed as well as the full model.

Table 4-3. EAP 0300: Summary of simultaneous multiple regression analyses for models predicting successful placement as measured by final course grades

Course	Model	Variable	B	SEB	β
EAP0300	1) Composite LOEP Test Scores	LOEPAVG	.016	.007	.238*
		2) Composite LOEP Test Scores	LPAVGWE	.018	.017
	3) Individual LOEP Test Scores Averaged with Essay	LOLU	.003	.005	.053
		LORC	.014	.005	.309**
		LOSM	-.002	.006	-.035
		LOES	-.000	.010	-.012

Model 1 $R^2 = .057$; $F(1,94) = 5.65$, $p = .020^*$

Model 2 $R^2 = .011$; $F(1,94) = 1.09$, $p = .299$

Model 3 $R^2 = .101$; $F(4,91) = 2.55$, $p = .045^*$

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

For EAP 0320 (Reading at level 3), only Model 3 significantly predicted success in the course as measured by final course grade, $F(4,90) = 3.90$, $p = .006$. However, in Model 3, LOEP Reading was the only variable significantly contributing to the prediction. Model performance and beta weights for the models are presented in Table 4-4. The R-squared value for Model 3 is .148. This indicates that 14.8% of the variance in final course grades in EAP 0320 was explained by Model 3. According to Cohen (1988), this is a medium effect. The adjusted R-squared value for Model 3 was .110.

Table 4-4. EAP 0320: Summary of simultaneous multiple regression analyses for models predicting successful placement as measured by final course grades

Course	Model	Variable	B	SEB	β
EAP0320	1) Composite LOEP Test Scores	LOEPAVG	.015	.010	.155
		2) Composite LOEP Test Scores	LPAVGWE	.007	.025
	3) Individual LOEP Test Scores Averaged with Essay	LOLU	-.004	.008	-.052
		LORC	.025	.007	.381**
		LOSM	-.009	.009	-.126
		LOES	-.004	.013	-.039

Model 1 $R^2 = .024$; $F(1,93) = 2.30$, $p = .133$

Model 2 $R^2 = .001$; $F(1,93) = .085$, $p = .771$

Model 3 $R^2 = .148$; $F(4,90) = 3.90$, $p = .006^{**}$

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

For EAP 0340 (Writing at level 3), only Model 3 significantly predicted success in the course as measured by final course grade, $F(4,69) = 2.90$, $p = .028$. However, in Model 3 LOEP Sentence Meaning was the only variable significantly contributing to the prediction. Model performance and beta weights for the models are presented in Table 4-5. The R-squared value for Model 3 is .144. This indicates that 14.4% is the proportion of explained variance of the variance in final course grades in EAP 0340 in Model 3. According to Cohen (1988), this is a small effect. The adjusted R-squared value for Model 3 was .094.

Table 4-5. EAP 0340: Summary of simultaneous multiple regression analyses for models predicting successful placement as measured by final course grades

Course	Model	Variable	B	SEB	β
EAP0340	1) Composite LOEP Test Scores	LOEPAVG	-.013	.011	-.142
		LPAVGWE	-.021	.029	-.088
	2) Composite LOEP Test Scores Averaged with Essay	LOLU	.002	.009	.028
		LORC	.008	.007	.132
		LOSM	-.028	.009	-
		LOES	-.007	.015	-.076

Model 1 $R^2 = .020$; $F(1,72) = 1.48$, $p = .228$

Model 2 $R^2 = .008$; $F(1,72) = .558$, $p = .457$

Model 3 $R^2 = .144$; $F(4,69) = 2.89$, $p = .028^*$

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

For EAP 0360 (Grammar at level 3), none of the competing models were significantly able to predict success as measured by final course grade: Model 1 $R^2 = .00$; $F(1,79) = .05$, $p = .82$; Model 2 $R^2 = .03$; $F(1,79) = 2.50$, $p = .12$; Model 3 $R^2 = .11$; $F(4,76) = 2.34$, $p = .063$.

For EAP 0400 (Speech at level 4), Models 1 and 3 significantly predicted success in the course as measured by final course grade: $F(1,177) = 19.91$, $p < .001$ for Model 1 and $F(4,174) = 7.37$, $p < .001$ for Model 3. However, in Model 3, LOEP Reading was the only variable significantly contributing to the prediction. The beta weights for the models are presented in Table 4-6. The R-squared values for the competing models are .101 and .145 respectively for

Models 1 and 3. This indicates that 10.1% and 14.5%, respectively, of the variance in final course grades in EAP 0400 was explained by the models. According to Cohen (1988), this is a small effect for Model 1 and a medium effect for Model 3. The adjusted R-squared values for the two models were .096 and .125 respectively for Models 1 and 3. An F-test was used to test if the reduced model, Model 1, performed as well as the full model, Model 3. Model 1 did not perform as well as Model 3. The reduced model had a significantly lower R^2 , $F(3,174) = 2.98$, $p = .03$

Table 4-6. EAP 0400: Summary of simultaneous multiple regression analyses for models predicting successful placement as measured by final course grades

Course	Model	Variable	B	SEB	β
EAP0400					
	1) Composite LOEP Test Scores	LOEPAVG	.039	.009	.318**
	2) Composite LOEP Test Scores Averaged with Essay	LPAVGWE	.026	.019	.107
	3) Individual LOEP Test Scores	LOLU	.012	.007	.146
		LORC	.023	.005	.326**
		LOSM	-.002	.008	-.025
		LOES	-.004	.010	-.035

Model 1 $R^2 = .101$; $F(1,177) = 19.91$, $p < .001$ **

Model 2 $R^2 = .011$; $F(1,177) = 2.03$, $p = .156$

Model 3 $R^2 = .145$; $F(4,174) = 7.37$, $p < .001$ **

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

For EAP 0420 (Reading at level 4), Models 1 and 3 significantly predicted success in the course as measured by final course grade: $F(1,182) = 6.63$, $p = .01$ for Model 1 and $F(4,179) = 3.08$, $p = .02$ for Model 3. However, in Model 3, none of the variables were shown as significantly contributing to the prediction. The beta weights for the models are presented in Table 4-7. The R-squared values for the competing models are .035 and .064 respectively for Models 1 and 3. This indicates that 3.5% and 6.4%, respectively, of the variance in final course grades in EAP 0420 was explained by the models. According to Cohen (1988), this is a small effect for both models. The adjusted R-squared values were .030 and .043 respectively for Models 1 and 3. An F-test was used to test if the reduced model, Model 1, performed as well as

the full model, Model 3. Because the R^2 -change was not significant $F(3,179) = 1.85, p = .14$, it is assumed that the reduced model performed as well as the full model.

Table 4-7. EAP 0420: Summary of simultaneous multiple regression analyses for models predicting successful placement as measured by final course grades

Course	Model	Variable	B	SEB	β
EAP0420	1) Composite LOEP Test Scores	LOEPAVG	.023	.009	.188*
		LPAVGWE	-.007	.019	-.027
	2) Composite LOEP Test Scores Averaged with Essay	LOLU	-.001	.007	-.015
		LORC	.011	.006	.154
		LOSM	.002	.008	.022
		LOES	-.017	.011	-.141

Model 1 $R^2 = .035; F(1,182) = 6.63, p = .011^*$

Model 2 $R^2 = .001; F(1,182) = .132, p = .716$

Model 3 $R^2 = .064; F(4,179) = 3.08, p = .018^*$

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

For EAP 0440 (Writing at level 4), only Model 1 significantly predicted success in the course as measured by final course grade, $F(1,155) = 5.14, p = .03$. Model performance and beta weights for the models are presented in Table 4-8. The R-squared value for Model 1 is .032. This indicates that 3.2% of the variance in final course grades in EAP 0440 was explained by Model 1. According to Cohen (1988), this is a small effect. The adjusted R-squared value for Models 1 was .026.

Table 4-8. EAP 0440: Summary of simultaneous multiple regression analyses for models predicting successful placement as measured by final course grades

Course	Model	Variable	B	SEB	β
EAP0440	1) Composite LOEP Test Scores	LOEPAVG	.022	.009	.179*
		LPAVGWE	.022	.023	.077
	2) Composite LOEP Test Scores Averaged with Essay	LOLU	.009	.007	.116
		LORC	.013	.007	.174
		LOSM	-.000	.008	-.005
		LOES	.002	.013	.013

Model 1 $R^2 = .032; F(1,155) = 5.14, p = .025^*$

Model 2 $R^2 = .006; F(1,155) = .931, p = .336$

Model 3 $R^2 = .042; F(4,152) = 1.66, p = .163$

*p < .05; **p<.01

For EAP 0460 (Grammar at level 4), none of the competing models were significantly able to predict success as measured by final course grade: Model 1 $R^2 = .02$; $F(1,155) = 2.67$, $p = .10$; Model 2 $R^2 = .01$; $F(1,155) = 1.00$, $p = .32$; Model 3 $R^2 = .02$; $F(4,152) = .86$, $p = .49$.

For EAP 1500 (Speech at level 5), only Model 1 significantly predicted success in the course as measured by final course grade, $F(1,224) = 5.76$, $p = .02$. Model performance and beta weights for the models are presented in table 4-9. The R-squared value for Model 1 is .025. This indicates that 2.5% of the variance in final course grades in EAP 1500 was explained by Model 1. According to Cohen (1988), this is a small effect. The adjusted R-squared value for Model 1 was .021.

Table 4-9. EAP 1500: Summary of simultaneous multiple regression analyses for models predicting successful placement as measured by final course grades

Course	Model	Variable	B	SEB	β
EAP1500	1) Composite LOEP Test Scores	LOEPAVG	.021	.009	.158*
		LPAVGWE	.017	.017	.067
	2) Composite LOEP Test Scores Averaged with Essay	LOLU	.001	.007	.012
		LORC	.012	.006	.139
		LOSM	.007	.008	.070
		LOES	.000	.009	.002

Model 1 $R^2 = .025$; $F(1,224) = 5.76$, $p = .017^*$

Model 2 $R^2 = .004$; $F(1,224) = .997$, $p = .319$

Model 3 $R^2 = .031$; $F(4,221) = 1.75$, $p = .139$

*p < .05; **p<.01

For EAP 1520 (Reading at level 5), only Model 3 significantly predicted success in the course as measured by final course grade, $F(4,232) = 6.40$, $p < .001$. However, in Model 3, LOEP Language Use and Reading Comprehension were the only variables significantly contributing to the prediction. Model performance and beta weights for the models are presented in Table 4-10. The R-squared value for Model 3 is .099. This indicates that 9.9% of the variance

in final course grades in EAP 1520 was explained by Model 3. According to Cohen (1988), this is a small effect. The adjusted R-squared value for Models 3 was .084.

Table 4-10. EAP 1520: Summary of simultaneous multiple regression analyses for models predicting successful placement as measured by final course grades

Course	Model	Variable	B	SEB	β
EAP1520	1) Composite LOEP Test Scores	LOEPAVG	.005	.010	.060
		LPAVGWE	-.028	.018	-.102
	2) Composite LOEP Test Scores Averaged with Essay	LOLU	-.018	.007	-.171*
		LORC	.024	.007	.235**
		LOSM	-.007	.008	-.052
		LOES	-.016	.009	-.122

Model 1 $R^2 = .004$; $F(1,235) = .835$, $p = .362$

Model 2 $R^2 = .010$; $F(1,235) = 2.45$, $p = .119$

Model 3 $R^2 = .099$; $F(4,232) = 6.40$, $p < .001^{**}$

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

For EAP 1540 (Writing at level 5), none of the competing models were significantly able to predict success as measured by final course grade: Model 1 $R^2 = .00$; $F(1,192) = .06$, $p = .81$; Model 2 $R^2 = .01$; $F(1,192) = .94$, $p = .33$; Model 3 $R^2 = .02$; $F(4,189) = .94$, $p = .44$.

For EAP 1560 (Grammar at level 5), none of the competing models were significantly able to predict success as measured by final course grade: Model 1 $R^2 = .01$; $F(1,200) = 2.34$, $p = .13$; Model 2 $R^2 = .01$; $F(1,200) = 2.13$, $p = .15$; Model 3 $R^2 = .05$; $F(4,197) = 2.33$, $p = .06$.

For EAP 1620 (Reading at level 6), Models 1 and 3 significantly predicted success in the course as measured by final course grade: $F(1,211) = 8.34$, $p = .004$ for Model 1 and $F(4,208) = 3.28$, $p = .01$ for Model 3. However, in Model 3, only LOEP Reading Comprehension significantly contributed to the prediction. Model performance and beta weights for the models are presented in Table 4-11. The R-squared values for the competing models are .038 and .059 respectively for Models 1 and 3. This indicates that 3.8% and 5.9%, respectively, of the variance in final course grades in EAP 1620 was explained by the models. According to Cohen (1988),

this is a small effect for both models. The adjusted R-squared values were .033 and .041 respectively for Models 1 and 3. An F-test was used to test if the reduced model, Model 1, performed as well as the full model, Model 3. Because the R^2 -change was not significant $F(3,208) = 1.55, p = .20$, it is assumed that the reduced model performed as well as the full model.

Table 4-11. EAP 1620: Summary of simultaneous multiple regression analyses for models predicting successful placement as measured by final course grades

Course	Model	Variable	B	SEB	β	
EAP1620	1) Composite LOEP Test Scores	LOEPAVG	.045	.016	.195**	
		LPAVGWE	.013	.022	.043	
	2) Composite LOEP Test Scores Averaged with Essay	3) Individual LOEP Test Scores	LOLU	.005	.012	.030
			LORC	.031	.010	.226**
			LOSM	.004	.012	.023
			LOES	-.004	.011	-.022

Model 1 $R^2 = .038; F(1,211) = 8.34, p = .004^{**}$

Model 2 $R^2 = .002; F(1,211) = .398, p = .529$

Model 3 $R^2 = .059; F(4,208) = 3.28, p = .012^*$

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

For EAP 1640 (Writing at level 6), Models 2 and 3 significantly predicted success in the course as measured by final course grade: $F(1,177) = 7.99, p = .005$ for Model 2 and $F(4,174) = 4.84, p = .001$ for Model 3. However, in Model 3, only LOEP Language Use, Sentence Meaning and Essay significantly contributed to the prediction. Model performance and beta weights for the models are presented in Table 4-12. The beta weights for Model 3 suggest that LOEP Language Use contributes the most to predicting success followed by Essay and Sentence Meaning. The R-squared values for the competing models are .043 and .100 respectively for Models 2 and 3. This indicates that 4.3% and 10%, respectively, of the variance in final course grades in EAP 1640 was explained by the models. According to Cohen (1988), this is a small effect for both models. The adjusted R-squared values were .043 and .079 respectively for

Models 2 and 3. An F-test was used to test if the reduced model, Model 2, performed as well as the full model, Model 3. Model 2 did not perform as well as Model 3. The reduced model has a significantly lower R^2 , $F(3,174) = 3.67$, $p = 0.013$

Table 4-12. EAP 1640: Summary of simultaneous multiple regression analyses for models predicting successful placement as measured by final course grades

Course	Model	Variable	B	SEB	β
EAP1640	1) Composite LOEP Test Scores	LOEPAVG	.015	.016	.069
		LPAVGWE	.059	.021	.208**
	2) Composite LOEP Test Scores Averaged with Essay	LOLU	.042	.013	.259**
		LORC	.015	.010	.115
	3) Individual LOEP Test Scores	LOSM	-.024	.012	-.157*
		LOES	.030	.011	.212**

Model 1 $R^2 = .005$; $F(1,177) = .847$, $p = .359$

Model 2 $R^2 = .043$; $F(1,177) = 7.99$, $p = .005^{**}$

Model 3 $R^2 = .100$; $F(4,174) = 4.84$, $p = .001^{**}$

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

In the first study, none of the models was consistently able to predict success in all of the EAP courses. Model 3 was able to predict success in the greatest number of courses followed by Model 1. None of the models were able to predict successful placement in EAP grammar courses. Model 3 was consistently able to predict success in EAP reading courses. Model 1 was consistently able to predict success in EAP speech courses. Finally, Models 1 and 3 were sometimes able to predict success in EAP writing courses, Model 3 being the better of the two at predicting writing. It should be mentioned that none of the models was able to account for more than 15% of the variance in final course grades, with the majority of them accounting for less than 10% of the variance across courses.

Study 2

The second study used all willing EAP students taking courses at Valencia during the Summer A and C terms of 2006. Similar to the first study, multiple regressions were conducted

to compare the abilities of the three competing models at predicting success in EAP courses as measured by final course grades. In the second study, however, the additional outcome variable of teacher evaluation of placement was added. Furthermore, two new variables were analyzed for their predictive abilities: Locus of Control and Computed Generation 1.5 status.

It was hoped that this second study could replicate findings in the first and add to those findings. Unfortunately, none of the models in the second study were found to be significant predictors of success as measured by final course grades. Even if the models had been found to significantly predict success, the low numbers of students in their first semester led to critically low numbers in each course. Although there were originally 470 students surveyed, only 131 of those students were in their first semester. Furthermore, because some of these students failed to take all subtests or because information was missing from the database, only 121 students had complete LOEP subtest scores and end of final course grades.

In the second study, multiple regressions were also conducted to compare the abilities of the same three variables at predicting success in EAP courses as measured by teacher evaluation of placement. The means, standard deviations, and correlations can be found in Table 4-13. All three models significantly predicted successful placement as measured by teacher evaluation of placement: $F(1,118) = 184.2, p < .001$ for Model 1, $F(1,118) = 312.4, p < .001$ for Model 2, and $F(4,115) = 79.5, p < .001$ for Model 3. In the third model, all LOEP subtests contributed significantly to prediction. Model performance and beta weights are presented in Table 4-14. The R-squared values for the competing models are .610, .726, and .734 respectively for Models 1, 2, and 3. This indicates that 61.0%, 72.6%, and 73.4%, respectively, of the variance in teacher evaluation of placement was explained by the models. According to Cohen (1988), this is a large effect for all models. Because the first two models were not nested, an F-test could not be

conducted; however, the R-squared values indicated that Model 2 accounted for 11.6% more of the variance and therefore is the better model. Two F-tests were conducted to test if the reduced models, Model 1 and 2, performed as well as the full model, Model 3. Model 1 did not perform as well as Model 3, with a significantly lower R^2 , $F(3,115) = 17.87$, $p < .001$. However, it can be assumed that Model 2 did perform as well as Model 3 because the R^2 -change was not significant $F(3,115) = 1.15$, $p = .33$. Given that there is no significant difference between Models 2 and 3, the simpler model was selected as the preferred model.

Table 4-13. Means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations for teacher evaluation of placement and predictor variables for first semester survey respondents

Variable	N	M	SD	Correlation with TCHRPLC
TCHRPLC	121	4.55	.965	1.0
<u>Predictor Variables</u>				
1. LOEPAVG	121	94.25	11.38	.781**
2. LPAVGWE	121	95.29	9.06	.852**
3. LOLU	121	90.88	14.89	.693**
4. LORC	121	95.02	13.31	.581**
5. LOSM	121	97.16	12.94	.667**
6. LOES	121	95.54	13.35	.648**
7. LOCSCAL	106	8.67	3.63	-.074
8. GN15CMPT	131	.275	.448	.271**

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Using the LPAVGWE as the preferred model, the additional variables (LOCSCAL, GN15CMPT) were each tested individually to see if they improved prediction. LOCSCAL and GN15CMPT did not significantly improve prediction.

Although the second study failed to replicate findings in the first study using final course grades as an outcome variable, the addition of the second outcome variable did add to the findings. In the second study, Model 2 was selected as the preferred model because of its ability to perform as well as Model 3. In the first study, Model 3 was able to predict success in the

greatest number of courses followed by Model 1. All of the subtests in Model 3 in the second study were significantly able to predict success as measured by teacher evaluation of placement, with LOES contributing the most to the prediction, and followed by LOLU, LORC, and LOSM respectively.

Table 4-14. Summary of simultaneous multiple regression analyses for models predicting successful placement as measured by teacher evaluation of placement

Model	Variable	B	SEB	β
1) Composite LOEP Test Scores	LOEPAVG	.066	.005	.781**
2) Composite LOEP Test Scores Averaged with Essay	LPAVGWE	.091	.005	.852**
3) Individual LOEP Test Scores	LOLU	.016	.004	.251**
	LORC	.018	.004	.247**
	LOSM	.018	.005	.244**
	LOES	.039	.005	.392**

Model 1 $R^2 = .610$; $F(1,118) = 184.20$, $p < .001^{**}$

Model 2 $R^2 = .726$; $F(1,118) = 312.43$, $p < .001^{**}$

Model 3 $R^2 = .734$; $F(4,115) = 79.49$, $p < .001^{**}$

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

Although the second study failed to replicate findings in the first study using final course grades as an outcome variable, the addition of the second outcome variable did add to the findings. In the second study, Model 2 was selected as the preferred model because of its ability to perform as well as Model 3. In the first study, Model 3 was able to predict success in the greatest number of courses followed by Model 1. All of the subtests in Model 3 in the second study were significantly able to predict success as measured by teacher evaluation of placement with LOES contributing the most to the prediction followed by LOLU, LORC, and LOSM respectively.

CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION

In addition to identifying descriptive information about Valencia's EAP population, this research sought to identify the most effective practices for placing students into EAP courses at Valencia by finding answers to the following questions:

1. What are the student and teacher beliefs about placement at Valencia?
2. Which of the following three approaches best predicts student success as measured by final course grades and teacher evaluation of placement: 1) Averaging the three objective LOEP subtests, 2) Using an equally weighted average of both the objectively and subjectively scored LOEP subtests, or 3) Using the four LOEP subtests as individual predictors?
3. Which of all approaches best predicts success across different language skill courses (reading, writing, grammar, and speech) and language proficiency levels as measured by final course grades?
4. Which of all approaches best predicts success across different language skill courses (reading, writing, grammar, and speech) and language proficiency levels as measured by teacher evaluation of placement?
5. Do the student variables of Locus of Control and Generation 1.5 add to the prediction of placement in EAP courses as measured by final course grades and teacher evaluation of placement?

Valencia's EAP Population

With the exceptions of country of origin and native language, survey responses revealed that Valencia's EAP population, for the most part, is similar across the three campuses. However, survey results did reveal that the West Campus had considerably more Haitian students than the two other campuses: 28.85% of the West Campus EAP student population was Haitian as opposed to 4.63% on the East Campus and 4.92% on the Osceola Campus. These demographic differences, however, did not appear to affect placement. In the surveys, teachers across campuses rated misplacement in a similar manner, and none of the teacher comments led the researcher to believe the incidence of misplacement of students was greater on one campus than another.

Valencia's prototypical EAP student is a 19-year-old Spanish speaker from Columbia. She is in her second semester at Valencia and started school in the U.S. in or around 10th grade, but is most likely not a Generation 1.5 student. She has been in the U.S. about three years and is not the first person in her family to go to college; however, she is more than likely the first person in her family to go to college in the U.S. and has probably not attended college outside the U.S. She rates her abilities to write papers and do research in English as average. Only a few of the people she does things with every week are native English speakers. However, she does use English most of the time to speak with her friends. On the other hand, her family does not often use English in the home, and in that home there are fewer than 25 books. She does, however, own a computer and rates her ability to use it as above average.

Student and Teacher Beliefs about Placement

This section of the chapter discusses findings relevant to the first research question, "What are the student and teacher beliefs about placement at Valencia?" When students were asked their beliefs on placement, 21% of the 470 students surveyed felt that they had been misplaced. One might expect that a larger percentage of students who had been placed into a developmental program rather than regular college courses to feel that they have been misplaced. In the surveys, teachers indicated that 17% of their students were misplaced. It is interesting to note that student beliefs about the incidence of misplacement are similar to those of instructors, 21% and 17% respectively.

Prior to the study, anecdotal evidence (emails, teacher complaints at meetings, and discussions about placement with colleagues) indicated teacher dissatisfaction with the way students were being placed. In response to survey questions on placement, faculty members felt that Valencia did an average job at placing students; 14 of 19 survey respondents (74%) selected the term "Average" to describe Valencia's accuracy at placing students. 74% indicated that they

“Sometimes” feel that students in their EAP classes might be better placed in a different level. The responses to this particular question about how often misplacement occurs were interesting in that not one of the instructors felt that students were “Rarely” or “Never” misplaced, indicating that instructors do feel that misplacement is an ongoing phenomenon. Of those surveyed, 68% felt that a few of the students in their courses during the semester in which surveys were conducted should have been placed in a different level. And while 10% indicated that “None” of their students would have benefited from different placement, 21% indicated more than a few students should have been placed differently.

In terms of teacher responses to the open-ended questions, three of the eight major categories were related to placement: one specifically dealing with misplacement, one on placement in general, and one on other placement comments. To summarize teacher comments about misplacement, many of the comments indicated differing opinions about students being placed above and below their ability levels: “I believe that students who are misplaced are more frequently under-prepared than over-prepared,” and “Sometimes we get students that just seem way beyond the level of EAP.” In the category of Teacher Comments on Placement, responses were generally positive regarding placement at Valencia. For example, one instructor wrote “I believe that most students are well placed within the EAP program.” In the category Other Placement Comments there was some indication that teachers felt students placed in writing courses lacked sufficient grammar skills. A typical response was that “some of my level 6 students who have placed directly into level 6 lack the grammar and sentence structure skills necessary to be successful in Advanced Comp.” This was supported by instructors who commented on both weak skills and a total lack of skills. Also, in the same category of Other Placement Comments, another instructor wrote “I never had grammar students misplaced.”

Further research would need to be conducted verify this, but perhaps there is a mismatch between the specific discrete point grammar topics taught in EAP grammar courses and what is measured by the LOLU and LOSM subtests.

Other teacher comments that should be mentioned here dealt with teaching-related problems but indirectly reflect issues with placement. For example, comments like “It is uncomfortable—and sometimes embarrassing—to have completely native sounding students in classes. I don’t feel I am necessarily meeting their needs,” reveal a wide variety of language proficiencies in courses. A comment such as,

The problem I have with writing is high school grads know essay organization but have problems with grammar and mechanics. On the other hand, other students aren’t familiar with any organization, mechanics, or sentence structure

further demonstrates the variety of skills and background knowledge that students have when they enter courses at Valencia. The variety of language proficiencies and differences in skills and background knowledge demonstrated by students could simply be the result of placing students into skills classes at a single level rather than into skills classes across levels. It could also indicate a mismatch between the LOEP subtests and the school curriculum.

In summary, the majority of faculty members surveyed felt that only a few of their students were misplaced during the study period. Although there were indications that placement problems existed, the findings failed to reflect the anecdotal reports in terms of the incidence of misplacement. It is possible that with the lighter course load over the summer (with fewer courses, fewer students in courses, shorter work weeks) teachers did not feel or vent frustrations about misplaced students over the summer in the same manner as they did during the fall or spring semesters.

The Preferred Approach

This section discusses findings relevant to the second research question, “Which of the following three approaches best predicts student success as measured by final course grades and teacher evaluation of placement: 1) Averaging the three objective LOEP subtests, 2) Using an equally weighted average of both the objectively and subjectively scored LOEP subtests, or 3) Using the four LOEP subtests as individual predictors?”

To help improve the successful placement of EAP students into the program, research Question 2 sought to find which of three approaches best predicted student success as measured by final course grades and by teacher evaluation of placement. Model 1 studied the variable of the simple average of the three objectively scored LOEP subtests. In the first study using the data including 1,030 students, Model 1 was able to significantly predict success as measured by final course grades in six of the 15 courses analyzed. The first model significantly predicted success in all EAP Speech courses, levels 3, 4, and 5. Speech courses are not offered at levels 2 or 6. The first model also predicted success in Reading at levels 4 and 6, and Writing at level 4. In three of those courses (level 3 Speech, level 4 Reading, and level 6 Reading) Model 1 was selected for its simplicity, but this model could never account for more than 10% of the variance in final course grades. Model 1 failed to predict success in any of the grammar courses.

As mentioned earlier, perhaps there is a mismatch between content assessed on the LOLU/LOSM subtests and the content taught in EAP grammar courses. Another explanation could be that perhaps grammar is not a skill to itself; perhaps it is a subcomponent of other skills. A final reason for the inability of these subtests to predict success in Grammar courses may have something to do with the different populations who do well on grammar tests. Some students’ study of English prior to arrival in the U.S. has focused extensively on memorization of vocabulary and grammatical rules. These students tend to do well on grammar tests, but do not

write or speak well in English. Other students may have had greater access to English-speaking models with a greater focus on communicative tasks and less focus on grammar and vocabulary. An example would be Generation 1.5 students who speak with near-native proficiency but lack grammar knowledge. The differences in these populations could be affecting the ability of the LOEP to place students appropriately.

In the second study using the data from 470 surveyed students, Model 1 was found to significantly predict successful placement as measured by teacher evaluation, but it was outperformed by Models 2 and 3. This is reasonable because this model did not include the LOEP Essay subtest, the subtest that was found to be most predictive of teacher evaluation of placement.

Model 2, which used an equally weighted average of both the objectively and subjectively scored LOEP subtests, was found to be a poor predictor in the first study. This model was able to significantly predict success in only one 15 EAP course (level 6 writing), and it was able to account for only 4% of the variance in that regression. However, in the second study Model 2 performed as well as Model 3, which considered the four subtest variables individually.

Model 3, which entered the four LOEP subtests as individual predictors, performed moderately well in both studies. Although it accounted only 15% of the variance in the first study using the population of 1,030 students, it significantly predicted success in eight of the 15 EAP courses as measured by final course grade. The eight courses included Speech at levels 3 and 4, Reading at levels 3, 4, 5, and 6, and Writing at levels 4 and 6. In the second study, Model 3 accounted for the greatest amount of variance using teacher evaluation of placement. All of the LOEP subtests in Model 3 were found to be significant predictors of success as measured by teacher evaluation of placement. The Essay performed the best, followed by Reading, Sentence

Meaning, and Language Use, respectively. The performance of the Essay variable was interesting but not surprising; in survey responses teachers welcomed the reinstatement of the Essay variable. One instructor even noted, "...students seem to be better placed since we began reading LOEP essays." Because the Essay is the only direct measure of language proficiency, it is not surprising that it is able to predict teacher evaluations of placement.

A partial explanation for the ineffectiveness of the Essay variable in the first study could be that single-prompt essays are highly unstable as variables. This instability could have led to low reliability and thus negatively affected the correlation. Future research could address the comparative effectiveness of holistically scored single prompt essays and multi-prompt short essay measures. If holistically scored multi-prompt short essay measures are found to increase the reliability of written assessment, their use could enhance placement practices.

In the first study, none of the variables in Model 3 showed high correlations with final course grades, the highest correlation being .36 for LOEP Reading with EAP 0320 (Level 3 Reading). These low correlations may be explained by low reliability of course grades, restriction of range of test scores, or both. Because of the different ways that teachers evaluate students and the variety of personal, social, economic, and academic factors involved in assigning student grades, final course grades may not be a reliable indicator of successful placement. It has been suggested that low reliability of course grades can depress correlations (Sawyer, 1989). For example, if the reliability of a test score is high, e.g., .90, and the reliability of course grades is low, e.g., .40, the maximum correlation between the measures is .60. Another possible explanation is restriction of range (American College Testing Program, 1990; Armstrong, 1994). In other words, because students in EAP courses only include students above the test cut-off scores and below other benchmark scores, predictor scores do not include the

students at the lower or upper ends of the range of scores. A variety of studies use one or both of these explanations to explain low correlations (American College Testing Program, 1990; Armstrong, 1994; College Board, 1990; College of the Canyons, 1994; Feldt, 1989; Kesler, 1987). Another likely explanation for the failure of the models to show a large effect is that because the LOEP test scores had actually been used to place students into classes, most of the variance attributed to the placement measures had already been explained.

Reading Subtest Preferred

This section of the chapter discusses findings relevant to the third research question, “Which of all approaches best predicts success across different language skill courses (reading, writing, grammar, and speech) and language proficiency levels as measured by final course grades?”

In response to Question 3, the LOEP Reading subtest was the best at predicting success across different skills and levels as measured by final course grades. In the first study, LOEP Reading contributed significantly to Model 3 in Reading courses at levels 3, 5 and 6 and in Speech courses at levels 3 and 4.

In a post hoc analysis, the LOEP Reading subtest was predictive of all skills: reading, writing, grammar, and speech. The test was also able to predict success in at least one course at each level. The post hoc analysis tested each of the LOEP subtests in isolation for ability to predict success as measured by final course grades using the 1,030 students in the first study. Table 5-1 details the results comparing the seven variables, the three original models and the four LOEP subtests as individual, single variable models. In the event that one of the LOEP subtests and Model 3 both predicted success, an F-test was conducted to compare the models. In the event that two or more subtest variables predicted success, whichever model accounted for the greatest amount of variance was selected as the preferred model. As with the results of study 1, none of

the new variables was able to perform well across all skills and levels. However, LOEP Reading (LORC) was the best predictor of success. It was predictive in all Speech courses (Levels 3, 4, and 5), all Reading courses (levels 3, 4, 5, and 6), and also was predictive in level 4 writing and level 6 grammar.

Table 5-1. Post-hoc results comparing the 3 original models with each subtest added as a competing model.

Level	Skill	Course	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	LOLU	LORC	LOSM	LOES
2	Combined	EAP0281							
3	Speech	EAP0300	X		X		X*		
3	Reading	EAP0320			X		X*		
3	Writing	EAP0340			X			X*	
3	Grammar	EAP0360							
4	Speech	EAP0400	X		X	X	X*		X
4	Reading	EAP0420	X		X		X*		X
4	Writing	EAP0440	X*				X		
4	Grammar	EAP0460							
5	Speech	EAP1500	X				X*		
5	Reading	EAP1520			X		X*		X
5	Writing	EAP1540							
5	Grammar	EAP1560					X		X*
6	Reading	EAP1620	X		X		X*		
6	Writing	EAP1640		X	X	X			X*

* The X indicates significant results on F-test; *Indicates best correlation

In terms of a theory of assessing language competence, this study does not appear to lend any evidence to support Oller's (1992) suggestion that in the early stages of second language learning, distinct dimensions of listening, writing, and reading ability may resolve into further sub-component traits. The reading, writing, and grammar subtests in this study were not able to predict success more efficiently for students at the lower proficiency levels than at the higher proficiency levels. In fact, all of these tests failed to consistently predict success in courses across levels and skills. However, it could be that the range of EAP student language proficiency levels is narrower than what Oller was considering in his description of the differences among

students in the early and later stages of second language acquisition. It could also be that the LOEP subtests are not accurate enough to detect small variations in these proficiency levels.

A number of recent studies have examined the relationship of reading and placement. Although reading placement tests have shown negligible or modest correlations with grades in credit level college courses (American College Testing Program, 1990; Armstrong, 1994; College of the Canyons, 1994; Feldt, 1989; Kesler, 1987), it has been suggested that the reason for this weak relationship may be a result of the fact that these tests are grounded in a domain-generic model of comprehension that assumes “a good reader is a good reader,” no matter the content (Behrman, 2005). Results of other studies have found evidence that domain-specific factors are important (Alexander & Judy, 1988; Byrnes, 1995), and placement tests using domain-specific readings have demonstrated greater efficiency than domain-generic reading tests at predicting student success (Behrman, 2005). The current research reveals that the domain-generic reading comprehension subtest is the most effective of all the LOEP subtests analyzed at predicting success as measured by final course grades, but how might domain-specific testing measures fare with EAP students? Future research may address whether or not EAP students are equitably assessed and placed by these measures given that language proficiency or lack of background knowledge could lead to lack of test reliability. For example, a domain-specific test using passages selected from literature courses may perform better than a domain-generic test at predicting success in composition and literature courses for native English speakers, but how would different background knowledge and different cultural perspectives bias an EAP student’s results on the domain specific test?

From a theoretical perspective of background knowledge in reading, it appears that first language literacy and grammatical knowledge account for approximately 50% of the variance in

second language performance (Bernhardt, 2005). Future research analyzing affect, interest in second language text, and alternative conceptions of literacy may add to the amount of variance already accounted for in second language performance. Would EAP students employ strategies of cognate knowledge in a domain-specific test of science passages, or would they be negatively affected by a large amount of unknown vocabulary?

In terms of practical placement, future investigations of reading as a predictor may want to include different reading measures. For example, it may be interesting to analyze other measures of reading that are gathered and stored in community college databases. In Florida, all students are required to take the CPT. How well do EAP student scores on the CPT Reading and Sentence Skills subtests correlate with success in EAP courses? This question was asked by James (2006) in her predictive validity study of the Accuplacer subtests, but to date no related research has been reported.

Predicting Evaluation of Placement

This section of the chapter discusses findings relevant to the fourth research question, “Which of all approaches best predicts success across different language skill courses (reading, writing, grammar, and speech) and language proficiency levels as measured by teacher evaluation of placement?” Unfortunately, in the second study, in which teacher evaluation of placement data were gathered as a variable, the low numbers of students in their first semester led to critically low numbers in each course. Although there were originally 470 students surveyed, only 131 of those students were in their first semester. Furthermore, because some of these students failed to take all of the subtests or because information was missing from the database, only 121 students had complete LOEP subtest scores and final course grade data. Even the least conservative recommendation for case-to-predictor ratios in regression analyses suggested a minimum case-to-predictor ratio of 15-to-1 (Schmidt, 1971). Therefore, regression

analyses across skills and levels using teacher evaluation of placement as an outcome variable were not suggested. Similar to the post hoc analyses conducted in response to Question 3, post hoc analyses were conducted using the individual LOEP subtests in isolation as predictors and teacher evaluation of placement as the outcome variable. However, none of the individual LOEP subtests in isolation was able to perform as well as LOEP Average with essay (Model 2).

LOC and Generation 1.5

This section of the chapter discusses findings relevant to the fifth research question, “Do the student variables of Locus of Control and Generation 1.5 add to the prediction of placement in EAP courses as measured by final course grades and teacher evaluation of placement?”

In study 2, these two variables were not found to add to the prediction. However, to determine whether these variables would have had better predictive power with the full set of survey respondents rather than the limited subset having LOEP scores, both were tested in isolation. When tested for their abilities to predict success as measured by teacher evaluation of placement, both were found to be significant predictors: LOCSCAL $R^2 = .020$; $F(1,338) = 6.98$, $p = .009$ and GN15CMPT $R^2 = .056$; $F(1,412) = 24.58$, $p < .001$. Generation 1.5 accounted for the greatest amount of variance in teacher evaluation of placement. Table 5-2 lists model performance and beta weights for the models.

Table 5-2. Summary of simultaneous multiple regression analyses for LOCSCAL & GN15CMPT at predicting successful placement as measured by teacher evaluation of placement

Model	Variable	B	SEB	B
1) Scores on the Trice LOC Scale	LOCSCAL	-.047	.018	-
				.142**
3) Computed Generation 1.5 Status	GN15CMPT	.588	.119	.237**

Model 1 $R^2 = .020$; $F(1,338) = 6.98$, $p = .009$ **

Model 2 $R^2 = .056$; $F(1,412) = 24.58$, $p < .001$ **

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

The Trice Locus of Control scale (Trice, 1985) used in this study was developed and validated on native English speaking college students with similar gender and age characteristics as the EAP students in this study. In Trice’s original study (1985), the mean scores for education and psychology students were 12.46 and 13.22, respectively; the mean score for EAP students surveyed in this study was 8.83. However, of the 470 students surveyed, 140 students did not complete the Trice LOC index and were therefore not included in the data analysis for the study.

To examine the possible role of English proficiency in the students’ ability to complete the Trice LOC index, a post hoc analysis was conducted. The researcher calculated percentages of students within each course who failed to answer questions on the LOC inventory. Table 5-3 displays these percentages.

Table 5-3 Percentages of students in each course failing to answer questions on the Trice LOC Index.

Level	Skill	Course	N	Percentages
3	Speech	EAP0300	34	8.82
3	Reading	EAP0320	35	8.57
3	Writing	EAP0340	27	7.41
3	Grammar	EAP0360	29	6.90
4	Speech	EAP0400	62	8.06
4	Reading	EAP0420	61	4.92
4	Writing	EAP0440	54	12.96
4	Grammar	EAP0460	62	8.06
5	Speech	EAP1500	105	14.29
5	Reading	EAP1520	109	15.60
5	Writing	EAP1540	104	18.27
5	Grammar	EAP1560	109	15.60
6	Reading	EAP1620	141	12.06
6	Writing	EAP1640	124	16.94

Contrary to what might be expected, lower proficiency students were not the only students failing to answer questions on the LOC inventory. In fact, as proficiency level increased, so did the percentages of students not answering questions on the LOC measure. Whether or not students at the lower levels understood the questions is unknown. Perhaps higher proficiency

students perceived elements of ambiguity in the items and were unable to respond. Future research could investigate the role of language and culture in EAP student responses to LOC questions. For example, perhaps some of the questions were perceived as too personal in nature, or perhaps students from different cultural groups that tend to prefer consensus building rather than individual decision making felt uncomfortable with some of the questions and opted not to answer them. If linguistic and cultural variables are identified to influence results, perhaps a new LOC scale could be developed and validated for ESL/EAP students at the college level.

Valencia's Generation 1.5 population was found to be relatively small in comparison to Generation 1.5 populations discussed in other research (Blumenthal, 2002; Lay, Carro, Tien, Niemann, & Leong, 1999). However, because the relative size of Generation 1.5 populations at other institutions within the state is unknown, it is difficult to say if Valencia is representative of other schools. Another finding that deserves comment is that teachers rated 71 out of 470 students (approximately 15%) as Generation 1.5. The computed indicator rated 146 out of 470 students (approximately 31%) as Generation 1.5. What accounts for this discrepancy? Does the computed indicator include more error, or did the objective nature of the indicator find things teachers missed? For example, it is possible the computed indicator identified students as Generation 1.5, but due to affective, cultural, or personal reasons, these students have not acquired high levels of spoken proficiency or adapted to American culture, which could have caused teachers not to rate them as Generation 1.5. On the other hand, perhaps because of affective, cultural, or personal reasons, some students failed to participate in class, thereby concealing their language proficiency levels and their Generation 1.5 status.

In the open-ended responses to teacher surveys, Generation 1.5 was one of the major categories. This indicates that even though the actual size of the population is small, teachers are

concerned about this population. Teachers expressed thoughts about proper placement of these students and how these students are affecting their classes. Teachers made comments such as, “Once again, the problem arises with 1.5s; all other students are placed right.” A few indicated how Generation 1.5 students were bored in their courses. Two instructors suggested the possibility of developing specific courses for these students. Teacher comments in the Speech subsection could also be considered indirect comments about Generation 1.5 students. One teacher summed things up nicely by saying “Speech is where the battles begin!” Many of the comments made about students in Speech courses indicated that many Generation 1.5 students didn’t need the course at all or had spoken proficiency higher than other students in the course.

CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study assumes that effective placement for developmental education programs can increase both student success and retention, but only if placement measures are valid and can therefore accurately predict student success in courses. While there are a variety of studies analyzing the validity of Accuplacer tests at predicting success for native English speakers (Hirschy & Mack, 2001; James, 2006; Saunders, 2000; and Smittle, 1993), there is a relative paucity of research looking at how well these test function for ESL students. This study contributes to the growing body of research on placement and computer adaptive testing by investigating the predictive characteristics of the Accuplacer LOEP subtests on student performance in EAP classes at the community college level. It further informs research on Generation 1.5 students by developing and applying a survey measure for identification of this population. This research also raises questions for future research which have theoretical underpinnings to language competence, learner motivation, and the importance of background knowledge. For example, how do level of language proficiency and background knowledge interact and affect the validity of placement tests? What percentage of the variance in final course grades is accounted for by student motivation? And to what extent does culture influence assessment of proficiency and placement?

On a more practical note, this study has provided information for the researcher and decision makers at Valencia Community College on the effectiveness of a variety of current and potential placement practices. Based on the results of this study, Valencia and other similar institutions may wish to consider a number of recommendations. For example, if students could be identified as Generation 1.5 early in the placement process, counselors could intervene and

help to place them more effectively into Speech courses. A discussion of other placement recommendations follows.

Recommendations for Testing and Placement

This study indicated that students are best placed into courses using individual subtests rather than composite scores or aggregates of subtests. This research compared three models, two using averaged subtest scores and one using individual subtest scores. In both studies, the model using individual subtests was the best predictor of success as measured by both final course grades and teacher evaluation of placement. Therefore, when institutions identify a subtest as predictive of a particular skill, schools should not weaken its predictive capabilities by averaging it with other tests that are not predictive of the skill. Schools should simply use the individual skill variable for placement into same skill courses. For example, the Reading subtest should be used to place students into reading courses.

The Reading subtest was found to be the most efficient predictor of success as measured by final course grades; this finding was true across language skills and levels. When Valencia re-evaluates placement practices, if it is decided to not use the Reading subtest in isolation to place students into Reading courses, any new composite models that are developed could benefit from giving the Reading subtest added weight.

The Essay was found to be the most efficient predictor of success as measured by teacher evaluation of placement. Therefore, the writing sample should continue to be used in placement practices. Other experts in the field agree that including an essay provides important information in placing students into EAP courses. In fact, the CCCC Committee on Second Language Writing stated:

Decisions regarding the placement of second language writers into writing courses should be based on students' writing proficiency rather than their race, native language background,

nationality, or immigration status. Nor should the decisions be based solely on the scores from standardized tests of general language proficiency or of spoken language proficiency. Instead, scores from the direct assessment of students' writing proficiency should be used, and multiple writing samples should be consulted whenever possible. (2001)

If the use of a writing sample is found to be too costly or time consuming, perhaps the Essay could be administered but assessed only when accuracy of placement is of the utmost importance. For example, at Valencia the decision to place students into level 5 is of greater importance than the decision to place students into levels 3 or 4 because at level 5 students earn college credit for the courses they are taking. Therefore, essays could be read only prior to admitting students into level 5.

Given the inability of any of the subtests to predict success in EAP grammar courses, Valencia's program could benefit from an analysis of the curricular goals of its grammar courses. Perhaps there is a mismatch between the LOEP subtests and curricular goals. If this is the case, perhaps an in-house subtest could lead to more predictable placement into grammar courses.

Other Recommendations

Although not a direct finding of this study, the review of research for this study led the researcher to findings that are fundamental in their application to placement practices. Because student populations and curricula vary from school to school, each institution should identify which placement tests or combinations of placement tests provide the greatest accuracy for their curricula and establish cut scores and placement mechanisms accordingly. Furthermore, students are not negatively affected by being placed across levels based on test results. In other words, it is not only acceptable, but desirable, to place students into different skills based on their demonstrated proficiencies in those skills. Students do not need to be placed into all skills at one level. This concept is supported by the College Board (2003).

In addition, students need to be aware of the importance of placement tests; therefore, they should be advised accordingly and given explicit information about the costs both in time and money that they could incur as a result of poor performance on the placement tests. Also, to ensure optimal test performance, limits should be placed on the number of tests a student can take in one day, or scheduled breaks should be added to the test-taking timeline.

Finally, because cut-scores have never been normed for the LOEP subtests at Valencia, a final recommendation would be to conduct a cut-score study. If Valencia were to undertake such a study, a subcomponent of the study should add the existing but currently unused LOEP Listening subtest and perhaps the LOEP Write Placer ESL subtest to identify their predictive capabilities. Developing cut-scores for and using these other tests (like the LOEP Listening, Write Placer ESL and the CPT) in addition to the current LOEP subtests could lead to enhanced placement of EAP students at Valencia.

APPENDIX A
APPENDIX A: LOEP ESSAY RUBRIC

Level 7	Native-like control of language. Second language errors may be present but do not interfere with communication. Organization facilitates a clear and well supported message.
Level 6	Although some second language errors are evident, they rarely interfere with communication. In addition, the reader is not troubled by occasional errors of vocabulary, spelling, punctuation, and/or grammar. Organization and details, although simplistic, enable the reader to follow the message.
Level 5	Second language errors, from a variety linguistic categories, are evident and sometimes interfere with communication. The reader is sometimes troubled by errors of vocabulary, spelling, punctuation, and/or grammar. Organization has been attempted, but may be unsuccessful.
Level 4	Second language errors frequently hinder communication. Errors of vocabulary, spelling, punctuation, and/or grammar often trouble the reader. Organization may or may not be present.
Level 3	Widespread second language errors in virtually every category. While some evidence of basic grammatical structures is present, errors of vocabulary, spelling, punctuation, and/or grammar consistently trouble the reader.
Level 2	The reader sees rudimentary control of vocabulary, spelling, punctuation, and/or grammar. However, the paper has no unified meaning, and errors constantly interfere with the readers' ability to comprehend.
Level 0	The reader sees no evidence of control of vocabulary, spelling, punctuation, and grammar; hence, there is no sense of linguistic competence. Words appear on page but do not communicate meaning.

APPENDIX B
APPENDIX B: SURVEY INSTRUMENTS USED IN THE STUDY

Letter to Instructors

Dear EAP Instructor,

I am a fellow EAP faculty member here at Valencia Community College. During the last ten years there have been significant changes made to the English as a second language program offered here at Valencia, including changes to the number and types of courses offered, how students are placed into these courses, and how Valencia as an institution monitors the effectiveness of this placement.

I am conducting research on the effectiveness of the placement process, and as an instructor here at Valencia you are in a position to provide valuable insight into how the system is working. Along with this informed consent form, you have been given a survey. The data gathered from this survey will provide me, the researcher, with the information necessary to evaluate current practices and make recommendations to enhance practices in the future. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer on this survey. It is important that you know that your identity will be kept confidential to the extent provided by law. The survey you fill will be stored in a locked file cabinet in my office and will be destroyed after the relevant data have been recorded.

There is no anticipated risk, compensation, or other direct benefit to you as a participant in this research. You do not have to answer any questions you do not wish to answer or allow me access to your records. You are free to withdraw your consent to participate and may discontinue your participation in the research at any time without consequence. If you have any questions about this research, please contact James May by e-mail jmay@valencia.cc.fl.us or phone 407-582-2047, or my supervisor, Dr. Candace Harper at charper@coe.ufl.edu or (352) 392-9191. If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, you can also contact the UFIRB office, University of Florida, Box 112250, Gainesville, FL 32611; ph (352) 392-0433.

Please sign the Informed Consent form before taking the survey. By signing this form you give me permission to gather your scores and grades from your records and report your responses anonymously in my research. Thank you for your help.

Sincerely,

James May, Valencia Community College

Informed Consent: Instructor

(Please sign & return with survey)

I have read the letter explaining the purpose and procedures involved in this EAP placement study. I voluntarily agree to participate in the study and to have my anonymous responses, scores, and grades included in the research report.

Signature of Research Participant

Date

Instructor Survey Section II

Instructions: Give your opinion of the current placement for each of the students in the list below. If you feel the student has been well placed, put a check in the well placed column next to the student's name. If you feel the student would have been more appropriately placed in a different level, indicate which level (for example, EAP levels 2 through 6, College Prep rather than EAP, College Composition, etc.)

	Student Name	Well Placed	Not Well Placed	Should have been placed in
1	Sample Student			
2	Sample Student			
3	Sample Student			
4	Sample Student			
5	Sample Student			
etc	Sample Student			

Generation 1.5 Survey

Dear fellow EAP Instructor:

Thank you very much for your assistance in the LOEP Placement research. As a direct result of your assistance, we were able to survey 470 EAP students and 27 EAP Instructors. Coding of the data has begun, and we hope to have some answers by August.

As I spoke with each of you, I gained valid insight into many of the issues we are facing. One of the more obvious issues many of you expressed concern about was Generation 1.5. In the surveys, students were asked a variety of demographic and personal history questions. It is hoped that we can use some of these questions to reliably identify Gen 1.5 students early in the placement process. However, to create a valid instrument that will reliably identify this population. We need one more vital piece of evidence from you. I hope you will grant us this one last petition of your time.

Below you will find a definition for Generation 1.5 students. Attached you will find your class rosters with a check box titled "Generation 1.5?" Please read the definition below and then place a check next to the names of the students you feel are members of Generation 1.5. Because you know your students quite well by this point in the semester, this should take you no more than a few minutes of your time. After you have identified the Generation 1.5 students, please place the survey back in the envelope and mail it back to James May at Mail code 3-20. Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Thanks Again

James May
Professor of English as a Second Language

Generation 1.5 Defined

Generation 1.5 students usually have come to the United States in their early teen or pre-teen years. They have often attended U.S. schools, and many of these students have even graduated from American high schools. While attending American schools, these students have had time to acquire informal English. Many of them use American idiomatic expressions, and some may even have American accents. Errors in their language are detectable, but they do not interfere with understanding, and these students are comfortable speaking English and do so with relative ease. Their reading, grammar, and writing skills on the other hand are usually behind that of their college-ready peers. They are not what you may consider true ESL students, but they are not true native English speaking students either.

Letter to Students

Dear EAP Student,

I am an EAP faculty member here at Valencia Community College. During the last ten years there have been significant changes made to the English as a second language program offered here at Valencia, including changes to the number and types of courses offered, how students are placed into these courses, and how Valencia as an institution monitors the effectiveness of this placement. Students and teachers have commented that some students are placed in classes that are too easy or too difficult for them.

As a student here at Valencia you are in a position to provide valuable insight into how the system is working. Along with this informed consent form, you have been given a survey. The data gathered from this survey will provide me, the researcher, with the information necessary to evaluate current practices and make recommendations to enhance practices in the future. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer on this survey. In addition to the survey, I would also like to access your LOEP placement test scores and final course grades. You are not required to allow me access to these records; however, this information is necessary for the research and would be greatly appreciated. It is important that you know that your identity will be kept confidential to the extent provided by law. The survey you fill out and the scores and grades accessed in your records will be stored in a locked file cabinet in my office and will be destroyed after the relevant data have been recorded.

There is no anticipated risk, compensation, or other direct benefit to you as a participant in this research. You do not have to answer any questions you do not wish to answer or allow me access to your records. You are free to withdraw your consent to participate and may discontinue your participation in the research at any time without consequence. If you have any questions about this research, please contact James May by e-mail jmay@valencia.cc.fl.us or phone 407-582-2047, or my supervisor, Dr. Candace Harper at charper@coe.ufl.edu or (352) 392-9191. If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, you can also contact the UFIRB office, University of Florida, Box 112250, Gainesville, FL 32611; ph (352) 392-0433.

Please sign the Informed Consent form before taking the survey. By signing this form you give me permission to gather your scores and grades from your records and report your responses anonymously in my research. Thank you for your help.

Sincerely,

James May, Valencia Community College

Informed Consent: Student

EAP Placement Study

I have read the letter explaining the purpose and procedures involved in this EAP placement study. I voluntarily agree to participate in the study and to have my anonymous responses, scores, and grades included in the research report.

Signature of Research Participant

Date

Student Survey

Section I: Course and Student Identification Information

Directions: Circle the most appropriate answer, check the box, or fill in the blank with the appropriate information (please print)

1. Campus: East West Osceola
2. Instructor's Name: _____
3. Course: EAP _____
4. Today's Date: _____
5. Your Last Name: _____
6. First Name: _____
7. Country of Origin: _____
8. Native Language: _____
9. Age: _____
10. Gender: Male Female

Section II: Student Background Information

Directions: Circle the most appropriate answer or fill in the blank with the appropriate information (please print)

11. This semester is my (1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, _____) semester at Valencia Community College.
12. How many years have you lived in the Continental United States (or Alaska/Hawaii)?

13. What grade were you in when you started school in the United States?
14. (If the answer is college, circle college.) _____
15. What year did you graduate from high school? _____ (or receive your GED)? _____
16. Are you the first person in your family to go to college? (Yes – No)
(If no, who was?) _____
17. Are you the first in your family to go to college in the United States? (Yes – No)
(If no, who was?) _____
18. Have you gone to college outside of the United States? (Yes – No)
19. If yes, for how many years? _____
20. How would you rate your abilities to write papers and do research in English? (Circle one)
Poor Below average Average Above average Expert
21. How many of your good friends (people you do things with every week) are native English speakers? (Circle one)
None A few Some Most All
22. How often do you use English when speaking with your friends? (Circle one)
Never Not often Sometimes Most of the time Always
23. How often does your family use English in your home? (Circle one)
Never Not often Sometimes Most of the time Always
24. Approximately how many books do you have in your home? (Circle one)
25 or less 25 - 50 50 - 75 75 - 100 100 or more
25. Do you have a computer at home? (Yes – No)
26. How would you rate your abilities to use the computer?

Poor Below average Average Above average Expert

Section III: Locus of Control

Directions: Read each statement on this page and record your answer in the space provided on the left of each item using the following answer key:

T = True, I agree with this statement

F = False, I do not agree with this statement.

27. _____ College grades most often reflect the effort you put into classes.
28. _____ I came to college because it was expected of me.
29. _____ I have largely determined my own career goals.
30. _____ Some people have a knack for writing, while others will never write well no matter how hard they try.
31. _____ At least once, I have taken a course because it was easy to get a good grade.
32. _____ Professors sometimes make an early impression of you and then no matter what you do, you cannot change that impression.
33. _____ There are some subjects in which I could never do well.
34. _____ Some students, such as student leaders and athletes, get free rides in college classes.
35. _____ I sometimes feel that there is nothing I can do to improve my situation.
36. _____ I never feel really hopeless – there is always something I can do to improve my situation.
37. _____ I would never allow social activities to affect my studies.
38. _____ There are many more important things for me than getting good grades.
39. _____ Studying every day is important.
40. _____ For some courses it is not important to go to class.
41. _____ I consider myself highly motivated to achieve success in life.
42. _____ I am a good writer.
43. _____ Doing work on time is always important to me.
44. _____ What I learn is more determined by college and course requirements than by what I want to learn.
45. _____ I have been known to spend a lot of time making decisions which others do not take seriously.
46. _____ I am easily distracted.
47. _____ I can be easily talked out of studying.
48. _____ I get depressed sometimes and then there is no way I can accomplish what I know I should be doing.
49. _____ Things will probably go wrong for me some time in the near future.
50. _____ I keep changing my mind about my career goals.
51. _____ I feel I will someday make a real contribution to the world if I work hard at it.
52. _____ There has been at least one instance in school where social activity impaired my academic performance.
53. _____ I would like to graduate from college, but there are more important things in my life.
54. _____ I plan well and stick to my plans.

Section IV: Placement

Directions: Circle the most appropriate answer or fill in the blank with the appropriate information (please print)

Survey Script

Hello, my name is James May, and I am an EAP professor here at Valencia. During the last ten years there have been significant changes made to the English as a second language program offered here at Valencia, including changes to the number and types of courses offered, how students are placed into these courses, and how Valencia as an institution monitors the effectiveness of this placement.

As teachers and students here at Valencia you are in a position to provide valuable insight into how the system is working. In the packet you have been given, you will find a brief letter detailing the most important points of what I am telling you now, an informed consent form, and a brief survey that will help Valencia to make decisions about our EAP program.

You do not have to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer on this survey. In addition to the survey, I would also like to access your LOEP placement test scores and final course grades. You are not required to allow me access to these records; however, this information is necessary for the research and would be greatly appreciated.

It is important that you know that your identity will be kept confidential to the extent provided by law. The survey you fill out and the scores and grades accessed in your records will be stored in a locked file cabinet in my office and will be destroyed after the relevant data have been recorded.

You are free to withdraw your consent to participate and may discontinue your participation in the research at any time without consequence. If you have any questions about this research, please feel free to contact me. My contact information is on the front sheet of your packet. Please rip off that sheet at this time and keep it for your records.

Are there any questions before I go any further?

If not, and you are willing to participate in the study, sign the informed consent form, and begin the survey. When you are finished, please raise your hand, and I will come around and collect it. If you have any questions during the survey, raise your hand and I will be around to answer them. Thank you in advance for your help in this research.

APPENDIX C
APPENDIX C: COMPLETE RESULTS OF STUDENT/TEACHER SURVEYS

Table C-1. Native languages of EAP placement survey respondents listed by campus

Native Language	All respondents (n = 466)	East campus (n = 109)	Osceola campus (n = 122)	West campus (n = 210)
Spanish	51.5	63.3	74.6	31.9
Creole	14.4	1.8	4.1	25.2
Arabic	7.3	7.3	5.7	8.6
Portuguese	3.4	1.8	3.3	4.8
French	3.0	2.8	1.6	4.3
Russian	2.8	0.9	3.3	2.9
Chinese	2.4	0.9	1.6	3.8
Vietnamese	2.1	2.8		3.3
English	1.3	1.8	0.8	1.0
Korean	1.1	1.8		1.4
Tagalog	1.1	1.8	0.8	0.5
Bengali	0.9			1.9
Gujarati	0.9	1.8		1.0
Farsi	0.6	0.9		1.0
Hindi	0.6		2.5	
Moldavian	0.6	0.9		1.0
Polish	0.6	0.9		1.0
Urdu	0.6	0.9	0.8	0.5
Amharic	0.4			1.0
Bulgarian	0.4	0.9		0.5
Japanese	0.4			1.0
ASL	0.2		0.8	
Armenian	0.2			0.5
Burmese	0.2	0.9		
Dutch	0.2	0.9		
Georgian	0.2	0.9		
Indonesian	0.2	0.9		
Krio	0.2			0.5
Latvian	0.2			0.5
Lithuanian	0.2			0.5
Papiamento	0.2	0.9		

Table C-1: continued.

Serbian	0.2		0.5
Somali	0.2	0.9	
Swahili	0.2		0.5
Thai	0.2		0.5
Tswana	0.2		0.5
Ukrainian	0.2	0.9	

Note: Numbers represent the percentage of survey respondents in each category.

Table C-2. Countries of origin for EAP placement survey respondents listed by campus

Country of Origin	All respondents	East campus	Osceola campus	West campus
	(n = 464)	(n = 108)	(n = 122)	(n = 208)
Columbia	17.24	18.52	25.41	11.54
Haiti	17.03	4.63	4.92	28.85
Puerto Rico	11.21	18.52	18.85	3.85
Morocco	4.74	3.70	4.92	5.77
Peru	4.53	4.63	7.38	3.37
Dominican Republic	4.09	4.63	6.56	2.4
Brazil	3.45	1.85	3.28	4.81
Venezuela	3.02	0.93	5.74	2.4
Cuba	2.80	4.63	1.64	1.44
USA	2.37	3.70	1.64	2.4
Vietnam	2.16	2.78		3.37
Ecuador	1.94	1.85	3.28	0.96
India	1.51	1.85	2.46	0.96
Russia	1.51	0.93	2.46	0.96
China	1.08		1.64	1.44
Jordon	1.08			1.92
Korea	1.08	1.85		1.44
Nicaragua	1.08	0.93	2.46	0.48
Philippines	1.08	1.85	0.82	0.48
Bangladesh	0.86			1.92
Pakistan	0.86	0.93	1.64	0.48
Uruguay	0.86	0.93	0.82	
Chile	0.65	0.93	0.82	0.48
Iran	0.65	0.93		0.96
Mexico	0.65	1.85		0.48
Panama	0.65	0.93		0.96
Poland	0.65	0.93		0.96
Argentina	0.43	0.93		0.48

Table C-2: continued

Bulgaria	0.43	0.93		0.48
Egypt	0.43			0.96
Estonia	0.43			0.96
Ethiopia	0.43			0.96
Hong Kong	0.43	0.93		
Japan	0.43			0.96
Lebanon	0.43	0.93		0.48
Mongolia	0.43	0.93		0.48
Paraguay	0.43	0.93	0.82	
Surinam	0.43	0.93		0.48
Taiwan	0.43			0.96
Uzbekistan	0.43		0.82	
Africa	0.22			0.48
Armenia	0.22			0.48
Aruba	0.22	0.93		
Belarus	0.22			0.48
Botswana	0.22			0.48
Burma	0.22	0.93		
Costa Rica	0.22			0.48
Denmark	0.22	0.93		
El Salvador	0.22			0.48
Guatemala	0.22			0.48
Honduras	0.22			0.48
Latvia	0.22			0.48
Lithuania	0.22			0.48
Moldova	0.22			0.48
Palestine	0.22		0.82	
Qatar	0.22	0.93		
Russian Georgia	0.22	0.93		
Serbia	0.22			0.48
Sierra Leone	0.22			0.48
Somalia	0.22	0.93		
Syria	0.22	0.93		
Thailand	0.22			0.48
Tunisia	0.22		0.82	
Spain	0.22	0.93		
Indonesia	0.22	0.93		
Cameroon	0.22			0.48

Note: Numbers represent the percentage of survey respondents in each category.

Table C-3. Gender of EAP placement survey respondents listed by campus

	<u>All respondents</u>	<u>East campus</u>	<u>Osceola campus</u>	<u>West campus</u>
Gender	(n = 467)	(n = 109)	(n = 122)	(n = 211)
Female	59.5	61.5	66.4	55.9
Male	40.5	38.5	33.6	44.1

Note: Numbers represent the percentage of survey respondents in each category.

Table C-4. Semester of enrollment for EAP placement survey respondents listed by campus

	<u>All respondents</u>	<u>East campus</u>	<u>Osceola campus</u>	<u>West campus</u>
Semester	(n = 466)	(n = 107)	(n = 123)	(n = 210)
1st Semester	28.1	32.7	24.4	28.6
2nd Semester	34.3	34.6	35.0	34.3
3rd Semester	26.6	22.4	30.9	24.8
4th Semester	7.7	6.5	4.9	10.0
5th Semester	1.7	2.8	1.6	1.4
6th Semester	0.9	0.9	1.6	0.5
7th Semester	0.4		0.8	0.5
8th Semester	0.2		0.8	

Note: Numbers represent the percentage of survey respondents in each category.

Table C-5. Ages of EAP placement survey respondents listed by campus

	<u>All respondents</u>	<u>East campus</u>	<u>Osceola campus</u>	<u>West campus</u>
Age	(n = 451)	(n = 105)	(n = 121)	(n = 201)
17	0.44		0.83	0.50
18	6.65	11.43	9.09	2.99
19	11.97	13.33	15.70	9.95
20	9.98	11.43	11.57	9.45
21	11.97	8.57	13.22	12.44
22	4.43	6.67	4.13	3.98
23	5.54	5.71	1.65	7.46
24	3.99	2.86	3.31	4.98
25	3.99	3.81	4.96	3.48
26	4.21	7.62	3.31	2.49
27	1.55	1.90		2.49
28	2.44	0.95	1.65	3.98

Table C-5: continued

29	2.22	0.95	1.65	3.48
30	2.44		2.48	2.49
31	2.00	1.90	2.48	1.99
32	3.10	3.81	3.31	2.99
33	2.00	1.90	3.31	1.49
34	0.89	1.90	0.83	0.50
35	2.22	0.95	0.83	2.99
36	1.77	2.86	1.65	1.49
37	0.44			1.00
38	1.77	0.95	0.83	2.99
39	2.66	0.95	1.65	3.48
40	2.22	2.86	0.83	2.49
41	0.67		0.83	1.00
42	1.11		1.65	1.49
43	0.67	0.95		1.00
44	0.44		0.83	0.50
45	1.11	0.95	0.83	1.00
46	0.67	0.95	0.83	
47	0.89	0.95	0.83	1.00
48	0.22			0.50
49	0.89		3.31	
50	0.44	0.95		0.50
51	0.22		0.83	
52	0.44	0.95		
53	0.67	0.95	0.83	0.50
55	0.44			0.50
59	0.22			0.50

Note: Numbers represent the percentage of survey respondents in each category.

Table C-6. Number of Years in the U.S. for placement survey respondents listed by campus

	All respondents	East campus	Osceola campus	West campus
Years in U.S.	(n = 461)	(n = 107)	(n = 122)	(n = 207)
< 1 Year	1.3	3.7		1.0
1 Year	7.2	8.4	5.7	8.2
2 Years	12.4	10.3	11.5	12.1
3 Years	15.4	15.0	16.4	14.5
4 Years	10.8	13.1	9.8	10.6
5 Years	12.8	15.0	11.5	12.1
6 Years	10.6	11.2	7.4	13.0
7 Years	6.1	2.8	5.7	8.7
8 Years	3.5	3.7	3.3	3.4
9 Years	2.0		3.3	2.4
10 Years	4.1	3.7	6.6	2.4
11 Years	1.1		2.5	1.0
12 Years	1.7	0.9	3.3	1.0
13 Years	1.1	1.9	1.6	0.5
14 Years	1.1	0.9	1.6	1.0
15 Years	2.4	1.9	3.3	2.4
16 Years	0.9	1.9		0.5
17 Years	0.9	0.9	1.6	0.5
18 Years	0.9	1.9		1.0
19 Years	0.4		0.8	0.5
20 Years	0.9			1.9
22 Years	0.4	0.9	0.8	
23 Years	0.4		0.8	0.5
25 Years	0.4		0.8	
27 Years	0.2		0.8	
28 Years	0.2			0.5
29 Years	0.2	0.9		
30 Years	0.2			0.5
33 Years	0.2	0.9		
34 Years	0.2		0.8	

Note: Numbers represent the percentage of survey respondents in each category.

Table C-7. Survey responses to, “What year did you graduate from high school/earn GED?” listed by campus

Year	All respondents (n = 435)	East campus (n = 102)	Osceola campus (n = 114)	West campus (n = 195)
2006	0.2		0.9	
2005	19.8	25.5	22.8	16.9
2004	12.2	11.8	14.9	11.8
2003	8.3	7.8	8.8	8.2
2002	5.5	2.9	5.3	6.2
2001	5.1	3.9	4.4	6.2
2000	6.0	3.9	3.5	8.2
1999	4.8	6.9	2.6	4.6
1998	2.8	3.9	3.5	1.0
1997	2.3		3.5	2.1
1996	2.1	3.9	0.9	2.1
1995	3.7	4.9	2.6	4.1
1994	3.4	1.0	3.5	4.6
1993	2.1		1.8	3.1
1992	1.8	2.9		2.6
1991	2.3	3.9	2.6	1.0
1990	1.4	1.0	1.8	1.0
1989	1.1		1.8	1.5
1988	0.7	1.0	0.9	0.5
1987	1.4	2.0		2.1
1986	1.4		0.9	2.6
1985	1.4	1.0		1.5
1984	1.4	1.0	1.8	1.5
1983	1.8	2.0		2.6
1982	1.1	1.0	2.6	0.5
1981	0.7	2.0		0.5
1980	1.4	2.0	2.6	0.5
1979	0.2			0.5
1978	0.2	1.0		
1977	0.5	1.0	0.9	
1975	0.7		2.6	
1974	0.5			1.0
1973	0.5	1.0	0.9	
1972	0.2		0.9	
1971	0.5	1.0	0.9	
1970	0.2			
1969	0.5			1.0

Note: Numbers represent the percentage of survey respondents in each category.

Table C-8. Survey responses to, “Are you the first person in your family to go to college?”

	All respondents	East campus	Osceola campus	West campus
Answer	(n = 465)	(n = 109)	(n = 122)	(n = 208)
No	72.26	70.64	77.87	69.71
Yes	27.74	29.36	22.13	30.29

Note: Numbers represent the percentage of survey respondents in each category.

Table C-9. Survey responses to, “If you weren’t the first person in your family to go to college, who was?”

	All Respondents
Answer	(n = 295)
My child has gone to college	2.71
My siblings/cousins or spouse has gone to college	50.51
My parents or their siblings have gone to college	41.02
My grandparents have gone to college	2.71
Everyone in my family has gone to college	2.71
	East Campus
Answer	(n = 68)
My child has gone to college	2.71
My siblings/cousins or spouse has gone to college	50.51
My parents or their siblings have gone to college	41.02
My grandparents have gone to college	2.71
Everyone in my family has gone to college	2.71
	Osceola Campus
Answer	(n = 82)
My child has gone to college	2.71
My siblings/cousins or spouse has gone to college	50.51
My parents or their siblings have gone to college	41.02
My grandparents have gone to college	2.71
Everyone in my family has gone to college	2.71
	West Campus
Answer	(n = 129)
My child has gone to college	2.71
My siblings/cousins or spouse has gone to college	50.51

Table C-9: continued

My parents or their siblings have gone to college	41.02
My grandparents have gone to college	2.71
Everyone in my family has gone to college	2.71

Note: Numbers represent the percentage of survey respondents in each category.

Table C-10. Survey responses to, “Are you the first person in your family to go to college in the U.S.?”

	<u>All respondents</u>	<u>East campus</u>	<u>Osceola campus</u>	<u>West campus</u>
Answer	(n = 464)	(n = 108)	(n = 121)	(n = 209)
No	37.50	40.74	37.19	35.89
Yes	62.50	59.26	62.81	64.11

Note: Numbers represent the percentage of survey respondents in each category.

Table C-11. Survey responses to, “If you weren’t the first person in your family to go to college, who was?”

	<u>All Respondents</u>
Answer	(n = 147)
My child has gone to college	4.08
My siblings/cousins or spouse has gone to college	82.31
My parents or their siblings have gone to college	12.93
My grandparents have gone to college	0.68
	<u>East Campus</u>
Answer	(n = 41)
My child has gone to college	2.44
My siblings/cousins or spouse has gone to college	78.05
My parents or their siblings have gone to college	17.07
My grandparents have gone to college	2.44
	<u>Osceola Campus</u>
Answer	(n = 37)
My child has gone to college	5.41
My siblings/cousins or spouse has gone to college	91.89
My parents or their siblings have gone to college	2.70
My grandparents have gone to college	

Table C-11: continued

	<u>West Campus</u>
Answer	(n = 61)
My child has gone to college	3.28
My siblings/cousins or spouse has gone to college	80.33
My parents or their siblings have gone to college	16.39
My grandparents have gone to college	

Note: Numbers represent the percentage of survey respondents in each category.

Table C-12. Survey responses to, “Have you gone to college outside of the United States?”

	<u>All respondents</u>	<u>East campus</u>	<u>Osceola campus</u>	<u>West campus</u>
Answer	(n = 464)	(n = 109)	(n = 121)	(n = 210)
No	60.78	61.47	66.94	60.00
Yes	39.22	38.53	33.06	40.00

Note: Numbers represent the percentage of survey respondents in each category.

Table C-13. Number of years spent in college outside of the U.S. by placement survey respondents listed by campus

	<u>All respondents</u>	<u>East campus</u>	<u>Osceola campus</u>	<u>West campus</u>
Years	(n = 185)	(n = 44)	(n = 42)	(n = 82)
< 1 Year	1.1	2.3	2.4	
1 Year	16.8	13.6	28.6	13.4
2 Years	20.5	20.5	23.8	19.5
3 Years	22.2	18.2	11.9	28.0
4 Years	17.8	25.0	14.3	17.1
5 Years	11.9	13.6	7.1	13.4
6 Years	4.9	2.3	11.9	1.2
7 Years	1.6	2.3		2.4
8 Years	1.6			2.4
9 Years	0.5	2.3		
10 Years	1.1			2.4

Note: Numbers represent the percentage of survey respondents in each category.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

James May has been an instructor of English for academic purposes (EAP) at Valencia Community College in Orlando, Florida for the past 6 years. Before that, he worked for three years as an adjunct ESL instructor at Santa Fe Community College in Gainesville, Florida. James earned his Master of Education degree in ESOL from the University of Florida in 1999. Prior to that, he was a Korean and Spanish linguist for the U.S. Army. His undergraduate degree is also from the University of Florida, a B.A. in Spanish literature. James has traveled the world extensively, has taught English as a foreign language in both Mexico and Korea, and has studied Spanish, Portuguese, Korean, and American Sign Language. While earning tenure at Valencia, James developed a special English as a second language program to teach English to the deaf. Although his true passions are learning and teaching language, James also writes, trains, and consults on how best to work with second language populations at the community college level.