



Advanced L2 learners and reading placement: Self-assessment, CBT, and subsequent performance

Cindy Brantmeier *

*Department of Romance Languages and Literatures, Washington University, Campus Box 1077,
One Brookings Drive, St. Louis, MO 63130-4899, United States*

Received 10 February 2005; received in revised form 23 June 2005; accepted 11 August 2005

Abstract

There is a dearth of research involving advanced second language (L2) learners in the USA [Brantmeier, C., 2001. Second language reading research on passage content and gender: challenges for the intermediate level curriculum, *Foreign Language Annals* 34, 325–333; Young, D.J., 2003. Workshop on overcoming anxiety in the foreign language classroom. *Language Learning Series*, Washington University in St. Louis]. At some universities in the USA many freshmen test directly into the advanced levels of Spanish language instruction where the goal is to prepare students for the reading of lengthy, authentic texts. With 71 advanced L2 learners of Spanish, the current research project attempts to determine the reliability of self-assessment, as determined by a questionnaire previously utilized for placement [Birckbichler, D., Corl, K., Deville, C., 1993. The dynamics of language program testing: implications for articulation and program revision. *The Dynamics of Language Program Direction*. Heinle and Heinle, Boston, MA; Deville, M., Deville, C., 1999. Computer-adaptive testing in second language contexts. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics* 19, 273–299], to predict reading performance via computer-based testing (CBT) and subsequent reading achievement. All incoming freshmen completed self-assessment questions about L2 reading abilities before completing an online placement exam (OPLE). In order to assess subsequent reading performance, all students who tested into Advanced Spanish Grammar and Composition participated in an investigation during regular class time during the 3rd week of class. Participants read a short story, completed three different comprehension assessment tasks and additional self-assessment items. Overall, results of the present study suggest that self-assessment of L2 reading ability, as measured before and after reading via a 5-point scale, is not an accurate predictor variable for placement or subsequent performance. Advanced learners did not accurately estimate their L2 reading abilities

* Tel.: +1 314 935 7953; fax: +1 314 726 3494.

E-mail address: cbrantme@artsci.wustl.edu.

as measured via CBT and in-class performance. Findings do not offer conclusive evidence about the value of self-assessment as a predictor of performance on CBT or as an indicator of subsequent classroom performance, but the current investigation provides indications as to the direction in which research on self-assessment of L2 reading needs to move. A more contextualized, criterion-referenced self-assessment instrument may be more beneficial for the placement of advanced readers in the USA. These results both echo and contradict prior research, which calls attention to the need for more investigations concerning instrumentation of self-assessment as a factor to be used in placement decisions for advanced learners.

© 2005 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

Keywords: Self-assessment; Second language reading; Computer-based testing; Advanced second language learners; Language placement

1. Introduction

Placement testing is an essential part of university level language departments across the USA, and there is a current need to expand research on placement testing with advanced learners that incorporates aspects beyond linguistic components, such as self-assessment. For some time now, researchers have conducted investigations that examine issues concerning language placement tests (Bachman, 1990; Bachman and Palmer, 1996; Bernhardt et al., 2004; Byrnes, 1991; Chapelle, 2001; Dunkel, 1991; Heilenman, 1991; Lange et al., 1992; Schwartz, 1985), but to date it appears that none have specifically examined the relationship of the following variables with advanced language learners: self-assessment of reading abilities, CBT reading achievement, and subsequent reading performance. Given the emphasis on reading at the advanced levels of language instruction in the USA, an investigation of this nature is valuable for program directors that are responsible for placement testing and making decisions based on results.

Placement procedures vary greatly and include multiple variables that range from paper-and-pencil tests, online tests, oral interviews, and combinations of different procedures (Wheritt and Clearly, 1990). Besides test results, other variables often involved in placement decisions in the USA are years of language study prior to the university, time spent in target language countries, and scores on national standardized exams such as the advanced placement exam (AP) administered by the College Board. An issue of great importance regarding placement testing is that of practicality, and therefore many universities develop their own CBT for placement that reflects the objectives of their language programs. Even though online placement tests take a considerable amount of time and money to create, the practicality often justifies the costs. Conventional placement tests require testing schedules, appropriate types of rooms, proctors, graders, interviews, and more. Once created and validated, CBTs offer advantages that conventional placement tests do not. Chalhoub-Deville (2001) offers an overall review of what has transpired in the development of CBT in educational contexts and cites examples of institutions that are utilizing CBT for different purposes. Recently, Bernhardt et al. (2004) examined the practicality and efficiency of the CBT designed for language placement at Stanford University and reported that placement testing via the internet can be reliable and can match the objectives of the foreign language curriculum (p. 364), and in that study they specifically emphasized the oral component of the exam and how it reflects course goals.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/373385>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/373385>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)