

Investigating Agency in Multilingual Writers' Placement Decisions:
A Case Study of The Writing Programs at Arizona State University

by

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ABSTRACT

This yearlong project examines how multilingual undergraduate writers—including international visa students and U.S. permanent residents or citizens who are non-native English speakers—exercise agency in their first-year composition placement decisions. Agency is defined as the capacity to act or not to act contingent upon various conditions. The goal of the project is to demonstrate how student agency can inform the overall programmatic placement decisions, which can lead to more effective placement practices for multilingual writers. To explore the role of agency in students' placement decisions, I conducted a series of four in-depth interviews with eleven multilingual writers between Fall 2010 and Spring 2011 in the Writing Programs at Arizona State University. To triangulate these placement decisions, I interviewed some of the multilingual student participants' academic advisors and writing teachers as well as writing program administrators.

Findings showed that when conditions for agency were appropriate, the multilingual student participants were able to negotiate placement, choose to accept or deny their original placement, self-assess their proficiency level as deciding to choose a writing course, plan on their placement, question about placement, and finally make decisions about a writing course they wanted to take. In the context of this study, conditions for agency include the freedom to choose writing courses and information about placement that is distributed by the following sources: advisors' recommendations, other students' past experience in taking first-year composition, the new student orientation, and other sources that

provide placement related information such as an online freshman orientation and a major map.

Other findings suggested that the academic advisor participants did not provide the multilingual students with complete placement information; and this affected the way the multilingual students chose which section of first-year composition to enroll in. Meanwhile, there was no formal communication about placement options and placement procedures between the Writing Programs and writing teachers. Building on these findings, I argue for improving conditions for agency by providing placement options, making placement information more readily available, and communicating placement information and options with academic advisors, writing teachers, and multilingual students.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my father and mother, who have inspired me to be an educator.

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CHAPTER 1

MULTILINGUAL WRITERS' PLACEMENT DECISIONS

In the placement literature, researchers have examined perceptions of placement practices and placement preferences of multilingual writers, including international visa students and U.S. permanent residents or citizens who are non-native speakers of English (i.e., Braine, 1996; Chiang & Schmida, 1999; Costino & Hyon, 2007; Harklau, 2000; Otmeier-Hooper, 2008; Ruecker, 2011). Indeed, a variety of those studies have provided insightful results that allow writing program administrators (WPAs) to understand multilingual students' preferences for enrolling in multilingual composition over mainstream composition or vice versa as well as their placement perceptions in general. Yet, as WPAs continue to determine appropriate placement for and address the needs of multilingual students, what is learned from research into placement preferences and perceptions may not be sufficient. One main reason, among others, is that we have neglected to understand how multilingual students make decisions about placement into mainstream or multilingual composition courses. These placement decisions, I argue, are fundamental to better understanding why multilingual students choose to enroll in one writing course as opposed to another. In this study, I demonstrate why looking at placement decisions is an important element for developing and improving placement practices for multilingual writers. Particularly, the study aims to demystify placement by beginning from one basic question: How do multilingual writers make decisions about placement into mainstream or multilingual composition courses? To address this question, I

carried out a series of four in-depth interviews with multilingual writers from various language backgrounds in the first-year writing program at Arizona State University between Fall 2010 and Spring 2011. Considered as one of the largest writing programs in the country, the ASU Writing Programs makes various placement options available to students—developmental, regular, and advanced composition—for both the mainstream and multilingual composition tracks.

This study is an attempt to “improve the institutional practices for ESL [multilingual] writers” (Matsuda, 1999, p. 718) by incorporating insights from multilingual students, academic advisors, writing teachers, and WPAs. The study consists of a series of in-depth interviews with multilingual students and one-time interviews about perspectives on the placement of multilingual writers with academic advisors, writing teachers, and WPAs. The ASU Writing Programs’ placement policies and other related issues are also included in this investigation. The goal of the study is to understand how multilingual students choose which section of first-year composition to enroll in and what goes into their placement decision process. This valuable information from multilingual students’ placement experiences together with perspectives from academic advisors and writing teachers can provide WPAs with resources and tools for making placement practices more effective for multilingual writers who are continuously enrolling in colleges and universities in U.S. higher education. Even though “placement is a local decision” (Harrington, 2005, p.12), I hope that this study can be a model for other institutions to assess their placement practices for multilingual writers.

Statement of Problem

The placement of multilingual students into first-year composition courses is of concern to WPAs in terms of how placement should be decided, what placement method should be used, and how placement outcomes should be assessed. WPAs' main goals are to ensure appropriate course placement for students and students' success in writing courses. As Ribble (2005) points out:

Recently, more and more composition programs are looking at their placement practices as inadequate to explain student failure. There have been a number of attempts to increase student success and student retention, by developing placement practices that are directly linked to improved writing pedagogies. (p. 13)

One such attempt has occurred as WPAs have been adopting various placement methods in order to guarantee placement that meets students' own needs. These placement methods are: standardized test scores (indirect assessment), a single timed-writing sample (direct assessment), portfolios, and directed self-placement (Peckham, 2009). A combination of these methods has also been used in many writing programs, such as standardized test scores and a timed-writing essay, or standardized test scores and directed self-placement (Huot, 1994; Peckham, 2009; Williams, 1995). It varies from institution to institution about what placement method is chosen; it is based on institutional contexts and local needs.

Writing programs use those placement methods to place multilingual students into first-year composition courses. As described by Silva (1994), there are four placement options for multilingual students. One option is to place

multilingual writers in mainstream composition classes with native users of English. Another approach is to create a separate section of first-year composition designated for multilingual writers. It is also possible that multilingual writers can be placed in the same class with native English-speaking basic writers who need extra time to develop their academic writing skills. Multilingual students can also be placed in a cross-cultural composition class in which a more or less equal number of native English speaking students and non-native English-speaking students are systematically integrated (I discuss each option in detail in Chapter 2).

As mentioned earlier, placement itself is complex. Placement is made even more complicated by conflicting results of research (Sullivan & Nielsen, 2009) that has looked into multilingual students' placement perceptions and preferences (Braine, 1996; Chiang & Schmida, 1999; Costino & Hyon, 2007; Ortmeier-Hooper, 2008). To illustrate, Braine's (1996) study shows that a majority of ESL students (international and unspecified resident non-native English students) preferred to enroll in ESL classes to mainstream classes. Braine also looked at these students' performance in both mainstream and ESL classes and found out that students who enrolled in ESL classes performed better in an exit exam than those enrolled in mainstream sections. Based on what he found in the study, Braine argues that having separate ESL sections will benefit ESL students. Braine further suggests that ESL students should have the chance to select whether they want to enroll in ESL or mainstream sections.

A study by Costino and Hyon (2007) echoes Braine's study that L2 students prefer ESL classes. In their study, international students and U.S.-born resident immigrants preferred the multilingual section. One possible reason might be that they feel comfortable working with their non-native English-speaking friends who are like them. Another reason is the teachers, who are well-trained and know how to work effectively with them. However, L2 students (U.S. resident L2 students referred to as Generation 1.5 students) in a study by Chiang and Schmida (1999) resisted being in ESL writing classes because they did not associate themselves with the ESL label of those first-year composition sections. Like U.S. resident L2 students in Chiang and Schmida's 1999 study, an ESL immigrant student in a study by Ortmeier-Hooper (2008) did not like to be "classified as an 'ESL' student" (p. 397). This student chose to be enrolled in an honors section of first-year composition and ignored an ESL section—he did not consider himself to be an ESL student. These situations are likely to happen, as Blanton (1999) points out, because when U.S. resident L2 students "reach college, they may feel strongly that they shouldn't be placed differently from other U.S. high school graduates, and are offended when labeled *ESL*" (p. 123; emphasis is in the original).

In summary, these conflicting placement preferences and perceptions make it more difficult to understand the placement of multilingual writers into first-year composition courses. In order to have a better understanding of this complex topic, I argue for studying how multilingual students make decisions about placement into mainstream or multilingual composition courses. Some may

argue that multilingual students do not make their own placement decisions; placement is decided by writing programs or institutions. This is true if those writing programs offer only one option of first-year composition to students. However, in the context of writing programs like the one at ASU that makes various placement options available to multilingual students, placement is not always necessarily determined by the writing programs themselves. Multilingual students do have an opportunity to decide what writing course (mainstream versus multilingual) they want to take based on the options they have. This study particularly examines multilingual students' placement decisions and what goes into their placement decisions process and aims to generate an understanding of placement decisions by multilingual students in the context of the first-year writing program at ASU.

Overview of Chapters

This project consists of six chapters. In Chapter 1, I provided an antecedent of placement studies and argue the case for studying multilingual students' placement decisions and what goes into their placement decision process. In Chapter 2, I discuss the notion of agency, which I use as a theoretical framework to investigate multilingual writers' placement decisions. I argue that the role of agency in multilingual students' placement decisions needs to be fully explored in the context of institutions, like ASU, where test scores are used as a placement method and various placement options are made available to students. I also provide my operationalized definition of agency. Chapter 3 describes research design, including the method used, participant selection, data collection,

and data analysis. Specifically, I discuss the following: a rationale for using a series of four in-depth interviews; how I recruited different groups of participants; and how I coded and analyzed interview transcripts.

Chapter 4 relates stories of placement decisions of the multilingual writer participants focusing on the following topics: how multilingual writers made the decisions about first-year composition placement, how multilingual writers exercised agency in their placement decisions, multilingual writers' comments on academic advising, and multilingual writers' recommendations for the Writing Programs and incoming students. Chapter 5 discusses perspectives of academic advisors and writing teachers on the placement practices of multilingual writers. Based on what is found in this chapter, I argue the case for improving placement practices with academic advisors, writing teachers, and multilingual students. In Chapter 6, I discuss student agency and placement decisions and theorize agency based on what is found in the study. The chapter also provides implications for WPAs and concludes with future research.

CHAPTER 2
INVESTIGATING AGENCY IN
MULTILINGUAL WRITERS' PLACEMENT DECISIONS

As mentioned in Chapter 1, WPAs have been using various methods to place multilingual students into first-year writing courses. Many institutions place multilingual students into writing courses by using standardized test scores (Williams, 1995), writing samples (Huot, 1994), or a combination of standardized tests cores and a writing sample (Peckham, 2009). Some institutions grant students the opportunity to make their own decisions about first-year writing courses (Crusan, 2006; Royer & Gilles, 1998, 2003). For any placement methods used, I argue that “*well-informed* [emphasis added] decisions” (Braine, 1996, p. 91; Lewiecki-Wilson, Sommers, & Tassoni, 2000; Matsuda & Silva, 1999; Royer & Gilles, 1998, 2003; Silva 1994, 1997) are crucial for multilingual writers as they enroll in first-year composition courses, mainly because decisions about placement can determine their “success or failure” (Braine, 1996, p. 91) in those courses. In this chapter, I propose agency as a theoretical framework to investigate multilingual writers’ placement decisions, and I argue that the role of agency in multilingual students’ placement decisions needs to be fully explored. My goal in this investigation is to demonstrate how student agency can inform the overall programmatic placement decisions, which can lead to more effective placement practices for multilingual writers.

In what follows, I discuss agency as a theoretical framework, synthesizing existing definitions of agency and presenting my operationalized definition of

agency. Next, I discuss placement options for multilingual writers by drawing on Silva's (1994) placement models for second language writers (see Matsuda & Silva, 1999 for a more nuanced discussion). I then discuss placement methods and how each of them is/is not related to agency. This discussion leads to my argument for taking a close look at agency in multilingual writers' placement decisions.

Agency: A Theoretical Framework

It is necessary that I define what agency means in the context of my study. Before I proceed to my definition of agency, I must discuss different definitions of agency and how these definitions inform my definition of agency.

Scholars, both in the fields of rhetoric and applied linguistics, find the term agency tricky to define (e.g., Hauser, 2004; van Lier, 2009). In rhetoric, "there is considerable disagreement about what constitutes agency and how it might be best conceptualized" (Hauser, 2004, p. 183). In applied linguistics, van Lier, among others, notes that a delineation of agency is "far from straightforward" (2009, p. xii), and it is difficult to make a distinction between agency and autonomy and other related constructs, including self and identity. According to van Lier, if "self is basically anything and everything we call 'me' or 'I'" (Harter, 1999, as cited in van Lier, 2009, p. x), agency, which involves an act, can be equally looked at from the two ends. On one end, "agency refers to the ways in which, and the extents to which, the person (self, identities, and all) is compelled to, motivated to, allowed to, and coerced to, *act*" (van Lier, 2009, p. x; emphasis in the original). On the other end, "agency refers equally to the person

deciding to, wanting to, insisting to, agreeing to, and negotiating to, *act*” (van Lier, 2009, p. x; emphasis in the original). These definitions of agency by van Lier capture “nicely the complexities of the notion of agency” (2009, p. x). Other general definitions of agency are also concerned with an act. A definition by anthropologist Ahearn (2001) reads as follows: “agency is the socioculturally mediated capacity to act,” which she considers a “provisional definition” (p. 122). For British Marxist historian and writer Anderson, agency is a “conscious, goal-directed activity” (1980, p. 19).

As suggested by Hauser, in the field of rhetoric, there are divergences of what constitutes agency and how it should be conceptualized (2004). These divergences, however, have led scholars to develop their definitions and each has emphasized various features of agency. Young (2008), based on results of her study of teenage girls who were interacting with a computer program about safe sex, describes that:

Agency entails planning and decision-making. It also requires self-evaluation and the recognition of internal and external expertise. Agency is constructed and expressed in how people manage conflicts and design plans for change that acknowledge people’s beliefs and readiness to change behavior if warranted. (p. 244)

Young also suggests the fundamental properties of agency, which include questioning, negotiation, choice, and evaluation (p. 228). For others, these properties are considered as resources for agency (see Callinicos, 1988, p. 236; Flannery, 1991, p. 702). Turnbull (2004) considers agency as a property of

questioning and suggests the following: “Where there is choice there is agency” (p. 207). Flannery (1991) takes a step further and comments that “choice is itself a resource to which agents have different access” (p. 702); it is not ones who choose to make use of resources that are out there. Flannery also notes that it is agents who “possess the potential to act or not act contingent upon their ‘relative access to productive resources’” (Callinicos, 1998, p. 236 as cited in Flannery, 1991, p. 702).

Campbell (2005), based on her analysis of the text created by a white woman 12 years after the event of the speech delivered by Sojourner Truth at the 1851 woman’s rights convention in Akron, Ohio, proposes that agency:

(1) is communal and participatory, hence, both constituted and constrained by externals that are material and symbolic; (2) is ‘invented’ by authors who are points of articulations; (3) emerges in artistry or craft; (4) is effected through form; (5) is perverse, that is, inherently, protean, ambiguous, open to reversal. (p. 2)

The notion of agency, as asserted by Koerber (2006), also includes the acts of resistance. This claim of Koerber is built from her technical communication analysis of interviews with breastfeeding advocates who support breastfeeding mothers and assist them when they encounter problems. Koerber’s interviewees said that mothers had to resist other elements of medical discourse and cultural perceptions that contradict official medical guidelines on breastfeeding. Mothers’ acts of resistance, as Koerber suggests, are “the kind of rhetorical negotiation that might be construed as the occupation of preexisting subject positions rather than

true resistance” (p. 88). Importantly, the acts “begin as active selection among discursive alternatives” (p. 88).

Operationalized Definition of Agency

Following Ahearn (2000) and van Lier (2009), I define agency as the capacity to act or not to act contingent upon various conditions. I use it as a theoretical lens when I code and analyze data. In the context of this study, conditions for agency include the freedom to choose writing courses and information about placement that is distributed through the following sources: academic advisors’ recommendations, other students’ past experience in taking first-year composition courses, the new student orientation, and other sources that provides placement related information such as an online freshman orientation and a major map (See Appendix B for a major map). These constructs are developed during the process of data analysis (See more detailed discussion in Chapter 3).

Placement Options for Multilingual Writers

In one of the most comprehensive discussions of placement options for second language students, Silva (1994) considers four placement options—mainstreaming, second language writing, basic writing, and cross-cultural composition. The first placement option is to place multilingual students in a mainstream composition course with so-called native English speaking students. Since mainstream composition is predominantly designed for native English writers, multilingual writers may feel intimidated by their native English counterparts (Braine, 1996; Matsuda & Silva, 1999). The instructors for

mainstream composition may not be prepared to work with multilingual writers or they may not be able to give extra help to the students' needs because they have not been trained to work with students whose writing characteristics differ from those of native English speakers (Silva, 1994). It is also likely that multilingual students' differences (e.g., diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds and writing styles) may be treated as "intellectual deficiencies" (Silva, 1994, p. 39). These disadvantages of mainstream composition "could result in resentment, alienation, loss of self-confidence, poor grades, and, ultimately, academic failure" (Silva, 1994, p. 39). However, mainstream composition courses would benefit both multilingual students and native English speaking students in terms of learning and sharing linguistic and cultural differences.

The second option is to place multilingual students in basic or developmental writing classes with native speakers of English who are inexperienced writers and need more time and attention from teachers. There are both potential advantages and disadvantages for this option. One possible advantage is that this type of class allows multilingual students to work and interact with native English-speaking peers. In addition, basic writing teachers are trained and are prepared to work with students who need extra help and attention, and multilingual students would benefit from it. In terms of administration, when institutions have already made basic writing courses available, placing multilingual writers in those courses does not require additional work or resources. Its disadvantages are that basic writing teachers may not have insights into the characteristics or needs of multilingual writers because they are trained to

work with inexperienced native English-speaking writers whose needs are different from those of multilingual writers. For example, inexperienced native English writers may have a problem of transferring features of their spoken language to written form. Multilingual students, on the other hand, may struggle with linguistic and cultural differences between their native language and English as the target language.

The third option is to place multilingual students in a separate second language/multilingual writing course, which is specially designated for non-native speakers of English. Teachers teaching these courses are supposed to have knowledge about how to teach second language writing and know how to address students' language issues. Clearly, this type of placement benefits multilingual writers. Since second language writing classes are designed for second language students, students would have more confidence and feel comfortable to participate in class activities (Matsuda & Silva, 1999; Silva, 1994). The students could feel safe and secure because this is the place for them where their peers all come from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. However, separate second language sections of writing courses invite some criticisms as they are considered “remedial” (Silva, 1994, p. 40; Williams, 1995) and “less rigorous than the regular composition course” (Matsuda & Silva, 1999, p. 18) at some institutions.

The fourth option is to create a class called “cross-cultural composition” (Silva, 1994, p. 40), in which multilingual writers and native users of English students are systematically integrated. What makes this option different from mainstream composition is that its writing assignments' focus on cultural and

linguistic differences. One of the important goals of creating this type of course “is to offer an environment which is less threatening to second language writers than existing placement options while providing an optimal learning opportunity for all students involved” (Matsuda & Silva, 1999, p. 16). In addition to a second language-friendly environment, both groups of students would have a chance to learn from one another in terms of cultural and linguistic differences.

Placement Methods and Student Agency

Given the availability of first-year composition placement options for multilingual writers, writing programs, varying from institution to institution, place students into writing courses using different placement methods: standardized test scores (indirect assessment), a single timed-writing sample (direct assessment), portfolios, and directed self-placement (Peckham, 2009). A combination of these methods has also been used in many writing programs such as standardized test scores and a timed-writing essay (Huot, 1994; Peckham, 2009; Williams, 1995). For example, results of Huot’s (1994) nationwide survey of writing placement practices of 1,037 public and private institutions indicate that a writing sample is the most widely used placement method (51%), followed by standardized test scores (ACT or SAT) (42%), and a combination of a writing sample and standardized test scores (23%). What is found in Huot’s survey echoes a previous study by Greenberg et al. (1986), which demonstrates that the majority of institutions use a writing sample to determine placement for students. On the contrary, Williams’ (1995) nationwide survey of 78 colleges and universities shows that a writing sample (23%) is not as widely used as indirect

assessment (58%) for deciding placement for ESL students, when combining the percentages of an institutionally administered indirect test (32%) and TOEFL scores (26%). A combination of standardized test scores and a writing sample is also used (19%).

The National Testing Network in Writing and the National Council of Teachers of English recommend using writing samples for placing students into writing courses (Gordon, 1987). This is inline with language assessment specialists (i.e., Crusan & Cornett, 2002; Ferretti, 2001; White, 1994b, as cited in Crusan, 2002) who advocate essay tests because “they are able to gauge the ability of students to identify and analyze problems, to identify audience and purpose, to argue, describe, and define, skills that are valued in composition classes in the United States” (Crusan, 2002, p. 19). Yet, research shows that the use of a timed-writing sample “has been defined as preferable if only one measure for placement into composition courses will be used, and if the only alternative is a multiple-choice test (Matzen, Jr. & Hoyt, 2004, p. 3). Multiple-choice tests have been criticized because they “isolate and evaluate knowledge of specific components of language” (Crusan, 2002, p. 19). Nonetheless, Gordon (1987), an advocate for standardized tests, argues that “standardized tests are more accurate than a single writing sample for placing students” (p. 29), adding that “[...] with regard to validity and reliability, a single writing sample is among the most unacceptable means to place students” (p. 29). Others also question reliability and validity of writing samples’ results (i.e., Belanoff, 1991; Elbow, 1996; Huot, 1990). While Breland (1977) points out that a writing sample is not a useful

indicator of student writing ability compared to an objective assessment, Saunders (2000) argues that writing samples are not necessary for accurate placement. To solve these conflicting results, assessment specialists (e.g., Crusan, 2002; Haswell, 1998; Leki, 1991) have tried to figure out effective methods to assess student writing so that multilingual writers are placed into a writing course that is right for them. Crusan (2002) particularly recommends using multiple instruments (a combination of direct and indirect assessment) as a means to place multilingual writers into first-year writing courses (p. 23)

Another placement method is the use of portfolios. In this type of placement method, high school teachers help students develop their portfolios before submitting them to writing programs at particular institutions for assessment. Since the portfolio system is impractical for international and out-of-state students, it has not been widely used as the placement method for international students (P. K. Matsuda, personal communication, November 23, 2010).

With limitations of the three placement methods, the implementation of an alternative placement method called directed self-placement (DSP) at Grand Valley State University (Royer & Gilles, 1998; 2003) attracts several writing programs nationwide. DSP's principle is to inform students about appropriate and accurate information about available first-year writing courses as well as advantages and disadvantages from taking those courses. After Royer and Gilles' groundbreaking article, "Directed Self-Placement: An Attitude of Orientation," appeared in *College Composition and Communication* in 1998,

many institutions have become interested in DSP and have adopted it as a placement procedure in lieu of traditional placement methods such as objective tests, essay exams, and even portfolios. Since DSP refuses to make placement decisions for students, it fosters student agency in choosing a writing course that students think it is right for them.

Royer and Gilles' DSP is discussed in the context of first language (L1) composition. In the context of second language (L2) writing, the use of DSP as a placement method originally excludes second language writers (Crusan, 2006). As explained by Crusan (2006) from Wright State University (WSU), resistance to an inclusion of second language writers in DSP by her second language writing colleagues stems from their beliefs that second language students are prone to make poor decisions about their language proficiency. This is because second language writers either overestimate or underestimate themselves; as a consequence, they may place themselves into a course that is higher or under their level of proficiency. In contrast, a study by Strong-Krause (2000) suggests that second language students will be able to self-evaluate if self-assessment instruments are carefully developed and appropriately implemented.

Even though second language writers are originally excluded from DSP at WSU, the institution is developing a new system of DSP, which will be carried out online. This Online Directed Self-Placement (ODSP), which will include second language writers, applies multiple measures, has separate questions for native English students and second language students to complete, and collects students' various scores: standardized test (SAT, ACT, TOEFL), high school

GPA, and high school class rank. The online program will calculate a placement for students by combining students' question scores with the combination of test scores, GPA, and school rank. When placement results are released, students are encouraged to discuss the placement results with their advisors. ODSP allows students to be part of placement decisions and in turn students have some agency in their placement decisions.

It has been argued that directed self-placement probably comes with disadvantages if students are not well-informed about writing courses that are available to them and about advantages and disadvantages from taking those courses. Furthermore, in a situation that students cannot make appropriate decisions about placement, they may end up being in a writing course that does not fit their writing ability and proficiency. As pointed out by Schendel and O'Neill (1999), "directed self-placement may not work in some contexts, as students may misjudge their writing abilities" (p. 218). Schendel and O'Neill base their criticism from psychological research by Kruger and Dunning (1999), which suggests that undergraduate students tend to misevaluate their performance and they do not necessarily possess self-evaluation skills when they first arrive at college.

To mitigate these probable disadvantages of DSP as a placement method, Lewiecki-Wilson, Sommers, and Tassoni (2000) from Miami University, Middletown campus (an open-admissions institution), have created a writing placement process called the Writer's Profile in which students are engaged in "self-reflection and teachers incorporate knowledge gained into their classrooms

and curricular” (p. 172) and in the end teachers are the ones who decide course placement for students. For Lewiecki et al., “the best placement decisions would be reached both through student self-reflection *and* assessment from those [teachers] who know the curriculum” (p. 168; emphasis in the original).

Building on the previous work by Yancey (1992) and Grego and Thompson (1995, 1996), the Writer’s Profile, which is developed based on the same concept of portfolios, consists of multiple types of student writing such as lists, notes, drafts, and revision. Students work on their Writer’s Profile at home and select pieces of writing to include in the profile by themselves. Two writing teachers evaluate the Writer’s Profile. When an agreement is reached, course placement is referred to each student. In the Writer’s Profile, students are asked to complete multiple tasks. In the prewriting stage, students are first asked to write down the first thing that comes into their head about all of the writing they have done in the last month or so. Second, they are asked to respond to a different question about the writing they have done in school. Third, they respond to another question about writing in college, particularly their goals for writing in college and about what they think writing in college will be like. In the drafting stage, students use the information they have from their prewriting to compose a 2-3 page Writer’s Profile, a portrait of themselves as a writer. Lewiecki-Wilson et al. (2000) believe that the Writer’s Profile can help students and their advisors “make more informed choices about course placement” (p. 166) because both students’ actual writing and teachers’ placement recommendation are used to decide course placement for students. A rationale behind the

Writer's Profile, as noted by Lewiecki-Wilson et al., is that "placement should not be something we do to or *for* students, but something we do *with* students" (p. 173; emphasis in the original).

In the final analysis, when writing programs or institutions use standardized test scores, timed-writing samples, and portfolios, they all use scores to determine placement for students. Clearly, these three placement methods do not seem to allow room for agency unless students study hard and decide to retake a test for a better score—this applies to the use of standardized test scores as a placement method. DSP and the Writer's Profile are different; they are designed to maximize student agency. As I discussed earlier in this section, while DSP grants full agency to students and believes that placement should be a student's own choice (Royer & Gilles, 1998), the Writer's Profile allows students to act as agents who self-reflect on their writing; writing teachers assess students' reflections and decide an appropriate writing course for them (Lewiecki-Wilson et al., 2000). From the perspective of DSP and the Writer's Profile, students are the ones affected by placement decisions; they can fail or succeed in writing courses as a result of placement decisions.

Systematically, DSP presents conditions for agency by providing placement information and placement options to students and in the end students are the ones who get to decide what writing course they will take. It is clear that conditions for agency are built into the DSP system. In the system of standardized test scores, conditions for agency are not built into its system. Yet, it does not mean that agency cannot or does not exist in the system of standardized test

scores when various placement options are made available to students and students have the freedom to choose writing courses. This present study explores, among other things, how conditions for agency are distributed in the context of (many) typical institutions like the Writing Programs at ASU where test scores are used as a means to place students into first-year writing courses.

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

The purpose of the study is to explore the notion of student agency in placement decisions in the context of typical institutions like ASU where standardized test scores are used as a means to place students into first-year writing courses. The ASU Writing Programs also makes various placement options available to students, which is unusual in other writing programs. Given this particular institutional placement practice, this study aims to investigate the extent to which multilingual writers have agency in their placement decisions for the first-year composition courses. To address the main research question, sub-questions include:

1. How do multilingual writers make the decisions about placement into mainstream or multilingual first-year composition courses?
2. How do multilingual writers perceive the current placement practices?
3. How do multilingual writers exercise agency in their placement decisions?
4. What is the role of academic advisors and writing teachers regarding multilingual writers' placement decisions?
5. How can the placement policy/procedure be developed in order to maximize student agency?

I conducted an interview-based qualitative study in the ASU Writing Programs between the fall semester of 2010 and the spring semester of 2011. Data primarily came from a series of four “in-depth, phenomenologically based

interviewing” (Seidman, 2006, p. 15) with eleven multilingual undergraduate writers from various language backgrounds. I also conducted one-time interviews with some of the multilingual student participants’ academic advisors and writing teachers to gain their perspectives on the placement of multilingual writers into a college composition program. Furthermore, I interviewed the Director of Writing Programs and the Director of Second Language Writing. The ASU Writing Programs is unique. While the Director of Writing Programs is in charge of mainstream composition, the Director of Second Language Writing oversees multilingual composition.

Academic advisors are selected to be part of the study because they are academic staff members whom incoming students meet when they first enter the university, and they are the ones who advise students on course registration. It is important to know to what extent academic advisors are aware of placement of multilingual writers into first-year writing courses. Because writing teachers work closely with multilingual students, obtaining their perspectives helps illustrate teachers’ awareness of placement practices. Lastly, the WPAs address the Writing Programs’ current policies on placement of multilingual writers and other related issues. In addition to the interviews, I examined online information related to first-year English composition placement from the English Department website, the University’s new student orientation 2010 website, and the University Testing and Scanning Services website.

The Writing Programs at Arizona State University: The Context of the Study

Recognized as one of the largest writing programs in the country, the Writing Programs at Arizona State University enrolls both native users of English and multilingual students. Housed in the English Department, the Writing Programs offers a variety of placement options for first-year composition courses.¹ There are two main tracks of first-year composition: mainstream and multilingual. Each track has different levels of first-year writing courses, ranging from developmental to advanced composition, for students to choose from. Table 1 shows placement options that are available in the Writing Programs.

Table 1

Placement Options

	Mainstream	Multilingual
Advanced Composition	ENG 105	No course offered
First-Year Composition II	ENG 102	ENG 108 (English for Foreign Students)
First-Year Composition I	ENG 101	ENG 107 (English for Foreign Students)
Stretch Composition	WAC 101 (Introduction to Academic Writing)	WAC 107 (Introduction to Academic Writing for International Students)

¹ In addition to first-year composition courses, The Writing Programs offers other higher-level English courses for undergraduate students.

For the mainstream track, the Writing Programs offers the two-semester first-year writing sequence (ENG 101 and ENG 102), the stretch first-year writing course (WAC 101),² which stretches the first semester of the first-year writing course (ENG 101) over two semesters, and the advanced composition (ENG 105), which is a one semester writing course that can satisfy the first-year writing requirement. For the multilingual track, the Writing Programs offers the two-semester first-year writing sequence (ENG 107 and ENG 108), which is equivalent to ENG 101 and ENG 102. Like WAC 101, WAC 107 stretches the first semester of the first-year writing course (ENG 107) over two semesters.

The Writing Programs places students into first-year writing courses using standardized test scores, such as SAT and ACT (for the mainstream track) and TOEFL and IELTS (for the multilingual track). In a situation that students do not have test scores or are not satisfied with their test scores, they have an option to take the Accuplacer Test (the WritePlacer section), a placement test for a first-year English course administered by the University Testing and Scanning Services. Students can take this test only once. Table 2 shows test score cutoff points and course placement.

² Stretch Composition (WAC 101 and WAC 107) is designed to help develop students' academic writing skills. Students have more time to work on their writing until they are ready to take the regular first-year writing sequence (ENG 101 and ENG 102 and ENG 107 and ENG 108). For detailed description of Stretch Composition, see Glau, 2007.

Table 2

Test Scores and Course Placement

Placement Exam	Score	Course
SAT Verbal	460 and below	WAC 101 or WAC 107
ACT English	18 or below	WAC 101 or WAC 107
Accuplacer	7 or below (12 point system)/4 or below (8-point system, effective Fall 2009)	WAC 101 or WAC 107
TOEFL	Below 560PBT/220CBT/83iBT	WAC 107
SAT Verbal	470-610	ENG 101 or ENG 107
ACT English	19-25	ENG 101 or ENG 107
Accuplacer	8, 9, or 10 (12-point system)/ 5, 6, or 7(8point system, effective Fall 2009)	ENG 101 or ENG 107
TOEFL	560PBT/220CBT/83iBT and above	ENG 101 or ENG 107
SAT Verbal	620 or more	ENG 105
ACT English	26 or more	ENG 105
Accuplacer	11 or more (12 point system)/ 8 (8-point system, effective Fall 2009)	ENG 105

**Source: Placement Information from <http://english.clas.asu.edu/wp-placement>

Placement information is communicated to students by academic advisors.

Domestic students meet their academic advisors before each fall semester starts during the new student orientation, which takes place between March and early

July. Students register for classes, including a first-year writing class, during the orientation. For international students holding student visas, some of them register for classes online, including a first-year writing class, when they are in their home countries. They contact academic advisors via email asking for advice on enrollment. Others wait until they arrive to campus and register. Communication about placement information to international students is minimal. They primarily rely on recommendations from academic advisors.

In each fall semester, the Writing Programs offers about 500 or more sections of writing courses—this includes first-year writing courses and other higher-level writing courses for undergraduate students. For each spring semester, the number of sections is reduced to about 400 sections or so. During the time of this study (Fall 2010-Spring 2011), the Writing Programs offered 426 sections of first-year composition courses (out of 544 sections of all writing courses) in Fall 2010. The total number of students enrolled in first-year writing course was 8,258. In Spring 2011, 322 sections (out of 443 sections of all writing courses) of first-year writing courses were offered. The total number of students was 5,867.

The Writing Programs has been directed by a WPA (Director of the Writing Programs), who is in charge of both mainstream and multilingual composition. Beginning in Fall 2011, another WPA (Director of Second Language Writing) has been in charge of multilingual composition.

Participants

Participants taking part in the study included eleven multilingual undergraduate students who enrolled in first-year writing courses in Fall 2010 and

Spring 2011, four academic advisors, five writing teachers, and two writing program administrators. Below is a discussion of how each group of participants was selected.

Multilingual Student Participants. From 165 sections of ENG 101 (excluding West, Polytechnic, and Downtown campuses) that were made available in Fall 2010 in the Writing Programs on Tempe campus, I randomly selected twenty sections (see Appendix C for Sampling Strategy). My goal was to get six multilingual students (three international and three U.S. resident or citizen students who are non-native English speakers) from these mainstream sections. For the multilingual composition track, nine sections of ENG 107 were offered. I included all the multilingual sections in order to recruit other six multilingual students (three internationals and three U.S. residents or citizens who are non-native English-speaking students). In the end, twenty-nine sections of both mainstream and multilingual composition were a sample size for recruiting student participants.

At the beginning of Fall 2010 (early September), I sent an email invitation to students who enrolled in the selected twenty sections of ENG 101 and nine sections of ENG 107 to request their participation in four interviews. The Writing Programs gave me access to these selected twenty-nine rosters and I obtained each student's email address. I individually emailed students under supervision of the director and the coordinator of the Writing Programs. The goal was to get twelve multilingual student participants. I mentioned in the email invitation that students who participated in the four interviews would receive a \$30 gift card

when the study was complete, and their participation in the study would not affect their standing in their writing courses.

After attempts of email correspondence, twelve multilingual students agreed to participate in the interviews. One student stopped coming to interviews after his first interview was completed. Another student also stopped coming after his second interview. However, I included this student in the group of student participants because he completed the first two interviews, which covered his placement decisions in both Fall 2010 and Spring 2011 semesters. It is also reasonable to use his interview data because the student did not indicate that he wished to withdraw from the study. In short, while this student participated in the first two interviews, other ten multilingual students participated in a series of four interviews conducted over the course of one academic year. In the end, there were eleven multilingual student participants in the study.

The student participants came from various language backgrounds, countries, and disciplines. They included two U.S. citizens, two permanent residents, and seven international visa students; five females, six males; aged 18 to 30 when they first enrolled at ASU; from the United States, China, Norway, Kazakhstan, the United Arab Emirates, and Qatar; studying political science, industrial engineering, mechanical engineering, computer information systems, business communication, business management, economics, mathematics and statistics, and mathematics and film. While the two student participants were enrolled in mainstream composition sections, the rest were enrolled in multilingual composition sections. In what follows, I introduce the eleven

multilingual undergraduate students who were the participants in the study. They were with their pseudonyms. The backgrounds of these eleven multilingual students are summarized in Table 3.

- Jasim is a 19-year-old visa student from Dubai, the United Arab Emirates (UAE). He started his first semester at ASU as a freshman in Fall 2010. His first major was electrical engineering but finally settled on industrial engineering. An Arabic native, Jasim has been in the United States for almost two years. After graduating from an English medium high school in Dubai, he spent a year attending an intensive English program (IEP) in Seattle and moved to Philadelphia to study in another IEP. He scored 6.5 on IELTS and was enrolled in ENG 107 in the first semester and in ENG 108 in Spring 2011.
- Joel is a 30-year-old U.S. permanent resident from Mexico City, Mexico majoring in political science. Spanish is his first language; he considers English and Italian his second and third language, respectively. At the time of the interview, Joel was a junior; he transferred from a technological college in Mexico. Before he left his country, he had one year left to finish his bachelor's degree in international relations. Joel is married to an American and has U.S. resident status and has been in Arizona for three years. While taking classes at ASU, he is working for an immigration law firm helping clients who are Spanish speakers on immigration issues. Joel scored 542 on TOEFL Paper-based Test. He was placed in WAC 107 in Spring 2010, which was his first semester at ASU.

Between Fall 2010 and Spring 2011, Joel was enrolled in ENG 107, followed by ENG 108.

- Marco is an 18-year-old U.S. citizen majoring in business management. Marco moved from Mexico, where he was born, to Arizona with his parents when he was five years old. His mother was born in the United States but raised in Mexico. He has been in Arizona for thirteen years. Marco said Spanish was his first language and English was his second language but said he was fluent in English more than Spanish. He spoke Spanish with his mother and sister at home. Marco graduated from a U.S. high school in Prescott, Arizona. Marco started learning English in the first grade when he was six years old. At that time, he did not know English at all but managed to pass his first year in the elementary school. Later in the second year, he was placed in an ELL (English Language Learners) program between the second and fourth grade. Marco said: “They [the school] made the program for ESL [students] because they saw students like me and some other ones who did not know English. So, they [the school] developed the program.” During the two years in the ELL program, he went into a “special class” (Marco used this term when mentioning the ESL class) for about an hour every day. “I managed to understand the language and was able to write it.” He seemed to like the class because “everything was good.” When he moved to the fifth grade, he did not have to take an ELL. Marco was the first in his family to attend

college. He said: “It’s pretty exciting.” Marco scored 480 on SAT Verbal and registered for ENG 101 and ENG 102, respectively.

- Chan is a 22-year-old visa student from China majoring in business communication but attempting to switch to accounting. A Chinese native, Chan is a transferred student from the Mainland China where she studied at a university there for two years. Considered as a freshman when first enrolled at ASU, Chan scored 90 in TOEFL Internet-based Test and registered for ENG 107, followed by ENG 108.
- Jonas³ is a visa student from Oslo, Norway, first majoring in business administration then switching to political science. He scored 77 on TOEFL Internet-based Test and was first enrolled in WAC 107. When he found out about the Accuplacer Test, he took the test and scored 5 out of 8 on the WritePlacer section; and finally he was able to take ENG 107 as he wanted.
- Afia is a 22-year-old U.S. permanent resident from Qatar majoring in computer information systems. A junior student, Afia transferred from a university in Qatar where she studied there for three years. Her parents and brother are also U.S. permanent residents. Afia moved to the United States in July 2009 to live with her brother; her parents plan to come to live in Arizona when they retire. Arabic is Afia’s first language. She has both ACT and TOEFL scores. While she scored 19 on SAT English, she

³ Since Jonas did not show up after his first two interviews completed, I did not have information about his age and other related information because I collected information about the student participants’ backgrounds in the final interview.

got 76 on the TOEFL Internet-based Test. She used her TOEFL scores for her English placement and was placed in WAC 107. Like Jonas, Afia took the Accuplacer Test and scored 5; and with this minimum required score, she was able to enroll into ENG 107.

- Pascal is a 20-year-old visa student originally from France majoring in economics. While French was his first language, Pascal was able to speak four other languages, including German, English, Arabic, and Japanese. He was born in France then moved to Morocco, where he picked up Arabic; to Vienna where he learned German and English; and ended up living in Amsterdam before coming to the United States. Pascal was previously in ESL classes in a high school in Vienna when he first learned English five years ago. At that time, he did not know how to speak English at all. Pascal scored 102 on TOEFL Internet-based Test and was enrolled in ENG 107 and ENG 108, respectively.
- Mei is a 20-year-old visa student from China currently majoring in business communication but attempting to switch to marketing. A non-first time freshman, Mei used to study at a university in her home country for one year. Because she could not transfer credits from a university in China, Mei had to start over her first year at ASU. A native Chinese speaker, Mei speaks English as a second language and is currently taking a Spanish class. She scored 6.5 on IELTS and was enrolled in ENG 107, followed by ENG 108.

- Ana is an 18-year-old U.S. citizen student from the United States double-majoring in mathematics and film. Ana was born in the United States in a Spanish speaking family; she considers herself bilingual. Her U.S. citizen parents are originally from Mexico. According to Ana, Spanish is her first language and English is her second one; yet, she says she is more fluent in English. She graduated from a high school in Arizona. While in elementary and high schools, Ana was never in ESL classes, but she was taken out of classes sometimes to make sure that she understood English correctly. She scored 26 on her ACT English; with this score, she could enroll in ENG 105. Because she did not know about test score cutoff points and course placement, Ana registered for ENG 101 and ENG 102, respectively.
- Askar is a 19-year-old visa student from Kazakhstan majoring in mechanical engineering. He speaks Kazakh and Russian as his first and second language, respectively. He considers English to be his third language. He has been in the United States for three years. He came to study in a U.S. high school as a foreign exchange student in 2007 for one year and went back to his home country and graduated from a high school there. Right after graduating from the high school, he came to ASU to study in an intensive English program for one year and later was admitted to the engineering school. Askar scored 96 on TOEFL Internet-based Test and was enrolled in ENG 107, then ENG 108.

- Ting is a 20-year-old visa student from China majoring in math and statistics. A native Chinese speaker, Ting, before admitted to ASU, attended two intensive English programs for one year: the first one in Vancouver and the other at the University of British Columbia. Ting scored 84 on TOEFL Internet-based Test and was enrolled in ENG 107 and ENG 108, respectively.

Table 3

Multilingual Student Participants

Student	Country/ native language	Length of time in the US	Age	Residency status	Test score	Course place- ment
Jasim	United Arab Emirates/ Arabic	Almost 2 years	19	International visa student	6.5 (IELTS)	ENG 107 & 108
Joel	Mexico/ Spanish	3 years	30	U.S. permanent resident (from marriage)	542 (TOEFL PBT)	WAC ENG 107 & 108
Marco	Mexico/ Spanish	13 years	18	U.S. citizen	480 (SAT Verbal)	ENG 101 & 102
Chan	China/ Chinese	Almost 1 year	22	International visa student	90 (TOEFL iBT)	ENG & 108
Jonas	Norway/ Norwegian	2 months	NA	International visa student	77 (TOEFL iBT)	ENG & 108
Afia	Qatar/ Arabic	1.5 years	22	U.S. permanent resident	76 (TOEFL iBT)	ENG & 108
Pascal	France/ French	9 months	20	International visa student	102 (TOEFL iBT)	ENG & 108
Mei	China/ Chinese	7 months	20	International visa student	6.5 (IELTS)	ENG 107 & 108
Ana	United States/ Spanish	All of life (18 years)	18	U.S. citizen	26 (ACT English)	ENG 101 & 102

Askar	Kazakhstan/ Kazakh	3 years	19	International visa student	96 (TOEFL 107 iBT) & 108
Ting	China/ Chinese	8 months	20	International visa student	84 (TOEFL 107 iBT) & 108

Academic Advisor Participants. After obtaining names and contact information of each student participant's academic advisor, I sent out an email invitation to eleven academic advisors to request their participation in the study. After a few times of email correspondence, four academic advisors agreed to take part in the interview. They were from various disciplines, including electrical engineering, business administration, mathematics and statistics, and economics. The four academic advisors were two males and two females; they had years of advising experience ranging from two to six years. Each had a few years of experience in working with multilingual students. Below is a brief biography of the academic advisors, including their pseudonyms.

- Jerry is an academic advisor for electrical engineering majors. He has six years of advising experience at ASU.
- Keith is an academic advisor for business administration students and has worked with a few multilingual students in the past.
- Elaine is an academic advisor for economics majors and has five years of experience in student advising at ASU. She has also taught economics for undergraduate students at the same time.
- Megan is an academic advisor for mathematics and statistics majors and has two years of advising experience at ASU.

Writing Teacher Participants. Like the academic advisor participants, the writing teacher participants were teachers of the multilingual student participants. I sent an email invitation to the target writing teachers to request their participation and five of them agreed to take part in the interview. Two taught both mainstream and multilingual composition, the other two taught only multilingual composition, and other one taught only mainstream composition. The five writing teachers were three females and two males. Two were graduate teaching assistants, two were full-time instructors, and one was an adjunct instructor. While two writing teachers never had ESL training, the rest had ESL training before. Their experience in teaching in the Writing Programs ranged from three years to almost ten years. The writing teachers were with their pseudonyms.

- Beverly is an adjunct instructor. She taught two sections of ENG 107, two sections of ENG 108, and one section of ENG 102 in Fall 2010.

Throughout her three years at ASU, she has had experience teaching both multilingual and mainstream composition. She earned a master's degree in TESOL from ASU and used to tutor non-native English speakers.

- Sammy is a full-time instructor and she taught two sections of ENG 107 and two sections of ENG 105 in Fall 2010. For almost ten years, she has been teaching both multilingual and mainstream composition at ASU. Sammy earned a Ph.D. in English from ASU. She used to teach English at the university level in Japan for nine years. When she returned to the United States, she began privately tutoring international multilingual

students. She never had ESL training but learned to teach second language writing in the classroom.

- Anne is a graduate teaching assistant and taught two sections of ENG 107 in Fall 2010. She is a doctoral student in the Rhetoric, Composition, and Linguistics program at ASU. She has been teaching both mainstream and multilingual composition. A fifth year TA, Anne had ESL training before. She taught English speaking in India and at a university in Portland before coming to ASU.
- Ethan is a graduate teaching assistant and taught two sections of ENG 107 in Fall 2010. He is a doctoral student in the Rhetoric, Composition, and Linguistics program at ASU. He earned a master's degree in TESOL and had training in ESL before. As a teaching assistant, Ethan taught mainstream composition when he first taught in the writing program, which is a requirement for new teaching assistants. After his first-year teaching, Ethan, a fifth year TA, has chosen to teach multilingual composition courses.
- Dan is a full-time instructor and taught five sections of ENG 101 in Fall 2010. He earned a Ph.D. in English Education from ASU. Over the past six years (the first three years as a teaching assistant and the rest as an instructor) of teaching in the Writing Programs, Dan has been teaching only mainstream composition. Before coming to ASU, he did have experience in teaching multilingual students but it was minimal. He has never received ESL training.

WPA Participants. The Writing Programs at ASU has two WPAs: Director of the Writing Programs and Director of Second Language Writing. During the time of the study (Fall 2010 and Spring 2011), the Director of the Writing Programs was in charge of both mainstream and multilingual composition. Beginning in Fall 2011, the Director of Second Language Writing took charge of multilingual composition. I sent the two WPAs different email invitations to participate in the interviews, and they both agreed. I will not mention the two WPAs by pseudonyms because information gained from the interviews with the two WPAs will be used as background information for the discussion in Chapters 4 and 5.

Data Collection

Interview. In order to fully explore how agency plays out in multilingual writers' placement decisions and what goes into their placement processes, I used Seidman's "in-depth, phenomenologically based interviewing" (2006, p. 15) as a primary means of data collection. In this interview approach, open-ended questions are used in order to encourage participants to reconstruct their experience under the topic of the study (Seidman, 2006). In my study, I used semi-structured questions, which I found helpful for students when they did not have anything to say. The questions helped both the students and me continue the conversation. It was often that I asked follow-up questions that were not listed. This type of interview allowed me to closely follow individual multilingual writers and I came to understand each of them thoroughly. It also allowed me to understand why they did what they did. From the first interview to the fourth

interview, students became more comfortable sharing their experience in first-year composition placement. Information gained from each interview helped develop an understanding of each student's whole placement decision process and what went into their decisions about taking first-year writing courses.

Interview with Students. I interviewed each student participant four times over the course of one academic year (See Appendix D). Table 4 shows a focus of each interview.

Table 4

Interview Focus

	Int. I	Int. II	Int. III	Int. IV
Time of Interview	Beginning of Fall 2010 (after Wed. of the second week of the semester)	Middle of Fall 2010 (after students register for Spring 2011)	Middle of Spring 2011	End of Spring 2011
Interview Focus	First-semester writing course placement decisions	Decisions about second semester writing course (mainstream vs. multilingual)	Reflections on taking first-year writing courses	Reflections on the whole placement decision process

For the academic advisors, writing teachers, and WPAs, I conducted a one-time interview with each of them. I used semi-structured questions and asked follow-up questions to clarify previous answers and raise other related issues.

Interview with Academic Advisors. The interview focused on the following topics (See Appendix E):

- Academic advisors' awareness of placement options offered in the Writing Programs and other placement related issues;
- How they advised students on first-year composition placement;
- Their role in advising students about first-year composition placement; and
- Their experience in working with multilingual students.

Interview with Writing Teachers. The interview focused on the following topics (See Appendix F):

- Teachers' knowledge about first-year composition placement;
- Their awareness of the presence and needs of multilingual students;
- Their experience in working with multilingual students; and
- Their perceptions of the needs and support required of multilingual students.

Interview with WPAs. The interview mainly focused on the Writing Programs' policies on the placement of multilingual students into first-year composition courses and other placement related issues (See Appendix G).

Data Analysis

The audio-recorded interviews with all groups of the participants were transcribed. Informal analysis of the interview transcripts began at the transcribing stage where summaries and notes were typed. Formal analysis began when the transcripts were coded based on the established research questions. Emerging themes and patterns were also observed. Data analysis was a recursive process and it continued throughout the process of writing this dissertation.

Student Interview Coding. My goal was to examine how the multilingual students exercised agency in their first-year composition placement decisions. In other words, how agency played out when the students made the decisions about placement into mainstream or composition courses. I began coding by carefully reading the student interview transcripts and made marginal notes in order to develop a general sense of the categories or themes that might be present. After an initial reading, I developed categories of how students decided to take first-year composition courses in Fall 2010 and Spring 2011. The categories for the two semesters were as follows:

- Advisors' recommendations
- Other students' past experience in taking first-year composition courses
- The fact that first-year composition is a requirement
- Student's preexisting knowledge/information about first-year composition (from various sources such as an online freshman orientation and a major map)
- Student's own decisions
- A combination of previous categories

Later, I created two coding charts: the first one for how students decided to take the first-semester writing course (See Appendix H) and the second one for how students decided to take the second-semester writing course (See Appendix I). After the first round of coding, I had to modify these two coding charts. I replaced "friends' past experience" with "other students' past experience"

because I found from the interview transcripts that the multilingual students also talked to other students who were not their friends. While “Friends” was too narrow, “Other students” was more inclusive.

Reliability of Coding. To test reliability of my coding schemes, I asked a second coder, who, at the time of the study, was a doctoral student in applied linguistics and had experience with qualitative data analysis, to separately code two student interview transcripts, which I randomly selected. At a coding training session, I gave him copies of the coding charts I developed as well as two copies of the randomly selected student interview transcripts. We began by reviewing the coding schemes to ensure that we had a common understanding of each coding category. I then explained to him the operationalized definition of agency and showed him examples of categories that I had already coded using the modified version of the coding schemes. A few days after the training session, I met with him to check the between-coder agreement. For the first student interview transcript, it turned out that we obtained 75% intercoder reliability for the first coding chart, which was how students decided to take the first-semester writing course. For the second coding chart, which was how students decided to take the second-semester writing course, we received 50% intercoder reliability. For the second student interview transcript, we obtained 67% intercoder reliability for the first coding chart and 80% for the second coding chart using the following formula:

$$\text{Reliability} = \frac{\text{number of agreements}}{\text{total number of agreements} + \text{disagreements}}$$

These between-coder agreement percentages were not unusual; as Miles and Huberman (1994) point out that we do not usually get “better than 70% intercoder reliability” (p. 64) for the very first time of coding. I then attempted at something closer to 80% code-recode reliability, as suggested by Miles and Huberman, for the coding charts that the agreement percentage was problematic.

I met with the second coder again to discuss the categories of how students decided to take first-year writing courses, particularly focusing on one category that we coded differently, which was the students’ preexisting knowledge/information about first-year composition. We looked at the student transcripts and tried to find examples that showed the category of students’ preexisting knowledge/information about first-year composition. We agreed that only sources such as an online freshman orientation and a major map were not inclusive. The second coder suggested that students’ knowledge about test scores and their ability to find out about course descriptions of first-year composition courses should be considered evidence to suggest that students have previous knowledge about placement. The second coder raised a good point, which I did not pay attention to while I coded and that I ignored these two examples. A week after a meeting with the second coder, I recoded the same transcripts myself and tested reliability of my coding schemes again using the same formula. It turned out that for the first interview transcript, the agreement percentages for the two coding charts were 100% and 83%. For the second interview transcript, the percentage for both coding charts was 100%. In the end, the problem of the first two coding charts was resolved.

I learned from coding and analyzing the student interview transcripts that the multilingual students decided to take first-year writing courses using placement information that was distributed by various sources: advisors' recommendations, other students' past experience, the new student orientation, and other sources that provided placement related information. When this placement information was made available, the multilingual students were able to make well-informed placement decisions. I considered the availability of placement information an important condition for agency; this condition makes student agency, which is the capacity to act or not to act, possible. The multilingual students would not be able to choose the writing course they wanted to take if the Writing Programs did not give the freedom to them. The freedom to choose writing courses was another important condition for agency. In short, conditions that make agency possible included available placement information and the freedom, granted by the institution, to choose writing courses.

In the process of writing Chapter 4, I found out that some categories of how students decide to take first-year composition courses did not accurately represent how they used those sources of information. So, I decided to drop three categories as the main categories, which included: the fact that first-year composition is required, students' preexisting knowledge/information about first-year composition, and students' own decisions. Additionally, I inductively created two new categories, which were: the new student orientation and other sources that provide placement related information. I did not really get rid of those three categories. Instead, I assigned them to be part of the two new categories. The

category “the fact that first-year composition is required” was part of the category “other sources that provide placement related information.” The category “students’ preexisting knowledge/information about first-year composition” was also part of the category “other sources that provide placement related information.” For the category “students’ own decisions,” I got rid of it as the main category, but it could be part of any other main categories because when the students received information about placement from various sources, they made decisions based on the information they had.

While I worked on Chapter 4, I also discovered the following. When the conditions for agency were appropriate, the multilingual student participants were able to negotiate their placement, choose to accept or deny their original placement, question about placement, plan on placement, self-assess their proficiency level as they chose a writing course, and make decisions about a writing course they wanted to take. I call these abilities *acts of agency*. Yet, this did not mean that I did not use a framework for coding and analyzing. In fact, I first coded the interview transcripts and looked for acts of agency using existing definitions of agency by scholars in the fields of anthropology (i.e., Ahearn, 2000), rhetoric (i.e., Callinicos, 1988; Flannery, 1991; Hauser, 2004; Young, 2008), and applied linguistics (i.e., van Lier, 2009). Primarily relying on the existing definitions of agency, I created two coding charts: the first one listed resources for agency (See Appendix J); the second one listed agency requirements (See Appendix K). When I coded, I found that the categories in the two coding charts were very constraining and I found them very problematic. I realized that I

did not really want to look for agency resources and agency requirements. On the contrary, my analysis goal was to look for acts of agency. Later, I figured that these two coding charts did not work and so decided not to use them. I then started over the coding and ended up relying on emerging patterns and inductive analysis as I mentioned earlier in this paragraph.

Academic Advisor Interview Coding. I coded interview transcripts of the academic advisor participants, particularly looking for the role of advisors in multilingual students' placement decisions. In addition, there were two more topics emerging, including (1) how and what academic advisors use to determine first-year composition course placement, and (2) a common feature of advising first-year composition placement (see Appendix L). I coded the academic advisor interview transcripts myself.

Writing Teacher Interview Coding. When coding interview transcripts of writing teachers, I was looking for the following topics: (1) teachers' knowledge about first-year composition placement; (2) teachers' awareness of the presence and needs of multilingual writers in their classrooms; (3) and teachers' perceptions of needs and support required of multilingual students (See Appendix M).

WPA Interview Coding. When coding interview transcripts of the WPA participants, I looked for some background information of the Writing Programs at ASU such as the Writing Programs' policies on the placement of multilingual students, what the Writing Programs has done to accommodate multilingual

students, and its current and/or future plans to make placement practices of multilingual students more effective.

CHAPTER 4

STUDENT AGENCY IN PLACEMENT DECISIONS

In this chapter, I recount stories of the eleven multilingual writers who made the decisions about placement into mainstream or multilingual first-year composition courses in the Writing Programs at Arizona State University between the fall semester of 2010 and the spring semester of 2011. I relate their placement decision stories and what went into their placement decision process focusing on the following topics:

- How multilingual writers made the decisions about first-year composition placement;
- How multilingual writers exercised agency in their placement decisions;
- Multilingual writers' comments on academic advising; and
- Multilingual writers' recommendations for the Writing Programs and incoming students.

I present Chapter 4 in a descriptive and narrative form aiming to provide detailed portraits of the multilingual writer participants and their placement decision stories over the course one academic year. Like Leki (2007), I intend to “leave maximum room for these students’ voices and [placement] experiences” (p. 13) and keep “to a minimum outside scholarly references” (p. 13). Because I want to let my multilingual student participants voice out their placement stories, Chapter 4 primarily relies on direct quotes from a series of four in-depth interviews. I understand that “this choice makes it more difficult for readers to come away from the narratives with ‘the point,’” but “it helps the narratives remain somewhat

truer to the students' experiences" (Leki, 2007, p. 13). It is also my intention not to edit the interview excerpts.

How Multilingual Writers Made the Decisions about First-Year Composition Placement

The eleven multilingual writer participants decided to take their first-and-second semester first-year composition courses using various sources of information such as advisors' recommendations, others students' past experience in taking first-year composition courses, the new student orientation, and other sources that provide placement related information. In other words, these sources of information were major factors that influenced the way the multilingual students made the decisions about placement into mainstream or multilingual composition courses.

Academic Advisors' Recommendations

Of the eleven students, five of them made the decisions to take a multilingual section of first-year composition based on recommendations from their academic advisors. Jasim, in the first interview, said that the advisor chose ENG 107 for him. He said the advisor told him that international students should take ENG 107:

He [the advisor] did not tell me much, actually. He told me that these writing courses [ENG 107 and ENG 108] are required. He said I have IELTS scores, so I should take ENG 107. He just told me I have to take it. It is required. (Jasim, Interview I, September 16, 2010)

When I asked Jasim whether his advisor explained to him about available placement options in the Writing Programs, Jasim was surprised and asked me back: “Really? I did not know that I have options. I thought it was fixed....ENG 101 and ENG 102 are for people from the United States, ENG 107 and ENG 108 are for international students.” Jasim then raised three questions: “Actually, what is the difference between ENG 101 and ENG 107?” “Why do you guys separate classes for international students? Do you guys use the same books?” This shows that Jasim was concerned about his English courses and wanted to find out more about them. At the same time, it demonstrates that he did not receive complete information about first-year composition placement from his advisor. It is also worth noting that information about ENG 107 Jasim had received was inaccurate. In fact, international multilingual students’ options are not limited to multilingual composition sections in the Writing Programs at ASU. They have an option to take a mainstream composition section if they wish to do so.

Like Jasim, Pascal chose to take a multilingual section of first-year composition based on his advisor’s recommendations. Pascal registered for classes online, including ENG 107, while he was in Amsterdam, Netherlands. Pascal did not meet with his advisor but corresponded with him through email. Pascal said he took ENG 107 based on the advisor’s email message in which he was told that “ ‘you should take ENG 107 and ENG 108.’ So, I decided to take it from what he told me.” Pascal mentioned that the advisor did not give him any other explanation. Pascal also reported that he really did not know other classes. “I just knew the class I am taking.”

Mei and Chan, who were both from China, also decided to take ENG 107 based on recommendations from their advisors. “My academic advisor gave me suggestions to enroll in this class [ENG 107],” said Mei. Like Mei, Chan said: “I just followed my advisor. She told me to take ENG 107.”

Askar was another student who decided to take a multilingual composition section for his first semester at ASU by recommendations from his advisor. He recalled the time when he had a meeting with his advisor:

My advisor told me that since my [iBT] TOEFL scores [96] was good, I have two choices [ENG 101 or ENG 107]. I thought ENG 101 is too hard for me and it is for native speakers. I did not want to put extra work on myself. My advisor told me that ENG 107 is way easier. So, I just chose ENG 107. It is my own decision. (Askar, Interview I, October 4, 2010)

Even though Askar was the one who made the decisions about the course he wanted to take, he consulted his advisor about first-year English courses and received complete information, which he could use as he enrolled in ENG 107—the course that he thought appropriate for him.

Other Students’ Past Experience in Taking First-Year Composition Courses

Some of the multilingual students sought out more information about placement from other students who took first-year composition courses before. Mei, for example, said she knew that she had to take ENG 107 from her Chinese friends who took this class before. Chan received some information about TOEFL scores and English placement from her Chinese friends who took WAC 107 before. According to her friends, Chan’s iBT TOEFL scores (90) would allow her

to enroll in ENG 107. Ting, a Chinese student majoring in math and statistics, knew about WAC 101, WAC 107, ENG 101, ENG 102, ENG 107, and ENG 108 from her friend who went to a high school in China with her. She recalled: “I got all the information about [first-year] English [writing] classes from my friend.” Ting also learned more about placement from this friend’s experience in taking both mainstream and multilingual composition sections. Here, she referred to Joyce’s story⁴. After graduating from a high school in China, Joyce spent another year in a U.S. high school before going to ASU. Since Joyce graduated from a U.S. high school, her advisor recommended that she take ENG 101 and Joyce told Ting that her advisor cheated on her and lied to her. Later, Joyce switched to ENG 107 and was happier with the class.

Similar to Ting, Afia, a junior majoring in computer information systems, knew about English composition placement from other students’ past experience in taking first-year composition. Afia, explaining her placement decisions for the first semester, said that she knew about English composition placement from her brother and cousin who recently graduated from ASU. She said: “My brother helped me a lot because he already graduated from ASU. He knows that ENG 101 is for native [English] speakers and ENG 107 is much easier because it is for international students.” From what Afia was told about ENG 101 and ENG 107 is another example that shows placement information has been distributed to multilingual students inaccurately. Afia’s brother understood that ENG 101 was for native English-speaking students and ENG 107 was for international students.

⁴ I named Ting’s friend Joyce (pseudonym).

As I discussed earlier, multilingual students in the ASU Writing Programs have an option to take either a mainstream or multilingual composition section.

The New Student Orientation

Another source of placement information that the multilingual students, particularly resident students, relied on was the new student orientation. Marco said he registered for classes, including first-year composition, during the new student orientation. Marco described what went on during his orientation session:

It was a group of about 15 students in the classroom and we all gathered up with, and there were about 4 advisors there. They just told us about what classes were available and what time and gave us a sheet for enrollment. And we just signed up for class through that. It was not like one-on-one experience. (Marco, Interview IV, April 15, 2011)

I asked Marco whether those academic advisors specifically informed students about first-year composition courses. Marco replied: “No, not really. They just told us ‘ENG 101 and ENG 102 for English courses, if you have not taken them from high school, sign up for those.’ Pretty much it.” Based on the information he received during the orientation, Marco did not know that there were different options of first-year writing courses for him to choose from. He said: “The advisors did not go into detail about English classes; they just said here is your requirement, you need to take this in your first year.” Marco continued:

As a student, I want to know what the options I have. I think it would be nice if at the orientation, they [advisors] would let people know what their options are for first-year writing classes. It would be also helpful if they

can tell us about test score information and placement procedures. (Marco, Interview IV, April 15, 2011)

In the end, Marco enrolled in ENG 101 because “it is generally known [since in high school] it was required. It was not really information about the school [ASU] gives me, it is the information I know.” Marco said it was his own decisions to retake ENG 101, even though he could “jump” in ENG 102 because he already took ENG 101 in his senior year in high school and he earned three credits for that. Marco explained why he decided to retake ENG 101:

I could have gone to ENG 102 this semester [Fall 2010]. It is pretty much my decision to go over it again. I figured I can use it as a reminder of how to get that basic writing processed, instead of just skipping it and not knowing what to do in English classes and the next steps. I thought it will [would] be pretty helpful, so I just enrolled in it. (Marco, Interview I, October 4, 2010)

Like Marco, Ana registered for classes during the new student orientation. “I chose the class [ENG 101] based on my schedule and when I wanted it. I just did whatever day I could go,” Ana explained. For Ana, “English and math are just basic; they are required. For English, it is like pick one.” When asked whether she knew of other first-year composition classes that she could take, she replied: “I just know that I have to take ENG 101 and ENG 102. I do not know about ENG 107 and ENG 108, or WAC 101, WAC 107, or ENG 105.” She even said: “If I had known [about ENG 107 and ENG 108], I might have taken those classes.” Ana seemed to be interested in multilingual composition courses because she

considered herself to be bilingual who grew up with both Spanish and English and thought she might benefit from those courses. She said: “For bilingual people, they should have more options because their writing is different.” Ana also hoped that information about different classes was communicated to incoming students during the new student orientation.

Yet, Ana seemed unsatisfied with her ENG 101 placement and she recalled: “I did not really have any choice [for my English class] because I did not do good on my SAT. I was really mad with the SAT. I had good grades in all my [high school] classes but I am not a good test taker.” Ana went on to comment on the use of test scores for placement:

I do not really agree with having a test to figure out where you should be placed because it is just one test. Somebody can have luck and gets a good test score, and they get placed in a higher English class. It is not fair. They should look more your history in high school, instead of just looking at scores from one test. I think it’s better to use GPA and that you know that they do their work and they can get a good grade. (Ana, Interview II, December 2, 2010)

I asked Ana whether she knew that she had an option to take the Accuplacer Test and she could use the score from the test for her English placement. Ana said she had no idea about the test and was not aware that with her ACT English scores of 26, she could enroll in ENG 105. Ana lacked awareness of the Accuplacer Test and about test score cutoff points because she was not informed about and advised on them during the new student orientation. Ana’s case suggests that not all

students necessarily receive complete and accurate placement information during the new student orientation. It is also possible that the advisors did not recommend ENG 105 to Ana because her test scores were borderline, or they might not be aware of test score cutoff points and course placement.

Other Sources Providing Placement Related Information

The multilingual students did not rely on only one source of information as they chose to enroll in their first-semester writing course. They looked into other sources that provided placement related information such as an online freshman orientation, an online class search, a major map, and DARS⁵ (Data Audit Report System). In DARS, students can keep track of which requirements that are satisfied and which requirements remain to be fulfilled. In the major map, there is a list of courses recommended for each semester; first-year composition courses are listed in the first two semesters. Mei and Chan, for instance, tried to find more information about first-year composition from these sources and they found them very helpful. Like Mei and Chan, Ana said that she primarily relied on information about required courses on her major map and DARS, which showed that first-year writing courses were required.

In summary, the multilingual student participants used various sources of information as they enrolled in their first-year composition courses; yet, they did not necessarily receive accurate and complete information about English placement from some sources such as advisors, other students' past experience in

⁵ DARS (Data Audit Report System) is available through MyASU, the university's online system, in which students have access to their classes, specific courses they are enrolled, and other resources.

taking first-year composition, and the new student orientation. This led them to find information related to placement from other sources so that they could make well-informed placement decisions. Apparently, academic advisors and the new student orientation are seen the worse sources compared to the other two sources in terms of the quality of the information. The multilingual students were partially informed about available placement options by academic advisors and the new student orientation. They were also informed that mainstream sections were for native English-speaking students and multilingual sections were for international students. In addition, academic advisors tended not to tell all necessary information to the multilingual students. They went easy ways with the students. If they knew that their advisees were international students, they recommended that they take ENG 107 and ENG 108 without telling the students that there were other options available for them to choose from.

Another finding was that even though the multilingual students did not receive complete and accurate information about placement, they were aware of first-year composition placement and knew that they needed to take first-year writing courses. Particularly, they tended to know only the course they would be taking, not realizing other available placement options in the Writing Programs, except for Ting who learned about English placement from her friend's story as well as Askar who seemed to know what kinds of question to ask his advisor so that he was able to obtain complete information about placement.

How Multilingual Writers Exercised Agency in their Placement Decisions

The multilingual students were able to choose a mainstream or multilingual composition course using various sources of information as mentioned in the previous section. Before the multilingual students could make the decisions about placement, it required their ability to manage these various sources of information. Once the multilingual students had access to the sources of information and/or they made an effort to obtain these sources, what and how they dealt with them before placement decisions were made is discussed in this section. Clearly, the process of placement decisions is complex.

To begin, these various sources of information—advisors' recommendations, other students' past experience in taking first-year composition courses, the new student orientation, and other sources that provide placement related information—were either made available to the students or the students themselves made an effort to obtain them. These sources of information are key conditions for agency that can make student agency in placement decisions possible. Another essential condition is students' freedom to choose writing courses. As I mentioned in Chapter 3, the ASU Writing Programs offers various placement options and students are allowed to choose the writing courses they want to take. These conditions were important for student agency to be possible. In other words, when conditions for agency were appropriate, the multilingual students had the capacity to act. They were able to negotiate their placement, choose to accept or deny their original placement, question about placement, plan on placement, self-assess their proficiency level as they chose a writing course,

and make decisions about a writing course they wanted to take. These acts of agency are complex and they take place during the placement decision process. In what follows, I discuss how the multilingual writers exercised agency in their first-year composition placement decisions, and/or how agency played a role when each multilingual student made the decisions about placement into mainstream or multilingual composition courses.

Negotiating Placement

It seems that the multilingual students will be able to negotiate first-year composition placement when more information about placement is made available to them. Afia would not have been able to take ENG 107 if her advisor did not inform her about the Accuplacer Test. Afia originally enrolled in WAC 107 because she did not have enough TOEFL scores to be placed in ENG 107. Afia recalled: “First, they [The Writing Programs] put me in WAC 107 because my TOEFL scores. I got 74. They tell me I should get 80 or above to get in ENG 107.” Right after visiting the Writing Programs office, Afia met with the advisor and here she reported on their conversation: “I did not want to waste time [in WAC 107] and I am a transferred student. So, I asked, ‘should I take WAC?’” When the advisor learned about Afia’s situation, the advisor informed her about the Accuplacer Test and recommended that she should take the test. “My advisor told me to take this chance and tried my best for this written test. She said if I get a score of 5, I could enroll in ENG 107.”

After a meeting with her advisor, Afia decided to take the Accuplacer Test and, fortunately, she received a score of 5, which was a minimum score to let her

be in ENG 107. Finally, she could enroll in ENG 107. Afia negotiated placement with her advisor by informing her advisor that she should not take WAC 107 because she was a transferred student and did not want to waste her time in WAC 107. Afia was happy with her placement into ENG 107 and did fine enough in the class; she earned a B for the final course grade. She expressed her feeling toward the class:

I think it [ENG 107] is the most effective class for me. I like this class because most of the students are not native English [speaking] Americans. They are like me, so they speak like me, I do not feel shy when I speak to them, and I make a lot of friends. That is why I prefer ENG 107 rather than taking ENG 101. (Afia, Interview II, November 17, 2010)

What Afia felt about being in a class with students who were “like” her echoes what is found in Costino and Hyon’s (2007) study, which suggests that students of varying residency statuses (U.S.-born, U.S.-resident immigrant, and international) preferred either mainstream or multilingual composition because each class had students who were like them. As pointed out by Costino and Hyon, their student participants “sought a class with students who reflected some aspects of themselves” (2007, p. 76), and these aspects included “English proficiency level, ...international residency status, multilingual experience, or national origin” (p. 76).

Accepting Placement

While Afia chose to negotiate her placement with the advisor, Joel, also a transferred student, preferred to accept his WAC 107 placement. A senior

majoring in political science, Joel received all information about placement, including test score cutoffs, available placement options, and placement procedures, from his advisor. Joel said he followed his advisor's recommendations for taking WAC 107. "She [the advisor] told me that I have to take this class [WAC 107], and I am okay [with it]." Joel also recalled the time when he met his advisor in Spring 2010 in which he first enrolled at ASU:

According to my advisor, I have this score [542, Paper-based Test TOEFL], so I have to take WAC, and I do not have complaints about it. Well, I will see in this way.... We have to be in the class because we have to be. From that score, we have this class for you, even though I think I am better than that. (Joel, Interview I and II, November 9, 2010)⁶

Joel explained that because he was going to graduate next year (Spring 2012), "it does not matter if I advance in ENG 108 or else; it is gonna be the same time. So, it is okay. If I have to take it, I [am] gonna take it." Joel considered taking ENG 107 was like having a "dessert" because he thought the class was not too difficult compared to other higher-level courses; and he could write whatever he wanted:

The way I see this class for me is a dessert. Why? I am not that stress [ed out]. I type and I talk about whatever I want to. I do not think that is pressure. Well, because, for example, other higher-level courses like philosophy and politics in which I had to put a lot of attention. I write

⁶ I conducted the first two interviews with Joel on the same date. The time that this student decided to participate in the study was late and I already finished the first interviews with other student participants. The first interview was supposed to carry between September and October 2010.

about the topic that I want in the English class. I just type it. It is more easy [easier]. I do not feel that pressure. For me, it is my dessert. (Joel, Interview I and II, November 9, 2010)

Even though Joel accepted his situation and seemed to be happy with it, he did not really enjoy his ENG 107 class and had negative impressions of the class and his classmates. He said the class “could be better if we [were] more fluent and participated more” but “they [most of students] do not want to participate in class activities. No one says anything. I have to raise my hands and say something. Sometimes it is kind of frustrating.”

When asked whether there were things that he liked about the class, Joel said that even though the class “is terrible,” he had freedom to write about topics he liked and that made him feel comfortable:

I wrote a paper about anarchy and nobody in my class understood it, except the instructor. No one had questions. I think when I reviewed their essays; their writing skills are good. But, they tended not to speak in class. They may be afraid of their accent, but I do have an accent, too. (Joel, Interview I and II, November 9, 2010)

Self-Assessing as Making Placement Decisions

Of the two multilingual student participants said they assessed their English proficiency as they made the decisions about the writing course they wanted to take. It is interesting that these two multilingual students had different ways of self-assessment and that the outcomes were also different. Jonas learned about first-year composition placement information by searching on ASU’s

websites and looking it up from his major map. He knew about English placement before consulting his advisor. “I had to find everything on the Internet. I did not know about advising; I found out about the classes by myself before I spoke with my advisor.” Based on information he obtained, Jonas self-assessed his English proficient and resisted his original placement into WAC 107. Jonas seemed to be satisfied with the outcomes of taking the Accuplacer test:

I chose to enroll in ENG 107 because I was in that level. I have spoken and written a lot of English before. So, English wasn't new to me. I think my level was ENG 107. I found WAC 107 easy. I think it was a good decision. It is very good to do the Accuplacer test. I feel like I am in the right class. I am doing well in ENG 107. It is good for me. (Jonas, Interview I, September 13, 2010)

Jonas signed up for WAC 107 online when he was in Norway. When he came to ASU, he figured out by himself how he could get into ENG 107. He recalled:

I did some research on the Internet. I found out about the [Accuplacer] test myself. I called a lot of people and looked down the web page and search on the Internet on ASU sites. I did the placement test and got a better score. I dropped WAC 107 and enrolled in ENG 107 instead. That is what before school starts. (Jonas, Interview I, September 13, 2010)

This suggests the agentiveness of the student. Jonas tried to find out about placement information by himself; and when he had access to complete information, he was able to make his own decisions about choosing a writing course that was right for him.

When asked what he thought about the Accuplacer test, Jonas replied: “The placement test is good. They [The University Testing and Scanning Service] should do more marketing on this. If I did not know about it, I would have to do WAC 107.”

Jonas was not the only student who self-assessed his English proficiency. Pascal, an economics major also did self-assess. What makes these two cases different from each other is that Jonas chose to enroll in a writing class that he thought it was appropriate with his level of proficiency, Pascal, who scored 102 on the iBT TOEFL, was still enrolled in ENG 107, a class that he claimed to be below his language ability level:

I mean it is really a beginner class. The only thing I do not really like is it is too easy. We have to write essays about ourselves and stuff like that. I do not want to do that anymore, you know since they are like what I used to do in my [previous] ESL classes. I get tiring of writing about myself and personal experiences. Ah, I did that for three years now. I am not [an] ESL anymore. (Pascal, Interview I, September 17, 2010)

This suggests that Pascal does not know that students in mainstream composition courses also write about themselves. It is also worth mentioning that Pascal did not receive complete placement information from his advisor. He did not know how each option of first-year composition was different from one another. What Pascal learned from his advisor was that ENG 107 and ENG 108 were for international students and if he did not want to put extra work on writing courses, multilingual composition seemed to be a better option. A case of Pascal also

raises questions about how to best design curricula that address the abilities, needs, and identities of multilingual students who come from diverse backgrounds (Costino & Hyon, 2007). Specifically, we do not want to see types of instruction and assignment that positions multilingual students as “newcomers or outsiders to U.S. culture” (Costino & Hyon, 2007, p. 78; Harklau, 1999, 2000).

Pascal said he was unhappy with the way his teacher treated him and classmates:

In the class where I am right now, it is not frustrating. But, sometimes, it is annoying because when the teacher talks, you feel like she thinks you are an ESL student, you do not speak English, you know. I think I move beyond that level. I am more than an ESL student compared to average ESL students. (Pascal, Interview I, September 17, 2010)

Pascal seemed to be resisting to the ESL treatment; yet he still chose to enroll in multilingual composition sections both fall 2010 and spring 2011 semesters. One possible reason was that he was recommended by his advisor to take multilingual composition courses because they were designed for international students like him. Another reason, as Pascal said in an interview, was that he did not want to put extra work on his writing class. If he chose to take ENG 101 and ENG 102, he had to work harder to compete with native English speaking peers. So, Pascal’s own solution for multilingual students whose English skills were beyond an ESL level looked like this: “ Perhaps, they [The Writing Programs] should have, for example, 107A for beginners, and 107B for higher level students.” He also said

that he should have not been in ENG 107; instead “ I think I could be in ENG 108 right now.”

Planning, Questioning, and Making Decisions

Negotiating, accepting, and self-assessing were the acts of agency that I observed over the course of one academic year during the placement decision process of the multilingual student writers. Planning, questioning, and decision-making were also evident as other acts of agency, which occurred when the students had access to sources of placement information and/or they made an effort to obtain placement information. I discussed these three acts of agency in the same section because the multilingual students performed these acts concurrently. Particularly, the case of Jasim that shows how these three acts of agency were interwoven. Before making decisions about his second-semester writing courses, Jasim did much more research on placement than he did with his first semester placement. In Fall 2010, Jasim took ENG 107; he was not sure about what writing course he would be taking in Spring 2011. He asked his American friends who were taking ENG 102 and ENG 105 and discussed differences between ENG 102 and ENG 108 with them:

I was thinking of taking ENG 102. I talked to some people. I told them that I wanted to be in ENG 102 because I wanna be experience with native speakers instead of with foreign students. I am in America that makes sense to be involved with more native speakers. (Jasim, Interview II, November 9, 2010)

After a conversation with American friends, he said:

So, I was about this close to apply for ENG 102. I kept thinking about it. Then I talked to some of other international students. They said that the university made ENG 108 for foreign students. That means it is good for me, you know. (Jasim, Interview II, November 9, 2010)

Jasim kept thinking about which section (mainstream or multilingual) of second-semester writing course he should enroll in until he met his advisor; Jasim reported:

When I talked to my advisor. Okay, I am gonna take ENG 102 because she motivated me. You are an international student, it will be better if you want to improve your skills, and it would be better to be with native speakers. (Jasim, Interview II, November 9, 2010)

However, in the end, he decided to register for ENG 108 because:

ENG 108 is gonna be easier since I am an international student. ENG 108 is made specifically for international students so I think the instructor will be easy with us and explain more about the projects and things like that. (Jasim, Interview II, November 9, 2010)

Here, he also provided another rationale for taking ENG 108: “I would prefer to be in a writing class with non-native English speakers because I am gonna discuss with other students more effectively and I feel more comfortable about it than with native speakers.”

I was also interested in how Jasim felt about taking a writing course with non-native English speaking students. He said: “I am not gonna improve my

English skills more than I am gonna do in English native speaker class.” This is because he believed that:

We are from the same background. English is not our native language. When we fix our papers, there might be some kind of controversies because I think this might be correct grammar, those peers might think no, this is correct, something like that. And I ended up going to the Writing Center. (Jasim, Interview II, November 9, 2010)

Even though he thought there were some disadvantages of taking a writing course with non-native English speakers, Jasim still preferred multilingual composition because he did not have to be too cautious when it comes to speaking. Jasim explained that when he had a conversation with native English speakers, he always had to think before he spoke. He specifically paid attention to the use of subjects, verbs, and nouns.

It was also evident that other factors influenced the way the multilingual students made the decisions about their second-semester writing course. The multilingual students did more planning before making decisions about their English course. A case of Chan is another example. Before Chan made a decision about her second-semester writing course, she thought about postponing ENG 108 to her third or fourth semester because she desired to change her major from business communication to accounting. Chan is different from some other students who want to complete their first-year writing courses during their first academic year. Changing a major requires a good GPA and some prerequisite

courses, which she had to complete them within her second year at ASU. Even though she had registered for ENG 108, Chan was not certain about her decisions:

I am not sure about ENG 108. I still consider. May be I will drop it or I will choose another class because I can take ENG 108 in the summer session or in the following Fall. May be in the community college because it is cheaper. And ENG 108 is not related to business. It is just English for foreign students, and everybody will take it. If I take it at a community college, I think it is okay. I may drop ENG 108 at the beginning of the next semester [Spring 2011]. I am still thinking. (Chan, Interview II, November 30, 2010)

In the end, Chan, however, decided to stick with ENG 108. Here, she explained:

Actually, I was trying to take ENG 108 during the summer at a community college. But, my friend told me that the tuition fees between 12 and 18 credits are the same. So, why I had to pay more to go to a community college? (Chan, Interview III, March 11, 2011)

When I asked whether she was satisfied with her decision about taking ENG 108 in the spring semester of 2012, she said: “No. No. No. I did something wrong. I should have not choose [chosen] ENG 108 for this semester. Maybe I should choose it later in my next semester or the following years.” She continued: “I cannot handle it. It is not perfect. Writing takes you a lot of time. Actually, I wanted to spend my most time or focus my attention on some courses required for my major.” Chan even said that if she could start over the semester again, “I will take ENG 107 in the first semester, but I will not take ENG 108 in the following

semester. I may take it during the summer or winter break. So, it will be easier to handle it.”

The multilingual students also exercised their agency when they were not satisfied with their placement decisions. In this case, the multilingual students made decisions to withdraw from the course they were currently taking. This situation happened to Ting. In the final interview, Ting reported that she decided to withdraw from her ENG 108 because she was not happy with her grade. She showed unsatisfactory to the class during the third homework assignment and complained about the overload of work she had to devote every Tuesday and Thursday. When Ting completed the first writing project and received her grade, she decided to withdraw from the course:

My paper is not so good. I only got 105 out of 150 for the first assignment. After I revised it, I got 125. I calculated the score and the average, and my grade. I think it is not so good for my overall GPA. I will end up getting a B. So, I decided to withdraw from the class after I know a grade of my first writing assignment. Besides, there is a lot of homework. I decided to focus on my other classes. I will choose ENG 108 for next semester [Fall 2011]. (Ting, Interview IV, April 14, 2011)

Ting was not the only student who withdrew from the course; some of her friends did the same thing. She spoke for herself and friends:

We all tried our best to write, but we still cannot get a good grade. I heard that it is her [the teacher] first time to teach international students. Maybe

she uses the way she grades native English-speaking students to us. Then,
I think it may not be right for me. (Ting, Interview IV, April 14, 2011)

It was not easy for Ting to decide to withdraw from the course. She said: “I think about this for a long time. I am afraid that having a W will influence my whole grade. But, some of friends told me that it is not a big deal.” I also asked Ting about what her academic advisor had to say about her decision. Ting said her academic advisor “was okay” with her decision and recommended that she could retake it next semester. Ting said that she had no regret about her decision. On the other hand, she seemed happier for having more time to focus on assignments in other courses:

I think I made a good choice. If I did not withdraw it, my other classes would be not as good as now because I did not have time for other classes. Working on English class’ homework takes a lot of time. Compared to ENG 108, my other classes are more important. They are all my required classes such as microeconomics and mathematics. I think I made a good decision. I did not feel regret. (Ting, Interview IV, April 14, 2011)

To conclude, agency is not possible if the conditions for agency are not made available to the multilingual students. When conditions for agency were appropriate, the multilingual student participants were able to: negotiate their placement, choose to accept or deny their original placement, self-assess as they made the decisions about placement, question about placement, plan on placement, and make decisions as they enrolled in their first-year composition courses.

Multilingual Writers' Comments on Academic Advising

In addition to how the multilingual student participants made the decisions about first-year composition placement and how they exercised agency in their placement decision process, I was interested in their experiences with academic advising. Because academic advisors are academic staff members who come into contact with students when they first enter universities, I wanted to find out about what and how the multilingual students were informed about first-year composition placement.

One main issue related to first-year composition placement advising emerged throughout a series of four in-depth interviews with the multilingual students was that they were not much informed about English placement. Advising sessions were mostly devoted to required courses for the students' majors. Chan remembered what went on when she met with her advisor. "We did not talk about an English class. We mostly talked about courses required for my major. We did not talk a lot about English because I know I will have to take it." Ting also had the same experience. "She [the advisor] gives me more advice on math classes and other required classes for my major. My major is mathematics." Like Chan and Ting, Pascal experienced the same kind of advising, saying that he received enough information on other courses, but "for English classes...not really. I do not know if this is the advisor or if it [is] the way they do it."

Additionally, inaccurate and partial placement information was delivered to students (as discussed in Chapter 5 when the academic advisors did not provide complete information to their advisees). To illustrate, when first met with her

academic advisor, Mei asked whether she could take ENG 101 and ENG 102, and she was told that those classes were for native English-speaking students. This suggests that the student may not receive complete placement information from her academic advisor. In fact, both native and non-native English-speaking students can take those two courses if they have a required minimum score of one of the following tests: SAT, ACT, TOEFL, IELTS, and the Accuplacer.

Unlike Mei, Ting, and Pascal, Askar said he received complete information about placement and available placement options from his advisor. “She just told me that I have choices of ENG 101, ENG 107, and ENG 105. She explained differences of each class and I said I would take ENG 107 because it is easier.” Jasim, on the contrary, said he did not obtain necessary placement information from the advisor:

We need to ask them actually. They do not give you or tell you all the options you have. Meeting with advisors (he had two advisors) is about the graduation process and they did not get into specific details about English classes. (Jasim, Interview II, November 9, 2010)

Jasim also mentioned that as a new student, he needed to be informed about other available placement options, not just ENG 107 and ENG 108. Afia was another student who was not informed about other available placement options (ENG 101, ENG 102, ENG 105). She tried to understand that maybe her advisor knew that “I am not good in English so that is why she advises me to go to 107, and I am okay with that.”

The multilingual students also had both negative and positive impressions of academic advising. Because his impression of academic advising was not pleasant, Pascal said he would not need advising in the following semester: “I will just with myself [I will be by myself] and if [...] I am off track, I will go to my advisor,” because “they [advisors] do not give you a lot of information, you know. I feel like they are just doing a little bit of their job, doing the cover, the surface of their job.” This is what Pascal preferred while meeting with the academic advisor:

I expected the advisor to look at my file and look at my scores and say something like ...oh, you got that [test score], you should go there instead of saying you should take this because it is a requirement. (Pascal, Interview IV, April 13, 2011)

He also wished the advisor could ask him the following questions: “What do you want to do, what is your level? Do you rather want to be with Americans or foreigners?” Moreover, Pascal expected that “they [academic advisors] should try to know more about students what they really want.”

Unlike Pascal, Joel appreciated the way his academic advisor tried to understand him and where he came from as well as his background:

She is a great person. She participates in my academic decisions. For first-year composition courses, she told me not to feel bad that I have to take English classes again. I do not feel bad. I already completed all the required courses for my majors, except for some fundamental courses like math, and biology. (Joel, Interview IV, April 18, 2011)

Furthermore, there were reasons why some of the multilingual student participants preferred not to consult academic advisors about first-year composition placement. Marco and Ana chose not to meet with academic advisors individually before deciding to register for their English courses. Instead, they registered for first-semester English writing course during the new student orientation and decided on the second-semester English writing course by themselves. Marco recalled his decisions not to take advice from his academic advisor:

In my case, it would not hurt if I asked my advisor, but I would have gone with the same decisions either way. I think in the future if I choose beyond my prerequisite, I think it would be good to ask my advisor. (Marco, Interview III, February 23, 2011)

For Ana, she simply said that did not need to meet with her advisor one on one because she knew that she would take ENG 101.

In summary, each of the multilingual students' experiences with academic advising suggests that the majority of students did not receive complete placement information, particularly available placement options in the Writing Programs. In addition, international students were typically advised to take ENG 107, followed by ENG 108 because these courses, as understood by academic advisors, were for foreign students who had TOEFL scores. Meanwhile, resident multilingual students automatically chose or preferred to enroll in ENG 101, followed by ENG 102 because they had either SAT or ACT scores. It is also worth mentioning that the multilingual students did not care much about English writing courses. Some

of the students (i.e., Ana, Marco, and Wang) considered first-year composition courses merely as requirements as opposed to useful preparation for writing in other courses. They also wanted to complete these courses as soon as they could.

Multilingual Writers' Recommendations for the Writing Programs and Incoming Students

Because the majority of students did not received complete and accurate placement information, they came up with practical recommendations for the Writing Programs in terms of how placement information should be distributed and where it should be distributed. They also mentioned what kind of placement information they needed to be informed. The multilingual students also provided some helpful suggestions to incoming students who would be enrolling in first-year composition courses at ASU in the future. Both the recommendations for the Writing Programs and the suggestions for new students were insightful; these recommendations and suggestions all are from the multilingual writers' direct placement experiences.

Recommendations for the Writing Programs

The multilingual student participants made two specific recommendations for the Writing Programs that were related to placement information and teachers of multilingual composition. The multilingual students suggested that the Writing Programs provide more placement information to students so that they could use it as they decided about writing courses they wanted to take. They also wished the Writing Programs to have more choices of teachers for multilingual composition sections.

Complete Placement Information Needed. The majority of multilingual students did not receive complete placement information. As a result, they had to figure out ways to obtain more information so that they could make well-informed placement decisions about a writing course they wanted to take. Jonas was one of the multilingual students who researched on English placement on ASU's websites. For him, placement information obtained from his advisor via email correspondence was not sufficient. As an international student, Jonas wanted placement related information to be mailed directly to him. Like Jonas, Pascal felt that placement information he received from the advisor via email correspondence was not adequate. He wish he could obtained test score information from either his advisor or the Writing Programs:

I would really want more specific descriptions [of course placement] and test scores. So, we know where we should go. For example, if you have more than 100 [of TOEFL], you should go to 101 and 102 and if you score lower than 70, you should go to ENG 107 and 108. (Pascal, Interview I, September 17, 2010)

Pascal scored 102 on iBT TOEFL; and based on this score, he thought he should be able to skip ENG 107:

From my score, I could be in ENG 108. There should be an advanced ESL class like ENG 105 for American students. Do not put us in ENG 105, otherwise we will be lost. If I were in ENG 105 in the first semester, full of Americans who perfectly know English, I will feel like where am I right now. (Pascal, Interview III, February 25, 2011)

Even though Pascal did not receive complete information about placement from his advisor, he recommended that new students consult academic advisors about placement:

For new students, look at your SAT or TOEFL scores and bring them to the advisor. Ask your advisor what she/he thinks what course you should take, ENG 101 or ENG 107. They can tell you should take that [but] you do not have to [follow their recommendations]. Make the choice yourself.

Do not let them choose for you. (Pascal, Interview III, February 25, 2011)

Regarding placement information, the multilingual students also specifically wanted to be informed about all available placement options in the Writing Programs. Jasim voiced his opinions:

I wanna know more about options of writing courses at ASU. We should be informed about options of writing courses. If I had known other options, it would be possible that I would have tried ENG 101. But, I am like an international student, and my advisor told me that international students take 107 and that is why I chose 107. (Jasim, Interview I, September 16, 2010)

Jasim wanted information about placement to be available to students during the new student orientation. For international students, in a situation that they were not able to attend the orientation, the International Students and Scholar Office (ISSO) should provide this kind of information for them. Jasim specifically said:

In the orientation, they should make like a section telling about English composition. Students should know what scores they should have in order

to be placed in a writing class they want to take. Some students are able to attend the orientation, but I did not because I was working on my visa.

ISSO should add some information about English composition. (Jasim, Interview IV, April 13, 2011)

Because Marco registered for his first-semester English class during the new student orientation, he recommended that the Writing Programs provide information about available placement options, brief descriptions of each option, test scores and course placement, and placement procedures at sessions during the new student orientation:

This information should be written in sheets and they should be distributed to us during the orientation. It is important to new students to know what options they actually have and how each option is different. (Marco, Interview I, October 4, 2010)

Like Marco, Ana wanted information about different first-year composition courses to be distributed during the new student orientation. As mentioned before, Ana considered herself to be bilingual because she grew up speaking both Spanish and English. As a bilingual taking ENG 101 and ENG 102, she recommended that the Writing Programs inform students who grew up using English as an additional language about multilingual composition courses because “these classes might benefit or fit them better. Maybe those kids can be successful.” Ana also wanted to hear about experiences in taking first-year writing courses of current students so that she could use that information when deciding to take her first-year writing courses. She said it would be helpful to “have students from those classes come

to the orientation and share their experience in choosing writing classes and in taking English writing classes at ASU.”

In addition to information about available placement options and test scores, the students like Askar believed that “first-year students need more information about English courses such as descriptions of the courses and brief information about assignments.”

More Choices of Teachers for Multilingual Composition. The multilingual students also mentioned a dearth of writing teachers for multilingual composition sections and made recommendations for the Writing Programs. As Mei said: “I want more choices of teachers for ENG 108. For this semester [Spring 2011], there were just three teachers.” In addition to a variety of teachers, the multilingual students wanted to have information about teachers. Ting expressed her interest in finding out more about teachers. “I wanted to know more about the teacher who will be teaching whether she/he will be friendly, tough, or good. Also her accent and how much homework we will be assigned.”

Recommendations for Incoming Students

The multilingual students’ recommendations for incoming students varied; and they covered a wide range of issues related to their placement decisions. They based their recommendations on what they had gone through. Their recommendations ranged from taking placement tests to evaluating English skills.

Take Written Placement Test if not Satisfied with Test Scores. One multilingual student recommended that incoming students take the Accuplacer test if they wanted to be placed in a higher-level English course. Joel suggested

that new students take the Accuplacer test if they were not satisfied with their TOEFL scores. “If you do not feel comfortable [with TOEFL scores], you take a test. They [ASU] give that option.”

Take WAC if You Want to be Prepared. Even though Afia skipped WAC 107, she recommended that international multilingual students take this course. As discussed earlier in the chapter, Afia found information about the Accuplacer test obtaining from her advisor helpful. She decided to take the test and received the minimum score to be placed in ENG 107. She liked the Accuplacer test because “I did not have to take three English classes.” However, when I met her for the third interview, Afia seemed to be regretful that she did not take WAC 107. She even said: “If I came to ASU for my freshman year, I would take WAC 107. I think it helps. I found the problem, you know. If we move first to ENG 107, it is kind of falling.” That is why, “I recommend taking WAC especially if they are international students. It will help them a lot. When they take ENG 107, they will be more prepared.”

Evaluate Your English. From his experience in taking multilingual composition for two semesters, Askar recommended that new students “evaluate your English writing skills and think about what you want accordingly. If you are really good in English, you may want to take ENG 101 or ENG 105. If you are not so confident, may be you should take ENG 107.”

Do not Need to Complete First-Year Composition during First Year. Even though Chan was successful in her first semester writing course and ended up earning an A, she struggled with her second-semester writing course. “I feel

messed up every time when I work on assignments. I feel miserable. This is not just me. Most of us have this feeling about this class [ENG 108].” She then recommended new students: “If you are not confident enough, you can take ENG 108 later, not necessary in your second semester. It is not necessary to take ENG 107 and ENG 108 in consecutive semesters.”

Conclusion

This chapter provided insights into the multilingual students’ placement decision experiences and what went into their placement decision process. In their first semester, the multilingual students used various sources of information, including advisors’ recommendations, others students’ past experience in taking first-year composition courses, the new student orientation, and other sources that provides placement related information. For their second semester, there were other factors that affected the way some of the multilingual students decided to take their English course. As discussed earlier, Jasim did more research on the differences between a mainstream and multilingual composition course by asking friends who took ENG 102 and ENG 108 before. He also discussed with his advisor advantages and disadvantages of each course. Another example was when Chan desired to switch her major from business communication to accounting. At that time, Chan had been considering taking ENG 108 during a winter break or summer session so that she could have time to complete some courses required for changing a major of her study.

Essentially, stories of placement decisions of the multilingual student participants discussed in this chapter delineated how study agency played role

when the students made the decisions about placement into mainstream or multilingual composition courses. The multilingual students, when conditions of agency were optimal, were able to:

- Negotiate placement;
- Choose to accept or deny their original placement recommended by advisors;
- Self-assess their proficiency and decide whether placement is appropriate;
- Question about placement related issues;
- Plan on placement; and
- Make decisions about placement.

In addition, this chapter related the multilingual students' experiences with academic advising and what went on during advising sessions, particularly what and how the multilingual students were informed about first-year composition placement and how this information influenced their placement decisions. The chapter also included some recommendations for the Writing Programs and some suggestions for incoming students provided by the multilingual students who directly experienced the placement practices at ASU. These insightful placement decision stories are valuable information that the Writing Programs may want to consider taking into account. This information could be helpful as the Writing Programs continues to improve placement practices for multilingual students who are regularly present in U.S. higher educational institutions.

CHAPTER 5

ACADEMIC ADVISORS, WRITING TEACHERS, AND THEIR PERSPECTIVES ON THE PLACEMENT OF MULTILINGUAL WRITERS IN A COLLEGE COMPOSITION PROGRAM

Chapter 5 discusses the academic advisors' and writing teachers' perspectives on the placement of multilingual writers into first-year composition courses in the first-year writing program at ASU. This chapter covers a wide range of topics related to the placement of multilingual students that is pertinent to academic advisors and writing teachers who come into close contact with multilingual students. The ASU Writing Programs' placement policies and other related placement issues are also foregrounded when necessary. I present this chapter in a descriptive form in which I let the academic advisor and writing teacher participants share their perspectives on the placement of multilingual writers into first-year composition courses.

Academic Advisors and the Placement of Multilingual Writers

Academic advisors are academic staff members with whom incoming undergraduate students meet when they first enter the university; they play an important role in advising and guiding students about registration, including first-year English courses. In the context of ASU, the academic advisor participants learn about advising in general as well as English and math placement from information given to them each spring semester before a new student orientation takes place. During the time of the study (Fall 2010 and Spring 2011), the ASU Writing Programs did not have direct communication about first-year composition

placement with academic advisors and other related academic offices. Based on this institutional practice, I examined academic advisors' awareness of and their understanding about first-year composition placement and other related issues by addressing the following topics:

- The role of academic advisors in advising students about first-year composition placement; and
- How academic advisors advise students on first-year composition placement.

Before I proceed to the discussion of these two main topics, I discuss the four academic advisor participants' awareness of the presence of multilingual students and how they identified these students. From now on, I will use abbreviations when I refer to disciplines of the four academic advisor participants. The academic advisors came from the following disciplines: electrical engineering (EE), math and statistics (M&S), business administration (BA), and Economics (ECON). Overall, the participants recognized the presence of multilingual students who were their advisees; they reported on an estimated number of multilingual students whom they had worked with. In EE, 20 % of students were multilingual students; they were from China, India, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Turkey. This was the same with ECON in which many international students graduated from. The field of M&S was also popular among international students; and an academic advisor for this major said 10% to 15% of her advisees were international undergraduate students. Two academic advisor participants were more specific reporting on a specific number of multilingual

students whom they worked with in Fall 2010 semester. While an M&S academic advisor said she had five international multilingual students, a BA advisor mentioned he had only a few numbers of multilingual students.

There were various characteristics that the academic advisors used to identify who multilingual students were. Students' accent and TOFEL scores were the most frequently mentioned among the academic advisor participants. As one academic advisor said, "they have thick accents and they have TOEFL scores. Another academic advisor mentioned how he identified multilingual students:

The first clue I will see if they have TOEFL scores, usually not SAT or AC. The second clue is that their English speaking ability is kind of broken. It is a good indicator but not always 100%. (Keith, BA advisor)

Furthermore, the academic advisor participants relied on records from the International Students and Scholars Office (ISSO) that informed which students were international students. For example, two academic advisors, Megan and Elaine, mentioned that they knew and learned about backgrounds of students from the ISSO office.

In some cases, the academic advisors knew that their advisees were international students because students self disclosed. As Megan pointed out: "Many students disclose themselves as non-native English speakers and mention a home country where they are from."

When the advisors were not sure about students' backgrounds, they directly asked from students. Elaine said: "I will just ask. I do not make an

assumption. I need to be very careful.” Like Elaine, Keith said: “If I am not sure, I will ask.”

The academic advisor participants identified resident multilingual students using the following features: accents, standardized test scores (i.e., SAT or ACT), and students’ self-disclosure. Keith said: “They have an accent from a non English-speaking country and they have either SAT or ACT scores.” Based on her experience, Megan said: “Resident multilingual students always self disclose. I could make an assumption, but I do not always know that from having a conversation with students.”

In short, the academic advisors were aware of the presence of multilingual students who were their academic advisees. They seemed to know who the students were and relied on various characteristics to identify international multilingual students and resident multilingual students. It is apparent that the academic advisors were more comfortable when identifying who international multilingual students were. They had information about and records of students’ language backgrounds from the ISSO to confirm their assumption. This is different from identifying resident multilingual students. The academic advisor participants had to rely on students’ self-disclosure or standardized test scores (i.e., SAT or ACT) because there is no record of resident multilingual students provided by the institution. As Harklau (2000) points out, identifying resident multilingual students is not an easy task; and this is the case because higher educational institutions do not collect information about these students’ language backgrounds (p. 36).

The Role of Academic Advisors in Advising Students on First-Year

Composition Placement

The four academic advisor participants said their role in advising students in general were important because some students would definitely take their advice or wanted to be told what courses they should take. As illustrated by one academic advisor:

A lot of students always come to me and say, “you tell me what I am supposed to take,” while some students would say “I expect you to tell me and I will just do it.” (Megan, M&S advisor)

For their role in advising students on English placement, the participants indicated that all steps of advising were taken to ensure that multilingual students were in appropriate writing courses and to encourage them to feel good about their English placement. Importantly, the academic advisor participants helped multilingual students to understand why they needed to be in a particular course.

Three academic advisors reflected on their English placement advising:

Multilingual students do not know what English classes they need to take because they are new. Our roles are to guide them to take classes that are appropriate for their academic level. (Keith, BA advisor)

Incoming undergraduate students do not necessarily know what English classes they should take. We [academic advisors] just make sure that they are in appropriate classes. (Elaine, ECON advisor)

It is important for us to ensure that students are moving forward. I have to ensure that students be in the right course for them. I also make sure that

students understand that this writing course is the right course for them to be in. They have to feel good about it. (Jerry, EE advisor)

The role of academic advisors also included helping students to understand the placement process. As one advisor explained:

I always tell students that it is not just this is your score and what you need to do. I also encourage students to understand the process why they need to be in a particular class and what they need to do. (Jerry, EE advisor)

How Academic Advisors Advise Students on First-Year Composition

Placement

The academic advisors primarily relied on students' standardized test scores when advising students on what first-year composition courses they should take. This is inline with the ASU Writing Programs' placement policy that decides first-year composition placement based on standardized test scores. Two academic advisors mentioned how they recommended first-year composition placement to their multilingual students:

We begin from their [students'] test scores. That is really what it is. We go by test scores. (Elaine, ECON advisor)

I recommend English course placement to my advisees [using their test scores], and I successfully convince them about the writing course they should take. (Jerry, EE advisor)

Since the ASU Writing Programs uses standardized test scores as a placement method, I was interested in finding out what the academic advisor participants

thought about this means. One academic advisor, who did not believe in test scores, responded to the question:

I am not a big one for standardized tests. I do not believe in standardized testing, to be honest. It does not really measure you real intelligence. It measures how well you take a test. (Elaine, ECON advisor)

Unlike the ECON academic advisor, three academic advisors were advocates of the use of standardized test scores; yet, they realized that test scores were not everything:

Placement testing scores are pretty accurate; they tell people where they need to be. (Jerry, EE advisor)

Test scores are pretty accurate. It is a good guide to where students' level is. (Keith, BA advisor)

I believe that test scores are pretty accurate. (Megan, M&S advisor)

The academic advisor for M&S also explained why she believed test scores were accurate:

I haven't had students who were placed in ENG 107 and said this is so easy and I should have done ENG 101. For students who are placed in WAC 107, I believe it is appropriate. They are glad that they did. And I think it also lowers their anxiety because they know everybody else in the class is learning English as well. Some of them even say I love my English class because I know other people do not speak very well or struggle with the language like I do. (Megan, M&S advisor)

However, the academic advisors realized that test scores did not always measure students' skills. Thus, when advising students about placement, they also looked at English proficiency of students. One advisor shared his advising strategy:

When I advise students on English placement, I consider both test scores and students' English proficiency. I always ask them, "how comfortable are you with English?" For placement, they [students] themselves get to decide but I may guide them one way [mainstream composition] or the other [multilingual composition] depending on their comfort level and what their test scores are. (Keith, BA advisor)

The same advisor commented that students seemed not to have the opportunity to make their own decisions when test scores were used to decide placement:

Sometimes, there is no [placement's] decision if students' test scores are low. WAC 101 or WAC 107 is the only option. This is different if students have high scores; they can have the choice. (Keith, BA advisor)

Another advisor had similar thoughts and explained that:

The use of test scores is very black and white and there is not a lot room for movement. If students do not get placed to one course; they go to the lower level course. And there is really not a lot of flexibility with that. (Megan, M&S advisor)

I was also particularly interested in how the academic advisor participants communicated first-year composition placement to multilingual students.

Generally, the academic advisors recommended that international multilingual students take multilingual composition and resident multilingual students take

mainstream composition. An academic advisor shared how he communicated placement to international multilingual students:

When I have a conversation with students, if they are international students, they have to do the [ENG] 107 in the first semester. They may do the [ENG] 102 in the next semester if they are comfortable with that. We [he and his students] mutually determine that students should do the [ENG] 107 or the WAC 107 based on their test scores. (Jerry, EE advisor)

Another academic advisor mentioned how he communicated placement to resident multilingual students.

I would first try to get to know if students graduated from a U.S. high school and I recommend that they take ENG 101 depending on the SAT or ACT scores they have. (Keith, BA advisor)

Unlike these two academic advisors, the ECON advisor said she did not really advise students on first-year composition placement because placement at ASU is decided by test scores. “That is the criterion at ASU,” Elaine insisted. Elaine said if students needed help with placement or wanted to switch classes, she referred them to the Writing Programs office.

Issues related to the Accuplacer test were also raised regarding how the academic advisors communicated first-year composition placement to their advisees. It was expected that information about the Accuplacer test be distributed to all students. What I found from interviews with the academic advisor participants was that two academic advisor informed students about this placement test while one academic advisor preferred not to do so unless students

asked. The two academic advisors reported on how they communicated the Accuplacer test to students:

I recommend that students take the Accuplacer test if they do not want to be placed in WAC 101 or WAC 107. (Keith, BA advisor)

For a student who is placed in WAC 107, I tell him/her to take the Accuplacer test to prove if they want to be in ENG 107. (Jerry, EE advisor)

While Keith and Jerry referred the Accuplacer test to their students, Elaine never wished to introduce it to her students. “I have to admit that even as an advisor, I do not like brining it [the Accuplacer test] up unless I have a student saying, ‘why am I in WAC 107? I should be in a higher-level class,’” Elaine said. She also explained that:

For students who are not happy with this placement [WAC 107], they have to voice it to me. Unless, students actually come to me and say something like I cannot believe I am in WAC 107. Then, I tell them to contact the University Testing and Scanning Services for the Accuplacer test. (Elaine, ECON advisor)

She continued:

If they do not question, I am not going to go out of my way to tell them about the Accuplacer test. I have no reason to. If they are placed in a certain level, I am not going to go upfront and tell them to do something else. Why am I gonna talk about it with them? (Elaine, ECON advisor)

Furthermore, Elaine pointed out that many international multilingual students were not aware of the Accuplacer test because advisors did not usually inform them about this test. As a result, Elaine believed that international multilingual students “proceed with whatever TOEFL scores tell them to take.”

As discussed in Chapter 4, the majority of multilingual student participants did not necessarily know about all available placement options in the Writing Programs. According to the multilingual student participants, they tended to know only the option of course they would be taking; they were not informed about other available placement options. As the finding in this chapter show, the academic advisor participants said they knew about all available placement options in the Writing Programs and were able to identify which course fell into a mainstream or multilingual track. Yet, the academic advisor participants informed their advisees about the only option the students should take. This is evident when both Jerry and Keith pointed out that they recommended ENG 107 and ENG 108 to international multilingual students and ENG 101 and ENG 102 to resident multilingual students. As Jerry mentioned, “ENG 107 is for international students.” The academic advisors did not inform students about other available placement options unless students raised questions about the options they had; yet, this was unlikely to happen. Megan confirmed that “international students for the first semester do not ask a lot of questions, especially not about English.”

One common feature of academic advising pattern observed was that the academic advisors did not spend much time discussing first-year composition placement with students. The academic advisor participants focused more on

students' required major courses. One of the main reasons of why academic advisors did not spend much time discussing first-year composition with students was explained by one academic advisor:

When students first come in for their first semester, we are getting them oriented [to] the university and degree requirements and how to interpret what is required. We must properly orient them to how to access and use these tools more than discussing specific course choices in some respect.
(Megan, M&S advisor)

The same academic advisor described why she did not spend a lot of time advising her M&S students about first-year composition placement:

Being math majors, it [English] seems to be an afterthought to them. They do not really... I don't say 'care.' But, where they [are] place [d] in English does not matter to them as much as whether or not in calculus versus pre-calculus. Their focus is on what math, computer, physics, and chemistry classes they are going to take. For English...oh yeah I have to take it because the university requires but I do not really care where I [am] place [d]. English is their necessary evil. It rarely comes up. (Megan, M&S advisor)

It is evident that the four academic advisors were aware that first-year English placement existed and they realized what placement options were available in the ASU Writing Programs. Yet, they lacked an accurate understanding of first-year composition placement. They tended to advise international multilingual students to take ENG 107 and ENG 108. For resident multilingual students, they

recommended taking ENG 101 and ENG 102. This leads to an enrollment pattern: International multilingual students take multilingual composition sections and resident multilingual students enroll in mainstream composition sections. In fact, both groups of multilingual students are able to enroll in any options of first-year writing courses if their test scores meet the requirement of an option they want to take. In addition, the advisors did not inform students about all available placement options that are available in the Writing Programs. They only informed about the option that students should take.

Since academic advisors play such important role in multilingual students' placement decisions, they need to have a better and accurate understanding of first-year composition placement. For the academic advisor participants, placement is prescriptive and there is no room for movement. In the view of the academic advisor participants, international students should take multilingual composition sections because they have TOEFL or IELTS scores. Resident multilingual students can take mainstream composition sections because they have SAT or ACT scores and graduate from high schools in the United States. I am not suggesting that this enrollment pattern is wrong. Yet, as I draw on the findings of the study, it would be beneficial for multilingual students to be well informed about placement so that they are able to make decisions about a writing course they will take by using information they have. As mentioned before, academic advisors play such important role in multilingual students' placement decisions. Information about placement that comes from academic advisors needs to be accurate and complete and reflects on updates from the Writing Programs.

To conclude, it is necessary that the Writing Programs increase communication with the academic advisors and update placement information and related placement issues. In doing so, students will be able to receive accurate and complete placement information, which can lead them to make well-informed placement decisions. In addition to increase communication with academic advisors, the Writing Programs may want to consider communicating placement information and available placement options to related academic units such as the unit that is in charge of the new student orientation and the international student office.

Writing Teachers and the Placement of Multilingual Writers

In this section, I relate the perspectives of the five writing teacher participants on the placement of multilingual writers in the ASU Writing Programs focusing on their knowledge about first-year composition placement and what they wanted to be informed about placement. I also discuss other related issues, including the participants' awareness of the presence of multilingual students, their perceptions of the needs and support required for multilingual students, and their perceptions of resources needed for working with multilingual students. The writing teacher participants included two full-time instructors, one adjunct instructor, and two graduate teaching assistants, and they were the teachers of some of the focal multilingual students. From now on, when I refer to the ranking of the writing teacher participants, I will use the following abbreviations: FT INSTR for full-time instructor; ADJ INSTR for adjunct instructor; and GTA for graduate teaching assistant.

Teachers' Knowledge about First-Year Composition Placement

Within the first-year writing program at ASU, there was no formal communication about first-year composition placement between the Writing Programs and writing teachers; yet, the writing teacher participants managed to learn and know about placement. While three writing teacher participants came across issues related to placement when they encountered cases of placement from their students, one writing teacher understood that academic advisors had the responsibilities to advise students on placement. Only one writing teacher participant reported that he knew enough about placement in the Writing Programs. The three writing teacher participants recalled their experiences with placement:

I had a student who did not want to take WAC 101 because she did not want to waste her time. She wanted to be in a regular ENG 101. That is when I got more information about test scores and placement. I have known now with my experience, not because of someone told me. They are issues I encountered myself and made me aware of it. This is how has been done. This is what happens. (Anne, GTA)

I found out about placement from one of my students whom I thought was misplaced in my ENG 107. It was a year ago. I had a student in my ENG 107 class and he spoke quite well. After two weeks passed by, his writing was superior. I called him up to my office, asking “what are you doing in this class?” He said, “Well, I did not have a choice. I was told by the advisor that since I was an international student, I had to take ENG 107.”

And I asked about his TOEFL. He said he made a high score. He also had SAT. (Sammy, FT INSTR)

The same FT INSTR further explained that, at that time, it was too late for this student to be in ENG 101. Based on the case of this student, this instructor learned from the Writing Programs office that the student could sign up for ENG 102 in the following semester if he wanted to. Here, the instructor repeated: “That was really how I found out about placement.” However, “I [still] know not a lot about first-year composition placement.” This instructor was uncertain about who was involved in placement decisions so made the following comment: “I am still not sure how much of it has to do with advisors who do not really know what they are doing.”

Another writing teacher participant also learned more about placement in the Writing Programs when she advised one of her students to switch from ENG 108 to ENG 102, even though in the end the student decided to stay in her ENG 108 course:

I thought her English was strong enough [to be in ENG 102]. But, she [the student] said she preferred to be in my class [ENG 108] and thought there might be something that she could benefit from. And I told her she was welcome to stay. (Beverly, ADJ INSTR)

Unlike the three writing teachers, one writing teacher participant said he was comfortable with first-year composition placement:

I know enough to where I feel a student has been for whatever reason. I am aware that the Writing Programs places students into ENG 107 or

ENG 101 or WAC 101 or WAC 107 based on SAT or ACT scores or TOEFL scores. I know where to go and see how to match those things up if needed. (Dan, FT INSTR)

In contrast, another writing teacher participant said he knew “somewhat” about first-year composition placement in the Writing Programs. This writing teacher believed that academic advisors played such important role when it comes to placement:

It seems that, ultimately, a lot of advisors encourage students to be in ENG 107 sections or in sections that are for international students. However, I think, ultimately, it is their [students’] choice whether they wanna [want to] be in ENG 107 or ENG 101. (Ethan, GTA)

When asked whether they were aware of available first-year composition placement options in the Writing Programs, three writing teachers (Dan, Ethan, and Beverly) said they were fully aware of all the options that were made available to students. Each of them was able to recite each option. In contrast, two writing teacher participants seemed not to be certain about placement options. As one writing teacher said:

I am not completely aware of placement options that were available in the Writing Programs. However, I understand that ESL students can try out mainstream sections if they want to. But, I do not know if [ESL/multilingual] students know about them or not [whether they can take mainstream sections]. (Anne, GTA)

In this teacher's opinion, it was academic advisors' responsibilities to inform students about placement options. She said: "I suppose they do go and talk to their advisors." Another teacher, who was also uncertain about placement options, said that "placement options are complex." Thus, she went to the Writing Programs office when she had questions.

The writing teacher participants understood that native English speaking students had more options than multilingual students. As stated by one writing teacher participant, "the Writing Programs has lots of options for American students. However, we have more limited options for international multilingual students." Based on her understanding, the same writing teacher explained:

So, for the American students, we have WAC 101, and ENG 101, 102, and 105. For the international students, we have WAC 107, ENG 107 and ENG 08. And it still feels like a lot of different language skills are getting combined together in those classes. It might not be such an awful thing if there was an ENG 105 equivalent. (Beverly, ADJ INSTR)

However, this ADJ INSTR was not sure how the Writing Programs decided placement for American students whether they belonged in WAC 101 or regular English classes or even advanced ENG 105 classes:

I think there is some confusion about which students are supposed to belong in ENG 107 and ENG 108 classes versus in ENG 101 and ENG 102. The confusion ends up coming from because of the course labels. It [the course title] says for foreign students. Even though students who are residents, their English are not strong. From what I have heard most of

them end up being told they have to take ENG 101 and ENG 102 because only foreign students are allowed in ENG 101 and ENG 108. (Beverly, ADJ INSTR)

During the time of the interview, ENG 107 and ENG 108 course titles were English for Foreign Students. These labels were problematic because they could prevent resident multilingual students from taking those classes. As a result of this, the same ADJ INSTR believed that resident multilingual students ended up being told they had to take ENG 101 and ENG 102 because only foreign students were allowed to take ENG 107 and ENG 108.

As the findings show, the three writing teacher participants realized what placement options were made available to students, even though two of them were not certain what those options were. Based on what was asked about their first-year composition placement knowledge and available placement options, the writing teacher participants wished the Writing Programs to inform them and their fellow writing teachers about issues related to first-year composition placement. I discuss below what placement information the writing teacher participants wanted the Writing Programs to communicate.

What Teachers Wanted to be Informed about First-Year Composition Placement

As mentioned earlier, there was no formal communication about first-year composition placement between the Writing Programs and writing teachers. In this section, the writing teacher participants indicated what and how they wished the Writing Programs to inform them about placement. Basically, the writing

teacher participants (1) wanted to be formally informed about all issues related to placement, (2) wished to know how placement information was communicated to students, and (3) would like the Writing Programs to make placement information available. First of all, they wanted to know what placement is, who decides placement, and how and why students end up being in their classes. As one writing teacher said:

I want to know what is exactly and how these students end up in my classes. It would be nice to know. Who makes decisions? Why are they allowed to be in my class, even though they are not that good? (Ethan, GTA)

This GTA believed that for teachers teaching mainstream composition, knowing placement procedures could help them understand if there were “foreign students in their classes. It does not mean they are all misplaced. Maybe they do belong there.” Another GTA said that “it is important that we make it clear what the placement is and how students end up in their classes.”

Second, the writing teacher participants wished to know what and how multilingual students were informed about first-year composition placement. An ADJ INSTR raised this concern and expressed that “I want to know what kind of advice being provided to students when they go to register. That is why, I make sure I am giving them the same advice.”

Third, the writing teacher participants wanted to see placement information made available to them and specified where they wanted it to be distributed. As one writing teacher participant said:

All writing teachers should be informed about first-year composition placement during fall semester convocations. This could be part of a general meeting in August. They [The Writing Programs] could give a little handout [about placement]. (Sammy, FT INSTR)

Similar to this FT INSTR, a GTA suggested that “information about placement should be included in TA orientations and other meetings held in the Writing Programs.”

Teachers’ Awareness of the Presence of Multilingual Students

Each of the writing teacher participants has had experience in working with multilingual students before teaching first-year composition in the ASU Writing Programs (see Chapter 3 for more details about each participant’s experience in working with multilingual students). Overall, the writing teachers were aware of the presence of multilingual students in their classrooms. What made them aware of multilingual students mainly came from multilingual students’ unique characteristics. The main characteristics that the writing teacher participants used to identify their multilingual students included grammatical and mechanic problems in student writing:

There are more language errors. (Anne, GTA)

They often have mechanical errors, comma splices, fragment, and spelling errors. (Sammy, FT INSTR)

As far as their writing goes, characteristics include lack of articles or misuse of articles, prepositions, and punctuations. (Beverly, ADJ INSTR)

Certainly, there is probably the language that is the most problematic for non-native speakers. Even if they are very good and a capable writer, there is a few articles. (Ethan, GTA)

Some other characteristics of multilingual students when they work in groups or participate in class discussion:

Multilingual students do bring interesting topics because they tend to look at things that are happening all part of the world. (Anne, GTA)

When I put them in groups, occasionally some of them did not stay on task. (Sammy, FT INSTR)

If I am using any kinds of collaborative or cooperative learning activities where students working together in groups, the multilingual students will tend to be very quiet and not assert themselves in conversation. (Dan, FT INSTR)

Because of these unique characteristics of multilingual writers, I was also interested in knowing about the participants' approaches to teaching multilingual students in comparison with their approaches to teaching native English users.

While three writing teachers did not approach multilingual students differently, the rest had different approaches to working with multilingual students. The former group of teachers treated all students the same because they did not want to single out multilingual students. The latter group of teachers preferred to work with multilingual students on a different basis and would be friendlier and open with them. The former group of three writing teachers commented on their approaches to teaching multilingual students:

I do not approach them [multilingual and native English speaking students] differently. For example, I practically try to use the same textbook because it does not make sense for me to do anything differently with multilingual students. Students do need help, and it does not matter if he or she is an international or mainstream student. (Anne, GTA)

I have to be careful when working with multilingual students because sometimes students do not like to stand out, particularly foreign students. So, I am very careful about that. I treat all students the same. When I say I treat all the same, I do in a sense that if they are obviously second language interference then I will do is work with the students [one on one] and encourage them to go to the Writing Center. (Sammy, FT INSTR)

I am concerned about students' sensitivity so try not to make the assumption of students based on their appearance. If I see a student who might look Asian or Hispanic, I am not gonna [going to] say that okay that student might be an international student. (Dan, FT INSTR)

The same FT INSTR described his teaching approach:

I do not approach teaching them [multilingual students] differently from other students. I do not want to think these students have been handicapped. I do not want to go in with any kind of preconceive notion what students can and cannot do until I start getting some of the writing back. (Dan, INSTR)

Meanwhile, the later group of two writing teachers provided rationales for approaching multilingual students differently:

Because multilingual students were not from the same country and same educational background, I would have to deal with each student on a different basis. You cannot really make any assumption about the background and experience of students. (Ethan, INSTR)

I feel like I have to be a little friendlier, intentionally friendlier. Because I need them to know they have someone on their side who wants to help them. And if I am not friendly enough or do not make that open enough to them. I feel like they just sit back and will not ask any question. I have to be really engaging for them to get them to participate. (Beverly, ADJ INSTR)

Teachers' Perceptions of the Needs and Support Required for Multilingual Students

What the writing teacher participants perceived to be the needs and support required for multilingual students was divided into the needs and support in the context of inside of the classroom and outside of the classroom. For the former, more time, attention from teachers, and grammar instruction and feedback were the needs required for multilingual students. For the latter, the Writing Center and students' ability to make use of other available sources were the needs and support required for multilingual students

Inside of Classroom Context. In the context of classroom, the writing teachers perceived time and attention from teachers and grammar instruction to be important for multilingual students. Two writing teachers suggested that multilingual students need more attention from teachers as well as more time to

learn to write in a second language. Sammy explained that in the context of writing classroom, multilingual students often require much more attention. “It takes more time, but I do not resent that. I really do not.” Ethan said teachers should “give them some more time.”

In addition to time and attention from teachers, multilingual students needed more grammar instruction and feedback:

Sometimes, their needs are very much grammatical. However, I do not teach grammar in my writing classes, but I point it out on their papers. I will not mark the points down unless it is very very problematic. It is not really because I am not teaching it. I also try not to judge an essay based on the grammar alone. (Ethan, GTA)

They need more grammar. With my international students, I always include additional instruction over basic verbs or tenses or uses of punctuations. There are just some basic things that students may not be aware of. (Beverly, ADJ INSTR)

Outside of Classroom Context. The support outside of the classroom context that the writing teacher participants perceived to be helpful for multilingual students included the Writing Center, which was mentioned by two writing teachers. As said by one FT INSTR, “the Writing Center is very good in supporting multilingual students.” Another writing teacher participant said when she recommended the Writing Center to her multilingual students:

I always tell them to specifically ask for grammar feedback, though I understand that the Writing Center has the policy that does not focus on

grammar tutoring. We at least should have a place where they can go to and actually give them grammar feedback. I think grammar resources are definitely needed. (Beverly, ADJ INSTR)

In addition to the Writing Center, multilingual students should learn to know how to make use of other available sources such as libraries and online sources. One writing teacher said:

They just need to be aware of these available sources. I think there is a lot available already but they do not know about it. Or even they know about it, they do not understand the merit of it. Students have to be forced to go there. Once they realize the benefit, they will come back. Instructors who often meet with students should encourage them to go out and use those available sources. We need to raise their awareness and make them feel it. (Anne, GTA)

Teachers' Perceptions of Resources Needed in Working with Multilingual Students

The writing teacher participants also specified what they needed in terms of resources when working with multilingual writers. Basically, the four writing teachers wanted to see training and workshops focusing on issues in teaching multilingual writing, except for one writing teacher participant that wanted any resources that could be helpful. The four writing teachers commented on why they and other fellow writing teachers needed to take part in training and workshops:

As a mainstream composition instructor, I believe it would be helpful if the Writing Programs provided some kinds of training or workshop for instructors and teaching assistants. In the past, I did not encounter a lot of training in terms of working with students who are non-native speakers. We are seeing more and more multilingual students, and in order for me to teach multilingual composition, I need to know more about multilingual writers and their writing. It might be something that the Writing Programs should work out. (Dan, FT INSTR)

I think there are a lot of native English writing teachers; they are scared of second language writers. I talked to people who said that “I could never do that. I do not know how to teach it [second language writing].” It is very foreign for them. It will be good to give an explanation of some of the problems and benefits of teaching foreign students. (Ethan, GTA)

Workshops should include issues related to common types of mistakes that multilingual learners made so that teachers can know what is going on with student writing. I think if teachers working with multilingual learners have knowledge about typical types of errors students make, they will be able to look for those and figure out what students are trying to say. I think that would be helpful. (Beverly, ADJ INSTR)

Beverly, also a former GTA in the ASU Writing Programs, also said:

It would be helpful to offer topic suggestions for teachers of non-native English speakers during TA training. Those suggestions should be focused on how to interact with people from different cultures and what the

cultural expectations are. Teachers need to know about these things.

(Beverly, ADJ INSTR)

As a current teaching assistant, Anne suggested that “the Writing Programs include multilingual issues in TA training” because “the ESL part is never covered in TA training.”

All the writing teacher participants indicated that having some kinds of training and workshop focusing on teaching multilingual writing would be helpful for them and other writing teachers in the Writing Programs. They requested for this kind of resources because they realized the continuous growing number of multilingual students in composition classrooms and they needed to be prepared to work with these students.

Conclusion

This chapter related perspectives of the four academic advisors and five writing teachers on the placement of multilingual writers into first-year writing courses in the Writing Programs at ASU. As discussed in the first half of the chapter, academic advisors played such important role in advising multilingual students about first-year composition placement. Yet, what is found in the institutional context of the ASU Writing Programs is that the academic advisors did not provide complete and accurate placement information, including placement options, test score cutoffs, and placement procedures, to multilingual students. The academic advisors tended not to inform multilingual students about available placement options in the Writing Programs. They would rather tell multilingual students the only options they should take such as ENG 107 and

ENG 108, which they thought were designed for international multilingual students. As a result, there is an enrollment pattern that has become usual: International multilingual students take multilingual composition sections and resident multilingual students take mainstream composition sections. There is nothing wrong with this enrollment pattern. Yet, for multilingual writers to be able to make well-informed placement decisions, they need to be informed about all options they have as well as advantages and disadvantages of taking each option. Thus, it is essential that academic advisors realize that distributing accurate and complete placement information to multilingual students is crucial because students do need this information as they make decisions about placement into mainstream or multilingual composition courses. However, what is found in the context of this study is that the academic advisor participants have not done their best job in terms of advising multilingual students about first-year composition placement. There needs to be improvement in accuracy and completeness of first-year composition placement information given during one on one academic advising sessions and group advising sessions during the new student orientation.

Within the Writing Programs itself, there was no formal communication about first-year composition placement and placement procedures between the Writing Programs and writing teachers. The writing teacher participants came to know and learn about first-year composition placement from their experience when they had to encounter cases of placement of their students. As a result, the writing teacher participants wanted to see placement information made available

in the Writing Programs and they believed that placement was the topic that all writing teachers should be informed. As the writing teacher participants indicated, they wanted to know what placement is, who gets to decide placement, and how and why students end up being in their classes. What the writing teacher participants needed to be informed about placement made a lot of sense. Knowing this information would definitely help writing teachers understand the dynamics of placement. In addition, it could let writing teachers know how and what they should be part of placement decisions. In other words, when multilingual students need help from writing teachers in terms of placement, they will be able to guide or advise students on placement procedures, placement options, and other related issues.

Building on what is found in the institutional context of the first-year writing program at ASU, I argue for improving first-year composition placement communication with academic advisors, writing teachers, and multilingual students. Fortunately, an appointment of the Director of Second Language Writing has helped make my argument for improving such communication come true. The Director of Second Language Writing is in charge of multilingual composition (WAC 107, ENG 107, and ENG 108) as well as the curriculum. He works with the Director of Writing Programs by providing information about how best to address the needs of multilingual students, including both international and resident or citizen students. He also works with teachers who teach multilingual composition by providing resources and professional workshops for them.

Occasionally, he works with mainstream teachers who have multilingual students in their classes. He also answers placement questions from students.

I have periodically reported on results of and recommendations from my study to the Director of Second Language Writing. There are various changes to placement practices for multilingual students that are currently underway. First, the Writing Programs, led by the Director of Second Language Writing, has proposed new course titles and descriptions of WAC 107, ENG 107, and ENG 108 so that multilingual students can be placed in a more or less appropriate section. The current course titles and descriptions have caused the misplacement of multilingual writers, especially resident multilingual writers. During the time of writing dissertation (Spring 2012), a proposal is under consideration by the English Department Undergraduate Curriculum Committee. By the time this dissertation is complete, the Writing Programs would probably be able to implement the proposed course titles and descriptions. Second, the Writing Programs is increasing direct communication about placement to academic advisors and related academic offices, including the new student orientation and International Students and Scholars Office (ISSO). Third, the Writing Programs is communicating placement to writing teachers in the program by providing them the most current information about placement.

In communicating information about placement to multilingual students, the Writing Programs' website is the main source of information. In the past, there was the inaccuracy of test score information, which could lead students to misunderstand about the options they could have. For example, resident

multilingual students would not think to place themselves in WAC 107 or ENG 107 because these two options required TOEFL scores. Similarly, international multilingual students thought they were not allowed to take ENG 101 or ENG 102 and that they automatically enrolled in ENG 107 and ENG 108 because they did not have SAT or ACT scores in order to be placed in those sections. Currently, the website has been updated and information about test scores is corrected. Multilingual students can take any options as long as they have any test scores that meet the requirement of that option. When discrepancies of test scores occur, particularly with students who are placed in WAC 107, they are asked to write an email to the Director of Second Language Writing explaining why WAC 107 is not appropriate for their level and why they need to be in ENG 107. Multilingual students get to know about this process on the first day of classes by their WAC 107 instructors who distribute instruction to them. During the beginning of Fall 2011, about five to six students wrote an email letters of the Director of Second Language Writing.

In short, if the Writing Programs continues to communicate and update information about placement to academic advisors, writing teachers, and multilingual students, placement will no longer be complex as it seems.

CHAPTER 6

STUDENT AGENCY AND PLACEMENT DECISIONS: A DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND FUTURE RESEARCH

In this yearlong study, I investigated the role of agency in multilingual students' placement decisions in the ASU Writing Programs where various placement options are made available to students, including developmental, regular, and advanced first-year composition, for both mainstream and multilingual tracks. Agency is defined as the capacity to act or not to act contingent upon various conditions. The goal is to demonstrate how student agency can inform the overall programmatic placement decisions, which can lead to more effective placement practices for multilingual writers who are regularly present in U.S. college composition programs.

Major findings show that the multilingual writers relied on various sources of information when they decided to take mainstream or multilingual first-year composition courses. These sources of information included advisors' recommendations, other students' past experience in taking first-year composition, the new student orientation, and other sources that provide placement related information. I consider information about placement from these various sources to be a condition for agency. The unique placement practice in the ASU Writing Programs is that students have freedom to choose writing courses from various options that are made available to them. As such, the freedom to choose writing courses is another condition for agency. In short, both the freedom to choose writing courses and information about placement from various sources

are conditions for agency. The findings indicate that when conditions for agency were appropriate, the multilingual students were able to negotiate their placement, choose to accept or deny their original placement, self-assess as they made decisions about placement, plan on placement, question about placement, and make decisions as they decided to take mainstream or multilingual composition courses. Building on these findings, I argue that, for multilingual writers to have the capacity to decide to take mainstream or multilingual composition courses, conditions for agency need to be made available to students.

Other findings indicate that the academic advisors partially informed multilingual students about first-year composition placement and placement options. As the results in Chapter 5 show, the academic advisor participants did not provide accurate and complete information about placement to the multilingual students. This affected the way the multilingual students decided to take mainstream or multilingual composition courses—when advisors recommended that international students take ENG 107 and ENG 108 because they had TOEFL or IELTS scores and that resident multilingual students take ENG 101 and ENG 102 because they graduated from a U.S. high school and had SAT or ACT scores. Thus, there is an enrollment pattern that has become common in the context of this writing program: international multilingual students tend to take multilingual composition while resident students tend to enroll in mainstream composition. Within the Writing Programs itself, there was no formal communication about available placement options and placement procedures between the Writing Programs and writing teachers. The findings on this part

show that the writing teacher participants wished the Writing Programs to inform them and other fellow writing teachers about placement such as what placement is, who gets to decide placement, and what and how students end up being in their classes. The writing teachers also requested for training and workshops focusing on issues in teaching multilingual writers so that they can be prepared to teach these students as the writing teachers realized the continuing growing number of multilingual students in their classrooms. Based on these results, I argue the case for improving first-year composition placement communication with academic advisors, writing teachers, and multilingual students in order for multilingual students to be able to make well-informed placement decisions. In addition to increase such communication, I recommend communicating first-year composition placement information to related academic units such as the new student orientation and the International Students and Scholars Office (ISSO).

Student Agency and Placement Decisions: A Discussion

As shown in the placement literature, directed self-placement (DSP) (Royer & Gilles, 1998) and the Writer's Profile (Lewiecki-Wilson et al., 2000) are probably considered the two placement methods that allow student agency, to differing degree. Clearly, conditions for agency are built into the DSP system; these conditions include providing options to students, explaining to students the differences between options as well as their advantages and disadvantages, providing students with questions to assess their own writing skills and abilities, and allowing students to choose which writing course that is most appropriate to them (Royer & Gilles, 1998). Meanwhile, the Writer's Profile to some extent

grants student agency. In the Writer's Profile system, students include various types of writing, including lists, notes, drafts, revision, and final drafts. Then, they self-reflect on their writing based on questions asked. Later, writing teachers evaluate the profiles and recommend placement to students. Both DSP and the Writer's Profile are good systems; yet, it does not mean that agency does not exist in other placement methods such as the use of standardized test scores.

The current study shows that student agency does exist in the context of the writing program that uses standardized test scores as a placement method; and student agency is found essential as the multilingual students made the decisions about placement into mainstream or multilingual composition courses. I believe that each individual multilingual student demonstrates the case for students' voices in placement decisions, particularly in a placement method that conditions for agency are not built in to the system. The use of standardized test scores, like placement essays and portfolios, does not seem to allow room for student agency; this is can be explained as follows: When institutions use standardized test scores, placement essays, and portfolios, they use scores to determine placement for students and that, as it has been believed, students do not have to decide which writing course they should take. Yet, based on what is found in the study, I argue that even though conditions for agency are not built in to this type of placement method, multilingual students did exercise agency when they made decisions about placement. I should note that the conditions for agency in the context of this study include the freedom to choose writing courses and placement information; these conditions need to be made available to multilingual students so that they

can use them while a placement decision process is taking place. I should also note that since the ASU Writing Programs offers a small number (eight to nine sections) of multilingual composition course in each semester, the availability of seats in these sections is another factor that can affect the way multilingual students choose to enroll in which section of first-year composition.

Since this study makes the case for student agency in the use of standardized test scores as a placement method, I hope it helps us look at standardized test scores in a different perspective, a more constructive way. I believe what is found in the study can be useful to other writing programs where standardized test scores is used as a placement method and various placement options are made available to students. One of the most practical strategies that WPAs would probably consider implementing in their writing programs is to inform students about the options students have and how taking each option is different from one another as well as advantages and disadvantages from taking each option. Later, the decisions to take which writing course may be left to students after in consultation with WPAs, academic advisors, and writing instructors.

When the choice is left to students, the international multilingual student participants preferred to enroll in multilingual sections. Their preferences for being in multilingual sections resonate with preferences of ESL and multilingual students in previous studies (Braine, 1996; Costino & Hyon, 2007; Matsuda & Silva, 1999). ESL students (international and unspecified resident students) in Braine's study preferred to enroll in ESL sections because they felt "comfortable

or at ease” (1996, p. 97) when working with other non-native speaking peers who also had accents, among others. For example, they did not have to be too cautious when speaking in classes because everyone else also had an accent. Like ESL students in Braine’s study, Afia was also concerned about her accent if she had to be in classes with native English speakers. As she once mentioned: “I like this class [ENG 107] because most of the students are not native English Americans. They are like me, so they speak like me, I do not feel shy when I speak to them.” What is found with the case of Afia echoes with what seven multilingual students in the study by Costino and Hyon (2007) felt about preferring in multilingual sections; these students considered their classmates as someone who were “still-developing English language” (p. 75) users, international, and multilingual like them.

It is evident from this study that the resident multilingual student participants preferred to be in mainstream sections. In the context of this study, it can be explained that two resident multilingual students (Anna and Marcos) decided to take ENG 101 in the first semester because they did not know other available placement options and did not know they could take multilingual composition. They assumed that ENG 101 was their only option. During the new student orientation, both of them were not informed about multilingual composition options. What they were informed was that if they did not take ENG 101 from a high school, they should enroll in ENG 101 in the first semester and ENG 102 in the second semester. It is worth noting that Ana’s and Marcos’ s decisions to take mainstream composition were different from other resident

multilingual students (Chiang & Schmida, 1999; Costino & Hyon, 2007) who did not want to be enrolled in ESL or multilingual sections because they seemed not to know what the label ESL was and they did not associate this label with them because they grew up speaking English; they considered themselves to be native English speakers, even though they used their native language at home with parents.

In sum, this study indicates that, in a placement method where conditions for agency are not built into the system, multilingual students do have the capacity to choose mainstream or multilingual composition courses because they have the freedom to choose writing courses and access to placement information from various sources. Specifically, when conditions for agency are appropriate, multilingual students are able to negotiate, accept, self-assess, plan, question, and make decisions as they decide to take a first-year writing course. Nevertheless, it should be noted that this study relied primarily on direct experience of multilingual students with first-year composition placement as well as perspectives of academic advisors and writing teachers at one institution during a single year. Obviously, similar studies at other institutions as well as an observation of academic advising sessions are needed before generalizations can be drawn. Notwithstanding its limitations, what is found in this study is useful to WPAs in terms of: (1) how student agency can inform the overall programmatic placement decisions; (2) why communicating first-year composition placement with academic advisors, writing teachers, multilingual students, and other related

academic units needs to be improved; and (3) why we should leave the choice to students.

Agency: A Theoretical Discussion

Drawing on what is found in this study, I propose an alternative definition of agency as follows: Agency is the capacity to act or not to act contingent upon various conditions. My definition of agency, like the ones by applied linguist van Lier (2009) and anthropologist Ahearn (2001), involves an act. A contribution of my definition of agency to existing theories of agency is that it provides an alternative approach that considers conditions to make agency possible. Conditions for agency include the freedom to choose writing courses and placement information that is distributed through various sources: academic advisors' recommendations, other students' past experience in taking first-year composition, the new student orientation, and other sources that provide placement related information such as an online freshman orientation and a major map. Even though these conditions for agency are specific to placement practices, these conditions could be referred to something else in other situations. Young (2008), based on her study of safe sex discourse, suggests questioning, negotiation, choice, and evaluation as fundamental properties of agency. These properties of agency, for others (see Callinicos, 1988, p. 236; Flannery, 1991, p. 702), are considered resources for agency. In contrast with these scholars, I propose negotiating, choosing to accept or deny, self-assessing, planning, questioning, and making decisions as acts of agency. These acts of agency will be possible when conditions for agency are optimal.

Implications for WPAs

What I found in this study is that when conditions for agency were appropriate, the focal multilingual students were able to negotiate, accept or deny placement, self-assess, question, plan, and make decisions as they decided to take mainstream or multilingual composition courses. I believe the findings can usefully inform placement practices for multilingual writers. Primarily, writing programs may want to consider allowing the placement procedures that can maximize student agency. To do so, there needs to be improvement to conditions for agency. Building on the results of the study, I discuss three possible ways to improve conditions for agency. First, it would be highly beneficial to multilingual students when writing programs could provide various options of writing courses. As Silva (1994) suggests, for multilingual students, the most constructive way is to provide as many placement options as possible. Those options may include, but not limited to, mainstreaming, basic writing, ESL/multilingual writing, and cross-cultural composition (see more details in Chapter 2 and in Silva, 1994). Each option has its own advantages and disadvantages and that WPAs are encouraged to disseminate this information to multilingual students. Braine (1996) also advocates providing options and suggests that multilingual students should not be “compelled to enroll in ESL or mainstream classes, the choice should be left to the students,” (p. 103). Like Braine, I agree that students are the ones who get to decide which choice they want to take after being informed about all the options they have and what potential advantages and disadvantages from taking each

option are. In essence, well-informed placement decisions are crucial for multilingual students.

Second, in order to ensure that those who are involved in placement decisions receive complete information about placement, WPAs may consider making placement related information more readily available. This information may include, but not limited to, placement options, test score cutoffs, and placement procedures. The availability of placement information can be in the form of handouts, sheets, or brochures that contain information about placement that ones can access easily and easy to read and understand. One way to make information about placement more readily available is to provide this information on a website and periodically update it. Another possible way is to distribute placement information during the new student orientation; this can be in the form of representatives from writing programs briefly presents information about placement during new student orientation sessions. If this way is not practical, WPAs may want to provide a brochure that contains information about placement and include it in a packet that will be distributed to students during the new student orientation. The reason why I specifically believe distributing placement information during the new student orientation is practical because my interviews with Marcos and Ana raise a concern that not all students necessarily receive complete and accurate placement information during the new student orientation. I also believe distributing brochures containing placement information to academic advisors could help them provide accurate and complete information to multilingual students.

Third, in order to successfully communicate with academic advisors, writing teachers, and multilingual students, WPAs may want to consider including the following details, among others: What to address and when, where, and how to communicate placement information to each group of audience. For academic advisors, as mentioned earlier, providing them a factsheet or a brochure that contains all related placement information that they need to know seems to be a practical idea. When academic advisors have a better understanding about placement, I believe they will be able to provide accurate and complete placement information to multilingual students. For writing teachers, having formal communication about placement with them seems to be one of the best ways to go about. This can be in the form of meeting, training, or workshop so that writing teachers can understand more about placement procedures in their writing programs. In case students need help from writing teachers regarding placement, writing teachers can provide useful information to students. For multilingual students, providing placement information on a website that details options of writing courses, test score cutoffs and course placement, and brief descriptions of each course can help them aware of placement. In addition to the website, the new student orientation (this applies to resident multilingual students) is a place where information about placement can be distributed. It can be in the form of representatives from writing programs give a brief speech about placement during academic enrollment sessions. If this way could not be possible, distributing a brochure that contains placement information to students would help. For international multilingual students, information about placement can be mailed

with other admissions information to them so that they understand what English placement is and what options they have, for instance. Another possible means to distribute placement information to international multilingual students is to distribute a brochure that contains placement information to them during the orientation held by an office of international students. All in all, it is essential that academic advisors, writing teachers, and multilingual students receive accurate and complete placement information.

In addition to improving conditions for agency, this institutional case study provides another implication for placement, which is directly related to the use of labels in course titles and descriptions. As discussed in Chapter 5, the labels, such as “foreign” or “international” students used in the course titles for WAC 107, ENG 107, and ENG 108 have caused the misplacement of multilingual writers, particularly resident students. The use of labels has negative connotation, as explained by Costino and Hyon (2007), and “has been situated within discourse of marginalization and powerlessness” (p. 77). Fortunately, the ASU Writing Programs has found its own way to deal with this challenge. As I mentioned in Chapter 5, the Writing Programs has submitted a proposal to change current course titles and descriptions for all multilingual composition sections. Changes outlined in the proposal include proposed new titles and descriptions of WAC 107, ENG 107, and ENG 108 so that multilingual students can be placed in a more or less appropriate section. To illustrate, the proposed course title for WAC 107 is Introduction to Academic Writing, as opposed to the current one, which is Introduction to Academic Writing for International Students. The proposed course

title for ENG 107 and ENG 108 is First-Year Composition, as opposed to the current one, which is English for Foreign Students. The proposed titles are identical to mainstream sections (WAC 101, ENG 101, and ENG 102). For the course descriptions, two changes will be made. First, the phrase “Foreign students” will be removed. Second, pre-requisite test scores, including TOEFL, which now include computer-based (CBT) and Internet-based (iBT) tests, will be updated as well as SAT, ACT, and Accuplacer Test scores. In doing so, resident multilingual students will not be precluded from enrolling in ENG 107 (See Appendix N for Course Titles and Description Changes).

In the context of other writing programs, it might be a good idea to conduct an institutional survey of multilingual students to examine their perceptions of labels. In doing so, WPAs will be able to have a better understanding of what multilingual students think about labels and how those labels affect their placement decisions. What is obtained from a survey would be useful in terms of course title and description modification as well as instruction and curriculum design and development. For placement, it is probably the most efficient if it can serve the needs of multilingual students in local contexts. Solutions work at one institution may not work at other institutions because multilingual students are different “from individual to individual and from institution to institution” (Matsuda, 1999, p. 717; 2008). With this in mind, I advocate conducting institutional studies to learn more about students and teachers in our programs so that adjustments can be made based on their needs (Matsuda, 2008).

Future Research

In an attempt to gain a better understanding of the placement practices of multilingual writers in college composition programs, I, in collaboration with my co-researcher, am conducting a survey that collects data from WPAs and writing teachers from various colleges and universities in the United States. The goal of the project is to examine U.S. college composition programs' placement practices of multilingual writers in order to generate information that can help improve the quality of placement practices. Particularly, the project seeks to investigate: (1) What placement options are available for multilingual writers in college composition programs; (2) what the placement procedures look like; (3) to what extent multilingual students are placed in mainstream composition courses; and (4) and whether multilingual students' needs are served in those courses. In addition to the nationwide survey, I plan to conduct follow-up institutional case studies of first-year writing programs that participate in the survey.

Another area of research on placement practices of multilingual students that can be pursued is an observation of academic advising sessions. This can be done during one on one academic advising sessions in offices of advisors or group academic advising sessions during the new student orientation. This type of research would help us have insights into what goes on during academic sessions, particularly what and how placement information is distributed to multilingual students.

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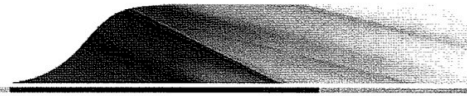
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APPENDIX A
IRB APPROVAL



Office of Research Integrity and Assurance

To: Paul Matsuda
LL

fr **From:** Mark Roosa, Chair *DR*
Soc Beh IRB

Date: 07/07/2010

Committee Action: Exemption Granted

IRB Action Date: 07/07/2010

IRB Protocol #: 1007005295

Study Title: Examining Second Language Writers' Placement Decisions

The above-referenced protocol is considered exempt after review by the Institutional Review Board pursuant to Federal regulations, 45 CFR Part 46.101(b)(2).

This part of the federal regulations requires that the information be recorded by investigators in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects. It is necessary that the information obtained not be such that if disclosed outside the research, it could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability, or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

You should retain a copy of this letter for your records.

Note: The study title has been changed from "Examining Second Language Writers' Placement Decisions" to "Investigating Agency in Multilingual Writers' Placement Decisions: A Case Study of The Writing Programs at Arizona State University." The change has been approved by the Office of Research Integrity and Assurance.

APPENDIX B

MAJOR MAP

Major Map



Major Map: Mathematics – Bachelor of Science (B.S.) College of Liberal Arts and Sciences | Catalog Year: 2010-2011

Course Subject and Title <i>(Courses in bold/shading are critical)</i>	Hrs.	Upper Division	Completed Transfer Pathway:		Minimum Grade if Required	Completed General Education:		Additional Critical Requirement Notes
			<input type="checkbox"/> MAPP Course/Grade	<input type="checkbox"/> TAG Course/Grade		<input type="checkbox"/> ATP Course/Grade	<input type="checkbox"/> None	
TERM ONE: 0-15 CREDIT HOURS								
MAT 270: Calculus with Analytic Geometry I (MA)	4	<input type="checkbox"/>			Grade of C			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An SAT, ACT, Accuplacer, or TOEFL score determines placement into first-year composition courses • ASU Math Placement Exam score determines placement in Mathematics course • Minimum cumulative 2.80 GPA in all critical courses • Minimum grade of C required in all MAT and STP classes; grade of B or better strongly correlated with timely graduation • All freshmen must pass an academic success course and therefore must enroll in an Academic Success Cluster and/or a First-Year Seminar
ENG 101 and 102: First-Year Composition OR ENG 107 and 108: English for Foreign Students OR ENG 105: Advanced First-Year Composition	3	<input type="checkbox"/>			Grade of C			
General Elective	3	<input type="checkbox"/>						
General Elective	3	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Academic Success Class or First Year Seminar	1	<input type="checkbox"/>						
TERM TWO: 16-30 CREDIT HOURS								
<i>Complete 1 course from:</i>								
CSE 100: Principles of Programming with C++ (CS) OR CSE 110: Principles of Programming with Java (CS)	3	<input type="checkbox"/>			Grade of C			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum cumulative 2.80 GPA in all critical courses • Minimum grade of C required in all MAT and STP classes; grade of B or better strongly correlated with timely graduation
MAT 271: Calculus with Analytic Geometry II	4	<input type="checkbox"/>			Grade of C			
ENG 101 or 102: First-Year Composition OR ENG 105: Advanced First-Year Composition OR ENG 107 or 108: English for Foreign Students	3	<input type="checkbox"/>			Grade of C			
Social & Behavioral Science AND Cultural Diversity in the US (C), Global Awareness (G) OR Historical Awareness (H)	3	<input type="checkbox"/>						
General Elective	3	<input type="checkbox"/>						
TERM THREE: 31-45 CREDIT HOURS								
MAT 272: Calculus with Analytic Geometry III	4	<input type="checkbox"/>			Grade of C			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First-year composition completed • Minimum cumulative 2.80 GPA in all critical courses • Minimum grade of C required in all MAT and STP classes; grade of B or better strongly correlated with timely graduation
CSE 205: Object Oriented Programming and Data Structures	3	<input type="checkbox"/>			Grade of C			
Literacy and Critical Inquiry (L)	3	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Humanities, Fine Arts & Design (HU) AND Cultural Diversity in the US (C), Global Awareness (G) OR Historical Awareness (H)	3	<input type="checkbox"/>						
General Elective	3	<input type="checkbox"/>						
TERM FOUR: 46-60 CREDIT HOURS								
MAT 300: Mathematical Structures (L)	3	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			Grade of C			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum cumulative 2.80 GPA in all critical courses • Minimum grade of C required in all MAT and STP classes; grade of B or better strongly correlated with timely graduation • PHY 121/122 (SQ) advised for Natural Sciences semester 4, also fulfills related field
MAT 342: Linear Algebra OR MAT 343: Applied Linear Algebra	3	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			Grade of C			
Social & Behavioral Science (SB)	3	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Natural Science Quantitative (SQ)	4	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Upper division CLAS Science and Society	3	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			Grade of C			
TERM FIVE: 61-75 CREDIT HOURS								
MAT 371: Advanced Calculus I	3	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			Grade of C			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum grade of C required in all MAT and STP classes; grade of B or better strongly correlated with timely graduation
MAT or STP (additional) course	3	<input type="checkbox"/>			Grade of C			
Natural Science Quantitative (SQ) or General (SG)	4	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Upper division Humanities, Fine Arts & Design (HU)	3	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>						
Upper division general elective	3	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>						
TERM SIX: 76-90 CREDIT HOURS								
Upper division MAT or STP (depth) course	3	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			Grade of C			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum grade of C required in all MAT and STP classes; grade of B or better strongly correlated with timely graduation
MAT or STP (additional) course	3	<input type="checkbox"/>			Grade of C			
Upper division Humanities, Fine Arts & Design (HU) OR Social & Behavioral Science AND Cultural Diversity in the US (C), Global Awareness (G) OR Historical Awareness (H)	3	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>						
Upper division Related Field course	3	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			Grade of C			
Upper division CLAS Science and Society	3	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			Grade of C			
TERM SEVEN: 91-105 CREDIT HOURS								
Upper division MAT/STP (depth) course	3	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			Grade of C			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum grade of C required in all MAT and STP classes; grade of B or better strongly correlated with timely graduation
Upper division MAT/STP (advanced) course	3	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			Grade of C			
Upper division Related Field	3	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			Grade of C			
General Elective	3	<input type="checkbox"/>						
General Elective	3	<input type="checkbox"/>						
TERM EIGHT: 106-120 CREDIT HOURS								
Upper division MAT/STP (advanced) course	3	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			Grade of C			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum grade of C required in all MAT and STP classes; grade of B or better strongly correlated with timely graduation
Upper division MAT/STP (additional) course	3	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			Grade of C			
General Elective	3	<input type="checkbox"/>						
General Elective	3	<input type="checkbox"/>						
General Elective	3	<input type="checkbox"/>						

APPENDIX C
SAMPLING STRATEGY

Sampling Strategy

From 165 sections of ENG 101 (excluding West, Polytechnic, and Downtown campuses) that were made available in Fall 2010 on Tempe campus, I randomly selected twenty sections, using an Excel function called RANDBETWEEN (see more details next page). My goal was to get six multilingual students (three international and three U.S. resident non-native speaking students) from these mainstream sections.

Descriptions for RANDBETWEEN (see details next page):

Columns A-D show how I randomly selected 20 sections.

Column G shows the random result, presenting the 20 sections that an email invitation was sent to students in those sections.

Column H shows the estimated number of L2 students (international and U.S. resident) in those randomly selected sections. The number is based on our previous study, which demonstrated that mainstream sections enrolled one or more multilingual writers.

Column I shows the probability that students in those sections will participate in the interview.

Column J shows the number of students who will participate in the interview.

Columns L-W show how I assessed the probability of student participation from the 20 sections. There are three sets of the random data, which demonstrate the number of students who will participate in the interview. From the first set of the data, the probability that students will participate in the interview is: 8.39 (M 28) to 10.41 (O 28) students. From the second set of the data, the probability is: 9.45 (Q28) to 11.55 (S 28) students. From the last set of the data, the probability is: 7.72 (U 28) to 9.78 (W 28) students. Mean of the mean is shown in Columns Y, Z, and AA. The probability of the number of students will be 9.55 ± 2.31 students at the confidence level of 95.45%. It means that the number of students who will participate in the interview will range from 7.24 students to 11.86 students.

For the multilingual composition track, 9 sections of ENG 107 were offered. I included all the sections in order to recruit other 6 multilingual students (3 internationals and 3 U.S. residents)

APPENDIX D
STUDENT INTERVIEW GUIDE

Student Interview Guide

Interview I

1. How did you choose to enroll in this writing class? (How did you end up in ENG 101/ENG 107?)
2. Did you know that there are different types of first-year composition courses for you to choose from?
3. Where did you get the information about first-year composition?
4. What did your academic adviser tell you about first-year composition?
5. How did your academic adviser advise you on first-year composition and placement options?
6. Did your academic adviser tell you directly which writing course you should take?
7. Tell me about your overall impression of your current writing class.
8. What are the things that you like and do not like about taking this class?
9. What conversation do you have with your teacher about you being in his/her class?
10. Do you have any other thoughts you would like to share?

Interview II

1. Tell me about your second semester writing class? What class are you taking?
2. Why did you decide to enroll in ENG 102 or ENG 108 in Spring 2011?
3. What were other factors for you to switch the section or continue to stay in the same track of first-year composition?
4. How did your academic adviser advice you on the second semester of first-year composition?
5. How would you describe your experience in working with your classmates in your writing class?
6. What are the best parts of being in the class with native English speaking students?
7. What are the best parts of being in class with non-native English speaking students?
8. What are the disadvantages of taking the writing classes with native English speaking students?
9. What are the disadvantages of taking the writing classes with non-native English speaking students?
10. How would you describe your interaction with your teacher?
11. How would you describe your interaction with native English speaking classmates?
12. How would you describe your interaction with other students?
13. Do you have any other thoughts you would like to share?

Interview III

1. How is your class going?
2. Tell me about your experience in taking in this current writing class (ENG 102 or ENG 108).
3. How does it compare to your previous writing class in the fall semester of 2010?
4. What are differences and similarities between taking first-year writing courses in the fall and spring semesters?
5. How do you feel about your performance in this writing class?
6. How would you describe your interaction with your teacher?
7. How would you describe your interaction with your classmates?
8. Do you have any other thoughts you would like to share?

Interview IV

1. I want you to think back to the first semester when you got here and you had to decide to choose/take a first-year writing class at ASU. Can you tell me about what was going on? Where did you get some help on this?
2. Then, you had to register to a second semester writing class, was the process that you had to deal with easier? Can you tell me about it?
3. Are you satisfied with your decisions about choosing first-year writing courses at ASU? Please explain.
4. Tell me about your experience in the two writing classes you have taken at ASU?
5. If you could start over your first two semesters again, would you take the same writing courses? Why?
6. How much did your academic adviser help you decide about which first-year writing course you should take?
7. How much did your writing teacher affect your placement decisions?
8. What information has been useful for you when you decided to register for first-year writing courses at ASU?
9. What would you recommend new students about how to choose a first-year writing course at ASU?
10. Do you have recommendations for the Writing Programs in helping you decide to take first-year writing courses at ASU?
11. What kind of information would be helpful for you when deciding to choose a first-year writing course at ASU?
12. Do you have any other thoughts you would like to share?

APPENDIX E
ACADEMIC ADVISOR INTERVIEW GUIDE

Academic Advisor Interview Guide

For the purpose of my study, *multilingual students* are defined as: (1) international students who hold student visas; and (2) resident students (i.e., non-international students) who graduated from a U.S. high school and whose English is not their home language.

1. Tell me about your past experience in working with multilingual students.
2. Does any of your academic advisees is a multilingual student?
3. How do you know that your academic advisees are multilingual students?
4. How often do you meet with your academic advisees?
5. Where do you receive information about first-year composition at ASU and the placement options?
6. Are you aware of different placement options that are available in the Writing Programs at ASU?
7. How do you advise your academic advisees on which section of first-year composition they should take?
8. What are your criteria for directing or guiding your academic advisees to take which section of first-year composition?
9. Have your academic advisees ever complained about the first-year writing classes they have taken?
10. Have your academic advisees switched from a mainstream section (i.e., ENG 101, ENG 102) of first-year composition to a second language section (i.e., ENG 107; ENG 108) or vice versa?
11. How do you think your role as an academic adviser is important to students' placement decisions?
12. What are your recommendations for the Writing Programs in terms of placement communication to academic advisers and students?
13. What information regarding the placement of multilingual students do you want to be informed?
14. Do you have any other thoughts you would like to share?

APPENDIX F
WRITING TEACHER INTERVIEW GUIDE

Writing Teacher Interview Guide

For the purpose of my study, *multilingual students* are defined as: (1) international students who hold student visas; and (2) resident students (i.e., non-international students) who graduated from a U.S. high school and whose English is not their home language.

1. How much do you know about first-year composition placement in the Writing Programs at ASU?
2. Have you ever advised your students on what first-year writing course they should take?
3. Are you aware of placement options that are available in the Writing Programs at ASU?
4. Tell me about your past experience in working with multilingual students.
5. Please describe your experience in working with multilingual students in your writing classrooms at ASU this semester.
6. What are the characteristics of multilingual students?
7. What are some similarities and differences between working with multilingual students and native English speaking students?
8. What does it feel like to teach native English speaking students and multilingual students in the same classes? What are difficulties you have had so far?
9. Compared to native English speaking students, do you approach multilingual students in your classes differently? If so, could you please explain how?
10. What are some of the benefits multilingual students can gain from enrolling in a writing class with native English speaking students?
11. What are some of the drawbacks multilingual students can encounter from enrolling in a writing class with native English speaking students?
12. What are some of the needs or support required for multilingual students?
13. What preparation, training, resources, if any, would have been helpful to work with multilingual students?
14. What are your recommendations for the Writing Programs in terms of the placement of multilingual students?
15. What information regarding the placement of multilingual students do you want to be informed?
16. What information regarding the placement of multilingual students do writing teachers need to know?
17. Do you have any other thoughts you would like to share?

APPENDIX G
WPA INTERVIEW GUIDE

WPA Interview Guide

For the purpose of my study, *multilingual students* are defined as: (1) international students who hold student visas; and (2) resident students (i.e., non-international students) who graduated from a U.S. high school and whose English is not their home language.

1. What are the writing program's general policies on first-year composition placement?
2. Does the writing program have specific policies on the placement of multilingual students? If so, what are those policies?
3. How does the writing program communicate placement information/options to academic advisors?
4. How does the writing program communicate placement information/options to writing teachers?
5. How does the writing program communicate placement information/options to incoming students?
6. How does the writing program cooperate with other related academic units in communicating placement information/options to multilingual students?
7. What are changes, if any, that the writing program plans to make regarding placement of multilingual writers?
8. How can the placement policies and procedure be developed to meet the needs of multilingual writers?
9. Do you have any other thoughts you would like to share?

APPENDIX H

CODING CATEGORY FOR FIRST-SEMESTER PLACEMENT DECISIONS

Coding Category for First-Semester Placement Decisions

How did the students decided to take the first-semester composition course?

Please put a plus sign to indicate evidence/examples for each category.

Name (pseudonym)	1*	2*	3*	4*	5*	6*
Ana						
Askar						
Afia						
Jasim						
Joel						
Marco						
Pascal						
Chan						
Ting						
Mei						
Jonas						

*1= Advisors' recommendations; 2= Other students' past experience in taking FYC; 3= The fact that FYC is the requirement; 4= Students' preexisting knowledge/information about FYC (major map, DARS, online orientation); 5= Students' own decisions; 6= A combination of previous factors

APPENDIX I
CODING CATEGORY FOR SECOND-SEMESTER
PLACEMENT DECISIONS

Coding Category for Second-Semester Placement Decisions

How did the students decided to take the second-semester composition course?

Please put a plus sign to indicate evidence/examples for each category.

Name (pseudonym)	1*	2*	3*	4*	5*	6*
Ana						
Askar						
Afia						
Jasim						
Joel						
Marco						
Pascal						
Chan						
Ting						
Mei						
Jonas						

*1= Advisors' recommendations; 2= Other students' past experience in taking FYC; 3= The fact that FYC is the requirement; 4= Students' preexisting knowledge/information about FYC (major map, DARS, online orientation); 5= Students' own decisions; 6= A combination of previous factors

APPENDIX J

CODING CATEGORY FOR AGENCY RESOURCES

Coding Category for Agency Resources

Resources of agency include choice, questioning, and negotiation.

Please put a plus sign to indicate evidence/examples of agency resources.

Name (pseudonym)	Choice	Questioning	Negotiation
Ana			
Askar			
Afia			
Jasim			
Joel			
Marco			
Pascal			
Chan			
Ting			
Mei			
Jonas			

APPENDIX K

CODING CATEGORY FOR AGENCY REQUIREMENTS

Coding Category for Agency Requirements

Agency requires planning, self-evaluating, and decision-making.

Please put a plus sign to indicate evidence/examples of one's capacity to act, including planning, self-evaluating, and decision-making.

Name (pseudonym)	Planning	Self-Evaluating	Decision-Making
Ana			
Askar			
Afia			
Jasim			
Joel			
Marco			
Pascal			
Chan			
Ting			
Mei			
Jonas			

APPENDIX L
ACADEMIC ADVISOR INTERVIEW CODING

Academic Advisor Interview Coding

Topics Coded and Analyzed

Roles of academic advisors in Multilingual students' placement decisions

- Ensure that students are in the right course
- Ensure that students understand this is the right course for them
- Guide students to take classes that are appropriate for their academic level
- Make sure that students are in appropriate courses based on their test scores

How/what academic advisors use to determine/recommend students' FYC placement

- Test scores for placement
- Always recommend resident students taking ENG 101 because they have either SAT or ACT scores
- Provide an option (taking the ACCUPLACER Test) if students do not have test scores or are not satisfied with their test scores

One common feature of academic advising session from the four interviews

- Academic advisors did not spend much time taking about FYC placement and courses with students. They focused more on students' major courses.
- Tracey said "Placement is prescriptive for the first semester; there are many other factors for the first semester." (See Tracey's interview transcript for a direct quote.)
- Typically, international students are advised to take ENG 107 and ENG 108.

APPENDIX M

WRITING TEACHER INTERVIEW CODING

Writing Teacher Interview Coding

Topics Coded and Analyzed

Categories of teachers' knowledge about FYC placement

- Fully aware of placement
- Aware that the Writing Programs use test scores to determine placement
- Somewhat; not completion
- Not a lot
- A bit some confusion

Needs and support required of Multilingual students perceived by the teachers (Question 12):

- Much more attention from teachers /special attention (classroom context)
- Give them more time (classroom context)
- More grammar work/feedback/resources (both classroom context and outside of the classroom context)
- Writing Center, ISSO (outside of the classroom support)
- Treat students as individuals (Erik, David)
- Students should make use of available sources (Writing Center, library, online sources—mentioned by Anita)

Resources that could be helpful for teachers when working with Multilingual students (Question 13):

- Anything
- Teaching preparation
- Training/workshop (should have been organized like online/hybrid workshop)
- Smaller class size
- Educate mainstream teachers about multilingual writing and writers
- Teachers need to know types of errors multilingual students make
- TA training that introduces teachers to different cultures

APPENDIX N
COURSE TITLE AND DESCRIPTION CHANGES

Course Title and Description Changes

Course	
<hr/>	
WAC 107	
Current title	Introduction to Academic Writing for International Students
Current description	For students from non-English-speaking countries. Combines classroom and supplemental instruction with intensive reading, writing, and discussion. Enroll requirements: Pre-requisites: TOEFL score of 0-559, ACT score of 0-18, SAT score of 0-460 or Accuplacer score of 0-4 (if test taken prior to May 12, 2009, then score 0-7)
Proposed title	Introduction to Academic Writing
Proposed description	For students for whom English is not the native language. Combines classroom and supplemental instruction to teach academic genres of writing, including definition, summary, and analysis. Enroll requirements: Pre-requisites: TOEFL score of below 560PBT/220CBT/83iBT; IELTS score of below 6.5; ACT English score of 0-18; SAT Verbal score of 0-460; or Accuplacer score of 0-4 (unless test taken prior to May 12, 2009, then score of 0-7)
<hr/>	
ENG 107	
Current title	English for Foreign Students
Current description	For students from non-English-speaking countries who have studied English in their native countries, but who require practice in the idioms of English. Intensive reading, writing, and discussion. Satisfies the graduation requirement of ENG 101. Enroll requirements: Pre-requisites: TOEFL score of 560 or higher, ACT English score of 19 or higher, SAT Verbal score of 470 or higher, Accuplacer minimum score of 5 (exam taken prior to May 12, 2009 requires minimum score of 8) or WAC 107 with A, B, C or Y
Proposed title	First-Year Composition
Proposed description	For students for whom English is not the native language. Discovers, organizes, and develops ideas

in relation to the writer's purpose, subject, and audience. Emphasizes modes of written discourse and effective use of rhetorical principles. Satisfies the graduation requirement of ENG 101. Enroll requirements: Pre-requisites: TOEFL score of 560PBT/220CBT/83iBT or higher; IELTS score of 6.5 or higher; ACT English score of 19 or higher; SAT Verbal score of 470 or higher; Accuplacer score of 5-7 (unless taken prior to May 12, 2009, then score of 8-10) or have completed WAC 101 or 107 with a grade of A, B or C

ENG 108

Current title

English for Foreign Students

Current description

For foreign students; critical reading and writing; strategies of academic discourse. Research paper required. Satisfies graduation requirement of ENG 102. Enroll requirements: Pre-requisites: Must have completed ENG 101 or 107 with a grade of C or greater

Proposed title

First-Year Composition

Proposed description

For students for whom English is not the native language. Critical reading and writing; emphasizes strategies of academic discourse. Research writing required. Satisfies graduation requirement of ENG 102. Enroll requirements: Pre-requisites: Must have completed ENG 101 or 107 with a grade of C or greater

ENG 101

Current title

First-Year Composition

Current description

Discovers, organizes, and develops ideas in relation to the writer's purpose, subject, and audience. Emphasizes modes of written discourse and effective use of rhetorical principles. Foreign students, see ENG 107. Enroll requirements: Pre-requisites: ACT English score of 19 or higher; SAT Verbal score of 470 or higher; Accuplacer score of 5-7 (unless taken prior to May 12, 2009, then score of 8-10) or have completed WAC 101 with a grade of A, B, C or Y

Proposed title

First-Year Composition

Proposed description

Discovers, organizes, and develops ideas in relation to the writer's purpose, subject, and audience. Emphasizes modes of written discourse and effective use of rhetorical principles. Enroll requirements: Pre-requisites: TOEFL score of 600PBT/250CBT/100iBT or higher; IELTS score of 6.5 or higher; ACT English score of 19 or higher; SAT Verbal score of 470 or higher; Accuplacer score of 5-7 (unless taken prior to May 12, 2009, then score of 8-10); or have completed WAC 101 or 107 with a grade of A, B or C

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Tanita Saenkhum earned her Ph.D. degree in English with a concentration in Rhetoric, Composition, and Linguistics from Arizona State University in May 2012. She specializes in second language writing with a focus on writing program administration. While at ASU, she served as Assistant Director of Second Language Writing in the Writing Programs. She publishes in *WPA: Journal of the Council of Writing Program Administrators*, *Journal of English for Academic Purposes* and WPA-CompPile Research Bibliographies. Her teaching experience includes professional writing and both mainstream and multilingual first-year composition. She has accepted a tenure-track Assistant Professor position in the English Department at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville where she will be teaching in the Rhetoric, Writing, and Linguistics program beginning in Fall 2012.