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Multilingual Student Autonomy in Directed-Self-Placement: Providing Student Choice Through Linguistic Domains Using Qualtrics Scoring

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Abstract: In this article, we review the dynamic state of research regarding multilingual writers, especially their experiences in first-year composition (FYC) and with composition self-placement methods. Then, we position our institution and department's theoretical underpinnings in support of multilingual writers and their self-placement, and we describe how we utilized Qualtrics scoring tools to provide students with feedback on a novel language domain as part of their FYC directed self-placement. Our intent was to offer multilingual students transparency and choice in the placement process so they could select the FYC course that best matched their needs and goals, including those related to their linguistic backgrounds. Finally, we reflect on our placement survey revisions using Cavazos and Karaman's (2021) Translingual Disposition Questionnaire to determine future revisions. We hope that other WPAs gain insight on how to integrate asset-based philosophies and linguistic domains using Qualtrics scoring to offer their multilingual students more autonomy in their FYC placement experiences.

Keywords: first-year composition, directed self-placement, Generation 1.5, student autonomy, mulitlingual students

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Crusan (2011) and others have argued that placement into first-year composition (FYC) courses has been "a perennially thorny issue" for multilingual students (p. 775). These students have rarely had a say in their writing placement (Horton, 2022). This fact has been especially true for Generation 1.5 students, native English speakers born into linguistically diverse households, who are often inappropriately placed with either first language (L1) or English as a Second Language (ESL) students (di Gennaro, 2008). Their course pathways have often been decided by a deficit view of their complex linguistic identities. However, the emergence and continued development of self-placement models has offered writing program administrators (WPAs) the affordance of leveraging information about students' linguistic backgrounds and experiences to promote placement and assessment ecologies that "construct linguistic differences as something other than a problem" (Inoue, 2017, p. 120).

Royer and Gilles (2003) defined directed self-placement (DSP) as "any placement method that both offers students information and advice about their placement options . . . and places the ultimate placement decision in the students' hands" (p. 2). Since Royer and Gilles' first DSP experiment, institutions have heeded the call for more student choice in the first-year composition (FYC) placement process, which has led to many different models of self-placement. Regardless of name, models of self-placement typically claim a similar mission of effective student placement and increased student autonomy. However, these self-placement models have often failed to use students' linguistic backgrounds to support student autonomy in the self-placement process. Institutions that offer FYC self-placement methods can better support multilingual students going forward by intentionally drawing upon students' linguistic backgrounds.

At our institution, we earned our Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) status in 2015, and subsequently, we piloted our first DSP survey as well as a new corequisite composition course for multilingual students in 2016. However, in 2021, when we critically reflected on our DSP survey in response to a statewide corequisite education scaling initiative, we felt our initial work promoted possible deficit beliefs about multilingualism and did not fully support our HSI mission. Thus, we attempted to revise our DSP (and, simultaneously, our multilingual corequisite composition course) to better serve students from an asset perspective, provide them with more transparency and autonomy, and more fully embody our mission as an HSI.

Building on this reflective work of revision, our article offers WPAs insights into DSP for multilingual and Generation 1.5 writers and provides discussion on how we utilized Qualtrics scoring tools to enmesh our institutional and departmental mission with our DSP process, which Caoette (2019) theorized as the best path toward destigmatizing marginalized writers and providing opportunity for genuine student autonomy. We also share insights from our placement data to support our discussion and provide directions for future research. Finally, we discuss our use of Cavazos and Karaman's (2021) Translingual Disposition Questionnaire (TDQ) as a framework for contextualizing our DSP revisions and planning future revisions.

Traditional Pedagogical Approaches to Multilingual Writers

Before we delve into how we revised our DSP to better align with our departmental and institutional beliefs about multilingual writers, we want to examine the historical goals of English Language Learning (ELL) and ESL programs, what we term traditional approaches to multilingual writers. Historically, ELL and ESL programs have been focused on homogenizing English language learners into a standardized form of language users. We acknowledge that writing in

any language, regardless of one's writing background, is difficult (Peters & Lankshear, 1996). It is even harder when you cannot rely on the language and language patterns you bring to the writing classroom, instead having to replace them with new academic or linguistic rules that privilege white language practices. With that said, as long as the goal for such programs is assimilation into White Mainstream English (Baker-Bell, 2020), "monolingual assumptions regarding language and literacy [will] remain embedded in the developmental writing program through institutionalized attitudes about grammar and Standard Written English (SWE)" (Corcoran & Wilkinson, 2019, p. 19). The result of such programs is an attempt at inclusion while simultaneously being exclusive. Such programs create a deficit attitude about bilingualism and multilingualism that Newman and Garcia (2019) argue reinforces the idea that speakers of multiple languages, regardless of their language proficiency, must be in need of English intervention.

Despite the growth in the number of linguistically diverse students in higher education, little has changed in the ways that we approach writing instruction. According to Matsuda (2011), "until well into the 1970s the teaching of second-language writing focused mostly on the features of L2 written text—orthography, sentence-level structure, and discourse-level structure—and the way L2 student texts deviated from the L1 norm" (p. 25). After increased admission rates of more diverse students in higher education and more intentional discussions of linguistic identity, there has been a deeper linguistic acceptance in the composition classroom, and yet, our teaching and assessment of language hasn't changed. Lippi-Green (1997) argued that the goals of many multilingual language pedagogical approaches are "mastering the standardized written language, and replacing one spoken language with another" (p. 80). Multilingual students enter a writing classroom with years of language and cultural experiences that do not fit the standard white norm and are asked not just to adapt but to adopt new linguistic patterns that are unfamiliar to them. However, with a deeper understanding of how identity shapes writing patterns, students can learn to communicate more effectively—the goal of a writing classroom. Anzaldúa (1987) poignantly stated that "ethnic identity is twin skin to linguistic identity—I am my language" (p. 59), asserting that language and identity are intrinsically tied together and impossible to separate. Following Anzaldúa's influence, scholars have focused on how identity and writing affects classroom composition performance. Matsuda (1991) argued that the way you speak tells the unique story of who you are, "who first held you and talked to you when you were a child, where you have lived, your age, the schools you attended, the languages you know, your ethnicity . . . your class position: traces of your life and identity are woven into your pronunciation, your phrasing, your choice of words" (p. 1329). Thus, identity must be addressed and linguistic identity cultivated in writing classrooms rather than prescribing one correct way to write onto linguistically diverse students.

More recently, research has provided practitioners with a deeper understanding of multilingual identities—for example, that *multilingual* is not interchangeable with *language learner*. Further, there has been a shift away from assessing linguistic competence through assumptions of needs based on first language or home language (Valdes, 2011). Instead, it is the classroom experiences of multilingual individuals that affect their ability to learn a target language. Additionally, the assumption that all multilingual writers despite level of language acquisition have the same needs and thus need similar pedagogical methods—for example, teaching international students and Generation 1.5 students using the same techniques—might be detrimental to the multilingual learner's ability to learn, but assimilation in a mainstream writing classroom with an instructor that devalues linguistic diversity is similarly detrimental. Silva (2011) argued that

students must be given the opportunity to identify themselves as linguistically unique from the traditional native speaker or language learner identities. Silva (2011) also suggested it would be more beneficial to allow flexible and diverse placement options for students enrolling in FYC courses. It is these two calls that guided the revisions we made to our DSP model.

Situating Generation 1.5 Students in the Multilingual Landscape

In the U.S., Generation 1.5[1] students have benefitted from the shifts described above in multilingual pedagogical approaches. Generation 1.5 students have most often immigrated to the United States young or were born into a recent immigrant household (di Gennaro, 2008). They are students who often speak a different language at home than they do at school, but do not fully fit into ELL categories. Matsuda (2003) argued that they are students who have been historically neglected in multilingual literature, as much multilingual pedagogy focuses on ELL and ESL students and assumes all multilingual learners have the same challenges international students do. Matsuda (2003) argued that Generation 1.5 students have two options in most writing programs: ESL-focused instruction or mainstream composition. Instead of labeling Generation 1.5 students as "basic writers" and teaching our students with a deficit approach, we suggest a third option: a curriculum designed with their needs in mind.

Importantly, Generation 1.5 writers are typically both native English speakers and multilingual writers; however, any student labeled multilingual, even Generation 1.5, is often assumed to struggle with language barriers. Chiang and Schmida (2011) argued, "because English is [a] second language, students are assumed to have difficulties with the language" (p. 106). Reid and Kroll (2011) reminded us, however, that Generation 1.5 writers graduate from U.S. high schools, and they understand the culture, the language, the context for their writing, and the slang and ethos of their communities; however, they sometimes lack the literacy tools to fully engage them. Reid and Kroll (2011) wrote, "their reading skills may be hampered by limited understanding of the structures of the English language, and/or a lack of literacy, and/or lack of reading experience. Their writing displays the conversational, phonetic qualities of their 'ear-based' language learning" (p. 83). For these reasons, schools with a high number of Generation 1.5 students need a different approach to multilingual classes than the approaches designed for language learners.

Generation 1.5 writers deserve a multilingual pedagogical approach designed with their needs in mind, rather than the ESL or ELL approaches. Generation 1.5 thrives best in a pedagogical approach that honors the identity, cultural, and linguistic experiences they bring to the classroom. Johns (2011) suggested that "it is the responsibility of composition instructors to help these students acquire a literacy strategy repertoire and develop the confidence that enables them to approach and negotiate a variety of literacy tasks in many environments" (p. 290). For Generation 1.5, this focus on their own needs starts with offering them the agency to self-place into the FYC course they feel most benefits them. The current trends in multilingual and Generation 1.5 pedagogy aim to look beyond the grammatical concerns and deficit approaches that were historically true of ESL and ELL classrooms and focus on how linguistic identity serves as an asset and can enhance writing.

1 There is a dearth of research on this topic and population in the past decade, with the most recent publications focused on Generation 1.5 student experiences outside of the U.S., and thus less germane to our research.

Generation 1.5 and Multilingual Corequisite Composition

At our institution, all undergraduate degrees require a two-course composition sequence. While the only current offering for the second-semester composition course is ENG 102, which focuses on academic research writing, students can choose from three unique first semester courses: ENG 100, a five-credit corequisite composition course; ENG 100, a three-credit first-semester composition course; and ENG 116, a five-credit multilingual corequisite composition course. All three first-semester courses work toward the same learning outcomes. However, the two corequisite courses offer an additional two credits of reading and writing instruction, and our multilingual corequisite course frames this instruction from a position of language difference.

Our revision of our multilingual corequisite composition course purposefully counters the problematic traditional approaches to multilingual pedagogy outlined above. Prior to our composition course revisions, ENG 116 was largely focused on grammatical interventions through low- and high-stakes assignments with a grammar-based required textbook. Despite the CCCC (1974) statement on "Student's Right to Their Own Language," our approach to multilingual composition was still designed with student deficits in mind. According to Horner (2001), "dominant approaches to language and 'error' have failed to understand language as material social practice . . . persistently produc[ing] strategies at odds with the realities teachers, students, writers, and the public confront daily in their interactions with one another" (p. 742). Similarly, Corcoran and Wilkinson (2019) argued that despite the 1974 statement, "national statements guiding WPA work . . . do not address the linguistic diversity of students" (p. 20). This linguistic neglect was reflected in the previous way our ENG 116 class was taught.

However, our program and institutional mission has shifted over the years. Our institution now has a clear social justice-oriented approach to education to ensure equitable education opportunities for historically marginalized communities. In an interview after their inauguration in 2021, our university president used the metaphor of pulling on door that requires one to push it to describe what higher education is like for students from marginalized communities: "The design of the door was not intuitive to you . . . oftentimes, it may not have been designed with you in mind." Under our current president, our school's mission became a mission to change our doors—or remove them entirely—allowing for more access for more students. Our university also underwent a revision of our core curriculum, and our social justice mission is reflected in some of our new essential learning outcomes: critical literacy to identify how power and bias operate through texts; diversity, equity, and inclusion to develop an understanding of power and privilege within institutions such as ours; and the communication skills needed to develop and express ideas to diverse audiences.

Because so many of our students are Generation 1.5, they might identify linguistically as multilingual, but in practice, their writing may be closer to native English speakers. For this reason, our corequisite course for multilingual students needed to offer more than the remedial approach we previously offered. Our goal was to empower multilingual writers to view all their languages as assets and encourage them to practice communication skills in the language(s) most comfortable to them. Our current course design of ENG 116 was created for multilingual students to practice their languaging skills beyond an adherence to what has traditionally been accepted as Standard Academic English. Each of our projects was created to focus on a different aspect of linguistic identity.

To scaffold the kind of identity work asked of students in ENG 116, every aspect of class is designed to examine linguistic diversity, from the course readings to low-stakes in-class activities. Within these classes, the ways we discuss language and power are often at odds with the experiences of many of our multilingual students, as our students of color are often in classrooms that privilege standardized forms of English. Leon and Enriquez-Loya (2019) suggested a more anti-colonialist approach with a direct examination of the effects of colonialism on linguistic attitudes and the ways that it appears in classrooms. They argued, "HSI writing programs should include analyzing ways systemic oppression is created and enforced through technical writing, as a form of critical thinking" (p. 166). Examining linguistic identity and confronting the ways that colonialism still oppresses marginalized communities like Generation 1.5 in the classroom is incredibly important in the FYC classroom; however, it cannot be theoretical. Students must also be empowered to use their entire linguistic repertoire and value all their languages equally. Thus, in our multilingual corequisite composition course, students are not only encouraged to use whatever languaging techniques are most comfortable to them to complete writing assignments, but they are also trained in code-meshing strategies that make their diverse linguistic writing patterns more effective by studying authors who code mesh (Young, 2010). By treating our students' lived experiences as assets rather than deficits, we hope to foster a community of multilingual writers in this course and that means rethinking the way we also use deficit approaches to DSP.

Directed Self-Placement and Students' Linguistic Backgrounds

Because this article is included in a special issue devoted to self-placement research and discussion, we assume that our audience is likely familiar with self-placement in general. Thus, to frame how we revised our own DSP for our multilingual and Generation 1.5 students, we will very briefly define self-placement, discuss select models of self-placement, and present relevant research findings around multilingual students and self-placement. Morton's (2022) literature review on Informed Self-Placement (ISP) defines ISP and its counterparts, like DSP, as placement procedures that include both student engagement in the placement process and institutional guidance or information sharing related to the placement process (p. 2). Toth and Aull (2014) noted that self-placement models exist in various forms, including self-placement checklists, extensive open-ended reflective responses, group advising discussions around self-placement, and written responses to prompts with post-writing reflective questionnaires. Decades of research on self-placement has shown that self-placement leads to positive faculty-student relationships (Caouette, 2019) and that institutions believe that self-placement leads to more student agency (Royer & Gilles, 1998; Toth, 2018, 2019). Additionally, as Crusan (2011) pointed out, "DSP sends a powerful message to students because it affords them some agency and includes students' self-evaluations as an essential component in the placement decision" (p. 778).

Morton's (2022) literature review also typifies the sort of guidance provided by self-placement processes, finding five major components of institutional guidance:

> materials that explain ISP, available courses, or other relevant details; online and paper questionnaires, which are usually employed to prompt students to consider their background and relevant experiences; discussions with faculty or staff; tasks like math problems and writing prompts; and sample course materials or assignments, which are sometimes accompanied with sample responses. (p. 5)

While actual self-placement instruments (e.g., checklists, surveys, essays, reflections) may look different across institutions, we want to note here that institutional philosophies have the power to shape the guidance materials as well as the amount of student agency offered in the process. In the context of our study and our self-placement efforts, this means that institutions who serve multilingual student populations, like our institution, can use their self-placement guidance materials, like surveys, to specifically message their support of those students' linguistic identities and offer them guidance that can empower them in the self-placement process.

Morton's (2022) literature review describes various levels of student engagement and institutional approaches to self-placement. For instance, they describe limited choice self-placement as a process where writing assessments are used to prepare students for their advising appointments, but where students have little or no choice in their course placement, and the process is mostly informational. Veiled choice self-placement includes the use of scores to make placement recommendations to students without making clear that those are only recommendations, essentially veiling the student agency in the self-placement process. Other models may truly offer students the choice in placement but do not market transparent policies around self-placement, so students are often unaware of that choice. Another problematic model of self-placement is where institutions capitalize on the phrase self-placement, but in fact offer no avenues of self-placement and instead rely primarily on high school records. These self-placement models claim to offer students choice in their placement, but in actuality, students are provided a placement decision by the institution. Institutions that strive to offer true student autonomy in placement decisions, like ours, must ensure to offer placement recommendations rather than placement decisions (Morton, 2022).

Important to this article, drawing on students' linguistic backgrounds is not new to self-placement surveys, but the utilization of languaging domains (i.e., blocks of questions specifically geared toward understanding students' languaging practices) in placement methods has been less clear. In their 2014 study, Toth and Aull (2014) found that of the 30 self-placement surveys they reviewed, 23.3% of them included some question(s) about students' linguistic backgrounds, but their article did not provide specific details on the kind or frequency of these questions. Because self-placement surveys have "become an important source of institutional data, providing a snapshot of incoming students' prior writing experiences, literacy practices, self-beliefs, and self-assessments" (Toth & Aull, 2014, p. 5), in the case of our study, we seek to provide a more detailed view of our own use of students' linguistic backgrounds in the DSP process. We also seek to understand and present on our students' reported self-beliefs around their linguistic identities and self-assessments of their skills and needs regarding FYC.

Revising Directed Self-Placement With an Asset-Based Linguistic Philosophy

Before offering DSP at our institution, we utilized many different methods for placing students into FYC courses, including their ACCUPLACER score, high school GPA, SAT/ACT scores, or AP English scores, depending on what indicators were available to our institution. However, in keeping with trends in the field as well as supporting our status as an HSI, a designation we received in 2015, we began the process of creating a DSP and a multilingual corequisite composition course in 2016. Thus, our DSP and our multilingual corequisite composition efforts are intertwined with one another, both in terms of our philosophical approach—to better support our multilingual students—and in terms of their development timeline—in response to our HSI status.

Our pilot DSP offered students the opportunity to reflect on their linguistic, reading, and writing experiences in order to self-select the FYC course they felt was most appropriate for their needs and goals; however, the DSP did not provide any recommendations or context for students to use to make those choices, other than course descriptions and sample assignment prompts. Looking back, we believe that without the context a nuanced recommendation might have provided, our original pilot DSP assumed that all multilingual students, including Generation 1.5 students, should be guided to our multilingual corequisite composition course, even though we know that Generation 1.5 multilingual identity is more complicated than our pilot DSP suggested. We felt that our pilot DSP was positioned precariously between our desire to serve multilingual students and researchers' statements about limited and inappropriate placements for Generation 1.5 students (di Gennaro, 2008; Matsuda, 2003). Since Generation 1.5 is a large portion of our population, we wanted our revised DSP to provide more nuanced options for placement with more transparency during the placement process.

When we began considering revisions to the self-placement survey in 2021, we understood that such a limited approach to placement essentially suggested that all multilingual and Generation 1.5 students want or need a corequisite multilingual learning community. Because Toth and Aull's (2014) review found that many DSP policies lacked theoretical underpinnings regarding the domains they assessed, we attempted to revise our DSP in 2021 with a more asset-based linguistic philosophy. This meant that for our multilingual and Generation 1.5 students, we needed to offer transparency around the possibilities of a multilingual corequisite composition course, but we needed to empower them to self-select in the end based on their own needs and goals. In essence, as Inoue et al. (2011) argued, we needed our self-placement process to be "'site-based' and 'context-sensitive'" (p. 1).

Similar to our pilot version of our DSP, in our revised DSP, students self-report on three separate domains: linguistic experiences, reading experiences, and writing experiences. However, because we were able to use the Qualtrics scoring feature in our revised DSP, students now receive three distinct placement recommendations based on each domain and are encouraged to self-select based on whether their linguistic, reading, or writing experiences matter most to them. Prospective students also have the choice to self-select from the FYC courses based on their own assessment of their needs and goals, regardless of the survey's recommendations. The Qualtrics scoring tool is invaluable for providing recommendations based on student scores for each domain.

Using Qualtrics Scoring For Discrete Experiential Domains

In our revised DSP, we hoped to offer students an important perspective on their placement options while maintaining student autonomy and choice in the process. Therefore, we needed to use a scoring system that could offer our students relatively dynamic recommendations based on their responses about their experiences with reading, writing, and their linguistic backgrounds. Creating a scoring system using Qualtrics proved easy enough for the reading and writing domains of the survey. We used a Likert scale and sentiment analysis (Qualtrics, n.d.) to capture how positively or negatively students felt about their experiences with reading and writing. Students received higher scores on questions they answered confidently and lower scores for answers that were less confident. For example, for the statement "I usually try to avoid reading unless it is required," a prospective student would receive the most points for answering Strongly Disagree, slightly fewer points for answering Disagree, and even fewer points for answering Agree

or Strongly Agree. For the reading and writing domains, a higher overall score would provide a traditional first-semester FYC recommendation (ENG 101), while a lower score would result in a corequisite FYC recommendation (ENG 116 or ENG 100).Where students did not provide an answer, or scores indicated they had not answered at least 50% of the questions in a particular domain, they received a message that instructed them to retake the survey or reach out to the advising department for support with the survey.

Creating a scoring system for the language domain was more difficult because, as we have explained throughout our article, we did not want to suggest that all multilingual students have the same linguistic experiences or that they all need or desire a multilingual corequisite composition course. Additionally, while some questions worked well to score on a scale similar to the reading and writing domains, the language domain included questions about students' language contexts as well as a question about anxieties around writing as a multilingual writer. Therefore, we could not just rely on the same scoring for the two kinds of questions. To overcome this challenge, we piloted the DSP multiple times with our own English faculty, all of whom were familiar with our FYC courses and HSI mission, and some of whom identified as multilingual and ESL writers. In these pilot sessions, faculty were given hypothetical student identities, including hypothetical linguistic backgrounds and varying levels of reading and writing confidence and skill sets. Faculty were then asked to self-report on the recommendation they received from the DSP and whether they believed that recommendation would serve their hypothetical student well. From these pilot tests, we learned about potential issues in the survey design itself, including where information about the available courses felt overwhelming or lacked clear organization, as well as about potential issues in scoring. For example, in response to piloting the DSP, faculty members offered clarification on their own thinking as hypothetical students, noting where they expected certain recommendations or were surprised at other recommendations. This information was helpful in revising our survey's organization as well as the scoring system to ensure we offered appropriate recommendations to our students.

After multiple pilot tests and scoring revisions, the DSP was then piloted to three FYC courses, where students were invited to take the DSP and then self-report on their recommendation and whether they agreed with it. Further scoring revisions were made before the final (2022) version of the DSP replaced the initial pilot (2016) version.

In order to receive multilingual corequisite composition recommendations, prospective students must report using more than one language besides English for communication, and they either must report using a language besides English within specific communities (e.g., friends, family, teachers) or report being anxious about making errors in English. From these criteria, we draw different assumptions about our multilingual students' language goals and needs, the first being about language and community and the second about language and instructional needs. Additionally, although we recognize that these latter criteria may appear to be based in deficit thinking about languaging, we believe that our multilingual corequisite composition course best serves both students who primarily want to study with a multilingual community and students who feel they need linguistic support in their writing course. When multilingual students are asked to receive writing intervention and tutoring simply because their writing reflects their spoken accent, it reinforces the deficit thinking in which they already see themselves. Because research shows that multilingual students often have internalized deficit thinking about their writing skills (Cirillo-

McCarthy et al., 2016), our ENG 116 course aims to support and develop asset-based mindsets around languaging.

For the reading and writing domains, higher scores represent higher levels of self-efficacy, growth mindset, and enjoyment for each domain, and lower scores represent lower levels of these mindsets. Importantly, self-reported multilingual students received relevant recommendations based on their self-reporting and not just based on their multilingual identity, so that those with higher reading and writing domain scores receive recommendations for traditional first-semester FYC (ENG 101), whereas students with lower scores receive recommendations for corequisite composition (ENG 100) and multilingual corequisite composition (ENG 116). In the end, students can choose which recommendation to follow based on their own beliefs about their goals and needs.

Sample Domain Scoring and Student Facing Recommendations

To exemplify our course recommendation process, a student who identifies as multilingual and either reports using languages other than English across different communities or reports high levels of anxiety around writing in English would receive a multilingual corequisite composition recommendation and this message at the end of their survey:

> Based on your responses in the language section, it seems like you might benefit from a multilingual writing community and discussions about how multilingual writers approach writing. If you want to make a placement decision primarily based on your language background, we recommend ENG 116, which is a five-credit first year writing course that has additional reading and writing support as well as the added benefit of a multilingual classroom community.

Whereas our pilot DSP provided no context for what the decision to take multilingual corequisite composition might mean for students, leaving prospective students to fill in the blanks based on their own level of self-efficacy and understanding of their linguistic identities, in our current recommendation descriptions, we attempt to frame multilingualism as an asset that our composition program can support through language-specific community and discussion. As mentioned, even when self-reported multilingual students receive a recommendation for multilingual corequisite composition, they also receive unique recommendations based on their reading and writing backgrounds, and they are free to choose among the recommendations. For our hypothetical student, if they are a confident reader, they might also receive the following recommendation at the end of their survey:

> Based on your responses in the reading section, it seems like you are pretty confident in your reading skills and that you enjoy reading. If you want to make a placement decision primarily based on your reading background, we recommend ENG 101, which is a three-credit first year writing course.

In this response, we provide important context to the prospective student that they can use to determine their best self-placement if they want to foster their reading skills more than their linguistic identity. However, that same student might also report feeling a lack of self-efficacy in writing and receive a third recommendation at the end of their survey:

> Based on your responses in the writing section, it seems like you might not be confident in your writing skills or perhaps you feel some anxiety around writing and would benefit from some additional writing support. If you want to make a placement decision primarily

> based on your writing background, we recommend either ENG 100, which is a five-credit first year writing course that has additional reading and writing support, or ENG 116, which is a five-credit first year writing course that has the added benefits of both additional reading and writing support and a multilingual classroom community.

In this hypothetical example, our DSP has provided the student rich context around their survey responses and offered a few important clues to help them self-place most effectively: (a) they might enjoy studying with other multilingual writers based on their linguistic background; (b) they have strong reading skills that can serve them well in a first-semester composition course; and (c) they may want to take a corequisite or corequisite multilingual section to provide additional support for their writing. For this hypothetical student, they have received two recommendations for multilingual corequisite composition (ENG 116), one recommendation for corequisite composition (ENG 100), and one recommendation for first-semester composition (ENG 101). After students receive their course recommendations, they are presented with the course descriptions from our catalog and sample course prompts, after which the survey asks them to select their preferred course. Students are free to select from the course recommendations or they may choose a course not recommended if they feel that is the best fit. While our program believes that students' voices and choices are most important in the DSP process, we also believe that providing the kind of context and recommendations our current revised DSP survey offers can empower students to make informed decisions that support their linguistic, reading, and writing needs and goals.

Theoretical Underpinnings for Future Revisions to DSP

In response to Toth and Aull's (2014) plea for sound theoretical underpinnings for placement methods, we looked to Cavasos and Karaman's (2021) Translingual Disposition Questionnaire (TDQ) to both understand how our revised DSP engages with our prospective students' languaging practices and mindsets and consider future revisions to and assessment of our DSP. The TDQ was developed to offer educators a tool to "explore how translingual dispositions are linked to students' sense of belonging in higher education, academic success, self-efficacy, and rhetorical writing abilities" (p. 58). As seminal research has shown, a sense of belonging, whether in the FYC classroom or across campus spaces, is a predictor of retention for many student groups that HSIs like ours claim to serve, so the TDQ is appropriate to our context (Tinto, 2017). The TDQ comprises 27 questions related to students' understanding of their own languaging practices, with particular detail around not only students' rhetorical awareness of the languaging but also their critical questioning of languaging across contexts. Using the TDQ as a framework, we can see that the questions in the linguistic domain of our DSP serve to primarily establish whether our prospective students are aware of the languages they use and the contexts in which they use them and whether they feel confident with those uses or not.

The TDQ asks students to respond to survey items like "I use my knowledge of different languages to convey meaning when I communicate," "I communicate in more than one language," and "I understand a variety of languages," which all fall under what Cavasos and Karaman (2021) described as a factor of translanguaging *negotiation.* As defined by the authors, *negotiation* means "viewing and enacting language practices as contingent and negotiable based on context" (Cavasos & Karaman, 2021, p. 8). In our own placement survey, we understand that when we ask our prospective students to respond to survey items like "Is English your only language for communication," "I grew up in a community where another language besides English is regularly

used for everyday communication," "While growing up, I often spoke another language besides English at home," and "I regularly speak a language other than English with my friends and/or high school classmates," we are asking them about their languaging *negotiation,* or how their language use is context-specific and negotiable.

Cavasos and Karaman (2021) also describe two other translanguaging factors: *resistance* and *exploration*. Our DSP does not currently ask any questions that we feel address those two areas. Admittedly, our goals in our DSP and their TDQ are not identical, so our aim will never be to completely replicate the TDQ in our DSP. Additionally, as evidenced by the literature on self-placement, we must keep in mind that cognitive load our DSP survey requires of our students, as too unfamiliar, too complex, or too many questions can all be prohibitive to prospective students taking the survey (White & Newell, 2022, p. 11). However, we do believe that the TDQ is an important instrument that we will continue to use to shape our self-placement survey around, and because our targeted student population includes multilingual communities, we cannot ignore their languaging awareness and practices. In fact, to do so would be irresponsible. Thus, in future revisions of DSP, we plan to integrate a few additional opportunities for students to reflect on how their linguistic backgrounds serve not only as backdrops to their reading and writing experiences, but instead how those backgrounds are integrated with their reading and writing experiences. For instance, survey items from the TDQ like "reading different languages helps me create new meanings" and "I challenge language standards and expectations when I write" can prompt our incoming students to reflect more specifically on how their linguistic identities are indeed complex.

Multilingual Student Responses to Self-Placement

In this section, we provide our methods for collecting and analyzing the data from our DSP as well as present the data available from our DSP. Our methods section will provide transparency about our decision making in regard to the data we analyzed. Importantly, our analysis uses data collected through our DSP for an original purpose of placing students into FYC courses; however, we did ascertain appropriate IRB approval (#2307-0352) for utilizing secondary data. All data was de-identified before analysis.

Our presentation of the data will show our thematic analysis of the open-ended DSP survey question regarding why students selected the multilingual corequisite composition course or why they chose not to select it even though it had been one of their recommendations. Broadly, our themes included *Awareness of Linguistic Background*, *Finding a Multilingual Community*, *Multilingualism as a Tool for Advocacy,* and *Resisting Linguistic Labels*.

Methods

Our goal in this article was to look at how the addition of a linguistic domain in our self-placement survey, using Qualtrics scoring, can support multilingual student autonomy in the self-placement process. We were most interested in how multilingual students responded to the survey's three distinct recommendations (linguistic background, reading, and writing) and the reasons they cited in regard to their self-selected course. Our study conducts inquiries similar to Ferris et al.'s (2017) study that looked at how multilingual students' self-placement choices aligned with their placement test scores, except that we look at our DSP survey recommendations as related to students' qualitative responses in support of their own self-placement choices. Thus, the data we analyze in this section includes descriptive analysis of the statistics from our survey as well

as the qualitative responses from the self-placement survey. Importantly, this project does not look at data beyond the self-placement survey, so it neither provides follow up data on whether students followed through with their self-placement selections nor looks at the success rate of students in their self-selected placements. That data will be important to future articles that will look at the follow through rates and course experiences of multilingual students; however, the primary goal for this project is to look at their rationale for their choices.

To home in on the data that would be most useful, we first determined how many survey takers self-identified as multilingual based on their answer to the first question of the linguistic background domain, "Is English Your Only Language?" We then used the Qualtrics filter feature to limit our report to only "No" responses, so that we were only looking at multilingual student responses. Then, we scrubbed the data to remove any responses that were incomplete so that the responses we looked at were only those where students had fully reflected on the three domains. Then, we identified the percentage of multilingual students who received multilingual corequisite composition as a recommendation, and from there, we filtered the responses based on whether students selected multilingual corequisite composition (ENG 116), corequisite composition (ENG 100), first-semester composition (ENG 101), or second-semester composition (ENG 102). In the end, we ran four separate reports.

Once we had a report that included multilingual student responses for each possible course self-selection, we analyzed the qualitative responses from students to better understand why they made their selection.

Presentation of Data

Before looking at the data, we feel it is important to note that the self-placement survey is not required for new or transfer students, although it is strongly recommended. As an institutional policy, students who do not (a) take the self-placement survey and (b) follow through with advising are automatically scheduled for our corequisite composition course (ENG 100), which, as mentioned, is a five credit first-semester composition course that satisfies the same general outcomes as multilingual corequisite composition (ENG 116) and first-semester composition (ENG 101). Between March 2022, when our revised self-placement survey went live, and July 2023, 316 prospective students completed our self-placement survey. Out of those 316 students, 111—just over one-third of survey takers—answered "No" to the question, "Is English your only language?" essentially self-identifying as multilingual in the most basic sense. Of those 111 students, 70 received a recommendation for multilingual corequisite composition based on their linguistic domain score. Out of those 111 prospective students who completed the survey during this period, 25 students self-selected multilingual corequisite composition, 16 students self-selected corequisite composition, 66 students selected first-semester composition, and 4 students selected second semester composition. From the data, it appears that while the majority of our multilingual writers saw themselves as confident readers and writers who were not primarily interested in studying with other multilingual writers or utilizing the additional corequisite support model, nearly one-quarter of our multilingual students felt that their linguistic identity was an integral factor in their self-placement choice. Additionally, though not as important to our research in this project, for other institutions who worry about adopting self-placement models due to a fear that students will opt out of any first semester courses, our data supports other studies (Ferris et al., 2017; Melito et al., 2022) and showed that non-conformity to DSP recommendations has not

been a frequent problem at our institution and may not be as legitimate a fear as some institutions may believe it to be. Even more so, Tinkle et al. (2022) found that when students self-place outside of DSP recommendations, there is no significant relationship with underperformance in FYC courses.

Theme One: Awareness of Linguistic Background

Royer and Gilles (1998) found that their students most often selected their self-placements based on their behaviors and self-perceptions of themselves rather than on their GPA and test scores, and our results demonstrate that truth within our multilingual population. From looking at the data collected since our revision of the student self-placement survey, it's clear that there is a population of multilingual writers who are aware of their linguistic identities and interested in coursework that supports or reflects those identities. Survey takers often mentioned their multilingualism in terms of their struggles or of receiving help. For example, one survey taker was attracted to the multilingual corequisite composition course because "it offers outside resources to help me succeed. English has always been something i struggle with." Another student was attracted to the course because "I just thought that this choice would benefit me because I speak 2 languages." Other survey takers responded about improving their language skills, as they disclosed that "I chose this class because I'm a native Spanish speaker and I'd like to improve my English writing skills" and that the multilingual corequisite course "seems like the best option to me. Could really help me improve my reading and righting in both languages." It's important to reiterate that the majority of prospective students who identified as multilingual did not select the multilingual corequisite composition section, and many survey takers noted their struggles with writing and reading that were not based on their linguistic background. Responses like "I'm not extremely confident in my English skills, and I'm looking forward to improve them" were very common among those prospective students who self-selected corequisite composition and first-semester composition. However, there was still a clear faction of multilingual students who recognized that their linguistic background was an integral factor in their self-placement decisions.

Theme Two: Finding a Multilingual Community

Beyond confirming the fact that linguistic backgrounds are an important part of students' identities in college writing courses, the addition of a language domain and course recommendation based on students' linguistic backgrounds also provides a necessary tool for self-reflection for our students regarding their expectations in a college writing course. One of the themes that emerged from our multilingual student responses is that of finding community and belonging in their FYC courses. When asked why they had self-selected multilingual corequisite composition, one prospective student responded, "I chose this course to be around other multilingual communities. I feel that writing and reading is a great way for people to connect to other cultures." Another prospective student described the level of comfort they experienced working with other multilingual writers: "I chose ENG 116 because I feel that I will be much more comfortable and productive if im around students who are also like me who speaks another language." These responses show how some incoming student writers may be excited by the aspects of community building around linguistic identities that a multilingual corequisite composition course offers. Beyond viewing multilingual corequisite composition as a supportive community, students also expressed selecting the course for the general institutional support they imagined it would provide: "ENG 116 is the

best choice for me, as I currently struggle with my reading and language skills. As my current high school does not provide this amount of support for multilingual students in English classes, I believe that I can heavily benefit from taking this class."

Theme Three: Multilingualism as a Tool for Advocacy

Another theme in the placement data is that multilingual students sometimes see multilingual corequisite composition as a way to advocate for themselves or others in their world. For instance, one survey taker made very clear that multilingual corequisite composition would offer them the opportunity to talk more about their cultural identity: "I strongly believe my upbringing can shed light on many problems I have in my community and possibly help others understand the current political policies put against my community." In this first response, the student describes their linguistic background and ability to utilize various languages as an asset, a way to build bridges across experiences and with others. Another survey taker saw multilingual corequisite composition as an opportunity to "further my knowledge on various experiences from diverse groups." Finally, a third survey taker offered that they self-selected multilingual corequisite composition so that they would "be able to write something significant to me." Interesting, in all of these responses, the students saw their linguistic background as an asset. In discussions about self-placement, Toth (2018) warned that students "may reproduce the narratives about their own identities, languages, and literacies that they have experienced through prior school-based assessments" (p. 159). However, while other themes presented do demonstrate our prospective students' desires to develop their writing, the responses that support this theme seem to suggest that students have positive narratives about their identities, languages, and literacies.

Theme Four: Resisting Linguistic Labels

Even though we recognize that our survey needs continued revision to serve our students best, as well as our institutional messaging, one of the reasons we believe that our survey revisions are a step in the right direction is because although students who are multilingual are likely to receive multilingual corequisite composition as one of their recommendations, students are truly empowered to make their own choice and self-select in the end. As demonstrated earlier, some models of self-placement do not allow students the choice in course or coerce those choices, and there is a long history of removing choice altogether from multilingual students. One example of student autonomy from our self-placement survey is the response from the following student, who received multilingual corequisite composition as one of their recommendations but opted for the second-semester composition course, ENG 102, skipping first-semester composition completely:

> I am bilingual but English is my Primary Language. I am currently taking Psych 240 which is intro to research methods, and requires numerous and extensive writing assignments. I have taken 10 psychology courses and they all required analytical, and numerous pages of research writing. I am comfortable in taking Eng 102 as I am currently an elementary school teacher who just graduated from my teaching program of a year and a half. This program required me to write 24 papers on the methods and theories behind teaching principles.

Even though this student recognizes their linguistic background as one aspect of their writerly self, this student also recognized that their goals and needs for an FYC course were better aligned with a higher-level lower-credit course. A few other students who received multilingual

corequisite composition recommendations felt similarly that although their linguistic background was certainly one aspect of their identity, it was not the aspect that they were most interested in nurturing. These students reported that they chose ENG 101 because they "don't want to go based off the language I speak at a home" and "although English is my second language, I am very confident in my comprehension." We feel that although our dataset is small and site specific, the transparency in our DSP regarding multilingual corequisite composition has offered our prospective students a genuine opportunity to self-place into FYC courses.

Limitations and Future Research

While we believe that our data provides an important look at how student linguistic identities play a role in their self-placement choices when we allow them an autonomy to let them play a role, there are some limitations to our study. First, at this point in our research, we only look at our own institutional data. We recognize that our institution has made commitments to diversity, as evidenced by our administration's public statements, our efforts to develop multilingual corequisite composition pathways for our students, and our FYC program's interest in supporting linguistic identities. Where other institutions may have different missions and different student populations that they serve, or where they may face legislation specifically prohibiting them from supporting diversity initiatives, their data may tell a different story about students' linguistic backgrounds, self-placement, and student autonomy. Second, because the DSP has not been required of incoming students, our study is not able to look at how every self-identified multilingual student would have responded to our DSP and which FYC course they would have selected. The truth is that many of our students do not take our DSP and instead receive an institutionally chosen course placement, whether due to a lack of knowledge about the DSP process or a lack of interest, time, or other factors needed to complete the DSP. Thus, our study used a relatively small dataset, though we have also tried to be careful not to generalize the findings from this cohort of survey takers too broadly. Finally, as this is the first of more planned projects around our institutional self-placement data, we only look at student responses to the survey and their self-reported placement choices. Future projects will look at the validity and consistency of the actual multilingual student self-placements (White & Newell, 2022) as well as their experiences in those courses.

Finally, Moos and Van Zanen (2019) provided evidence that some of the most successful DSP are revised annually to reflect not only updated course descriptions and DSP processes, but to also reflect the changing student demographics. Their suggestion had been earlier heralded by TYCA's (2016) white paper on placement reform, which advocated for DSP processes to coordinate with "first-year experience courses, new student orientation, curriculum revision, faculty development, and student support services" (p. 13). As we have reflected on our experience adding a language domain through the use of Qualtrics scoring to our DSP survey, we have also realized that we need to create a plan for continued evaluation and revision to support our students.

Conclusion

Historically, multilingual students have not had full ownership of their experiences within FYC courses and placement practices, yet multilingual students are aware of their linguistic backgrounds and have their own needs and goals for composition. Institutions serving multilingual students must recognize their needs and goals and provide opportunities for them

to make decisions regarding FYC. Self-placement methods have the potential to offer these students some critical autonomy; however, self-placement methods should be sensitive to the student population served by the institution and carefully crafted. In our article, we offered some insight regarding our multilingual student population and how our FYC program has attempted to offer courses that support multilingual writers. Additionally, we shared how our self-placement methods are positioned in the larger discussion of self-placement, and we demonstrated how we have revised our DSP to offer better choices for our students. Finally, we presented data from our self-placement survey that sheds light on the reasons why multilingual students self-place into our multilingual corequisite composition course, and we described ideas for further revision of our DSP using Cavasos and Karaman's (2021) TDQ. Through understanding how students recognize their linguistic backgrounds, see their multilingual identities as asset-based and contributing to a community, but also how they may resist linguistic labels, we hope that our discussion offers other institutions some inspiration for designing similar courses and self-placement approaches.

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