

## 2005 NFLRC WORKSHOP:

### Designing Effective Foreign Language Placement Tests

June 20– July 1, 2005

#### EVALUATION

© Thom Hudson

*University of Hawai'i at Mānoa*

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## SUMMARY

The 2005 workshop, *Designing Effective Foreign Language Placement Tests*, took place from June 20 through July 1 at UH Mānoa in Moore Hall 155A and 153A, with the support of the National Foreign Language Resource Center (NFLRC). The aim of the workshop was to involve foreign language educators who have some role in the language placement process at their institutions in a two-week immersion into language placement practices. The primary issues addressed were: articulation among programs, placement contexts, validity, reliability, alternatives in assessment, maintaining test quality, and basic testing statistics. The workshop achieved its goals and was a successful two-week experience for the overwhelming majority of the twenty-three participants from around the nation. Eleven different languages were represented, most of them less commonly taught languages.

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## ORGANIZATION AND PARTICIPANT SELECTION

Thom Hudson and Martyn Clark served as facilitators for the two-week workshop, working to clarify information for the workshop participants prior to the workshop and developing the workshop content that would be placed in a binder for each participant. Jim Yoshioka, NFLRC program coordinator, served as the workshop organizer, arranging publicity, the online application process, compiling the course materials, arranging for the facilities, food, entertainment, and equipment.

From the outset, there was a high degree of interest in the workshop. The application process was carried out electronically, yielding 74 applications. Twenty-three applicants were selected in a process involving Thom Hudson, workshop director and co-facilitator, Martyn Clark, co-facilitator, Richard Schmidt, director of the NFLRC, Jim Yoshioka, program coordinator at the NFLRC, David Hiple, associate director of the NFLRC. With eleven languages, this was one of the most diverse workshops offered through the NFLRC. The languages were: Filipino, French, Hindi, Hebrew, Japanese, Korean, Mandarin Chinese, Russian, Spanish, Swahili, and Thai.

There was a decision to focus on less commonly taught languages in the selection process. As such, background knowledge in assessment was de-emphasized. That is, the selection committee intentionally did not select participants who had extensive language testing knowledge. These decisions affected the types of workshop topics, materials, and activities that took place. For example, having eleven different languages meant that sample material had to be in English rather than in a foreign language. Further, the decision to select candidates without a background in testing meant that many were unfamiliar with computer applications other than word processing.

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## THE WORKSHOP

The workshop generally consisted of three content threads. (The complete workshop schedule is shown in Appendix A). The morning sessions tended to involve theoretical and conceptual aspects of the placement process. The goal of the morning sessions was to help workshop participants think critically about placement issues in the context of an overall approach to language learning and teaching. Topics such as articulation among high school and college programs, placement contexts, validity, reliability, alternatives in assessment, maintaining test quality, and heritage learner issues were dealt with during this time. These mornings involved both workshop facilitator fronted sessions and group work among the participants.

The initial part of each afternoon generally focused on more technical aspects of the placement and testing process. This time included such topics as spreadsheet program use, descriptive statistics, standardized scores, item level statistics, ratings, correlation, test reliability, and test score interpretation. These were generally very hands-on times when the participants were working on the computer. The activities included work with the spreadsheet Excel and with a freeware item and test analysis program called TAP (Test Analysis Program) by Gordon P. Brooks of Ohio University.

The last part of the afternoon was spent with participants working on a case study of their particular instructional and assessment context. This exercise was initially foreign to some of the participants to the extent that sitting and writing was not a familiar activity. However, as the workshop progressed, most of the participants became accustomed to the process and indicated that they liked it in the end. In the end, twenty-two of twenty-three of the participants produced case studies. (The case study format is shown in Appendix B).

There were definite features of the group make up that affected the flow of the workshop. First, the twenty-three participants had very unique and strong personalities, as well as varying expectations of the workshop outcomes. Additionally, a great deal about the home educational context of the workshop participants was institution specific. Some came from large programs while others came from small programs. For example, one participant came from an institution with 1700 to 2000 students enrolled in the first four undergraduate courses while another had fewer than 45 students in all courses. Additionally, some of the programs had heritage and non-heritage students while others had no heritage learners. In some contexts there are institutional language requirements while others had no such requirement. Either having or not having a language requirement affects the types of stakes that are involved in the placement decisions, both for the students and the institutions. Another set of contextual features has to do with the way in which the placement process takes place. Some institutions require the placement examination to be taken at a computer, some require that all testing take place within a fifty minute period time frame, some have formal examinations while others offer more informal screening procedures without required exams.

Because there was so much diversity within the participant population, it was not possible to address specific content areas. Rather, the workshop had to deal with generic concepts. This meant that those participants who wanted to write their tests at the workshop were unable to do

so. Further, this diversity made it difficult to constitute discussion groups that had commonalities beyond the fact that they all had to address a foreign language placement process. Finally, although the participants had been encouraged to bring data from their placement process, only one brought usable data to analyze. Initially, the workshop had been seen as a venue for the participants to analyze their own tests in order to discover changes that might be necessary. In fact, the one participant who did bring data wrote on the evaluation that “Perhaps the best moment was when Thom and Martyn looked over my data and said my test is working remarkably well.” However, this type of analysis was not possible for the remainder of the participants, and the absence of participant data caused some restructuring of the workshop sequence. Thus, the computer work seemed of distant application to some. For others, the computer exercises were very difficult because of limited past experience with numerical interpretation.

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## EVALUATION OF THE WORKSHOP

### Final questionnaire, Part II (numerical ratings)

The participant evaluation of the workshop was carried out with a final questionnaire. The results for Part II of the questionnaire are presented in Table 1. The scale that was employed for the evaluation spanned a high of 5 (strongly agree) to a low of 1 (strongly disagree), with intermediate steps of 4 (agree), 3 (neutral) and 2 (disagree). The results in Table 1 indicate a generally high degree of satisfaction with little dispersion from the mean. Exceptions to this are discussed below. All items are considerably above a rating of 4 (agree).

**Table 1: Workshop questionnaire results for Part II  
(1=strongly disagree to 5= strongly agree)**

no.	item	mean	sd
1	How did you find out about the 2005 NFLRC workshop?	journal/newsletter	1
		email/WWW	12
		colleague	5
		other	1
		university language center	1
		email and flyer	1
		email/WWW and colleague	3
2	The information I received about the workshop prior to coming was adequate for my needs.	4.48	0.59
3	The workshop was well organized and well run.	4.69	0.56
4	The staff was helpful.	4.87	0.34
5	The workshop facilities and technical support were adequate	4.91	0.29
6	The length of the workshop (two weeks) was appropriate.	4.57	0.79

*continued...*

**Table 1: Workshop questionnaire results for Part II (continued)**

no.	item	mean	sd
7	I enjoyed the overall format of the workshop (presentations, demos, hands-on practice, group work, etc.).	4.35	1.03
8	I found the variety of perspectives represented by workshop presenters, facilitators, and participants valuable.	4.61	0.72
9	I found the following components of the workshop to be especially valuable:		
a	Lectures from the facilitators (Thom Hudson and Martyn Clark)	4.61	0.78
b	Hands-on activities	4.30	0.82
c	Materials provided (handbook, handouts, etc.)	4.70	0.56
10	I found the process of learning about, developing, and discussing placement testing useful and relevant.	4.70	0.47
11	I was satisfied with the facilitation of the workshop.	4.52	0.95
12	Overall, my expectations of the workshop were met.	4.52	0.85

Items 7, 11, and 12 have means above 4.00 but have relatively more dispersion as indicated by the standard deviations. For item # 7 “I enjoyed the overall format of the workshop (presentations, demos, hands-on practice, groupwork, etc.),” the evaluation breakdown was strongly agree = 13, agree = 7, neutral = 0, disagree = 3, strongly disagree = 0. The three who selected “Disagree”, stated:

1. Didn’t get a sense of community from the group; small groups were good, but fragmented. Computer work wasn’t contextualized. Instead of case study, I would have preferred more focus on writing and critiquing test items.
2. I found the work groups to be only marginally useful. It’s good to know that everyone shares similar concerns and practical constraints, but that could have been done in an hour or two at most.
3. Too much lecture, and lecture not as effective as it could be. Hands-on tasks didn’t seem well chosen in some cases; give the participants skills and interests.

Both 1 and 2 perceptions appear to result from the diversity of the participants. This concern is well taken but represents a trade-off in how the participants were selected. The type of diversity used might be reconsidered in future workshops. The comments in 3 appear to be internally contradictory, or to result from a participant who simply was not interested in the topic. However, these comments represented only three of the 23 participants.

The relatively larger standard deviations in items 11 and 12 likewise result from a small number of participants being either neutral or indicating disagreement. The results here are as follows: 11. “I was satisfied with the facilitation of the workshop.” with ratings of strongly agree = 17, agree = 4, neutral = 1, disagree = 1, strongly disagree = 0, and 12. “Overall, my expectations of the workshop were met.” With scores of strongly agree = 17, agree = 3, neutral = 2, disagree = 1, strongly disagree = 0.

Thus, overall, the participants appear to be very satisfied with the workshop and its coverage of testing and placement material. The high mean scores for the evaluation items indicate strong satisfaction with the aspects of the workshop assessed in these questionnaire items.

While the results from Part II of the questionnaire are positive, the open-ended questions in Part III reveal some of the consequences of the diversity in the perspectives among the group. A summary of comments from the questionnaires is presented below. (Verbatim comments from the questionnaires are included in Appendix D). The following discussion generally applies to results across all five of the questions in Part III.

#### **Final questionnaire, Part III (open-ended questions)**

Generally, participants found the case study activity valuable. Three explicitly mentioned it in this section of the evaluation. However, in question 4 some participants wanted more direction in terms of what was expected as an outcome for the case study. Overall, the participants liked the interaction with the other participants, although, again, in question 4 a small number of participants felt that there was too much group work or that the participants had too diverse interests and contexts to form productive groups. This sentiment was definitely a minority view. Likewise, the participants felt the lectures were helpful in providing an overview about what is involved in the assessment enterprise as a whole.

The participants felt that the workshop helped to increase their knowledge about placement and other forms of assessment as well. Comments such as that the workshop materials covered “Make me a better qualified placement test administrator and test developer”, “I have never focused on testing in this way before.” “I have tools to design a placement test which I will introduce to the schools’ administrators.” “I want to begin a two- to three-year project to create a new placement test – and proficiency test to measure the progress of the language ability of returning students from summer/year abroad.” and “The information has made me much more aware of the issues in testing. Given the political climate in which I work, in which we all live today, that is very good.” indicate that the participants feel that they learned quite a bit of important materials through the workshop. Many appear much more confident in their knowledge about and ability to do assessment now.

The participants generally indicated that they would disseminate what they have learned with their colleagues at their home institutions. The form for this varies from incorporating the information and concerns with assessment into workshops to working with individual colleagues on revising or writing placement tests. This indicates that the workshops will have impact beyond the particular groups of participants who were here in the summer of 2005. To this end, the workshop appears to have met one of its goals, and one of the goals of the NFLRC overall.

In terms of what the participants felt were areas that the workshop could have done better, there were often contradictions with the perceptions of other participants. For example, one participant complained “Too much group work” while another indicated that “Interaction w/ other participants” was the most valuable learning experience.

Finally, in terms of what the organizers of the workshop did right, the participants were overwhelming in their appreciation of the work that Jim Yoshioka did prior to and during the workshops. They commented on how welcome they felt, how well organized the meetings were, how well they were treated, and how well they were fed. They generally felt that the facilities were very good, though they did note that chairs with writing surfaces would have been an asset during the morning sessions. However, the majority had no serious complaints at all and felt that they had benefited greatly from the content and structure of the workshop.

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## OUTCOMES

A collection of twenty language placement case studies has been gathered and is currently in the editing process. The collection will be submitted for an external review process and then edited as needed. This will be a unique collection of papers covering a large number of different placement approaches and contexts. The diversity of the participants will help to ensure that there is a broad coverage of placement processes in modern language educational settings at a tertiary level.

Finally, the manual that was used during the workshop sessions is being edited to include issues that arose during the workshop. For example, there were differences in the different programs regarding the issue of students who intentionally underperform on the placement examinations. For some programs, the students received credit hours for the courses they scored above, while at other institutions no such credit is offered. This issue will now be addressed in the manual. It is not yet clear whether this particular manual will best be a paper and ink publication or will exist as pages on the Internet.

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## CONCLUSIONS

Placement in foreign language programs is a confusing fact of life for many foreign language instructors across the country. It was apparent from comments made during the workshop and on the evaluation questionnaire that many who are involved in the placement process are not aware that there is a discipline associated with language assessment. If nothing else, the NFLRC 2005 workshop made 23 people more aware of this than they were before attending.

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## APPENDIX A: SCHEDULE OF THE WORKSHOP

### WORKSHOP SCHEDULE

The goal of the afternoon sessions is to familiarize participants with simple statistical procedures for analyzing test results that can help inform them about the extent to which their assessment instruments are functioning properly. In both the morning and afternoon sessions, specific issues from the participants' home programs will be discussed whenever possible.

*note:* Morning sessions will be in Moore 155A. Afternoon sessions will be in the PC Lab (Moore 153A), which will be open from 1:00 to 5:00pm daily.

#### Monday, June 20

- 8:30 – 9:00 morning refreshments
- 9:00 – 9:30 welcome / introductions
- 9:30 – 10:30 placement, articulation, curriculum (lecture/discussion)
- 10:30 – 10:45 break
- 10:45 – 12:00 placement, articulation, curriculum (lecture/discussion)
- 12:00 – 1:30 lunch / email access (1:00–1:30)
- 1:30 – 3:00 data management and basic spreadsheet use (hands-on session)
- 3:00 – 3:15 break – afternoon refreshments
- 3:15 – 4:00 case study work
- 4:00 – 5:00 optional – additional work time / email access
- 5:30 – 7:30 welcoming reception (Student Services Center 412)

#### Tuesday, June 21

- 8:30 – 9:00 morning refreshments
- 9:00 – 10:30 language proficiency, language development, and placement (lecture/discussion)
- 10:30 – 10:45 break
- 10:45 – 12:00 language proficiency, language development, and placement (lecture/discussion)
- 12:00 – 1:30 lunch / email access (1:00–1:30)
- 1:30 – 3:00 data management and basic spreadsheet use (hands-on session)
- 3:00 – 3:15 break – afternoon refreshments
- 3:15 – 4:00 case study work
- 4:00 – 5:00 optional – additional work time / email access

#### Wednesday, June 22

- 8:30 – 9:00 morning refreshments
- 9:00 – 10:30 issues in validity, reliability, and practicality (lecture/discussion)
- 10:30 – 10:45 break
- 10:45 – 12:00 issues in validity, reliability, and practicality (lecture/discussion)
- 12:00 – 1:30 lunch / email access (1:00–1:30)
- 1:30 – 3:00 descriptive statistics (hands-on session)
- 3:00 – 3:15 break – afternoon refreshments
- 3:15 – 4:00 case study work
- 4:00 – 5:00 optional – additional work time / email access

### **Thursday, June 23**

8:30 – 9:00 morning refreshments  
9:00 – 10:30 identifying common placement issues (lecture/discussion)  
10:30 – 10:45 break  
10:45 – 12:00 identifying common placement issues (lecture/discussion)  
12:00 – 1:30 lunch / email access (1:00–1:30)  
1:30 – 3:00 interpreting test scores / calculating standardized scores (hands-on session)  
3:00 – 3:15 break – afternoon refreshments  
3:15 – 4:00 case study work  
4:00 – 5:00 optional – additional work time / email access

### **Friday, June 24**

8:30 – 9:00 morning refreshments  
9:00 – 10:30 placement as a system (lecture/discussion)  
10:30 – 10:45 break  
10:45 – 12:00 placement as a system (lecture/discussion)  
12:00 – 1:30 lunch / email access (1:00–1:30)  
1:30 – 3:00 item level statistics (hands-on session)  
3:00 – 3:15 break – afternoon refreshments  
3:15 – 4:00 case study work  
4:00 – 5:00 optional – additional work time / email access

### **Sunday, June 26**

optional social event (TBA)

### **Monday, June 27**

8:30 – 9:00 morning refreshments  
9:00 – 10:30 alternatives in assessment (lecture/discussion)  
10:30 – 10:45 break  
10:45 – 12:00 alternatives in assessment (lecture/discussion)  
12:00 – 1:30 lunch / email access (1:00–1:30)  
1:30 – 3:00 norm-referenced and criterion-referenced decisions (hands-on session)  
3:00 – 3:15 break – afternoon refreshments  
3:15 – 4:00 case study work  
4:00 – 5:00 optional – additional work time / email access

### **Tuesday, June 28**

8:30 – 9:00 morning refreshments  
9:00 – 10:30 developing and improving test items (lecture/discussion)  
10:30 – 10:45 break  
10:45 – 12:00 developing and improving test items (lecture/discussion)  
12:00 – 1:30 lunch / email access (1:00–1:30)  
1:30 – 3:00 ratings and correlations (hands-on session)  
3:00 – 3:15 break – afternoon refreshments  
3:15 – 4:00 case study work  
4:00 – 5:00 optional – additional work time / email access

### **Wednesday, June 29**

8:30 – 9:00 morning refreshments

9:00–10:30 cut scores and guidelines (lecture/discussion)  
10:30–10:45 break  
10:45–12:00 cut scores and guidelines (lecture/discussion)  
12:00–1:30 lunch / email access (1:00–1:30)  
1:30–3:00 test reliability (hands-on session)  
3:00–3:15 break – afternoon refreshments  
3:15–4:00 case study work  
4:00–5:00 optional – additional work time / email access  
5:15–6:00 lei-making lesson (optional) (NFLRC office)

#### **Thursday, June 30**

8:30–9:00 morning refreshments  
9:00–10:30 maintaining test quality (lecture/discussion)  
10:30–10:45 break  
10:45–12:00 maintaining test quality (lecture/discussion)  
12:00–1:30 lunch / email access (1:00–1:30)  
1:30–3:00 test score reporting, norming, equating: consolidation (hands-on session)  
3:00–3:15 break – afternoon refreshments  
3:15–4:00 case study work  
4:00–5:00 optional – additional work time / email access  
5:30–7:30 sunset reception on the NFLRC lanai

#### **Friday, July 1**

8:30–9:00 morning refreshments  
9:00–10:30 outstanding issues / group presentations (lecture/discussion)  
10:30–10:45 break  
10:45–12:00 outstanding issues / group presentations (lecture/discussion)  
12:00–1:30 lunch / email access (1:00–1:30)  
1:30–3:00 workshop wrap-up  
3:00–4:00 optional – email access

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## APPENDIX B: CASE STUDY INSTRUCTIONS

### Placement testing case studies

As part of the course work during the placement testing workshop, you will be asked to develop a case study of your program's approach to placement testing. These case studies will be incorporated into the final version of the placement testing manual. Why are case studies important for the placement testing manual? Because they can help illustrate how general ideas and recommendations might be implemented in real programs. There is a kind of Murphy's Law that says: "In theory, theory and practice are the same. In practice, theory and practice are different". Case studies help put flesh and blood ("warts and all") onto the information and ideas presented in the rest of the manual. It is not necessary that your program have the perfect placement test for the case study to be useful – if the placement test is still in the development stage, for example, the case study could focus on how a curricular review is being used to develop content for the test.

You will be given time during the workshop regularly to work on the case study. After you read the format below, think of what materials you will want to bring with you to the workshop to facilitate discussion of your context and to assist you in writing the project.

### Case study format

In order to maximize the usefulness of the case studies, it is helpful to have them all follow the same general format. This will allow future readers to identify the similarities and differences between programs as well as quickly locate pertinent examples. For this reason, case studies should have the following elements in the following order:

#### *Title*

An informative title will help readers quickly locate potentially useful case studies. If there is something noteworthy or unique about your particular case, try to make it a part of the title (e.g., "Incorporating heritage speaker sensitivity into the Thai placement process", "Using personal essays to improve placement in Tagalog", etc.).

#### *Introduction*

This is basically an abstract for the case study and should explain the goal and scope of the case study. It could also be used to position your particular case study within the language teaching literature (e.g., "Although there have been numerous articles describing the development of instructional activities in many modern languages, there have only been a handful involving African languages.").

#### *Context of the program*

In this section, you should introduce your program and students. Is the program part of a larger institution? If so, what is the relationship with surrounding components? Who are the students? Do they come from more than one population? What are their language learning needs?

### ***Description of the process***

This section is for presenting a description of the program and the placement processes and challenges within it. What are the various courses offered? What type of information is needed for placing students into courses? How is course placement carried out? What are the goals and objectives of the program? If your case study is focusing on the development of a new placement instrument, your description can focus on the steps that were taken at each stage of the process.

### ***Distinguishing features of the program***

In this section, you can describe any features that are unique to your particular situation. These could be features that have to do with the context, such as having a large number of heritage students and a strong commitment to special classes for them. Or it could be related to the test itself, such as developing a video-based listening test. If there is an emphasis on articulation between your program and another program, that could be considered a distinguishing feature. Anything that you think is particularly noteworthy about your placement process could be included here.

### ***Practical ideas for placement and future development***

Here is where you can take any lessons that you have learned in your own placement approach and generalize them to be of use to others. These can either be things to do or things to avoid. For example, if you found that having an online bulletin board to discuss proposed changes to the placement process allowed for a more productive use of time than having multiple meetings, that idea might be useful to other programs. Also, here is where you talk about what actions you recommend for making your placement better.

### ***Conclusion***

In this section, you should summarize what the experience in designing your placement process has taught you. This is also a chance to emphasize any important points or issues that came up in your case study.

### ***Appendix (optional)***

If there are any materials that you would like to have included with your case study (such as an annotated list of course objectives or samples of test items), those could be presented here. It is also possible to present such materials within the main text of your case study if you so desire.

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**APPENDIX C: WORKSHOP EVALUATION FORM**

Your assistance with this questionnaire is greatly appreciated. Please take a few minutes to assess the effectiveness of the workshop. Completing it carefully will aid those who participate in future workshops. Thank you very much!

**Part I**

1. Which foreign language do you teach? \_\_\_\_\_
2. What is your position title? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Years of experience in foreign language instruction \_\_\_\_\_
4. Briefly describe any previous experience with testing: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Part II**

Please check the phrase or statement that best applies to your experience. Feel free to add any comments to clarify or enhance your response.

1. How did you find out about the 2005 NFLRC workshop?  
 journal/newsletter    flyer    email/WWW    conference    colleague  
 other? comment \_\_\_\_\_
2. The information I received about the workshop prior to coming was adequate for my needs.  
strongly agree   agree   neutral   disagree   strongly disagree  
comment \_\_\_\_\_
3. The workshop was well organized and well run.  
strongly agree   agree   neutral   disagree   strongly disagree  
comment \_\_\_\_\_
4. The staff was helpful.  
strongly agree   agree   neutral   disagree   strongly disagree  
comment \_\_\_\_\_
5. The workshop facilities and technical support were adequate.  
strongly agree   agree   neutral   disagree   strongly disagree  
comment \_\_\_\_\_
6. The length of the workshop (two weeks) was appropriate.  
strongly agree   agree   neutral   disagree   strongly disagree  
comment \_\_\_\_\_
7. I enjoyed the overall format of the workshop (presentations, demos, hands-on practice, groupwork, etc.).  
strongly agree   agree   neutral   disagree   strongly disagree  
comment \_\_\_\_\_

8. I found the variety of perspectives represented by workshop presenters, facilitators, and participants valuable.  
 strongly agree      agree      neutral      disagree      strongly disagree  
 comment \_\_\_\_\_
9. I found the following components of the workshop to be especially valuable:
- a. Lectures from the facilitators (Thom Hudson and Martyn Clark)  
 strongly agree      agree      neutral      disagree      strongly disagree  
 comment \_\_\_\_\_
- b. Hands-on activities  
 strongly agree      agree      neutral      disagree      strongly disagree  
 comment \_\_\_\_\_
- c. Materials provided (handbook, handouts, etc.)  
 strongly agree      agree      neutral      disagree      strongly disagree  
 comment \_\_\_\_\_
10. I found the process of learning about, developing, and discussing placement testing useful and relevant.  
 strongly agree      agree      neutral      disagree      strongly disagree  
 comment \_\_\_\_\_
11. I was satisfied with the facilitation of the workshop.  
 strongly agree      agree      neutral      disagree      strongly disagree  
 comment \_\_\_\_\_
12. Overall, my expectations of the workshop were met.  
 strongly agree      agree      neutral      disagree      strongly disagree  
 comment \_\_\_\_\_

### Part III

Please respond to the following questions. Your comments will assist in the preparation of the evaluation report.

1. Please describe your most valuable learning experience(s) at the workshop (e.g., specific session, conversation with a workshop facilitator/another participant, etc.).
2. What effect will the workshop have on your teaching/professional development?
3. How do you expect to share/disseminate what you have learned with colleagues at your home institution?
4. What could we have done better at the workshop?
5. What did we do particularly well?

MAHALO FOR YOUR TIME!

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## APPENDIX D: COMMENTS FROM PART III OF THE FINAL QUESTIONNAIRE

*note:* One participant did not complete Part III.

xxxx = illegible handwriting

**1. Please describe your most valuable learning experience(s) at the workshop (e.g., specific session, conversation with a workshop facilitator/another participant, etc.).**

Interaction w/ other participants, Shared concerns about heritage learners, Difficulties of relatively small programs

Sessions on item types; issues in assessment, Case study, Group discussions

Writing the case study helped me clarify my own situation. Doing that exercise in the context of the presentations, readings, and hands-on computer exercises was very helpful

The session on 6/28 “Writing quality items” is most valuable. It specified basic guidelines in writing tests, not only for placement, but also for other tests i.e., proficiency, finals

By learning about different kinds of tests, it gave me the possible choices to fit our placement needs.

Writing a case study to analyze my own school’s situation deeply, based on what we learned in lectures. Excel was very helpful too.

The lecturers were very helpful. It was also very nice to hear cases from other programs. The hands-on sessions were particularly useful.

From the lectures and discussions and queries, I realized how important a placement is to teaching. I learned what makes a good placement test and hopefully be able to construct a valid and reliable test for our program.

The step-by-step lecture and the hands-on training using Excel are very important so that a heavy and boring subject becomes very interesting. The opportunity to talk with other instructors is very welcoming. Thank you for making available the time and the setting for it.

I was never sure what I had done was appropriate or not because I made the tests mostly by reading books. This workshop taught me things I did ok and wrong, and what I need to do in the future.

Contributions from “more advanced” participants and discussions with them (e.g., Yukiko, Derek). But really, the overall orientation of all.

The lectures, materials, hands-on activities were all excellent! I learned a lot!

All of the above. I am eager to learn about the decisions regarding PT and the various options a tester may have to contemplate – and I got it all during the workshop.

Most valuable elements were those that began with explanation, followed with concrete examples, moved on to general/theoretical view, and included practice/discussion. Some

of the item difficulty and item creation/item type worked this way. That was most useful to me.

The morning lectures gave me the whole picture of placement testing. I learned a lot about test data analysis and many things to avoid to create a good placement test.

The workshop was planned very well. The facilitators know how to introduce the topics and sustain the interest of participants. I enjoyed the sessions on the theoretical background on testing.

For me – Thom and Martyn were the gems. They had the thorough expertise and the actual experience. W/ what they taught us, I was grateful and honored that we were learning from professionals who really knew their ‘stuff’.

Learning to do statistical analysis was invaluable, and Martyn’s presentation were excellent. Perhaps the best moment was then Thom and Martyn looked over my data and said my test is working remarkably well. Really, there were so many discussions and moments, it’s difficult to narrow down.

I cannot single out just one example, since I am deeply satisfied by the overall result. I definitely will go back to the materials.

Chaps 5 and 6 were most helpful or me in terms of the lecture portion. For the hands-on, while numbers and statistics are still not my cup of tea, working on Excel spreadsheet was a good learning for me. Now I sort of understand the way it works – sort of.

Theoretical issues on testing (never took a course like this before) statistic analysis.

## **2. What effect will the workshop have on your teaching/professional development?**

More background on statistical analysis will help me seek support and funding from additional sources

Make me a better qualified placement test administrator and test developer

I have never focused on testing in this way before. The information has made me much more aware of the issues in testing. Given the political climate in which I work, in which we all live today, that is very good.

I have tools to design a placement test which I will introduce to the schools’ administrators.

I want to begin a two to three-year project to create a new placement test – and proficiency test to measure the progress of the language ability of returning students from summer/year abroad.

This is my summer project for my school.

I am going back with a completely new outlook on how placement and testing in general is done. I just took it for granted before. Since grades impact my students’ lives, I am going to make concerted efforts to make good (placement) tests.

As I mentioned previously, I am in the process of revising our placement test.

I have become more aware of other factors in assessing students' proficiency, and I know that I can use this knowledge to make other tests, besides the placement tests, measure exactly what I want to see in the students' ability.

I am more comfortable with interpreting some of the data that I had trouble with. As a teacher trainer, I feel I can help my students in developing and evaluating their classroom tests more than I used to.

Better attention to all assessments.

I feel much more confident now to begin a project of developing our Chinese placement test for our department.

I knew practically nothing about the placement exams before the workshop. Now I feel that I have a pretty good idea of what to look for in order to evaluate our current system and to xxxditing the exams.

I've already changed the format of the test and its general appearance. After the summer I plan to meet w/ my faculty – discuss the contents of the workshop and decide on a course of implementing the principles.

It will place me in the difficult role of being the local “expert” without sufficient expertise. It will increase my influence on testing, which I hope will lead to better testing.

I had very good training in language teaching before, but I did not receive any training in placement test. From this workshop, I make up this important lesson. Now I can say I am a more qualified language teacher.

The workshop will help me in developing a placement test for my institution.

(Humility aside) I have introduced, helped start, or re-started language programs in five colleges/universities, and four high schools in the Bay Area. Will definitely share all we learned with the faculty and staff in this area.

I have acquired so much useful knowledge, I hardly know where to begin. Primarily, the workshop has prepared me to be a leader on my campus in placement test evaluation and design. I know I have much more to learn, but this has added a degree of professionalism to my position.

Great! I am ready to start developing a long overdue new placement test. Now I have a step-by-step guide how to do it.

Everything I learned on test qualities and developing tests are useful in my teaching. The Excel functions for placement tests will probably push or program to finally input all the information from our past placement tests in some kind of a data file to make them more useful.

Class management and teaching effectiveness.

3. **How do you expect to share/disseminate what you have learned with colleagues at your home institution?**

Will discuss with colleagues. Newly inspired to create a good test.

I will actively take part in the development of a new/revised placement test for our program.

As language director of SEASSI I am in a position to share this information insight with a faculty of 25 from all over the world. I'll make placement testing a topic of our annual pre-workshop preparation week and so it will no doubt be an improvement for the field in general.

Definitely – will recommend it to my colleagues.

Share with my colleagues at the beginning of the school year.

Most urgently, I will discuss the content of my case study with my colleagues. – my colleagues of languages other than Japanese will also get benefits from what I will share with them.

Have one day session with my colleagues in the African language program. If this is not possible, I plan to send them an email inviting them to consult me in matters pertaining to placement testing.

I have already sent them a draft of the case study I wrote. Now, if they are interested, I can share with them the nitty-gritty part of it.

I plan to have my colleagues read the paper that I have written, and welcome any additional comments to make the paper really represent my language program.

I plan to show the analysis of our most recent results to my colleagues because the data indicates changes in our students' population and curriculum. I would like to work with my colleagues to improve our placement system.

Assessment is important. Through Berkeley Language Center, and as my interest in backward design grown (I present about it at conferences).

I would like to propose a project to develop our own Chinese language placement test together with colleagues.

I'm hoping to re-create the placement exams in the future w/ assistance of my colleagues.

I also plan an inter-university meeting in NY with my colleagues from other institutions.

I expect to serve on all committees working on language placement testing.

I will use what I learned from this workshop to study our current placement and procedure. I will have a meeting and discuss with my colleagues to make our test better.

Yes, I will give a presentation at the language center of my university.

Am targeting sharing this first with my colleagues in Japanese, Russian, and Chinese – in a staff development or faculty meeting. Will also run a small cascade-down meeting with

my colleagues in Filipino in the chapter of the Foreign Language Association of Northern California.

As soon as I return, I will begin working closely with the Italian faculty on their re-designed test, pre-testing items and hopefully piloting in the fall. I will also encourage the Spanish faculty to consider developing their own test. Oh, and I will work with the new Russian faculty member to develop a productive skills test for heritage speakers.

I will discuss my pre-test with my colleagues and then will share my new knowledge with TFS, while teaching Russian and methodology seminar.

Like I've mentioned, we may now have to do something about those old tests in storage boxes back in our program office and get some use out of them w/ the information we've learned from this workshop.

Informal talk (only one more staff in our program) and do placement together.

#### **4. What could we have done better at the workshop?**

Contextualized presentation of material rather than start w/ so much emphasis on statistical analysis. Once participants work on developing test items, they will better appreciate the need for the more technical aspects of assessment.

Give information/readings on expected case study outcomes and basic info on statistics/excel as used in testing.

As I say above, some of our peers didn't distinguish between individual concerns and concerns of general interest. They wasted a lot of time and should have been controlled more effectively.

Everything went well – I could not ask for more. Now I remember – the chairs in the a.m. sessions should have writing desks.

If it had been more clearly described what we would be writing in the case study (including length, etc.) I could have written most of it at home and would have been able to spend time in what could be done only at the workshop.

Maybe location – closer to Waikiki. The school is located in a place that is a bit inconvenient.

I think the hands-on sessions would have been more focused on one or two tasks. I felt that we were somehow jumping around. Two weeks is a very short time to learn the complicated Excel. Everything else was Great!!

Maybe more items i.e., actual test questions sample of a good placement test.(Also inform us that if we come on a weekend, there's no cafeteria in the dorms where one can buy food. Esp. if you arrive in the evening.

Everything has been excellent. If anything needs improvement at all, maybe a table to write on. It is a littler hard balancing the pad on your lap for a long time.

For me, this was very valuable, but some people who were in small institutions and place only a few students a year, may need a different kind of guidance as well.

Too much group work. Too much time on “study questions” It is interesting to find out about other situations but they are indeed very different no matter how we are grouped. Have a glossary and critiques of existing tests. Use or refer to good ones as a model or to guidelines even if there is no perfect test. Why not the ELI? Best guidelines seem good (though French and Spanish sample aren’t).

You’ve done just fine. I did have some problems w/ the statistical analysis, but I now value the systems I was taught. I would also eliminate the “case study” requirements to be done on our return.

Can’t think of any. It was really good!

More effective structure, LESS LECTURE, more effective hands-on and discussion topics. More guidance and modeling for new tasks, especially the tasks for getting started. Case study was not well integrated into other work, not well guided.

If we have a chance to study one or two real cases, from the context program, test content, cut sore to the placement result, analysis, I think it will be very helpful and practical.

Feedback from the participants after the first week.

If the luxury of time existed, more of the hands-on practice with TAP and Excel and the other exercises.

Some more information about expectations of the case study may be useful. The description that was sent out was helpful, but perhaps information about the length, more possible approaches, what we should expect to produce after two weeks, etc.

Group-work. Different activities (not only study questions would be very beneficial).

I would have liked to have seen and analyzed sample test items from existing placement exams to learn more about the reliability and usefulness of our own exam.

If course content and preparation (what to prepare) instructions were given in more explicitly before hand.

##### **5. What did we do particularly well?**

Staff (Jim, esp.) was extremely helpful – facilities were great. Pre-workshop info excellent  
Organizing the lectures and putting together the manual

You all (Thom, Martyn, Jim) treated us very well, gave us lots of good information, and were patient with our jet lag. Mahalo for your hard work.

All of them – the quality and content of the workshop, the expertise of the facilitators and professionalism and “caring” of the program coordinator. Thank you very much for the great and productive time.

Thom, Martyn, and Jim were the best part of the workshop. Thom and Martyn were extraordinary facilitators. First of all, they have completely wide range of knowledge related to testing and second language education. Secondly, they are good teachers – they are always ready to answer any questions with lots of insights. Also, they are flexible to try to meet the participants' need. Jim is a great coordinator and took good care of us.

The food (excellent). The lectures (the facilitators are extremely knowledgeable with nice personalities). Generally, this is the best workshop that I have ever attended (and I am not lying). I will come again if you do a workshop on developing effective proficiency tests.

Taking care of us (feeding...) Being friendly. Many emails prior to the workshop.

Making me realize and taught me how to make an effective foreign language placement test.

The day-to-day presentation, starting from the refreshment in the morning, the lecture, the practice till the end of the day. This has been the best workshop I have attended, and I attend several workshops every year.

I found individual consultation extremely valuable. I also liked the hands-on sessions. Most of all, I felt the literature very easy to understand and the instructors extremely approachable.

The way you put it all together. Nice overall pace.

The workshop schedule and the food.

Everything! Mahalo!

Present, xxxxxx, clarified... the more we hear you, the better!

Creating a collegial supportive open atmosphere. Warm, friendly interactions.

Data analysis lectures and hand-on activities.

You did great in all areas. The administrator – snacks, coffee breaks, sundown excursion, the course content and the pedagogy, this theory match with the practice.

We were very well taken care of overall – from having questions answered readily to having more food than we ever dreamed of.

Lectures/seminars. Interaction with participants. Flexible responses and attention to individual needs. Great job.

The information in the lecture discussions were very helpful. And even if I don't really like numbers, the hands-on spreadsheets had give me some new and interesting learning that I know I could use.

I liked the structure of the workshops (theoretical issues, work on computer for analysis, case study writing).