Evaluating the Effectiveness of Thompson’s (2105) Survey of Language Usage and Spanish of Heritage Learners Placement Program Exam at the High-School Level

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A Dissertation Presented

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In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
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by
Elizabeth Villanueva
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Evaluating the Effectiveness of Thompson’s (2015) Survey of Language Usage and Spanish of Heritage Learners Placement Program Exam at the High-School Level

Language placement test serve with multiple purposes to measure the language abilities and performance of language learners to place them in the most appropriate language course with curriculum that best meets the language needs. There is the need to assess appropriately the Spanish heritage language learners’ (SHLLs) abilities at the high-school level. Therefore, this mixed-method study investigated how Thompson’s (2015) modified Yes or No 10-question Survey of Language Usage (Survey) and the three part Spanish for Heritage Language Learners Placement Program Exam (Placement Test) could be used effectively with three Spanish class levels of HLLs at the high-school level to differentiate HLLs' use of Spanish inside and outside of the home and in their academic use of Spanish. The three placement test parts were (a) Language Awareness (LA); (b) Bilingual Skills (BS) and (c) Writing Skills (WS). The independent variables were the three classifications of the survey and the three SHLL classes, and the dependent variables were the scores for LA, BS and WS.

A total of one hundred forty-four 9th- through 12th-grade Spanish-speaking heritage language learners enrolled in Pre-International Baccalaureate (Pre-IB) Spanish for Heritage Learners Level 1 (Pre-IB SHLL I), Spanish for Heritage Learners Level I (SHLL I), and Spanish for Heritage Language Learners Level II (SHLL II) classes
participated in the study taking the Thompsons’ modified Survey and Placement Test. Four Spanish teachers with diverse teaching experience participated in the pre- and postfocus group interviews evaluating the benefits and challenges of the existing placement system and the new implementation of Thompsons’ modified instruments.

The findings of the Survey show that only 33% of SHLLs were correctly placed and approximately 66% were misplaced. Cohen’s kappa ($k$) results also showed that there was no statistically significant agreement between the survey results and the existing class placement, $k = .04$. One of the major findings of the placement test results indicated that there were only mean differences in Bilingual Skills (BS) based on the three SHLLs classes. The practical importance (Eta squared) for BS is .04, which is a small size according to Cohen’s criteria. Due to the major possibility that 34 participating students could have used Google Translate for Part II: Bilingual Skills, additional analyses were performed. The independent-sample $t$-test results show that there was a statistically significant mean difference between the SHLLs group who did not use Google Translate ($n = 110$) and the group who possibly did use it ($n = 34$). The findings from the pre- and postfocus teachers’ interviews revealed a total of 19 themes and three subthemes. They have mixed equivalence on the benefits and challenges of the existing and the new implementation of the placement systems; however, one major benefit of the new placement systems was the implementation of rating rubrics for more appropriate assessment of the SHLLs skills and an equitable placement system. Due to the unprecedented COVID-19, however, the findings also indicated that a major factor that possibly influenced the results of the study was being in distance learning.
This dissertation, written under the direction of the candidate’s dissertation committee and approved by the members of the committee, has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty of the School of Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education. The content and research methodologies presented in this work represent the work of the candidate alone.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Language is a tool that can unite, edify, and fortify, or it can divide, weaken, and destroy societies. Completing my doctorate has been one of the most challenging and humbling experiences I have ever had as an English learner. This would not have been possible without all the support, guidance, motivation, and love I received from a community of family, friends, colleagues, professors, and so many others it is not possible to name them all. First of all, I am tremendously grateful to my mother, Petra, for all her sacrifices she made to come to this country looking for the American Dream for her family. Her strength, intelligence, and determination are qualities that have influenced me to pursue my own dreams such as completing my dissertation. My father, Leodegario, my siblings, Amelia, Jesús, and Verónica, and especially my nieces and nephew, Ximena, Renata, and Julián have been part of my inspiration during this process and the value of their education and our heritage language maintenance. My family, cultural and linguistic roots in Mexico have been the backbone of my upbringing to aspire for this milestone goal and to be where I am.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

DISSERATION ABSTRACT ........................................................................................................... ii
SIGNATURE PAGE ....................................................................................................................... iv
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .................................................................................................................. v
TABLE OF CONTENTS ............................................................................................................... vii
LIST OF TABLES ........................................................................................................................ xii
LIST OF FIGURES ....................................................................................................................... xiv

CHAPTER

I. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM ................................................................. 1
   Purpose of the Study .......................................................................................... 7
   Background Need ........................................................................................... 10
   Theoretical Framework .................................................................................. 14
   Significance of the Study .............................................................................. 21
   Research Questions ....................................................................................... 25
   Definition of Terms ....................................................................................... 26
   Summary ........................................................................................................ 33

II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE .............................................................. 35
   National, State, and Local Surveys for HLLs .............................................. 35
   The need for language programs designed for HHLs and pedagogical practices ....................................................................................... 35
   Sociocultural variables that affect HLLs linguistic abilities ...................... 40
   Why HLLs opt out of learning their own HL .............................................. 42
   Summary ........................................................................................................ 43
   Placement tests for HLLs ............................................................................ 44
   Language assessments and purposes ......................................................... 44
   Differentiation of language assessment for HLLs, FLLs and L2s ............. 47
   Considerations while developing a Spanish HLLs placement test ............. 49
   The piloting process for accurate statistical analysis ............................... 54
   The efficacy of Spanish HL placement test .............................................. 61
   Thompson’s (2015) placement test model for this study .......................... 65
   Summary ........................................................................................................ 70
   Summary ........................................................................................................ 71

III. THE METHODOLOGY ............................................................................ 74
   Research Design .......................................................................................... 74
   Setting and Participants ............................................................................. 77
   Qualifications of Researcher ...................................................................... 82
# TABLE OF CONTENTS CONTINUED

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participating Teachers Qualifications</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protection of Human Subjects</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrumentation</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modifications to the Instruments</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modified Survey of Language Usage</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thompson’s (2015) Modified Spanish for Heritage Learners Placement Test</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Testing out the rating system</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Placement test rating system</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-and Postfocus Teacher Group Interviews</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedures to Collect the Data</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pilot Procedures</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers’ Rubric and Placement Test Training</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analyses</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantitative analysis</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualitative analysis</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## IV. FINDINGS

| Quantitative findings                                               | 106  |
| Research Question 1                                                 | 106  |
| Research Question 2                                                 | 109  |
| Research Question 3                                                 | 111  |
| Research Question 4                                                 | 113  |
| Additional Analysis                                                 | 116  |
| Qualitative Findings Research Question 5                             | 120  |
| Prefocus Teachers Interviews’ Findings                              | 121  |
| Theme 1                                                              | 122  |
| Theme 2                                                              | 123  |
| Theme 3                                                              | 124  |
| Theme 4                                                              | 125  |
| Theme 5                                                              | 126  |
| Theme 6                                                              | 127  |
| Theme 7                                                              | 128  |
| Theme 8                                                              | 128  |
| Postfocus Teachers Interviews’ Findings                              | 129  |
| Theme 1                                                              | 132  |
| Theme 2                                                              | 132  |
| Theme 3                                                              | 134  |
| Theme 4                                                              | 137  |
| Theme 5                                                              | 138  |
# TABLE OF CONTENTS CONTINUED

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theme 6</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 7</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 8</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 9</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 10</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 11</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>V. SUMMARY, LIMITATIONS, DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS</th>
<th>149</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Summary of the Study</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of the Findings</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations of the Study</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion of Findings</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusions</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implications for Educational Practice</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations for Future Research</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afterword</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| REFERENCES | 196 |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>APPENDIXES</th>
<th>206</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX A: Parental Consent of Student Participants (English)</td>
<td>207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX B: Parental Consent of Student Participants (Spanish)</td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX C: Parent Letter of Consent (English)</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX D: Parent Letter of Consent (Spanish)</td>
<td>216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX E: Student Letter of Consent (English)</td>
<td>219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX F: Student Letter of Consent (Spanish)</td>
<td>222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX G: Teachers Consent Form for Research Participation</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX H: Principal Letter</td>
<td>228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX I: Principal’s Letter for Elizabeth Villanueva</td>
<td>230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIXES</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX J: Modified Survey of Language Usage</td>
<td>232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX K: Modified Spanish for Heritage Learners Program Placement Exam</td>
<td>235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX L: Survey and Placement Test Rating Point System</td>
<td>239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX M: Survey Classification on Number of Yes Response</td>
<td>241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX N: Placement Test Result Point Scale System</td>
<td>243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX O: Part II–Bilingual Skills (Spanish Translation) Sample Rubric</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX P: Standardized Spanish Translation Sentences Sample age</td>
<td>247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX Q: Spanish HLL Writing Skills Scoring Rubric</td>
<td>249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX R: Samples of Spanish HLLs Writing Skills Rating Score</td>
<td>253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX S: Transcripts of Prefocus Teachers’ Interview</td>
<td>256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX T: Transcripts of Postfocus Teachers’ Interview</td>
<td>262</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Frequency of Items Within Given Ranges of Item Difficulty</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Demographic Data for the Participating Students</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Demographic Information for Four Participating Interviewees’ Teachers</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Thompson’s (2015) Three Classifications Based on the Modified Survey of Language Usage Broken Down by Existing Class Placement</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Means, Standard Deviations, and Sample Sizes for the Three Part of Thompson’s Placement Test by the Three Existing Spanish for Heritage Language Leaners Classes (SHLLC) at the High-School Level</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>One-Way ANOVA Results for Existing Class Level Placement Based on the Three Existing three Spanish for Heritage Language Leaners Classes at the High-School Level</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Results of Tukey Post-Hoc Comparisons of Class Level for Bilingual Skills</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### LIST OF TABLES CONTINUED

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Frequency and Proportions of SHLLs Who Did and Did Not Use Google Translate on Part II: Bilingual Skills Based on the Thompson’s Modified Survey of Language Usage Three Classifications</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Frequency and Proportions of SHLLs Who Did and Did Not Use Google Translate on Part II: Bilingual Skills by Existing Class Placement</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Results of Independent-Sample t Test for SHLLs Who Did Use Google Translate and Who Did Not Use Google Translate Group on Part II: Bilingual Skills</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>One-Way ANOVA Results for SHLLs Who Did Not Use Google Translate in Part II: Bilingual Skills</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Results of Tukey Post Hoc Tests for Bilingual Skills for Those Students Who Did Not Use Google Translation by Survey Placement Levels</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>Means and Standard Deviations for SHLLs Who Did Not Use and Did Use Google Translate in Part II: Bilingual Skills</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>Prefocus Group Teacher Interview Themes Based on the Evaluation of the Existing Class Placement System</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Zyzik’s (2016) Prototype Model of Heritage Language Learner</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Zyzik’s (2016) modified prototype model for high-school Spanish HLL</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Interconnectedness to establish a high-school Spanish heritage language program at the high-school level</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Given the increasing and constant presence of the Spanish speaking population in California and the United States, Spanish is one of the most commonly taught foreign languages in kindergarten through college level curriculum (Carreira, 2014a; Beaurdrie, 2011; Potowski, 2004; Valdés, 1997). Nagano, Ketcham, and Funk (2019) stated that the unprecedented volume and diversity of immigration into the United States since the passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act in 1965 has had an obvious effect on the demographics of students in modern language classrooms across the country. The California Education Code has established a minimum requirement of one year of foreign language as a high-school requirement, which can be satisfied with either one year of visual and performing arts, a foreign language, or career and technical education (California Department of Education, 2019). At Sacramento City Unified School District (SCUSD), for example, this requirement can only be satisfied by taking a language other than English (SCUSD, 2019). Thus, it is evident that learning a foreign language is a real-world priority in 21st century global society. There is also the need to differentiate the language abilities of those who already have background language and knowledge when placing them in foreign language classes. The implementation of a placement test is a crucial step in distinguishing and addressing those language abilities and needs.

The foreign language requirement for high school and postsecondary levels becomes an issue when there is no distinction in the language ability between second language learners (L2s) and heritage language learners (HLLs) when the students are placed in the same foreign language classes (Montrul & Perpiñán, 2011; Parra, 2013;
Valdés, 1997). L2s are those who attend second language classes with no previous knowledge in the language (Montrul, 2010). By contrast, the most widely used definition for HLLs in the US is a child or adult member of a linguistic minority who grew up surrounded by their native language as well as the majority language, and for some researchers, this definition can be used interchangeably to refer to indigenous languages, and not just immigrant languages (Fishman, 2006; Montrul, 2010). These two language learner groups have different linguistic profiles, competencies, and needs. Potowski, Parada, and Morgan-Short (2012) pointed out in general terms that the differences between the strengths and needs of these two kinds of language learners can be understood by considering the differences between a student of English as a Second Language (ESL) and a native English-speaking student. Placing HLLs and L2 learners in the same class results in pedagogical challenges for the practitioners as well as the language learners due to the distinct linguistic abilities, cultural background, language proficiency, and literacy needs that each group may bring to the classroom (Carreira, 2004; Lynch, 2003; Valdés, 1997).

It is critical to understand the main differences in language abilities between the Spanish L2s and Spanish HLLs, to distinguish the abilities and needs of each, and to separate these two distinct language learner groups in order to meet their particular language needs and abilities (Valdés, 2006). An increasing number of studies have indicated that a main strength in the language abilities of L2 learners is the strong explicit knowledge of grammatical competence such as syntax, morphology, and semantics, which they may have acquired from classroom language instruction (Montrul & Perpiñán, 2011). As nonnative speakers, however, L2s have poor oral ability to use this
knowledge to produce and understand fluent discourse (Beaudrie, 2011). On the other hand, a general profile of Spanish HLLs describes them as having well developed basic communication skills in their heritage language, having a limited range of vocabulary, and using a more colloquial vocabulary as a result of not being taught the academic aspects of the Spanish language (Beaudrie & Ducar, 2005; MacGregor-Mendoza, 2012). The linguistic abilities that HLLs possess, no matter how limited they are, have the tendency to exceed those that L2s possess when entering in a foreign language class (Carreira, 2014a). Therefore, a placement test helps to identify and measure more accurately the Spanish HLLs linguistic and cultural backgrounds and classify them according to their specific language abilities and needs (Beaudrie, 2011, 2012).

It is precisely these diverse language abilities that create a challenge for the accurate assessment and proper placement of Spanish heritage speakers (Fairclough, 2006; Potowski et al., 2012; Thompson, 2015). HLLs may have stronger verbal and aural skills, but they lack the grammatical and literacy skills most second language learners acquire from classroom language instruction. MacGregor-Mendoza (2011) indicated that HLLs mainly use their heritage language at home for stories, family background, moral values, and discipline as the vehicle that allows them to develop strong verbal and aural communication skills of the everyday language. HLLs do not receive formal instruction in literacy, grammatical structures, and other language modalities that non-HLLs receive with their formal education. Thus, as Hulstijn (2011) pointed out, HLLs must be identified appropriately based on a proficiency language range from basic language cognition (BLC) to higher language cognition (HLC) in each of the four language domains: listening, reading, speaking, and writing. These four skills give learners
opportunities to create contexts in which to use the language for exchange of real information, evidence of their own ability (proof of learning), and most important, confidence (Montrul & Polinsky, 2019). Listening and reading are the receptive skills because learners do not need to produce language; they receive and understand it. These skills are sometimes known as passive skills. The productive skills are speaking and writing because learners are applying these skills to produce language. They also are known as active skills (Lynch, 2003).

Research on heritage language assessments is needed for the development of instruments to more accurately evaluate HLLs abilities at the high-school level. Much research on language assessment has been conducted on second language acquisition at the kindergarten through 12th-grade level (Baker, 2006; Fairclough, 2012), but that research does not accurately measure HLL skills. Some limited research on HL assessment and placement, however, has taken place at the college level (Carreira & Kagan, 2011; Fairclough, 2011, 2012; Parra, 2013; Potowski, 2004; Thompson, 2015). Wilson (2012) indicated that some college institutions have started to develop their own placement tests to address the challenge in differentiating the language abilities of Spanish HL and Spanish L2 learners.

MacGregor-Mendoza (2011) agreed that the diverse and differentiated language background knowledge and abilities of Spanish HLLs has been a challenge for college institutions to place them in the appropriate language level. Nevertheless, Spanish HLLs must be placed into the appropriate Spanish level within the program in order to increase their prospects of success in the development of their language skills. Spanish HLLs entering high-school share a similar language profile as college Spanish HLLs. From
early education to high-school, HLLs experience different levels of contact with the Spanish language. Some students may be recent Spanish speaking immigrants who have been educated primarily in Spanish in their country of origin. Others may be first, second, or third generation in the US having some or no academic education in Spanish, such as, being part of bilingual programs in kindergarten to sixth grade. Others may have taken Spanish as a foreign language in middle school (Amengual, 2018; Baker, 2006; Dixon, Wu, & Daraghmeh, 2012; O’Rourke & Zhou, 2018). Thus, considering the linguistic profiles of Spanish HLLs offers more accurate background information to develop a placement test for high-school HLLs to differentiate and better measure their HL abilities, needs, and proficiency.

The types of heritage placement tests used for college students entering Spanish heritage language programs vary from L2 assessments, self-placement exams, diagnostic assessments, and questionnaires, to vocabulary knowledge, interviews, and locally designed pencil-and-paper examinations (Carreira, 2012; Fairclough, 2012b; Vergara-Wilson, 2012). The determination of which type of placement test is used depends on the specific goal that each language program has (Thompson, 2015). For example, it is necessary to consider the resources the institution has and provides, as well as the diversity of the students in terms of place of origin, cultural background, and linguistic profile (Beaudrie & Ducar, 2012). Early research on placement tests for HLLs underscored that most of the instruments testing Spanish proficiency of native speakers and HLLs were designed by psychologists interested in language and mental growth, or teachers interested in bilingual education or English as a second language, but very few were designed for decisions regarding which language placement track best fits the
Spanish language skills of the learner (Othegy & Toro, 2000). Recent studies on
developing a Spanish HL placement test at the college level concentrate on differentiating
L2s and HLLs linguistic, grammatical, and literacy abilities in order to assign them to the
most appropriate language course (Lynch, 2014; Nagano, Ketcham, & Funk, 2019;
Wilson, 2012). Thus, the purpose and practicality of the placement tool become two basic
components of the test to identify the most correct proficiency level of the student and the
most appropriate HL course.

Language assessment is a key element in accurately evaluating the linguistic skills
of language learners. With accurate assessment, instructional classes, programs, and
curriculum can be developed to efficiently meet and grow those linguistic abilities
(MacGregor-Mendoza, 2012). When it comes to Spanish heritage speakers, however,
colleges and universities and other educational institutions in the United States struggle to
find or develop an exam to determine the proper placement of HLLs in the language
classes (Fairclough, 2006; Thompson, 2015). Rodríguez, Sunderman, and Wood (2017)
emphasized that assessing the linguistic skills of heritage language children continues to
present challenges for school personnel and related specialists for various reasons.

Language placement tests are fundamental to curriculum design and pedagogical
implementation (Beaudrie & Ducar, 2012). Fairclough (2012a) presented a working
model at the college level for assessing the general Spanish language abilities of HLLs to
facilitate the discussion of the relationship between placement testing and teaching
mission, program and student characteristics, and course content. In order to enhance the
HLLs’ experience, it is crucial that schools first adequately assess their language abilities
to provide the necessary academic language support (Magaña, 2015). Placement tests at
the high-school level can assist in identifying what type of school support is needed to
develop appropriate Spanish classes designed for HLLs where they can develop the basic
literacy skills for Spanish. These classes can help to develop and create a formal
academic foundation and support in their Spanish linguistic skills. Potowski et al. (2012)
emphasized that the challenge college language departments have with both a basic
language track and a heritage track can also be experienced at the high-school level. This
challenge must be considered when developing or adopting a placement test for high-
school students. Thus, the identification of students as HLLs or L2s must be carried out
as a first step.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to investigate how Thompson's (2015) Survey of
Language Usage and Spanish for HLLs Placement Program Exam could effectively be
used with three Spanish class levels of HLLs at the high-school level to differentiate
HLLs' use of Spanish inside and outside of the home and in their academic use of
Spanish.

The need to identify and evaluate the diverse language abilities of HLLs has been
fundamental to placing students and to providing heritage language classes that are
appropriate and that meet the needs of Spanish heritage speakers (Carreira, 2012;
Vergara-Wilson, 2012). The development of Spanish HL placement tests is one of the
ways researchers are exploring to better understand the linguistic abilities and language
usage of HLLs. Considering HLLs varied sociocultural and linguistic backgrounds is
necessary to the development of a proper placement exam as well as determining how
these aspects influence language proficiency and placement (Thompson, 2015).
Thompson’s (2015) research conducted at the university level was the model adapted for this study, conducted at the high-school level. HLLs were differentiated into three groups: (a) students who most likely did not have any academic background knowledge in Spanish and had BSLC skills; (b) students who could have some academic experience in Spanish because they were in bilingual tracks at the elementary school level, they took Spanish classes at the middle school, or they had taken a Spanish class at the high-school level; and (c) recent immigrant Spanish speaking students who most likely had had formal education in their Spanish speaking countries and had strong academic foundation in Spanish and had HLC skills, but they were English language learners with BLC skills in English. Because there was no formal placement test, there was the need to implement one that provided more of a formal placement system and more accuracy in placing Spanish HLLs into the proper Spanish level.

Therefore, this study examined how the implementation of Thompson’s (2015) modified placement test at the high-school level distinguished the Spanish usage of HLLs inside and outside of the home assessing their academic level of Spanish to suggest further improvements to those tests for high-school students pursuant to the findings of this research. There was a two-step procedure in Thompson’s (2015) study to collect data. First, a Yes or No, 10-question Survey of Language Usage was given to students to identify how and with whom Spanish language was used by the Spanish HLLs inside and outside of their home. Second, the placement test was given to students. The test was composed of three parts. Part 1: Language Awareness was composed of 10 background questions in Spanish asking whether the students would respond in Spanish or English; Part II: Bilingual Skills was a set of seven sentences in English to be translated to
Spanish; and Part III: Writing Skills was composed of a short writing composition in Spanish based on one of three topics provided.

Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, another modification to Thompson’s (2105) pencil-and-paper placement test was its adaptation to an electronic version. The modified placement instrument was given to three groups of students: (a) 9th graders who were placed in Pre-International Baccalaureate (Pre-IB) Spanish for Heritage Learners 1 (Pre-IB SHL1), which follows a sequence of Spanish heritage-language classes for the IB Bilingual Program during their junior and senior high-school years; (b) 9th to 12th graders who were placed in Spanish for Heritage Language Learners (SHLL1) Level I, which can also follow a 3-year sequence of Spanish heritage language classes; and (c) 10th to 12th graders who were placed in Heritage Language Learners (SHLL) Level 2, which can continue with Advanced Placement Spanish Language and Culture. In this study, there is reference to the three levels of classes ranging from basic (SHLL1), intermediate (Pre-IB SHLL 1) and high (SHLL2). Students placed in SHLL1 ranged in the basic Spanish language proficiency due to factors such as low academic achievement, lack of experience with the academic Spanish, the need to meet the high-school world language requirement, or being recent Spanish speaking immigrants with or without prior academic knowledge of Spanish. Students placed in Pre-IB SHLL1 were most likely to have had a high academic achievement and could have had some degree of experience with academic Spanish because they had taken Spanish in bilingual tracks either at the elementary or middle school grade level. All students placed in SHLLs Level II were expected to have taken SHLLs Level I with a letter grade of “C” or better, or the students were recent Spanish speaking immigrants with some degree of experience with academic
Spanish. Based on the method of placing SHLLs into SHLL classes at the high-school where the study was conducted, there was not a formal method to classify and place SHLLs and assess their Spanish language skills. Teachers used a diagnostic test from Cuaderno de Actividades El Mundo 21 workbook (Samaniego & Rojas, 2004). Thus, in this study that method was referred to as the school existing placement method.

**Background Need**

The Hispanic population is the fastest growing minority group in the United States in the 21st century. According to the prestigious Instituto de Cervantes 2015 report, Spanish is spoken by more than 559 million people globally, making it the second most spoken language in the world. Currently, the United States is the second largest Spanish speaking country in the world after Mexico, which has 121 million native Spanish speakers. The US has more than 41 million native Spanish speakers and approximately 12 million bilingual Spanish speakers. More than 73% of Hispanic families in the US use Spanish to communicate at home. Thus, the US has more people speaking Spanish than Spain with approximately 47 million and Colombia with 48 million. Scamman (2018) indicated that by 2050 the United States is expected to have 138 million Spanish speakers, making it the largest Spanish speaking country in the world.

The interest in educational research on Spanish as a heritage language and on heritage language learners (HLLs) has increased significantly due to the rapid rise of the Latino and Spanish speaking population in the United States and the language abilities they bring to the educational setting (Fairclough, 2006). Valdés, et al., (2008) stated that Spanish was spoken by some 47 million US residents age 5 and older at the time of their research in 2008. According to the US Census Bureau, by 2017 that number had
increased to nearly 59 million Spanish-speaking people in the US. This population, however, does not necessarily include the number of undocumented immigrants who reside in the US (Torres, Pascual y Cabo, Beusterien, 2018).

With such a rapid growth of the Hispanic population in the US, the number of Hispanic students enrolling in the educational system has increased dramatically. Bauman (2017) reported that the number of Hispanic students enrolled in schools, colleges, and universities in the United States doubled from 8.8 million in 1996 to 17.9 million by 2016. Hispanic students now make up 22.7% of all students enrolled in school. With the growth of the Hispanic population in the US, not only have the demographics changed but also linguistic changes have occurred affecting this monolingual society.

The US Hispanic population is composed of a great number of diverse immigrants from Mexico, Central America, South America, and other Spanish-speaking countries around the world. There are many differences that characterize heritage language populations, such as, their diverse social, economic, and linguistic backgrounds, as well as their affective connections with their heritage language. These factors highlight the variety of language proficiency from basic language cognition (BLC) to fully developed higher language cognition (HLC) abilities (Beaudrie, 2012; Fairclough, 2012; Hulstijn, 2011; MacGregor-Mendoza, 2011). Most of the research on the heritage language learner (HLL) needs and abilities has been conducted at the college level and not at the high-school level. Therefore, more research on high-school HLL placement tests is needed to have a better understanding of the language knowledge and abilities that those students already possess in order for them to develop and maintain an effective language learning proficiency (Wright, 2007).
The numbers also suggest an increase in the number of English language learners whose first language is Spanish (Cohen & Wickens, 2015). Bialik, Scheller, and Walker (2018) reported that Spanish was the most common language for English language learners in 45 states and in Washington, DC. English language learners, as well as first, second, and third generation Spanish heritage language speakers are not retaining use of their mother tongue. Factors that weaken the connection of English language learners to their first language, Spanish, include the perception of English as the language of power and success, as well as the lack of an educational system that supports and provides the necessary resources to maintain their heritage language (Cohen & Wickens, 2015; Fishman, 2006; Valdés, 2016). Other factors that negatively affect heritage language preservation are generational status in the US., the age at which HLLs acquired English, the order in which they acquired their heritage language and English, the language they speak at home, and the amount of schooling and other input received (Beaurdrie & Ducar, 2005; Carreira & Kagan, 2011; Oh & Au, 2006).

The Hispanic population continues to spread throughout the US. The top 11 counties with the largest Hispanic population by order of magnitude are Los Angeles County, CA; Harris County, TX; Miami-Dade County, FL; Maricopa County, AZ; Cook County, IL; Riverside County, CA; Bexar County, Texas; San Bernardino County, CA; San Diego County, CA; Orange County, CA; and Dallas County, TX. The states with the fastest growing Hispanic populations in the past few years have been North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana, New Hampshire, as well as the District of Columbia (Flores, Lopez, & Krogstad, 2019).
As the Spanish speaking population in the US increases, there is higher demand to provide Spanish language classes at different academic levels. The importance of teaching and learning foreign languages other than English in the United States has been under-appreciated because the foreign language competency of most Americans is extremely low (Olguín-Mendoza, 2018; Potowski, 2004; Tucker, 1991; Valdés, 2005). The conservative perspective is that monolingual English-speaking Americans inadvertently discourage English language learners from developing fluency and competency in a foreign language or their own heritage language (HL) because of biased language ideologies, negative attitudes toward bilingualism, recent waves of US Nationalism, harsh immigration policies, and “English only” rhetoric that exists within the US (Lufkin, 2018; Schiffman, 1996; Wright, 2007). After the event of 9/11 and other subsequent events in the Middle East, however, there has been a demand for speakers of non-English strategic languages to solve what is known as the language crisis surrounding national security (Valdés, 2006; Valdés et al., 2008). The need to incorporate the learning of foreign languages into the educational system of the United States has become obvious. It is equally important to distinguish and differentiate the needs of second language learners (L2s) and heritage language learners (HLLs) with regard to linguistic abilities, acquired knowledge, and other unique needs when developing foreign language curriculum (Potowski et al., 2012; Valdés, 2006).

Even with the challenge of differentiating language abilities among L2s and HLLs, there is an increasing number of US universities working to develop their own SHL placement tests (e.g., University of Arizona: Beaudrie & Ducar, 2007; New Mexico State University: MacGregor-Mendoza, 2011; University of Houston: Fairclough 2006,
Recently, interest has begun to expand to placement issues for other heritage languages as well (e.g., Kondo-Brown, 2004; McGinnis, 1996; Polinsky & Kagan, 2007; Sohn & Shin, 2007; Thompson, 2015).

The implementation and implications of those placement tests provide relevance to this study. Fairclough (2006) suggested three key points, which are essential when testing HLLs, to enhance a placement test for the SHL: a) distinction of spelling accuracy (form) from usage accuracy (use); b) use of compound tenses as better grammatical predictors for advanced language proficiency; and c) provision of ample context, especially in fill-in-the-blank. McGeorge-Mendoza (2011) recommended three additional key points when developing a placement test: a) assessment measures need to take into consideration the local population and context; b) placement measures should be informed by current understanding of SHL learners’ linguistic behavior; and 3) linguistic and cultural issues that can confound results need to be accounted for. Beaudrie (2012) posited that an effective placement test must be designed in-house and must have an alignment with the particular needs of the local HLLs and the specific goals and content of the SHL program.

**Theoretical Framework**

Zyzik’s (2016) Prototype Model of Heritage Language Learner served as the conceptual model for this study. Zyzik’s prototype presented an alternative way to understand the variety of HLLs, which traditionally has been presented on a bilingual continuum of monolinguals of language A and language B, with HLLs situated...
somewhere in between depending on their relative strength or dominance in both languages (p. 24). Zyzik’s prototype intended to categorize the HLLs’ membership in the center instead of comparing HLLs with the monolingual speaker or with the second language learner. This perspective of categorization has its foundation in cognitive linguistics, which is an approach to language study based on the assumptions that our linguistic abilities are rooted firmly in cognitive abilities, that meaning is essentially conceptualization, and that grammar is shaped by usage (Dabrowska & Divjak, 2015). In constructing the prototype, Zyzik took the following foundational attributes of heritage language learner profiles and definitions proposed by classic and more recent research:

- Early exposure to the heritage language in the home
- Proficiency in the heritage language
- Bilingual to some degree
- Dominance in a language other than the heritage language
- Ethnic or cultural connection to the heritage language (p. 25).

In addition to those attributes, Zyzik (2016) incorporated one more attribute, implicit knowledge, and emphasized that this attribute was needed to differentiate HLLs from other types of proficient speakers (e.g., L2 learners). Zyzik (2016) elaborated that proficiency is by itself a poor predictor of a group membership, especially when other proficient speakers of a language who are not HLLs can match or surpass HLLs standardized measures of proficiency. Thus, understanding the concept of the HLL from the implicit knowledge point of view can add to valuable distinction needed in pedagogical methods and materials originally designed for the L2 classroom, which may not be easily transferable to the HL context (p. 25). The consideration of HLLs’ implicit knowledge helped to understand the differentiation among proficiency measures for assessment and pedagogical purposes (p. 26).
Bachman and Palmer (2010) stated that the primary purpose of a language assessment is to collect information to help make decisions about test takers, and that the attribute of test takers that is of primary interest in language assessment is language ability. They defined language ability as the capacity that enables language users to create and interpret discourse, and that it consists of two main components: language knowledge (organizational knowledge and pragmatic knowledge) and strategic competence as well as other attributes like language users’ or test takers’ personal attributes, topical knowledge, affective schemata, and cognitive strategies (p. 33-35).

In designing a language assessment, language knowledge becomes the premise of its construction. The distinction that Bachman and Palmer make in language knowledge as informed by Hulstijn’s (2011) research refers to the implicit knowledge in the definition of basic language cognition. Thus, Zyzik (2016) emphasized that implicit knowledge is what creates native speakers’ ability to comprehend and produce language in spontaneous and unconscious situations without realizing the structural properties taking place. In contrast, explicit knowledge consists of conscious awareness and controlled processing that is declarative in nature and verbalized. Zyzik claimed that the type of knowledge (implicit or explicit) is a meaningful contribution to HLLs’ performance on different types of tasks.

The construct of implicit knowledge of HLLs in Zyzik’s prototype model specified that HLLs have limited metalinguistic knowledge of their heritage language. Montrul (2010) indicated that HLLs are primarily naturalistic and very often illiterate learners, whereas L2 learners are instructed and literate learners. HLLs could do better than L2 learners on grammatical areas tested through oral production and aural...
comprehension tasks. By contrast, L2 learners could outperform HLLs in untimed written tasks that maximize the use of metalinguistic and explicit knowledge of the language (Montrul, 2010, p.17), which adds weight to how the languages are tested and the types of tasks used to measure linguistic competence and ability in the two types of learners.

The attribute of proficiency as a construct in Zyzik’s prototype model was defined from Jan Hulstijn’s (2011) theoretical point of view in understanding the nature of HLLs. Hulstijn proposed to understand the language proficiency of first and second language speakers and to differentiate between basic language cognition (BLC) and higher language cognition (HLC). He defined basic language cognition as what all native speakers have in common pertaining to three main components:

- The largely implicit, unconscious knowledge in the domains of phonetics, prosody, phonology, morphology, and syntax;
- The largely explicit, conscious knowledge in the lexical domain (form-meaning mappings); and
- The automaticity with which these types of knowledge can be processed (Hulstijn, 2011, p. 230)

BLC is restricted to listening and speaking including frequent lexical items and frequent grammatical structures that may occur in conversations or routines that occur in everyday life. The restriction to speech reception and production implies a more fundamental human attribute than literacy (Hulstijn, 2011, p. 231).

HLC is the domain where differences between native speakers can be observed that complement or extend BLC with two main exceptions: (a) utterances that can be understood or produced that contain low frequency lexical items or uncommon morphosyntactic structure and (b) utterances that pertain to written as well as spoken language (Hulstijn, 2011, p. 231). Furthermore, Hulstijn (2011) situated the differences and commonalities between native speakers in terms of their language knowledge and the
use of their language knowledge more or less quickly or fluently and their performance in
the different listening, speaking, reading, or writing tasks. He claimed that native
speakers demonstrate HLC depending on the individual’s level of education, professional
careers, and leisure time activities. Thus, BLC refers to the language knowledge shared
among all native speakers regardless of their educational backgrounds or cultural profiles,
whereas HLC refers to the higher language skills and abilities that generally come from
formal education in the language (Zyzik, 2016).

Hulstijn (2011) argued that established proficiency scales are at the higher levels
already and do not distinguish the HLC from the BLC. Consequently, those higher levels
of proficiency can only be obtained by those individuals who have higher levels of
education (Hulstijn, 2011). Even though Hulstijn’s research on proficiency does not make
reference to HLLs, Zyzik (2016) used his reasoning to apply it to the HLLs’ proficiency
prototype and claimed it is restricted to basic language cognition because that is the
commonality among all native speakers. Zyzik (2016) further explained that if that is the
appropriate track to categorize HLLs, then the prediction can be that HLLs might be very
similar to native speakers if tested with the conceptual framework that involves highly
frequent linguistic units that can be applicable to their performance on a range of tasks
comparable with native speakers who have limited formal education and do not use
written language in their daily lives (p. 27).

Zyzik (2016) supported that line of reasoning with an American Council on the
Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) research
finding that indicated that Russian and Spanish heritage speakers, rated as Advanced,
could not reach to the Superior level (higher level rating) because of their limitations on
areas such as the inability to deal with the topic abstractly, support an opinion, hypothesize, as well as, their lack of extended discourse and lack of precise vocabulary. Within the HLC, the development of higher language proficiency occurs as the result of language use in academic and professional contexts. Using language with abstract topics implies a higher level of topical preparation, linguistic ability, and usage to conceptualize linguistically and intellectually. In creating language proficiency assessments, it is necessary to distinguish the linguistic ability of HLLs and L2s. The academic educational background, or lack thereof, influences the level of language proficiency of the HLLs (Hulstijn, 2011).

Zyzik’s (2016) Prototype Model of HLLs integrated the components that best aligned with the implementation of Thompson’s (2015) placement test. As explained before, Zyzik added the implicit knowledge of HLLs and the perspective of proficiency from Basic Language Cognition attributes, which provided a deeper level of understanding of the diversity of the prototype and profile of Spanish HLLs. Those two attributes were aligned with Thompson’s placement test in Part I-Language Awareness, in which the test taker needed to identify whether they would respond to a set of often personal and topical questions in Spanish or English. The Spanish language usage in the questions was for a daily basis routine, which met the proficiency level of BLC in the heritage language and the implicit knowledge of HL attributes. The survey of Language Usage originally written only in English was modified for this study and provided the Spanish translation of the instructions and for each question, and aligned the Yes or No questions with the proficiency level of BLC in the heritage language and the implicit
knowledge of HL because those two attributes of the basic and simple language use identified whether the test taker spoke or heard the language as a child.

Thompson (2015) explained the challenge for researchers in developing HL placement exams that include the components that measure the complexity and diversity of HLLs’ background life (e.g., sociocultural, linguistic, attitudes, understanding sociocultural aspects, linguistic ability, bilingual range, and language exposure) as well as what HLLs bring to the academic setting (Alarcón, 2010; Valdés, 2001). Thus, from previous research that represented the profiles of HLLs, Zyzik (2016) included the attributes of ethnic or cultural connection to the HL, dominance in a language other than the HL, bilingual ability, and early introduction to the HL in the home.

The attribute of ethnic or cultural connection to the HL in Zyzik’s (2016) prototype model was represented as a cluster of sociocultural variables that include attitudes, motivations, and social and ethnic identity, this dimension occurs from social practice and interactions (p. 32). This attribute was well aligned with several questions throughout the placement test that implied sociocultural and linguistic awareness, motivation, and attitudes toward the language use of the test taker. Dominance in a language other than the HL referred to the degree of English dominance, which could be determined with a language dominance questionnaire. This attribute was met by the Yes or No Survey of Language Usage that the test takers took prior to taking the placement test on Part II-Bilingual Skills. The prototype model accommodated BLC bilinguals, learners who could produce sufficient language to engage using basic Spanish, who overheard Spanish in everyday conversations growing up but had limited experience engaging directly in conversations with Spanish speaking family members, which also
implied the attribute of early introduction to the HL in the home. The three parts of the placement test (i.e., Language Awareness, Bilingual Skills, and Writing Skills) were partially aligned with the categorization of each attribute of Zyzik’s prototype. This alignment revealed the relevance and the importance of the language used in the placement test to reflect the attributes of HLLs that were informed and supported by conceptual and theoretical frameworks. Zyzik’s (2016) prototype model of HLLs, shown in Figure 1, was used in this study to analyze the implementation of Thompson’s (2015) placement modified test and to examine the results of language proficiency from the findings of the study.

Figure 1 Zyzik’s (2016) Prototype Model of Heritage Language Learner

**Significance of the Study**

The significance of this study rested upon five points: (a) the largely unmet need to properly and formally assess high-school HLLs when placing them into Spanish classes, (b) the need to expand upon the scarce research literature on the subject of HLL placement tests at the high-school level, (c) the need for research to guide further development of HLL placement exams at the high-school level, (d) the need to enhance
teachers’ understanding of the significance of administering a placement test that rates students by following a rating rubric with rating samples to validate the results and to have an equitable placement system across the Spanish language department, and (e) the need for Spanish teachers’ preparation on differentiating and assessing the varied range of linguistic abilities that SHLLs bring to the academic setting in a Spanish class.

First, as it has been elaborated upon throughout this chapter, the existence and use of placement tests that accurately place Spanish HLLs into the correct Spanish class at the high-school level is a largely unresolved problem. Without the existence of such tests, and without the use of those tests that are available, the high-school Spanish HLL is left to the whim of the Spanish department, and more often than not ends up in a class that is not appropriate for the unique linguistic and curricular needs of a Spanish HLL. Consequently, the students’ linguistic and academic capacity may not be fully developed, and the system may not have served the student well.

Second, this study expanded upon the current literature on placement tests for Spanish HLLs at the high-school level by adopting the methodology of Thompson’s (2015) placement instrument used at the university level and applying that similar methodology at the high-school level. Baker (2006) pointed out that research has been concentrated on bilingual skills (e.g., English language acquisition) but not on the placement of HLLs at the high-school level. Lynch (2014) reported the advances made on developing placement instruments for HLLs at the university and college levels. This study was conducted in a public high-school, where three different groups of Spanish HLLs were placed in three different SHL level classes. The findings from this study were provided to inform future researchers and practitioners toward the improvement of
placement tests that accurately place high-school Spanish HLLs in the proper class and to enhance the understanding of the issue of heritage language acquisition and the proper characterization of the Spanish heritage speakers’ linguistic profiles and the type of proficiency (Montrul, 2013).

Third, this study provided valuable information on the need to further develop Spanish heritage language (SHL) placement instruments for high-school HLLs, which also informed how to enhance pedagogical practices and curriculum design. Beaudrie and Ducar (2012) argued that a Spanish-heritage-language (SHL) placement test should be developed in-house not only due to the diversity of the student populations but also due to the unique structure and content of each Spanish heritage language (SHL) program.

Fourth, this study presented the significance of Spanish teachers understanding and engagement in the training of how to administer a placement test, how to apply a rating rubric with deep understanding of the meaning of rubric criteria, and in the importance of providing sample rating criteria translated in Spanish so that the rubric can be accurately scored. Rating the students’ placement test and the postfocus group interview also enhanced the understanding and connection between students’ language assessment and the instructional pedagogies implemented by the teachers. Implementing instructional methodologies that not only enhance language acquisition and development but also offer meaningfulness and motivation to heritage Spanish learners is a challenge. Intervention programs, however, with the appropriate pedagogical strategies and Spanish language and literacy focus can help stimulate greater linguistic growth. Cuza et al. (2017) demonstrated that during the implementation of an 18-week intervention program focused on Spanish phonological awareness, word reading accuracy, word reading
fluency, and vocabulary, there was statistically significant improvement with language
learners. Valdés et al. (2008) found little evidence that either high-schools or colleges and
universities offering heritage programs were as engaged in the process of heritage
language preservation as their research suggested. This divergence suggests that
pedagogical methodologies implemented in the teaching of Spanish for heritage speakers
generally are not supported by a set of theories about the role of instruction in the
development of language proficiency in bilingual learners (Valdés et al., 2008, p. 21).

Lastly, this study provided a professional development opportunity to the
participating Spanish teachers to better understand and distinguish between the linguistic
abilities of SHLLs and L2s. Not differentiating the linguistic abilities and needs between
Spanish heritage learners (HLLs) and Spanish foreign language learners (L2s) affects the
pedagogical strategies and accuracy of program language development. Historically,
many school systems have not offered Spanish for heritage speakers, and the heritage or
native speakers are placed in traditional Spanish foreign language classes, which do not
address the linguistic abilities and needs of the heritage learner (Pentón Herrera & Duany,
2016). The pedagogical problems and challenges are similar to the ones that Valdés has
suggested from the very beginning of her research on the topic. The pedagogical
problems facing instructors who teach Spanish to Hispanophone bilinguals are not
simple, and they are made more complex by the heterogeneity of the student population
as compared to Anglophone students, who begin their study of Spanish at absolute zero
(Valdés, 1997). Teaching Spanish as a heritage language requires the teacher to
implement adequate pedagogical strategies, which are different from those in teaching
traditional foreign language classes. This study contributed to the need to provide teacher
preparation programs specific to teachers of heritage speakers. Unfortunately, many of those instructors trained to teach Spanish as a foreign language have very little understanding of bilingualism, contact varieties of language, and factors influencing the retention or abandonment of heritage language.

**Research Questions**

To this end, the current study was conducted to discover the answers to the following four questions.

1. What are the proportions of Thompson’s (2015) three classifications based on the modified Survey of Language Usage for each of the three Spanish HLL classes at the high-school level?

2. To what extent are there differences in general knowledge and demographics (Language Awareness), Bilingual Skills, and Short Writing Composition based on the three classifications of Thompson’s (2015) modified Survey of Language Usage?

3. To what extent are there differences in general knowledge and demographics (Language Awareness), Bilingual Skills, and Short Writing Composition based on the three Spanish HLL classes at the high-school level?

4. To what extent is there an interaction between Thompson’s (2015) modified Survey of Language Usage three classifications and the Spanish HLL classes at the high-school level on general knowledge and demographics (Language Awareness), Bilingual Skills, and Short Writing Composition?

5. What are the benefits and challenges of using Thompson’s modified Survey of Language Usage (Survey) and Spanish of Heritage Learners Program Placement
Exam (placement test) to place Spanish HLL students given the usual practice at the high-school level?

**Definition of Terms**

The following terms are defined as they are applied within this study. There may be other definitions and uses of these terms in other contexts, but for the purposes of this study, these are the ones that apply to the study.

**Basic Language Cognition (BLC)** pertains to three components (a) the largely implicit, unconscious knowledge in the domains of phonetics, phonology, morphology, and syntax; (b) the largely explicit, conscious knowledge in the lexical domain (form-meaning mappings), and (c) the automaticity with which these types of knowledge can be processed (Hulstijn, 2011). Spanish HLLs have basic language knowledge acquired at home and is part of their daily life.

**Bilingual** implies not only the ability to use two languages to some degree in everyday life but also the skilled superior use of both languages at the level of the educated native speaker (Valdés, 2014).

**Background knowledge** by Thompson’s (2015) Survey of Language Usage refers to questions of the how and with whom Spanish language is used by the HLLs, and in the placement test, it refers to Part I: Language Awareness composed by seven general and personal questions.

**Bilingual skills** in Thompson’s (2015) placement test refers to the sections in which students needed to translate seven sentences from English to Spanish. Those sentences were selected to test students’ abilities in four distinct areas: (a) phrasal expressions, (b) the use of “GUSTAR”, (c) the use of subjunctive mood, and (d) the use of aspect, which
was considered much more important than the proper used of accent marks. This section also included many vocabulary words that have a standard or common translation.

**Class Levels** refers to SHL Level I (beginning), Pre-IB SHS I (intermediate) and SHS Level II (advance) at the high-school level; and at Thompsons’ (2015) study refers to Span 103 (low), Span 203 (medium), and Span 253 (high).

**Class Classification** refers to the range of number of Yes responses in Thompson’s (2015) 10-Question Survey of Language Usage, in which 2 to 4 Yes answers implies beginning class level, 5 to 7 Yes answers implies intermediate class level, and 8 to 10 Yes answer implies advanced class level.

**Explicit knowledge** is declarative in nature and is potentially verbalizable involving conscious awareness and controlled processing (i.e., grammatical components about language) and metalanguage (Zyzik, 2015).

**Heritage language speaker (HLS)** is the most well-known term defined by Guadalupe Valdés (2000) as a student of language who is raised in a home where a non-English language is spoken, who speaks or merely understands the heritage language, and who is to some degree bilingual in English and the heritage language. A characteristic that also defines HL speakers is that they have been educated formally in the social majority language of the place where they reside (Polinski, 2008; Valdés, 2000). The term “heritage language speaker or learner” is used in different countries to refer to a person who uses a specific language at home other than the one formally or commonly spoken in the larger community or country in which he or she is immersed. In the United States, the Spanish-speaking population refers to Spanish heritage language and its speakers as so-called heritage speakers. Thus, heritage speakers of Spanish receive the oral skills and
support of the spoken Spanish language, but not necessary the academic language skills. They are more likely to have better listening comprehension skills than speaking skills because speaking skills are not reinforced in an academic setting (Hopewell, Butvilofsky, & Escamilla, 2016; Kagan & Dillon, 2009). The spoken language is the informal language that most of the learners use because its usage at home has a meaningful purpose for communication among family members or friends.

Heritage Language (HL) refers to a language with which individuals have personal and historical connection (Fishman, 2001).

Higher Language Cognition (HLC) pertains to the complexity of lexical and grammatical (often longer than BLC) utterances, and they need not to be spoken. HLC discourse pertains to topics other than simple everyday matters, that is, topics addressed in school and colleges, in the work setting, and in leisure time activities (Hulstijn, 2011).

Implicit Knowledge underlies native speakers’ ability to comprehend and produce language in spontaneous situations. Children learn the structural properties of their native language without a conscious intention to learn them and without awareness of what they have acquired (Zyzik, 2016).

Language Awareness refers to Part I in Thompson’s (2015) placement test, in which students needed to indicate to what extent they were aware of what language, either Spanish or English, they would answer to a set of 10 personal questions written in Spanish.

Language Proficiency describes what individuals can do with language in terms of speaking, writing, listening, and reading in real world situations in a spontaneous and non-rehearsed context (ACTFL, 2012).
**Language Use** is defined as the creation or interpretation of intended meanings in discourse by an individual, or as the dynamic and interactive negotiation of intended meanings between two or more individuals in a particular situation (Bachman & Palmer, 2010).

**Literacy** traditionally is defined as the ability to read and write; however, the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) extends its definition based on the use of technology and how people communicate in the 21st century. Therefore, ACTFL has adopted the new term “new literacies,” which include the Internet and other information and communication technologies that require new social practices, skills, strategies, and dispositions for their effective use; new literacies are central to full civic, economic, and personal participation in a global community; new literacies rapidly change as defining technologies change; and new literacies are multiple, multimodal, and multifaceted.

**Metalinguistic Awareness** a conscious reflection on, analysis of, or intentional control over various aspects of language phonology, semantics, morphosyntax, discourse, and pragmatics outside the normal unconscious process of production or comprehension. It also can include awareness about what varieties and registers tend to occur in particular contexts or be spoken by particular kinds of people (Holguín Mendoza, 2018; Karmiloff-Smith, et al. 1996). This is connected to Thompson’s (2015) placement test, Part 1-Language Awareness, which asks the test takers to indicate whether they would respond in Spanish or English to a set of 10 questions written in Spanish.

**Minority Language** is defined by Holmes (2017) as the language used by a minority speech community in a society where the majority language is regarded as the norm.
Thus, language maintenance is the process by which a minority language community sets out to inhibit the shift or loss of their language. Factors such as the degree to which the language is considered an important symbol of the group’s identity, frequent contact with other speakers in the community, and frequent contact with the homeland, through visits to the homeland or new immigrants or visitors from the homeland, contribute to language maintenance. The majority language refers to the official language of the host country (Baker, 2001).

Native Speaker is a term that is important to distinguish from heritage speaker. Pentón Herrera (2016) restated the definition of Spanish native speakers as individuals who are expected to have a certain level of understanding of the grammatical structure and rules of the Spanish language. These students are expected to be proficient in their first language (L1) at their arrival to the United States, which means that these students must be competent in their reading, writing, speaking, and listening abilities. Language maintenance is the process by which the minority language community sets out to inhibit the shift or loss of their language (Holmes, 2017). There are several factors that influence language maintenance, such as, the degree to which language is considered an important symbol of the group’s identity, frequent contact with other speakers in the community, and frequent contact with the homeland. In the study, there were students who are recent Spanish-speaking immigrants who are considered Spanish native speakers because that is their first language and could have been educated to some degree in Spanish. That has given them some degree of language understanding of the grammatical structures and rules.
Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) is a valid and reliable means of assessing how well a person speaks a language. It is a 20- to 30-minute one-on-one interview between a certificated ACTFL tester and an examinee. ACTFL (2012) defined OPI as what the individual can do with language in terms of speaking, writing, listening, and reading in real world situations in a spontaneous and unrehearsed context. Zyzik (2016) highlighted the distinction in defining proficiency on L2 and HL acquisition in a narrower sense focusing on basic linguistic abilities (e.g., vocabulary grammatical knowledge or both) instead of the full spectrum of communicative competence.

Passive abilities imply the ability to understand a language but not being able to reproduce it communicating verbally (Baker, 2001).

Productive abilities refer to two of the four basic language abilities, speaking and writing (Baker, 2001). Productive Spanish language usage is assessed by the number of Yes answers to 5 of the productive items on the 10-item survey and the ability to write Spanish translation in Part II -Bilingual Skills and Part III -Writing Skills short composition in Thompson's (2015) placement test.

Proficiency based teaching in the modern foreign languages is defined as teaching that results in the development of measurable speaking, listening, reading, and writing proficiency of a foreign language (Valdés, Fishman, & Chávez, 2006).

Receptive abilities refers to two of the four basic language abilities, listening and reading (Baker, 2001). Receptive Spanish language usage is assessed by the number of Yes answers to 7 of the receptive items on 10-item survey and in Part I -Language Awareness 10 questions in Spanish in Thompson's (2015) placement test.
**Second language** is any language that a person uses other than a first or native language. Contemporary linguist and educators commonly use the term *L1* to refer to a first or native language, and the term *L2* to refer to a second language or a foreign language that is being studied (Nordquist, 2020).

**Second language learner (L2Ls)** typically refers to a person who typically begins exposure with second language (L2) at or around puberty and most often in an instructed setting (Montrul & Perpiñán, 2011).

**Sociocultural background variables** imply the context in which HLLs are learning the target language such as opportunities to use the target language, motivation for learning the target language, and attitudes toward the target language group, identification with the Latino culture, and participation with the Latino cultural activities (Oh & Au, 2005).

**Sociolinguistic profile** refers to a descriptive summary of a specific group of speakers that highlights their language usage as well as the social and cultural factors influencing their linguistic choices, attitudes, and motivations, such as age, education, and ethnic identity (Alarcón, 2010).

**Survey of Language Usage** in Thompson’s (2015) survey refers to the usage of Spanish inside and outside of home by the HLLs and determines how and with whom Spanish is used. As measured in the study, students who marked two or more “Yes responses” on the survey were considered HLLs and proceeded to take the heritage placement test. Those students who marked below two, were considered L2Ls.

**Writing Skills** in Thompson’s (2015) placement test is the part in which the students need to write a short composition in Spanish choosing one of the three personal experience topics.
Summary

Given the need of placing Spanish HLLs in the proper Spanish classes based on their linguistic skills, a considerable amount of research has been conducted to distinguish the language proficiency between HLLs and L2 learners. Much of the research on placement tests for Spanish HLLs has taken place at the college level, whereas much less study has been done on placement test for Spanish HLLs at the high-school level. Therefore, the current study was conducted to investigate how Thompson's (2015) placement test can effectively be used with three classes of HLLs at the high-school level to differentiate HLLs' use of Spanish inside and outside of the home and in their academic use of Spanish in order to further develop Spanish-heritage-language placement exams to better measure Spanish language knowledge and ability for high-school HLLs. Research on Spanish HLLs highlights that family language use of Spanish, the constant contact with Spanish-speaking immigration, and the steady growth of the Spanish-speaking population in the United States play key roles in maintaining Spanish. The issue of not having academic opportunities from early grade levels to university levels, however, limits the possibilities for the Spanish HL speakers to develop their academic linguistic abilities.

Part of the issue is the need for well-designed, efficient, and accurate methods of student placement at the high-school level. The discrepancies between the fastest growing minority group with the second most spoken language in the country and lack of social, political, and educational support made this study more relevant and significant to the existing bulk of literature. Placement tests have an essential purpose in the implementation of any successful HL program. As stated in this chapter, existing research
on Spanish HL placement is limited, and regardless of the efforts done at the university level, there is a greater need at the high-school level. Thus, the literature relevant to the current study is synthesized and analyzed in chapter II. The research design of the study is described in chapter III, the findings of the statistical data analysis are presented in chapter IV, and the conclusions of this study are presented in chapter V along with the discussion of the results.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of this study was to investigate how Thompson's (2015) placement test could be used effectively with three classes of Spanish heritage language learners (HLLs) at the high-school level to differentiate HLLs' use of Spanish inside and outside of the home and in their academic use of Spanish. This chapter focuses on two sections of the review of literature: (a) the national, state, and local surveys that have been conducted in the field of heritage language research at the college level; and, (b) the development and implementation of placement tests at community colleges and 4-year universities for heritage-language learners. It is important to note that the bulk of this literature under review involves research at the college level, thus pointing to the need for more research at high-school level.

National, State, and Local Surveys for HLLs

National, state, and local educational survey reports on heritage language learning provide important evidence that varies from the type of heritage language programs, learners’ linguistic abilities, and assessments to pedagogical implications. In this section, the following three areas on heritage language surveys are addressed (a) the need for language programs designed for heritage language learners (HHLs) and pedagogical practices, (b) sociocultural variables that affect HLLs linguistic abilities, and (c) reasons to opt out of learning a heritage language.

The need for language programs designed for HHLs and pedagogical practices

Montrul and Perpiñán (2011) affirmed that postsecondary institutions have been developing heritage language programs that offer courses for HLLs who already have
abilities in language comprehension, vocabulary, phonological decoding, and pronunciation. However, maintaining two language tracks (i.e., Spanish as a Second or Foreign Language vis-à-vis Spanish as a Heritage Language) in Spanish departments has created a challenge in placing students in the appropriate classes (Beaudrie, 2011). Potowski (2004) reaffirmed that students with no previous language knowledge or coursework in the target language are placed according to their level of language ability and need. Others are placed based on the equivalency and sequence of courses taken at the high-school level, and subsequently, this hierarchy of language courses continues at the college level.

The challenge of placing HLLs into foreign language Spanish courses is that the different linguistic profiles vary from being fluent speakers of a prestigious variety of Spanish to having only basic skills using a rural and colloquial Spanish variety. The reason is that some recent immigrant students have acquired and studied Spanish in their Spanish speaking country, whereas others are first generation in the US who speak Spanish mixed with some English words and expressions, also known as Spanglish. Further, some second and third generation HLLs speak Spanish with grammatical tendencies, such as, simplification of the verbal system and prepositions, misuse of “estar” vs. “ser,” (both of which are translated “to be” in English but have different meanings in Spanish), codeswitching in English and Spanish, and the age factor of having the experience with the use of Spanish (Carreira & Kagan, 2011; Potwoski, 2004). The necessity to develop and design language programs for HLLs is palpable at local, state and nation level.
Inglod et al. (2002) reported on the National Foreign Language Center (NFLC) and American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese (AATSP) Survey of Spanish Language Programs for Native Speakers from 240 randomly selected higher education Spanish programs. The results of the report came from a total of 146 campuses. Findings indicated that only 26 (17.8%) offered Spanish for HLLs referred to as Spanish for Native Speakers Programs, 65 reported having no such programs, and 55 did not answer the question. Some of the major challenges reported were the inadequacy of program information, lack of interest, and inadequacy of placement. The early results of this study demonstrated a consistent agreement with the reports on upcoming research. According to the report, universities without Spanish heritage language programs addressed the issues of insufficient funding, lack of enrollment, and lack of staff to create such programs. The implication of the report showed the need for more effective approaches to assessment, pedagogical practices, and curriculum design for Spanish HLLs.

Pedagogical practices to increase heritage language (HL) literacy abilities have a significant role in motivating HLLs. Jensen and Llosa (2007) piloted a survey that investigated the reading experiences, strategies, and curriculum preferences of university level HLLs from four different HL programs at University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). The heritage language programs included Korean, Russian, Thai, and Vietnamese. The relevance of this study to Spanish HL is the consistency of the results and pedagogical implications. The self-reported survey data from 128 students enrolled in those four programs revealed that most of the students were interested in achieving university level academic reading proficiency, but they did not spend much time reading
in their HL at home. The lack of access to HL classes at lower grade level may bring some relevance to this finding.

In addition, Jensen and Llosa’s pilot survey results were consistent with Giangrande’s (2009) national survey findings. Furthermore, in addition to measuring students’ literacy level in the HL, assessment procedures should also evaluate the range of functions they can successfully carry out and the different registers and language varieties present in their linguistic repertoire (Elder 2005; Li and Duff 2008; Valdés 2007). These results and findings helped to deepen the understanding in creating and establishing well-designed programs and curriculum for heritage language learners from high school to college and university levels.

Beaudrie (2011) investigated the Spanish HL course offerings and content at public and private universities in the American Southwest. Previous research showed a low percentage of Spanish departments offering HL classes. Due to the strong historic and cultural connection with the Spanish speaking population in the Southwest, it has been expected to have the largest number and the greatest need for Spanish HL programs. The study was conducted in 173 universities with a minimum of 5% of Hispanic students enrolled. That percentage of enrollment was deemed sufficient to justify the presence of a Spanish HL program. The study was carried out in two phases: (a) an extensive Web search of FL and Spanish department Web sites; and (b) email surveys targeting universities irrespective of whether they had Spanish HL programs. The results of the study indicated that on average 38% of the language departments offered Spanish HL courses, but overall, most of the Spanish HL programs only offered one or two courses.
The possibility of offering a Spanish HL program increased with the number of Hispanic people in the population. The findings also showed inconsistencies in defining and determining who was a HLL, and in defining course descriptions. Those were the two main issues that negatively affected the language proficiency and course content alignment. The universities that did not offer a Spanish HL Program indicated that lack of funding, low enrollment, and staffing issues were part of the reasons for not having one. That study concluded by stating the need to further investigate the effectiveness of the HL program in meeting the needs of the Spanish HLLs. Valdés et al. (2006) surveyed 35 California colleges and universities that have implemented Spanish HL programs. The results indicated that most of the responding institutions reported that 74% of students self-selected the heritage class whereas 77% were placed by an adviser or counselor; only 11% of the institutions were using a placement exam specifically designed for heritage learners. These data further demonstrate the need for more effective HL programs across the board.

Carreira and Kagan (2011) reported the findings of a national survey that evaluated HL programs from different universities in the US. The survey represented 22 languages. There was a total of 1,732 participants mainly from California, New Jersey, and New York. Most of the participants were from California, and Spanish-speaking participants comprised 23.1% of the group. The results of the study addressed language usage and proficiency, HLL attitudes and goals toward learning their HL, diverse HLL profiles related to place of birth, age arrival or both, and HLL profile and language differences. The findings showed that a general profile of HL learners across the language emerges as a student who: (a) is an early sequential bilingual, (b) has limited
experience with the HL outside of the home, (c) has relatively strong aural skills, (d) has positive attitudes and experiences with the HL, and (e) studies the HL mainly to connect with communities of speakers in the US and to gain insights into his or her roots. These findings enhanced the significance of this study in understanding the complexity and variety of factors that comprise HLLs profiles, such as promoting a consequential level of awareness of considerations when choosing, adopting, or developing a placement test for HLLs.

Based on the findings, the researchers recommended community-based curriculum as pedagogical practices to effectively connect the academic language learning goals with the HLLs knowledge and experience considering the vast HLLs diversity. Luo, Li, and Li (2019) reported the results of a national survey of college-level Chinese programs conducted at 246 institutions of heritage language education in the United States. The findings revealed the following similarities to the other heritage language surveys: (a) the limited access to appropriate pedagogical instructions, (b) the tendency of Chinese language programs to prioritize the teaching to nonheritage learners due to budget constraints and small numbers, (c) the mix of heritage and nonheritage learners are placed in the same classes, (d) the limitations of addressing the diverse linguistic backgrounds of the HLLs, and (e) the lack of differentiated instruction. These recent findings highlighted the need to create and cultivate HL educational language programs.

**Sociocultural variables that affect HLLs linguistic abilities**

Motivation, language attitude, language contact, and linguistic behaviors influence HLLs to maintain their heritage language. Well-designed classes that address
HLLs linguistic abilities elevate and enhance their motivation, confidence with the language usage, and their identity. That issue has been addressed by researchers in the field. Beaudrie and Durcar (2005) surveyed a group of 20 participants at the beginning level of Spanish from the University of Arizona. The study investigated whether the needs, experiences, and attitudes of beginning level of Spanish HLLs would be better met in the HL program. The results of the survey revealed that the students had a high degree of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to learn Spanish; however, they felt neglected by not having the space and designed classes that met their linguistic, cultural, and emotional needs in order to cultivate the Spanish language. Beaudrie and Durcar suggested that this specific group of students needed and deserved a niche of their own within HL Programs. This study highlighted the significant issue of offering the required space in which HLLs could nurture the essence of their language skills to build a meaningful connection to the language usage in the academic setting.

Having self-confidence with one’s own language abilities elevates the level of participation in society. Knowing what variables can motivate HLLs to use their heritage language inside and outside the classroom setting provides insight to HL research. In a survey of 55 participants, Oh and Au (2005) investigated the sociocultural background variables that predicted to increased proficiency in Spanish and to an elevated self-confidence in HLLs. The study revealed a positive correlation between (a) HL students’ cultural identification, and (b) their participation using Spanish inside and outside of the classroom, which increased the possibilities of HLLs to successfully master the language.

Culture and identity play a key role in a person’s values, attitude, and integration in a community. Consequently, the incorporation of culture in a language class deepens a
person’s literacy and understanding of their role in society. For instance, Jensen and Llosa’s survey findings (2007) showed that most of the students expressed that learning their own HL was a way to maintain their cultural identity, and they expressed their desire to read text embedded with cultural and historical information in the HL classroom. The survey results also agreed with other researchers that sustaining students’ motivation in HL literacy courses was aided by selecting appropriate materials that connected to students’ goals for learning the HL, and by providing explicit instruction in reading skills and strategies in both English and the HL. Carreira and Kagan’s (2011) findings reinforced that HL students perceived the maintenance of their heritage language as source of motivation to be connected to their roots and identity. This study contributed to significance of diverse variables that affect the complexity of defining and understanding the HLL profile and prototype.

**Why HLLs opt out of learning their own heritage language**

Opting out of learning one’s HL may sound unreasoned. A more recent study by Nagano, Ketcham, and Funk (2019), however, examined the reasons why HLLs opt out of their own HL at community colleges. The nationwide survey collected data from 101 community colleges from 33 states across the US in which 1,756 students enrolled in modern language classes referred as HL speakers participated. In contrast to other survey studies, the findings showed that the HLLs were studying a language other than their own HL despite their prior language knowledge, cultural familiarity, and familial ties with their HL.

The findings of the study delineated important differences in comparison to other national or state surveys on HL learning. Some of those differences are that third
language (L3) learners, referred to as students studying a third language, had more motivation to learn the language than HLLs. For L3 learners, nearly two-thirds (63%) reported interest in the L3 culture as a reason for studying the target language in comparison to two-fifths (44%) of HLLs. Of the L3 learners, 58% reported intellectual curiosity as a motivating factor while HLLs reported 41%. The study clarified that only 29% of community-college institutions had a foreign language graduation requirement, and that could also be another indicator of motivation that suggested that L3 learners were a highly curious and academically motivated group overall. Factors such as the pragmatic use of the language, prior learning experience in K-12, specifically at the high-school level, possible collaboration with high school and community colleges, the role of students’ parents in their children’s choice of which language to study at college, and the need for effective pedagogical training on teaching and learning of HL students seemed to have had significant effect on the study results.

**Summary**

The information obtained from the national, state, and local surveys in the field of heritage language indicated the complexities of identifying variables that define who is a heritage language learner; which variables compose their linguistic profile and prototype; and, the consideration of the range of their language abilities and linguistic variables needed to create heritage language assessments, programs, curricular content and the implementation of pedagogical practices that best meet their linguistics skills. This section presented key factors that deepened the level of holistic understanding of HLLs profile and that set the stage for the next section of the review of literature, which
presents the results obtained from the development and implementation of placement
tests for HLLs at different community colleges and 4-year universities.

**Placement Tests for HLLs**

As presented above, recognizing and differentiating the variety of language
learners and language abilities within the spectrum of HLLs and the type of language
program needed to meet their linguistic needs encompasses a complex process from the
individual to the institutional level. Since 2000, the educational field in foreign language
has shifted due to the growing presence of heritage language learners at various grade
levels. This increasing trend has been even more noticeable in many postsecondary
foreign language classes in North America (Montrul, 2010). That change has created
challenges to meeting the diverse needs of the HLLs’ linguistic abilities and determining
appropriate instruction and assessment for them within the foreign language classroom
(Fairclough, 2006; Leeman, 2012). Language assessment is a fundamental step to
measuring the test taker’s quality of performance and informing the level of the language
proficiency in the different domains. In education, assessment usually includes various
procedures, ranging from informal observations and interviews to examinations or tests
that are designed to measure in some way and to some extent the knowledge, abilities,
and attitudes of an individual student, a group of learners, an institution, or a whole
educational system (Fairclough, 2012b).

**Language assessments and purposes**

The purpose of the language assessment clarifies the type of assessment and
desired outcomes. There are different types and purposes of language assessment
instruments. In the field of second language instruction, especially in English, assessment
research has increased and has included delineation of specific types and purposes of
assessment instruments. Baron and Boschee (1995) stated that an authentic assessment is
a process where students not only complete or demonstrate desired behaviors but
accomplish them in a real-life context. Thus, assessment can be defined as any number of
methods which may be used to gather information about the performance of students
(Baron and Boschee, 1995, p. 2).

Placement tests and proficiency tests both can be used with the purpose of placing
students into a particular level or section of a language curriculum or school (Brown &
Abeywickrama, 2010). Placement tests assess a variety of language abilities, for example,
comprehension and production, responding through written and oral performance, open-ended and limited responses, multiple-choice selection, and gap-filling formats (Baron
what differs between placement tests and proficiency tests is that proficiency tests
examine the overall ability traditionally consisting of standardized multiple-choice items
on grammar, vocabulary, reading comprehension, and aural comprehension, whereas the
constructs of language ability are essential for HL proficiency testing.

Although research in heritage language assessments is still limited, second
language and foreign language assessment research has provided a platform for HL
assessment research. Ascher’s (1990) early research pointed out that standardized test
scores often ignored the language or languages spoken by the test takers and highlighted
the difficulties of administering and interpreting standardized tests with bilinguals that
were often obscured. The study emphasized the importance of language variation of the
bilingual students due to circumstances, such as, their age upon arrival in the US, the
language(s) spoken at home and in the neighborhood, the frequency of television watching, and the language(s) used in the classrooms. Ascher’s observations shed light on the HL assessment research and this study because it illustrates clearly the two variables of age and use of media that can influence the range of the HL use.

To this extent, the field of Spanish as a heritage language has increased and has produced a wealth of research. While there has been an advance in understanding the sociolinguistics profile of Spanish HLLs, their linguistic knowledge, abilities, and pedagogical practices, there still is the need to design assessment that can enhance their linguistic profile. Ascher (1990) stated that true bilingual assessment involved evaluating how a student uses his or her two language systems to perform the targeted cognitive tasks, and the assessment should be sensitive to issues such as content and processing factors such as speed. The differentiation of linguistic patterns is a relevant element for testing, especially when it is unclear to what extent those patterns affect the measurement for bilingual competence. Fairclough (2012b) reaffirmed that for HL students with higher language cognition, proficiency testing should measure all four modalities for reading, writing, listening, and speaking, while HL students with basic language cognition or no literacy skills in their HL should be tested for listening and speaking only. This assertion aligns correspondingly with Zyzik’s (2016) prototype. Additionally, assessment procedures should evaluate the range of functions that HLLs can successfully carry out and the different registers and language varieties present in their linguistic repertoire (Elder, 2005; Valdés, 2007).
Differentiation of Language assessment for HLLs, and FLLs or Second Language (L2) Learners

Studies showing the differences between HLLs and FLLs or L2s regarding, for example, the stronger oral and aural abilities of HLLs vis-à-vis L2s, demonstrate the need for proper placement tests that can distinguish these differences (Beaudrie & Ducar, 2005; Fairclough, 2011; & Yan, 2003). Their findings suggested that HLLs developed stronger oral and aural abilities because they were surrounded by Spanish speaking family members and were constantly listening to Spanish at home. That factor highlights the relevance and importance of considering the use of Spanish inside the home when designing placement tests. Beaudrie and Ducar (2005) found that 79% of the Spanish HL participants at the University of Arizona seldom used Spanish with parents, grandparents, or relatives, although their responses indicated they were frequently surrounded by Spanish, and the main goal of taking Spanish was to overcome a lack of confidence in Spanish as well as a desire to improve fluency.

Their findings also indicated a recurring theme that having space for HLLs within the foreign language department was one of the needs. Lingxin Yan (2003) common results showed that 88% of the Spanish HL group stated that the reasons for using their HL at home were for storytelling, family background, moral values, and discipline. Another commonality among those studies was the lack of formal instruction in literacy and linguistic foundations of their HL. Not having accessibility to academic language outside of home results in affecting HLLs motivation and attitude to maintain their HL. O’Rourke and Zhou (2018) confirmed that mixed classes with HLLs and L2s have a demotivating effect on HLLs and should be avoided.
Reliability and validity are considered two essential components to be considered during the assessment process. Reliability refers to consistency of measurement. A reliable test score is consistent across different characteristics of the testing situation (Bachman & Palmer, 1996). Ilieva and Clark-Gareka (2016) posited that reliability is a necessary quality of meaningful language tests since, with too much inconsistency or error in measurement, the yielded results do not reflect the test taker’s true abilities and leads to faulty decisions in terms of diagnosis or placement. Bachman and Palmer (1996) define validity as the meaningfulness and appropriateness of the interpretations made on the basis of test scores providing the adequate justifications.

MacGregor-Mendoza (2011) examined the validity design, structure, and content of the Spanish Placement Test (SPT) at New Mexico State University, which was developed by Teschner and colleagues at the University of Texas at El Paso. According to MacGregor-Mendoza, Teschner’s 100-item multiple choice placement test was a pioneering and laborious effort to take into consideration the diverse and distinct linguistic abilities of SHL learners as compared to second-language learners. The findings, however, are against the criteria for validity as established by the Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing (American Educational Research Association, American Psychological Association, National Council on Measurement in Education, 1999, [hereafter AERA, APA & NCME, 1999]). MacGregor-Mendoza discussed in greater detail the validity flaws and concerns of SPT, its history, adoption and formatting modifications made at NMSU. Implementing Thompson’s (2015) placement instruments at the high-school level also provided the opportunity to use statistical analysis that
examined the validity and reliability of the instruments with the different Spanish-class levels shedding light to the review of literature in HL.

**Considerations while developing a Spanish HLLs placement test**

Standardized, demographic questionnaires, self-placement, and interviews are some of the tools that different universities have used with placement tests for HLLs; however, they often provide unreliable results for HLLs. Fairclough (2006) indicated that the 140-item multiple-choice test by Parisi and Teschner was used as the only available test for several universities to place all incoming students either on the heritage learners track or in traditional foreign language courses. In an effort to provide a more reliable placement test for Spanish HLLs at University of Houston, Fairclough (2006) designed a computerized placement test for Spanish HLLs. The placement test consisted of two parts: (a) the measurement of knowledge of verb morphology through a fill-in-the-blank section, and (b) four guided short essays that elicited the basic types of discourse (i.e., descriptive, narrative, argumentative, and hypothetical).

The results of the 459 test takers indicated that only a small percentage of Hispanic Spanish-speaking students took the placement for-credit exam for heritage speakers, whereas the majority of the students was placed at the intermediate levels, and a small percentage placed at the advanced levels was composed of students born and educated in Spanish-speaking countries. The results also showed that simple tenses in the indicative mood, and present tense forms, were produced correctly more often than compound tenses, the subjunctive, and the past tenses. The implication for future placement testing showed that there should be a distinction in spelling accuracy (form) from language accuracy (use) as well as that certain compound tenses could be better
predictors of heritage learners’ more advanced oral and aural communication proficiency and therefore should be included in placement exams. Subsequently, these findings offered valuable consideration when rating Thompson’ (2015) modified test, specifically the bilingual skills and writing composition parts. HLLs may have the tendency to use imperfect tense form when speaking, writing, or translating in the past tense not considering the accurate verb and mood tense such as preterit and subjunctive.

Verb tenses, aspect, and mood play an important role in Spanish-language usage, as well as differentiating linguistic knowledge (i.e., language comprehension, vocabulary, phonological decoding, and pronunciation) between L2s and HLLs. Montrul and Perpiñán (2011) investigated whether L2s and HLLs differed in their command of specific structural properties of the language and specific areas of grammatical knowledge. The study results of four written tasks showed that assessing the use of tense, aspect, and mood (TAM) could help to differentiate proficiency levels between the HLLs and L2 learners. The results also showed that HLLs were better than L2 learners with grammatical aspect but not with mood. The level of proficiency varied depending on the modality. The suggestion that this study brought to the developing or adopting of a placement test for Spanish HLLs was to consider the level of the structural aspects of the language such as syntax, morphology, and semantics that HLLs possess.

Language awareness is an asset to facilitate language usage when the language learner is trained to retrieve his or her metalinguistic skills. Montrul and Perpiñán (2011) emphasized that HLLs tend to be more accurate than L2s in linguistic tasks that minimize metalinguistic knowledge, and L2s seem to perform more accurately on written tasks and other tasks that tap metalinguistic knowledge. Their findings about the differentiation of
linguistic knowledge underlined the importance of language awareness as a component to assess in a placement test of HLLs. The findings of this study, however, appear to reflect only a moderate level of usefulness for my research with Spanish HLLs at high school for three main reasons: (a) it did not use all the linguistic components and attributes of the proposed prototype model of the HLLs that Thompson’s (2015) included, (b) the focus on grammatical knowledge excludes sociocultural aspects that validates the varied linguistic abilities of Spanish HLLs, and (c) Montrul and Perpiñán (2011) did not investigate the need of measuring the bilingual range of the HLLs in different competencies. Nevertheless, Montrul and Perpiñán’s (2011) study made a clear case on how metalinguistic abilities and use are linked to the higher language cognition in the four domains, which attested to differentiating between SHLLs implicit and explicit knowledge (Zyzik, 2016).

A lexicon recognition test is used to a certain extent as a placement tool to differentiate linguistic levels between HLLs and L2 learners. Fairclough (2011) investigated the effectiveness of using a lexical recognition test as a placement test for L2s and HLLs at the University of Houston. The Spanish program at this university consisted of two tracks: one for Spanish HLs and one for Spanish L2s. Each Spanish program track consisted of four different course levels based on the enrollment. In the study, there was a total of 330 participants, of which 183 were Spanish HLLs and 147 were Spanish L2s from different language levels. The two groups were divided based on a questionnaire completed at the time of the test that elicited basic sociolinguistic information. A control group composed of 16 graduate students who were Spanish-
English bilinguals was included in order to provide further evidence for the validity of the task.

The lexical recognition test consisted of 120 words selected from a list of 5,000 of the most frequently used words in the Spanish word lexicon, *A Frequency Dictionary of Spanish: Core Vocabulary for Learners* by Mark Davies. The alpha value for the 120 words ($n = 330$) in the internal consistency tests based on raw scores was .972, which suggests very high reliability. Eighty pseudo-words were added to take into account orthographic and morpho-phonological restrictions. The inclusion of the pseudo-words created a challenge because of the degree of guessing accepted. Forty-four words (24 real words and 20 nonwords) were chosen for each of the four levels. As points of comparison, half of the participants took a Cloze Test, which consisted of one paragraph that omitted every fifth word while the other half took a multitask test, composed of several productive tasks. Test takers were asked to mark the words for which they could explain the meaning.

The findings from this study suggested a relationship between passive vocabulary knowledge and the results of the other types of tests, such as the Cloze Test and the Multiple-task Test, as verified by moderately high correlation coefficients between the Yes or No Test and the other tests (Cloze Test: $r = .87$; Multiple-task Test; $r = .79$; both at the .01 level, 2-tailed). The Yes or No lexical test was easier and faster to administer, and computer scores were instantly available and completely objective.

Time plays a valuable factor when developing a placement test. Although the other measure used for comparison, the Multiple-task Test, also had high reliability (.82 and .81), it took much longer to complete (an hour, compared to 10 minutes for the
lexical test). The test could differentiate L2 learners and HLLs, as well as discriminate different proficiency levels for L2 learners. The test, however, was not as efficient for discriminating HLLs with advanced proficiency levels. The use of a Yes or No test was very valuable tool to meet the challenge of practicality and the complexity of the diverse background of the HLLs being placed in the HL program. Thus, the lexical items used serve as robust identifiers when assessing Spanish HLLs, and they also could serve as indicators not just to distinguish levels of language proficiency and sophistication, but also the extent of language exposure among language variations in different communities.

The relevance of Fairclough’s (2011) study to Thompson’s (2015) study is the indication that several of the students in the HLL group already possessed receptive knowledge of the basic/core/high-frequency lexicon in Spanish, in which case a lexical recognition test that is limited to the 5,000 more frequent words does not effectively provide results that can distinguish linguistic ability among the higher levels of Spanish proficiency in this group of students. A larger frequency corpus would be needed to avoid the ceiling effect. Thus, Fairclough’s (2011) placement test was not a good placement test for my study because it does not include all the linguistic measures suggested by Zyzik’s (2016) prototype model of the heritage language learners, and the study failed to distinguish higher language cognition of the language learners due to a ceiling effect. In addition, Zyzik’s (2016) prototype model emphasized the importance of pondering the linguistic abilities of HLLs, whose lexicon may be reduced to a more colloquial or non-academic.

Language knowledge undoubtedly is an essential component to be considered when designing placement tests for HLLs. This synthesis of knowledge is of utmost
importance to developing assessment practices that are both scientifically sound as well as linguistically and culturally relevant to the population being assessed (Bachman & Palmer, 1996; Hughes, 2003; McNamara, 2000). Fairclough (2012a) presented a model for designing and administering a language placement test based on second-language theory and HLLs research at the university level. Fairclough provided preliminary considerations prior to designing a Spanish HLL placement test: (a) the mission of the program, (b) program and student characteristics, and (c) course content. She reaffirmed that Spanish L2 placement tests are not suitable for Spanish HLLs. Therefore, she proposed academic context criteria for the appropriate placement test, which included (a) definition of the HL proficiency construct, (b) preliminary considerations, (c) test content, (d) test design and sample tasks, and (e) implementation. The article emphasized that the accuracy of course placement is essential for the student and program success. Language knowledge is embedded in both of Thompson’s (2015) instruments and their different language tasks.

*The piloting process for accurate statistical analysis*

Wilson (2012) investigated a method of graphical and statistical item analysis at the University of New Mexico to identify multiple-choice items in an online placement test that were most effective at distinguishing between Spanish HL and Spanish SL. The collected data came from two rounds of piloting the test. In the first round, there were 507 participants. In the second round, there were 330 participants. Doing two rounds of the pilot tests allowed the researcher to test a large number of items and then eliminate the weaker items. The results of the item analysis, the point biserial correlation coefficient, and Cronbach’s alpha test suggested the effectiveness of using this method to
discriminate between test items that were more effective at distinguishing Spanish HL from Spanish SL. The findings suggested that when developing a placement test, certain types of questions may affect how students react, and indicated the importance of understanding the different sociolinguistic profiles of the language learners.

Potowski, Parada, and Morgan-Short (2012) described the process of developing and piloting an adaptive, online placement test for SHLLs at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC). The findings of their report were based on three pilot phases and the modifications they did during each stage. The authors explained that the Spanish language program at UIC offered two tracks, Basic Language Program (BLP) and Heritage Language Program (HLP), in which 1,700 students were enrolled. There were 1,200 students in the BLP and 500 students in the HLP. Each track offered its own paper-and-pencil placement test. The placement test for the BLP consisted of 100 multiple-choice items and was required of all incoming students who did not speak Spanish outside of the classroom before registration. HL speakers self-identified using the criteria “You should take the Spanish for bilinguals placement test if you learned Spanish in a natural, non-academic environment.” The placement test consisted of three parts: (a) background questions, (b) a written essay of 18-20 lines in response to one of three prompts, and (c) a short translation from English to Spanish that contained hypothetical sentences with compound verb tenses.

Factors such as having two separate placement tests, students having to self-identify in order to take the correct test, enrollment growth, technological advances, and legal concerns that could arise from a misconception that placement in the HLP was based on ethnicity rather than linguistic characteristics were part of the reasons to
redesign a new placement test. The new placement test underwent three pilot phases. The first pilot phase took place in the spring of 2009. There was a total of 461 students dispersed across the four course levels for beginners, and two for Spanish HLLs. The second pilot phase was administered in the spring 2010 to a total of 1,183 participants. The third pilot phase of the test took place during the summer of 2010, in which they had a smaller size of participants. The researchers did not clarify the size of the sample. For each pilot phase different sets of statistical tests were used to establish its accuracy, validity, and reliability. The first phase was based on item analyses measuring across levels to differentiate in-group performance of the individual on each subtest. An item-by-item analysis was administered to assess items according to: (a) their difficulty index, which measured the proportion of examinees who got the item right and (b) their item test correlation. Based on those statistics, test items were identified using the following criteria: (a) difficulty indices above .80 or below .40 were flagged as too difficult or too easy, respectively and (b) Pearson correlation values below .20 were noted as too low. Problematic items were either eliminated or revised and additional items were created following the format and topics that had proven most successful in discriminating levels. In the second phase, they conducted a one-analysis of variance (ANOVA) to examine whether students at various course levels were performing differently on the placement tests. In phase three, once again, separate one-way repeated ANOVA measures were performed on the results of each test in order to confirm whether learners at different levels did indeed perform differently on these tests.

The new pilot test was going to be administered to Spanish HL and Spanish L2 to separate them by differentiating their linguistic abilities and provide proper placement in
the course level. The test was designed to be connected to the course based on the two Spanish course tracks. The design of the adaptive test had three goals: (a) to separate L2 learners from HLLs based on linguistic criteria; (b) to eliminate paper, as well as appointment scheduling in the Office of Testing Services, by online administration; and (c) to comply with standards of validity and reliability. The adaptive test was designed for all students wanting to take Spanish, which means that all HLLs and L2 began in the same entry level. Based on the individual tests scores, students might or might not take the next test. The following test order was used to decide whether to advance a student to the next test: (a) Test A for those who had the lowest scores, (b) Test B, or entry point, (c) Test C, separation of HLLs from L2Ls occurred, and those who passed Test B could take it; and (d) Test D for L2 learners or Test D for HLLs. The scores on Test D for HLLs and L2Ls determined whether a student qualified for placing out of the basic language program. After administering three pilot tests, the findings indicated the effectiveness and practicality of the placement test in differentiating most of the class level. The overall results of the alphas for all test blocks but one exceeded .95 (Test A, $\alpha = .98$; Test B, $\alpha = .98$; Test C, $\alpha = 1.00$; Test D-L2, $\alpha = .81$; Test D- HS, $\alpha = .98$). Thus, Potowski et al. (2012) concluded that all the tests met acceptable levels of reliability, and all but one test met the highest criterion for an acceptable reliability level.

Their study described an effective process to develop an efficient and reliable placement test at differentiating language abilities for HLLs and L2 learners. Based on three pilot phases, it was recommended to pilot the test one more time. This placement test was not a good fit for my study for the following reasons. First, without the final findings and results of the last pilot test, the effectiveness of the four tests is uncertain.
The format of the test may not be the best way to measure the linguistic abilities of HLLs at the high-school level. It did not include a language awareness section nor a bilingual skill section that helps to provide a more comprehensive view of the HLLs language profile and validates the implicit and explicit language knowledge of HL. Last, the practicality of the test due to lack of technological resources and funding makes it less feasible to adapt to an online placement test. The Potowski et al., (2012) study highlighted the necessity of piloting the placement test to fix or work out any discrepancies in the statistical analysis or any other issue during the implementation of the test. That provided relevance to piloting a placement test and the statistical analysis process that was applicable to my study.

Beaudrie (2012) presented well developed guidelines for the design and implementation of a computerized Spanish placement test at the University of Arizona. The University of Arizona’s Spanish and Portuguese Department offers two tracks for HLLs and L2 learners in its Spanish language program. The creation of a computerized Spanish language placement exam was initiated for the following reasons: (a) the need for the Spanish and Portuguese Department to improve its ability to differentiate among the levels of SHL students recognized by the University of Arizona, (b) the need to identify receptive bilingual students and accurately distinguish them from beginning and intermediate L2 students of Spanish, and (c) the fact that university administrators required that the test-taking experience of SHL students and their L2 peers be similar, largely because of concerns with the way the previous placement exam had been conducted.
The Spanish-language exam was administered every summer during a 2-day orientation for incoming freshmen and transfer students. The exam is required of all students planning to register for Spanish courses unless they have earned prior course credit or could certify that they have passed an accredited language exam. Beaudrie’s paper outlined the process of creating the placement test which consisted of two parts: (a) a 14-item Yes and No survey and (b) a computerized SHL language placement test. The 14-item Yes and No survey targeted the students’ childhood and current contact with Spanish through family, community, friends or a combination outside of the classroom context, and it also included four distracters asking students about their contact with English.

The survey distinguished between the L2 and SHL learners. Three or more responses on Spanish related statements determined that students had sufficient contact with Spanish to take the SHL placement test. Once students took the survey, the Spanish HLLs who were identified, were directed to take the SHL placement test. The computerized SHL placement exam was developed based on each of the three course’s goals and prerequisite language requirements to establish content validity. The process to develop a list of discrete points was as follows: (a) Spanish 103 targeted receptive bilinguals, so items for that level aimed only at recognition of familiar idiomatic expressions common in Spanish conversations, and (b) the distinction between Spanish 203 versus 253, revolved around errors in orthography, morphology, grammar, and vocabulary or idioms. For example, whereas students placed in Spanish 203 had difficulty spelling irregular preterit forms, students in 253 had mastered these forms. As a result, two items were designed to target the spelling of irregular preterits. Thus, the
computerized SHL placement test was composed with a total of 25 items: eight items targeting Spanish 103 (lower level), eight items targeting Spanish 203 (intermediate), and nine items targeting Spanish 253 (advanced level).

The placement test was administered for the first time in the summer of 2005 with a total of 351 participants. In summer 2006, the test was administered to a total of 564 participants, summer 2007 to a total of 530 participants, and summer 2008 to a total of 508 participants. The test reliability was calculated using Cronbach's alpha as the measure of internal consistency. The item-difficult value was used to eliminate questions that were too difficult or too easy. According to Beaudrie, the following results indicated that the overall computerized SHL placement test was reliable: 2005 test = 0.88, 2006 test = 0.93, 2007 test = 0.92, 2008 test = 0.91, 2009 test = 0.92, 2010 = 0.92, 2011 = 0.93.

Beaudrie’s (2012) study was included in this literature review because it provided a rudimentary foundation for my study. For example, one main point that was crucial when developing a placement test was the alignment of the courses’ goals with the placement test to establish content validity. In the institution where my study took place, the Spanish department is in the preliminary stages of formalizing the process of the HL program with the implantation of Thompson’s (2015) test. Despite the highly indicated reliability, Beaudrie’s (2012) online placement test could not be applicable to my study because the 25-items in the test were chosen based on the HLLs population of the institute. As it has been stated, a placement test needed to reflect the linguistic needs of the student population that it serves.

Additionally, Beaudrie’s (2012) online placement test includes items heavily aimed at specific orthography, morphology, grammar, and vocabulary idioms that did not
necessarily reflect the array of language variation as Thompson’s (2015) paper-and-pencil placement test which had more open and general test components that elicited a broader use of Spanish language, and bilingual or, more specific, translation skills from English to Spanish. Beaudrie’s 14-item Yes or No survey, however, presented new components that could possibly be an addition to Thompson’s 10-question Yes or No item survey, for instance, the distractors asking about the contact with English. Thompson (2015) also suggested that a possible way to improve the accuracy of his test could be by lengthening the survey. Last, Beaudrie’s (2012) test guided to some extent the process of converting Thompson’s (2015) survey and placement test into an online version. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the inevitable distance learning school year, Thompson’s paper and pencil test had to be converted into an electronic version with modification to make feasible to high-school students and their distance learning academic settings.

The efficacy of Spanish HL placement test

MacGregor-Mendoza (2012) evaluated the efficacy of the Spanish Placement Test (SPT) that had been used for over 15 years to assess students entering their Spanish language study at New Mexico State University (NMSU). The student population at this university is very diverse as is their linguistic abilities. The diversity and extension of their language abilities and experience can be traced from the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo circa 1846 to the most recent arrivals from Spanish-speaking countries. Most of the SHLLs have acquired the language at home and hardly have any formal instruction in the language. Their Spanish abilities are often subject to societal scrutiny (MacGregor-Mendoza, 2012, p. 5).
MacGregor-Mendoza (2013) highlighted the distinctions of the diverse SHLLs population in accordance with the purpose and goals of the placement test because the adopted placement test by NMSU was developed by Teshcher (1990), at the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP), which served a very different population. She pointed out that the geographic location of UTEP near Ciudad Juárez, México influenced the flow of the constant cultural, economic, and linguistic interaction among the Spanish-speaking population. The presence and use of Spanish throughout El Paso reinforced and revitalized it. Therefore, MacGregor-Mendoza (2012) questioned whether the test content and design from more than 20 years ago for a different university efficiently met the linguistic abilities of the distinct Spanish HL population and whether or not the results of the Spanish placement test rendered any value at (a) distinguishing between SHL and non-SHL at NMSU, (b) identifying efficiently the relevant skills of the SHLLs, and (c) placing accurately SHL into their SHL Program.

The electronic Spanish placement test was administered to 4,764 test takers during a 12-month period. The test was composed of two instruments: (a) 10 Native Speaker indicators and (b) 90 multiple-choice items. The 10 Native Speaker Indicators were embedded to distinguish between HLLs and non-HLLs using colloquial terms and expressions from a Mexican influenced variety of Spanish. It was pointed out that the use of the 10 Native Speaker Indicators was questionable practice from a procedural, cultural, statistical, and ethical point of view. The 90 multiple-choice items designed for SHL assessed lexical and grammatical features. Because the test was available online, MacGregor-Mendoza (2012), cautioned that data was unfiltered, meaning that test taker did not take the test with the intention of being properly placed into their Spanish
program or being differentiated between HLLs and non-HLLs. The test identified 1,610 students as HLLs. The accuracy of that sample size could be questionable due to the open availability of the placement test to everyone and the propensity to attract a greater range of HLLs.

In examining the SPT item, a difficulty analysis was used. Based on the item-difficulty values, over 50% of the test items were problematic because they did not assess properly the language skills of the NMSU Spanish HL student sample, which limited the value of accomplishing the intended task. The summary of the ranges of item-difficulty values for the items is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item Difficulty</th>
<th>.85-.99</th>
<th>.75-.84</th>
<th>.60-.74</th>
<th>.45-.59</th>
<th>&lt; .44</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-40 basic grammar</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-50 basic vocabulary</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-70 Intermed. &amp; adv.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vocabulary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71-80 orthography</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>81-90 formal grammar</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to the item difficulty analysis, a discrimination index (D) was used as a guideline to assess an item’s discriminatory power. The results of the D value showed that all test items fell in the bottom range of D values, meaning that no item was higher than .11. Based on Ebel and Frisbie’s recommendation, items with a D value of less than .20 should either be discarded or subjected to intense scrutiny, as they provide limited
ability to determine differences among learners, even those at the opposite ends of the skill range (MacGregor-Mendoza, 2012, p. 12).

Another finding of examining the SPT was the inappropriate use of basic grammar items such as the use of *ser, estar, gustar*, simple subject-verb and noun-adjective agreement, and simple vocabulary to discern levels of ability for a population who acquired Spanish in an authentic setting. This finding was consistent with Montrul’s (2004) study. The mismatch of the goals of the courses in the SHL sequence at NMSU was another issue found due to the fact that test was designed for a different university’s Spanish HLLs and the goals of the program courses varied as well. Last, based on the overall findings of the study, five recommendations were made to better assess the Spanish HLLs abilities while developing or adopting a more accurate and adequate placement test: (a) placement measures applied to populations of HLLs needed to be home grown, (b) HLL placement measures needed to be informed by current research, (c) HLL placement measures need to be mindful of the linguistic and cultural issues at play that can confound results, (d) HLL placement measures needed to be grounded in established test development principles, and (e) HLL placement measures needed to be administered responsibly. These are fundamental guidelines that inform the importance and relevance of the role that reliability and validity play in developing HLL assessment related to the testing of a specific student population.

Ilieva and Clark-Gareka (2016) emphasized that there has been a lack of examples of tests created exclusively for HLLs and a general lack of HLL specific testing guidelines, and that accurate and specific measurement for HLL language proficiency is an area that requires more discussion and research. MacGregor-Medoza (2012) provided
a sample of the essential guidelines to consider when adopting a placement test that has been developed and designed for a different Spanish HL population in another institution. Those guidelines emphasized the crucial role of being deliberate while designing a placement test to increase its efficacy. In relation to her findings and recommendations to the implementation of Thompson’s (2015) placement test at the high-school level was the intentionality to identify the level of language usage in different domains within the different constructs of the two instruments of the placement test. Thompson’s (2015) test instruments elicited the Spanish HL test takers to identify the degree of their language knowledge awareness in Spanish and English as well as their language abilities and proficiency levels. Adopting Thompson’s (2015) and making modification to it considering previous studies on improving efficacy and use of online placement tests provided fundamental considerations.

*Thompson’s (2015) placement test model for this study*

Research on HL has highlighted the strong listening and speaking language abilities HLLs have. In addition, HL research on assessment has noted the need for better instruments to assess the HLLs language skills. Thompson (2015) argued that current models for heritage placement put less emphasis on the analysis of the domains of language use (i.e., how and with whom the languages are being used) and exclusively analyze the grammatical knowledge of the speakers. He pointed out that the failure to consider the importance that the domains of language utilization play in proper placement needs to be addressed (Thompson, 2015, p. 83). The purpose of Thompson’s study was to provide guidance on designing placement tests to increase the accuracy and facility of placement so that HLLs might be properly placed into language classes and thus benefit
the most from their education. Thompson stated that the study was conducted in a large public university without revealing its name. There was a total of 277 Spanish HL participants, a group of freshmen who were mainly of Mexican descent. As part of their new student orientation, all students took an exam to differentiate who was heritage and nonheritage learners to determine which was the best language track that fit their needs. The HLLs were placed in three class levels: 100 students in Spanish 103 (beginning Spanish for HLLs), 79 students in Spanish 203 (intermediate Spanish for HLLs), and 98 students in Spanish 253 (advanced Spanish for HLLs). The data collected did not have any effect on the placement of the students into the different level courses because they had been placed in there beforehand.

The design of the study used qualitative and quantitative data analysis to better understand the HLLs placement. The placement test consisted of two instruments: (a) Yes or No 10-question survey of language usage, and (b) a three-part instrument composed of three sections. The 10-question survey of receptive and productive language use was given to all students to determine whether they were HLLs or not. The questions were designed to take into consideration the different domains in which the heritage speakers either used Spanish or had any experience with the language. These questions also determined with whom Spanish was used. This instrument was piloted before the gathering of the data. The three parts of the second instrument were as follows: Part I: “Language Awareness,” was intended to measure the students’ basic knowledge of the Spanish language, and Part II: was a translation section, labeled “Bilingual skills,” that included seven questions. These sentences were selected to test students’ abilities in four distinct areas: phrasal expressions, the use of gustar, the use of the subjunctive, and the
use of aspect. This section also included many vocabulary words that have a standard translation common among monolinguals but are often mistranslated by the Spanish heritage population. Part III consisted of a short composition in which students could choose from one of three options that were selected to elicit responses using the past tense. Thompson (2015) clarified that the first instrument was piloted previously to gather data, and he then stated that the design of these instruments was based on previous research studies in HL placement and HLLs (Ascher, 1990; Lam et al., 2003; Valdés, 2000) as well as the experience of the test designer.

Even though, the two instruments were used, Thompson (2015) only provided the data analysis of the first instrument, the 10-question survey of language usage. He provided qualitative and quantitative analysis results of the common characteristics of HLLs placed in different course levels and used inferential statistics and an one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) with post hoc Tukey pairwise comparisons to determine whether a significant difference existed between the level of placement and the domains of language usage as described in the 10-question survey. Based on the affirmative results of the survey, it showed that students placed in the more advanced Spanish 253 used and had a wider range of experience with the language variety of settings. They demonstrated both active and passive use of the language. They had a greater level of language variety in the domains of viewing, listening, and speaking due the fact that they spoke with different family and community members.

The students who were placed in Spanish 203 stated that they used Spanish at a lower level and less frequently that those placed in 253, and although they indicated their frequent use of the language at home, their use outside of home was less. Two of the
main distinctions between students placed in Spanish 253 and 203 were that students in 203 were much less likely to view any television or listen to programs in Spanish that could have influenced their level of language usage. Students placed in Spanish 103 showed a very limited active use of the language. Their main experience using Spanish was with their grandparents and less with parents. This group of students did not view television very much and rarely listened to the radio in Spanish. Their use of English-speaking media paralleled their receptive abilities with Spanish. Thompson pointed out that this group of students was unique in the way they often understood certain topics in Spanish, especially those related to home and family; however, they frequently could not respond orally in Spanish due to their limited range of vocabulary, which was an important point to consider when distinguishing between the level of language production, implicit knowledge of the heritage language, and early exposure (experience) with the HL at home when implementing a placement HL test at the high school level.

The results of the placement according to the 10-questions survey showed correlation with the number of Yes responses and the accuracy of the course placement. The breakdown of the number of Yes responses in accordance with the course level was 1 to 4 Yes responses correlated accurately with the placement into Spanish 103, 5 to 7 Yes responses correlated to some degree with the placement into Spanish 203, and, 8 to 10 Yes responses correlated accurately with the placement into Spanish 253. The correlation with the accuracy of placement with Spanish 103 was at 71%, Spanish 203 was at 41%, and Spanish 253 was at 73%. Based on these results, the use of the 10-question survey accurately placed more than 70% of the students in the lower and upper course levels, but only 41% the intermediate level. The fact that the group in Spanish 203
had language skill sets in the higher and lower range made it more difficult to place them. The results from the one-way ANOVA with a post hoc Tukey pairwise comparisons of the course level placement and affirmative response on the 10-question survey showed that for all three groups there was a statistical significant finding of $F(2,275) = 135.54$ with an eta squared of .44 large practical importance. When comparing Span 103 with Span 203 and Span 253, the mean difference was statistically significant 3.55 with a standard error of 0.21. When comparing Span 203 with Span 103 and Span 253, the mean difference was statically significant 5.68 with a standard error of 0.23. When comparing Span 253 with Span 203 and Span 103, the mean difference was statistically significant 8.37 with a standard error of 0.21. Thompson (2015) argued that even though the 10-question instrument needed more refinement, it was relatively accurate for being a short instrument and its practicality was fairly useful.

Even though Thompson’s (2015) study focused only on the analysis of the implementation of the yes or no 10-question survey language usage inside and outside of the HLLs home and its need for refinement, it still provided a valid perspective of using the two placement instruments that it covers. Using both instruments included a wider range of the language profile attributes of the HLLs from bilingual skills, the language dominance other than the HL, implicit knowledge of the HLLs, the ethnic and cultural connection to the HL and the proficiency of the BLC in the HL. The implementation and incorporation of both instruments has helped to reflect the level of differentiation of HLLs’ use of Spanish inside and outside of the home and their academic use of Spanish. Another important reason to use Thompson’s instruments was its practicality and simplicity to administer and evaluate at the high-school level when there was not a formal
and official placement test the Spanish for HLL classes. In addition, using Thompson’s placement instruments have provided valuable information on designing or adopting a placement test used at the university level in comparison with the high-school level. His study provided the basics on establishing a more solid and formal system at the high-school level when placing SHLLs in three Spanish for HLLs class levels. Having that foundation also sheds light on the bulk of SHLLs research on the effectiveness of implementing a college SHLL placement test at the high school level. Further discussion on my study results and findings are provided in the following chapters.

**Summary**

Language assessment using placement tests has been researched extensively in the areas of second-language acquisition but not necessarily on language assessment for HL. The challenges in the field of placement tests for Spanish HLs are many. The information presented in this section, however, has highlighted key areas of investigation that can be useful and necessary when designing or adopting a placement test for high-school Spanish HLLs. Six areas that shed light on this study are (a) language assessments and purposes; (b) differentiating language assessment for HLLs, FLLs and L2s; (c) considerations when developing a placement test for Spanish HLLs; (d) the piloting process for accurate statistical analysis; (e) the efficacy of placement test, and (f) Thompson’s (2015) placement test model. Knowing the purpose of the placement test and what language abilities it intends to measure among the Spanish HLLs helps to determine what type of language content to include. Content such as lexicon, phrasal expressions, verb tenses, verb moods, and other linguistic items can provide meaningful information for language proficiency measures as well as accurate data for statistical
analysis. Piloting a placement test allows the researcher to make necessary adjustments that demonstrate a certain level of difficulty or simply add more clarity in reading and understanding instructions. Knowing the elements that reinforce the efficacy of a placement test assists the researcher with how to offer a more reliable and fairer placement test that meets the test takers’ language abilities.

**Summary**

Because of the lack of scholarly research on high-school placement tests for Spanish heritage language learners or heritage language in general, the review of the literature presented in this chapter mainly reflected studies conducted at community colleges and 4-year universities with or without heritage language programs. The studies demonstrated relevance and significance to this study. Although the studies were not related directly to placement testing for Spanish heritage language at the high-school level, the targeted student population in my study shared many similarities with those studied such as linguistic profiles and cultural background. Therefore, the research on college heritage language was applicable to this study.

The results of national, state, and local survey studies presented the differentiation of what constitutes a foreign language program and makes the distinction between a L2 learner and a HL learner as the very first step to better serve the language learners’ needs and accommodations. Subsequently, these studies showed that the essential step to placing nonheritage- and heritage-language students in the appropriate language tract is having an efficient language placement test. The components of a placement test orchestrate the variables to measure language abilities, proficiency, and literacy. Thus, the studies in this chapter also demonstrated the importance of assessing HLLs linguistic
attitude, behaviors, age, and motivation that play a crucial role that helps to define the
linguistic profile of HLLs when choosing whether to take a HL course.

The consideration of sociocultural variables is essential when designing and
offering HL courses. The major findings of the surveys indicated that community
colleges and universities offering heritage-language programs had major issues
identifying and addressing HLLs diversity, the alignment of the course content with the
overall heritage program goals, need for well-designed pedagogical practices and relevant
curriculum for HLLs that reflect their linguistic knowledge and abilities. In addition,
these studies underscored the need for professional-development preparation on heritage
language teaching and learning and the absence of funding and staff to create effective
HL programs. Carreira (2013) addressed three effective and interrelated pedagogical
approaches for Spanish HL courses: (a) community service as vehicle for social
engagement with the Latino community, (b) the multiliteracies approach with emphasis
on work with art, and (c) a border and critical pedagogy framework. Bayram et al. (2016)
stressed that the grammar of HLLs, also referred to as heritage speaker (HS), is not
broken, meaning that pedagogical approaches designed for HSs should not have the aim
of “fixing” them. Rather, instruction for HSs should be more akin to language arts class
(what all natives speakers have as children as opposed to language skills classes
imparted to non-native speaking adults). These are considerable implications that are
further discussed in chapter V of this study.

Based on the review of the literature regarding placement tests for Spanish HLLs,
the following conclusions are drawn. When designing and implementing a language
placement test, it is important to know the student population and demographics, as well
as the language abilities between HLL and L2 learners’ linguistic abilities, cultural background variables, the implicit and explicit language knowledge, proficiency in the HL, cultural and familial connection with the language, and the bilingual range. Potowski et al. (2012) stated an overall agreement that language placement assessment is not “one-size-fits-all” and it must reflect the varied needs and composition of the heritage-speaking population that it is intended for, as well as the goals of the curriculum decided upon by the institution, that is, the placement test can be adapted for use at other institutions where demographics and heritage-language programs may differ. Statistical analysis establishes the validity and reliability of the placement test. The alignment of the course and language program goals with the placement test plays a key factor. This chapter also presented insights on the relevance of measuring students’ literacy level in the HL in accordance with the assessment procedures to be evaluated and the range of functions language learners possess to successfully carry out and the different registers and language varieties present in their linguistic repertoire (Elder 2005; Valdés 2007).

The sections on academic literature offered samples of the literature available for national, state, and local survey studies conducted on the heritage-language research field and for developing and implementing placement tests for heritage language learners at higher education institutions that provided a deep understanding of the significance of designing and implementing a placement test, its purpose, differing language program tracks, the implications of their results on students’ placement and language and designing HL curriculum. This chapter provided meaningful guidance in understanding and interpreting the findings of this study.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to investigate how Thompson's (2015) modified survey and placement test could be used effectively with three classes of Spanish heritage language learners (HLLs) at the high-school level to differentiate HLLs' use of Spanish inside and outside of the home and in their academic use of Spanish. The following outlines the research design of the study. The subsections of this chapter contain the details of the research design, a description of the study setting and participants, the protection of human subjects, instrumentation, the study, the piloting of the placement test, procedures for data collection, proposed data analyses, and limitations of the study. The study was conducted during the 2020 fall semester based on agreement with the host school.

Research Design

To address the purpose of the study, a mixed method study was undertaken with a quantitative component and a qualitative pre- and postfocus group interview. Creswell (2015) defined it as an approach to research in the social, behavioral, and health sciences in which the investigator gathers both quantitative (closed-ended) and qualitative (open-ended) data, integrates the two and then draws interpretations based on the combined strengths of both sets of data to understand research problems. The quantitative part of the study assessed the placement of the high-school students into the three Spanish HLL classes using Thompson’s survey and placement test. Descriptive statistics were computed via one-way analyses of variance (ANOVAs) followed by post hoc tests to find proportions and mean differences. The qualitative part consisted of pre- and postfocus
group interviews of Spanish teachers in the World Language Department commenting on the benefits and challenges of Thompson’s (2015) modified Survey of Language Usage and Spanish for Heritage Learners Program Placement Exam as compared with the previous process of facilitating placement of high-school Spanish HLL students. The independent variables for this study were the three classifications resulting from Thompson's placement survey of language usage and the three Spanish courses for heritage speakers at the high-school level. The dependent variables were Language Awareness, Bilingual Skills, and Writing Skills as assessed by Thompson's placement test. The focus teacher group interviews took place before and after the implementation of Thompson’s modified survey and placement test. The participants responded to open-ended questions that helped to determine the benefits and challenges of Thompson’s (2015) modified placement test in comparison to the previously established system.

The study investigated the following research questions with respect to the implementation and evaluation of Thompson’s (2015) modified survey and placement test within the three Spanish courses for heritage speakers: (a) to what extent are Thompson’s three classifications as assessed on the modified Survey of Language Usage consistent with the three Spanish HLL classes at the high-school level, (b) to what extent are there differences on the second part of Thompson’s modified survey for the three classifications of Spanish HLL high-school students?, (c) to what extent are there differences on the second part of Thompson’s modified survey for the three Spanish HLL classes at the high-school level?, (d) to what extent are consistent differences on the second part of Thompson’s modified survey between the three classifications across the three Spanish HLL high-school students and (e) what are the benefits and challenges of
using Thompson’s modified Survey of Language Usage (survey) and modified Spanish of Heritage Learners Program Placement Exam (placement test) to place Spanish HLL students given the usual practice used at the high-school level? This last research question addressed the qualitative part of the study.

To address the first four research questions, the quantitative part of the study involved the two instruments comprising Thompson’s (2015) modified placement test: the 10-Yes or No question modified Survey of Language Usage inside or outside the student’s home and the modified Spanish for Heritage Learners Program Placement Exam. The three Spanish courses for participating HLLs were likely to be linguistically, academically, and culturally diverse based on previous students in these courses. The status of living in the US varies from recent immigrants to first-, second-, and third-generation immigrants. Therefore, the Spanish department has offered two language tracks: (a) Spanish as a second language or foreign language, and (b) Spanish for heritage language learners (HLLs). Within the HLL track, there is a two-course sequence (a) a 4-year advanced course track for bilingual (Spanish and English) students participating in the International Baccalaureate (IB) Program and (b) two Spanish for HLLs regular course tracks with the opportunity to take Advanced Placement (AP) Spanish: Language and Culture in their third or fourth year or as sophomores depending upon their arrival to this country and the level of their academic knowledge in Spanish and if they are following the IB Program track. Question number 5 was addressed by analyzing the open-ended questions answered by the pre- and postfocus groups with four Spanish classroom teachers. The data from the pre- and postfocus group interviews were analyzed qualitatively applying a 3-step thematic coding. In this method, the qualitative data
initially were clustered into emerging patterns or segments that are related to one another. Interpretive description was provided to each cluster, and major themes and subthemes were developed and coded (Merriam, 2009).

**Setting and Participants**

A convenience sample of two hundred and thirty-five 9th- through 12th-grade Spanish-speaking heritage language students were invited to participate in the study. There was a total of 222 ($N = 222$) students who participated in taking Thompson’s (2015) modified placement test and 235 ($N = 22$) who took the modified Survey of Language Usage; however, only 144 participating students turned in their parent and student consent forms to participate in the study. Therefore, the convenience sample for this study was of one hundred forty-four 9th- through 12th-grade Spanish-speaking heritage language students. The breakdown of students per grade was as follows: 50 ninth-grade students, 43 tenth-grade students, 37 eleventh-grade students, and 14 twelfth-grade students.

The study was conducted at a public high school in Sacramento, California. This institution offers a four-track Spanish program which differentiates language abilities between Spanish for L2s and HLLs. This study took place in (a) a Pre-International Baccalaureate (Pre-IB) Spanish for Heritage Learners Level 1 (Pre-IB SHLL I) course for 9th-graders, which follows a sequence of Spanish heritage-language courses during four high-school years; (b) three Spanish for Heritage Learners Level I (SHLL I) classes for 9th to 12th-graders; and (c) three Spanish for Heritage Language Learners Level II (SHLL II) courses for 9th to 12th-graders. Sacramento Unified School District requires all high-school students to take one year of a world language class in order to graduate. These
classes satisfy that requirement as well as California World Language college requirement.

The school is an urban, inner-city, ethnically and culturally diverse high school situated in South Sacramento, California. The surrounding community is rich in culture, diversity, language, and ethnicity, which is reflected in the student population of the school. As a comprehensive high school, it serves approximately 1,800 students. The majority of the student population comes from low-socioeconomic status. As a Title 1 school, an estimated 90% of the student population qualify for free-and-reduced lunch. The ethnic demographic breakdown of the student body is as follows: 40% Latino/Hispanic, 28% Asian, 22% African American, and 10% other minority groups, such as, Afghans, Pakistanis, Syrians, Pacific Islanders, White, or two more races. An estimated 26% of the students are designated English language learners. The school remains dedicated to preparing all the students in this varied student population for the challenges of college and career following high school. To achieve that goal, the school provides programs ranging from English Language Development to the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Program.

The exiting unofficial placement system in the Spanish department consisted of giving a diagnostic questionnaire to all students who spoke some Spanish or were fluent to some extent in Spanish. That diagnostic questionnaire consisted of demographic questions about the students and a short writing composition paragraph. All students who were placed in a class that did not meet their language skills were given that diagnostic test to assess their writing skills in Spanish and provide some information on their Spanish background knowledge and usage. The assigned Spanish teacher was the one
who would give the test individually based upon requests by students, or at the teacher’s discretion according to students’ language abilities. Then the teacher would grade the diagnostic questionnaire and would give a recommendation for the student to stay in the assigned class or to be placed in an upper level class based on their level of expertise. The teacher would make her final decision on the writing composition based on vocabulary, verb tense usage and punctuation. Teachers would follow up with an informal oral interview to assess the students’ oral abilities when necessary.

Before placing the students in an upper-level class, the assigned teachers would consult with the department chair for approval and then would email the lead-teacher in charge of the Small Learning Community in which the student belonged. The lead-teacher would make the final change according to the student’s class schedule flexibility. In this placement system, there were no rubrics or specific written criteria to follow and to measure the student’s language abilities. It was left to the teacher’s discretion whether to recommend that the student remain in that specific class or to move the student to a different class for heritage or non-HLLs. The teacher would consult with the head of the Spanish/World Language Department as a second rater. Then, the decision was made based on the discretion of those two raters.

HLLs were differentiated as: (a) students who had never taken a Spanish class, most likely did not have any academic background knowledge in Spanish, and most of the Spanish they knew was because they learned it at home; (b) students who may have had some academic experience in Spanish because they had been in bilingual tracks at the elementary-school, middle school, or high-school level, or they had some schooling in their Spanish speaking countries; and (c) recent immigrant Spanish-speaking students
who have had formal education in their Spanish-speaking countries and had a strong academic foundation in Spanish and they were English-language learners with limited-English skills, or if they did not have any formal education in Spanish, at least it was one of the main languages they utilized to communicate. Therefore, Thompson’s (2015) modified survey and placement instruments helped to differentiate HLLs’ use of Spanish inside and outside of the home and in their academic use of Spanish and to formalize the implementation of this placement test to enhance the accuracy in placing those HLLs into the proper Spanish level. It is very important to note that the implementation of Thompson’s modified Survey of Language Usage and placement test helped to assess more than 220 Spanish HLLs in this institution for the very first time. Although, not all students participated in the dissertation research, it is very valuable to consider.

The group of HLLs placed in SHLL II were 10th-to 12th-grade students with some degree of literacy in academic Spanish because they all had taken Spanish I either for HLLs or as second-language, and they were following the Spanish sequence courses for HLLs as college readiness preparation to better meet the college requirement. This group most likely was composed of recent Spanish-speaking immigrants who had been educated fully in Spanish and had developed a higher language cognition in Spanish because of their contact with the language in different academic settings back in their Spanish-speaking countries, or they were recent immigrants with some degree of education from their previous Spanish-speaking countries and whose academic abilities in reading and writing were more limited.

Because there was no specific data collected on their generational peer group in this country or date of arrival to the US, the language survey was used to distinguish the
level of contact with the Spanish language. Therefore, the level of performance of the HLLs with Spanish usage and proficiency depended on the level of experience with it in different settings. This group of students might have spoken and understood Spanish with some degree of fluency on a wider range of topics but could have had limited ability with the complexities of the Spanish writing system. The class curriculum could enhance reading, writing compression, and speaking skills with a higher level of complexity. The spectrum of Spanish language abilities of the three groups could add to the complexity of the language assessment. The demographic data for the participating students who were assigned to Spanish classes, including their gender, class level, class period, and the participating teachers are provided in Table 2.

Table 2

Demographic Data for the Participating Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic</th>
<th>( f^a )</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class level</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>SHLL I</td>
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<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHLL II</td>
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<td>Period 5</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade Level</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>50</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10th</td>
<td>43</td>
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<td>12th</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12th</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\( f \) represents frequency.
**Qualifications of Researcher**

The researcher, Elizabeth Villanueva, is both a Spanish teacher and the World Language Department Chair located at South Sacramento, California. She has taught for the last 17 years a full gamut of Spanish language skill levels, from Spanish as a second language (L2) lower-level classes, often with behaviorally challenging students, all the way up to International Baccalaureate Spanish Language and Literature and Advanced Placement (AP) Spanish Language and Culture. In addition, Villanueva has taught Spanish courses for L2 and HLLs in a variety of settings including evening classes to high school parents at the local community-college, Spanish academic language development training at a local bilingual K-8th-grade charter school, and a credentialing program for Project Pipeline Sacramento. She also has organized and taught an after-school leadership program for young ladies called New-Age Latinas, and a Dreamers Club for undocumented high school students and parents. Villanueva holds a BA in Spanish, Single Subject Bilingual Cross-cultural, Language Academic Development (BCLAD) from California State University (CSU) Stanislaus, and an MA in Spanish Culture and Literature from CSU, Sacramento.

**Participating Teachers Qualifications**

The study included four participating Spanish teachers, two of whom served as test administrators, test raters, and were part of the focus groups. Each of them is credentialed as a Single Subject Bilingual Cross-cultural, Language Academic Development (BCLAD) Spanish teacher. Teacher A was in her sixth year at the school, teaching a variety of Spanish classes for L2, Spanish for SHL II, and Pre-IB Spanish classes for L2 learners. At the time of this study, she had started her Master’s degree in
school counseling. Teacher B was in her fourth year at the high school, and she had taught one year at a different high school. In this high school, she mainly taught Spanish for HLLs Level I (SHL I), Pre-IB SHLI, and Pre-IB Spanish for L2s. Both teachers are Spanish heritage speakers, and both did their student teaching credential program in this high school. Thus, they have had previous experience working with the student population and the Spanish teachers at the high school. They earned their teaching credentials from CSU, Sacramento. Teacher A had a total of 91 SHLLs enrolled in the three SHL II classes, of whom 53 SHLLs participated in the study. Teacher B had a total of 138 SHLLs enrolled in the four participating classes; 101 SHLLs were enrolled in SHL I and 37 in Pre-IB SHL I. From her classes only 91 SHLLs participated in the study (see Table 2).

The other two were veteran Spanish teachers who mainly participated as part of the focus group. Based on their experience implementing the previous system of placing HLLs students, Teachers C and D helped to determine the benefits and challenges of using Thompson’s (2015) test to place Spanish HLLs at the high school level. Teacher C was in her fourteenth year at the high school where the study took place, and she had taught two years at a middle school in the bay area. In this high school, she mainly taught Spanish as a second language (L2) levels I, II, III and IB as well as a higher-level course as a L2, and one year of Spanish for HL speakers I. She also was the Advanced Placement Coordinator. She holds a BA in Spanish from Humboldt State University, Single Subject Credential, and an MA in Spanish from CSU Sacramento. Teacher D was in her eleventh year at the high school where she taught Spanish of HL Speaker I and II, Spanish as L2 level II, Pre-IB Spanish I-II, and IB Spanish I. She also was the athletic
director at this high school. She holds a BA in Spanish from University of California, Davis and a Single Subject Credential from CSU Sacramento.

Table 3

Demographic Information for Four Participating Interviewees’ Teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Spanish Track</th>
<th>Teaching Experience Years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>SHLL</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>SHLL</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>L2L</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>L2L</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Protection of Human Subjects**

In accordance with Standard 8: Ethical Principles Concerning Research and Publication (American Psychological Association, 2012), Sacramento City Unified School, and the University of San Francisco Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRBPHS), all information obtained during the course of this study was kept confidential, and only aggregated group scores and group means were reported in the data analysis. Due to COVID-19, all the consent forms in English and Spanish were converted to an electronic version using USF Qualtrics consent forms. The school principal authorized the researcher and participating teachers A and B to share the Qualtrics consent form links with all their students via the Google Classroom platform. Prior to sharing the link, participating teachers A and B explained the purpose of the study and its significance during class via zoom. The researcher also attended a class session via zoom for each of the class levels to provide a briefing session about the study and answer any questions students had.
The researcher also gave the students her cell phone number, so that students could give it to their parents in case they had any questions. Parents had access to the link for the consent forms through their child’s Google Classroom account. Because students were provided access to a school district Chromebook and Wi-Fi, even parents with no personal email or technology had access to the consent forms. Parents had to read in the language they understood, Spanish or English, (see Appendix A) to agree or disagree to consent. Their signature and the name of the student were required before submitting it. Once signed, the researcher had immediate access through her USF Qualtrics account. All parents and students were informed in the consent letter of their parental right to have their student opt-out of the study without academic penalty.

All students had access to the consent forms prior to administration of the modified survey and placement test. All collected data from each student was maintained confidential. Each student was assigned a unique identification number for the collected data. Parents, students, lead teachers, and counselors were given access to the study results. Teachers also made sure that all students had access not only to the bilingual, Spanish and English, parental consent form of student participant in English and Spanish (see Appendixes A and B) but also to a parent letter of consent in English and Spanish (Appendixes C and D) informing parents that the participants’ identities were kept anonymous, and the results remained confidential and in a secure location. The consent letters were kept in the researcher’s USF Qualtricts account which only she had access to until after grades were posted. All identifying information from the students’ tests was removed before any analysis was performed. Whether the student had consented to the study or not was not known to the teacher, nor did it affect the student’s grade in any
way. Students also were given a student letter of consent in Spanish and English (Appendixes E and F) informing them about the anonymity and confidentiality.

The data for the study was collected by using Google forms. Data was kept confidential. All student data was recorded by a unique student identification number assigned by the researcher. The online survey and placement test responses were kept in a confidential google file, and the data related to the study was stored in a password-protected computer to ensure the security of the data. Only the researcher had access to the response data and any lists generated from the data-collection process including the master list.

Instrumentation

This study was intended to investigate how Thompson's (2015) modified survey and placement test could be used effectively with three classes of SHLLs at the high-school level to differentiate HLLs' use of Spanish inside and outside of the home and in their academic use of Spanish. A mixed method study was used as a systematic method for collecting, analyzing, and using information to answer questions about the placement test for three groups of Spanish heritage speakers at the high-school level. The pre- and postfocus Spanish teacher group interviews assessed the previous diagnostic placement system vis-à-vis the implementation of Thompson’s (2015) modified placement test. The placement exam consisted of two instruments. The first was a 10-question survey (see Appendix J) of receptive and productive language use given to all students to assess whether they were HLLs or not. The second instrument was the placement test that consisted of three parts: (a) Language Awareness; (b) Bilingual Skills (Translation); and (c) Writing Skills. Thompson stated that both of the instruments were tested out and
piloted to establish validity previous to conducting his study and the gathering of the data; however, he did not provide further details about its reliability from the other studies. In his study, Thompson did not provide rating/scoring rubrics for any of the three parts that composed the placement test. Therefore, the researcher for this study created three rating/scoring rubrics to measure students’ Spanish Language Awareness, Bilingual Skills, and Spanish Writing Skills.

**Modifications to the Instruments**

The researcher made modifications to both instruments. Both were converted to online versions to accommodate the unprecedented circumstances of distance learning due to COVID-19. In Thompson’s (2015) instruments all the instructions were in English. To create more equitable access system and to meet the diverse linguistic or bilingual skills of all test takers, the researcher also added the Spanish translations of all the instructions to assure that English language learners and Spanish speakers were equally able to read and understand what they were asked. Lastly, the current research included three additional demographic items in the placement test in order to have more specific demographic information for the study: (a) the student ID number to keep a record for the assigned teachers; (b) the student’s grade level; and (c) the student’s gender.

**Modified Survey of Language Usage**

The first instrument used in the study was a yes or no 10 -question modified survey (see Appendix J). One purpose of the survey was to differentiate and classify Spanish heritage language learners and Spanish second language learners. The survey questions were designed to take into consideration the different domains in which the
heritage speakers either use Spanish or have experience with the language. The questions also assessed the nature of how and with whom Spanish HLLs used Spanish inside and outside of the home in order to measure an overall proficiency of the speakers.

The proportions of Thompson’s (2015) three classifications based on the modified Survey of Language Usage for each of the three Spanish HLL classes at the high-school level were measured by the number of yes’s chosen by the students. The “yes” response classification on Thompson’s survey helped to determine who were HLLs specifically for those students who possessed a lower level of productive language skills. The following breakdown represented the scale for placement: (a) 0 to 1 “Yes” responses indicated that students were not Spanish HLLs and needed to be placed in a L2 track; (b) 2 to 4 “yes” responses indicated basic-level Spanish for Heritage Language Learners Level I (SHL I); (c) 5 to 7 “yes” responses indicated intermediate-level Pre-IB Spanish for Heritage Language Learners I (Pre-IB SHL I); (d) and 8 to 10 “yes” responses indicated high-level Spanish for Heritage Language Learners II (SHL II) (see Appendix M).

**Thompson’s (2015) Modified Spanish for Heritage Learners Placement Test**

The second instrument (see Appendix K) was composed of three sections and only given to those students who were determined to be HLLs by the 10-question Survey of Language Usage. For this study, all students who took the survey responded with more than two “yes” answers, which indicated that all were considered SHLLs. Because Thompson’s (2015) three-part placement test only provided the instructions in English, the researcher of this study also translated the instructions of the three parts to Spanish to assure that all test takers understood the instructions if they were English learners and did not fully understand English. That created a fairer system for all students with diverse
linguistic background knowledge. As part of the modifications to Thompson’s (2015) modified placement test, the researcher also added two component items to identify students’ grade level 9th-12th and gender (female, male, transgender, and non-binary). The addition was suggested and approved by the participating teachers A and B with the intention of enhancing clarity in the data collection.

The three sections of the placement test were as follows: (a) Language Awareness; (b) Bilingual Skills (Translation); and (c) Writing Skills. Since Thompson’s (2015) study did not provide any type of rubric or rating system for any of the three placement test components, the researcher created three rating systems for each part in collaboration with the consultant David Sul, and approval of the dissertation advisor, Dr. Patricia Busk (see Appendix L). The Language Awareness part was composed of 10 questions in Spanish about general knowledge and demographics. This section, was intended to measure students’ basic knowledge of the Spanish language. The students were given the option of answering in Spanish, English, or Spanish and English.

The section “Bilingual skills” included seven sentences in English. The students had to type their translation in Spanish with appropriate punctuation and use of diacritical marks. These sentences were selected to test students’ abilities in four distinct areas: phrasal expressions, the use of “gustar”, the use of the subjunctive mood, and the use of aspect. Those four areas helped to distinguish the language usage of a Spanish native speaker and a Spanish heritage language speaker. This section also included many words that have a specific standard translation but often are mistranslated by the Spanish heritage population using false cognates or literal translation that would lose the correct meaning of the sentence. As an example, when translating the phrase “to call her back”,
some students would give the often-used literal translation “llamarla para atrás” instead of the more correct translation “devolverle la llamada”.

The third section called “Writing Skills” consisted of a short composition in which students had to choose one of the three selected topics which elicited responses using the past tense. The design of these instruments was based on previous research studies in HL placement and HLLs (Ascher, 1990; Lam et al., 2003; Valdés, 2000) as well as the experience of the test designer. Using the past tense in the writing composition helped to prompt students to use metalinguistic resources in different verb tenses such as preterit, pluperfect, imperfect, and the indicative and subjective moods. However, as indicated in the review of literature, SHLLs tend to overuse the imperfect tense in the indicative mood. Those SHLLs who used not only the verbs in the indicative mood but also in the subjective demonstrated a higher level of language proficiency. The rubric used to rate this section was created by the researcher based on the review of literature and the brief description of the section provided by Thompson. This rubric entitled, Spanish HLLs Writing Skills Scoring Rubric, assessed the diverse language abilities based on the Spanish HLLs profile taking into consideration the sample in this study (see Appendix Q).

**Testing out the rating system**

Before implementing the rating system in the study, each rubric was tested out at the beginning of the 2020 fall semester with three advanced classes. The three advanced classes were one IB Spanish: Language and Literature for 12th graders and two Advanced Placement (AP) Spanish: Language and Culture for 10th-12th graders. Those three classes are designed for SHLLs. The student population in the AP Spanish:
Language and Culture class has a similar linguistic background as SHLL II due to the fact that those students have taken at least one Spanish class previously or they are recent immigrants from a Spanish speaking country. In comparison with the students enrolled in the IB Spanish: Language and Literature class, they all have taken a minimum of two to three years of Spanish academic language classes either in that high school or a different institution or place. However, that does not indicate that all students’ language skills are beyond the expectation. The samples provided in the rubrics were taken from this student population.

**Placement test rating system**

As mentioned, Thompson’s study did not provide a rating system to evaluate any of the three parts of his Spanish Heritage Learners Program Placement Exam. Therefore, the researcher of this study had to create a rating system that helped establish a deeper understanding for teachers and an equitable system for measuring the students’ linguistic abilities using a point scale and sample rubrics. There were five different types of rubrics: (a) Placement Test Result Point Scale System, (b) Part II – Bilingual Skills (Spanish Translation) Sample Rubric, (c) Standardized Sample of Spanish Sentence Translation for Bilingual Skills, (d) Spanish HLL Writing Skills Scoring Rubric, and (e) Spanish HLL Writing Skills Scoring Rubric. In the creation of each rubric, the researcher followed the review of literature and the theoretical framework of this study in consultation with David Sul, psychometrician, Dr. Patricia Busk, dissertation advisor, and participating teachers A and B. Each rubric criterion was intended to represent the language abilities of the student population of this study.
The Survey and Placement Test Rating Point System in Appendix L represents the overall point breakdown for both instruments with a total of 100 points; 10 points for the 10-question survey, and 90 points for the placement test total, which reflects the breakdown rating point scale for Part I: Language Awareness. To differentiate the level of Spanish usage: (a) 3-points were given if the test taker responded in Spanish; (b) 2-points were given if the test taker responded in English and Spanish, and (c) 1-point was given if the test taker responded in English. The total point value for this section was 30 points.

To rate Part II: Bilingual Skills, two types of rubrics were created and implemented. First, The Part II – Bilingual Skills (Spanish Translation) Sample Rubric consisted of a 5-point rating scale rubric with the following rating range: (a) 1-Limited Proficiency, (b) 2-Some Proficiency, (c) 3-Proficiency, (d) 4-High Proficiency, and (d) 5-Higher Level of Sophistication (see Appendix O). Each category was defined with specific criteria indicating the reasons and meaning of each category. Under each criterion, the researcher provided specific written translation samples taken from students who took the placement pilot test. Each sentence was worth 5 points and the total score for this section was 35-points.

The following breakdown of the point scale for this section indicated the placement for each class level: (a) 0-5 indicated that students should be placed in SHLL I; (b) 6-20 indicated that students should be placed in Pre-IB SHLL I; and (c) 21-35 indicated that students should be placed in SHLL II (see Appendix N). Second, the creation and implementation of the Standardized Spanish Translation Sentences Sample as shown in Appendix P helped the rater to assess a range of rating variety from the
standard language to the student’s language sample. It helped increase the validity of the results and reinforced interrater validity as well as.

To rate Part III: Writing skills, two types of rubrics were created and implemented as well. First, The Spanish HLL Writing Skills Scoring Rubric was composed of a 0-5-point rating scale system to measure the level of writing proficiency in Spanish. The 0-5-point rating scale rubric was composed of the following rating range “Level 0 No Proficiency”, “Level 1 Limited Proficiency”, “Level 3 Some Proficiency”, “Level 4 High Proficiency”, and “Level 5 Higher Level of Sophistication”. The researcher decided to include a 0-point scale category to identify those students who could have had, to some extent, oral or reading skills in Spanish but who did not know how to write complete sentences in Spanish. The 5-point scale category was included to identify students who could have been educated in Spanish and had a higher degree of the academic Spanish language.

The rubric was based on the following criteria: Use of Past Tense and Verb Moods, Personal Experience, Grammar, Academic Language, and Standard Vocabulary. The following breakdown of the point scale for this section indicated the placement for each class level: (a) 0-8 points indicated that students should be placed in SHLL I; (b) 9-17 points indicated that students should be placed in Pre-IB SHLL I; and (c) 18-25 points indicated that students should be placed in SHLL II (see Appendix N). The total point value for this section was 25 points.

Second, participating teachers A and B were provided with a Spanish HLL Writing Skills Scoring Sample as shown in Appendix R. Its purpose was to help the rater have more clarity and guidance when rating students’ writing composition. It was
intended to reinforce interrater validity. The seven writing samples enhanced the participating teachers’ training to better understand how to use the rubrics, and they also served as consulting guidelines when rating their own students’ writing composition. The Spanish HLL Writing Skills Scoring Rubric and the Samples of Spanish HLLs Writing Composition Skills Rating Score provided a concise and equitable system for teachers and students when rating the writing compositions. It also helped to establish more validation assessing the diverse range of SHLLs language skills.

**Pre- and Postfocus Teacher Group Interviews**

For the qualitative part of the study, the prefocus teacher group interview was conducted via zoom. The prefocus teacher group interview took place the last week of August prior to the beginning of the school year. It took approximately 20 minutes. The postfocus teacher group interview was conducted during the last week of October prior to when the first quarter progress reports were due during the fall semester. The following open-ended questions were asked to the four participating Spanish teachers during the prefocus teacher group interview to obtain their responses. The four participating teachers were asked the same questions per the interview protocol and follow-up questions were asked to add any further clarification or if more information was needed:

1. What was working and not working with the previous diagnostic questionnaire and oral interview implemented to place Spanish HLLs?
2. What were some of the benefits and challenges for students and teachers while implementing this system?
3. What was the most effective aspect of this system?
4. Is there something you could have done differently?
The following open-ended questions were asked during the postfocus group teacher interview to obtain the responses of the four Spanish participating teachers. There were follow-up questions for any further explanation, clarification or needed information:

1. What are the benefits and challenges of implementing Thompson’s (2015) placement test?

2. In comparison with the previous system, what was the most effective aspect of implementing Thompson’s placement test?

3. What were some of the benefits and challenges for the students taking Thompson’s placement test?

4. What is something you would recommend doing differently?

Thompson (2015) did not provide reliability and validity information for the survey or three-part placement test. A panel of bilingual teachers evaluated the survey and placement test for validity evidence. The internal consistency reliability was computed for the each of the three parts of the placement test and the survey. Interrater reliability was obtained for the scoring of each of the Spanish for Heritage Learners’ Program Placement Exams. Based on the overall results, the participating teachers and raters made recommendations to the student, parent, and lead teacher regarding whether to change the enrolled course to another that better meets the student’s Spanish language abilities.

**Procedures to Collect the Data**

Upon receiving the approval letter from the Sacramento City Unified School District where the research took place, an application for IRB review of the proposed
study at University of San Francisco (USF) was submitted. Once the IRB application was approved at USF, data collection started at the end of August.

The data collection was a three-phase process. The first and the third phases were the collection of qualitative data through the pre- and postfocus teacher interviews, in which the four participating teachers (A, B, C and D) attended. It took place at the end of August right before the beginning of the school year. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the pre-focus group interview was via zoom. Participating teachers C and D had the most years of experience working in the same institution and administering the previous existing questionnaire to place students and did not necessarily have the same years of experience working directly and teaching SHL classes. Teachers A and B had less years of experience working in the same high school where the study took place, where they mainly worked with the SHLL population. They also had experience administering the previous existing questionnaire. The interview protocol was to ask one question at a time and each teacher responded one at a time with the freedom to add more comments to each other’s answers. The researcher asked follow-up questions to elicit necessary information or clarification. For the prefocus group teacher interview, the four main open-ended questions mainly asked about what was working or not, the benefits and challenges, and the effectiveness of implementing the previous questionnaire as a placement system. For the postfocus group, the concentration of the open-ended questions was on the analysis of the benefits and challenges of implementing Thompson’s placement test. The pre- and postfocus teacher group interviews were recorded, fully transcribed, and theme coded for analysis.
Phase 2 consisted of collecting the quantitative data. This study tried to follow Thompson’s (2015) study procedures in collecting the data. However, due the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic, the two-instrument placement test did not take place during the 2-day class period as it was proposed. With distance learning in place, all classes met via zoom. Instead of meeting five days a week, Spanish classes met three days a week. Every Monday the time schedule was only a 20-minute class period. The other two days there was a 40-minute synchronous time and a 40-minute asynchronous time. That meant that participating teachers A and B, who administered the survey and placement tests, had planned sufficient time to do it. However, although they designated a day to administer each instrument, one issue that prolonged the data collection was the high volume of absentees. That meant that students who were absent had to take both instruments by themselves during their own time. The researcher attended each of the class periods to provide detailed information about the study and to answer any possible questions or concerns. She also gave her cell phone number to students and parents in case they had more questions.

The order of administering the instruments did not change. First, the online modified Survey of Language Usage was administered (see Appendix J). Once the students submitted the survey, and the teacher verified their submission, students had access to the modified Spanish for Heritage Language Program Placement Exam (see Appendix K). To make this process more effective with more student participating in submitting both instruments, the teachers assigned them as a class assignment in the Google Classroom Platform. It was not possible to use the students’ Google classroom account without having access to the students’ emails. So, to maintain students’
anonymity, the researcher deleted all of their email addresses once the data was transferred to SPSS. By the third week of October, approximately 270 students had taken the Survey of Language Usage, the Heritage Language Program Placement Exam or both.

For the electronic consent forms, the researcher used USF Informed Consent Forms using Qualtrics. To help with the organization and to record who and from what class students turned in their consent forms, the researcher created seven different links, one for each class, for the student consent forms and seven more for the parent consent forms. Both forms were required to be signed to indicate whether they gave their consent or not. Participating teachers A and B posted the links in their Google Classroom assignments. The researcher was constantly monitoring who had submitted them and shared the record with the participating teachers, so that they could have access. By the first week of November, 144 students had submitted their consent forms with their parents as well.

**Pilot Procedures**

To ensure that both online modified instruments, modified Survey of Language Usage and Spanish for Heritage Learners Program Placement Exam, worked properly with the high school SHLLs population, three advanced classes piloted them in early September during the second week of the beginning of the school year. Those classes were the IB Spanish: Language and Literature for 12th graders and two Advanced Placement (AP) Spanish: Language and Culture for 10th to 12th graders, all of which were in the repertoire of classes routinely taught by the researcher. Each class was given 15 minutes to access the modified Survey of Language Usage Google link from their Google Classroom account and to take the survey. In each class, two to five students could not
access it immediately due to a lack of technology at home or not knowing how to do the survey or placement test. So, the researcher provided further explanation on how to access the survey or placement test and gave the students more time to finish it. The students who were absent had access to the google form link in their Google classroom account as well and they completed the tasks for homework. Those who could not access the survey or placement test for some reason were provided help separately by the researcher. There were no major issues reading and following the instructions for the survey. After the students submitted all their surveys, the researcher went over the results for each of the 10 questions. The students were asked to interpret the results to bring more relevance to their learning of Spanish and what the results revealed of their usage of the language.

The same procedures were followed to pilot the online Spanish for Heritage Learners Program Placement Exam. However, students encountered some difficulties reading and understanding the instructions. When they submitted their responses, the researcher realized that the students were confused on Part 1: Language Awareness. Instead of typing whether they would respond in Spanish or English, they were typing complete sentences responding to the 10 questions. That gave the researcher the feedback that she needed to change the format on Google forms and instead of providing a space for them to type “Spanish or English,” the researcher provided a selection method to indicate either Spanish or English as the language in which the student would respond to each of these questions. The researcher also modified the instructions from Thompson’s test because students indicated that the instructions for that specific part were confusing (see Appendix K). That feedback from students helped
to fix those issues before the study took place. Discussing and reflecting on the results of the pilot survey and placement test also gave the opportunity to learn about some possible setbacks that the participating teachers could face while administering both instruments. That gave the researcher a better and more meaningful preparation for the teachers’ training, which the researcher facilitated for the participating teachers before they administered the test.

**Teachers’ Rubric and Placement Test Training**

After the piloting the online Survey of Language Usage, Spanish for Heritage Learners Program Placement Exam and the rating rubric scale and sample system, the researcher created a training for the participating teachers on administering the two instruments and the implementation of the rating system. The training took place during a professional development day dedicated to developing curriculum for Spanish HLLs. It was on the second Saturday of September prior the participating teachers A and B administering both instruments. The training was one hour in person.

The researcher provided the electronic version of both instruments, the point scale, and sample rubrics. The researcher and the teachers went over each of the questions from both instruments to verify spelling and avoid any type of discrepancies. The researcher asked if there were any suggestions or changes needed to any of the provided documents, and participating teacher B suggested adding a 0-point category to the Spanish HLL Writing Skills Scoring Sample Rubric to more accurately score responses that did not provide enough evidence to rate. Subsequently, the researcher added the 0-scale criterion named “No Proficiency” with the descriptor criteria “Not sufficient evidence to rate.” Once that was added, both teachers agreed on the rating
system implementation. As part of the training, the participating teachers took the modified Survey of Language Usage as practice to corroborate that the link was working. To differentiate each class level and class period while collecting the data, the researcher added the last name of the teacher and the number of the class period before the name of the survey and placement test, for example, Villanueva 1 Survey of Language Usage/Encuesta del uso del lenguaje.

The following Saturday, the researcher held a follow-up training session during a subsequent professional development day. The researcher and the teachers took one hour to work specifically on rating a few placement tests of their own students who had taken both the survey and placement test. They concentrated on rating Part II: Bilingual Skills and Part III: Writing composition. They worked together on the same test to establish interrater validity and to become more knowledgeable on how to implement and interpret the rating system on their own students’ written language production.

**Data Analyses**

The data analysis for this study was both quantitative and qualitative. The data were downloaded and entered into IBM SPSS Statistics for the analyses to address the four quantitative research questions of the study: (a) what are the proportions of Thompson’s (2015) three classifications based on the Survey of Language Usage for each of the three Spanish HLL classes at the high-school level?; (b) to what extent are there differences in general knowledge and demographics (Language Awareness), bilingual skills, and short composition based on three classifications of Thompson’s (2015) Survey of Language Usage?; (c) to what extent are there differences in general knowledge and demographics (Language Awareness), bilingual skills, and short composition based on
the three Spanish HLL classes at the high-school level?; and (d) to what extent is there an interaction between Thompson’s (2015) three classifications and the Spanish HLL classes at the high-school level on general knowledge and demographics (Language Awareness), bilingual skills, and short composition? The thematic coded data collected from the pre- and postfocus teacher group interviews were to address the qualitative research question of the study: (e) what were the benefits and challenges of using Thompson’s survey to place Spanish HLL students given the usual practice used at the high-school level?

**Quantitative analysis**

To address research question 1, the descriptive statistics showed the overall proportions of Thompson’s (2015) three classifications using the results of responses on the Survey of Language Usage for each of the three Spanish HLL classes at the high-school level. The survey classifications were 2 to 4 “yes” responses indicated to be placed in SHL I, 5 to 7 “yes” responses indicated to be placed in Pre-IB SHL I and 8 to 10 “yes” responses indicated to be placed in SHL II. A crosstabulation analysis was computed to analyze the Survey of Language Usage classifications in comparison to each of the three current class placements for Spanish HLL (SHL I, Pre-IB SHL II, and SHL II) at the high-school level. A Cohen’s kappa test was applied for Thompson’s modified Survey of Language Usage classifications.

Although the research proposal stated that a two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) would be implemented to address questions two, three, and four, once the data was collected, the descriptive statistics showed that the numbers based on Thompson’s modified Survey of Language Usage classifications were too small to justify a two-way analysis of variance. Therefore, two one-way analyses of variance with post hoc Tukey
were carried out to address the second and third research questions to determine whether there were any statistically significant differences between the independent variables. The independent variables were the three classifications of students using Thompson’s 10-question survey and the three Spanish HLL classes at the high-school level. The dependent variables were the answers to the Language Awareness (general knowledge and demographics); scores for Language Awareness, “Bilingual skills,” and vocabulary; and scores for the Writing (Short) Composition, which were computed for statistically significant results. The level of significance was set at .05 for each of the tests.

The fourth research question asked if there was an interaction between Thompson’s (2015) survey three classifications and the SHLL classes at the high-school level on general knowledge and demographics (Language Awareness), Bilingual Skills, and Writing Composition. The sample sizes were too small to perform a valid interaction test for a two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), so separate one-way ANOVAs were conducted for each of the three parts of Thompson’s placement test.

Additional analyses were performed on SHLLs who did not use Google Translate and the SHLLs who used Google Translate in Part II: Bilingual Skills based on the online Spanish for Heritage Learners Program Placement Exam showed a statistically significant difference. An independent t-test was computed to examine the mean score differences of the groups. Eta square was performed for the practical importance.

**Qualitative analysis**

To address research question number 5, the data obtained from the pre- and postfocus groups were recorded and analyzed qualitatively applying a 3-step thematic coding: in this method, the qualitative data initially was clustered into emerging patterns.
or segments related to one another. After reading the participating teachers’ responses, the data was reviewed to categorize major themes to each response item into different themes and subthemes (Creswell, 2013). Interpretive description was provided to each cluster, and major themes and subthemes were developed and coded (Merriam, 2009).

Due to time factors, the researcher ordered the transcription of the recorded interview at a website called rev.com. Once the interview responses transcription was available, the researcher applied the following procedure. First, the researcher listened to the interview responses following the transcribed responses to verify they were correctly transcribed. Second, the researcher read, identified, and highlighted the common patterns in each participant’s response. Third, the researcher created a Word document classifying key words or phrases for each of the responses based on open-ended questions to have them organized electronically and on paper. Fourth, the key-word search was used to locate and highlight similar patterns across different texts. The similar patterns were highlighted with the same color in all texts (e.g., one pattern is yellow-highlighted, another one is green-highlighted, etc.). Fifth, quotes were identified with similar patterns, and common threads were grouped together under one category. Sixth, each category (group of similar quotes) was labelled with a general theme that describes its content. Finally, a micro analysis was conducted to identify related segments within each category of responses to develop possible subthemes.

To enhance the reliability of the findings and reduce the subjectivity of qualitative analysis, reanalysis and interrater reliability were applied. After initial coding, the data were reread and reanalyzed three times, and accordingly, some categories and themes were renamed, modified, or integrated with one another. Similarly, the initially
categorized data were rewritten, supplemented, or reduced. Also, the analysis was reviewed by a second rater and compared to the findings generated by the primary researcher. Any suggested changes were made to the final findings reflecting the consensus of the two raters.

**Summary**

This study investigated how Thompson’s (2015) modified online Survey of Language Usage and Spanish for Heritage Learner’s Program Placement Exam could effectively be used with three Spanish class levels of HLLs at the high-school level to differentiate HLLs' use of Spanish inside and outside of the home and in their academic use of Spanish. Participating teachers administered the two instruments to high-school SHLLs during the first two weeks of the fall semester under distance learning conditions. The results of both instruments were taken into consideration when deciding whether to place SHLLs into a different class level class if needed. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected and examined to address the research questions. Statistical analyses including descriptive statistics, frequency and proportions, one-way Analysis of Variance, Tukey post hoc comparison, independent-sample t test, crosstabulation, and Eta square measurement tests were conducted to address the first four research questions. The pre-and postfocus group interview data were coded into themes and examined to address research question five. Additional analyses were performed to investigate the mean score differences of SHLLs who did not use Google Translate and the SHLLs who used Google Translate in Part II: Bilingual Skills based on the online modified Spanish for Heritage Learners Program Placement Exam. The results of the data analysis are presented in Chapter IV, and findings of the study are discussed and interpreted in Chapter V.
CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The purpose of the study was to investigate how Thompson's (2015) modified Survey of Language Usage and placement test could be used effectively with three classes of Spanish Heritage Language Learners (SHLLs) at the high-school level to differentiate HLLs' use of Spanish inside and outside of the home and in their academic use of Spanish. The strategy used to examine the differentiation of HLLs' use of Spanish inside and outside of the home and their academic use of Spanish was a mixed method study. The quantitative part of the study assessed the placement of the high-school students into the three Spanish HLL classes using Thompson’s (2015) modified Survey of Language Usage and placement test. The qualitative part of the study took place by conducting focus group interviews with teachers before and after implementing the online revised version of Thompson's (2015) Survey and placement test that investigated the benefits and challenges of implementing Thompson’s modified survey and placement test to place high-school SHL students vis-à-vis the existing class placement system used before.

Quantitative Findings

Research Question 1

What are the proportions of Thompson’s (2015) three classifications based on the Survey of Language Usage for each of the three Spanish HLL classes at the high-school level?

The first research question focused on finding the proportions of Thompson’s (2015) three classifications based on the results of the Survey of Language Usage. The
results are presented in Table 4. According to the descriptive statistics findings of the frequency of responses, the overall proportions of Thompson’s (2015) three classifications based on the modified Survey of Language Usage for each of the three Spanish HLL classes at the high-school level indicated that approximate 8% of the SHLLs should be placed in SHL I, approximate 40% of SHLLs should be placed in level 2 (Pre-IB SHL I), and approximate 52% of SHLLs should be placed on SHL II.

Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Three Classifications</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level 1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 2</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>40.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 3</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>52.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As part of the answer to research question one, to provide additional information of the distribution of the survey proportions in comparison to the distribution of the existing class placement system of the SHLLs, a tabulation of the results for the three classifications are presented in Table 5. In the table, each row represented the survey classification results, and the columns represented the existing class placement categories. In general, there was some variability between the survey results and the existing class placement classifications.

According to Thompson’s modified Survey of Language Usage levels, the number of students in the diagonal (7 or 11%, 13 or 45%, and 28 or 53%) were in the existing class placement classifications. The rest of the numbers off the diagonal
indicated the incorrect or mismatched placement of students based on the survey classifications and the existing class placement classifications.

Table 5

Thompson’s (2015) Three Classifications Based on the Modified Survey of Language Usage Broken Down by Existing Class Placement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thompson’s Survey Classification</th>
<th>Existing Class Placement</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SHL1</td>
<td>Pre-IBSHL1</td>
<td>SHL2</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 2</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 3</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>75</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>144</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The numbers above the diagonal indicated that 26 SHLLs were placed in advanced classes (Pre-IB SHLL I, SHLL I, and SHLL II), and the numbers below the diagonal represented 70 SHLLs who were placed in lower class level and they needed to be placed in a more appropriate advanced class level according to Thompson’s three level classifications.

The results showed that only 48 out of 144 SHLLs were properly placed based on the survey and the existing class placement classifications. Those 48 SHLLs comprised approximately 33% of the SHLLs. Therefore, 96 SHLLs were misplaced, which comprised approximately 67%. Cohen’s kappa ($k$) was computed to assess whether there was agreement between the Thompson’s (2015) modified Survey of Language Usage results and the existing class placement classifications. The results indicated that there was no statistically significant agreement between the survey results and the existing class placement, $k = 0.04$. 
Research Question 2

To what extent are there differences in general knowledge and demographics (Language Awareness), Bilingual Skills, and Short Composition based on three classifications of Thompson’s (2015) modified Survey of Language Usage?

A one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was computed to examine the differences in general knowledge and demographics (Language Awareness), Bilingual Skills, and Short Composition based on the three classifications of Thompson’s (2015) modified Survey of Language Usage. The results are presented in Table 6. The descriptive statistics findings indicated that there were only slight differences between the classification means and the mean for the total classification. Based on Thompson’s (2015) three classifications on the Survey of Language Usage, there were only differences in the Writing Composition.

Table 6


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part</th>
<th>Survey Classification</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval for Mean</th>
<th>Lower Bound</th>
<th>Upper Bound</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I: LA</td>
<td>Level 1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>23.36</td>
<td>6.87</td>
<td></td>
<td>18.75</td>
<td>27.98</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Level 2</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>25.82</td>
<td>4.94</td>
<td></td>
<td>24.51</td>
<td>27.13</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Level 3</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>25.03</td>
<td>4.45</td>
<td></td>
<td>24.00</td>
<td>26.05</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>25.22</td>
<td>4.87</td>
<td></td>
<td>24.41</td>
<td>26.02</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II: BS</td>
<td>Level 1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>18.36</td>
<td>7.74</td>
<td></td>
<td>13.17</td>
<td>23.56</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Level 2</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>17.02</td>
<td>4.47</td>
<td></td>
<td>15.84</td>
<td>18.19</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Level 3</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>19.12</td>
<td>5.06</td>
<td></td>
<td>17.96</td>
<td>20.28</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>18.22</td>
<td>5.14</td>
<td></td>
<td>17.37</td>
<td>19.06</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III: WC</td>
<td>Level 1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7.73</td>
<td>4.34</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.81</td>
<td>10.64</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Level 2</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>10.55</td>
<td>3.02</td>
<td></td>
<td>9.76</td>
<td>11.35</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Level 3</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>10.72</td>
<td>3.87</td>
<td></td>
<td>9.83</td>
<td>11.61</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>10.42</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td></td>
<td>9.82</td>
<td>11.03</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The assumptions for homogeneity of variances results based on the Thompson’s survey three classifications was not met because Levene’s test was statistically significant, which would indicate that a statistically significant result for the ANOVA could be a Type I error.

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to investigate the mean differences for Writing Composition (WC) based on Thompson’s survey three levels of classifications (Table 7). The one-way ANOVA results revealed that there were no statistically significant differences in Language Awareness (LA) and Bilingual Skills (BS), however, the findings indicated that there were statistically significant differences in Writing Composition. The measure of practice importance eta squared is .02, which is small according to Cohen (1992).

### Table 7
One-Way ANOVA Results for Thompson’s (2015) Modified Survey of Language Usage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Part I: LA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between</td>
<td>61.54</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>30.77</td>
<td>1.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within</td>
<td>3300.74</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>23.58</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3362.28</td>
<td>142</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part II: BS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between</td>
<td>144.88</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>72.44</td>
<td>2.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within</td>
<td>3631.45</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>25.76</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3776.33</td>
<td>143</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part III: WC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between</td>
<td>87.51</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>43.76</td>
<td>3.39*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within</td>
<td>1819.65</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>12.91</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1907.16</td>
<td>143</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Statistically significant at the .05 level.

A Tukey post hoc test was computed to compare the mean differences between the three class classification for the Writing Composition (Table 8). The Tukey HSD
results for Thompson’s Level 1 indicated that the mean difference between Level 2 and Level 3 were statistically significant at level .05 and also between Level 2 and Level 1.

Table 8
Results of Tukey Post-Hoc Comparisons of Three Classifications of Thompson’s (2015) Modified Survey of Language Usage for Writing Composition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Placement</th>
<th>Level 1</th>
<th>Level 2</th>
<th>Level 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level 1</td>
<td></td>
<td>-2.82*</td>
<td>-2.99*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 2</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Statistically significant at .05 level.

**Research Question 3**

To what extent are there differences in general knowledge and demographics (Language Awareness), bilingual skills, and short composition based on the three Spanish HLL classes at the high-school level?

An inspection of the means in Table 9 indicate that they increase across the three levels of SHLL classes for Thompson’s placement test Part I and II. For Part II: Bilingual Skills, SHL1 have the highest mean followed by SHL2, and Pre-IB SHL1 has a mean lower but close to SHL2. A one-way ANOVA was conducted to address this research question.

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to find the mean differences for Bilingual Skills based on the three Spanish HLL classes at the high-school level. The results of the one-way (ANOVA) (Table 10) indicated that the only statistically significant difference found between the three SHLL classes at the high-school level was for Bilingual Skills (BS).

There were no statistically significant differences found in one-way ANOVA for Language Awareness (LA), and Writing Composition (WC) based on the three existing
class placement method for SHL I, Pre-IB SHL I and SHL II. The practical importance (Eta squared) for BS is 0.04. According to Cohen (1992), 0.04 is a medium level of practical importance. Because the findings indicated statistically significant differences in BS based on the SHL I, Pre-IB SHL I and SHL II class levels, a post hoc test was needed to indicate what caused the statistical significance.

Table 9
Means, Standard Deviations, and Sample Sizes for the Three Part of Thompson’s Placement Test by the Three Existing Spanish for Heritage Language Leaners Classes (SHLLC) at the High-School Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Three SHLLC</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Lower Bound</th>
<th>Upper Bound</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Part I: LA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHL1</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>24.63</td>
<td>5.03</td>
<td>23.35</td>
<td>25.91</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-IB SHL1</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>25.52</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>23.94</td>
<td>27.10</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHL2</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>25.75</td>
<td>5.04</td>
<td>24.35</td>
<td>27.15</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>25.22</td>
<td>4.87</td>
<td>24.41</td>
<td>26.02</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part II: BS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHL1</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>19.23</td>
<td>5.67</td>
<td>17.79</td>
<td>20.67</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-IB SHL1</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>16.41</td>
<td>4.21</td>
<td>14.81</td>
<td>18.02</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHL2</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>18.02</td>
<td>4.72</td>
<td>16.72</td>
<td>19.32</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>18.22</td>
<td>5.14</td>
<td>17.37</td>
<td>19.06</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part III: WC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHL1</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>9.87</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>9.12</td>
<td>10.62</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-IB SHL1</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>10.24</td>
<td>3.98</td>
<td>8.73</td>
<td>11.75</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHL2</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>11.17</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>10.03</td>
<td>12.31</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>10.42</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>9.82</td>
<td>11.03</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The pairwise difference between means for Bilingual Skills are presented in Table 11, along with the results of the post hoc Tukey tests. The only difference was between SHL1 and Pre-IB SLH1 levels for Bilingual Skills.
Table 10

One-Way ANOVA Results for Existing Class Level Placement Based on the Three Existing three Spanish for Heritage Language Leaners Classes at the High-School Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Part I: LA</td>
<td>Between</td>
<td>38.82</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>19.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Within</td>
<td>3323.46</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>23.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3362.28</td>
<td>142</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part II: BS</td>
<td>Between</td>
<td>159.47</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>79.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Within</td>
<td>3616.85</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>25.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3776.33</td>
<td>143</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part III: WC</td>
<td>Between</td>
<td>49.41</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>24.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Within</td>
<td>1857.75</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>13.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1907.16</td>
<td>143</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Statistically significant at the .05 level.

Table 11

Results of Tukey Post-Hoc Comparisons of Class Level for Bilingual Skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class Level</th>
<th>SHL I</th>
<th>Pre-IB SHL I</th>
<th>SHL II</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SHL I</td>
<td></td>
<td>-2.81*</td>
<td>1.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-IB SHL I</td>
<td></td>
<td>-1.61</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Statistically significant at .05 level.

The post hoc Tukey results suggested that using BS for class placement for SHL1 and Pre-IB SHL1 would result in placing students in the inappropriate class level at a statistically significant difference. It should be noted that SHL2 level would have been the highest level in Bilingual Skills, however, it did not appear to have a statistically significant difference when comparing to SHL I and Pre-SHL I.

Research Question 4

To what extent is there an interaction between Thompson’s (2015) Survey of Language Usage three classifications and the SHLL classes at the high-school level on general
knowledge and demographics (Language Awareness), Bilingual Skills, and Writing Composition?

Because the sample sizes for some of the cells were too small (Table 12) to conduct a valid interaction test for a two-away analysis of variance (ANOVA), separate one-way ANOVAs were conducted for each of the three parts of Thompson’s Placement Test. An inspection of Table 12 revealed that the students in SHL II had a consistent increase in their means from lowest to the highest for Thompson’s Survey Classifications. For the students in Pre-IB SHL I, the means for Bilingual Skills are the lowest for classification 3 and highest for classification 1, and the mean is between the two classifications for those in classification 2 (Table 13).

Table 12

Means, Standard Deviations, and Sample Sizes for Part I: Language Awareness Broken Down by Thompson’s Three Survey Classifications and the Existing Class Placement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Existing Class Placement</th>
<th>Thompson’s Three Survey Classifications</th>
<th>Statistic</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SHL I</td>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>6.29</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>5.67</td>
<td>5.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>1.53</td>
<td>3.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-IB SHL I</td>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>5.45</td>
<td>7.00</td>
<td>6.95</td>
<td>7.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>2.65</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>2.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHL II</td>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>5.47</td>
<td>7.47</td>
<td>8.54</td>
<td>7.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>2.70</td>
<td>2.19</td>
<td>2.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>6.39</td>
<td>7.01</td>
<td>6.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>1.84</td>
<td>3.22</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>3.15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For those in SHL I, the Bilingual Skills means are increasing for the classifications, except for the one person in classification 2 (Table 13). For SHL II, the means are counter to what would be expected as those in the lowest classification have the highest mean, followed by the highest classification and the middle classification
As can be seen in Table 14, the means for Writing Composition are in the expected order for SHL2 only, whereas Pre-IB SHL I has the highest mean for classification 2 followed by classifications 3 and 1.

Table 13

Means, Standard Deviations, and Sample Sizes for Part II: Bilingual Skills Broken Down by Thompson’s Three Survey Classifications and the Existing Class Placement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Existing Class Placement</th>
<th>Thompson’s Three Survey Classifications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHL I</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-IB SHL I</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHL II</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 14

Means, Standard Deviations, and Sample Sizes for Part III: Writing Composition Broken Down by Thompson’s Three Survey Classifications and the Existing Class Placement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Existing Class Placement</th>
<th>Thompson’s Three Survey Classifications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHL I</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-IB SHL I</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHL II</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Additional Analysis**

During the post-focus teacher group interviews, the participating teachers, A and B, shared their concern that some students could have used Google Translate after rating Part II: Bilingual Skills. They found that several students had the exact or very similar translation compared to Google Translate. After looking up all the translated sentences from the collected data, the findings indicated that 34 students had the same or similar translation as Google Translate. For that reason, there was the need to conduct additional analyses to differentiate between the SHLLs’ performance based on who possibly had used Google Translate and those who did not use Google Translate for Part II: Bilingual Skills on the Spanish for Heritage Learners Program Placement Exam. Thus, all of the 144 SHLLs were divided in two different groups as (a) the group that used Google Translate and (b) the group that did not use Google Translate. Additional analyses were performed on these two groups. Crosstabulations, independent-sample t-test, and one-way analysis of variance, and the results are presented as follows.

A crosstabulation was performed to examine the proportions of SHLLs who did not use Google Translate and those who used Google Translate on Part II: Bilingual Skills based on Thomson’s Survey of Language Usage three class classifications. Table 15 illustrated that the frequency and proportions of SHLLs in the three survey class classifications who did and did not use Google Translate were similar. The results showed that Class Level 1 had the lowest proportion of students who did not use Google Translate as well as those who used Google Translate, Class Level 2 had the medium proportion of students who did not use Google Translate and those who used Google Translate, and Class Level 3 had the highest proportion of students who did not use
Google Translate as well as those who used Google Translate. There was no statistically significant difference in the proportion for the two groups.

**Table 15**

Frequency and Proportions of SHLLs Who Did and Did Not Use Google Translate on Part II: Bilingual Skills Based on the Thompson’s Modified Survey of Language Usage Three Classifications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Used Google Translate</th>
<th>Statistics</th>
<th>Thompson’s Three Survey Classifications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>11.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>43.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A second tabulation was performed to examine the proportions of SHLLs based on the existing class placement method for the groups who did not use Google Translate and those who used Google Translate for Part II: Bilingual Skills. As shown in Table 16, the results indicated SHL1 had the highest proportion for the groups who did not use Google Translate and those who used Google Translate, the second highest proportion fell under SHL2, and Pre-IB SHL1 had the lowest proportion of SHLLs. The proportion results were not statistically different.

**Table 16**

Frequency and Proportions of SHLLs Who Did and Did Not Use Google Translate on Part II: Bilingual Skills by Existing Class Placement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Used Google Translate</th>
<th>Statistics</th>
<th>Existing Class Placement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SHL I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>52.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>43.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
An independent-sample *t*-test was conducted to compare the means of the group that used Google Translate and the group that did not use Google Translate. The results in Table 17 indicated statistically significant mean difference among the 110 SHLLs who did not use Google Translate compared with the 34 SHLLs who did use Google Translate.

**Table 17**

Results of Independent-Sample *t* Test for SHLLs Who Did Use Google Translate and Who Did Not Use Google Translate Group on Part II: Bilingual Skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th><em>n</em></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th><em>t</em></th>
<th><em>df</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did not Use Google Translate</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>17.47</td>
<td>4.81</td>
<td>-3.31*</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used Google Translate</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>20.73</td>
<td>5.48</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Statistically significant at .05 level.

Measure of practical importance, eta square, was computed to determine to what extent the differences were between the two groups. Eta square result was approximately .07, which is a medium effect size (Cohen, 1992).

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed for SHLLs who did not use Google Translate to investigate if there was a difference on their scores for Bilingual skills. As shown in Table 18, the results revealed that there was a statistically significant difference with a medium effect size of .06 (Cohen, 1992). The one-way ANOVA results were not statistically significant when comparing those who used Google Translate. The Tukey post hoc results for those who did use Google Translate for Bilingual Skills are found in Table 19. Only statistically significant pairwise difference is for Levels 2 and 3.
Table 18

One-Way ANOVA Results for SHLLs Who Did Not Use Google Translate in Part II: Bilingual Skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df'</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between</td>
<td>150.98</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>89.60</td>
<td>4.07*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within</td>
<td>2382.53</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>22.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2533.50</td>
<td>109</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Statistically significant at .05 level

Table 19

Results of Tukey Post Hoc Tests for Bilingual Skills for Those Students Who Did Not Use Google Translation by Survey Placement Levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Placement</th>
<th>Level 2</th>
<th>Level 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level 1</td>
<td>-0.40</td>
<td>-2.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 2</td>
<td></td>
<td>-2.50*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The means and standard deviations for the SHLLs who did not use Google Translate versus those who did are presented in Table 20. For those students who did not use Google Translate, the means increased across the three class levels with SHL I having the smallest mean, Pre-IB SHL I having the medium mean, and SHL II having the largest mean. The ANOVA results are statistically significant (Table 20). The sample size means for the group that did use Google Translate are higher than the group that did not use Google Translate. Students in SHL I have the highest mean, with the means for Pre-IB SHL I and SHL II approximately two points lower than SHL I’s mean.

Table 20

Means and Standard Deviations for SHLLs Who Did Not Use and Did Use Google Translate in Part II: Bilingual Skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class Level</th>
<th>Did not use Google Translate</th>
<th>Did Use Google Translate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHL I</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-IB SHL I</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>16.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHL II</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>18.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>17.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Qualitative Findings Research Question 5

What are the benefits and challenges of using Thompson’s modified Survey of Language Usage (survey) and Spanish of Heritage Learners Program Placement Exam (placement test) to place Spanish HLL students given the usual practice used at the high-school level?

The purpose of addressing this research question conducting pre- and postfocus teacher group interviews as a qualitative approach was to investigate the benefits and challenges of implementing Thompson’s (2015) survey and placement test while taking into consideration the existing class placement method used for Spanish HLL students at the high-school level. Four participating teachers were interviewed during the pre- and postfocus interviews. They were identified as participating teachers A, B, C, and D. Teachers A and B participated directly by administering Thompson’s (2015) survey and modified online placement test to seven SHL classes. Participating teachers C and D administered the survey and placement test to other SHLLs placed in Spanish classes designed as a second language acquisition, and they had had experience working directly with SHLLs previously. They also have had experience using the existing placement system. The thematic coding approach was applied to broad units of information expressing a common idea or theme (Creswell, 2013). All the responses from the pre- and postfocus teacher group interviews were categorized in major themes and subthemes on the basis of evaluating the existing class placement method and Thompson's survey and placement test.
Prefocus Teacher Interviews’ Findings

The prefocus teacher group interview questions concentrated on four categories, which are on what was working or not working, the benefits and challenges, the effectiveness of the existing class placement method, and something that could have been done differently while implementing the existing class placement method for SHLLs at the high school level. The themes were put under those categories. It is important to note that the existing placement method was implemented during a normal school year where teachers and students were present in the live classroom setting.

There were eight themes that emerged from the analysis of data based on the prefocus teacher group interview and are as follows:

1. Consistency of using the same assessment instrument across the Spanish language department was valuable.
2. Collaboration among all the Spanish teachers enhanced interrater validity on assessing SHLLs skills.
3. It was a challenge to move students to an upper level class.
4. Teachers and students had accessibility and flexibility to administer and take the placement assessment in a timely manner.
5. The ability to evaluate the placement assessment the same day was effective in placing students.
6. The placement assessment could be used for pre-, mid-, and post-testing to measure students’ progress.
7. Teachers were limited to assessing overall students’ language abilities for their placement.
8. No rubric or specific rating criteria was established to make placement decisions for students.

Table 21

Prefocus Group Teacher Interview Themes Based on the Evaluation of the Existing Class Placement System

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>What Was Working</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Benefit</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Challenge</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Effectiveness, benefit</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Effectiveness</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Done something different</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Not working, challenge</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>What Was Not working</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Theme 1: Consistency of using the same assessment instrument worked across the Spanish language department

The results of the prefocus teacher interview indicated that using the same questionnaire instrument by all the Spanish teachers worked because it was a consistent way to place students. There was 100% agreement among the participating teachers that having that consistency created a placement system with the same baseline across the Spanish department. Participating teacher C stated the following:

I think what was working was that we had one diagnostic exam. I guess the questionnaire paper that we had, and it went across… We all used the same thing so then it was consistent across.

Participating teacher D recognized that the consistency of using the same instrument across the department made it successful. She also mentioned that by having the same instrument tool was working for the consistency across the department, and it helped to
differentiate the language skills that SHLLs possessed at the time when they took the placement assessment.

I think I agree. Well, it was a baseline. Everyone had the same thing across the department... Was the... I think made it successful. And it also gave us the abilities of distinguishing between the kids that had academic experience in the targeted language and also the ones that understood it and never have received formal classes in the targeted language.

The response from participating teacher A encapsulated theme 1 by expressing the value for all teachers in the department for using the existing class placement system.

So what was working is the fact that we had something in place and all of us were using it, as all of you already mentioned it. So I think it's very valuable, the fact that we have already something in place, in that we could actually communicate with all the teachers and ask for their input.

**Theme 2: The collaboration among all the Spanish teachers enhanced interrater validity on assessing SHLLs skills**

The thematic coding of the prefocus teacher interview revealed that using the same questionnaire as a placement method also provided strong collaboration among the Spanish teachers across the department. That gave them the opportunity to make collaborative decision when placing SHLLs in a specific class. The four participating teachers expressed that that collaboration gave them a deeper level of understanding on how to assess SHLLs skills. Subsequently, the interrater validity was enhanced while evaluating the students’ language abilities and deciding what class level to place them in. Collaboration and communication among the teachers were two key factors that facilitated the success of the existing class placement system.

Participating teacher B provided an example that illustrated how making a collaborative decision increased the possibility of better placement of the student in a
class level and knowing what extra support was needed by staying in the same class or being placed in a different one.

It was a start and when somebody was obviously at a higher level, or obviously at a lower level, we could present that to the rest of the teachers and then talk about the possibility of them skipping a level or staying and having extra support.

Participating teacher D expressed that having the easy practicality of seeing students’ written assessment right after they took it, they were able to share it with the rest of the teachers to ask for their input before making the placement decision.

I think because the student would be able to just write right on it, we could see... We could share that document with other teachers to see what they thought. So it was also a collaborative way of making a diagnostic decision in regards to what level that student could go into, depending on their writing skills. I thought that worked well because we were able to do it, and get input from other teachers as well.

**Theme 3: Challenge to move students to an upper level class**

Two participating teachers’ responses highlighted the challenge of not being able to place students in a more advanced class level after taking the placement questionnaire due to not having space in the upper level class. The issue was not only keeping those students in the lower level class, but also the students felt frustrated and emotionally affected for not being in a class that better met their linguistic abilities. It is worth mentioning that the number of Spanish speaking students enrolled in the high school has increased in the last few years. Consequently, the number of SHL classes offered has been affected, as well, by the number of students enrolled in those classes. Teacher B encapsulated in the next statement the effect on students for not being able to move to the upper level class after doing well in their diagnostic placement assessment.

And I actually had a bit of a different experiences in where I had students who did very well on the diagnostic test and they wanted to move to the higher levels
but because we didn't have space in the higher level classes they stayed in the first year course. And I knew that they were a bit just sad that they couldn't move on, not because they weren't at that level, but because the class has were impacted.

Teacher A expressed having had a similar experience as the previous teacher of not being able to place SHLLs in an upper-class level.

But in some of the challenges, just like Maestra B shared, was that sometimes even if they could move on to the next level, there was no space.

In contrast to the previous two participating teachers, participating teacher D reported that she had had students not wanting to change their classes after taking and doing well on the diagnostic placement questionnaire. They did not want to be placed in a more advance and challenging class.

I think one of the benefits is placing the students in the right class where we believe that they will be better served in the sense versus being placed in an easier class. And that's where it comes to the challenges, right? And the challenge was that the student did not want to be placed in that higher level course. They wanted to stay in their comfort zone and so, that's always part of the challenge of when the test was given.

Theme 4: Teachers and students had accessibility and flexibility to administer and take the placement assessment in a timely manner

The four participating teachers’ responses illustrated that the easy access for them to administer the placement questionnaire, as well as for the students to take it, was part of the benefits and effectiveness of the system. Part of the accessibility and flexibility of using the existing class placement system was that teachers were able to do it in a timely manner. Two teachers in specific reported the following:

Teacher D pointed out that

I think another effective aspect is that flexibility, flexibility. We had a lot of flexibility with it and it was also a good tool for the
beginning of the school year. And it wasn't too long. It was done in a period and we were able to make our evaluations within that same day.

Teacher C restated that

I also want to mention, aside from what was already said, that one of the benefits of doing the diagnostic that we did was that we were able to do it like at the moment while the student was there. So, they didn't have to come in later or it was very accessible to them.

**Theme 5: The practicality to assess students' language abilities to implement them in the curriculum development and teachers’ pedagogy**

It is worth noting that participating teachers in the study, A and B, are the ones who have been teaching SHLLs in the past few years in this high-school. Both of them emphasized the benefit and effectiveness of the practicality of the existing placement test not only to evaluate the language abilities of the students, for example, writing skills, but also the importance of using that knowledge to adopt curriculum that met the students’ linguistic skills. It was a great advantage to know since the beginning of the school year where their students were in terms of their writing and to continue monitoring that throughout the year. For those students who were not able to be placed in an upper level class, teachers were able to make the best possible accommodation and adjustment to meet and reinforce their language skills. Teacher B described her experience:

I noticed something from the first year I taught the course to the second year and I noticed that the first year that I taught it, the writing level of my students was a bit lower. So I knew that I had to review like main... Review the very basic phonology more in depth. And then the second year that taught the course, I noticed that, for the most part, their writing was, it was pretty advanced. So I knew that I didn't have to review those. I still reviewed them but not to the extent I did with my first group. So, I did benefit from using that test in that sense.
A similar approach of reviewing and keeping track of students’ Spanish language knowledge and abilities was used by participating teacher A to plan her curriculum for better teaching and learning outcomes.

Something that I feel it was effective is the fact that it's very practical. It's something that is there and it's easy to administer. So, and just like Maestra B share also, it gets you a platform, like where to start, where are my students, what I need to cover, what I need to review and help give you a sense, where are your students and what, what are the things that they need to learn, need support with throughout the school year.

Teachers’ pedagogies were influenced by the placement system to the extent that it allowed them to modify curriculum and the grouping of students in the classroom. Teacher B attested to that.

If students didn't get moved out of classes, you could use that as a way to base your grouping from the get-go. So, from the beginning of the school year, you kind of had an idea of who was a little bit more advanced and who needed a little bit extra help and then base your grouping and your seating off of that as well.

**Theme 6: Placement assessment could be used for pre-, mid-, and post-testing to measure student's progress**

Part of the reflection during the pre-focus teacher interview was to identify what they could have done differently while using the existing placement system. Teacher B explicitly indicated that she could have used the instrument not just at the beginning of the school year but also in the middle and end of the school year as a measurement of students language progress.

I guess I could have given that same test mid-year and then at the end of the year. Mid-year to regroup my students, to see if they're still kind of in the same levels and then at the end of the year so I could see, and so they could see themselves how much they've improved.
**Theme 7: Teachers were limited to assess overall students’ language abilities for their placement**

Based on the teachers’ responses, another limitation of the existing class placement system was to perform a holistic evaluation with the diagnostic questionnaire, which mainly concentrated on assessing reading comprehension and writing skills. Assessing those two domains left out the speaking and listening, which were assessed by the teachers on during an informal conversation.

Teacher D: I think we were limited in the oral interview but when it came to the writing portion, it was... I think it gave us a clear idea of where they were at.

**Theme 8: No rubric or specific rating criteria were established to make placement decisions for students.**

The four participating teachers expressed their concern that not having a rating system made it challenging to grade and place SHLLs in the most appropriate class level based on their language abilities. The missing criteria and specificity of what language abilities and domains needed to be measured to place students in a specific class was highlighted as a category that was not working well. The uncertainty that it was left up to the teacher’s own knowledge, experience, or instinct to determine the placement was seen as a deficit in the existing class placement system. Teacher B stated the following:

What I do not think was working is that, beyond that there wasn't any specific scoring system. It was kind of just what we thought but we didn't have anything that was more specific.

Participating Teacher D expressed her agreement with teacher B in the next statement.

What didn't work, I agree with the previous teacher. We didn't have a scoring mechanism in regards to... This person should be in this level, or that person. We were just... I think the scoring part was when we conference with one another.
Not having a scoring system created a problem of reliability for the existing class placement system. By sharing and consulting with one another, teachers were using a sort of faulty system that did not clearly present the criteria measurements needed for a reliable placement assessment. Participating teacher A strongly reinforced the need to have a system that showed what part of the language production was being assessed.

But something that was not working, I think like they mentioned as well, is the fact that we didn't have a specific criteria to score what the students were producing in these days. So, it was mainly based to the teacher and consultation with all their teachers. So, I think it will... It's that part that was not working.

The analysis of the pre-focus teacher interview data, as shown in Table 21, revealed that the existing class placement system was working overall, and teachers and students had several benefits that enhanced the effectiveness of the placing method. The main challenge revealed that what was not working with this placing system was the need for a rating system that indicated what criteria was being assessed for SHLLs abilities. That missing part of the system created a reliability issue because it was left up to the teachers’ knowledge, experience, or instinct to grade and place students in a different class level. The lack of a scoring system could negatively affect the teachers’ decision due to not having a formal document that provided guidelines to formally assess and validate students’ language production.

**Postfocus teacher interviews’ findings**

The themes from the postfocus teacher group interviews were categorized on the basis of the benefits and challenges, and the effectiveness of implementing the online Thompson’s (2015) modified survey and placement test instruments to place Spanish HLLs at the high school level. The themes and subthemes were put under those
categories. It is also important to note that the implementation of the online Thompson’s (2015) modified survey and placement test took place during the distance learning school year due the unpresented COVID-19 pandemic.

There were 11 themes (Table 22) that emerged from the data analysis based on the postfocus teacher group interview and are as follows:

1. Implementation of the electronic version of the survey and placement test gave immediate and easy access to all students.

2. The format of survey was simple and easy to follow and complete by the students and provided instant results.

3. The point scale rubrics and the sample rubric were effective and enhanced equity across the Spanish department in placing SHLLs in the correct class.

4. Having instructions in Spanish and English across the Spanish department was helpful in assessing Spanish HLLs language usage and domains.

5. Using the online survey and placement test unsupervised created issues with having high-school students to start and complete to submit it in a timely manner.

6. During distance learning, using the online placement test unsupervised by the teacher allowed the students to use online translators like Google Translate, which could lead to faulty placement decisions.

7. Students had trouble understanding and interpreting the instructions and questions on the survey and placement test.

8. Students’ lack of technology knowledge and skills typing in Spanish created an issue.
9. Not being able to collaborate across the Spanish department made it less effective in placing students.

10. Students’ high level of absences during distance learning created an inconsistency in administering the test and assessing all students’ language abilities in order to assign the correct Spanish placement.

11. Teachers A and B faced the challenge of grading all students’ placement tests mainly by themselves creating a delay in efficiently placing students.

Table 22

Postfocus Group Teacher Interview Themes Based on the Evaluation of the Implementation of Thompson’s (2015) modified Survey of Language and Spanish for Heritage Learners Program Placement Exam

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Benefit</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Benefit</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Benefit, Effectiveness</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Effectiveness</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Challenge</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Challenge</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Was Not Working</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Was Not Working</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Challenge, Was not Working</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Challenge</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Challenge</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There were three subthemes that emerged from the 11 themes based on the postfocus teacher interview: (a) Creating the survey supported with the school district data system could enhance understanding other students data scores and educational plan, (b) Not having a zero score category in the Bilingual Skills scoring rubric made it difficult to properly assess students’ who did not provide enough evidence or an answer in Spanish,
and (c) recommendation was made on how to explain the rubrics explicitly to help students to understand the significance of taking a Spanish class placement test for academic achievement.

**Theme 1: Implementation of the electronic version of the survey and placement test gave immediate and easy access to all students through Google Classroom**

The postfocus teachers interview responses of the four participating teachers showed that implementing Thompson’s (2015) modified survey and placement test facilitated the accessibility to administer it to all students in an easy manner because Google Classroom was the platform used by the district and school wide during distance learning. That convenient access for teachers and students worked well with this new system. Teachers conveyed that it was a great benefit to use the online version of the survey and placement test to give to all students at once. The following two statements from two teachers reinforced the extent to which the teacher agreed and enjoyed the easy access for this approach to work. Teacher C responded

Okay. I think the benefits of it is that I really liked the fact that it was [inaudible 00:16:32] it was easy... The benefit of it being on Google was easy to get it to the students... I think the benefits is that it was readily available through Google Classroom, so they had access to [inaudible 00:35:36] it.

Teacher A supported the statement made by the previous teacher:

I think, the fact that it was, it's on Google Docs, it made it easier for the students, just like Teacher C said, to get access to it.

**Theme 2: the format of survey was simple and easy to follow and complete by the students and provided instant results**

Besides noting that the online modified survey and placement test were easy to give to the students via Google Classroom, the participating teachers made specific
distinctions on how that was to some extent simple and easy to follow by students, and
teachers found the instant results useful in different way. For example, the instant results
from the survey informed the teachers to the extent and situations the students had
contact with the Spanish language and helped understand the level of language usage
they had. Teacher D began by saying that:

For me, I think that I only have one student that I gave the survey, I was able to
see instantly, that was one of the benefits of the survey is seeing how they
respond.

Teacher B followed up by describing a more specific example on how to use the instant
results from the survey in her class, and how she could also know the degree to which
students felt comfortable using Spanish:

I think some of the benefits for the survey are like teacher D said, we have the
instant results and the instant kind of classroom breakdown so we can see the
level of Spanish use in our class and that also gives me an idea of how
comfortable the kids are using and listening to Spanish

Teacher A pointed out that the simplicity of the language used in the survey made her
more comfortable to give it to the student because she made a personal connection on
how she felt when taking long and complex surveys. She also evaluated how students
reacted to it.

I actually really like the survey because it was simple. It was a simple format,
and it was very direct and I think about it in the sense, I personally don't like
super long surveys. I get frustrated and I get bored, I think it was very straight
forward and I really liked that part and I think students appreciate having
something simple to follow to complete.

Last, Teacher C compared and distinguished the effectiveness of the existing class
placement method to the effectiveness of the implementing the online survey especially
given the unprecedented circumstances with teaching remotely.
We already had a creative placement test, but I really liked the format of this one and it's easy right now for distance learning

Subtheme 1: Creating the survey supported with the school district data system could enhance understanding other students’ data scores and educational plans.

An important suggestion made by Teacher B to improve the survey implementation was its alignment with other school district database systems that showed complete students’ data scores and educational plan.

I also think that if we do go back to the classroom and I didn't think about this until last night. One thing to consider getting the survey through would be Illuminate because Illuminate has all of the students’ English levels on there, it has the students social-economic levels, and if they have IEP's or 504's that's already in there so when you get the survey results it will be broken down by that. It will tell you 80% of students that have this level of English proficiency scored here and 20% of students that are social-economically disadvantaged scored here and the rest score here, so I think having that extra data would also be helpful.

Theme 3: The point scale rubrics and the sample rubric were effective and enhanced equity across the Spanish department in placing SHLLs in the correct class

The common responses from the four teachers to the post-focus interview question about the most effective aspect of implementing the modification of Thompson’s (2015) online modified survey and placement test were about the efficacy and practicality of having point scale and sample rubrics. The four teachers underlined the great distinction and positive improvement of what it meant for them and students to have rubric and criteria as guidelines for decision-making on placing students. Teacher A began by noting that the rubric was a good addition to the new class placement system.

And when it comes to the rubrics I think it was good to have a rubric, we discuss the rubric, we talked about the rubric, the researcher, Teacher B and I, and I think it was good for me to hear and discuss the rubric.
Teacher D’s response showed that having a rubric system helped in creating a more formal class placement system that also provided guidelines to follow.

Obviously, we didn't have a rubric it was just based on our own knowledge and so as mentioned before the effect aspect of the Thompson's placement test is that is formalized right? There's a rubric, there's a form of guidance in regards to that.

The implementation of the new class placement system also presented a new way to establish equity for students while being assessed and placed in a specific class. The establishment of the same scoring system across the Spanish department enhanced the validity and reliability. Teacher C addressed that valuable point as well as avoiding predispositions among teachers while rating students’ placement test. She noted that

I don't want to use the word incorrectly but is it equitable? Because now there is a rubric that everyone is using. There's no, just like Teacher A said there's no biases right? I mean, not biases but everyone is looking at the same thing and we're all using the same exact thing to [inaudible 00:31:33]. I think that's very effective of having this placement exam and I also agree

The implementation of the rubric scales and sample systems helped to create fairness in identifying and categorizing students’ language abilities based on the rubric to make informed decisions on the students’ class placement. Participating Teacher B emphasized and illustrated the benefits and effectiveness of the rubrics.

Another benefit is I think is the rubric because we have just a set rubric that we can look at and be like, this person falls here, and we are not just saying oh, this writing is really good, or this writing is not very good. We have a specific set of, I don't know, things we are looking for… I think just having the rubric, I think I mention it on question one but I'm going to mention it again. The rubrics so we know what we are specifically looking for students to fall into each category and then I think also having the scale that you created. The point scale with how many points students need to receive in order to be classified into each level… I still think that is super effective and we didn't have it before and now we have something concrete that we can look at and go from. I did too because whenever I was grading for a long time, I would always revisit those, let me refresh my
memory what I'm looking for, the examples, not just the rubric descriptions. Having the specific examples was extremely helpful.

**Subtheme 2: Not having a zero-score category in the Bilingual Skills scoring rubric made it difficult to properly assess students’ who did not provide enough evidence or an answer in Spanish**

A subtheme that emerged from Theme 3 was improvement of the Bilingual Skill scoring rubric by making the modification of adding a zero criterion. That modification could help to better assess students’ performance when not providing enough evidence of bilingual skills and language usage. Teacher B specified examples for the reasons that that criterion was needed.

These are things I think we already talked about too but for the record, adding the zero, I don't know if you officially add it but a zero to the rubric for when they don't provide enough evidence, we can give then a score of zero or when they just answer in English. Another one would be to add the component if possible, on the rubric for when they don't write enough in the writing sample, because it was really hard for me to grade two sentences. When technically they were somethings in that too but then they just wrote two very short things, I think they should've lost points. So, adding an element for length I really would've, I think that would help a lot so I don't give a higher point that they deserve. I don't know, that, and then what else?

**Subtheme 3: Recommendation was made on how to explain the rubrics explicitly to help students to understand the significance of taking a Spanish class placement test for academic achievement**

Three of the participating teachers expressed the concern of students not wanting to take the class placement test to be placed in a upper or more challenging class level or not taking the placement test seriously for not knowing how that could help them advance in their education. That was a challenge recognized by Participating teacher B. She made
a valuable suggestion on how to use the rubrics before administering the class placement test. She communicated the possibility that students would not know the real meaning of the class placement in relation to not only Spanish linguistic skills, but also in terms to their academic achievement. This emerged subtheme is better explained in her next statement:

I think that we talked about it when we were doing the grading, maybe a challenge is the students don't know how serious this test is, or for the future how serious it could be that it really could change their level. Bring them down or take them up, so sharing that with them, the point scale and the rubric now that we have it. This is what we are looking for, for you to do really well. Your punctuation, your capital letters, your accents, you need to write more than two words, you need to write more than one sentence for us to be able to grade it. Also, sharing with them the point scale, if you score here, there's a chance that you could skip this level, I think that also would motivate them.

**Theme 4: Having instructions in Spanish and English across the Spanish department were helpful system at assessing Spanish HLLs language usage and domains**

Based on the teachers’ responses, another benefit and effectiveness of the online survey and placement test was the application of bilingual instructions in English and Spanish. Having the instructions in both languages helped all students taking both instruments, specifically, Teacher A pointed out, students who did not know English. That gave more access to a wider student population with different language skills. The example described how it would have affected negatively if the instructions were only in English and not in Spanish and also summarized what other teachers stated.

I think it was very helpful to have the instructions both in English and Spanish because I have some students that do not speak English so if the instructions were just in English, they were not going to know what they were supposed to do. So, I think it was very helpful to have the instructions both in English and Spanish.
Theme 5: Using the online survey and placement test unsupervised created issues with having high-school students to start and complete to submit it in a timely manner

In the teachers’ responses identifying challenges of implementing Thompson’s survey and placement test, it was indicated that one of the main challenges was giving the placement test in an unsupervised manner online because several students did not complete or submit it in a timely manner. Teachers clarified that it was not the survey or placement test that created this issue, but the fact that doing distance learning, overall, made it more challenging. Another reason that was pointed out that made it challenging was that some students needed more time to complete it. Teacher B specified the challenge she found:

Some of the challenges for the survey and the placement test have been just getting the kids to take both of them not just one or the other. And getting them to take it in a timely matter.

That statement was supported by the response of Teacher C and illustrated another example why students took longer taking the placement test.

The challenging part I think of it is, it has nothing to do with the actual test. Well, there's two parts to it. The challenging part is getting it back from the student in a timely matter. That has nothing to do with the test… The other thing with the placement test is that I found that some kids took more time to answer the questions.

Theme 6: During distance learning, using the online placement test unsupervised by the teacher allowed the students to use online translators like Google Translate, which could lead to faulty placement decisions

Based on the teachers’ response results, one of the greatest challenges, specifically with the online placement test, was the authenticity of students’ translation responses for the part on the Bilingual Skills. The teacher responses shared that concern;
however, it was teachers A and B who were extremely concerned that students would have used Google Translate for that section. They noticed patterns in which students had the same or similar translation in Spanish with perfect punctuation, use of accent marks, and key verb tense usage that raised their concern. That created a rating issue for the teachers in trusting their translated sentences. Teacher A noticed a distinction in students writing while grading their work that elevated the suspicion that students, perhaps, had utilized the help of online platform like Google Translate. The following description illustrated her concern with the authenticity of students’ translation skills.

And some of the challenges that I found, and I would say that I don't think it has to do with the test at this point. It has more to do with the situation we are living with the pandemic because for some of students I question myself, did they use Google Translate because I seen other type of writings and even thought I specifically say do not use Google Translate, the purpose of this is just to know where you are…There are some instances where I question myself, well is this Google Translate product or is this really their work? And I think that being, in the future being in the classroom this can be addressed in a different way.

Similarly, after reading and grading students’ translated sentences in Spanish, Teacher B noticed a consistent pattern with the same language usage for translation. Also, she pointed out the distinction of being in the classroom during a normal school year, when she could supervise and monitor that students were doing their authentic assessment.

Also, I'm pretty sure a lot of the kids used Google Translate they had to many perfect accents and I lot of them had the exact same answer with the exact same answers and I'm like, I don't know this is kind of suspicious. I guess I can speak in regards to the previous system and what Teacher A just mentioned is that, the previous system we know its original work. It wasn't that they used the internet, they couldn't use Google Translate, it was being supervised but then again that's when we were in the classroom.

**Theme 7: Students had trouble understanding and interpreting the instructions and questions on the survey and placement test**
In terms of students reading and understanding the instructions and questions, the participating teachers reported that one of the challenges they had was that some students were not able to understand and follow the instructions or questions as directed. That elevated the difficulty for the students to answer the questions in an appropriate manner and their best possible way. Identifying this issue informed teachers what considerations to take when giving the survey and placement test. Teacher A was able to recognize that her students had this challenge while reading their response. She described it as follows:

Also, I did notice that some of my students did not understand the questions and I'm basing this on some of their answers. They didn't understand either the question or it was the instructions that they didn't understand and therefore because they didn't understand the instructions, their answers, they didn't answer probably accordingly to what they were being asked.

Another example that Teacher C presented was her response of a student not being able to understand the question and what it meant to her in terms of classifying the student as a heritage language or second language learner. Her response was

One kid on one of the surveys said, he didn't answer the question, but he wrote, I don't really understand the question. That also gives me the thing of well maybe he doesn't, he's not going to move on to a heritage speaker class. You know? So that also gives you a measurement of that, but I didn't have any of the kids come back to me and tell me that they had a difficult time filling it out.

The same participating teacher was able to concisely point out the type of question that caused a degree of difficulty to interpret. Closed-ended questions from the placement test were confusing or hard to interpret from her students. She stated that choosing a one-word response like yes/no might not necessarily represent the best response of the student. The following examples described the situation of the Teacher’s C student.
I felt some kids just did like a one, one-word answers, I think that's a challenge because it's how do you know. I'm trying to think of a question, Do you speak to your friends in Spanish most of the time? That's like an example of one and then they just say no. Which is fine but it's like, no, but If you are like with a group of friends that are Spanish speakers would you speak Spanish? I don't know, I just think that there's some level of discrepancy in some of the questions, but it also has to do with the students and how they want to answer it.

**Theme 8: Students’ lack of technology knowledge and skills typing in Spanish created an issue**

Participating teachers A and B responses coincided that a challenge in general was that students did not know how to use technology not even to log in to their classes. For instance, Teacher B clearly emphasized that some challenges were basic, just technology issues and also because of distance learning that is a challenge, because some students haven't logged on at all. Teacher A, however, gave more concise examples of the lack of technology skills some of her students experienced. Consequently, that could have had an effect on students while taking the survey, and specifically, the online placement test. She even questioned if having an online placement test was something students liked because of their lack of skills using computers. Teacher A explained that:

I think some of the challenges that some of my students had was also computer turns, technology turns. In this case, some of them it was the beginning of the school year, we're having challenges like typing, some of them took a really long time because they are not fast typers (sic) or certain things like that… For the writing portion, the composition portion I'm not too sure if I like it on the computer or just like pencil or paper.

**Theme 9: Not being able to collaborate across the Spanish department made it less effective in placing students**

During and after administering the modified survey and placement test not all the teachers in the Spanish department were able to collaborate rating the students’ placement test for difference circumstances. Not having that collaboration was a common
theme among all the participating teachers’ responses. Teachers’ responses showed that
collaboration was needed for the benefit of the whole language department, to avoid
teachers’ biases while rating students’ placement tests, to enhance teachers’ efficacy
implementing and rating placement test, and to help grading in a timely manner in
collaboration with all Spanish teachers. The lack of teachers’ collaboration among all the
Spanish teachers could have made the Thompson’s placement system less effective
 according to the teachers’ responses. The following teachers’ statements encapsulated the
strong sense of agreement among the teachers and the different reasons why collaborating
as a whole Spanish department in rating all the students’ placement tests was important.

Teachers A emphasized that

> Because I think it would be appropriate in the sense that not only the people that administer the test are grading but then also other teachers so that would actually broaden our perspective and also it would be, I think, it will be less biased… I think I already mentioned it, it would be great if we could grade as a department instead of just the teachers administering the test, each of them, actually gather as a department and grade it.

Teacher D reinforced Teacher A’s statement by saying that

> Teacher D: I think, Oh sorry, everyone has kind of answered this theme and I'm honestly support Teacher A in that I think we should do it as a department. I really strongly think that would be beneficial for all of us too, as language teachers. That's all.

Teacher B highlighted the importance of collaborating to have more cohesive
understanding of the total number of students being moved to another class level after
taking the placement test. She suggested that if that collaboration did not happen this
school year to do it next year.

> To get them graded and back in a timely matter, I think in the future to get them greater sooner that I did this year would be way more efficient because we are
eight weeks into the school year? I think, and I don't know if we have gone through and talked about How many kids are getting switch up. I think maybe making time, setting aside time, maybe during a department meeting or just for future years if it's going to be used so that we can get the grading done with as soon, within, I don't know, two weeks after they get taken

Theme 10: Students’ high level of absentees during distance learning created an inconsistency to administer the test and assess all students’ language abilities to assign the correct Spanish placement

Another major challenge that the four participating teachers faced due to the unprecedented situation with COVID-19 and doing distance learning was the high degree of students’ absences. According to participating teachers’ responses, that affected to a different level of challenge because it created the conflict of being consistent in administering the placement test in one or two class session to all students at once and being able to assess the students’ language abilities to be placed in the most appropriate class level. Distance learning has affected what teachers could get accomplished in terms of content and curriculum as well as what students could learn or have access to for not being present. Teacher B stressed that

And maybe if we were in person they would be there, I had absences but never to this level, one student just coming to class one time in eight weeks. That's another challenge, just distance learning for them as well.

Teacher A also demonstrated in the following example two other possible reasons how students being absent affected the consistency of administering the survey and placement test.

But also some not being there and students probably taking a longer time to take it because they forgot to take it or they were not here and then we didn't see them as often, it was just kind of hard to get it to the students. Those are some of the challenges that I think.
Theme 11: Teachers A and B faced the challenge of grading all students’ placement tests mainly by themselves creating a delay in efficiently placing students

The challenge that the participating teachers A and B encountered was having the responsibility of grading more than two hundred students’ placement tests by themselves. That gave them a much greater load of work in comparison with the other Spanish teachers who mainly had second language Spanish learners. Teachers A and B expressed that that affected the process of rating in a timely manner as well as making decisions for students’ class placement based on students’ results. They both restated the suggestion to include all the Spanish teachers in the rating process by having collective time to work on that during department meetings. Although teacher A recognized the relevance for the assigned teachers to do all the grading, she also mentioned the importance of collaborating with the rest of the teachers to create a more holistic rating system and avoiding teachers’ biases in placing students. Teacher B expressed her how that challenge affected her grading process and made further recommendations for the future:

and then another challenge for me has also been the grading time… To get them graded and back in a timely matter, I think in the future to get them greater sooner that I did this year would be way more efficient because we are eight weeks into the school year? I think, and I don't know if we have gone through and talked about How many kids are getting switch up. I think maybe making time, setting aside time, maybe during a department meeting or just for future years if it's going to be used so that we can get the grading done with as soon, within, I don't know, two weeks after they get taken. For me was hard, that part was also challenging but other than that I think its very efficient.

Teacher A reaffirmed that

when it comes to the grading also, at some point, I just thought it was a little bit too much. I think considering the situation, that's probably also why, but I think it'll be appropriate in the future if we could have, I think Teachers B said, sometime that maybe we can as a department grade them. Because I think it would be appropriate in the sense that not only the people that administer the
test are grading but then also other teachers so that would actually broaden our perspective and also it would be, I think, it will be less biased.

The response of teacher C offered complete understanding and support in collaborating:

I also agree with Teacher A about, I was going to suggest that about the whole department having a deadline, we need to have this done by this date, so then we can all sit together and look at all the assessments so there's different eyes looking at it.

**Summary**

This chapter presented the findings of examining data collected from the five research questions addressed by the current research. The results are summarized as follows.

The first research question addressed the proportions of Thompson’s (2015) modified survey three classifications for each of the three SHLLs classes at the high school. The descriptive statistics findings of the frequency of the survey responses showed that approximately 8% of the SHLLs should be placed in SHL1, approximately 40% of SHLLs should be placed in level 2 (Pre-IB SHL1), and approximately 52% of SHLLs should be placed on SHL2. The tabulation results based on Thompson’s survey three classifications indicated that approximately 33% of the 144 SHLLs were placed in the appropriate class level.

The second research question asked for the differences in general knowledge and demographics (Language Awareness), Bilingual Skills, and Short Writing Composition based on the three classification of Thompson’s (2105) modified survey. The results of the descriptive statistics based on the three classification of Thompson’s (2105) modified survey showed that there were only differences in Writing Composition (WC). A post hoc Tukey test was conducted to compare the mean differences among the three class
classification for WC and the results were statistically significant between Level 2 and 3, and Level 2 and 1.

A one-way ANOVA was performed to address the third research question to investigate the differences in general knowledge and demographics (Language Awareness), Bilingual Skills, and Short Writing Composition based on the three SHLL classes at the high-school level. The results found that the only statistically significant difference was between the three SHLL classes at the high-school level for Bilingual skills (BS). A post hoc Tukey test was conducted to compare the mean differences for BS among the three SHLL classes at the high-school level, and the results demonstrated that basic class level, SHL1, obtained the highest mean for BS, but it was not statistically significant.

The fourth research question asked if there was an interaction between Thompson’s (2015) modified survey three classifications and the SHLL classes at the high-school level on general knowledge and demographics (Language Awareness), Bilingual Skills, and Short Writing Composition. The sample sizes were too small to perform a valid interaction test for a two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), so separate one-way ANOVAs were conducted for each of the three parts of Thompson’s placement test.

The additional analyses performed on SHLLs who did not use Google Translate and the SHLLs who used Google Translate in Part II: Bilingual Skills based on the online Spanish for Heritage Learners Program Placement Exam showed a statistically significant difference. An independent t-test was performed to investigate the mean score differences of the two groups. The results of the statistical analysis demonstrated statistically
significant differences. Eta square results showed that practical importance had a medium effect size of .07. The results of the one-way analysis of variance comparing the mean scores between SHLLs who did not use Google Translate and who did use Google Translate also indicated a statistical significance.

The results of the analysis of the qualitative data from the prefocus interview indicated that the existing class placement system was working because of the consistency of using the same assessment instrument across the Spanish department, collaboration among collaboration on assessing SHLLs skills which enhance interrater validity, easy accessibility and flexibility to for the teachers to administer placement test and for the students to take it in a timely manner, and practicality to evaluate the placement assessment the same day. One of the challenges was the inability to change students to an upper class due to the lack of space in the class. Something that teacher would have done differently was to have used the placement assessment pre-, mid-, and post-testing to measure student’s progress. A major challenge and a part that was not working was not having rating rubric criteria established to make placement decisions for students.

The results of the analysis of the qualitative data from the postfocus interview revealed that the implementation of the online Thompson’s (2015) modified survey and placement test at the high-school worked because of the easy and immediate access to give it to all students, the simple and easy format of the survey to follow and complete, the instant results from the survey, the effectiveness of the point scale rubrics and the sample rubric for equity access when placing SHLLs in the correct class, and the helpful Spanish and English to assess Spanish HLLs language usage and domains. On the other
hand, the results of the qualitative data analysis from the postfocus interview revealed that challenges of implementing Thompsons’ modified survey and placement test during distance learning were giving the survey and placement test unsupervised by teachers delayed their students’ completion and submission, the issue of using Thompson’s online placement test unsupervised by the teacher allowed the students to use online translators that affected the placement test scores and placement decisions, students having difficulty understanding and interpreting the instructions and questions on the survey and placement test by themselves, students’ lack of technology knowledge and skills typing in Spanish, lack of not being able to collaborate across the Spanish department made it less effective in placing students, high level of student absentees created inconsistency to administer the test and asses all students class placement, and balancing the rating process among all the Spanish teachers to establish a more efficient and effective class placement system.
CHAPTER V
SUMMARY, LIMITATIONS, DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of the study was to investigate how Thompson's (2015) Survey of Language Usage and Spanish for Heritage Leaners Program Placement Test could be used effectively with three classes of Spanish Heritage Language Learners (SHLLs) at the high-school level to differentiate HLLs' use of Spanish inside and outside of the home and in their academic use of Spanish. The strategy used to examine the differentiation of HLLs’ use of Spanish inside and outside of the home and their academic use of Spanish was a mixed method study. This chapter contains an overview of the study, its findings, its limitations, a discussion of findings, conclusions, implications for educational practice, and recommendations for future research.

Summary of the Study

Traditionally, pedagogical and curricular methodologies implemented in foreign-language classes in the United States have excluded the linguistic abilities of heritage language learners (HLLs) placed in those classes from kindergarten through university level (Carreira, 2014a; Beaudrie, 2011; Montrul & Perpiñán, 2011; Potowski, 2004; Valdés, 1997). The lack of differentiation of language skills between second-language learners (L2s) and HLLs creates disadvantages and inequities for HLLs, especially when state wide and school district policy have a foreign-language class as a high-school requirement (California Department of Education, 2019; Carreira, 2004; Lynch, 2003; Parra, 2013; SCUSD, 2019). As the Latino population is the fastest growing minority group in the United States, Spanish has become the second most spoken language. Thus,
differentiating the language skills of Spanish L2s and Spanish HLLs is an imperative first step to establishing more effective and equitable Spanish language programs in educational systems (Carreira, 2012; Fairclough, 2006; Instituto de Cervantes, 2015 Scamman, 2018; Valdés, Fishman, Chávez, & Pérez, 2008; Vergara-Wilson, 2012).

The term heritage language learners (HLLs), mainly in the United States, refers to students whose heritage language, other than English, is spoken mainly at home and who have primarily oral and aural linguistic skills, and who, to certain extent, are bilingual in English and the heritage language (Valdés, 2000). As part of their general profile, Spanish HLLs possess basic communication abilities, a limited range of vocabulary, and usage of a more informal, nonacademic Spanish due to not having access to formal education in their heritage language (Beaudrie & Ducar, 2005; MacGregor-Mendoza, 2012). The limited linguistic abilities that HLLs have, however, exceed those of L2s who have when starting to take a foreign-language class (Carreira, 2014a). Thus, a placement test assists in recognizing and differentiating more accurately the Spanish HLLs linguistic and cultural backgrounds, and in placing them according to their specific language abilities and needs (Beaudrie, 2011, 2012).

The need to place Spanish HLLs into more appropriate Spanish classes according to their linguistic skills has resulted in a new language research field. Much of that research has been conducted on the language proficiency between HLLs and L2 learners at the college level (Carreira, 2004; Lynch, 2003; Valdés, 1997). Hulstijn (2011) emphasized that HLLs proficiency must be classified from basic language cognition (BLC) to higher language cognition (HLC) according to four language domains: listening, reading, speaking, and to writing. Thus, research on heritage language
assessments has arisen to measure and distinguish more accurately their linguistic range. Most of the research on placement tests for Spanish HLLs has been conducted at the college level, and much less has been done at the high-school level (Carreira & Kagan, 2011; Fairclough, 2011, 2012a; Parra, 2013; Potowski, 2004; Thompson, 2015). Studies on language assessment at the kindergarten through high-school level have been mainly done on second-language acquisition (Baker, 2006; Fairclough; 2012a). The variety of heritage placement tests at the college level for students entering Spanish heritage language programs ranges from L2 assessments, self-placement exams, diagnostic assessments, and questionnaires, vocabulary knowledge, interviews, and locally designed pencil-and-paper examinations (Carreira, 2012; Fairclough, 2012b; Vergara-Wilson, 2012).

The majority of the studies on heritage language programs and heritage language placement assessments has been conducted at community colleges and 4-year universities across the nation. Three of the commonalities that the survey presented among heritage language programs were (a) the need for language programs designed for heritage language learners and pedagogical practices (Beaudrie, 2011; Beaudrie & Durcar, 2005; Giangrande, 2009; Inglod, Rivers, Tesser,, & Ashby, 2002; Montrul & Perpiñán, 2011; Valdés, Fishman, & Chávez, 2006; Luo, Li & Li, 2019), (b) sociocultural variables that affect HLLs linguistic abilities (Beaudrie & Durcar, 2005; Carreira & Kagan, 2011; Jensen & Llosa, 2007; Oh & Au, 2005), and (c) reasons to opt out of learning a heritage language (Nagano, Ketcham, & Funk, 2019).

Among the studies on heritage language placement tests, most of them highlighted six areas for understanding the process of developing a placement test and its
implementation. Language assessments and purposes are two key components that clarify the type of assessment and the desired outcomes (Baron & Boschee, 1995). Placement and proficiency tests help to place initially students into a language class level.

Proficiency tests, however, examine the student’s overall ability (Brown & Abeywickraman, 2010). Assessment procedures help to evaluate HLLs registers and language varieties based on their linguistic repertoire (Elder, 2005; Valdés, 2007). Some studies differentiated language assessment for HLLs, Foreign Language Learners (FLLs), and L2s (Beaudrie & Ducar, 2005; Fairclough, 2011; Yan, 2003). Fairclough (2006, 2011) and Montrul and Perpiñán (2011) indicated that certain considerations were needed when developing a placement test for Spanish HLLs: the measurement of knowledge of verb morphology through a fill-in-the-blank section, four guided short essays that elicited the basic types of discourse, and lexicon recognition and language awareness.

Piloting a process for accurate statistical analysis, Wilson (2012) investigated a placement test method of graphical and statistical item analysis to identify multiple-choice items that were most effective at distinguishing between Spanish HL and Spanish L2. Potowski, Parada, and Morgan-Short (2012) also described a pilot placement test and its efficacy in differentiating Spanish HLLs and L2s. MacGregor-Mendoza (2012) evaluated the efficacy of the Spanish Placement Test (SPT) that had been used for over 15 years and demonstrated its lack of efficacy to assess accurately SHLLs of that institution and its misalignment with its purpose and course goals. Thompson’s (2105) study on the implementation of the Survey of Language Usage and Spanish for Heritage Learners Program Placement Exam at the college level was the model followed for the
The implementation of instruments at the high-school level helped to investigate how and with whom high-school Spanish HLLs used Spanish, as well as a their language awareness, writing, and bilingual abilities. Thompson’s study provided a foundation for this study to delineate a more formal and effective class placement system to measure high-school Spanish HLLs overall proficiency so students can be placed in a more proper class level.

These studies presented suitable information on the development procedures and implementation of a placement test for Spanish heritage language learners at the community college and 4-year university; however, it was unclear the effectiveness of implementing a college-level placement test to the high-school level. Although, there was hardly any information on Spanish heritage language placement tests at the high-school level, the studies presented relevance in designing and implementing heritage language placement tests for the student population targeted in this study. The language profile and sociocultural background were among the many commonalities aligned with the student population described in the studies to determine the HLLs language proficiency.

The current study was conducted to answer the following five research questions:

1. What are the proportions of Thompson’s (2015) three classifications based on the modified Survey of Language Usage for each of the three Spanish HLL classes at the high-school level?

2. To what extent are there differences in general knowledge and demographics (Language Awareness), Bilingual Skills, and Short Composition based on the three classifications of Thompson’s (2015) modified Survey of Language Usage?
3. To what extent are there differences in general knowledge and demographics (Language Awareness), Bilingual Skills, and Short Composition based on the three Spanish HLL classes at the high-school level?

4. To what extent is there an interaction between Thompson’s (2015) modified Survey of Language Usage three classifications and the Spanish HLL classes at the high-school level on general knowledge and demographics (Language Awareness), Bilingual Skills, and Short Composition?

5. What are the benefits and challenges of using Thompson’s modified Survey of Language Usage (survey) and modified Spanish of Heritage Learners Program Placement Exam (placement test) to place Spanish HLL students given the usual practice at the high-school level?

The aforementioned research questions were examined using a mixed-methods research with a descriptive quantitative component and pre- and postfocus interviews as a qualitative component. Demographic information, Spanish HLLs usage and exposure, and overall Spanish proficiency information were collected through the administration of Thompson’s (2015) modified Survey of Language Usage and the Spanish of Heritage Learners Program Placement Exam. The first four research questions were answered with descriptive statistics as quantitative data. The pre- and postfocus interviews were conducted using with four high-school Spanish teachers to investigate the benefits, challenges, and effectiveness of the existing class placement system and the implementation of Thompson’s instruments. Due to the possibility of 34 students using Google Translate, additional analyses were conducted to examine the mean differences of Spanish HLLs who did not use Google Translate and the SHLLs who possibly used
Google Translate in Part II: Bilingual Skills based on the online Spanish for Heritage Learners Program Placement Exam.

A total of 144 high-school students, 83 female students, 58 male students, and 3 transgender students, participated in this study ($N = 144$). The breakdown of the grade level was as follows: 50 ninth graders, 43 tenth graders, 37 eleventh graders, and 14 twelfth graders. At the time when the data were collected, all participating students were enrolled in three Spanish for HLLs classes (SHLL I, Pre-IB SHLL I, and SHLL II). Sixty-two students comprised the basic level SHLL I, 29 students comprised the intermediate level Pre-IB SHLL I, and 53 students comprised the advanced level SHL II. All students enrolled in those three class levels took the survey and placement test with either one of the two participating teachers. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, frequency and proportions, one-way analysis of variance, Tukey post hoc comparison, independent-sample $t$ test, crosstabulation, and eta square.

For research question 5, the four participating teachers in the pre- and postfocus teacher interviews have been teaching in the same high school from 4 to 14 years. The teaching experience varied from teaching Spanish as a second language to teaching Spanish as a heritage language. They evaluated the benefits, challenges, and effectiveness of the exiting class placement system versus the implementation of Thompson’s (2015) modified survey and placement test. They also provided insight into what they could have done differently while implementing both systems. The fifth question was answered with coded theme and subthemes, as qualitative data (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009).
Summary of Findings

The findings of the study include quantitative and qualitative results. Research questions 1 to 4 were addressed by quantitative findings and research question 5 by qualitative findings.

For research question 1, the proportions of Thompson’s (2015) three classifications based on the online modified Survey of Language Usage approximately 8% of the students responded with 2 to 4 “yes” answers indicating that they should be placed in SHLL I (level 1); approximately 40% of the students responded with 5 to 7 “yes” answers indicating they should be placed in Pre-IB SHLL I (level 2); and approximately 52% of the students responded with 8 to 10 “yes” answers indicating that they should be placed in SHLL II (level 3). A tabulation of the three survey classifications results showed that the proportions of SHLLs placed in the existing class placement classifications were approximately 11% in the SHLL I class, 13% in Pre-IB SHLL I, and 53% in SHLL II. There was a mismatched agreement between the survey three classifications and the existing class placement. Based on the survey results only 33% of SHLLs were correctly placed, and approximately 66% were misplaced. Cohen’s kappa ($k$) results also showed that there was no statistically significant agreement between the survey results and the existing class placement, $k = .04$.

For research question 2, the descriptive statistics for the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) showed that there were very minor differences in between the classifications mean and the mean for the total classification for general knowledge and demographics (Language Awareness), Bilingual Skills, and Writing Composition based on the three classifications of Thompson’s (2015) modified Survey of Language Usage.
Based on Thompson’s survey, there was a statistically significant mean difference in Writing Composition. The Writing Composition mean difference between the three class classification was examined by using the Tukey post hoc test. The Tukey results indicated that there was a statistically significant mean difference between Level 2 and Level 3 and between Level 2 and Level 1 at the .05 level of significance.

For research question 3, a one-way ANOVA was performed to investigate the mean difference in Language Awareness (LA), Bilingual Skills (BS), and Writing Composition (WC) based on the three Spanish HLL classes. The one-way ANOVA showed no statistically significant differences for LA and WC. There were only mean differences in BS based on the SHLLs classes. SHL I had the highest mean, SHL II had the second highest, and Pre-IB SHL I had the lowest. The practical importance (Eta squared) for BS is .04, which is a small size level (Cohen, 1993). Because of the statistically significant difference on BS, a post hoc test was performed to investigate the cause. The post hoc Tukey results showed that BS would have placed SHL I and Pre-IB in the inappropriate class level at a statistically significant difference. BS would have placed SHL II, however, at the highest level, but comparing between SHL I and Pre-IB SHL I, it was not statistically different at .05 level.

Because the sample size between Thompson’s (2015) three-part Placement Test and the SHLL classes was too small to perform a valid interaction test for a two-away analysis of variance, separate one-way ANOVAs were performed for each of the three parts of Thompson’s Placement Test. The results indicated that students’ means in SHL II increased consistently from the lowest to the highest on Thompson’s Survey of Language Usage Classifications. Students in Pre-IB SHL I had the lowest mean in Bilingual Skills
for the three classification 3 and the highest for classification 1, and the mean was
between the two classifications for those in classification 2. Students’ means for
Bilingual Skills in SHLL I were increasing, except for one person in classification 2. For
students in SHLL II, the means were counter to what would be expected as those in the
lowest classification had the highest mean, followed by the highest classification and the
middle classification. SHLL II had means for the Writing Composition in the order that
was expected from the lowest to the highest classification. Pre-IB SHLL I had the highest
mean for classification 2 followed by classifications 3 and 1.

Additional analyses were conducted to analyze the mean differences between the
group of SHLLs who did not use Google Translate and the group who possibly did use it
for Part II: Bilingual Skills. There were 110 SHLLs who did not used and 34 who
possibly used Google Translate. The independent-sample t-test results showed that there
was a statistically significant mean difference between the two groups. The eta square
measure of practical importance was performed, and the results indicated that there was a
medium effect size of .06 (Cohen, 1992). The one-way ANOVA performed for SHLLs
who did not use Google Translate revealed there was some statistically significant
difference in sample means between the two groups, but the results were not effected
when comparing the group who used Google Translate. The means increased in each of
the three class levels.

The tabulations results for the proportions for the two groups based on
Thompson’s modified Survey of Language Usage three classifications showed there was
no statistically significant difference. A second tabulation was performed to investigate
the proportions of SHLLs based on the existing class placement method for both groups
for Part II: Bilingual Skills. The findings were not statistically different, except that SHLLs in SHLL I had the highest proportion for both groups, SHLL II had the second highest proportions, and Pre-IB SHLL I had the lowest proportions.

Eight themes emerged from the prefocus group interview responses as qualitative data analysis. They were coded and put in three categories based on what was working, the effectiveness and challenges of the existing class placement system, and what could have been done differently. First, the consistency of using the same assessment instrument across the Spanish language department was valuable. The four participating teachers’ responses strongly agreed that consistent implementation of the same questionnaire as a placement instrument enhanced the reliability and that the collaboration among all the Spanish teachers enhanced interrater validity on assessing SHLLs skills. The theme of having accessibility and flexibility to administer and take the placement assessment in a timely manner also showed the effectiveness of the existing class placement system. The ability to evaluate the placement assessment the same day was effective in placing students. Three emerged themes that were categorized as not working well with the existing class placement system were (a) the challenge to moving students to an upper level class because there was no more room to place them; (b) second, the limitations for teachers to assess overall students’ language abilities for their placement using the questionnaire; and (c) not having a rubric or specific rating criteria established to make placement decisions for students. Last, an emerged theme under the category of what could have been improved was that placement assessment could be used for pre-, mid-, and posttesting to measure student’s progress.
Eleven themes emerged from postfocus interview responses as qualitative data analysis. They also were coded and put in the three categories based on what worked, the effectiveness, and challenges of implementing Thompson’s (2015) modified Survey of Language Usage and Placement Test. Four of the emerged themes showed that Thompson’s instruments worked well. First, the implementation of the electronic version of the survey and placement test gave immediate and easy access to all students. Second, the format of survey was simple and easy to follow and to complete by the students and provided instant results. Third, the point-scale rubrics and the sample rubric were effective and enhanced equity across the Spanish department in placing SHLLs in the correct class. Fourth, providing instructions in Spanish and English across the Spanish department was helpful in assessing Spanish HLLs language usage and domains.

There were seven themes that showed the challenges of implementing Thompson’s class placement instruments. First, using the online survey and placement test unsupervised created issues with having high-school students to start and complete to submit it in a timely manner. Second, during distance learning, using the online placement test unsupervised by the teacher allowed the students to use online translators like Google Translate, which could lead to faulty placement decisions based on Bilingual Skills. Third, students had trouble understanding and interpreting the instructions and questions on the survey and placement test. Fourth, students’ lack of technology knowledge and skills typing in Spanish created an issue. Fifth, not being able to collaborate across the Spanish department made it less effective in placing students. Sixth, students’ high level of absences during distance learning created an inconsistency in administering the test and assessing all students’ language abilities in order to assign
the correct Spanish placement. Seventh, teachers A and B faced the challenge of grading all students’ placement tests mainly by themselves creating a delay in efficiently placing students.

Three of the subthemes emerged from the postfocus group interview responses data analysis. First, the data indicated the need to create a survey supported with the school-district data system so that way it could help teachers to enhance understanding other students’ data scores and educational plan. Second, teachers’ responses described that not having a zero score category in the Bilingual Skills scoring rubric made it difficult to assess properly students’ who did not provide enough evidence or an answer in Spanish. Third, the data analysis showed the need for the teachers to explain the rubrics explicitly to help students to understand the importance or relevance of taking a Spanish class placement test for academic achievement.

**Limitations of the Study**

There are several limitations to this study that need to be addressed. First, this study was adopted from Thompson’s (2015) research study at the college level to the high-school level. The design of Thompson’s (2015) modified Survey of Language Usage and Placement Test was based on previous research studies in heritage language (HL) placement and heritage language learners (HLLs) at the college and 4-year university (Ascher, 1990; Lam, Perez-Leroux, & Ramirez, 2003; Valdés, 2000), which is a drawback that affects efficacy of measuring the linguistic abilities of the targeted Spanish HLL population at the high-school level (MacGregor-Mendoza, 2012). The student population in Thompson’s study was not only different in terms of grade level, generation, and language skills but also in terms of the maturity level and knowing the
importance of taking a Spanish placement test for their academic achievement growth. As MacGregor-Mendoza (2012) pointed out, the geographic location in which the research studies took place could influence the flow of the constant cultural, economic, and linguistic interaction among the Spanish-speaking populations affecting the test content and design to meet efficiently the language skills. Thus, internal reliability and validity of this study could have been affected.

Second, due to the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic, school districts were shutdown forcing the implementation of distance or remote learning. The high school in which this study was conducted is practicing distance learning, which has effected, number one, the direct contact between students and teachers to deliver direct instruction. Not being in a controlled classroom setting may affect the learning outcomes of the SHLLs. Consequently, the two instruments for this study had to be converted into online versions to be distributed via Google Classroom to all participating SHLLs students. The fact that several SHLLs did not have access to the technological devises, Wi-Fi, or did not possess the necessary technology skills in Spanish to take the survey and placement test was another drawback when collecting the data in a timely manner or not at all.

Third, with the implementation of distance learning, students have a specific amount of time for synchronous learning in which teachers and students meet via Zoom, for approximately 40 minutes and the other half of the time period, students are supposed to do asynchronous learning, meaning they work by themselves without the teacher’s supervision. Using the online versions of the survey and placement test and being unsupervised by their teachers, some students were not able to read and fully understand the instructions and questions in both instruments, especially, the placement test. Not
being able to type or not knowing the correct accent mark or special Spanish marks, are possibilities that affected test takers total score. Another consequence of being unsupervised by the teachers is that there is the possibility that 34 students used Google Translate, specifically, to answer Part II: Bilingual Skills, which can have an effect on the data collection, the reliability, and the validity of the test results of this study and the class placement for the SHLLs.

Fourth, there were two main participating teachers who administered the online survey and the placement test in seven SHLL classes to the 144 HLLs. They were the raters for all the students’ Part II: Bilingual Skills and Writing Composition responses. Raters biases may affect the validity of the test results, especially because the two of the raters were raters of their own students and were not able to collaborate with other Spanish teachers among the Spanish department to apply interrater validity due to the circumstances with distance learning and the lack of time needed to meet with the rest of the Spanish teachers to consult with one another and rate the assessments.

Discussion of Findings

In order to answer the first research question, “What are the proportions of Thompson’s (2015) three classifications based on the modified Survey of Language Usage for each of the three Spanish HLL classes at the high-school level?”, the frequency of the classifications were analyzed to obtain the proportions. Based on the results of the proportions for Thompson’s (2015) modified survey three classifications for each of the three Spanish HLL classes at the high-school level, there was a mismatch with the existing class placement for each of the Spanish HLL classes at the high-school level because only approximately 8% of the SHLLs should be placed in level 1 (SHLL 1),
40% of SHLLs should be placed in level 2 (Pre-IB SHLL I), and 52% of SHLLs should be placed in level 3 (SHLL II). These findings are not aligned with Thompson’s study findings when considering Thompson’s placement exam being equivalent to the existing class placement system at the high-school level. In this study, based on the three survey classifications, the vast majority of SHLLs would be placed in level 3, the second largest group would be placed in level 2, and a very small amount of SHLLs would be placed in level 1. In Thompson’s study, the survey classification results placed students in level 1 and 3 with approximately 70% accuracy, and with approximately 40% accuracy in level 2 when compared with his exiting class placement system (placement exam).

Comparing the findings for the proportions of Thomson’s survey classifications for the three SHLLs classes at the high-school level with his findings, it is shown that in Thompson’s study there is a greater degree of accuracy using the survey to place SHLLs in level 1 and 3, but not 2, but those findings are not aligned with the proportions found using the survey at the three SHLLs classes the high-school level. The findings of this study shed light on to what extent the differences between the two studies could be due to grade level, age, generational language usage and insecurities with language usage, and language identity (Carreira, 2012). Based on the survey findings, high-school SHLLs seem to have a greater degree of experience using Spanish inside and outside of their home; therefore, the results indicated that a greater proportion of SHLLs should be placed in SHL2. Montrul (2010) explained some of the factors that influence the degree of having contact with the heritage language begins with the naturalistic way that language is acquired from interaction with the family, parental discourse strategies, status of the
language in the community, availability of a speech community beyond the family, attitude toward the language, and having access to education in the language.

When comparing the findings of this study with Thompson’s (2015) and Beaudrie’s (2012) findings about the use of a simple 10-question survey on areas where language is spoken and heard, as well as the interlocutors with whom different languages are used, provides rationale for developing heritage-language placement exams that accurately place HLLs and relevance for a depth of understanding about what needs to be considered when designing or adopting a placement test for SHLLs. The findings from the survey results showed that more than 65% to 100% of SHLLs spoke and heard Spanish at home as a child; more than 27% lived in a Spanish-speaking country for at least 2 years; more than 65% of the SHLLs still speak Spanish with their parents, grandparents, neighbors, and relatives; more than 83% speak Spanish or both Spanish and English when speaking with their parents; more than 73% watch television, listen to the radio, or both at least 30% in Spanish; and more than 45% speak Spanish when talking with their friends. Based on the findings from the survey classification, the vast majority of SHLLs at the high-school level revealed that they have a large level of experience and contact using Spanish mostly by listening and speaking, which is in agreement with the findings in other studies (Alarcón, 2010; Beaudrie & Ducar, 2005). These findings were considerably different when compared with Thompson’s Survey of Language Usage classifications with the placement exam findings; however, these findings are consistent when comparing his placement exam to the existing class placement system used at the high-school participating in this study.
These findings also demonstrated that the Survey of Language Usage classifications granted more opportunity for access to higher levels of academic Spanish than the existing class placement for SHLLs. The crosstabulation, Table 4, clearly supports the strong alignment with Zyzik’s (2016) Prototype Model of Heritage Language Learners, which indicated that HLLs possess the attribute of having implicit knowledge of the language that may not need to be considered when placing SHLLs into higher-language-level classes. These findings reciprocate to what Hulstijn (2011) called basic language cognition (BLC) of language reception and production, which does not include reading and writing. Thus, findings based on the results of the Survey of Language Usage correlate with the findings that SHLLs possess strong basic language cognition. These findings can question the meaning of a “proficient language speaker,” and thus, an educational HLL system can start to alter the definition of what it means to be a good language speaker. Beaudrie (2012) highlighted that although most practitioners agree that at least receptive proficiency in the language is required, the minimum and the maximum levels of proficiency a learner needs in order to benefit from a SHL course is still controversial. The findings of the survey results, however, suggest that more students could be placed in higher levels of SHLL courses than they otherwise would have with the existing class placement system, which can change the trajectory of a high-school SHLL’s life. The finding of the level of Spanish usage experience showed a degree of readiness not only to maintain the speaking and listening language abilities but also to start acquiring the reading and writing language skills (Fishman et al., 2006).

In order to investigate whether there were differences in general Language Awareness, Bilingual Skills, and Writing Composition based on three classifications of
Thompson’s (2015) Survey of Language Usage, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed using the data of 144 SHLLs, and the results found very small differences between the classification means and the mean for the total classification. The number of SHLLs in each class level were as follows: Level 1 \( (n=11) \), Level 2 \( (n=58) \), and Level 3 \( (n=75) \). The only differences were found in Writing Composition (WC) according to the Survey of Language Usage. Level 1 obtained \( M=7.73 \), Level 2 obtained \( M=10.55 \), Level 3 obtained \( M=10.72 \), and the total classification mean was 10.42. A one-way ANOVA was conducted to investigate the mean differences for Writing Composition (WC) based on Thompson’s survey three levels of classifications. The results of a Tukey post hoc test based on the three class classification for the Writing Composition indicated that for Thompson’s survey Level 1 mean difference between Level 2 and Level 3 were statistically significant at level .05.

The differences found between the writing composition based on the survey classifications can be associated with the distinction that Hulstijn (2011) suggested between basic language cognition and higher language cognition. Thompson’s survey classification level 1 differentiated the higher language cognition (HLC) of the writing skills between the class levels, which affirms that HLC is the complement or extension of BLC. The findings for the mean differences based on Thompson’s survey Level 1 between Level 2 and Level 3 indicate that the increasing HLC utterances that can be understood or produced contain low-frequency lexical items or uncommon morphosyntactic structures that pertain to written as well as spoken language (Hulstijn, 2011), which could explain the level of difficulty in measuring the distinction of language reception and production among the four linguistic domains. It is important to highlight
that the classification for the Level 1 also has the lower proportion of SHLLs, and that may affect increasing the mean difference. The measure of writing composition is relevant and important to elicit the basic types of discourse and may recognize a more holistic and functional assessment of the students’ language abilities (Fairclough, 2006).

When comparing these findings with Thompson’s (2015) study, his study showed that the 10-Question Survey results indicated that the proportions of accuracy were more aligned to a greater extent with the placement test class placement. His findings revealed that based on the survey more than 71% of the time students answered “yes” 1 to 4 times, which correlated to their accuracy determined by placement exam into Span 103 (level 2). The findings indicated similar results of more than 70% accuracy when students answered “yes” 8 to 10 times, correlating to the placement exam into Span 253 (level 3). Considering only the domains of language use, this approach was more challenging in placing SHLLs into Span 203 (level 2). His findings showed that when students answered “yes” 5 to 7 times, the survey only placed SHLLs with 41% accuracy in comparison with the placement exam. The accuracy of his findings comparing the survey classification placement with the placement exam was mainly with the lower and upper level classes.

To investigate the differences between Thompson’s placement test components general knowledge and demographics (Language Awareness), Bilingual Skills, and Short Writing Composition based on the three Spanish HLL classes at the high-school level, inspection of the means indicated that they increased across the three levels of SHLL classes for Language Awareness and Bilingual Skills. The main difference was found on Bilingual Skills, in which SHL1 had the highest mean (M=19.23) followed by SHL2 (M=18.02), and Pre-IB SHL1 (M=16.41) had a mean lower but close to SHL2. Because
Teachers A and B reported the suspicion that some students might have used Google Translate or another platform to translate this part, there was the need to investigate that anomaly. After looking up the Google translation in Spanish for each of the sentences in Part II: Bilingual Skills, the finding was that there were 34 suspected students with the same exact or very similar translation as Google Translate.

The findings for the additional analyses after computing an independent-sample $t$ test to compare the mean differences of the SHLL group who used Google Translate and SHLLs group who did not use Google Translate showed statistically significant mean difference among the 110 SHLLs that did who use Google Translate compared with the 34 SHLLs who did use Google Translate. The SHLLs whose group did use Google Translate had a mean of 20.73, which was much higher compared with the mean of 17.47 obtained by the SHLLs group who did not use Google Translate. The finding for Eta square was approximately .06 indicating effect size with medium practical importance (Cohen, 1992). The one-way analysis of variance for the SHLLs who did not use Google Translate versus those who did revealed the sample means increased in the three class levels for the SHLLs group who did not use Google Translate. These salient findings showed the expected mean order for each of the class levels. SHL I had the smallest mean of 15.86, Pre-IB SHL I had the medium mean of 16.26, and SHL II had the largest mean of 18.67. The sample means for the group that did use Google Translate continued to be higher than the group that did not use Google Translate.

The findings from the crosstabulation analysis that examined the frequencies and proportions of SHLLs in the three survey class classifications for the group who did and the group who did not use Google Translate revealed that Level 1 had the lowest
proportion of approximately 12% of students who used Google Translate, class Level 2 had the second highest proportion of approximately 33% of students who used Google Translate, and class Level 3 had the highest proportion of approximately 55% of students who used Google. There were no statistically significant differences between the two groups. The findings for a second tabulation analysis that inspected the proportions of SHLLs based on the existing class placement method for the groups who did not use Google Translate and those who used Google Translate for Part II: Bilingual Skills revealed that SHL I had the highest proportion for those who used Google of approximately 52%, SHL II had the second highest proportion of approximately 40%, and Pre-IB SHL I had the lowest proportion of approximately 20%. The proportion results were not statistically different between the two groups. The findings of the two crosstabulations based on Thompson’s survey three classification and the existing class placement of the three SHLL classes at the high school illustrated the complexity of measuring the bilingual language skills in Spanish and English for SHLLs.

These findings are consistent with the literature on the diverse range of language variety of SHLLs, and the possibilities that may have influenced the group of students who used Google Translate during distance learning. The findings show variability of language experience and contact in English and Spanish that influence their bilingual skills. Zyzik’s (2016) prototype of Model of Heritage Language Learner noted individual attributes that influence the overall Spanish language abilities of HLLs such as the bilingual language profiles, ethnic and cultural connection to Spanish as heritage language, and the level of early experience with Spanish at home. Those attributes, putting aside the distance learning factor, could have influenced SHLLs’ degree of
Spanish dominance, which may be lesser than English, and that affects their attitudes, motivation, confidence using Spanish, and their social and ethnic connection to Spanish (Miller, 2017; Nagano, Ketcham, & Funk, 2019).

These findings also may be indicators that SHLLs who used Google Translate could have been recent immigrants who did not possess strong English language abilities to be able to translate from English to Spanish affecting their own confidence when translating Spanish. Valdés (2001) described that many immigrant students who come to this country as young children enter American schools with little knowledge of English and are classified as limited English proficient (LEP). In this study, there is not a specific variable that indicates the level of English proficiency of the SHLLs; however, the institution where the study was conducted has a great proportion of English language learners among the Spanish-speaking students. They may possess stronger Spanish language skills but may not have sufficient English abilities to understand the Bilingual Skills component to translate to Spanish.

It is important to note that based on the existing class placement findings, the lower proportion of SHLLs who used Google Translate was the Pre-IB SHL I class. The relevance is that the Pre-IB SHL I class is designed for SHLLs who are part of the advanced achievement program. These students are supposed to be higher academic achievers. Their English skills may be stronger than their Spanish skills; however, their academic confidence may help them to thrive. Alarcón (2010) reported that advanced HL learners who use Spanish at home also hold positive attitudes towards their own variety of Spanish and tend to be confident about their Spanish language abilities, prioritizing writing, grammatical accuracy, and vocabulary over oral skills. Thus, the finding on Pre-
IB SHL I having lowest proposition of the SHLL class level who did not use Google Translate may be due to this factor.

The findings from the separate one-way ANOVAs conducted for each of the three parts of Thompson’s Placement Test to inspect if there were any interaction between Thompson’s (2015) three classifications and the three SHLL classes at the high-school level on the three parts of the placement test showed consistency in their means increasing from lowest to the highest for Thompson’s Survey Classifications. This finding adds validity to the study because by removing the 34 suspicious SHLLs who possibly used Google Translate, the mean scores of 110 group of SHLLs who did not use Google Translate fall under the expected class level order from the lowest to the highest.

It is important to point out that considering the additional analysis of the two groups those who used Google Translate and those who did not use Google Translate. These findings for bilingual skills should be interpreted with caution, because the findings for the Pre-IB SHL I students’ means for Bilingual Skills may not necessarily reflect accuracy for those who did not use Google Translate. As indicated in the additional analysis findings, the means for the group who did not use Google Translate increased across the three class levels with SHLL I having the smallest mean, Pre-IB SHLL I having the medium mean, and SHLL II having the largest mean. These findings indicate more accuracy of the mean difference order based on the existing class placement. The findings for the mean differences for Writing Composition show variability for Pre-IB SHLL I, which based on Thompson’s survey classification 2 has the highest mean followed by classifications 3 and 1. The last two classifications show a
degree of discrepancy considering that those in classification level 3 would have taken at least one level of SHLL class previously.

The findings from the prefocus teacher group interview revealed eight major themes that indicated the extent to which the implementation of the exiting class placement diagnostic questionnaire was working or not working, including its benefits, challenges, effectiveness and what could have been something done differently. The themes that indicated the extent that it was working involved having the consistency of using the same assessment instrument across the Spanish language department, the collaboration among all Spanish teachers in enhancing the validity of assessing the SHLLs skills, and the accessibility and flexibility for teachers and students to administer and take the assessment test and evaluate it in a timely manner. Three major themes that showed that the placement system was not working or was challenging were not having space in the upper level classes to place students after taking the diagnostic questionnaire showing a higher language skills, teachers’ limitations to assess the overall SHLLs’ language abilities for their placement, and not having the formality of rating system with specific rubric criteria established to make placement better informed placement decisions for SHLLs.

The teachers’ responses on the use of a diagnostic questionnaire as a placement test are consistent with other research, which has indicated the need to design proper placement tests to better measure the SHLLs language abilities for the most accurate placement instead of using a diagnostic test or another informal assessment with no concise measurement criteria (Ascher, 1990, Beaudrie, 2012; MacGregor-Mendoza, 2012, 2011). The findings revealed that the major deficiency of the existing class
placement system consists of not having a specific rating system with delineated criteria that include and mirror the HLLs proficiency in the language domains.

Wilson’s (2012) evaluation on a previous placement exam also revealed that the main deficiencies were that it had not been submitted to item analysis and included items that did not discriminate and that created a lack of reliability by having the evaluators interview the students to arrive at a best guess method (p. 30). MacGregor- Mendoza (2011) analyzed the efficacy of the Spanish Placement Test (SPT) used for more than 15 years at New Mexico State University (NMSU), and one of the major findings was that that test did not appear to match the NMSU’s SHLL population, which also shed light on the relevance of this study’s findings that the same diagnostic questionnaire was used for more than 10 years without evaluating its efficacy in assessing high-school SHLLs language skills.

The findings of the post-focus teacher group interview revealed 11 major themes and three subthemes. The themes and subthemes indicated the benefits, challenges, and effectiveness of implementing the online Thompson’s (2015) survey and placement test instruments to place SHLLs at the high-school level. Among the themes and subthemes, some of themes primarily reflect the challenges and difficulties teachers and students faced due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the circumstances of doing distance learning. Four of the themes showed that the benefits and effectiveness of implementing the electronic version of Thompson’s (2015) modified survey and placement test consisted of having immediate and easy access to all students who had the necessary computer devices and Wi-Fi, a simple and easy survey format to follow and complete by SHLLs and getting instant results, the point scale and sample rubrics enhanced the equity across
the Spanish department in placing SHLLs in the correct class, and the bilingual (Spanish and English) instructions in both of the instruments to better assess SHLLs language usage and domains.

Seven of the themes revealed the challenges and difficulties faced by teachers and students while implementing the electronic version of Thompson’s (2015) survey and placement test and its level of effectiveness at the high-school level. Being unsupervised by the teachers, high-school students had issues using the online survey and placement test to start, complete, and submit it in a timely manner, students had access to online translators like Google Translate leading to faulty placement decisions, not having the necessary technology knowledge and skills typing in Spanish, not being able to collaborate across the Spanish department affected its effectiveness in placing SHLLs, the high level of students’ absences during distance learning created an inconsistency in administering the test and assessing all students’ language abilities in order to assign the correct Spanish placement, and the imbalance of grading all students’ placement tests among all Spanish teachers made it more challenging for Teacher A and B who mainly graded them by themselves creating a delay in efficiently placing students. The three subthemes revealed the need to create both instruments in alignment with school and district data system to enhance understanding other students’ data scores and educational plan, to add a zero score category in the Bilingual Skills scoring rubric to properly assess students’ who did not provide enough evidence or an answer in Spanish, and for the teachers to explain the rubrics explicitly to help students to understand the importance of taking a Spanish class placement test for academic achievement.
The addition of a point scale and sample rubrics in the implementation of the online Thompson’s (2015) survey and placement test was a salient theme of the post-focus teachers’ responses. It helped to establish a more equitable class placement system across the Spanish department. The findings of the quantitative part reinforce this finding in the qualitative part of the study because the different statistical analyses helped to differentiate the strengths and deficiencies of the high-school SHLLs language domains. The breakdown of mean differences in scores per section revealed the level of language awareness, bilingual skills, and writing composition skills for each of the existing SHL1, Pre-IB SHLL1, and SHL2 classes. The rating system also shed light on understanding the three class placement methodologies involved in this study, the existing class placement, the Survey of Language Usage and Thompson’s placement test. The use of the point scale rubric and sample rubric informed participating teachers of the SHLLs’ performance among the course levels and what possibly may be needed for curriculum development. Research on HLL emphasized that the crucial point for instructors and HL teachers is to understand SHLLs needs and value the proper procedures to design, pilot, implement and interpret the results of a heritage language test (Carreira & Kagan, 2011; Potowski et al., 2012).

The dichotomy of the qualitative theme of teachers’ collaboration as a strength from the prefocus group responses and as a deficiency from the postfocus teacher group responses highlighted that the effectiveness and success of the implementation of a placement test is due to a great extent to the collaboration and communication among the professionals within the language department. Findings on the prefocus teacher interview responses showed that collaboration among all teachers facilitated interrater validity on
assessing SHLLs and their class placement. That also enhanced the consistency of using
the same assessment and the accessibility for the teachers to administer and for the
students to take the assessment, however, that part was not possible during the
implementation of Thompson’s (2015) online survey and placement test due to a great
extent to the situation of distance learning because of the pandemic. Not having that part
created challenges for teachers and students to the extent that some students probably
used Google Translate to respond to the Bilingual Skills section on the placement test.
These findings could have led to faulty results in the study. Based on teachers’ responses,
there was a great sense of willingness to continue working to the best of their abilities to
improve for next year. That indicated the meaningfulness of the framework of language
ideologies, educational policy and pedagogical practice among this Spanish language
department to create a more reliable and equitable placement system (Leeman, 2012).

Conclusions

This study investigated how Thompson’s (2015) modified online Survey of
Language Usage and Spanish for Heritage Learners Program Placement Test effectively
could be used with three classes of Spanish HLLs at the high-school level to differentiate
HLLs’ use of Spanish inside and outside of the home and in their academic use of
Spanish. As the result of this study, the implementation of Thompson’s instruments at the
high-school level was found to provide greater understanding of the diverse complexity
of assessing the language domains, use, and proficiency of SHLLs. The findings of this
study will contribute to the body of research literature on heritage language placement
assessment at the high-school level.
Spanish heritage language learners have a distinctive funds of knowledge when using Spanish as a heritage language compared with second-language learners or native speakers. Their implicit knowledge of the heritage language (HL) distinguishes their proficiency and academic success when using it (Leeman, 2012; Montrul, 2010; Zyzik, 2016). The need to design proper placement assessments that accurately measure the language skills of SHLLs at the high-school level is more essential in an educational system that requires a foreign-language class in order to graduate (California Department of Education, 2019; SCUSD, 2019; Thompson, 2015). Although most of the research on HL and HL placement tests has been conducted at the college level, more research is needed at earlier grade levels to better understand the factors that influence the language development of HLLs and how to better measure their linguistic abilities when placing them in a HL class and to design appropriate SHLL classes and curriculum (Beaudrie & Ducar, 2012; Fishman, Valdés, Chávez, & Pérez, 2006; Montrul, 2011; Wilson, 2012).

One of the very first steps in designing placement tests for HLLs is the distinction between the language skills of HLLs and second language learners (Potowski, Parada & Morgan-Short, 2012). That distinction helps to create a different language program that better serves the language needs and strengths of the language learner. The findings of this study assist in better understanding the advantages of having separate language programs. The student participants of this study primarily were homogenous meaning that all or most of the participating students were SHLLs. In addition, these findings have valuable pedagogical implications for the maintenance of Spanish heritage language, curriculum development, and teacher preparation training in the heritage language.
The findings of this study contribute not only to the benefits of placement assessment for heritage language learners at the high-school level, but also in developing curriculum designed for the language abilities of the HLLs population. As indicated by participating teachers A and B, knowing where their SHLLs were linguistically and academically helped them to better prepare lesson planning as well as grouping the language learners to serve their language skills more accurately. Both teachers also reaffirmed the benefits they had with the training on the implementation of the survey and placement test and understanding how to use the rating rubrics when assessing their own students.

The implementation of electronic versions of Thompson’s modified Survey of Language Usage and Placement Test shed light on the different type of literacy skills that SHLLs have such as writing in Spanish, reading and understanding instructions, using their bilingual skills, and using technology to type in Spanish. The findings of the study show that high-school SHLLs also faced other challenges beyond that of language usage inside and outside their home and academics. Not having the technology skills using Spanish is another factor that could have had serious consequences when SHLLs took their placement test. Teacher A reported that some students expressed that they did not know how to type or add specific diacritic marks for their responses in Part II: Bilingual Skills and Writing Composition.

Measuring the language attitude of SHLLs may be a difficult area to accomplish in a placement test, especially during a pandemic when the academic setting is through distance learning. Although the results and findings of this study indicate that SHLLs have a strong connection using the HL with family members, which can be a motivation
to continue learning and using Spanish, some SHLLs may have a negative attitude
towards the HLL for different factors (Leeman, 2012; Nagano, Ketcham & Funk; 2019).
Their attitude and confidence may be hidden by sociocultural variables that could have
influenced their performance when taking the placement test (Jensen & Llosa, 2007).
These findings bring relevance when assessing their language skills. Participating
Teacher B pointed out that some of her students did not appear to understand the
importance of doing well on the placement test with regard to their overall academic
achievement at the high-school level. Not knowing the degree of seriousness and having
low confidence using the HL in an academic setting could have affected the results of the
study.

Heritage language placement tests identify the language abilities of the targeted
student population using different measures for the language domains. Research
emphasizes that in order for language placement tests to more accurately assess the
language abilities of the test takers, they need to be designed locally to address the
language skills and needs of the heritage population based on their geographical region,
language variety, and the curricular design of the specific language program (Alarcón,
2010; Beaudrie & Ducar, 2012; MacGregor-Mendoza, 2012; Potowski, Parada &
Morgan-Short, 2012; Thompson, 2015). Taking this suggestion into consideration may
help to better understand the findings of the disproportions of Thompson’s (2015) three
classifications based on the modified Survey of Language Usage for each of the three
SHLLs classes at the high-school level. These findings corroborate the importance of
considering the student population’s language skills and provide the foundation to have
follow-sequence for the SHLLs who participated in this study as suggested by Thompson’s (2015) study.

**Implications for Educational Practice**

Because of the rapidly growing Latino population and the continuously increasing number of Spanish speakers in the United States population, Spanish heritage language education needs to be implemented in all grade levels of the educational system to a greater extent (Bauman, 2017; Fairclough, 2012; Instituto de Cervantes, 2015; Scamman, 2018). Understanding the heritage language learners (HLL) profile brings relevance in differentiating learning and pedagogical practices that distinguish the linguistic skills of a second language learner from native language learners, and HLLs in a foreign-language classroom (Montrul & Perpiñán, 2011; Parra, 2013; Valdés, 1997). The findings of this study suggest implications for Spanish heritage language placement assessment design and implementation, differentiation of Spanish language programs as heritage language and second-language programs, educational practice by foreign-language teachers kindergarten through college level, curriculum design, assessing technology skills of the SHLLs when online instruments using Spanish, the new World Language Standards for California Public School and Seal of Biliteracy, and implications for policymakers.

Designing a placement assessment for heritage language learners requires knowing the specific language characteristics that the speaker possesses. The heritage language learner prototype model proposed by Zyzik (2016) includes the following six attributes (a) proficiency of the basic language cognition in the heritage language (HL), (b) ethnic and cultural connection to the HL, (c) dominance in language other than HL,
(d) implicit knowledge of HL, (e) bilingual skills, and (f) early experience to HL in home. Using Zyzik’s HLL profile in this study was important to the implementation of Thompson’s survey and placement test at the high-school level in consideration of all possible factors that may influence the assessing of SHLLs language skills. The inclusion of all types of HL speakers in the academic setting must reflect the assets that the HLL brings; therefore, in addition to Thompson’s original instruments, bilingual instructions are essential when designing a placement test for high-school SHLLs. As stated before, the language variations of SHLL in the context of the United States mirrors what speakers do in their local communities, which are comprised of diverse speakers of Spanish (Pascual y Cabo & Wilson, 2019). Teachers, test developers, and test raters must keep in mind that the correctness of the use of a language is a social construct that does not necessarily measure to the greatest extent language skills of a language user. The incorporation of the linguistic profile of SHLL into the placement test increases the validity and reliability of the instrument.

Because of the convenience sample of this study, the sample population in the study was homogenous and, therefore, differentiating the HLLs and L2s was not necessary. The importance of differentiating the linguistic abilities between SHLLs and L2s, however, must be a priority in creating language programs for HLLs and L2s. Making this distinction encourages more equitable language programs that provide the language learners greater access to increase their language skills and provide teachers greater opportunities to focus on specific language teaching methodologies that deliver the curriculum in a more effective and efficient manner. Students and educators have their own attitude towards language varieties and needs and creating language programs
that resemble their own strengths and needs contributes to creating an environment that empowers each individual in their own language learning trajectory.

The results of a placement test measure the test taker’s knowledge skills and informs where the test taker is in terms of his or her knowledge with the specific subject matter. The findings of this study informed about SHLLs language usage inside and outside of their home and academic settings, their Spanish skills in language awareness, translation skills from English to Spanish, and their writing skills in Spanish describing a personal experience. The placement test results provide considerable information to guide curriculum design and development that reflect the funds of knowledge of the HLLs and that value their participation in the learning community of HLLs. Carreira and Kagan (2011) suggested that HLLs bring the home and community language and attitudes, including cultural stereotypes, into the classroom; thus, a classroom that either negates the value of the students’ background language knowledge acquisitions or ignores it cannot be efficient for those students. The relevance of HL curriculum must be based on what motivates HLLs to embrace their HL and learning process. Kagan (2005) claimed that using heritage students’ motivations for learning the language is a guiding principle for materials selection and curriculum design. Participating Teachers A and B reaffirmed that principle by using the placement test results as a guidance for their curriculum.

The findings of this study based on the responses of the participating teachers illustrated that the technology skills of the SHLLs must be assessed prior to giving online instruments that use Spanish. Learning about the different types of literacies that the high-school SHLLs may or may not have is imperative before implementing an online survey or placement test. Students at the high-school in which this study was conducted
come with a great variety of socioeconomic and literacy background knowledge. The findings of the teachers’ responses showed that some SHLLs did not have the necessary technology skills to properly use a computer or type in Spanish. Some of the SHLLs did not even have access to Wi-Fi and had to use their cell phone devices, if they had one, to take the survey and placement instruments. Heritage language teachers need to assure that HLLs have the necessary tools, resources, and abilities to be able to take the placement assessment under the given circumstances.

The State of California has developed the *World Languages Standards for California Public Schools, Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve*, which intend to provide guidance to teachers, administrators, students, parents and the community at large in implementing World Languages programs for California’s diverse student population and ensure successful entry at any point in the curriculum from kindergarten through grade level twelve (California State Board of Education, 2019). The new standards acknowledge the great contribution of the diverse heritage language communities in the state and classroom settings by supporting biliteracy and multilingual education through the concentration of three components: (a) communication, (b) culture, and (c) connection. The standards also promote and support the pathways for K to 12th grade students to attain the California State Seal of Biliteracy at the high-school exit. Although, the standards do not delineate necessarily explicit guidance and support for heritage language learning and instructions, it does mention the need for differentiated instruction for students with differing ranges of proficiency and discipline-specific knowledge and skills to access the core curriculum as well as the required assessments for heritage and native learners that determine appropriate placement in the sequence and access to
essential parts of the core curriculum should they need it (California State Board of Education, 2019, pp. 24-25). This study offers explicit guidance and support on how to differentiate the linguistic needs of HLLs and native learners through the implementation of two placement systems supported by the literature on heritage language.

The creation and implementation of heritage language education may not be possible to a greater extent without the support and educational policy that need to be provided by policymakers at the local, state, and national level. California and Sacramento Unified School District (SCUSD) require at least one year of foreign-language class in order to graduate from high-school, and even when the high percentage of SHLLs, there is not much support for the HL programs in Spanish (California Department of Education, 2019; SCUSD, 2019). This study identifies the need for implementing heritage language standards at the state and local educational level by providing guidance and support to all stakeholders involved in the learning, instruction, and maintenance of heritage language.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

The findings of this study suggest several lines of inquiry about the teaching and learning of a heritage language. There is a scarcity of empirical research on the development and procedures of placement tests for Spanish heritage language learners at the high-school level. Using Thompson’s modified online survey and placement test with high-school SHLLs will add to the body of literature. The findings of the study may not be generalized to other foreign-language departments that do not offer a program for Spanish as a heritage language at the high-school level. It is recommended, though, to differentiate the linguistic abilities of the language learners that are being served. This
study was conducted in a public high-school with 9th-through 12th-grade level Spanish heritage language learners implementing distance learning due COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, it is recommended that future studies replicate or complement the current study under different learning settings to compare findings.

Most of the research conducted on heritage language placement assessment has been at the college level. Future research in the field needs to focus on the proper heritage language placement of high-school language learners to better provide guidelines to design curriculum for HLLs that meet their language proficiencies and sociocultural needs. Therefore, it is recommended that placement instruments be developed with the best interest of the local HLL community considering their language knowledge reflecting and enhancing the authenticity of the academic context (MacGregor-Mendoza, 2012). The reflection of SHLLs skills and knowledge on the placement test validates the HLLs identity and deepens their connection with their cultural roots and, very importantly, with their academic settings for greater achievement growth. This study can be of great contribution to the online Heritage Language Journal emphasizing on HLL at the high-school level.

The results from the different heritage language surveys and placement tests at the community college or 4-year university level have illustrated the need to develop HLL placement measures that are informed by current research (Beaudrie, 2011; Carreira, 2011; Fairclough, 2012; Fishman et al., 2006; MacGregor-Mendoza, 2012; Nagano et al., 2019; Wilson, 2012). Therefore, it is recommended that the development of heritage language placement tests for high-school HLLs must be informed and guided by the body of literature in the field and supported by their findings. Learning about HLL
profiles, language awareness, language usage, language attitude, and general academic knowledge may provide insightful information when developing the items for the placement test. Examining formal writing tasks may create limitations on a placement test for SHLLs because of HLLs lack of higher language cognition (Beaudrie, 2011; Hulstijn, 2011; Montrul, 2010).

The connection with culture plays a crucial role in SHLLs regardless of their age or grade level. That connection to their culture motivates them to maintain and transmit meaning to their heritage language experience and skills. Culture is expressed through the linguistic skills of speakers of all languages. In the development of a heritage language placement for SHLLs, culture needs to be represented through idiomatic or phrasal expressions that better capture the oral, aural, and pragmatic knowledge that SHLLs possess in order to evaluate them with more accuracy (Carreira, 2012; Zyzik, 2016).

Generational differences among SHLLs differentiate their linguistic skills, and their cultural connection varies as well because the level of contact with the HL changes (Nagano et al., 2019). Valdés (2001) emphasized that the linguistic repertoires of immigrants range from upper-middle-class individuals to lower-ranked groups with a broad range of language registers including varieties appropriate for those situations in academia in which oral language reflects the hyperliteracy of its speakers and including those who have had little access to formal education who are much narrower in range and normally do not interact easily with hyperliterate discourse. When designing a placement test for SHLLs at the high-school level, it is recommended to assess the variability of the HL and the meaning and connection with their culture. The SHLL population where this study was conducted is a mixed group varying from recent immigrants to second-or third-
generation SHLLs. Their cultural experience using Spanish varies because of language contact under different situations inside and outside of their home and their academic level.

Last, bilingual skills are a very important factor that must be considered in the development of a placement test for HLLs. Living in the United States, having contact with English and Spanish is inevitable being that these are the first and second most spoken languages in the US. As Zyzik’s (2016) prototype model suggests, the bilingual language profile of an HLL needs to be incorporated. The bilingualism of different HLL generations is complex and diverse. Valdés (2001) highlighted that the high registers of English are used to carry out all formal and high-level exchanges, while heritage languages and the informal registers of English are used as the low variety appropriate primarily for casual, informal interactions. The bilingual skills of heritage language learners tell socioeconomic, academic, and linguistic stories that must be reflected when assessing their languages.

Afterword

Having taught Spanish as second language acquisition and heritage language for more than 10 years in the same high school prior to entering to the doctoral program gave me the experience to learn how to advocate for the resources needed to meet the language learners needs. As I continued working with Spanish heritage language learners, I began to notice linguistic phenomena on how the students were using their Spanish skills, which I did not know how to interpret or understand because as an English learner myself, I did not have the basic language cognition skills in English I needed to comprehend. It created a high level of curiosity to be able to understand how and why my students were using
their own Spanish language skills with a mixture of English structure, syntax, and semantics, and the outdated textbooks I was using did not necessarily explain their language competencies.

Thus, I decided to embark on my journey in a doctoral program to learn what that linguistic phenomena were about and how and why it happened among the Spanish heritage language learners. I also was interested in learning why some SHLLs were proud and thrived in their Spanish cultivation whereas others expressed no desire or interest in it and sometimes seemed that they were embarrassed by knowing Spanish. Heritage language education at the high-school level is a field that has not been explored much, and there is the need for much more research in this area. My experience with this research has taught me that one of the very first steps is to assess SHLLs language skills to provide the most accurate course placement and curriculum that helps enhance students’ language abilities, motivation, interest in Spanish, academic progress, cultural connection, and more.

The value of heritage language education and language assessment lies in understanding the language attributes and profile of the heritage language user. The assessment of the HLLs’ capabilities and competencies provides the fundamental knowledge and purpose for who, what, and how the assessment is being made, and to determine the next steps in developing learning goals, learning outcomes, instructional, and curricular goals. This study followed Zyzik’s (2016) foundational attributes of heritage language learner profiles and definitions recommended by most of the heritage language research such as early exposure to the heritage language in the home, proficiency in the heritage language, bilingual to some degree, dominance in a language
other than the heritage language, ethnic or cultural connection to the heritage language, and implicit knowledge. Zyzik’s prototype model served as a theoretical guidance to establish a deeper understanding of the proficiencies and membership of Spanish HLLs for this study.

In addition to the six attributes proposed by Zyzik’s (2016) Prototype Model for the Heritage Language Learner (HLL), and based on the findings of this study, I have added another attribute that will help to deepen the understanding of the Spanish HLL prototype for high-school. The new and seventh attribute is technology literacy in Spanish. The findings of this research indicated that high-school Spanish HLLs have basic or limited knowledge on how to use computer technology in Spanish, for example, they seemed to have zero to limited typing skills. That causes limitations when giving an online language placement test for not being able to add diacritical marks to accentuated words.

Test takers for this study reported verbally to teachers administering the test that they did not know how to add accent marks (á, é, í, ó, ú or ñ) to some of the vocabulary words they were using while taking the placement test. Some other students, however, did not have general technology literacy at all. Therefore, in order to create a fairer and more equitable placement system for Spanish HLLs, it is necessary and relevant to consider this new attribute (Figure 2). Thus, teachers teaching Spanish heritage language learners also need to add as part of their lesson planning and curriculum the technology literacy skills to enhance the needed technology skills in Spanish using different computer software programs.
During the process of deciding on the specific topic for my writing dissertation, I wanted to be able to help my Spanish HLL community as much as possible. I felt like I was all over the place. Then, I learned that part of the problem was not having a structured and formal class placement system with any type of written rubric criteria and measurement. What we had in our Spanish department was more of an organic method that the teachers used based on their personal knowledge, experience, and instinct. As a test developer, I find it very important to create meaningful relationships with all the stakeholders involved in the process of establishing a heritage language program. As a researcher and assessment developer, I have the added benefit of having worked as a full time Spanish teacher in the same institution for more than 15 years, which is important to consider because that gave me the advantage of knowing the administrators, counselors, and my Spanish teacher colleagues. We all worked together on the vision to create a Spanish program for Spanish native speakers, as we called it at the beginning. I have become well familiarized with the SHLLs population, and on several occasions, I have had the opportunity to work with the SHLLs parents in providing different workshops,

*Figure 2. Zyzik’s (2016) Modified Prototype Model for High-School SHLL*
cultural and educational events, and other extracurricular activities. As the chair of the World Language Department, I also work closely with the Spanish and Hmong teachers. Through collaboration within our department, we share the vision to work together to meet our students’ linguistic abilities to the best of our abilities.

Figure 3 encapsulates an interconnected process that includes the test developer, professionals, and students needed to execute a plan to create and establish an institutionalized program for Spanish heritage learners at the high-school level, which can guide and inform the process from class placement to creating learning goals.

![Figure 3. Interconnectedness to establish a high-school Spanish heritage language program](image)

Each of the four inner circles represent different processes needed to establish the Spanish heritage language program at the high-school level. The first inner circle has the
test developer, HLLs’ skills, test takers, placement assessment, and type of platform which will be explained next. It is essential for the test developer to know who the test takers are and know to what heritage language skills they may possess, their age, and the generation of HLLs that they belong to, because that may provide information about the language contact. For that reason, having the Survey of Language Usage can help not only to differentiate the type of language learner but also to know and provide better guidance in developing or modifying the placement assessment. The intention is to create a local placement assessment that accurately assesses the language abilities of the SHLL population to establish a fairer and more equitable system for the students, uses of rubrics, such as sample, holistic, or analytical, to aid in the accurate assessment of their language skills. It also is crucial to decide which platform to use to administer the placement assessment based on the students’ resources and abilities, for example, whether it will be an online or paper-and-pencil placement assessment. And, very importantly, before administering the placement assessment, the SHLLs should be informed about the importance of the placement assessment on their academic progress and educational goals.

The second inner circle represents the importance for teachers, counselors, and administrators to be trained and informed about who the HLLs are, the purpose of the placement test, the content, and the type of support and understanding that is needed to create a sustainable and equitable system. There is no doubt that teachers will play a key role in administering and evaluating the placement assessment, and for that reason, they need all the possible support and understanding of this process from school administrators and other colleagues. Having mutual understanding and support from all
parties is necessary to deepen the funds of knowledge of the learning community the institution is serving, that must be aligned with the global vision and mission of the language department, interdepartmental groups, and the institution as a whole.

The third inner circle represents the assessment results, which provide a deeper level of understanding of the language production and skills of the test takers. The assessment results, as well as the rubrics utilized, are for more than learning measurement because they become teaching and learning tools. The results inform where the heritage language learner (HLL) is in terms of language knowledge, usage, production, and needs. They guide teachers in decision making on placing the HLLs, type of HLL, classroom grouping, and designing the learning goals and curriculum content that better serve and meet the language abilities and development for the HLLs. This third inner circle becomes the informant for the procedures needed to identify the type of HLL, the fourth inner circle, and to develop the learning goals and curriculum.

The fourth inner circle, learning goals and curriculum are created based on the results of the placement assessment and by knowing what type of HLLs were tested. As heritage language and assessment research indicate, the learning goals and curriculum need to be designed and aligned based on language skills and awareness of the HLLs. The performance of the HLLs show their proficiency and deficiencies on difference language components such as the grammatical aspects, implicit and explicit language knowledge, bilingual and writing skills.

Each of the inner circles represents a series of processes and the collaboration of the learning community members needed to build and establish a sustainable and equitable heritage language program that empowers and uplifts HLLs by including their
cultural and linguistic values and attributes. Carreira (2007) argued that Spanish-for-native-speakers instruction at the secondary level can play a key role in narrowing the Latino achievement gap. I have no doubt that when there are well designed heritage language programs at an early age, the heritage language becomes a learning tool that connects the learning content with more relevance that improves the educational growth. The inclusion of the SHLLs’ contribution to the learning goals, curricular content and the whole learning community may add a meaningful purpose of belonging.
REFERENCES


APPENDIXES
Appendix A

Parental Consent of Student Participants (English)
September 8, 2020

Dear Parent/Guardian of Spanish Heritage Language Student,

You have been asked to grant permission to use your child’s Spanish heritage language placement test scores taken during the second week of Fall 2020 in a research study conducted by Elizabeth Villanueva, a Spanish Teacher at Luther Burbank and a doctoral candidate in the Department of Learning and Instruction at the University of San Francisco. The faculty supervisor for this study is Dr. Patricia Busk, a professor in the same department.

I am conducting an evaluation study of Thompson’s (2015) placement test for Spanish heritage speakers to be used with students in Pre-International Baccalaureate Spanish for Heritage Language Speakers I, Spanish I for Heritage Language Speakers I, and Spanish for Heritage Language Speakers II at the beginning of the academic year 2020-2021. Your child is being selected to participate in this study because he or she is enrolled in one of the classes where the study will take place.

Elizabeth Villanueva, researcher, is requesting permission to use your child’s test score for this study. The study will take place at the beginning of the Fall semester of 2020. The duration of the test will be from 60 to 90 minutes. It will be administered by the Spanish class teacher. There are no risks or discomfort to your child at this time as the placement test is similar to tests that the student would take during the school year. If you do not wish me to use your child’s test score, I will not do so. Your child will benefit from the placement test as the scores will be used to make certain that she or he is in the correct course for Spanish heritage speakers. My use of the test scores for this dissertation research will not benefit your child; however, the possible benefits to others include an improved understanding about the use of placement tests for Spanish heritage speakers at the high-school level. Based on the results of the placement test, teachers may make the recommendation for the student to stay in the class or change to a L2 or upper Spanish HL class level.

Your child’s anonymity will be maintained in the reporting of the study. All identifying information about your child will be removed from the list of placement test scores. No one reading the results of the research will be able to identify any individuals who participated. There is no payment or other form of compensation for using your child’s test scores in this study.

Please ask any questions you have before signing this consent form. If you have questions at a later date, feel free to contact me at via email at  or call me at . If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a participant in this study, you may contact the University of San Francisco Institutional Review Board at IRBPHS@usfca.edu.
I HAVE READ THE ABOVE INFORMATION. ANY QUESTIONS I HAVE ASKED HAVE BEEN ANSWERED. I AGREE TO HAVE MY CHILD’S PLACEMENT TEST SCORES USED IN THIS RESEARCH PROJECT AND I WILL RECEIVE A COPY OF THIS CONSENT FORM.

Parent Signature __________________________ Date __________

Child’s Name __________________________

Researcher Signature __________________________ Date __________
Appendix B

Parental Consent of Student Participants (Spanish)
8 de septiembre de 2020

Querido/a padre, madre o tutor/a de estudiante de español de herencia,

Se le pide conceder permiso de usar los resultados de su hijo/a del examen de ubicación que tomará durante la segunda semana del semestre de otoño de 2020 en un estudio de investigación realizado por Elizabeth Villanueva, la maestra de español en la Preparatoria Luther Burbank y candidata a un doctorado en el Departamento de Aprendizaje e Instrucción de la Universidad de San Francisco. La supervisora de la facultad para este estudio es la Dra. Patricia Busk, profesora en el mismo departamento.

Yo estoy realizando un estudio de evaluación del examen de ubicación para aprendices del español como hablantes de herencia, el cual se implementará con los estudiantes de las materias de español de Pre-Bachillerato Internacional nivel I, español para hablantes de herencia nivel I y nivel II al inicio del año escolar 2020-2021. Su hijo/a ha sido seleccionado/a para participar en este estudio porque está matriculado/a en una de estas clases donde se llevará a cabo la investigación.

Elizabeth Villanueva, la investigadora, pide su permiso para usar los resultados del examen de ubicación de su hijo/a en este estudio de investigación. Nuevamente, el estudio se llevará a cabo al inicio del semestre de otoño del 2020. La duración del examen será de 60 a 90 minutos. Será administrado por la maestra de la clase. Hasta ahora no se sabe de ningún riesgo o desasosiego que pueda ocasionar a su hijo/a ya que el examen es similar a otros exámenes que su hijo/a tome durante el año escolar. Si usted no desea que yo utilice los resultados del examen de su hijo/a, yo no lo haré. Su hijo/a se beneficiará del examen de ubicación, ya que los resultados se utilizarán para asegurarse que él o ella estén en la clase correcta de español para hablantes de herencia. El uso de los resultados del examen en mi investigación de la disertación no beneficiarán a su hijo/a; sin embargo, los posible beneficios para otras personas incluye un mejor entendimiento acerca del uso de los exámenes de ubicación para los aprendices de español como hablantes de herencia a nivel preparatoria. Basándose a los resultados del examen de ubicación, las maestras podrán recomendar a su hijo/a quedarse en la clase o cambiársela a una clase de español como segundo idioma o un nivel más alto de español para hablantes de herencia.

El anonimato de su hijo/a se mantendrá en el reporte del estudio de investigación. Toda información que pueda identificar a su hijo/a se quitará de la lista de los resultados del examen de ubicación. Ninguna información de los resultados de la investigación podrá identificar a los individuos que hayan participado. No habrá ningún tipo de pago u otro tipo de compensación por el uso de los resultados del examen de ubicación de su hijo en este estudio de investigación.

Por favor haga cualquier pregunta que tenga antes de firmar este documento de consentimiento. Si tiene alguna pregunta después, puede contactarme a mi correo electrónico Elizabeth-Villanueva@scusd.edu o llamarme a mi teléfono móvil al . Si tiene cualquier pregunta o consternación acerca de los derechos
como un participante en este estudio de investigación, usted puede contactar a la Directiva del Consejo Institucional (Institutional Review Board) de la Universidad de San Francisco al correo electrónico IRBPHS@usfca.edu.

YO HE LEÍDO LA INFORMACIÓN DADA. CUALQUIER PREGUNTA QUE YO HE TENIDO HA SIDO CONTESTADA. ESTOY DE ACUERDO EN QUE LOS RESULTADOS DEL EXAMEN DE UBICACIÓN DE MI HIJO/A SE UTILICEN EN ESTE ESTUDIO DE INVESTIGACIÓN Y RECIBIRÉ UNA COPIA DE ESTE DOCUMENTO DE CONSENTIMIENTO.

________________________________________________________________________
Firma del padre/ de la madre o tutor/a __________________________ Fecha __________

Nombre de su hijo/a: __________________________

________________________________________________________________________
Firma de la investigadora __________________________ Fecha __________
Appendix C

Parent Letter of Consent (English)
September 8, 2020

Dear Parent/Guardian of Spanish Heritage Language Student,

I am both a Spanish teacher at Luther Burbank High and I am currently a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at the University of San Francisco. As part of my degree requirements, I am conducting a study on a placement test for Spanish heritage speakers.

Although all students are required to take the placement test, participation in this study, which consists of allowing the researcher to use the placement test results as anonymous data in the study is entirely voluntary. The participants’ identities will be kept anonymous, and the results will remain confidential and in a secure location. The consent letters will be kept in a secure envelop in a secure location until after grades have been posted. All identifying information from your test will be removed before any analysis is done. Whether you consent or not to the study will not be known to your teacher or affect your grade in any way.

Your signature on the enclosed consent letter indicates that you acknowledge and authorize your placement test scores to be included anonymously in the study.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Villanueva
Doctoral Candidate
School of Education
University of San Francisco
Contact e-mail: ___________________________
Contact phone number:
Consent for Research

My signature below indicates that I acknowledge and authorize Elizabeth Villanueva to use my placement test scores in her study on a placement test for Spanish heritage speakers. I have been given a copy of this consent form.

______________________________________________________________________
Parent’s Name

Parent’s Signature __________________________ Date ____________

Researcher Signature __________________________ Date ____________
Appendix D

Parent Letter of Consent (Spanish)
8 de septiembre de 2020

Querido/a padre, madre o tutor/a de estudiante de español de herencia,

Soy Elizabeth Villanueva, la maestra de español en la Preparatoria y candidata a un doctorado en el Departamento de Aprendizaje e Instrucción de la Universidad de San Francisco. Como parte de los requisitos de mi doctorado, estoy realizando una investigación sobre un examen de ubicación de español para hablantes de herencia.

Aunque es requerido para todos los estudiantes tomar el examen de ubicación, la participación en este estudio de investigación, el cual consiste en permitir a la investigadora utilizar los resultados del examen de ubicación como datos anónimos en el estudio es completamente voluntaria. Las identidades de los participantes se mantendrán anónimas, y los resultados se mantendrán de manera confidencial en un lugar seguro. La carta de consentimiento se mantendrá segura en un sobre en un lugar seguro hasta que las calificaciones hayan sido anunciadas. Toda información referente a su identidad será borrada de su examen antes de que se haya cualquier análisis. Ya sea que dé su consentimiento o no para la investigación, su maestra no se notificará o de ninguna manera afectará tu calificación.

Su firma anexa a este documento de consentimiento indica que reconoce y autoriza que los resultados del examen de ubicación de su hijo/a sean incluidos de manera anónima en el estudio de la investigación.

Atentamente,

Elizabeth Villanueva
Candidata a doctorado
Escuela de educación
Universidad de San Francisco
Correo electrónico: ________________
Número de teléfono móvil:
Consentimiento para el estudio de la investigación

Mi firma indica que reconozco y autorizo a Elizabeth Villanueva a utilizar mis resultados del examen de ubicación de mi hijo/a en su estudio sobre el examen de ubicación de español para hablantes de herencia. Se me ha dado una copia de este consentimiento.

____________________________
Nombre del padre/la madre o tutor/a

____________________________
Firma del padre/la madre o tutor/a Fecha

____________________________
Firma de la investigadora Fecha
Appendix E

Student Letter of Consent (English)
September 8, 2020

Dear Spanish Heritage Language Student,

I am both a Spanish teacher at Luther Burbank High and a doctoral candidate in the Department of Learning and Instruction at the University of San Francisco. As part of my degree requirements, I am conducting a study on a placement test for Spanish heritage speakers.

Although all students are required to take the placement test, participation in this study, which consists of allowing the researcher to use the placement test results as anonymous data in the study is entirely voluntary. The participants’ identities will be kept anonymous, and the results will remain confidential and in a secure location. The consent letters will be kept in a secure envelop in a secure location until after grades have been posted. All identifying information from your test will be removed before any analysis is done. Whether you consent or not to the study will not be known to your teacher or affect your grade in any way.

Your signature on the enclosed consent letter indicates that you acknowledge and authorize your placement test scores to be included anonymously in the study.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Villanueva
Doctoral Candidate
School of Education
University of San Francisco
Contact e-mail: ______________________
Contact phone number:
Consent for Research

My signature below indicates that I acknowledge and authorize Elizabeth Villanueva to use my placement test scores in her study on a placement test for Spanish heritage speakers. I have been given a copy of this consent form.

______________________________________________________________________
Student’s Name

______________________________________________________________________
Student’s Signature                          Date

______________________________________________________________________
Researcher Signature                          Date
Appendix F

Student Letter of Consent (Spanish)
8 de septiembre de 2020

Querido/a estudiante de español de herencia,

Soy Elizabeth Villanueva, la maestra de español en la Preparatoria y candidata a un doctorado en el Departamento de Aprendizaje e Instrucción de la Universidad de San Francisco. Como parte de los requisitos de mi doctorado, estoy realizando una investigación sobre un examen de ubicación de español para hablantes de herencia.

Aunque es requerido para todos los estudiantes tomar el examen de ubicación, la participación en este estudio de investigación, el cual consiste en permitir a la investigadora utilizar los resultados del examen de ubicación como datos anónimos en el estudio es completamente voluntaria. Las identidades de los participantes se mantendrán anónimas, y los resultados se mantendrán de manera confidencial en un lugar seguro. La carta de consentimiento se mantendrá segura en un sobre en un lugar seguro hasta que las calificaciones hayan sido anunciadas. Toda información referente a su identidad será borrada de su examen antes de que se haya cualquier análisis. Ya sea que des tu consentimiento o no para la investigación, su maestra no se notificará o de ninguna manera afectará tu calificación.

Tu firma anexa a este documento de consentimiento indica que reconoces y autorizas que tus resultados del examen de ubicación sean incluidos de manera anónima en el estudio de la investigación.

Atentamente,

Elizabeth Villanueva
Candidata a doctorado
Escuela de educación
Universidad de San Francisco
Correo electrónico: ________________________
Número de teléfono móvil:
Consentimiento para el estudio de la investigación

Mi firma indica que reconozco y autorizo a Elizabeth Villanueva a utilizar mis resultados del examen de ubicación en su estudio sobre el examen de ubicación de español para hablantes de herencia. Se me ha dado una copia de este consentimiento.

____________________________________________________________________
Nombre del estudiante

Firma del estudiante ___________________________ Fecha ______________

Firma de la investigadora ___________________________ Fecha ______________
Appendix G

Teacher Consent for Research Participation
September 8, 2020

Dear Mrs. ______________.

I am both a Spanish teacher at ______________ and I am currently a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at the University of San Francisco. I am conducting an evaluation study of Thompson’s (2015) placement test for Spanish heritage speakers to be used with students in Pre-International Baccalaureate Spanish for Heritage Language Speakers I, Spanish I for Heritage Language Speakers I, and Spanish for Heritage Language Speakers II at the beginning of the academic year 2020-2021. You are being selected as a teacher to participate in this study because of your position as a Spanish teacher.

The procedures for this study will take place during your Spanish language period. By agreeing to participate in this study, you are asked to fulfill the following research components:

1. Administering Thompson’s (2015) placement test, during the second week of the school year. The placement test will take approximately 60-90 minutes.
2. Participating in a short training session on the use of the rubric and establishing interrater reliability.
3. Scoring the short composition using the rubric.

It is unlikely that you will be in an uncomfortable position. During the placement test, students may have difficulties and try to ask for help. In order to obtain a clear picture of student knowledge before instruction, assistance on actual test questions may not be given. There is no direct benefit to you for participating in this study. However, you may gain a more complete understanding of beneficial instructional approaches using multimedia. There will be no cost to you for participating in this study. No monetary reimbursement will be given to you for participating in this study.

If you have questions or comments regarding this study, first contact the researcher, Elizabeth Villanueva, by calling at ______________. If for some reason you do not wish to do so, you may contact the University of San Francisco Institutional Review Board at IRBPHS@usfca.edu.

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you agree to participate, please sign and return as soon as possible.

Thank you,

Doctoral Candidate
School of Education
University of San Francisco
Contact e-mail: __________________________
Contact phone number:
I HAVE READ THE ABOVE INFORMATION. ANY QUESTIONS I HAVE ASKED HAVE BEEN ANSWERED. I AGREE TO ADMINISTER THE PLACEMENT TEST, PARTICIPATE IN THE TRAINING SESSION FOR SCORING THE SHORT COMPOSITIONS, AND FOR SCORING THE SHORT COMPOSITIONS.

_____________________________________________  ________________________
Teacher signature                                Date

_____________________________________________
Researcher signature
Appendix H

Principal Letter
September 8, 2020

Dear Principal

I am formally requesting as a doctoral candidate at the University of San Francisco for consent to conduct research on a placement test for Spanish heritage speakers in Fall of 2020. During the second week of classes, students in Pre-IB Spanish for HLLs I, Spanish for HLLs I, and Spanish for HLLs II will be administered the placement test by their teacher. Students whose parents have consented for my using the placement test scores for my dissertation research will be asked to consent to my using their test scores as well. Students may opt out via a letter of consent should they not want their data included in the study. Their participation will be voluntary, and their information will be anonymous and kept in a secure location. I will obtain permission from the district to conduct my dissertation research and from the Institutional Research Board at University of San Francisco for this study. I hope you will give your consent to conduct this research study.

Thank you, in advance, for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Villanueva
Doctoral Candidate
School of Education
University of San Francisco
Contact Email: ________________
Contact phone number:
Appendix I

Principal’s Letter for Elizabeth Villanueva
5/11/2020

To Whom It May Concern:

My signature below indicates that I acknowledge and authorize Elizabeth Villanueva to request permission from parents of students and students in Pre-IB for HLLs I, Spanish for HLLs I, and Spanish for HLLs II to use their Survey of Language Usage and Placement Test scores for her dissertation research. I also hereby give permission for this study to be conducted on school grounds.

Principal
High SSchool
Appendix J

Modified Survey of Language Usage
Survey of Language Usage/Encuesta del uso del lenguaje

Please indicate your previous experience with the Spanish language by answering the following questions.

Por favor indica tu experiencia previa con el lenguaje de español contestando las siguientes preguntas.

* Required

Email address *

Write your student ID number / Escriban su número de identificación estudiantil.

1. As a child, I spoke Spanish frequently in the home. De niño/a, yo hablaba español con frecuencia en mi casa. *
   *Mark only one oval.*
   Yes/Sí
   No/No

2. As a child, I heard Spanish frequently in the home. De niño/á, yo escuchaba español con frecuencia en mi casa. *
   *Mark only one oval.*
   Yes/Sí
   No/No

3. As a child, I spoke Spanish frequently outside the home. De niño/a, yo hablaba español con frecuencia fuera de mi casa. *
   *Mark only one oval.*
   Yes/Sí
   No/No

4. As a child, I lived in a Spanish speaking country for two years or longer. De niño (a), yo viví en un país de habla española por dos años o más. *
   *Mark only one oval.*
   Yes/Sí
   No/No
5. I speak Spanish or both English and Spanish when speaking with my parents. Yo hablo español o inglés y español cuando hablo con mis padres/madres. *
Mark only one oval.
Yes/Sí
No/No

6. My parents often speak to me in Spanish. Mis padres/madres a menudo me hablan en español. *
Mark only one oval.
Yes/Sí
No/No

7. My grandparents often speak to me in Spanish. Mis abuelos/abuelas a menudo me hablan en español. *
Mark only one oval.
Yes/Sí
No/No

8. I speak Spanish when talking to my neighbors and/or relatives. Yo hablo en español cuando hablo con mis vecinos(as) y/o familiares. *
Mark only one oval.
Yes/Sí
No/No

9. I speak Spanish when talking with my friends. Yo hablo en español cuando hablo con mis amigos (as). *
Mark only one oval.
Yes/Sí
No/No

10. At least 30% of my television viewing/radio listening is in Spanish. Por lo menos, veo y/o escucho el 30% de televisión y radio en español. *
Mark only one oval.
Yes/Sí
No/No

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Appendix K

Modified Spanish for Heritage Learners Program Placement Exam
* Required

Email address *

Write your Student ID number. / Escribe tu número de identificación estudiantil *

Write your grade level. / Escribe tu grado. *

Check all that apply.

9th grade / 9o grado
10th grade / 10o grado
11th grade / 11o grado
12th grade / 12o grado
Other:

Write sex gender. / Escribe tu género. *

Check all that apply.

Female / Mujer
Male / Hombre
Transgender / Transgénero
Non-binary / No binario

Part I – Language Awareness / Parte I - Conciencia del uso del lenguaje

Instructions: You will see 10 questions. Indicate either Spanish or English how you would respond to each of these questions.

Instrucciones: Verás las siguientes 10 preguntas. Indica ya sea en español o inglés cómo tú responderías a cada una de estas preguntas.

1. ¿De dónde eres? *

Check all that apply.

Spanish / español
English / inglés

2. ¿Cuántos años tienes? *

Check all that apply.

Spanish / español
English / inglés

3. ¿Cuál es tu película favorita? *

Check all that apply.

Spanish / español
English / inglés

4. ¿Cómo te llamas? *

Check all that apply.

Spanish / español
English / inglés

5. ¿Adónde fuiste con tus amigos esta mañana? *
Check all that apply.
Spanish / español
English / inglés
6. ¿Vas a tomar clases de español en la escuela? *
Mark only one oval.
Spanish / español
English / inglés
7. ¿Qué autobús agarras para llegar a la escuela? *
Check all that apply.
Spanish / español
English / inglés
8. ¿Cómo te fue en tus clases este año? *
Mark only one oval.
Spanish / español
English / inglés
9. ¿Cuánto tiempo hace que vives en Sacramento? *
Mark only one oval.
Spanish / español
English / inglés
10. ¿Dónde dejaste las llaves del carro? *
Check all that apply.
Spanish / español
English / inglés

Part II – Bilingual Skills Parte II - Habilidades bilingües
Instructions: Translate the following sentences from English to Spanish.
Instrucciones: Traduce las siguientes oraciones del inglés al español.

1. We had a good time at the party. *

2. I promised to call her back, but then I forgot. *

3. I don’t like it when people bring their cell phones to the movies. *

4. He doesn’t believe that we have done the homework. *

5. I don’t think that she has ever gone to Mexico. *

6. I used to buy my mother flowers on her birthday. *
7. I ran into my old teacher while I was shopping.

Part III – Writing Skills Parte III - Habilidades de escritura

Instructions: Choose ONE of the following topics and write a short composition in Spanish. Be as descriptive as possible.

Instrucciones: Escoge UNA de los siguientes temas y escribe una composición corta en español. Sé lo más descriptivo posible.

1. El día de tu graduación de la escuela secundaria (middle school).

2. La mejor experiencia de tu vida.

3. Un viaje que hiciste.

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Appendix L

Survey and Placement Test Rating Point System
### Survey and Placement Test Rating Point System

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classes</th>
<th>LA (30 pts)</th>
<th>BS (35 pts)</th>
<th>WS (25 pts)</th>
<th>Test Score (90 pts)</th>
<th>Survey Results (10 pts)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Basic Span</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>0-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 HL1</td>
<td>0-12</td>
<td>0-5</td>
<td>0-8</td>
<td>0-25</td>
<td>2-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Pre-IB1</td>
<td>13-21</td>
<td>6-20</td>
<td>9-17</td>
<td>26-58</td>
<td>5-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 HL2</td>
<td>22-30</td>
<td>21-35</td>
<td>18-25</td>
<td>59-90</td>
<td>8-10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classes</th>
<th>Basic Span</th>
<th>1 SHL1</th>
<th>2 Pre-IB SHL1</th>
<th>3 SHL2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language Awareness</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>0-10 Less than 5</td>
<td>11-20</td>
<td>21-30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bilingual Skills</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>0-5 Less than 6</td>
<td>6-20</td>
<td>21-35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing Skills</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>0-8 Less than 9</td>
<td>9-17</td>
<td>18-25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

LA – Language Awareness (10 items each worth 3 point in Spanish, 2 point Spa & Eng, and 1 point in Eng.)
BS – Bilingual Skills (7 sentences each worth 5 points)
WS – Writing Skills (5 sections each worth 5 points)
Appendix M

Survey Classification on Number of Yes Response
Survey Results

- 0-1 2L1
- 2-4 SHL1
- 3-7 Pre-IB SHL1
- 8-10 SHL2
Appendix N

Placement Test Result Point Scale System
Placement Test Results

- 0-25 SHL1
- 26-58 Pre-IB SHL1
- 59-90 SHL2
Appendix O

Part II – Bilingual Skills (Spanish Translation)  Sample Rubric
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 1 Limited Proficiency</th>
<th>Level 2 Some Proficiency</th>
<th>Level 3 High Proficiency</th>
<th>Level 4 Higher level of sophistication</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reasons:</strong> Vocabulary words, high frequency vocabulary words, approximate verbal tense, phrasal expressions, and punctuation</td>
<td>Vocabulary words, high frequency vocabulary words, approximate verbal tense, phrasal expressions, and punctuation</td>
<td>Vocabulary words, high frequency vocabulary words, approximate verbal tense, phrasal expressions, and punctuation</td>
<td>Vocabulary words, high frequency vocabulary words, approximate verbal tense, phrasal expressions, and punctuation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Examples:**
- I don’t like it when people bring their cell phones to the movies.
  - Me enfada cuando la gente trae sus celulares a dentro de las películas.
  - No me gusta cuando la gente trae sus teléfonos al cine.
  - No me agradan cuando la gente decide traer sus teléfono móviles al cine.
- Tenemos un buen rato a la fiesta
- Tuvimos un buen rato en la fiesta.
- No me gusta cuando gente llevan sus teléfonos al cine.
- Prometí devolverle la llamada, pero luego lo olvidé.
- A mí no me gusta cuando la gente trae sus celulares al cine.
- No me gusta que la gente lleve sus teléfonos móviles al cine.
- Yo curi entre mi maestra cuando estaba de compras.
- Encontre mi maestra de antes cuando estaba a la tienda.
- No me gusta cuando gente trae sus teléfonos a las películas.
  - No me agrada cuando la gente trae sus celulares a las películas.
  - El no cree que hayamos hecho la tarea.
- No pienso que ella ha ido México antes.
- Yo le compraba flores a mi mamá para su cumpleaños.
- No me gusta que la gente lleve sus teléfonos móviles al cine.
Appendix P

Standardized Spanish Translation Sentences Sample
1. La pasamos bien en la fiesta.

2. (Yo) prometí llamarla nuevamente, pero se me olvidó/ me olvidé.

3. A Él no le gusta cuando la gente trae sus móviles al cine.

4. (Él) no cree que haya hecho la tarea.

5. No creo que (ella) haya ido a México.

6. Le compraba flores a mi madre en su cumpleaños.

7. Me encontré a mi maestro mientras estaba de compras.
Appendix Q

Spanish HLL Writing Skills Scoring Rubric
## Spanish HLLs Writing Skills Scoring Rubric

### Student’s #________  Period

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use of Past Tense and Verb Moods</th>
<th>Level 0 No Proficiency</th>
<th>Level 1 Limited Proficiency</th>
<th>Level 2 Some Proficiency</th>
<th>Level 3 High Proficiency</th>
<th>Level 5 Higher level of Sophistication</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not sufficient evidence to rate.</td>
<td>Student mixes inadequately all verb tenses and moods</td>
<td>Students uses mainly the imperfect verb tense without differentiating between the preterite tense or verb moods.</td>
<td>Student uses some verb tense in the past with some degree of adequacy in the verb moods</td>
<td>Student uses a great range of interchangeable verb tenses in the past: preterite, imperfect, pluperfect differentiating moods (indicative, subjunctive and conditional)</td>
<td>Student exceeds a great range of interchangeable verb tenses in the past and sophistication of verb tenses and differentiation of the usage of the three moods (indicative, subjunctive and conditional)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal Experience</th>
<th>Level 0 No Proficiency</th>
<th>Level 1 Limited Proficiency</th>
<th>Level 2 Some Proficiency</th>
<th>Level 3 High Proficiency</th>
<th>Level 5 Higher level of Sophistication</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not sufficient evidence to rate.</td>
<td>Lack of ability to write one clear topic</td>
<td>Student states some relevance of the topic providing some details and examples that support the topic</td>
<td>Student clearly and explicitly states the relevance of the topic providing concise details and examples that support the topic</td>
<td>Student clearly and explicitly states the relevance of the topic providing concise details and examples that support the topic</td>
<td>Student clearly and explicitly states the relevance of the topic providing concise details and examples that support the topic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grammar</th>
<th>Level 0 No Proficiency</th>
<th>Level 1 Limited Proficiency</th>
<th>Level 2 Some Proficiency</th>
<th>Level 3 High Proficiency</th>
<th>Level 5 Higher level of Sophistication</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not sufficient evidence to rate.</td>
<td>Student uses very few accurate examples of grammar related to the topic; frequent errors in subject/verb agreement; non-Spanish sentence</td>
<td>Student shows a few accurate examples of grammar related to the topic but not all; some errors in subject/verb agreement; some errors in adjective/noun agreement; some editing</td>
<td>Student demonstrates some examples of grammar related to the topic; occasional errors in subject/verb or adjective/noun agreement; some editing</td>
<td>Student demonstrates mastery of grammar related to the topic; very few errors in subject/verb, adjective/noun agreement; work was well</td>
<td>Student masters the use of grammar unmistakably changing the three moods, verb tenses, subject/verb, adjective/noun agreement related to the topic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Vocabulary</td>
<td>Academic Language</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Not sufficient evidence to grade.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Not sufficient evidence to grade.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student uses inadequate; repetitive; incorrect use or non-use of words studied; literal translations; abundance of invented words; no use</td>
<td>No academic skills in Spanish Poor academic skills in English Receptive bilingual in contact variety of rural Spanish</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student uses a few words presented in the lesson; erroneous word use or choice leads to confused or obscured meaning; some literal translations and vocabulary.</strong></td>
<td>Students shows no academic skills, registers or lexicon, shows contact with the variety of rural Spanish but possesses good academic skills in English Fluent but limited speakers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student uses several examples of words related to the topic, but there was opportunity for more; some erroneous word usage or choice; some use of the vocabulary.</strong></td>
<td>Student demonstrates to have access to bilingual instruction with basic academic skills in Spanish and good academic skills in English Fluent functional speakers of contact variety of rural Spanish</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student maximizes opportunities for use of words related to the topic; precise and effective word use and choice; variety of vocabulary; well usage of the supporting details.</strong></td>
<td>Students demonstrates to be poorly-schooled in Spanish-speaking country Speakers of stigmatized variety of Spanish, uses some academic registers and lexicon. Or student demonstrates to have access to bilingual instruction with basic academic skills in Spanish and good academic skills in English Fluent functional speakers of contact variety of rural Spanish</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Students demonstrates a high level of sophistication of academic registers of Spanish and English using proper written form and differentiating the prestige variety of Spanish and English.</strong></td>
<td>Students demonstrates to be well-schooled in Spanish-speaking country using the prestige variety of Spanish Newly arrived and provides academic register and lexicon. Or well-educated having access to bilingual instruction in the prestige Spanish and English</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Students exceeds using coherent and eloquent vocabulary that connect and support the main idea with the supporting details.</strong></td>
<td>Students demonstrates to be well-schooled in Spanish-speaking country using the prestige variety of Spanish Newly arrived and provides academic register and lexicon. Or well-educated having access to bilingual instruction in the prestige Spanish and English</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

structure; erroneous use of language makes the work mostly incomprehensible; no evidence of having edited the work for language

for language evident but not complete

edited for language
of phrasal expressions; invented words; phrasal expression
some words used repetitively; inappropriate use of phrasal expression
the phrasal expressions
Appendix R

Samples of Spanish HLLs Writing Skills Rating Score
1. Un viaje que hice fue el fin de semana pasado. Fui a Burney falls con toda mi familia. Tardamos como 4 horas en llegar porque hicimos algunas paradas de comida, baño y para agarrar gasolina. Cuando llegamos estaba un poco frío por la brisa del las cascadas y porque estábamos en las montañas. Para ir a la primera cascada, tuvimos que bajar como una colina de piedras. La mayoría estaban resbalosas por toda el agua pero fue divertido. Después de tomarnos fotos en esa cascada, hicimos una caminata y luego almorzamos. Después de almorzar, manejamos hacia otra cascada en la que si podíamos nadar. Para llegar a esa era más difícil porque no había un camino exacto para llegar. Nadamos un poco porque el agua estaba helada y no aguantamos mucho. Después de nadar, pasamos por comida y nos regresamos a casa.

2. Un viaje que tuve fue en diciembre fui a mexico en diciembre. El lugar donde fui a visitar fue guadalajara, jalisco y morelia, michoacan. En guadalajara nomas estuve dos días y en michoacan estuve casi todo el mes por que tambien fui a un rancho que se llama el resumidero, michoacan de donde es mi papa ese rancho esta a 25 minutos de morelia. Me la pase increíble en el resumidero, michoacan porque allí estaban todos mis primos que tambien van de sacramento y pude conocer mas familia y conocer las tradiciones que tienen en el rancho de mi papa . se mi hizo muy bonito que mis planes son ir cada año en diciembre para poder conocer mas de sus tradiciones porque creo que un mes no fue lo suficiente.

3. Un viaje de hice fue este ano cuando fui a Las Vegas con mi familia en Marzo. Me fue a las vegas y el dia que estaba manejando nos dijieron que la escuela iva estar cancelada por 3 dias. Cuando llegue a Las Vegas llegamos a la casa que nos ivamos a quedar. En segundo dia fue cuando empezaron a cerrar unos casinos y buffets pero estaba bien por que mi familia, mi tio, mis tias y mis primos teniamos una casa y teniamos comida. El segundo dia tambien fuimos al Hoover Dam. El tercer dia fuimos a los Outlets de Las Vegas y fuimos shopping. Ese dia fue el dia que el governador anuncio que las escuelas no iva abrir hasta el proximo ano escolar. El dia cuatro fuimos a Circus Circus a nos
subimos a unos rides con mis primos y nos divertimos mucho. Yo pense que nos ivamos a caer de los rides. Ese dia despues nos fuimos a otra casa y llegamos y nos relajamos ese dia y el proximo dia nos regresamos a Sacramento. Cuando nos regresamos llegamos a las tiendas a comprar comida y no habia mucha comida esencial. Tambien el governador anuncio que muchas cosas no ivan a quedar abierta. Ese fue el ultimo fin de semana donde tuve mucho diversion y el fin de semana donde todo se cambio.

4. El invierno pasado fui a México. Esa vez fuimos en carro para llevar muchas cosas. El viaje fue muy largo pero me gusto mirar por la ventana y conocer a diferentes partes de México. Por el camino pude probar comida de diferentes lugares. Fue un viaje muy divertido pero se te enfadas si lo haces mucho.

5. La mejor experencia que yo tuve fue aprender como a trabajar y moverme porque empeñando es dificil y no sabia nada y poco a poco apredi como hacer cosas como formiar y poner drip y muchas cosas mas.


7. Un viaje yo yo hací en mi vida es un visita a mi familia en Idaho. Mi familia y yo viajamos por auto y nos tomo unas cuantas horas para llegar a nuestra destinacion. Cuando llegamos, nuestros primos nos saludaron my nos quedamos en su casa para la noche. En la manana, fuimos a un restaruante para desayunar y luego nos regresamos a nuestra casa.
Appendix S

Transcripts of Prefocus Teachers’ Interview
Researcher:

Okay. I'm going to share my screen so you can view the questions, and I'm going to be showing one at a time. Are you able to see the screen? Yeah? Perfect. We, once again, thank you for participating in this focus group. This is the prefocus group. The first question that I have for all of you, it's what was working and not working with the previous diagnostic questionnaire in oral interview implemented to play the Spanish heritage language learners. We do not have any specific order to go. Raise your hand and I will not be calling you by your names. I have numbered you. Okay? Go ahead. I'm going to say maestra.

Teacher C:

Okay. So, because I have to leave this meeting early, I'll go ahead and go first. I think what was working was that we had one diagnostic exam. I guess the questionnaire paper that we had, and it went across... We all used the same thing so then it was consistent across. And then from there, I think because the student would be able to just write right on it, we could see... We could share that document with other teachers to see what they thought. So it was also a collaborative way of making a diagnostic decision in regards to what level that student could go into, depending on their writing skills. I thought that worked well because we were able to do it, and get input from other teachers as well. That's all.

Researcher:

Thank you. This is for all of you. Okay? Go ahead. Maestra.

Teacher B:

Like she said, I think that it was working to a certain extent because we did have something we were using. It was a start and when somebody was obviously at a higher level, or obviously at a lower level, we could present that to the rest of the teachers and then talk about the possibility of them skipping a level or staying and having extra support. What I do not think was working is that, beyond that there wasn't any specific scoring system. It was kind of just what we thought but we didn't have anything that was more specific. And that's all.

Researcher:

Maestra.

Teacher D:

I think I agree. Well, it was a baseline. Everyone had the same thing across the department... Was the... I think made it successful. And it also gave us the abilities of distinguishing between the kids that had academic experience in the targeted language and also the ones that understood it and never have received formal classes in the targeted language. I think we were limited in the oral interview but when it came to the writing portion, it was... I think it gave us a clear idea of where they were at. What didn't work, I agree with the previous teacher. We didn't
have a scoring mechanism in regards to... This person should be in this level, or that person. We
were just... I think the scoring part was when we conference with one another.

Teacher A:
Just like the other teacher's lessons, I was-

Researcher:
I'm sorry. Maestra. Could you please get closer to the... It's hard to hear you.

Teacher A:
It's hard? Okay. I'm going to change something then. Can you hear me better now?

Researcher:
A little bit better, yeah. A little.

Teacher A:
Maybe it's my volume. I don't know. Can you hear me better now? Yeah? Okay. So what was
working is the fact that we had something in place and all of us were using it, as all of you
already mentioned it. So I think it's very valuable, the fact that we have already something in
place, in that we could actually communicate with all the teachers and ask for their input. But
something that was not working, I think like they mentioned as well, is the fact that we didn't
have a specific criteria to score what the students were producing in these days. So it was
mainly based to the teacher and consultation with all their teachers. So I think it will... It's that
part that was not working. And that is all from my part.

Researcher:
Anything else that you'd like to add before I move on to the next question? No. Okay. Thank
you. So question number two says, "What were some of the benefits and challenges for
students and teachers while implementing this system?" And if you like, we can start with what
were some of the benefits or just make sure that you add both. It's a compound question.
Maestra.

Teacher D:
I think one of the benefits is placing the students in the right class where we believe that they
will be better served in the sense versus being placed in an easier class. And that's where it
comes to the challenges, right? By giving the diagnostic test, they were placed, most of the time,
in a higher level course. And the challenge was that the student did not want to be placed in
that higher level course. They wanted to stay in their comfort zone and so, that's always part of
the challenge of when the test was given.

Teacher B:
Thank you. I think some of the benefits were, I agree with the previous teacher, that the
benefits were that we were able to get a feel of where each student should be and try to place
them into the correct courses. And I actually had a bit of a different experiences in where I had
students who did very well on the diagnostic test and they wanted to move to the higher levels
but because we didn't have space in the higher level classes they stayed in the first year course. And I knew that they were a bit just sad that they couldn't move on, not because they weren't at that level, but because the class has were impacted.

Researcher
I'm sorry, maestra, did you also mention the challenges?

Teacher B:
Yes. That the students that did pass the test, or not pass, but that did very well and did want to move to the higher classes weren't able to because they were full.

Researcher:
Go ahead maestra.

Teacher A:
So some of the benefits is the fact that students could actually take this assessment and hopefully be placed in the right class, according to the teacher who graded the work submitted. But in some of the challenges, just like maestra B shared, was that sometimes even if they could move on to the next level, there was no space. And also I'll say maybe some of the challenges for the teachers, it was not having clear criteria when it came down to grading the product of the students. So it was mainly like on the teacher. What do you think? Where do you think these students should be? So I think having that clear criteria will also make it easier on the teacher.

Researcher:
Thank you. Next maestra. We're going to wait. I'm going to... Maestra, are you ready?

Teacher C:
I think the benefits were the same things that the other teachers mentioned and some of the challenges... I'm sorry, I'll go back to one benefit. I also want to mention, aside from what was already said, that one of the benefits of doing the diagnostic that we did was that we were able to do it like at the moment while the student was there. So, they didn't have to come in later or it was very accessible to them. So I think that's a huge benefit and some of the challenges were that there wasn't really a rubric or anything to also go by to do the exam, to grade the exam, just like it was said before.

Researcher:
Thank you. And I just want to add something over here for future clarification, we will be able to continue doing this placement test at the moment. So it will be available for every student that comes in. Thank you, maestras. So the next question it's, "What was the most effective aspect of the system that we created, that we had in place?"

Researcher:
And it could vary from the communication among the teachers, consultation among teachers, to the [inaudible 00:12:20] to give the placement tests to the new student?
**Teacher B:**
I think that... Oh, sorry. I think that we were as effective as we could be within what we had available to us because, well, I think individually, we did all try our best to go over the tests, the writing portion and the other questions and if we notice that students had gone to school in a Spanish speaking country for an extended period of time, or they had a really great writing piece, we would do our best to try to get them into an appropriate level and and communicate that with each other. So I do think that we were as effective as we could be.

**Researcher:**
Thank you.

**Teacher D:**
I think another effective aspect is that flexibility, flexibility. We had a lot of flexibility with it and it was also a good tool for the beginning of the school year. And it wasn't too long. It was done in a period and we were able to make our evaluations within that same day.

**Teacher B:**
Can I add something? I think that it was also effective in the sense that, even within the same class, if students didn't get moved out of classes, you could use that as a way to base your grouping from the get go. So from the beginning of the school year, you kind of had an idea of who was a little bit more advanced and who needed a little bit extra help and then base your grouping and your seating off of that as well.

**Researcher:**
Just for further clarification, do you think that also was a benefit when it came to application of curriculum or a specific content?

**Teacher B:**
I noticed something from the first year I taught the course to the second year and I noticed that the first year that I taught it, the writing level of my students was a bit lower. So I knew that I had to review like main... Review the very basic phonology more in depth. And then the second year that taught the course, I noticed that, for the most part, their writing was, it was pretty advanced. So I knew that I didn't have to review those. I still reviewed them but not to the extent I did with my first group. So, I did benefit from using that test in that sense.

**Teacher A:**
Something that I feel it was effective is the fact that it's very practical. It's something that is there and it's easy to administer. So, and just like maestra B share also, it gets you a platform, like where to start, where are my students, what I need to cover, what I need to review and help give you a sense, where are your students and what, what are the things that they need to learn, need support with throughout the school year.

**Researcher:**
Thank you. Any other... Anybody else? What was the most effective aspect of the system? Okay, thank you. So the question number four is more comments, anything... Is there anything you could have done differently?

Teacher B:
I guess I could have given that same test mid-year and then at the end of the year. Mid-year to regroup my students, to see if they're still kind of in the same levels and then at the end of the year so I could see, and so they could see themselves how much they've improved.

Researcher:
Thank you. Any other?

Teacher D:
No, I don't have any other comments.

Researcher:
No?

Teacher D:
No.

Researcher:
No. Okay, perfect. So that concludes the interview. And once again, I really, really appreciate your time and your input into this study. If you have any other comments, anything else that you'd like to add, please let me know. I will be transcribing this interview in a word document and then I will continue with the rest of the study, the qualitative aspect. Yeah. Okay. Thank you. So, right now I'm going to stop sharing and I'm going to stop the recording and.
Appendix T

Transcripts of Postfocus Teachers’ Interview
Researcher:
Just a second. I'm getting ready over here, because I'm going to also use my phone to prevent...
good morning, Teacher A.

Researcher:
Okay, I'm sharing my screen for you to see a quick review. This is a post-focus group for the study that I am doing on Spanish Heritage Language Learner survey and placement test, and both of them are an adoption from another institution at the university level. There's has been a lot of, some changes in the process and not on the survey but specifically on the placement test. As you know the original placement test was only in English, the instructions where only in English. I translated to Spanish the instructions and I added other components such as grade level, ID and gender, and I was in contact specifically for those changes with Rebeca and Veronica because in their classes there were the majority of the students or all the students taking the placement test and it was minor changes.

Researcher:
The purpose of this study, just a quick review again, the purpose of this study is, was to investigate how Thompson's placement test effectively, can affectively be used, could affectively be used with three classes levels at the high school level to differentiate Heritage Language Learners use of Spanish inside and outside of home and their academic use of Spanish. In the three classes, I meant the three different levels. The three different levels is Span 1, Pre-IB 1 for Heritage Learners and Span 2, those are the three different levels and the categories. The way that we categorized it is basic, is Span, Span, intermediate would be Pre-IB Spanish 1, and advanced would be Span, Span 2.

Researcher:
The reason why I differentiate basic and intermediate is just because Pre IB students, as you know, they might have a higher GPA or in academics they have a different level. That is the only reason, so that's the purpose. Now, our prefocus group you answered the following four questions. What was working and not working with the previous diagnostic questionnaire and oral interview implemented to place Spanish Heritage Language Learners?

Researcher:
Question two, what were some of the benefits and challenges for students and teachers while implementing this system?

Researcher:
Question three, what was the most effective aspect of this system?

Researcher:
Question 4, is there something you could have done differently?
Researcher:
That's what we did so far and that's where we are. So today we are going to concentrate on, what worked, didn't work and more. And I'm going to share with you the questions in a minute, but before I'd like to know if you have any questions before we proceed?

Researcher:
No questions or comments? Okay, thank you.

Researcher:
We also, I've been in contact not only with my professor who is a Spanish teacher but also I have been in contact with another consultant who has experience with placements and surveys and with a consultant and with my advisor we created a rating and I'm sorry it is not here, I'll show it to you in a moment. A rating system that. I'm using my school computer at the moment and I just realized that I don't have the rating system here, but we created a rating system on how to place the students based on the points and I don't have it right not in this computer. Teacher C and Teacher D, if you don't mind I can also send it you, I thought that I had it. I'm sorry but I have shared this rating score system with Teacher A and Teacher B as well on how to, according to the points that the students also get how to place them in their according class. I don't have that right now but I can.

Researcher:
If you give me a moment I can try, I would log in right now on my other one. Just because I do want you to see that rating system. Is that okay with you Teacher C and Teacher D? I'm going to log in to my other computer so I can share that with you.

Teacher D:
Yes, that's fine

Researcher:
Thank you.

Teacher C:
I'm fine with it.

Researcher:
Thank you. Just a second. In the meanwhile I'm going to share with you the questions that I'm going to be asking in a moment. In case that you want to start developing some ideas.

Researcher:
I'm going to stop sharing this screen and I'm going to share the other one.

Researcher:
I'm going to come back to this computer in a moment. [inaudible 00:09:03]
**Teacher A:**
Researcher, you are muted.

Researcher:
Can you hear me now?

Researcher:
Okay

Researcher:
I was saying, this is the process that we did. The first step was to give all students a survey and if the students chose zero to one yeses, that's the indication that they would be better placed in a Spanish for non-heritage speakers. If they answered two or more yeses they would be placed in one of the three classes for the Heritage Language speakers and after that all students would receive the placement tests, and the placement test had the three components; the language awareness, bilingual skills, writing skills and the breakdown for the points is the following.

Researcher:
What I did with the different teachers, once again, with intention to categorize in the most appropriate way and I do want the teachers to know and understand that I did not have any access of the breakdown system that the college, that the university did for the placement test. I needed to come up with a system for the rating. For the rate in the way that we did in, in collaboration with my advisor, the [inaudible 00:11:35] advisor and the other consultant, and then I consulted with Teacher B and Teacher A is the following.

Researcher:
Basic Spanish, this is students who are better placed in a non-heritage learner class, for level one this would be Span 1, for the language awareness would be zero to 12, bilingual skills zero to five, writing skills zero to eight points and the total points for the placement test would be zero to 25 and this is just a result of the survey. Placement test, 90 points in total, survey is 10 points.

Researcher:
The next one would be Pre-IB, 13 to 21 for language awareness, bilingual skills six to 20, writing skills nine to 17, total score between 26 to 58, that would be Pre-IB and the survey is five to seven.

Researcher:
Span 2, language awareness 22 to 30, bilingual skills 21 to 35, writing skills 18 to 25, total points for the placement test 59 to 90 and the survey.

Researcher:
I do want to share with you as you probably know, that all the students, all of those who took the students and we know they belong in one of the heritage language classes. All of them, most of them scored between five to seven, five to 10 because they are first generation, they are
recent immigrants and there are different reasons but most of them for the survey they got five to 10, that indicates something that is different from the college study.

Researcher:
On the bottom you have another visual, once again, the indication for the language awareness, this is specifically for placement test. The next one is just another vision of how to look at the survey, this is the survey, the breakdown and the next one is placement test.

Researcher:
Do you have any questions? No, okay. So I’m going to stop sharing this screen and I’m going to go back to the other one.

Researcher:
Are you able to see my? Okay. Now we are going to continue with the questions. The post focus group. And as you know, all of you can take the initiative to start. Whoever would like to start or I can go in order but I would really like to have a deep discussion and I would like for all of you to add something when you think it's appropriate.

Researcher:
The first question that we are going to discuss it's, what are the benefits and challenges of implementing Thompson's 2015 placement test? Maybe we can start with what are some of the benefits of these implementations?

Teacher C:
Can I start?

Researcher:
Yes. Can you hear me know?

Researcher:
Okay. I have two computers, I don't think I need the other one so let me just leave. Okay, yes, we can start Consuelo with you. Thank you.

Teacher C:
Okay. I think the benefits of it is that I really liked the fact that it was [inaudible 00:16:32] it was easy. We already had a creative placement test but I really liked the format of this one and it's easy right now for distance learning. The benefit of it being on Google was easy to get it to the students. The challenging part I think of it is, it has nothing to do with the actually test. Well, there's two parts to it. The challenging part is getting it back from the student in a timely matter. That has nothing to do with the test.
Teacher C:
The other thing with the placement test is that I found that some kids took more time to answer the questions. I felt some kids just did like a one, one word answers, I think that's a challenge because it's how do you know. I'm trying to think of a question. Do you speak to your friends in Spanish most of the time? That's like an example of one and then they just say no. Which is fine but it's like, no, but if you are like with a group of friends that are Spanish speakers would you speak Spanish? I don't know, I just think that there's some level of discrepancy in some of the questions but it also has to do with the students and how they want to answer it.

Researcher:
Thank you.

Teacher A:
I can go ahead and continue. Some of the benefits that I found of for the test is that it gives the teacher an idea about where the students are and what are their needs so we can accommodate the planning of the lessons and all of that. And some of the challenges that I found and I would say that I don't think it has to do with the test at this point. It has more to do with the situation we are living with the pandemic because for some of students I question myself, did they use Google translate because I seen other type of writings and even thought I specifically say do not use Google translate, the purpose of this is just to know where you are. There are some instances where I question myself, well is this Google translate product or is this really their work? And I think that being, in the future being in the classroom this can be addressed in a different way. I think, the fact that it was, it's on Google docs, it made it easier for the students, just like Teacher C said, to get access to it. But also some not being there and students probably taking a longer time to take it because they forgot to take it or they were not here and then we didn't see them as often, it was just kind of hard to get it to the students. Those are some of the challenges that I think.

Researcher:
And also I like to emphasize I did realize that I didn't have something in here. And I'd like you too... oh just a second. I noticed that I did not have the distinction between the placement test and the survey because I do want to hear from you also the benefits of having the survey and distinguishing that from the placement test because in the original question I have benefits and challenges of implementing Thompson's placement test but I did not clarify that we have two. The survey and the placement test. And I do want to hear if there's any benefits or challenges of implementing the survey, in the survey is the language usage. I can come back to you in a moment. Thank you, Teacher A. Who would like to continue for number one? Teacher D and Teacher B?

Teacher D:
For me, I think that I only have one student that I gave the survey, I was able to see instantly, that was one of the benefits of the survey is seeing how they respond. In regards of the placement test. I don't know if he completed it, I think that my concern, that if he completed the
exam, the placement test or not. That's one of my challenges, looking for it and actually seeing it. I don't know if they went back directly to you. Other than that I think that the accessibility of it and the instant information is beneficial and the challenges is just the technology usage.

Researcher:
The results, Teacher D, you have it, you have automatic access to all of them.

**Teacher D:**
I've been looking for it and I can't find it in my Google forms.

Researcher:
Remember the folder that I created for all of you. Have you been able. We can go double check. In the folder for Teacher D it should be there. But we'll double check on that. Thank you.

Teacher B?

Teacher B:
I think some of the benefits for the survey are like Teacher D said, we have the instant results and the instant kind of classroom breakdown so we can see the level of Spanish use in our class and that also gives me an idea of how comfortable the kids are using and listening to Spanish. And some of the benefits of the placement test, I think Teacher A said it, that it kind of gives us an idea of the level of Spanish that our kids have. Another benefit is I think is the rubric because we have just a set rubric that we can look at and be like, this person falls here, and we are not just saying oh, this writing is really good or this writing is not very good. We have a specific set of, I don't know, things we are looking for.

Teacher B:
Some of the challenges for the survey and the placement test have been just getting the kids to take both of them not just one or the other. And getting them to take it in a timely matter. Also, I'm pretty sure a lot of the kids used Google translate they had to many perfect accents and I lot of them had the exact same answer with the exact same answers and I'm like, I don't know this is kind of suspicious and then another challenge for me has also been the grading time.

Teacher B:
To get them graded and back in a timely matter, I think in the future to get them greater sooner that I did this year would be way more efficient because we are eight weeks into the school year? I think, and I don't know if we have gone through and talked about How many kids are getting switch up. I think maybe making time, setting aside time, maybe during a department meeting or just for future years if it's going to be used so that we can get the grading done with as soon, within, I don't know, two weeks after they get taken. For me was hard, that part was also challenging but other than that I think its very efficient.

Researcher:
Thank you Teacher B for mentioning, with Teacher B and Teacher A, I also provided a rubric system for the bilingual translation, bilingual skills and well as the writing piece and that is also in the folders, the rubrics, also, thank you. I do appreciate the fact that you are also
distinguishing the situation that we are with distance learning and with that keep in mind for the question number four, when we get to that. Right? Making those distinctions is essential, essentially important, thank you. Teacher C and Teacher A would like to say some benefits about the rubric or challenges.

**Teacher A:**
I can go ahead and share, well first, I wanted to mention about the survey, because I got disconnected. My internet isn't stable and I was gone for a little bit. I actually really like the survey because it was simple. It was a simple format and it was very direct and I think about it in the sense, I personally don't like super long surveys. I get frustrated and I get bored, I think it was very straightforward and I really liked that part and I think students appreciate having something simple to follow to complete.

**Teacher A:**
And when it comes to the rubrics I think it was good to have a rubric, we discuss the rubric, we talked about the rubric, Researcher, Teacher B and I, and I think it was good for me to hear and discuss the rubric but when it comes to the grading also, at some point, I just thought it was a little bit too much. I think considering the situation, that's probably also why, but I think it'll be appropriate in the future if we could have, I think Teacher B said, sometime that maybe we can as a department grade them. Because I think it would be appropriate in the sense that not only the people that administer the test are grading but then also other teachers so that would actually broaden our perspective and also it would be, I think, it will be less biased.

**Teacher A:**
Because when you know the students and sometime you are like, oh, but I know this student is able to do this, but then when you see what they did on the test. It might be biased I think it will be appropriate to have other teachers look at it and grade it probably as a department. I don't know, that's some suggestions.

**Researcher:**
Thank you, we are going to move on to question number two. Question number two is, in comparison with the previous system, what was the most effective aspect or inclement Thompson's placement test? We are going to keep in mind that placement test, it implies the survey as well as the placement. I know you already mention some bene, a lot of benefits and other challenges but what was the most effective aspect of both of them?

**Teacher D:**
I guess I can speak in regards to the previous system and what Teacher A just mentioned is that, the previous system we know its original work. It wasn't that they used the internet, they couldn't use Google translate, it was being supervised but then again that's when we were in the classroom. Obviously we didn't have a rubric it was just based on our own knowledge and so as mentioned before the effect aspect of the Thompson's placement test is that is formalized right? There's a rubric, there's a form of guidance in regards to that.

**Researcher:**
Thank you
Teacher C:
I agree with Teacher D, I think that the most effective aspect of this is having something that is said and then having the rubric so that we're all looking at the same thing. So it's consistent across all of our classes, all of our students so it's also [inaudible 00:30:33] everyone equal. It's equal across the board for the students.

Researcher:
Teacher C, just to verify, you cut off for a few seconds, I'm not sure if I got all of what you said.

Teacher C:
It's that my internet wasn't stable. I was saying that it's also, I don't want to use the word incorrectly but is it equitable? Because, now there is a rubric that every one is using. There's no, just like Teacher A said there's no biases right? I mean, not biases but everyone is looking at the same thing and we're all using the same exact thing to [inaudible 00:31:33]. I think that's very effective of having this placement exam and I also agree with Teacher A about, I was going to suggest that about the whole department having a deadline, we need to have this done by this date, so then we can all sit together and look at all the assessments so there's different eyes looking at it.

Researcher:
As a matter of fact, we can probably do this on Monday for the department. It depends How late is it? Ideally there was a timeline that I shared with all of you. Unfortunately with distant learning, it's been difficult but all of this I hope that it will be very beneficial for the next school year but we can definitely do something on Monday with the department. I think it is a great idea, good suggestions. Thank you. Teacher B?

Teacher B:
I think just having the rubric, I think I mention it on question one but I'm going to mention it again. The rubrics so we know what we are specifically looking for students to fall into each category and then I think also having the scale that you created. The point scale with how many points students need to receive in order to be classified into each level. And like you said, I think we talked about it when we got together that, maybe for our school we are going to revisit that just because the survey number and the high number of students that we have that do listen to and speak Spanish, for our school it was a bit higher just because of our population. I still think that is super effective and we didn't have it before and now we have something concrete that we can look at and go from.

Researcher:
Thank you, anything else you'd like to add to number two?

Teacher A:
I would like to share, just like all the teachers already shared, the rubric was very helpful but then also what the translations. Having some examples that was also very helpful About the possible answers that students could have I found very helpful as well.

Teacher B:
I did too because whenever I was grading for a long time I would always revisit those, let me refresh my memory what I’m looking for, the examples, not just the rubric descriptions. Having the specific examples was extremely helpful.

Researcher:
I do want to emphasize here from the original study, I did not have any rubrics, I did not have any examples of the bilingual, the translations, I created that consulting with my advisor as well as consultant who summit, I’m having difficulties, with those people also provide some sort of validity, just for information.

Researcher:
Question number three. What were some benefits and challenges for the students taking the survey and Thompson’s placement test? Benefits and challenges for students.

Teacher C:
I think the benefits is that it was readily available through Google classroom so they had access to[inaudible 00:35:36] it. Then without. The challenges were and we already talked about that is getting it back on time and then also the challenge of them using a translation platform to answer some of the questions. So I think those are the two challenges that I, kind of, think about.

Researcher:
Can I ask, just to clarify, do you think that the students had any challenges in reading and understanding the questions?

Teacher C:
I don’t think so, for me, I don’t think any of my kids did, unless they did and they didn’t feel comfortable asking me because of distance learning. They were on it. One kid on one of the survey said, he didn’t answer question but he wrote, I don’t really understand the question. That also gives me the thing of well maybe he doesn’t, he’s not going to move on to a heritage speaker class. You know? So that also gives you a measurement of that but I didn’t have any of the kids come back to me and tell me that they had a difficult time filling it out.

Researcher:
No, thank you.

Teacher A:
I can add something. I think some of the challenges that some of my students had was also computer turns, technology turns. In this case, some of them it was the beginning of the school year, we’re having challenges like typing, some of them took a really long time because they are not fast tyers or certain things like that. Also, I did notice that some of my students did not understand the questions and I’m basing this on some of their answers. They didn’t understand either the question or it was the instructions that they didn’t understand and therefore because they didn’t understand the instructions, their answers, they didn’t answer probably accordingly to what they were being asked.
Researcher:
Since you just spoke to that, Teacher A, to what extent do you also think that having the instruction in English and Spanish provided some help or made it more difficult. Benefit or challenge having the instructions in both languages.

Teacher A:
I think it was very helpful to have the instructions both in English and Spanish because I have some students that do not speak English so if the instructions were just in English they were not going to know what they were supposed to do. So I think it was very helpful to have the instructions both in English and Spanish. I don’t know if all of them read the instructions all the way until the end but I can say that it was helpful to have read in both in Spanish and English.

Researcher:
Thank you. Teacher B or Teacher D?

Teacher B:
I think some of the benefits that the students had and most of these have been covered, just having access to it immediately, it’s not something that we email them. Hopefully if we ever go back this is something we can do in person so it will remain accessible. Just having it online ready for them to take. Another benefit was taking it during class, it’s a homework assignment so if they had questions you could ask them right away. And also having the instructions in English and Spanish. Some challenges were basic, just technology issues and also because of distance learning that is a challenge, because some students haven’t log on at all. And maybe if we were in person they would be there, I had absences but never to this level, one student just coming to class one time in eight weeks. That's another challenge, just distance learning for them as well.

Researcher:
Teacher C would like to add anything else to that question or something you would like to that. I mean Teacher D, I apologize, Teacher D.

Teacher D:
No, I think my colleagues definitely hit all the points in regards to the benefits and challenges. I don’t have anything else.

Teacher B:
I wanted to add something, maybe a challenge and also it kind spills to number four but it isn't, I think maybe the students don’t know it’s a challenge but I think that if we explicitly. And I think that we talked about it when we were doing the grading, maybe a challenge is the students don’t know how serious this test is, or for the future how serious it could be that it really could change their level. Bring them down or take them up, so sharing that with them, the point scale and the rubric now that we have it. This is what we are looking for, for you to do really well. Your punctuation, your capital letters, your accents, you need to write more than two words, you need to write more than one sentence for us to be able to grade it. Also, sharing with them the point scale, if you score here, there's a chance that you could skip this level, I think that also
would motivate them. And it's not just something we're just doing so I can see what I need to plan for.

**Teacher D:**
Thank you, Teacher C go ahead.

**Teacher C:**
What Teacher B just had me, something came up when she was talking. I also feel that I have, I try to ask the students that I feel might have some knowledge of Spanish and the other challenge is are they being truthful with me? Because I do feel like I know stuff but I don't really know anything. So it's like, do I force it? Do I not? I think that's a challenge like, because I know that a lot of kids talk to each other and they are like, well if you move to this class, this is how it's going to be or like that type of challenge of having the kids really look at it as a benefit for them and not as a. I don't know, it's too hard for me or it's going to be too hard so I don't want to do this. I want the easy way. I think that's also the challenge because I do feel that I have a few students, maybe two in my Spanish one classes for language acquisition that possibly could be in a regular Span, Span one class but challenge that. I don't know

**Researcher:**
That is an excellent point Teacher D, looking at it from that perspective. As research indicates some of the implications of that, might be lack of confidence or misunderstanding of what it means, level of difficulty and that definitely makes it a challenge. Thank you. Anybody else would like to add to that point? Number three, question number three.

**Researcher:**
Okay so we are going to move on to question number four, and this is, what is something that you recommend to do differently? Differently I invite you also to think hypothetically if we are going back to the classroom or if we continue with distance learning because right now with distance learning what would be something to do differently and then when we go back to the classroom. Teacher B.

**Teacher B:**
These are things I think we already talked about too but for the record, adding the zero, I don't know if you officially add it but a zero to the rubric for when they don't provide enough evidence, we can give then a score of zero or when they just answer in English. Another one would be to add the component if possible on the rubric for when they don't write enough in the writing sample, because it was really hard for me to grade two sentences. When technically they were somethings in that too but then they just wrote two very short things, I think they should've lost points. So adding an element for length I really would've, I think that would help a lot so I don't give a higher point that they deserve. I don't know, that, and then what else?

**Teacher B:**
I also think that if we do go back to the classroom and I didn't think about this until last night. One thing to consider getting the survey through would be Illuminate because Illuminate has all of the students English levels on there, it has the students social-economic levels, and if they
have IEP's or 504's that's already in there so when you get the survey results it will be broken down by that. It will tell you 80% of students that have this level of English proficiency scored here and 20% of students that are social-economically disadvantaged scored here and the rest score here, so I think having that extra data would also be helpful.

Researcher:
I like to comment with the Illuminate, I consulted with people at the district, different ways to do it and that was definitely one of them. I got trained on that from another. It was suggested that because of the circumstances and the level of easiness, I don't know, for the students to do it because of distance learning.

Teacher B:
Oh yeah, I don't know how we would do it distance learning, because the only way I know how to do it is on paper. If we went back.

Researcher:
That's an excellent point and I really appreciate that, but I just want for all of you to know that I consulted with people on district level on how to manage the best way possible for the students and for the teachers with this. It was recommended maybe for the level, [FL 00:47:15] the easiest way to do it would be Google documents, forms. That definitely, I totally agree with you. Thank you Teacher B. Next one.

Teacher A:
I think I already mentioned it, it would be great if we could grade as a department instead of just the teachers administering the test, each of them, actually gather as a department and grade it. I think it will be good and I actually liked the fact that it was on a computer. There were certain things that were easier because it was done through the computer so I think, something that we can do if we come back to school, at some point, hopefully by next school year, I don't know, maybe they can also take it on a computer but having the computers in the classroom and doing it in the classroom. I think that will be a suggestion.

Teacher A:
I'm not sure about the composition portion about it because like I mentioned before some students don't have experience typing and it made it challenging for them and one of my questions while I was grading them for some of the work that I graded it was just like, was this because of technology or was this because really has to do with their abilities. For the writing portion, the composition portion I'm not too sure if I like it on the computer or just like pencil or paper.

Researcher:
I like also to add when I consulted four different people for the Illuminate, and that's another reason why I opted for Google forms, it that, the accents. I remember having a meeting with [another teacher] who is very well trained in Illuminate and she couldn't help me with the accents. And I consulted with another person who knows how to use Illuminate and she is a Spanish teacher as well and she don't know. So once, again those are excellent points. Thank
you Teacher A for the recommendation also as a whole department to have that time and space
to implement and also integrate it. Thank you, Teacher C or Teacher D.

**Teacher D:**
This time, I really, like I said I only did one assessment. I don't really have what I would
recommend differently. I think that I'm still learning the process, to be fair with this whole
situation. That's all I have to say.

Researcher:
Teacher D if I may ask, Do you think you might had have the challenge as Teacher C of students
not self-identifying themselves as Heritage Language Learners. Did you have that difficulty or
what do you think of that?

**Teacher D:**
I think that with the ones I had suspicions just based on how fast they were completing the
work, that gave me the idea of okay, you are and I would just automatically start speaking to
them in Spanish and they would naturally just respond. Specially that one particular student that
I give the assessment. The other two, one has an IDP, mom said no, don't move. And the third
one, I think that she's suspecting that I'm suspecting that she's a native speaker so I'm working
on that third student. Because right not with distance learning and their cameras off, I mean,
and no hardly any speaking, it's like pulling your are teeth. In regards to that class. In regards to
my IB classes I think the threshold of them being placed on the right spot has already happened.
I only have one regular class.

**Teacher B:**
I think the opposite could happen in our classes where if the students use Google classroom but
I'm sorry Google translate for the test but don't actually have the level to be in our class, then
later they're like, I actually don't speak Spanish or understand it that well so I think that
hopefully they're honest but could present a problem.

Researcher:
Thank you, Teacher C, anything that you would like to recommend to do differently?

**Teacher C:**
I think, Oh sorry, everyone has kind of answered this theme and I'm honestly support Teacher A
in that I think we should do it as a department. I really strongly think that would be beneficial for
all of us too, as language teachers. That's all.

Researcher:
Thank you and I would put this item on the next meeting because it's not too late to do it and
we can discuss that and also in the next department we can also check the scores, if possible, if
I'm able to put all the data together by then.

Researcher:
Any other comments that would like to add to this postfocus group?
Researcher:
No, I really appreciate your time and your input into this study, which is something that affects in the positive, I strongly believe in a positive way to all of us, thank you so much and that's the end of this meeting, post-focus group. I'm going to stop sharing my screen and I'm going to stop recording.