A Developmental Writing Experiment: Mixing ELL and NES Student Writers

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ABSTRACT: This collaborative writing intervention in one CUNY community college examined the effectiveness of mixing English language learners (ELLs) and native English speakers (NES) in advanced-level developmental writing courses. We describe the translingual approach to curriculum and intervention along with promising developmental education practices. We also combine reflections on collaboration and student outcomes with quantitative analysis to allow each of these tools to inform the other, as well as to consider the limits of single-measure analysis of students and programs. The mixing of ELLs and NES fostered a less segregated classroom with student work and language development progressing more than in non-mixed classes. A statistical analysis confirmed these impressions, which suggests a relatively predictable outcome for this intervention. The experiment influenced several changes in departmental and instructor practices.

KEYWORDS: accelerated learning program; developmental writing; English language learners; supplemental instruction; translingual approach

As the student population continues to shift in two-year colleges, it has become increasingly important for composition instruction to move toward a translingual approach that views language differences as resources for creating meaning rather than as an interference or hindrance (Horner et al.). In fact, most composition classrooms have evolved into places where "the categories have blurred and it is not uncommon for ESL, second dialect, generation 1.5, and native English-speaking students to work side by side" (Maloy 54). Even with those blurred categories, the shared goal of academic literacy for ESL specialists, basic writing practitioners, and those focusing on composition studies remains paramount. At the program level, Elena

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Lawrick has advocated for full integration of writing pedagogies, assessment practices, and teacher training (51) while Steven Accardi and Bethany Davila have advocated for mixed English Language Learners (ELL) and Native English Speaking (NES) composition classrooms that celebrate differences with blended pedagogies that can offer the most benefits for both students and instructors (57).

As instructors who regularly teach advanced-level developmental writing courses with those increasingly blurred categories, we have observed how difficult it can be for our own diverse student population to progress through, and ultimately, exit remediation, specifically ELLs who were exiting remediation at about half the rate as NES. Thus, we wanted to address two major college and departmental concerns as we designed an intervention to improve student learning outcomes. Specifically, we were aware of how easily students in ESL classes fall into linguistic cliques within and outside of the classroom, and we have struggled to integrate students with their classmates and the larger college community via our ESL classes. Given students' limited opportunities to practice Englishes with peers from different linguistic backgrounds, we have often found the development of adequate linguistic skills for credit-bearing course work insufficient as judged by in-class work, as well as the more restrictive exit measure of the college, an all-or-nothing writing exam.

In this article, we describe and examine the effectiveness of a collaborative, experimental writing intervention that made use of multiple best practices and addressed those recurring issues for our developmental students. In short, we developed a writing intervention that not only mixed NES and ESL classes, but also included supplemental instruction, as an alternative means of exposing students to a broader linguistic environment both within and outside of the classroom. In addition, the classes used materials for a credit-bearing class, à la the ALP model, as a way of contextualizing the work within this broader linguistic environment.

In examining the effectiveness of the program, we reflected on differences observed between the mixed classes and non-mixed ESL classes that we have taught at other times. As a way of contextualizing these reflections, we also conducted a quantitative analysis. We considered a statistical mode of analysis to be useful as a single quantitative measure that determined whether these students advanced, and as such, has often been useful in arguing for programmatic changes. In addition, a careful statistical analysis, paired with our reflections, allows for deliberation on the nature of all-or-

nothing testing. Accordingly, while we measured how the experiment of mixing the populations affected pass rates and measure this outcome, we also paid close attention to the improvement we observed in student placement/exit scores and how those results compared with our own observations about the students' linguistic engagement and development. We also conducted a regression to measure if previous test scores, ELL status, and/or repeater status could be correlated with exit test results. Namely, we considered whether the mixing of ELLs and NES and the use of gateway course materials were changes that should be used on the programmatic level.

Below we describe the intervention in detail by highlighting how it differed from our standard departmental practices. Next, we report on the differences we observed from students in the sections, notably not just the more linguistically diverse interactions within groups during class time, but also across groups within and outside of class. The students were more engaged with each other, as well as with campus institutions, and in this way, seemed more prepared for the challenges of the credit-bearing English class. The statistical analysis confirms these impressions while also illustrating how the single-measure exit test can be a questionable measure of student progress and preparedness. Lastly, we discuss how our observations and data have contributed to programmatic changes since the experiment.

ELL and NES Differences in Two-Year Colleges

Studies have shown that there are differences not only between ELLs and NES, which manifest themselves in significantly distinct outcomes for both populations, but also significantly varied characteristics "*within* each ESL group" (Lawrick 29). For instance, Sally Renfro and Allison Armour-Garb found that ELLs had higher retention rates after four semesters, and for those ELLs who had higher language skills than other ELLs, they also had higher graduation and retention rates than NES. Yet those positive ELL outcomes belie a unique set of challenges facing that particular population. For instance, Shelley Staples and Randi Reppen have addressed the differences in the development of linguistic complexity in academic writing (17); Paul Kei Matsuda and Tony Silva have examined the cross-cultural issues that may present challenges to institutional integration and the learning environment (16); and Lyndall Nairn has discussed the variability in faculty responses to grammatical concerns for ELLs versus NES (4). These differences in outcomes, integration, and instructor sensitivities raise the question: is

it better for these students with significantly different strengths and weaknesses to address these concerns together or separately?

Yet research on the efficacy of mixing ELLs and NES in developmental writing courses in community colleges is more nascent (Burt). Jennifer Malia (29) examined how ELLs perform in mixed classrooms by surveying teachers of a mandatory writing course, but her study focused on students who are already in a credit-bearing class. Similarly, Detlev Stenild Larsen conducted a qualitative study in which students were interviewed in the hopes of better understanding how NES and ELLs in a developmental writing program experienced remediation. In Larsen's study, however, even though the populations had very similar curricula and program structure (slightly fewer students in ESL classes), the students were not in mixed classrooms (58). In one quantitatively oriented study, Darlene Rompogren does, in fact have a quantitative analysis of ELLs comparing them with those of NES (131). The results show ELLs do as well if not better than NES, but her analysis compares how NES and ELL populations do in English and reading courses after ELLs have completed their ESL program, not what their proficiency was after the mixed class itself.

In developing our own combined classroom, we relied partially on other published accounts about mixing such students (notably, these articles focused more on promising collaborative learning strategies rather than outcomes). The findings emanated primarily from basic writing courses in which students engaged in peer review, highly structured dyads, or group assignments. Wei Zhu found some success when ELLs and NES provided oral feedback during peer review (251), while Leslie Hall Bryan reported that the safety of small, mixed groups helped ELLs develop an important awareness of their own writing and the writing process, and they engaged in opportunities to "rehearse" writing modifications through those discussions (189). For dyads, Diana Dreyer noted that read-aloud exchanges of essay drafts, note-taking, and switching roles, provided rich language opportunities for ELLs and enhanced NES spoken and written communication too (11-12). Not least, Bruce Speck discussed the importance of varied ELL and NES groupings to promote constructive discussion along with requiring writing from each group member (55-56).

Other researchers have focused on incorporating culturally based thematic content and experiences into mixed classrooms. Among numerous cross-cultural writing projects and activities, Matsuda and Silva found that ELLs seemed to increase their confidence, audience awareness, and communicative ability after interacting with NES (20-22). Similarly, D.

Michael Keleher reported that many of the ELLs and NES believed peer-to-peer interaction during group work helped to improve their writing and enhanced their cultural appreciation in their collaborative developmental writing course (9-11). Lastly, Nizar Ibrahim and Susan Penfield found that "the effect of interaction added substance and interest to virtually all writing assignments" (223) in their mixed ELL-NES grouping.

While qualitative research and the promising practices literature offer intriguing insights into the mixing of ELLs and NES in developmental writing courses, our experiment offers an opportunity to evaluate the effectiveness of these practices. First, it allowed us to observe how students may have changed their linguistic behaviors and development. In addition, the experiment lent itself to a quantitative analysis of how these changes affected outcomes for the students in terms of advancement out of remediation. As this advancement was determined by a single measure, our study allows for reflection on the limits of single-measure exit practices through both observation and statistics.

Student and Institutional Background

Before describing the details of the intervention, we want to describe the student population at Queensborough Community College (QCC), as well as how remediation works at the school. Queens, New York is one of the most culturally diverse counties in the nation (Queens: Economic Development and the State of the Borough Economy, 2006), and QCC attracts a varied NES and ELL population. For instance, more than 40 percent of students claim to speak a language other than English at home; 24 percent are African-American, 27 percent Hispanic, and 26 percent Asian (Fact Book 2012-2013). Partially due to students' diverse cultural and educational experiences, as much as 70 percent of incoming freshmen have scored below proficiency on their entrance exams, which designates them as needing remediation in reading, writing, and/or mathematics (Fact Book 2012-2013).

When students require writing remediation at QCC, they are required to take intermediate- or advanced-level remedial writing courses within the English Department. If NES were born in the United States or have been in this country for most of their lives, they are placed in a class with other NES. ELLs who have recently emigrated from other countries and/or have limited English language skills are assigned to courses taught by instructors who specialize in second language acquisition and English for Academic Purposes, and these classes only have ELLs[1].

Our students' varied linguistic and educational backgrounds can present advantages and challenges for the department and the college. For instance, departmental data shows that students classified as ELL pass the writing exit exam at nearly half the rate as their NES counterparts. Yet ELLs sometimes outperform their NES counterparts in other areas, such as persistence and retention. In addition, the varied backgrounds allow there to be a worldwide range of experiences and approaches to the classes.

We had both taught separately tracked courses for more than three years at QCC before this experiment, and we had often shared thoughts about how we might be able to increase meaningful interactions between our ELL and NES students. We both observed how, even with the linguistic diversity available at the college, students in ESL classes often broke themselves up into groups inside and outside of class along native-language lines and very often communicated with each other in that native language inside and outside of the class. Even if student group composition for in-class group work was determined by the instructors, students would find ways to avoid English practice by conversing with the one member of the group who shared their native language, work across groups during class time, and/or work within their linguistic community outside of class.

While we both understood this desire to work with native-language peers as part of the development of proficiency with a non-native language, it is tricky in numerous ways, not the least of which is how much language and identity are closely linked. We acknowledged this to our students as we often explained why we felt it was so important to work inside and outside of class in English as much as possible, and while almost all our students would nod their heads during these explanations, agreeing that yes, developing English language skills would be necessary for success in credit-bearing classes, informal conversations with many students would often reveal almost no English practice outside of the classroom. Many would note the lack of opportunity of speaking English as a partial cause for their limited practice, stating that in their homes, neighborhoods, and communities, there were very few people who spoke English. We also observed that these ELLs were generally quite diligent in doing the work assigned to them. They would make significant progress as readers and writers in our class, and while not all of them seemed ready for credit-bearing English 101, many who did seem ready were not able to take the credit-bearing English class because of the university's all-or-nothing exit exam. This frustrated the students and kept them more linguistically isolated, as they would have to stay in ESL classes or workshops until they could pass the exam.

In the NES classes, the concerns and outcomes were different than in ESL classes. Students generally did not work as hard, but they mostly did not struggle to find other speakers of English to converse with inside and outside of class (it is not rare that an ELL finds his/her way into NES classes, or that a NES is still in a community that does not have many English speakers). The all-or-nothing exit exam seemed to present less of a challenge for the NES with pass rates at times twice as high as in comparable ESL classes. Still, NES classes were often difficult to teach, and part of the blame could be laid on the test. Students often rejected and resented the remedial label, limiting participation and engagement. As this was before the more widespread use of ALP, which contextualizes the remedial work with a concurrent credit-bearing curriculum (although we did in fact do this by using 101 materials for this experimental class, see below), helping students to find a reason to work besides passing the exit exam was a challenge.

With these problems in mind, we wondered if it might make sense to mix upper-level ELL and NES remedial sections. The ELL cohort would have more opportunities to work with English speakers in the class. Group work in class can often lead to conversations and friendships outside of class, which of course can lead to a larger and more linguistically diverse social network for the ELLs. In addition, we thought the "expert" status the NES would hold with their ELL cohort could help them overcome any negative self-image impressions that may have arisen from the remedial label, while also investing them with some other purpose in the class besides passing an exit test. As well, we thought an in-class tutor from the department's learning center would help provide another English speaker for the ELL cohort, and being one from a campus learning center, the tutor could provide an intermediate gateway to other parts of the college community (that is, as opposed to the professor or students).

It so happened that initiatives to bolster course and/or curricular innovation were offered during the summer session sections as an opportunity to experiment with the upper-level remedial curriculum and class structure. Thus, we decided in our experiment that we would mix one upper-level NES remedial writing section with one upper-level ELL remedial writing section during a summer session. On the first day of class, Cheryl's ELL section came to Jed's NES section classroom. We explained to the students that we were mixing the classes, so that each would have about as many ELLs and NES as the other. We also told the students that we would be teaching the same material to each class, so it wasn't as if one class would be different or more difficult from the other, except by way of the difference in instructor. The

rosters were split at random, and Cheryl returned to her class with her NES cohort, leaving some ELLs with Jed.

In the end, both sections contained a total of 34 students who ultimately finished the class and took the exit exam, of those 22 were ELLs and 12 were NES. Fifteen students were repeating the advanced-level class, and 19 students were taking the class for the first time. All but a handful of students had previously taken developmental courses within the English Department (at that time Basic Education Skills Department). Some were repeaters and others had advanced from intermediate-level classes. During program recruitment, advisors had informed students that they would not need to pay tuition for the class, and in this way, students who may not represent the highly-motivated cohort often found in summer program were also included in the intervention; that is, the summer student population that generally has to pay for its own classes, and often do so for acceleration or completion purposes, were likely not the only students participating in it. Perhaps confirming this, a measure of student retention, unofficial withdrawals, shows no statistically significant difference between the summer session cohort and spring/fall-semester cohort (13% for the summer intervention).

The classes for the five-week summer session intervention met for the same number of contact hours as the fall and spring semesters (60 hours); however, we met with the students in a compressed schedule, four times per week for three and one quarter hours a day.

Accelerated Learning and Promising Practices

As mentioned above, the intervention adapted the Accelerated Learning Program's (ALP) practice of presenting credit-bearing course material to developmental students, albeit without the traditional ALP's mixing of developmental students with non-developmental students or the possibility of the accompanying credits. Nevertheless, the material offered our students the opportunity for a more contextualized learning experience as described in the ensuing sections. To this end, we used as a text one of the more popular 101 texts used on our campus, *Patterns of Exposition* by Robert Schwegler.

In an overview of recent research done on ALP models, Shanna Jaggars, Nikki Edgecombe, and Georgia Stacey have shown that within the City University of New York (CUNY) and outside of CUNY there is a statistically significant difference in completed credits for those students within the program compared to those not in the ALP. Exactly why ALP students have had this positive outcome is not clear as students who succeed in the ALP

are consequently earning credits for a class that non-ALP students, even successful ones, may or may not end up registering for. While our intervention did not include the possibility of gateway-course credits (i.e. English 101), it did, however, contextualize the developmental work students are doing by exposing students to gateway-course materials, which is another possible source of the ALP's positive outcomes.

Supplemental Instruction. Given the difficulty of the course material and the desire for ELLs to practice English more, we felt that supplemental instruction (SI) would also be essential for the compressed time frame of the summer intervention. Joakim Malm, Leif Bryngfors, and Lise-Lotte Mörner found that developmental students benefitted from SI with regard to improved grades and reduced failure rates in high-risk courses (282), and Vincent Tinto notes that it enhanced retention in community colleges (61). Arendale also points out the use of "selected collaborative learning and study strategies" (21), along with sustained feedback about the comprehension of course material, helps students to better adapt their study behaviors to meet academic requirements and prepare for major examinations (22). In a similar vein, our SI tutors quickly identified necessary skills for course completion and sustained the learning process initiated during class time into their review sessions afterward. Again, the tutors provided an additional English interlocutor for ELLs and another way to integrate students into the more linguistically diverse college community.

Course Pedagogy. Our overall aims for the mixing of ELLs and NES largely aligned with a translingual approach to composition pedagogy. Horner et. al aptly posited that it is an approach that can serve "to develop and broaden the repertoire of students' linguistic resources and to honor the resources of all language users" (308). For us, honoring the resources of all language users required a shift in our thinking about the blurred categories present in our classrooms; ultimately, those students' language differences were not "interference" in our pursuit to instill the norms of standard written English. Indeed, Melissa Lee's assertion that when curriculum revision is informed by a translingual approach to composition pedagogy, instructors can embrace "hybridity and fluidity as norms of language acquisition, usage and development" (312). Following the tenets of translingualism, we attempted to design the curricular activities and assignments so that our students had opportunities to work in pairs and groups and to foster meaningful communicative interaction with each other as often as possible. Moreover, we wanted to include similar thematically based readings from different perspectives, so

that ELLs and NES with varied backgrounds and experiences would be able to compare and contrast ideas in new and challenging ways.

To give readers a sense of how the mixed classes were conducted, we here describe the reading and assignments for one of the four major readings we did (see Appendix for further description of the other assignments). Throughout the session, we planned to work on increasingly challenging assignments to promote students' critical thinking and inference skills. Perhaps the most abstract assignment was "Two Ways of Seeing a River" by Mark Twain. Due to the difficulty of the assignment, we decided to try a different teaching approach in which we took turns teaching each class, which was a decision largely based on our own instructional strengths. We switched classes with Cheryl focused on brainstorming and organizing students' ideas in relation to Twain's notion of how outlook and experience can alter one's perception, and Jed focused on producing the summary. After trading classes, we each taught the same lesson in our own classes.

This class switch occurred in the middle of the session, effectively reminding both classes that the cohort of potential colleagues with which they could discuss classwork was in fact not just their own class, but any student from either class. Recall, that on the first day of the semester, the classes were brought together and reconstituted. The students were doing the same assignments with the same readings, and thus, had a wider range of interlocutors than a typical class.

Within the classes, students were put into mixed ELL-NES groups for brainstorming and summary writing assignments. Each group was asked to present their ideas and summaries to the class, with each member of the group required to present the work to the class in some way orally. For outlining and peer review assignments, students were paired off, an ELL with NES whenever possible, and when not, an ELL with another ELL of a different linguistic background. As Twain's essay deals with how differing backgrounds and perspectives can affect the way something appears to its viewer, the multitude of cultural and linguistic backgrounds led to lively discussions and illustrations of Twain's point. These tasks were again designed so that students would be prompted to practice speaking and listening as much as possible, but also so that the differing backgrounds were shown to be enriching. Finally, the students worked on the essay for this assignment while in the Academic Literacy Learning Center (ALLC), the same place the SI tutor would work with them outside of class time. As the students worked in the ALLC, the tutors and instructors came around and discussed the essay with them.

Just as we did with the Twain assignment, we repeated group-switching and mixing to mirror content and provide actual movement among and between groups for all the readings and assignments. Even though the other major readings were not as abstract as Twain, our overall pedagogical approach still provided ample opportunities for ELLs and NES to share different perspectives and engage in thoughtful discussions. Such interactions seemed to bolster students' reading comprehension and their confidence in working on the corresponding essay assignments.

Reflections on the Mixed Classes

Both of us have experienced summer session classes as more intense versions of spring and fall semesters. When they go well, the momentum of the work and progress can make the classes fly along, but when the classes don't click, daily meetings for over three hours can be a drain for the students and the professors. Interestingly, these classes did not feel either especially positive or negative. The more regular, longer class meetings paired with a new curriculum and course structure did often make us feel drained. However, the students' progress and group engagement were palpable and encouraging, to the point that the results of the exit exam described in the section below (which were in fact significant improvements) seemed disappointing since we felt confident that the classes were progressing so well.

Not surprisingly, considering our focus on mixing ELLs and NES, we were greatly satisfied with the increase in English usage in the classroom for the ELLs. The group work and paired work required students to communicate in English, and the informal conversations between students during breaks, before class, and after class were also observed to be almost all in English. The ELLs seemed to feel comfortable discussing homework and readings with the NES. They also seemed comfortable talking to them about other topics like snacks, commuting, us, the tutors, and the weather. Although we were conscious of the lack of English opportunities for ELLs, we primarily considered it in academic terms, and were surprised at how much the effect of mixing the populations extended the English opportunities for the students beyond class time.

Similarly, we had figured it would be useful to have the quasi-peer, quasi-instructor in the person of an in-class tutor for the students to talk with. The tutors were in fact regularly used by both populations as interlocutors and purposefully. There were times when groups would seek the tutor out instead of one of us because they wanted to present their ideas or ques-

tions in a less formal way. Likewise, when we were engaged in working with students or groups and another group had their hands up, we would offer to have the tutor help, but we were often told they wanted to check their ideas on us (and not because they thought the tutors weren't trustworthy). This awareness of different English registers was very gratifying, and again surprising, to observe.

Another benefit we observed was the way both populations regularly sought the help of the tutors and each other outside of class time. Both of us had multiple experiences of visiting the learning center to check on the tutors, or to coordinate with its director, to find multiple students from both classes engaged in work with the tutors from the class, other tutors, classmates or students in the other section. This was considered a heartening development as we had observed that a small set of ELLs made use of the tutoring available on campus (though those that did, we observed, would do so intensively). Having the tutors in the classroom, along with the increased confidence in English-language skills, appeared to make the students more comfortable to extend their potential for English practice outside of the classroom.

Although the effects described above generally are described through the prism of ELL changes, they also reflect changes for NES. As stated earlier, engagement with NES in remedial classes can be a challenge. The increase in NES engagement in class time, as well as in before class, during breaks, and after class conversations, suggested a more engaged NES population. Their ELL peers engaged them as linguistic experts, and thus, reached the students in ways we had struggled to. The NES were also more regularly seen in the learning center, again suggesting greater engagement. Part of the increased engagement could likely be attributed to the challenging nature of the work in the class. We would often hear remarks such as, "We're trying to figure this one out, Professor," when we saw the students in the learning center or returning from breaks. The playful complaints about the challenging nature of the work were taken as further evidence of increased engagement and the value of contextualizing the remedial work for a group of learners who were invested in each other's success.

One student in particular seemed to exemplify the benefits of the mixed class. This student had struggled to pass the exit test for numerous semesters. Conversations with the student and previous instructors attributed earlier challenges in exiting to limited English skills, but the more recent challenges were not as easily explained. The student worked hard in class and had developed her English skills to the point that non-passing grades on the exit

exams would surprise her instructors. The student had grown frustrated but continued to work hard. She expressed some concern on the first day, when we mixed the classes, about the experiment. Within a week, the student was acting almost as a second tutor in the class, regularly checking in with other groups for clarification on readings or assignments and pushing classmates to stay with her and the tutor after class for extra work. Even through all this, with her confidence growing, the student regularly expressed anxiety about the all-or-nothing exam at the end of the semester. She ended up passing and continued to earn an A in English 101. Returning after the exit exam and her English 101 success, the student would reflect on how the class gave her confidence, but she would also refer to other students in the class, showing the community effects of the mixing lasted.

Data Analysis

As stated in the introduction, our article looks to examine the effectiveness of our experiment with both reflections on the mixed courses and a quantitative analysis. The above reflections are anecdotal, and we hope valuable in that way. However, the analysis in this section is used to contextualize those reflections, as well as to explore the value and meaningfulness of single-measure exit criteria for remediation.

In examining the effectiveness of the program quantitatively, we first focus on the department's ability to advance the students out of remediation and the students' improvement as measured by entrance and exit scores (as opposed to how well the students were prepared for credit-bearing academic work in courses like ENG 101). As such, one of the primary outcomes that we have examined is pass rate for the exit exam. While a number of researchers have doubted the reliability of placement tests as a measure of academic success (Scott-Clayton and Rodriguez 5), for years it has been these tests, and these tests alone, that has determined whether the students in our upper-level developmental writing course can advance to the gateway course. As such, the results of the exit exam are one way of contextualizing the above reflections on the mixed classes and considering the meaningfulness of the exit exam.

There are obviously other measures and variables that can be considered for inclusion in this analysis besides pass rates, as there are numerous sources for student progress (or lack of progress). In this analysis, three primary independent variables are considered: ELL/NES status, placement score, and repeater status. ELL/NES status is included as it is a major concern

in the study, but it also represents a variable that can be viewed from the programmatic level as an input for placement. Likewise, a student's score on the placement exam, or whether a student has repeated the class, can also be viewed as an input for placement. More challenging variables to control for on the programmatic input level are instructor (there may be great variance in instructor pass rates and/or availability[2]), reading materials, and assignment types. It is for this reason that we are primarily considered with the variables listed.

As a dependent variable, a focus on pass rate allows us to assess how effective the intervention is, but the intervention must also be examined within the larger context of the program's sequencing, advancement criteria, and cut-off scores for each level. If students need to only score one or two points higher to pass the exam, and do just that, the intervention's success would need qualification. Similarly, if students need to make significant improvement to pass the exam, and they do so, though not entirely, the intervention's seeming failure should be understood in the larger context of the program, perhaps suggesting the intervention is, in fact, useful as long as other changes in the program are implemented (e.g. different placement scores).

The question of how much progress a student made is easily answered for repeating students since a failing grade on the exit exam is what forced them to retake the class. That failing grade is thus the most reliable statistical indicator that we had available for the student's entering expertise. However, for students who advanced into the class, their placement scores (the placement test is the same test as the exit test) may not be reliable because of the progress students made in their lower-level classes. Standardized exit exams for lower-level classes do offer an opportunity for us to estimate the students' entering expertise.

In our developmental writing courses, the final exam is nearly identical to the CATW and is scored with the same rubric as the exit exam and graded by two faculty members. Students must score above a score of 50 to advance to the upper-level class. For lower-level writing classes, students far exceeding the cutoff may bypass the upper-level and take the exit exam that semester, making the intervention useless to them. Thus, because we do not have access to the students' lower-level final scores, the students' adjusted placement scores were estimated at approximately the mid points of the placement range for the upper-level classes: 52 for writing (placement range 50-55). However imperfect this estimation may seem, it should be kept in

Table 1. Summary Statistics of Students Overall and Broken Down into ELL and NES Populations.

Cohort		**Placement Score**	**Adjusted Placement Score**	**Exit Score**	**Improvement** (between Adjusted and Exit Score)
Experimental Population *34 Students Overall*	*Mean* *Median* *StanDev*	46.82 48 3.63	50.27 52 2.47	54.73 56 6.63	4.46 4 5.7
ELLs *22 Students*	*Mean* *Median* *StanDev*	*46.95* *48* *3.46*	*50* *50* *2.83*	*54* *56* *6.66*	*4* *6* *5.51*
NES *12 Students*	*Mean* *Median* *StanDev*	*46.58* *48* *4.06*	*50.75* *52* *1.66*	*56* *56.5* *6.67*	*5.25* *4.5* *6.18*

mind that it is examined in concert with the more specified most-recent scores for repeaters.

Results

Table 1 shows a summary of the statistics for the summer intervention in the writing classes. The table shows that there is not much difference between the ELL and NES populations in terms of placement score and adjusted placement score averages. However, for the NES population, the median score, that is the middle score of the population as they are listed from least to most, is a little higher. The median score is presented with the average score to give readers another sense of an "average" student as the mean (average) can be heavily influenced by extremely low scores. In terms of exit scores, the NES population has a slightly higher average score than the ELL population. Standard deviation data is provided to give readers another sense of how close the majority of scores were to the average score. A lower standard deviation suggests more "clustering" around the average score, while a high score suggests a wider range of performance for students

Although the sample size is significantly smaller for the summer intervention, overall exit-test data for the program were better than the department's average for the previous semester and the overall pass rate for the previous three semesters (see Figure 1). One way of understanding whether these differences are meaningful or just a result of chance in statistics is to use a z-test. In a study that has two possible outcomes for a population (in this case pass or fail on the exit exam), a z-test considers the number of participants with one of the outcomes (in this case, passing) as well as the number of participants in each sample (in this case, the number of students taking the class each semester). The z-test produces a p-value, and that p-value represents how likely the difference between the populations is related to chance. Generally, if the z-test produces a result under .05, it can be said with some confidence that the difference between the populations is statistically significant, as more broadly the lower than .05 value means there is less than a 5% chance the difference in the populations is related to chance.

Z-tests on the data in Figure 1 confirm the statistical significance of the difference between ELL and NES results over the three semesters prior to the intervention ($p<.001$). This suggests the program's set up before the intervention was not working as well for the ELL population as the NES population. These results line up with the frustration we and our students experience in ELL stand-alone classes, at least in terms of disappointing re-

sults. It is important to note that the improvement in the summer programs is almost entirely in the ELL population, with z-tests suggesting only a statistically significant difference between the ELL pass rates when comparing the intervention with previous results ($p<.03$), and not for overall pass rates. Although the number of students in summer intervention (21) is relatively small and much lower than that of the previous semester (~150), the result is still considered promising considering the low p.

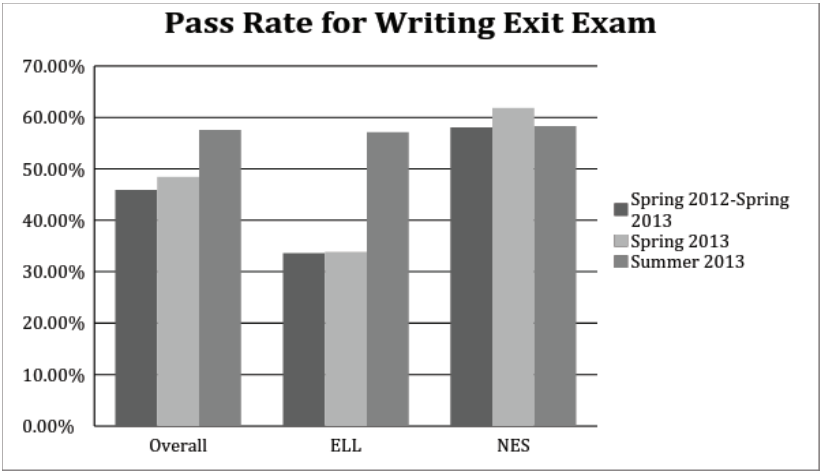

Figure 1. Pass rates for ELLs and NES on writing exit exam over three different time periods: the three previous semesters combined, the most recent semester, and the summer intervention.

When comparing the improvement of ELL and NES populations from an adjusted placement score to the exit exam, the average improvement for NES was higher, but the median improvement for ELLs was higher, while the standard deviations for improvement for both populations were similar (see Table 2). Using the same measures for repeaters and non-repeaters, it is observed that the mean and median improvement for the repeaters is higher. This difference is accompanied by a wider standard deviation for the repeaters. With no statistically significant differences found between the populations, these data, taken as a whole, suggest the intervention worked equally well for ELLs and NES, as well repeaters and non-repeaters. The parity in these measures of improvement suggests that the pass rate parity, the one observed only in the intervention, is not simply a result of students with higher entering scores only improving some. In fact, students in all cohorts seem to be improving at a relatively equal pace.

Table 2. Improvement Across Adjusted Entrance Exam and Writing Exit Exam for Cohorts of ELL, NES, Repeater, and Non-Repeater.

Cohort	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation
ELL	4	6	5.51
NES	5.25	4.5	6.18
Repeater	4.93	5.5	6.8
Non-Repeater	4	4.11	4.91

Discussion

The increased engagement for both ELL and NES populations was both not surprising (that is, within class time) and surprising (outside of class), and since the classes seemed to make such progress with English 101 course materials, we expected (or hoped for) better results in terms of the exit exam. The results described above though do, in fact, suggest our impressions were accurate as there was a significant improvement for the ELLs. Furthermore, the data suggested meaningful improvement for all the cohorts we examined. That this improvement, coupled with English 101 course materials, was not enough for some students to exit remediation, we view as a partial indictment of the all-or-nothing exit exam for remediation. Additional analysis of the intervention reveals a relatively predictable outcome for the intervention in terms of improvement, and with this in mind, it is certainly the case that the results suggest that the placement scores for the upper-level remedial class might need reconsideration. However, we both saw a few students whom we thought were ready for English 101 work, who did not make it just because of the exit exam.

Two of the ELLs, in fact, had exit-test results that showed that the students had improved, but their scores were below the cut off for taking English 101, for one of the students by one point. Both of these students seemed to us ready for English 101 work and were engaged in practicing and improving their English, and instead of being allowed to pass the students,

we were forced to refer them to a 20-hour, test-prep workshop. The students both passed the workshop and earned B grades in English 101 in their first attempt taking the class. It would seem in light of these students' subsequent success that the additional resources used in getting these students to pass an exam would be unnecessary if the instructors had discretion over passing students. It is heartening to see the changes CUNY has adopted since this experiment with students in accelerated models not needing to take an all-or-nothing exit exam, and those in stand-alone classes having that exam be only part of the exit assessment.

This experiment prompted several changes in our teaching practices and helped contribute to larger departmental changes. For us, utilizing the translingual approach brought forth a number of new understandings and possibilities. Lee summarized the main principles of the approach in the following way: "Languages and boundaries between them are never fixed, the focus should be on intelligibility rather perceived fluency, the blending of languages is normal, all language involves translation" (316). When we mixed our ELLs and NES, those translingual tenets were brought to fruition due to the productive student interactions and the meaning-making that they engaged in with each other, with us, and with the supplemental instruction tutors. Based on those beneficial learning outcomes, we have sought more opportunities to mix our ELL and NES students during the fall and spring semesters too. We designed a number of collaborative learning projects for those separately tracked students to interact and create meaning together via scaffolded listening, speaking, reading, and writing activities. Furthermore, we shared our classroom experiences and projects with other instructors in departmental professional development workshops; the feedback from those workshops revealed that instructors across ELL and NES course sections expressed quite a bit of interest in mixing their students and partnering with other instructors as well. As an extension of that conversation, the department has added regular conversation hours, run through the writing center, again helping students to engage with more speakers of Englishes and college institutions. These sessions are led by faculty and tutors, again mirroring the model from our experimental summer session.

Departmental changes followed the experiment as well, and while not all of the structural changes can be attributed to the experiment, we believe the changes were in part informed by the success of mixing ELLs and NES for upper-level remedial work. For one, remedial reading and writing work at the college was part of a separate department from English at the time of the experiment, and since then the departments have merged. A major

impetus for this change was the developing awareness that contextualizing remedial work was crucial for students. In addition, as the practice of keeping NES and ELLs separate was questioned by this experiment, the point of keeping remediation separate from English was also questioned at this time. The college's ALP model also followed our experiment, and a major element of its success has been the benefits for ELLs (see Anderst, Maloy, and Shahar for overview of program and benefits for ELL). The argument for ELLs in the ALP was made in large part by the success of this experiment.

Ultimately, the results suggest this intervention, which had the mixing of NES and ELL populations, the use of gateway course materials, and SI appears to improve pass rates for ELLs while not significantly affecting the NES. The results taken with our own observations and reflections suggest that mixing of NES and ELLs in upper-level remediation is useful in that it increases potential English interlocutors and opportunities. What's more, students, ELLs, as well as NES, were more engaged in a curriculum that contextualized the remediation. The success of the curriculum and the mixing validates the argument for a translingual approach advocated for in the past. These results have been incorporated into the college's remediation program in significant ways and have contributed to the merging of the college's remedial department with English as well as to its ALP model. The evidence from previous research and this study suggests the mixing of NES and ELL populations is beneficial for ELLs from at least one level below credit-bearing writing classes. Finally, we have shown that the university's move away from all-or-nothing exit testing for remedial students is an important step in matching student development with credit-bearing classes.

Conclusion

With more and more linguistically diverse students enrolling in two-year colleges, mixing ELLs and NES provides important benefits. Perhaps most importantly, bringing ELLs and NES together in the same composition classroom creates opportunities for instructors and students alike: Instructors can better integrate a translingual approach into their course pedagogy and assessment practice while students can use their linguistic differences as a resource to enhance learning. For ELLs in particular, the benefit of mixing emanates from interacting and creating meaning through informal and formal interactions that would not likely occur in separately tracked classes. Finally, mixing ELLs and NES coincides with recent best practices in developmental education, most notably the shift toward acceleration learning

models, that is contextualizing developmental learning. In the case of ALP, that context is the credit-bearing class, and in this model, there is the richer linguistic environment for both ELLs and NES.

Notes

1. Placement into intermediate- and advanced-level developmental writing courses is determined by the results of the CUNY Assessment Test in Writing (CATW), which has been a requirement for almost all QCC students since 2010 (as of Fall 2019 will not be used for placement, except under certain circumstances). The CATW is a 90-minute exam that asks students to respond to a 250-300 word 10th-12th grade level reading passage. Students are asked to summarize the text and respond to significant idea(s) by handwriting a well-developed, multi-paragraph essay. ELLs and NES who score between 50 and 55 are placed in advanced-level developmental writing courses, but they may also progress into the advanced-level class from an intermediate-level class after successfully completing the required course work and earning a score between a 50 and 55 on the English Department's final writing exam, which is similar to the CATW. During a typical fifteen-week spring or fall semester, students receive 60 hours of instruction with full-time or part-time faculty and meet twice per week for approximately one hour and forty minutes. At the end of the semester, students who have completed their course work can re-take the CATW, and those who achieve a score of 56 or above can exit remediation.
2. Both instructors in this study had pass rates in the past that were relatively similar to department averages for both NES and ELL populations.
3. As a way to understand what variable(s) may be leading to exit score outcomes in the summer intervention, a regression was run. A regression considers whether certain input variables (like ELL status) are affecting an output variable (in this case, exit score). A regression also looks to create a formula that states how much an input variable affects an outcome. This was done for this data as a way of understanding variable(s) most predictably affecting performance on exit scores in this intervention. If we were to find that ELLs or NES is an important variable, then we can say that the intervention "discriminates" in one way or the other for or against that population as that input predictably affects exit test score. Interestingly, a regression with ELL status, repeater status, entering CATW score, and adjusted CATW score as variables shows the adjusted

placement score is a good predictor of the exit exam score on the CATW. This means that, of the variables we considered, only adjusted incoming placement score predicted how well the students would do on the exit, not repeater status, not ELL status. This suggests the intervention does not favor one population over the other in a predictable way in terms of ELL status.

When a regression is run with only the adjusted score against the exit score, again there is a statistically significant difference, confirming the statistical correlation between adjusted placement score and exit score for this intervention. Equation (1) represents the relationship ($p < .01$). (1) Exit Score = 1.4467 * CATW Enter Adjusted - 18.0037

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APPENDIX

Description of Class Assignments

The first set of articles dealt with societal roles and the expectations or assumptions that coincide with those roles. In "Mother Tongue," Amy Tan addresses the notion of native language and how "broken English" influenced her perception of identity in family situations and in interactions with an often unforgiving outside world. After reading this text, our students discussed their own experiences with language in smaller groups mixed with ELLs and NES. Students then wrote an essay that would be similar to the CATW in which they were asked to summarize main ideas, discuss one significant idea, and include some type of personal experience that would be connected to the passage.

Upon completion of the Tan text, we paired readings with similar themes from differing viewpoints once again so that students would develop their ability to analyze and synthesize texts. The next set of readings dealt with the themes of trust and mistrust in society and corresponding societal roles: "In and of Ourselves We Trust" by Andy Rooney provides a positive stance on how most people are innately good citizens even if they can make selfish or reckless choices with impunity, while Brent Staples laments racially motivated mistrust among citizens and how that mistrust adversely affects perceptions of identity and societal interactions in "Just Walk on By." Again, ELLs and NES engaged in mixed group discussions and worked on CATW-type essays that compared and contrasted those articles.

The final assignment included the assigned reading, "The Great TV Debate" by Jason Kelly, and the additional requirement of conducting research that would contextualize the debate with regard to societal impact on TV watching, especially for children. After the initial discussion to ensure an understanding of the author's ambivalent position on the issue, the students had more autonomy than in previous assignments. Pairs of students had the choice to find data from several websites to support their chosen side of the TV debate and create a Powerpoint slideshow or other visual/multimedia response to present their position to the other students. The pars conducted their research and crafted their digital response in the ALLC, but gave their presentations in the assigned classroom. Throughout the whole process, we served as facilitators as students decided on the direction and scope of their research, creation of the digital response, the written product, and class presentation.