Title of project:
Exploring relationships between the new Indiana Academic English Test (IAET) and external measures

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Abstract

Exploring relationships between the new Indiana Academic English Test (IAET) and external measures

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The Department of Second Language Studies (SLS) has developed and administered the Indiana English Proficiency Exam (IEPE) to assess English proficiency of matriculated international students for the decisions made about their exemptions from or placements into the English Language Improvement Program (ELIP). However, the current IEPE exam has been used for a while without being revised and needs to be updated to enhance the degree of alignment between the test content and the ELIP curriculum. Additionally, the Office of the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education (OVPUE) requested that we implement web-based version of the test in order to improve logistical efficiency. Thus, the SLS has launched a new online test development project in which the integrated reading-to-write and narrative writing tasks along with real lecture-based listening tests are included to better represent the current ELIP curriculum and to assess students’ academic English abilities in a more valid manner. This innovative test is now called as the Indiana Academic English Test (IAET), which will be implemented in January 2017 as a new placement exam for the ELIP courses.

This proposed study will explore the relationships between students’ standardized language test scores (e.g., the TOEFL iBT and IELTS) and the IAET writing and listening scores to establish the concurrent validity of the test. It will also examine the consequential validity of the test by comparing the students’ GPA data across groups of students who are exempted from the test, tested out of the test, placed into different ELIP courses, or do not comply with placement recommendations based on test scores. This analysis will help us to see if proper placement and instructional intervention should result in measurable benefits to the students. Given these measures, ANOVAs and multiple regressions will be run on the data to establish the validity of the test and ELIP placement decisions. With the support of the Learning Analytics Fellows Program, this proposed study will shed light on concurrent and consequential validity of the new IAET, and will provide useful insight into various administrative policies regarding international undergraduate education at IU.
Project Description

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Pre-arrival standardized test scores (e.g., SAT, ACT, and TOEFL iBT) have been shown not to work for placing students into appropriate courses because these existing test scores do not represent their most updated English language abilities (Kokhan, 2012) and are not aligned with the ESL curricula (Fox, 2009), thus resulting in serious misplacement of international students into ESL courses (Kokhan, 2013). For these reasons, the Department of Second Language Studies (SLS) has developed and administered the Indiana English Proficiency Exam (IEPE) to assess English proficiency of matriculated international students for the decisions made about their exemptions from or placements into the English Language Improvement Program (ELIP). However, the current IEPE exam has been used for a while without being revised and needs to be updated to enhance the degree of alignment between the test content and the ELIP curriculum. In addition, the Office of the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education (OVPUE) requested that we implement web-based version of the test in order to improve logistical efficiency. Thus, the SLS has launched a new online test development project in which the integrated reading-to-write and narrative writing tasks along with real lecture-based listening tests are included to better represent the current ELIP curriculum and to assess students’ academic English abilities in a more valid manner. This innovative test is now called as the Indiana Academic English Test (IAET), which will be implemented in January 2017 as a new placement exam for the ELIP courses. This test is intended to examine whether newly admitted non-English speaking international students’ level of English proficiency is sufficient for academic coursework at IU. Students who do not pass this test will be required to take the ELIP courses (e.g., SLST-T 101).

This proposed study will explore the relationships between students’ standardized language test scores (e.g., the TOEFL iBT and IELTS) and the IAET writing and listening scores to establish the concurrent validity of the test. Concurrent validity involves comparing newly developed assessment tool to an external criterion to see whether there is positive correlation between one test and others meant to measure the same construct. If the same test takers score within the same range consistently on both tests, concurrent validity could be said to be high. Thus, by comparing the IAET test scores and other external scores, our newly developed English placement test can be validated to a certain degree.

It will also examine the consequential validity of the test by comparing the students’ GPA data across groups of students who are exempted from the test, tested out of the test, placed into different ELIP courses, or do not comply with placement recommendations based on test scores. This analysis will provide useful information for us to see if proper placement and instructional intervention should result in measurable benefits to the students. Given that ELIP courses are designed and offered to help international undergraduate students to succeed academically in the subsequent courses, we expect that if our ELIP courses are effective, students who have completed ELIP courses will be comparable in terms of overall GPAs in the regular undergraduate courses to those who were exempt from the IAET or passed the test, but will outperform the students who were placed into, but did not take ELIP courses.
Given these measures, ANOVAs and multiple regressions will be run on the data to establish the validity of the test and ELIP placement decisions. With the support of the Learning Analytics Fellows Program, this proposed study will shed light on concurrent and consequential validity of the new IAET, and will provide useful insight into various administrative policies regarding international undergraduate education at IU.

References

