
USING COMPUTER-ASSISTED GRADE PROFILES
TO EVALUATE ESL STUDENT PLACEMENT IN
FRESHMAN WRITING COURSES

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This session focused on a research project aimed at reviewing evaluation of the skills of ESL writers. Administrators of freshman writing programs often receive complaints from instructors about the poor writing skills of ESL students. These administrators need to determine whether problems with ESL students are significant enough to warrant separating them from native language students in freshman writing courses. The University of South Alabama used a review of computerized records to assess the nature and severity of difficulties evident in ESL writing. The data revealed great variability in the performance of ESL students, with differences in performance strongly associated with both academic records and social background characteristics of ESL students.

Session participants seemed to reach consensus about the heterogeneous nature of the ESL student population and the need for careful assessment of students, rather than wholesale treatment of large categories of students. Additional comments concerned the limitations of data available for ESL students and the need for more complete information.