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FAILURE IN A COLLEGE ESL COURSE: PERSPECTIVES OF INSTRUCTORS AND STUDENTS

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Based on data collected for a larger study, this paper reports on perceptions of factors contributing to students’ failure in a college ESL course. Surveys were completed by instructors of 67 students who failed their class. The instructors were asked their perceptions of what caused the students’ failure. Then, 22 of the students were interviewed about their backgrounds, current experiences in the college ESL program, motives, needs, and attitudes. Responses confirmed contributing factors identified in previous studies such as negative attitude; lack of interest, effort or motivation; insufficient target-language use; and deficient first-language reading and writing skills. The instructors also considered family and employment responsibilities that the ESL students had shouldered while taking the course as having a detrimental effect on their performance. The instructors’ perceptions of variables for failure correlated with information the students revealed in the interviews. The implications of the study include better communications between instructors and counselors, early intervention, more individual conferences between instructors and students, individualized tutoring assistance, and better support services.

Advanced English literacy, which involves decoding as well as high-order thinking—conceptualizing, inferring, inventing, and testing (Scarcella, 2002, p.211), is a requirement of English as a Second Language (ESL) students for success in secondary and post secondary schooling in the U.S.

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Factors contributing to ESL students’ success and failure in developing advanced literacy in English are numerous and often interactive (Scarcella, 2002). Based on her review of recent research, Scarcella (2002) identifies the following as factors that affect the acquisition of advanced literacy by ESL students: advanced literacy skills in the first language (Bialystok, 1997; Cummins, 1984; Durgunoglu, Nagy, & Hancin-Bhatt, 1993; Horberger, 1989; Krashen, 1993; Muchisky & Tangren, 1999); strong oral English proficiency upon entry to school (August & Hakuta, 1997; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998); opportunities for interaction with speakers of standard English (Wong Fillmore & Snow, 1999); basic reading ability (August & Hakuta, 1997; Krashen, 1993); input via written text (Wong Fillmore & Snow, 1999); and attention to form (August & Hakuta, 1997; Snow et al., 1998; Swain & Lapkin, 1990).

Other factors contributing to ESL students’ success and failure in acquiring advanced English literacy have also been studied. The importance of affective factors for language learning has long been understood (Dulay, Burti, & Krashen, 1982; Gardner, 1985; Hermann, 1980; Horwitz & Young, 1990; Krashen, 1981). Various affective factors, such as the learner’s motives, needs, attitudes, emotional states, and others, can all cause differences in advanced literacy acquisition (Gardner, Tremblay, & Masgoret, 1997; Oxford, 1996). Brilliant, Lvovich, and Markson (1995) note that psychosocial factors (e.g., the immigrant experience, the acculturation process, etc.) appear to be obstacles to ESL students. Watt, Roessingh, and Bosetti (1996) acknowledge that the dual burden of acquiring L2 proficiency to compete in the academic environment and of coping with issues related to immigration “mitigates against the success of many ESL students” (p. 200).

However, the socioeconomic variable as a contributing factor for the success or failure of a student in attaining advanced English proficiency and academic success cannot be overlooked. “The financial status of immigrant families often leads students to assume heavy workloads off campus with negative effects on academic performance” (Harklau, Losey, & Siegal, 1999, p. 5). Job and other familial obligations can put a great strain on students’ studying time and ability to focus, thus impeding their performance.

The English department of Kingsborough Community College, a part of the City University of New York (CUNY) system, runs a large academic ESL program, with a peak enrollment of over 1400 matriculated students in the 1990s. Successful completion of the 3-level ESL sequence advances students to upper level developmental English courses. While taking ESL or developmental English courses, full-time students receiving financial assistance from the government must also take credit-bearing courses that total at least 6 credits per semester. However, some academic
courses are not open to ESL students unless they have exited successfully from the developmental English sequence by passing the University’s required ACT reading and writing proficiency tests.

Kingsborough’s ESL sequence has been deliberately designed to promote success and minimize failure, providing both for rapid advancement, where merited, and for additional instruction, where needed. However, some of our students still fail to progress, oftentimes repeating one or more courses in the ESL sequence. Due to CUNY’s policies regarding restrictions for financial aid and time limits for completing ESL and developmental work, our repeating students are under tremendous pressure to complete ESL courses. The department sees an urgent need to find ways to help and advance these students more efficiently. What is reported here is a study of the partial data collected for a larger research project. The larger project is in response to the department’s request to conduct a study on the repeating students, with the mission of finding out the students’ needs and resources, and their areas of competence and problems.

The purpose of the larger study was to survey instructors and interview students in order to identify possible patterns of and factors contributing to failure in an advanced ESL course. It was hoped that an awareness of the patterns and factors for failure would assist the ESL program and instructors in providing support services and adjusting the course structure and pedagogy at times when the students were vulnerable and most at risk of failure.

The study reported here specifically seeks to answer these questions: What is the instructors’ assessment of the repeating students’ strengths and weaknesses, based on their classroom observations and records? What do the instructors consider as the major factors contributing to their students’ failing their course? What are the students’ backgrounds, affective domain, and perceptions of their experiences in the ESL program that can help explain their failure? What are the students’ special needs and problems to be addressed by the program?

**SAMPLE**

The study surveyed 17 instructors who taught ESL 91 in 2 semesters and interviewed 22 of the 70 students who failed both the reading and writing components of the course. ESL 91, the highest level in the department’s ESL sequence, was chosen for the study because students at this level had speaking and listening skills that generally would allow interviews to be conducted smoothly in English. A total of 15 instructors responded to the survey and evaluated 67 students who failed the course.
The biographical data about the 22 students ($M = 10; F = 12$) are as follows: they came from the Dominican Republic (4), Ecuador (1), Haiti (6), Honduras (1), Hong Kong (1), Peru (1), the Philippines (1), Russia (2), and Ukraine (5); spoke Chinese, Haitian Creole/French, Russian, Spanish, and Tagalog as their first or native languages; and aged from 18 to 39 with the length of residence in the U.S. varying from 2 to 10 years. Of these students, 9 had completed secondary education in their native countries, including 4 who had some college work; 10 students received diplomas from U.S. high schools, most entering school in or after the 10th grade; and 3 obtained GED (general equivalency degree) after attending high school briefly.

The survey asked the instructors to evaluate, on a scale of 1 to 6, with 6 being the highest value, the students’ relative strengths/weaknesses in speaking and listening, classroom behavior, attendance and homework record, and motivation and attitude. In addition, the survey solicited instructors’ opinions about factors that contributed to students’ failure in the ESL course.

The semistructured interviews were conducted in a friendly and informal atmosphere and lasted a little over an hour. Participating students were given the same set of questions. However, they were probed for further explanation or elaboration depending on the amount or type of information they offered to the questions. The interviews focused on the following areas: students’ previous education and English-learning background, immigration to the United States and the adjustment process, reading and writing habits, family responsibilities, English use outside of the college environment, and perceptions of the department’s reading and writing assessment practices as well as their own language learning experiences in the ESL program. The interviews were tape-recorded and later transcribed for content analysis.

The survey and interview content and questions were generated based on the author’s own experience and hunches as an instructor in the ESL program, and discussions with other ESL instructors and program directors. There was also a review of the studies regarding success and/or failure for second-language acquisition in general, and advanced English literacy development for ESL students in particular. The survey was piloted with two instructors and interviews with three students. Content and questions were further revised and refined.

The content analysis of the transcribed interviews revealed a tremendous body of information related to the multilayered and interwoven issues of language learning, identity, literacy, and affects. However, due to the limited scope of this paper, only a number of predominant and recurring themes discovered within, as well as across, the students’ revelations that are pertinent to contributing factors for failure and to the findings of the survey of instructors will be reported here.
FINDINGS

Survey of Instructors

Students’ Strengths and Weaknesses
The survey of instructors revealed that the 67 students, as a group, were evaluated highest for attendance (a mean score of 4.23 out of 6), but lowest for the quality of their homework (2.77 of 6). Aspects that received above-average values (>3.5) included: listening comprehension in class (3.76), speaking ability (3.68), motivation toward learning (3.61), interaction with other students (3.54), and attentiveness in class (3.51). Areas that obtained below-average assessments were: students’ involvement in class activities (3.2), attitude toward homework (3.4), homework submission (3.42), and interest in the subject (3.49). In short, students were in class, understanding what went on, and seemed engaged.

These results indicate that, overall, the students had proficiency in basic English skills for interpersonal communication, as judged by the above-average values the instructors assigned to their abilities to speak English, understand spoken English, and interact with other students. However, their conversational competence did not lead to success in the advanced ESL reading and writing course, which was a more abstract and demanding context of language learning. This survey result is consistent with previous studies (Collier, 1987; Collier & Thomas, 1989) in showing that basic oral proficiency in L2 is not sufficient for success in academic settings. The fact that instructors assessed the quality of the students’ homework as the worst was not surprising. Homework reflects, to some extent, a student’s ability to perform academic tasks; and, after all, these students failed the course.

Perceptions of Factors for Failure
Instructors most frequently identified family responsibilities/problems and employment as important contributing factors for failure. The burdens of taking care of small children as single mothers, looking after sick family members, dealing with family problems, and working to support themselves or their families financially, all seemed to have taken a toll on the students. As a result, their school work suffered. When overwhelmed by family and job responsibilities, students simply gave their studies a back seat. A professor detailed a student’s situation this way:

[She] often talks about how many hours she has to work. Also she frequently asked to leave early because of work or problems she was having…I think that she is quite capable and could have passed, but toward the end of the semester, she simply started to give up. She did
not even want to submit her final [writing] portfolio...It seems like school is not her top priority right now.

Another instructor said that her student “seemed pressed by family responsibilities.” So, “I gave her an OK to come in late after dropping her son at school” to accommodate her obligations at home.

A quiet place, a basic condition for studying, something many of us take for granted, seemed to be a luxury that some of our immigrant students did not have. “She gets sidelined a lot by her family. She says it’s never quiet and calm enough at home for her to study... I suggested the library here, but I don’t know how practical that is for her,” sympathized another professor. Not spending sufficient time on studies due to employment or family burdens was a recurring complaint the instructors had about the students. Comments like “Job cuts into his study time,” “The student is unable to spend time on his English,” “He has full-time employment and therefore did not have the time necessary for the study required by this course,” “He seems to be working too many hours,” appeared in the survey responses repeatedly. Other family problems, such as divorce and the loss of a close relative, also seemed to affect students’ performance. Some students were so emotionally torn and overwhelmed that they had not recovered by the end of the semester.

Besides family and job responsibilities, the respondents also frequently cited literacy deficiency as an important contributing factor for many students’ failure. The following are how the instructors characterized the limited intellectual and academic abilities of some of the students: “Cognitively immature,” “having difficulty in conceptualizing,” “unable to grasp analysis,” “shallow intellectually,” “incoherent thinking,” “lack of academic and cognitive skills even in native language,” “poor intellectual maturity,” “having a lot of difficulty organizing her thoughts clearly,” and “failure to engage in thought or generate ideas.” It is possible that some of these features, often evidenced in writing, may be a direct result of a lack of time, as students had to rush through assignment when pressed for time. However, a “lack of a strong academic background,” “without a sound background of education,” and “a poor educational background” were constantly explained as the causes of some of the students’ insufficient intellectual ability. One instructor believed that her student’s deficient academic and cognitive skills “were reinforced by poor schooling in New York City’s public schools.” According to Colombi and Schleppegrell (2002), many English-language-learning students “fail to continue development of their first languages as they become proficient in English” (p. 4) in the current U.S. educational system. Their literacy-skills development ends with their initial literacy level. The lack of adequate literacy development and academic language experience in the first
language further handicaps them in achieving higher proficiency levels in English and cognitive academic growth at college.

Affective factors such as negative attitude and a lack of interest, effort, or motivation were the next most frequently cited factors affecting students’ performance in the course. Complaints such as “Lack of seriousness in class,” “Too casual attitude and perhaps a little lazy,” “He didn’t seem to be seriously interested,” “Is far from a motivated and serious student,” “Didn’t invest herself as seriously as she could,” “He was quite nonchalant about the class and homework,” overflowed in the survey responses. Although many professors were accommodating with students who had job responsibilities, they would not accept employment as an excuse for not doing the course work required. To some of these students, the college “should factor in employment as an excuse for not doing work or not doing it up to standards;” however, the professors contended that students should have “enough motivation to overcome the pressures of an outside job.” They believed that many of these students were “well able to do the work,” but they “tried to do as little as possible.” They seemed “to be sabotaging” themselves with “a challenging attitude.” To some of these professors, the effects of a bad attitude on the students’ performance were “stronger than the pressures of parenthood” or employment.

Personal history or problems were also cited as contributing factors. “Hostile and emotionally disturbed,” “best friend was killed during the semester,” “personally troubled and self-destructing in attitude,” “emotionally disturbed,” “there was a boy-friend complicating the situation although in papers she described herself as a single mother,” and having difficulty adapting to immigrant life were some of the personal history or problems named. They seemed to have “prevented [students] from coming to class and completing assignments,” “caused [the student] to miss a good number of classes,” and made the students “too engulfed in personal problems,” and not to “care about learning—only faking his way through.”

Other identified contributing factors included, in descending frequency, insufficient language practice, misplacement, previous failure, poor attendance, inattentiveness in class, not following directions, inability to adapt to U.S. styles of reading and writing instruction, shy personality, underestimation of course difficulty, and difficulty with writing topics. However, these factors were cited with low frequencies.

**Interviews with Students**

**Factors Affecting Performance in Course**

Through the interviews, the author found out the following facts regarding students’ family status, employment, and family responsibilities. A total
of 5 students were living alone and supporting themselves financially; 7 students had families of their own, 6 of them with small children and 5 being single parents; the other 10 were living with their immediate families. While taking the course, 17 students (77%) were holding jobs off campus. Their weekly hours at the jobs varied, ranging from 10 to 51 hours, with a majority of them working more than 20 hours a week. Of these 17 working students, 4 had 1 or 2 small children, including 3 who were single parents. Another working student had a very sick mother who was bed-ridden and needed his attention and financial help. Of the 5 non-working students, 2 were single parents with small children and 1 acted as a mother, having to literally raise two younger siblings and take care of a large household. In short, only 2 of the 22 students did not have the burden of employment or family responsibility while in school.

These data seemed to confirm what the instructors suspected—that demands outside of class, such as employment and family responsibilities, contributed to many students’ failure in the college ESL course. Although few students stated explicitly that working at a job prevented them from doing well in the course, most indicated that they often “did not have enough time” to study or do all the things their professors assigned them. It was not rare for them to report that they often rushed through homework on the bus, on the train, in the college cafeteria, or even at jobs “when not too busy.” Some students also reported that when they tried to study things that needed their full attention, they often found themselves unable to concentrate due to extreme fatigue after working many hours at a job. For some students, sleep deprivation was so severe that they often had a hard time staying awake in class. It is somewhat paradoxical to find, though, that despite the fact that the jobs took away much precious time from studies, only 2 of the working students indicated a desire to reduce hours on the job. Most wanted to maintain or even increase, if possible, job hours out of “financial necessity” as they had to “help support the family” or “support myself.” A few students wanted to stay employed because they claimed the jobs actually provided them with “opportunities to practice or improve English” and “helped gain experiences.”

Similarly, students with a lot of family responsibilities also complained about the difficulty of finding time for their studies. One single mother with two children, aged 4 and 7, revealed that she simply had no time for school work when the children were awake. She tried to manage assignments by either getting the children to bed early or getting up early herself. “When I am not too tired, I wait till they sleep at 10, try to study until 11:30 or 12. If I am too tired, I try to get them to sleep a little early, me too, and then try to get up at 5 the next morning,” told the mother. In addition to a lack of time, worries about or burdens of taking care of family responsibilities often distracted the students. A student who had
to work 5 to 7 hours a day, 7 days a week at a job, and support and care for his sick mother, complained that he often had so many worries on his mind that he couldn’t remember the things he had studied. Another student, whose parents depended on her entirely to take care of two younger siblings and all other house chores because they were hardly home due to their long hours at jobs, was overwhelmed by the responsibilities at home. “There is always so much to do at home and I don’t have time for my studies. I want to study more, but I can’t.” For her parents, her taking care of the housework was more important than her studies. Moreover, sometimes when the family responsibilities became overwhelming, students simply gave up on their studies. For example, another student, a mother of two, said that she had no choice but to miss classes when her two children became sick one after another. When her professor warned her about her absenteeism, she felt that the professor didn’t like her. She developed a very negative attitude toward the class and believed she “was not going to pass it” and “stopped working hard in the middle of the semester.”

In the interviews, students having U.S. high school diplomas communicated a sentiment that they did not get an adequate high school education. Many complained that they “wasted time” or “just learned basic things.” Since many of these students began their U.S. schooling in or after the 10th grade, they did not have enough time to “obtain adequate exposure to the features of advanced English literacy and sufficient and appropriate language instruction” (Scarcella, p. 214). “I never took in my life something like that (departmental reading test). I think it was for people like...It was very very difficult.” These students may have acquired proficiency in basic English skills for communicative purposes. But, they were not equipped with the advanced English language skills related to what Cummins (1981) termed as the “cognitive dimension of language proficiency” (p. 133) necessary to handle college reading and writing tasks, which often involve a lot of abstract thinking and critical analysis.

Negative attitude and a lack of effort were also found among the students. By some students’ own account, they “didn’t like the teacher,” “hated writing, even in my own language,” “sometimes missed homework or didn’t read [as assigned],” “didn’t work hard enough,” and “wanted to get it [homework] over with fast and never checked.” A few students believed that they would have passed “if I studied more,” “if I spent more time,” or “if I paid more attention to my studies.” Although a large majority (82%) believed preparation was necessary, more than 40% of the students said that they were not always well prepared (doing all the homework or finishing assigned reading) before going to class. Several students (18%) said that preparation was not necessary because students could get by without it, and often got away without doing the homework
or reading the assigned material. A few students thought that teachers were not strict about homework, and very lenient toward students. They wondered if they had “wasted time to do homework.”

Although most students looked internally for the causes of failure, four mentioned that their instructors were responsible—at least partially, if not fully. One student said that his instructor did not prepare him for the type and difficulty level of the reading tests that students were required to take. Another student thought that her instructor wrote too negative comments on her revised essays which influenced the portfolio reader’s ultimate judgment of her writing ability. Still another blamed his instructor for not having warned him during the entire semester about his problems—if there were any.

Another interesting finding of the interviews was some students’ misconception about reading and writing. Several students mentioned that they were surprised to find that rote learning was not practiced in this country. To them, memorizing texts word for word without missing anything “was a lot more difficult” than “use your own words to express personal opinions.” Therefore, it took them much “less time and effort” to complete reading and writing assignments in English. This finding was revealing in that some students’ seemingly inadequate effort in the course may not be a manifestation of a bad attitude, at least in some cases. The perceived low effort could be a result of not fully understanding what the tasks of reading and writing in English in academic contexts really entailed and how to approach them. Indeed, a few students stated explicitly that they failed the course mainly because it was their first semester at an American college: they did not fully understand the requirements of the course and expectations of instructors and they were not used to the methods of reading and writing instruction and assessment. This was particularly true for the portfolio assessment for writing, which focused on the writing process rather than the product.

**Helping Students Succeed**

The students hoped that professors would “use individual conferences more,” to “discuss our work,” answer “questions about comments” made in their essays, “understand students’ needs and problems and provide help.” Individual conferences were considered necessary “because we don’t ask in class.” Students also wanted their instructors to be more understanding of their problems with English and the demands outside of class. They were particularly sensitive to demeaning or judgmental comments about their capabilities based on their mistakes in writing. “We can make mistakes in writing and he made it like… he writes like we are people who can’t do that,” as a student complained. Another student said, “Teacher have always to be tough, but sometimes she has to understand…
I had to be absent. My kids had to stay home because they had very high fever and other problems... I just had to miss class.”

Helpful programs such as Family College, which provides qualified students with child care and support, the Bilingual Program where students can go for academic tutoring and counseling in their native language (Spanish), and the content-linked ESL program that provides content courses linked with ESL, were acknowledged and greatly appreciated. Unfortunately, some students, particularly some freshmen, could not take advantage of these helpful programs, as they were oftentimes not informed of the programs’ existence.

Students also revealed that they sometimes could not understand professors’ comments about their essays, let alone act upon them in the revision process. The same can be said about some essay topics and instructions. They felt that it was crucial that ESL professors use simple language to help them understand comments and topics. Being strict and tough was another quality some students were looking for in a professor. It is interesting to note that students who made such comments were all from the former USSR. They were so used to “pushy and forceful” teachers in their native countries that they wanted similar pressures from teachers here. Two other students who were repeating ESL 91 with the same professor both acknowledged her good organizational skills—distributing handouts a week in advance listing her teaching plans for each class in the following week, assignments, deadlines, and other work elements. According to the students, she contrasted strongly with instructors who would only “give assignments orally or on board.” “She made my life so much easier,” commented one student. Given that many of our ESL students had to juggle between school, jobs, and family obligations with a tight schedule, it was understandable that they found so useful a handout of instructional plans with such simple instructions as what to bring to class. Another student explicitly voiced a sentiment that other students revealed implicitly throughout the interviews. They did not want their professors to be too diplomatic in expressing criticisms of their essays; instead they would appreciate sincere and constructive comments and suggestions in simple and direct language. Although some instructors believe in giving out lavish compliments to encourage students or boost their self-esteem, some students reported that they sometimes “misread” the compliments by thinking that their writing was good enough, and were shocked to find out too late otherwise.

**DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS**

Through the survey of instructors and interviews of ESL students, the study found that factors contributing to failure in the advanced college
ESL course varied, and were in some cases interwoven. Factors identified by previous studies such as negative attitude, lack of interest, effort or motivation, insufficient target-language use, and deficient first-language literacy, were confirmed by the ESL instructors in this study as important variables contributing to the students’ failure in the college ESL course. However, instructors most frequently cited family and job responsibilities as significant factors contributing to their students’ failure in the course.

In the interviews, ESL students confirmed the existence of the contributing variables identified by ESL professors. Most of the students attributed their failure mostly to internal factors—such as a lack of effort, or not working hard enough—despite the compounding influence of external ones, such as job and family responsibilities. But, a few students blamed their instructors for failure. Different from instructors’ beliefs was the students’ downplay of the negative effects of employment on their performance in the ESL course. While acknowledging that jobs limited their time for studies, most of the students wanted to increase, if possible, rather than decrease hours on the job, mostly for reasons of financial necessity.

Another important issue that ESL professors noted was the lack of intellectual maturity of many immigrant ESL students who were U.S. high school graduates. These students’ difficulty with reading and writing in the college ESL course was often complicated by the inadequate development of advanced literacy skills from high school. With their increasing presence in our ESL classes, these students will present a great challenge to our existing instructional strategies and methods. Although ESL expertise has an indispensable role to play in language development, perhaps, as Zambl (1995) and others point out, “L2 learning is too protracted a process for it to take place entirely under the auspices of ESL or other writing coursework” (Harklau et al., 1999, p. 11). According to Wolfe-Quintero and Segade (1999), there must be institution-wide involvement in assuming responsibility for English learners’ development as proficient college readers and writers.

Figuring prominently among the other cited contributing factors for failure is misplacement. It was quite surprising to find that there were still a big number of students (5 out of 64) who were considered misplaced. This was despite numerous assessment measures such as the entrance exams in reading and writing and a writing sample on the first day of class. This indicates that placing ESL students into appropriate levels is indeed a challenging task.

The high incidence of personal and second language problems notwithstanding, there was also the factor of the lack of a real support system for ESL students. When faced with new concepts of evaluation and different instructional methods in a foreign country—and without adequate knowledge of the language—they needed and cried out for external
help. However, they often found their calls unanswered and their needs unattended to. The college might also do a better job promoting or making the existing support programs known among the first-year ESL students.

In addition to contributing factors for failure, the study found that classroom instructors were highly accurate in identifying these factors. For example, in situations where instructors suspected a family problem or a less than enthusiastic attitude, interviews with students confirmed that it indeed was a major hindrance to the students’ school work. This finding shows that classroom instructors are an important and accurate source of information for counselors or support service personnel who provide intervention for at risk ESL students. Easy communication channels, therefore, should be established between the academic and support services departments. This will allow prompt and ongoing exchanges of valuable information to be made, and intervention and support provided in a timely manner.

Due to the limited scope of this study, other questions and additional information that students revealed in the interviews cannot be explored and reported here. Further studies are necessary. A longitudinal study tracking the college records of the 22 students interviewed for this study is of immediate interest to the author and her department. What happened after the students failed the course? Did they succeed after they repeated it and continued their college education? Did they ultimately graduate from college? How might what they reported or revealed in the interviews—such as their educational background or attitude toward ESL coursework and learning in general—affect their college career? Is there an identifiable pattern in their college performance in light of what was learned in the interviews? Answers to these questions will provide needed empirical data about the unsuccessful ESL students. This data, when compared with the findings of this study, will allow us to gain further understanding of, and insights into, what contributes and, ultimately, leads to ESL students’ success and failure in college.

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