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**INSTITUTO TECNOLÓGICO Y DE ESTUDIOS
SUPERIORES DE MONTERREY**

CAMPUS EUGENIO GARZA SADA



**A COMPARISON OF THE TOEFL WITH THE PLACEMENT TESTS
USED IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROGRAM AT THE INSTITUTO
TECNOLÓGICO Y DE ESTUDIOS SUPERIORES DE MONTERREY**

**THESIS PRESENTED TO OBTAIN MASTER'S DEGREE
IN EDUCATION WITH SPECIALIZATION IN ESL**

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To the ITESM for permitting me to obtain a master's degree.

To all the teachers and colleagues who have helped me grow as a professional in ESL.

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Dedication

To my husband and son for their everlasting love, comprehension
and support.

To my mother for her understanding and help.

A B S T R A C T

A Comparison of the TOEFL with the Placement Tests Used in the English Language Program at the Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey

This thesis will compare and examine the differences and similarities between the ITESM placement tests and the TOEFL. The study will be carried out through literature research, content analysis of both tests, a comparison of the results and a list of suggestions for the revision of the ITESM placement tests. The results of this study will allow the administration and the English Language Center to make a judgement on the validity of replacing the current ITESM placement tests with the TOEFL. It will also permit the reader to have a deeper understanding of language testing and especially of the use of the TOEFL.

R E S U M E N

A Comparison of the TOEFL with the Placement Tests Used in the English Language Program at the Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey

La tesis es un análisis comparativo entre los exámenes de ubicación de inglés del ITESM y el TOEFL. El presente estudio se llevará a cabo a través de las siguientes etapas: investigación de literatura, análisis del contenido de los exámenes, comparación de los resultados y la lista de recomendaciones para la revisión de los exámenes de ubicación de inglés del ITESM. Los resultados de este estudio permitirán que los directivos del ITESM y el Centro de Inglés opinen acerca de la conveniencia de substituir los exámenes de ubicación de inglés por el TOEFL. Además permitirá que el lector tenga un mejor entendimiento de los tipos de evaluación del inglés como una segunda lengua y especialmente del uso del TOEFL como instrumento de medición.

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Introduction

The Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey (ITESM) is a five-year university with twenty-six campuses throughout Mexico. In order to meet the changing educational needs of its students, it revises its curricula every five years. This Master's thesis is one of many studies within the División de Graduados, Maestría en Educación. The purpose of the studies is to review and analyze the current situation of the ITESM undergraduate English as a foreign language (EFL) program. The combined results of the research will lead to propose changes and revisions that can be taken to improve the EFL programs at the twenty-six campuses.

The purpose of this study is to compare, through content analysis, the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) and the ITESM placement test. The importance of conducting this study came about as a result of an ITESM administrative decision to use the TOEFL as a placement instrument for all incoming first year students at ITESM. There is a need for both ITESM administrators and the ITESM English Language Program (ELP) faculty to understand the ramifications of this decision. This thesis will compare the tests and examine their differences and similarities. The results of this study will allow the administration and the English Language Center to make a judgement on the validity of replacing the current ITESM placement test with the TOEFL. This study will also permit the reader to have a deeper understanding of language testing and especially the use of the TOEFL. This chapter will include a brief description of the current status of the ITESM ELP.

The chapter will also give an explanation of the need for this type of study. Finally it will list the objectives and mention the justification and limitations of the study.

1. The problem

This chapter presents the problem of studying the validity of replacing the current ITESM placement test with the TOEFL.

1.1. Background

The Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey (ITESM) is a five-year university with twenty-six campuses throughout Mexico. ITESM was founded in 1943 by a group of businessmen from Monterrey. Its commitment to excellence is found in the quality of its courses:

The basic mission of the ITESM System is to provide high quality undergraduate and graduate education. The Institute, through specific programs and educational policies, will stimulate the development of the following characteristics in its students: an innovative, entrepreneurial spirit; a vocation of leadership and commitment to community development; integrity; respect for human dignity and for such inherent personal rights and responsibilities as the right to truth, freedom and legal security; appre-

ciation of the cultural, historical and social values of the community and the nation (ITESM Kit)

From the time of the ITESM's founding in 1943 until the mid-1960's, four semesters of English language classes were offered as electives to all undergraduate students. By 1975, many academic courses were using textbooks in English. As a result of the new emphasis on the use of English in the academic courses, English became a requirement for graduation. English was considered to be a necessary skill for all ITESM students. To place students in the most appropriate English class, all incoming students were required to take a reading comprehension exam. Those who could not successfully comprehend college-level texts in English were required to take a noncredit-remedial course entitled "Reading English for Academic Purposes" (REAP). The text for this course was a compilation of reading texts and exercises developed by faculty members of the English Department. Students who successfully passed the placement test were exempted from taking additional English courses.

Every five years the ITESM study plan is revised in order to update the courses offered. In 1989, the university administration decided to implement a language requirement for the incoming year. The Plan of 1990 made the three-semester English language sequence a requirement for graduation. The decision was based on the following reasons:

- In response to a questionnaire, graduating students overwhelmingly stated that they felt that instruction in English would have helped to better prepare them for their professional careers.

- Many students expressed a desire to take college-level or graduate courses in the United States and Canada. To do so, they needed to obtain a high TOEFL score (500-550) in order to meet the entrance requirements.

- There was an ever increasing need for ITESM students to be proficient in English due to

- the large number of English-speaking visiting professors being hired to give lectures and courses in all major areas of study;

- the widespread inclusion of English-language teleconferences in a large number of academic courses; and

- the tendency of more and more courses to rely on textbooks and video presentations in English.

- All Tec graduates would be bilingual upon completing the English Program, and this would become a characteristic of distinction.

Based on the decision, taken by the ITESM administrators and the ITESM English Language Program, it was decided that the courses would have college credit and would be known as "curso sello" , i.e., the students would be expected to have a uniform level of English language proficiency before graduating. The students would have to take three semesters of English to complete the credits and would be expected to obtain a 550 on the TOEFL at the end of the ELP.

The English Language Program, which is part of the Humanities Department, took on the responsibility of

- developing the English requirement objectives;

- designing courses for meeting those objectives;
 - selecting appropriate instructional materials;
 - training teachers in the use of these materials and in effective foreign language teaching methods;
 - placing students in courses that corresponded to their level of proficiency;
 - evaluating student progress in terms of the ELP's objectives;
- and
- having students evaluate the ELP.

The English language program is designed to meet the following objectives:

- increase students' proficiency in English;
- develop the four linguistic abilities (reading, writing, speaking and listening);
- enable students to obtain a score of 550 on the TOEFL;
- provide a firm basis for comprehending textbooks, lectures, and other presentations in English;
- build self-confidence for students who need to study, work, and communicate in an English-language environment;
- create an awareness of and appreciation for English-speaking cultures.

Students begin the ELP during the first semester of their undergraduate studies. The undergraduate program takes five years. Students must take a total of fifty-four academic courses. In order to graduate, all students must take three English language classes as part of the fifty-four course requirement.

In the fall of 1989 an English Committee made up of faculty members in the English Department began meeting once a week to design a three-semester program that could successfully reach the stated ELP goals. It was decided that a communicative approach to foreign language learning and teaching would best meet these objectives. According to Richards et al., the communicative approach refers to "an approach to foreign or second language teaching which emphasizes that the goal of language learning is COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE" (65). Richards et al. defines communicative competence as "the ability not only to apply the grammatical rules of a language in order to form grammatically correct sentences but also to know when and where to use these sentences and to whom" (65). The *Spectrum* series textbooks, due to their successful use in special English courses for faculty members since 1986, were chosen by ELP faculty members. It was also felt that it was appropriate for preparing students for the TOEFL, because of its emphasis on grammar, vocabulary and listening comprehension practice. According to Warshawsky and Byrd, the objectives for the *Spectrum* series of EFL texts are.

(1) to provide motivational materials that teach students to function in real-life situations in which English is spoken, (2) to teach only authentic English; and (3) to give students a feeling of success and achievement in language learning (viii).

Drawing on experience in teaching *Spectrum* and TOEFL preparation courses to ITESM faculty, committee members determined that most students passing *Spectrum* 5 (high-intermediate/low-advanced level) were likely to obtain close to a 550 on the TOEFL, a score deemed desirable by ITESM authorities because of its high rate of acceptability among U.S. universities.

In the spring of 1990, a pilot TOEFL test was administered to regular faculty ITESM teachers who studied English and had completed *Spectrum* 5. The results indicated that most of them scored from the low to the high 500's. Since all undergraduate students had to take three semesters of English, it was decided that *Spectrum* 3, 4, and 5 would be the three courses, (English I, II, and III), that students would take to satisfy their foreign language requirement. Students who did not have sufficient knowledge of English to enter *Spectrum* 3, an intermediate-level course, would take up to two remedial courses (*Spectrum* 1 and 2: Remedial English I and II) for no academic credit. The ELP offers courses in three modules: Remedial, Basic and Advanced. The former would offer courses of five hours a week, while the latter courses, for students who were already proficient in English, would meet three hours a week. See Table 1.

Table 1
Description of ELP Courses

MODULE	HOURS PER WEEK	COURSE TITLE
REMEDIAL	5	<i>Spectrum 1</i>
		<i>Spectrum 2</i>
BASIC	5	<i>Spectrum 3</i>
		<i>Spectrum 4</i>
		<i>Spectrum 5</i>
ADVANCED	3	Advanced English Communication Academic Writing American Literature Public Speaking Readings from TIME TOEFL Preparation Understanding Cultures of the World Introduction to Translation Strategies

Based on the results of a placement test, all incoming students who demonstrated an advanced level of English proficiency would be required to take either French, German or advanced-level

English courses. The advanced-level English courses were designed to accommodate student interest in perfecting specific areas of English language studies. All students who have graduated from either an ITESM prep or other prep programs (e.g. Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León (UANL) prep, Universidad de Monterrey (UDEM) prep, Regio prep, etc.) are accepted into the ITESM undergraduate program. All students are required to take the English language placement test as part of the admission requirements, except students who are graduated from an ITESM prep school are never placed in remedial classes: there is a policy that states that students coming from ITESM prep schools are not required to take remedial classes. The following guideline describes the ELP Placement Policy:

- Students who come from the ITESM bicultural prep schools are exempted from taking the placement test and placed directly into the Advanced Module.

- Students who come from ITESM traditional prep schools must take the placement test. They are exempted and placed in the Basic Module if tested into the Remedial Module. Others are placed according to the results of the test (English I, English II, etc.).

- Students from other institutions must take the placement test and are placed according to the results of the tests (Remedial I, Remedial II, English I, English II, etc.).

This decision has caused some placement problems because even though ITESM prep school graduates test into remedial levels they are placed in English 1. This problem becomes evident when

the students take English 1 and are unable to handle the material because they do not have sufficient English proficiency to perform at that level. Students coming from ITESM bicultural prep schools are automatically placed in the Advanced Module.

Once students have exempted or completed Basic Module courses, they pass into the Advanced Module. Advanced English courses currently being offered include

*REINFORCEMENT LEVEL: Designed for students who have completed *Spectrum* 5 or for those who need to strengthen basic language skills.

-Advanced English Communication: A course that offers advanced practice in speaking, listening, reading, and writing assignments in English.

-Academic Writing: A course designed to enhance students' writing abilities for completing academic writing assignments in English.

-Public Speaking: A course devoted to having students improve their oral production skills.

*MIDDLE LEVEL: Designed for students who entered directly into the Advanced Module by taking the placement test or TOEFL, or for those from bicultural prep schools who are fairly confident in their use of English.

-TOEFL Preparation: A course designed for students who plan to study in the United States or Canada, or for those who seek a review of English grammar, vocabulary, listening comprehension, and writing.

-Introduction to Translation Strategies (English-Spanish): A course that offers instruction in translation skills, translation theory, and translation practice. The course is designed for students that have a solid understanding of English and Spanish.

*TOP LEVEL: Designed for students who are almost completely bilingual, U.S. college level texts are used in these courses. Advanced reading, writing, and oral skills are stressed.

-American Literature: One semester is devoted to classic novels and short stories from the first half of the twentieth century. The subsequent semester covers contemporary works by minority (Black, Hispanic, native American, Jewish, and Asian-American) authors.

-Understanding Cultures of the World: The text is a compilation of short writings by authors from all over the world; it gives students an understanding of and appreciation for foreign history, culture, and traditions.

-Readings from *Time* or *Newsweek*: Current events from weekly news magazines are studied, discussed, and written about.

FRENCH AND GERMAN

Only one of these languages may be studied in the Advanced Module, and it must be taken for a minimum of two semesters. Placement tests for students who have previous studies may be administered by the Humanities Department upon request. These courses in the Advanced Module were developed considering the interest and importance of the content of the classes for future graduate studies or professional activities. They are electives; the students have the opportunity to select the courses they pre-

fer to take. Every semester the ELP only offers eight courses based on teacher availability and academic background.

Each course is evaluated by the students. At the end of each semester, students are asked to fill out a course evaluation questionnaire. The following areas are included in the evaluation:

- Appropriateness of course content to course level
- Respect shown toward student
- Fairness of the grading procedures
- Amount of reasoning skills needed to complete coursework
- Clarity of classroom presentations
- Teacher compliance with attendance and punctuality policies
- Amount of outside materials used to supplement text
- Need to use library resources
- Overall opinion of teacher

Students rate their teacher on a scale of one (highest score) to seven (lowest score). Another means of evaluating ELP effectiveness among the student population is to hold formal scheduled meetings with a representative sample of students from each level of language learning. Once every semester an hour is set aside for students to meet with the Humanities Department director and the English Center coordinators, to convey their impressions about the ELP and to offer suggestions about ways in which the English courses could be improved.

ITESM administrators believe that the TOEFL is a valid and reliable measure of a person's ability to communicate in English. The goal of ITESM is to provide its students with the abilities and technical expertise to work effectively in the modern world. In

the spring of 1990, ITESM administrators indicated that the TOEFL be used as an entrance and exit measure in the English Language Program. This decision was based on the fact that the TOEFL is the entrance exam required for admission into most American universities. As a result of this decision, the TOEFL was used for the first time at ITESM in the fall semester of 1990, with students who had finished the Basic Module (English 3). These students were required to take the TOEFL. The English Center established this requirement in order to

- evaluate the overall effectiveness of the ELP,
- evaluate the texts (*Spectrum* Series) used, and
- try to establish a correlation between the ITESM placement tests and the TOEFL.

One of the criteria that American universities use in admitting students is the TOEFL. Based on this fact, the ELP committee has adapted the TOEFL as an exit test and settled on minimum scores for the Remedial and Basic Modules. The committee set the score for the Remedial Module at 450, and 550 for the Basic Module. Since 1990, the TOEFL has been administered three times and the average scores have ranged between 511-525. Table 2 shows the results of the Institutional TOEFL administered to the students that finished English III (*Spectrum* V). See Table 2.

Table 2
Results of the Institutional TOEFL (1990-1991)

	average	highest score	lowest score
Aug.-Dec. 1990	525	640	370
Jan.-May 1991	518	610	390
Aug.-Dec. 1991	511	623	400

Persons familiar with the TOEFL will note that these scores, 450 and 550, are high but they are not requirements for graduation at ITESM. The general feeling of the English Center committee was that they are attainable and that they were not too high.

In the month of December 1992, the President of ITESM directed the English Center to administer the TOEFL to incoming students along with the ITESM placement test in order to see if there was any correlation between the two scores. Because of the TOEFL's world-wide reputation as a reliable test, the President and other ITESM administrators wanted to explore the possibility of using the TOEFL in place of the ITESM placement test.

1.2. Identification of needs

The need for this study arose after ITESM administrators proposed the idea of using the TOEFL as a placement instrument. Prior to their proposal, no studies were done to determine if the

TOEFL could be used as a valid placement instrument at ITESM. As a result, there was a need to conduct studies to evaluate the TOEFL for use in placing students at ITESM. There was also a need to do a content analysis along with a comparison study on the TOEFL and the ITESM placement test. Results of the analysis will be used in making further decisions on the validity of both tests in the English Language curriculum and in the testing policy.

1.3. Statement of purpose

The purpose of this thesis is to carry out a content analysis and comparative study of the TOEFL and the ITESM placement tests. This thesis examines the differences and similarities of the tests and the problem that ITESM faces in using the TOEFL as a placement instrument. The problem to be solved in this study is to see which test is a more valid instrument for placing students in the ELP: the TOEFL or the ITESM placement test. Using the results of the analysis, the two tests will be compared, which will allow for a better evaluation of the tests.

1.3.1. Justification of the study

This topic was selected because it is necessary to learn more about the TOEFL and the skills that the TOEFL evaluates. It will also provide additional information about the ITESM placement tests, (development of the test, advantages and disadvantages, etc.)and about proficiency testing in general. In order to be able

to compare the two tests, it is essential to examine and study the content of both tests. It is also of importance to gather several samples of the tests to make the study more realistic. It is of interest, in order to make a judgement on the validity of replacing the current ITESM placement test with the TOEFL, to both ITESM administrators and the ITESM English Language Program to see the similarities and differences of both tests, and to see how compatible the ITESM placement test is with the TOEFL.

1.4. Objectives of the study

The study has three main objectives:

- to contribute to the ITESM curriculum study project.
- to fulfill the thesis requirement in order to graduate from the ITESM graduate program.
- to allow the administration and the English Language Program to make a judgement on the validity of replacing the current ITESM placement test with the TOEFL.

1.5. Limitations of the study

There are three general limitations to this study:

- The TOEFL test is considered to be a language proficiency test, while the ITESM placement test provides information that will help to place students according to the material covered in the *Spectrum* series. Therefore, the comparison will be

performed using two different kinds of tests: proficiency tests vs. placement tests.

- There is a lack of similar studies that compare the content of these types of tests.

- There are very specific time constraints placed on the research. The study, along with all of the other studies, have to be finished by February 15, 1995.

2. Review of the literature

In order to compare the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) and the placement test used at the Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey (ITESM), it is important to have an understanding of language testing, different types of language tests, and a description of what they measure. This study is especially interested in examining and understanding proficiency tests, since the new emphasis of the English Language Program is on improving the communicative competence and English proficiency of the students. Several types of tests will be described in this chapter. This will be followed with descriptions of both the TOEFL and the ITESM placement test. Finally, a review of the research done on the TOEFL will show more about the test and will give the reader a broader view of the TOEFL test.

2.1. Review of language testing

This section of the chapter will review the literature concerned with language testing. A review of pertinent research in this area will also be provided. The chapter will examine different definitions and opinions about language testing. Language testing refers to the measurement of what was taught and learned.

2.1.1. Chronology of test development

Spolsky (1978), in Brown, presents a historical perspective of language testing (227-228). He gives a chronology of language testing and begins with the prescientific period. The prescientific period existed before 1950 and shows no studies on language testing. The second stage established by Spolsky is the psychometric-structuralist period: 1950-1960. The discrete-point approach to language testing became popular during this period. Discrete-point tests "are based on the theory that language consists of different parts . . . and different skills . . . and these are made up of elements that can be tested separately" (Richards et al. 112). Discrete-point tests, according to Brown, were developed because it was thought that language was measured better by its components, that is, testing the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) separately (228). The third period (integrative-sociolinguistic approach) began in the late 1960's and continues to the present day. John Oller, a language testing expert, conducted studies on testing communicative competence. Oller, in the 1970's, placed much emphasis on language competence and stated that language should be measured as an integration of the language skills. The term integrative testing came from the idea of integrating all abilities and skills into one test. An integrative test "is one which requires a learner to use several language skills at the same time" (Richards et al. 112).

2.1.2. Approaches to language testing

Spolsky (1979), in Duran et al., identifies three approaches towards language testing:

- Traditional Approach
- Psychometric-Structuralist Approach
- Integrative-Sociolinguistic Approach (5)

The traditional gives more emphasis on what should be tested and not how it should be tested. This is a common approach and is carried out by most teachers. The psychometric-structuralist approach puts emphasis on the how and what to test. This approach is used more by psychometricians who work with linguists. The integrative-sociolinguistic approach is concerned with the real use of language and the way to measure it using tests. This approach is used by language teachers, psychometricians, linguists, sociologists, and anthropologists. Duran also states that there are two points to be considered in language testing: construct validity, and teacher and student needs (5).

"Construct validity refers to a form of validity which is based on the degree to which the items in a test reflect the essential aspects of the theory on which the test is based" (Richards et al. 80).

2.1.3. Aspects of language testing

Saleemi identifies four aspects of language testing:

- Evaluative
- Practical

- Instructional
- Theoretical (2-4)

Saleemi says that these aspects can be considered functions or determinants of testing (2).

The evaluative aspect is formed by three parts:

- Measurement: It refers to what the test evaluates. The test is supposed to measure the material covered and learned so it can be known as a reliable test. "A test is said to be reliable if it gives the same results when it is given on different occasions or when it is used by different people" (Richards et al. 314).

- Discrimination: The test should offer the teacher an accurate distinction of the scores of the good and poor students. After the evaluation, the teacher learns the students' objective achievement and is able to group them by levels.

- Comparability: Test scores should be comparable with those of other tests, although the same test was taken by different students and on different days.

The practical aspect refers to four points.

- Administrability: It refers to the learner's facility of using and taking a test.

- Economy: A good test should "provide as much information as is required with the minimum expenditure of time, effort and resources" (Saleemi 3).

- Testing environment: The environmental conditions should be appropriate for taking a test.

- Acceptability: A test is acceptable if the instrument is easy to follow and use.

The instructional aspect refers to the association found between the test and the course or program. It is of interest to observe how tests affect teaching. This aspect has two points to consider:

- Feedback: The teacher's main objective of evaluation is feedback. It provides information on teaching and on course development.

- Test-course interdependence: The content and the format of the tests are issued by the course, the syllabus, and the teaching process; not vice versa.

The theoretical aspect refers to the test-theory association.

2.1.4. Communicative language testing

Communicative language testing has received much attention by many researchers. Skehan, in his article "Language Testing", reviews much of the work that has been done in communicative language testing. He presents Canale's (1984) model and talks about "genuine" communication.

Genuine communication is inter-action-based, with more than one participant; . . . ; is situated in a context which is both linguistic/discoursal and also sociocultural, has a purpose, . . . ; uses authentic stimulus materials, and avoids contrived, specially produced, materials; is based on real psychological conditions, . . . ; and is outcome evaluated (215).

Sociocultural is studied in sociolinguistics which Richards et al. define as "the study of language in relation to social factors, that is, social class, educational level and type of education, age, sex, ethnic origin, etc." (339). Discourse competence is "an aspect of COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE which describes the ability to produce unified written or spoken discourse" (Richards et al. 111). Canale's model is very helpful to this study, since the ELP needs to include the communicative aspect in its language testing. It is this writer's opinion that Canale is correct and that it is absolutely necessary to have two participants, a defined context, the use of authentic material, besides psychological conditions for a real communication. Swain (1985) in working in the area of communicative language testing developed multiple-choice tests to evaluate sociolinguistic competence and used essays or reports to test discourse competence. It is important to note that to evaluate the different areas of communicative competence, one must use different types of testing items, e.g., multiple-choice, essay, etc. As will be noted in the conclusion of this study, neither the TOEFL nor the ITESM use a variety of testing items.

2.1.5. Conclusions on the review of language testing

The conclusions that can be drawn from the previous sections are as follows. The author believes that the integrative approach is the most appropriate way to measure the skills of a language, because the students are tested in the overall proficiency of the language in one test. The ITESM placement test only evaluates

listening and reading, but does not include speaking and writing. The large number of incoming students that are required to take the placement test every semester and the promptness the results of the test must be obtained are some reasons why the ELP committee did not consider including speaking and writing as part of the test. The absence of specialized raters to evaluate these skills and the need to train the ELP teachers to become speaking and writing evaluators influenced this decision.

Following the same idea of the integrative approach in the development of the test, the author also believes that the integrative-sociolinguistic approach in language testing is applicable to the ELP since it is concerned about the improvement of the students' communicative competence and thus the approach works with the idea of testing real language. Considering the aspects of language testing, Saleemi believes they can be used to see if the tests work as instruments that serve to evaluate a language (2-4). At present, without an in-depth study, it can be assumed that the TOEFL and the ITESM tests have all of the aspects that a language test must have to be valid. In the area of communicative language testing, the writer believes that Canale's model on genuine communication is precisely what the ELP would like to achieve since its emphasis is on stressing the communicative approach.

In reviewing the ideas presented in this review of language testing, it is of interest to the reader to identify why they are important to this study. These ideas are important because the ITESM ELP requires an English language placement test. To choose the correct test, it is important that knowledge and information

about English language placement tests be reviewed and studied. This information will be crucial in evaluating the two tests (TOEFL and ITESM) of this study.

2.2. Review and description of language tests

This section will review the different types of tests that are used for measuring English language proficiency. The information will be used in comparing the content and the structure of the TOEFL and ITESM ELP placement test.

2.2.1. Achievement tests

This section of the chapter will review the definitions concerned with achievement tests. This kind of test is well known to all teachers, no matter the field they are in, because their main purpose is to measure the students' progress in the course work.

2.2.1.1. Definition of achievement tests

"Achievement tests measure how much language someone has learned in a particular course of study or program of instruction" (Richards et al. 16).

2.2.1.2. Different opinions concerning achievement tests

This section will review how different authors describe and define achievement tests. Valette defines the achievement test as the test that "measures how much the student has learned in the course of second-language instruction"(5). Brown adds that an "*achievement test* is related directly to classroom lessons, units, or even a total curriculum. Achievement tests are limited to particular material covered in a curriculum within a particular time frame"(225). Biehler agrees with Brown and Valette saying that achievement tests are "designed to assess how much you had learned-or achieved-in basic school subjects"(149). According to Alderson, an "achievement test measures a student's success in learning some specific instructional content and is given after the instruction has taken place. A good achievement test should contain only material that was actually taught" (iv). Stevenson says achievement tests serve to show and predict a course syllabus (168). Chastain says achievement tests

encourage the students to organize their knowledge, to assimilate larger chunks of material, and to learn for long-term retention. They also present the students with objective evidence with regard to what they have and have not learned (486).

This was found interesting for the author because the courses in the ITESM ELP use a series that presents learning as a sequential acquisition of information. The students must organize the

material and store it in big pieces of information. When the students assimilate what is studied in one course it will help them learn and understand the material that follows.

Another author, Hughes, discusses achievement tests and says that they are associated with language courses and they serve to express the progress students have achieved through each lesson. There are two kinds of achievement tests: final achievement tests and progress achievement tests. The former are those used as final tests of a course. The latter are used to evaluate the students' advance during a course. Saleemi's definition of achievement tests is a "test that measures how much of the foreign language or culture taught during a given period has been learned by the student" (5). Achievement tests permit the teacher to learn the progress the students are making during a particular course work.

In reviewing the definitions of achievement tests, there are several areas that are important to this study and the comparison that is being done between the TOEFL and the ITESM placement tests. First of all, the definitions of achievement tests do not fit the tests studied because the TOEFL measures the students' proficiency of the English language and the ITESM test places students in a particular level in the ELP program.

2.2.2. Proficiency tests

This section of the chapter will review the literature concerned with proficiency tests. Since the ITESM ELP is emphasizing language proficiency, it is necessary to test for proficien-

cy. The TOEFL is called a proficiency test while the ITESM test is not: it is very important to understand the differences. This section will attempt to examine various definitions, and look at varying opinions regarding the use of proficiency tests. There are many different interpretations and definitions of proficiency tests.

The following will summarize these definitions. A proficiency test is "a test which measures how much of a language someone has learned A proficiency test is not linked to a particular course of instruction, but measures the learner's general level of language mastery" (Richards et al. 292). Brown says that a proficiency test measures the student's global competence in a language (225). This type of tests mainly measures listening comprehension, grammar, vocabulary, and reading comprehension. Vallette says that a proficiency test "measures what students have learned, but the aim of the proficiency test is to determine whether this language ability corresponds to specific language requirements" (6). Saleemi describes a proficiency test as one that "measures one's knowledge and/or ability in a foreign language without regard to formal study or text used" (6). Hughes's definition is probably the most well accepted and practiced by language teachers and testers. In the following statements, he gives a complete idea of what proficiency tests are and how they are used.

Proficiency tests are designed to measure people's ability in a language regardless of any training they may have had in that language. The content of a proficiency test, . . . is based on a specification of what candidates have to be able to do in the language in order to be considered proficient (Hughes 9).

Alderson agrees with the other authors, and says that proficiency tests "measure the test taker's overall ability in English along a broad scale" (iv). He also adds that this kind of test serves to decide a job position or to compare a person's capacity with requirements.

Proficiency tests are not good as achievement tests because, most likely, their context will not coincide with the material covered in a course, and they are not made to evaluate what a student has learned from a particular course.

In reviewing the definitions presented of proficiency tests, it is necessary to identify how and why they are important to this study. The definitions of proficiency tests allowed the comparison of the TOEFL and the ITESM test. It was found that the TOEFL is a proficiency test because it is used to evaluate the English language proficiency of non-native speakers of English; also because it measures how much English a person has learned; it has no relation to a particular course or syllabus. The ITESM test is not a proficiency test. The test is linked to a particular course and English program, and it is used to place students in a particular level. Since the ITESM ELP stresses language proficiency, it

was important to understand proficiency tests and try to determine if the ITESM test does or does not evaluate proficiency. As will be seen in the conclusion of this study, the ITESM test does not appear to evaluate general proficiency.

2.2.3. Placement tests

This section of the chapter will review the literature concerned with placement tests. Since the ITESM ELP is interested in improving the communicative competence and English proficiency of the students, it is necessary to see if the ITESM placement tests fulfill this need. It is important to determine if the various definitions of placement tests fit the ITESM test. This section will review several definitions and interpretations regarding the use of placement tests.

The following summarizes definitions and opinions on placement tests. Hughes explains that placement tests "are intended to provide information which will help to place students at the stage . . . of the teaching programme most appropriate to their abilities" (14). Alderson says that a good placement test can be recognized if it contains the same or similar kind of knowledge or abilities that will be/were learned during a course or language program (iii and iv). It should also not contain tasks that are different to what the students will see in a program or have studied before. Another author, Saleemi says that placement tests may be either "achievement or proficiency tests used to place students in a program or in a certain level of a program" (6). Richards et al. define

a placement test as "a test which is designed to place students at an appropriate level in a programme or course Various types of test or testing procedure (e.g. dictation, an interview, a grammar test) can be used for placement purposes" (279-280). According to Patkowski,

A good placement procedure involves a combination of tests. For example, in one ESL program, incoming students were given a standardized, discrete-point, commercially available objective test, supplemented with an in-house holistic essay exam, as well as a brief oral interview (also developed in-house) (121).

While this might be a good placement procedure it could be time consuming and costly, especially when there are large numbers of students (such as at ITESM where the ITESM placement test has been administered to approximately 800 students on a single test day).

In reviewing the definitions of placement tests, there are several areas that are important to this study and the comparison that is being made between the TOEFL and the ITESM placement test. First of all, most of the authors agree on the basic definition of a placement test. It was found that the ITESM test is a placement test because it fits all the definitions given above except Saleemi's who says that a placement test can be either an achievement or a proficiency test used to place students in a language program; this is not the case found in the ITESM test be-

cause it was developed by a special committee of the English Center faculty of the Monterrey Campus to be used exclusively for placing students in the ELP. The ITESM test also does not fit Patkowski's definition because it does not include an essay exam nor an oral interview. His idea is very attractive but unfortunately it is not possible at the ITESM because of the number of students tested.

2.3. Description of the TOEFL and the ITESM placement test

This study is being done to determine if the TOEFL and the ITESM test are comparable in what they evaluate: can they be used together as a placement test or is it necessary to design a new test. It is important to have knowledge about their construction, development, contents, and purposes. This section will describe the framework of the TOEFL and the ITESM placement test. The former will be described, first.

2.3.1. The TOEFL

This section will present the literature regarding the TOEFL. It will attempt to examine various definitions, look at varying opinions regarding the use of the TOEFL. It is very important to understand the literature in order to do the comparison between the TOEFL and the ITESM placement tests.

According to the TOEFL Test and Score Manual, the TOEFL is a test that measures general English language proficiency (6). It is

used to evaluate non-native speakers of English often as admission requirements for international students who apply to study at universities in the United States and Canada. It was developed and made available by the Educational Testing Service, a non-profit organization that is responsible for a testing program. The TOEFL is a test which is easy to obtain, to administer, and to evaluate. According to Duran, the first TOEFL tests had five sections (1). In 1976, two sections were eliminated and a three-section test was developed. Scores on the TOEFL range from 200-677. The test is administered at 1,260 test centers in 175 countries. Madsen adds that about 500,000 students take it each year (27).

Although there are various standardized, commercial or institutional ESL/EFL tests, Stevenson believes that the TOEFL is one of the best because of its purpose, the large population tested, and all its uses. Twelve new tests come out each year, i.e., an average of one per month. The TOEFL scores are valid for two years after the date the test was taken. Of all the foreign language tests, it is the most studied and used. Based on these reasons, Stevenson states that the "TOEFL is a universal test by necessity" (80). It can be administered to any person no matter his/her language or background.

For the purpose of this paper, it is of interest to know what the content of the TOEFL is, so the comparative analysis that is being done in this thesis can be easier to understand. The TOEFL Test and Score Manual says that the TOEFL consists of one hundred and fifty timed multiple-choice test items (6-7). It is a standardized, objective, discrete point test, which takes 105 minutes.

It consists of three sections: Section 1: Listening Comprehension, Section 2: Structure and Written Expression, and Section 3: Vocabulary and Reading Comprehension.

Section 1: Listening Comprehension This section tests the spoken English language. It measures the oral characteristics of the language in structure and vocabulary. Various comprehension tasks are assessed. These include: paraphrasing, drawing conclusions and inference, and understanding situations in talks and conversations. The dialogue items require students to distinguish the relation of ideas and sentences produced by the two speakers. There are items that test informal and idiomatic English. The section consists of fifty items. These are: statements (twenty items), short dialogues (fifteen items), and minitalks and long conversations (fifteen items). The complete recording is played only once. It is important to note, however that the instructions and the examples on the TOEFL are in English.

Section 2: Structure and Written Expression This section probes the examinee's ability to identify structural and grammatical points, syntactic and semantic characteristics, appropriate pragmatic and idiomatic usage of words, and correct diction in standard written English. The section consists of forty questions: structure items (fifteen) and written expression items (twenty-five). The examinee also has to do error analysis.

Section 3: Vocabulary and Reading Comprehension This section measures the examinee's capacity to comprehend the meaning and use of words, and the capacity to understand reading passages. It is divided in two parts: the first part tests vocabulary (thirty

items) and the second one tests reading comprehension (thirty items). This last section presents passages followed by three-eight questions. The questions are answered after reading the passage. They include: main-idea questions, factual questions, inference questions, analogy questions, organization questions, and viewpoint questions. The content of the passages are mainly academic.

The TOEFL program includes the Test of Spoken English and the Test of Written English. According to the TOEFL Test and Score Manual, the Test of Spoken English (TSE) measures the spoken proficiency of non-native speakers (37-38). The other supplementary test, called Test of Written English (TWE), measures the examinee's proficiency in writing in English as a non-native speaker.

2.3.1.1. Development of TOEFL test questions

In this section, a review of the development of the questions will help understand the content of the TOEFL and the construction of the test items.

According to the TOEFL Test and Score Manual, the test questions are written by specialists who are trained in developing test items and test questions (7). The Educational Testing Service (ETS) is responsible for item specifications, questions, and final test forms. ETS examines the test items for cultural and racial biases. It also checks for content suitability. Concern is given to any symbol, code or content that could be offensive to any test population. A committee made up of specialists in language

teaching and linguistics is responsible for producing the test guidelines, for deciding the skills tested, the type of questions and the subject and cultural aspects found in the content. The members of the committee are from the United States and Canada. The committee consists of six members who, frequently rotated, make sure new ideas about teaching and testing English are included. The complete test form is reviewed by the committee to ensure validity. Validity, according to Richards et al., as stated previously, is "the degree to which a test measures what it is supposed to measure, or can be used successfully for the purposes for which it is intended" (396). The TOEFL Test and Score Manual states that all test scores have an error in measurement; "the extent to which test scores are free from errors in the measurement process is known as reliability" (30). There are two procedures to study test reliability: by using a reliability coefficient or the standard error of measurement. If there is a reliability coefficient that means that "a variety of coefficients exist because errors in the measurement process can arise from a variety of sources" (TOEFL Test and Score Manual 30). The reasons of error can be due to the different tasks found in the test or to the examinee's behavior during the test. As it has been stated in the TOEFL Test and Score Manual, the standard error of measurement is "an estimate of the probable extent of the error inherent in a test score due to the imprecision of the measurement process" (31). This means that it gives the variation of scores among students who have the same level of proficiency.

For the purpose of this study, it is important to understand the idea of test reliability. Biehler defines reliability as "how consistent scores are if a test is taken again" (148). Chastain also defines reliability and says that it is identified when a test shows the same or similar scores (497). Hughes says that the more similar results are, the more reliable a test is (29). In *Fair Test*, it is stated that a "test is completely reliable if you would get exactly the same results if you administered it to the same student again" (11). Reliability for Saleemi is, first, the accuracy with which a test or test item measures consistently what it is supposed to measure and second, the consistency of a measure upon repeated administrations . . . to the same group of students (6). Oller defines reliability as the "degree to which a test produces similar conditions" (27). Stevenson makes a statement that is of interest to all language teachers, because he says that "reliability is a necessary-but not sufficient-condition for validity, and face validity is the mere appearance of validity to the metrically naive observer" (186). He probably states this because most of the time the test designer is so concerned about face validity that he gives less importance to validity and reliability. Face validity, according to Richards et al., is "the degree to which a test appears to measure the knowledge or abilities it claims to measure, based on the subjective judgment of an observer" (135). For the purpose of this study, it was found important to work with Biehler's definition because he says that reliability refers to how consistent scores are if a test is taken once again. Occasionally

the same ITESM placement test is taken more than once by the same student and, normally, the scores turn out to be consistent.

The author believes that it is also important to understand the idea of test validity. According to the TOEFL Test and Score Manual, validity is observed when a test measures what it is supposed to measure (33-35). Chastain defines validity and says the "test is sound when it tests what it purports to test" (497). This means the test measures the content according to the objectives. For Patkowski, as well as for Biehler, validity can be used when a test "really measures what it claims to measure" (118-119). Saleemi and Oller say that validity is the "degree to which a test actually measures what it is designed to measure" (6). Concerning the TOEFL and for the purpose of the study, validity refers to the accuracy of the test in measuring a person's proficiency of English.

Criterion-related validity refers to the possibility of relating a score on a test to a score on another one, this is known as a criterion, TOEFL Test and Score Manual (33). There are studies, says Alderson, on the TOEFL that check the criterion-related validity (81). It has been found that there is correlation between the TOEFL and other tests that measure similar abilities. In fact, TOEFL has been used as a criterion to check the validity of other tests. Tests have been considered as valid if they are in accord with the TOEFL. Criterion-related validity refers to "a form of VALIDITY in which a test is compared or correlated with an outside CRITERION MEASURE" (Richards et al. 92). A criterion measure is "a standard against which a test can be compared as a

measure of its VALIDITY" (Richards et al. 91). According to Hughes, there are two kinds of criterion-related validity: concurrent validity and predicative validity (23). Concurrent validity is, according to Patkowski, a standard used to correlate the validity of the scores on a test with the scores of another instrument of measurement (119). The construct-related validity is supposed to maintain the soundness of the skills found in the test. According to Hughes, construct validity is found when a test measures only the ability being tested (26). As Duran has written, there are two concerns in construct validity (6). One has to do with language proficiency and the other one with language performance. Biehler says, construct validity "indicates how well a test measures a particular construct or attribute" (548). Patkowski identifies construct validity when the "content and approach of the test can also be examined in light of the current state of the linguistic theory field" (119). Saleemi states that testing experts call construct validity the test-theory combination. He defines construct validity as the "extent to which the factors (competences, skills) a test is supposed to measure actually are measured, and other factors are not" (3-5). Concerning the TOEFL, it is a test that measures the abilities being tested. In this case, the Listening Comprehension section actually measures the examinee's comprehension of spoken English language; the Structure and Written Expression section measures the examinee's ability to recognize structural and grammatical points in standard written English; and the Reading Comprehension section measures the ability to understand reading passages, and the meaning and usage of words.

Content-related validity is the study of the content of the test; the degree to which it is considered valid, according to the TOEFL Test and Score Manual (33). Another author, Hughes, says a "test is said to have content validity if its content constitutes a representative sample of the language skills, structures, etc. with which it is meant to be concerned" (22). He adds to this that a specification of skills or structures is required to evaluate if a test has content validity. To prove if a test is really measuring what it says it is, content validity should be done. For Biehler, content validity refers to "how well test items cover the content of a type of a subject or type of learning" (158). Another author, Brown sees content validity as a test which gives the student the information of the subject he is tested on. The "test actually involves the testee in a sample of the behavior that is being measured" (222). Saleemi defines content validity as the "extent to which the content of the test or a portion of the course represents the content of the entire course" (5). The Committee of Examiners is very interested in the content-related evidence of the TOEFL. They want to make sure the test shows up-dated information of English as a second language. It should be noted that no validity or reliability tests have been done on the ITESM placement tests.

2.3.1.2. Advantages and disadvantages of the TOEFL

In order to determine the usefulness of the TOEFL as a placement test, it is necessary to look at the advantages and disadvantages of the test.

Chen Yuan-zhen affirms that the TOEFL has two main advantages. She says the TOEFL tests an ample scope of the knowledge of English. The examinee is tested in listening comprehension, grammar, vocabulary, and reading comprehension. Another advantage she sees is that the test is computer scored (26). This is very attractive for any language teacher.

Patkowski also presents another advantage using the results of studies practiced on TOEFL. Studies on reliability and concurrent validity of the TOEFL with other tests have shown good results. This demonstrates that TOEFL scores can be compared to any test that measures the same skills (125). A study conducted by Bachman, Kunnan, Vanniarajan, and Lynch, TOEFL Test and Score Manual, in Section 3 looked at reading comprehension. They found that the vocabulary and reading comprehension section presents passages mainly in the academic field. They found this fact to be an advantage to the examinee, considering that one of the main purposes of taking the test is to discover his proficiency in academic environments, because he will later have to survive in college life (33). Duran gives another interesting advantage identified in the TOEFL (56). He found that the communicative component of the test is limited, nonetheless, he finds it suitable to measure the proficiency of English in basic, intermediate, and advanced students. He states that it would not be too convenient to use TOEFL to assess high advanced students. This statement could be considered as a limitation for TOEFL, as well as an important observation users should be aware of. Duran later concludes that the study conducted by his colleagues on the TOEFL shows that it

can evaluate accurately the language proficiency of incoming foreign students (61).

Many studies have shown limitations and problems with the TOEFL as a test of language proficiency. Patkowski mentions that there are examinees who do well on the TOEFL, but when they are enrolled in a class they present problems in writing accurate English (120). The author also says that experts do not consider the TOEFL as a good predictor of the college grade point average (GPA), which refers to a score that is obtained from the grades of various courses throughout the years of high school (125). This score shows the student's achievement in high school and it may predict his future development in college. Duran presents some limitations identified in the TOEFL by Bachman and Palmer found in the TOEFL Research Report #17. These include:

- No language production is required on the test. The student is not asked to speak nor to write (40).

- The examinee gets involved in a conscious evaluation of the test items while answering the test (41).

- "Examinees cannot utilize visual perception to recognize proxemic and gestural cues that would enhance understanding of face-to-face interaction in real circumstances" (Duran 41).

- The test-taking situation and performance is much more on appropriateness of language and not so much on the communicative aspect of language (42).

- The student is not engaged in any problem solving and hard thinking because all his answers have to do with selecting the best option among four possible answers (43).

- Since all the test items are presented in a written form, it is stated that the graphic symbol is important in the examinees performance (26).

- The TOEFL items only show a portion of the language and its situations. They are short in comparison to statements found in real communication (60).

- The short TOEFL test items show little relation with authentic communication (22).

- The student is only exposed to receiving the language while taking the test. There is no interchange of information during the test. This may cause a problem because in all real communication, there is a negotiation of meaning; above all if there are problems of comprehension (45).

- The content of the TOEFL test is too abstract and it mainly presents academic contexts to accurately function as an evaluating instrument (43).

- The examinee only identifies meaning and grammar appropriateness at the sentence or text level (58).

- "TOEFL has an assessment purpose that is more limited in scope than assessment of the full range of communicative skills" (24). The extent of evaluation in the TOEFL is narrow. The TOEFL only measures one part of the English language among all the skills used in authentic speech.

- The TOEFL pursues to offer a context of authentic, natural language in the items but it only presents "a formal multiple-choice testing context" (35).

- In Section 2: Structure and Written Expression, there is not much communicative information in the questions and every item presents a different topic. This variation may be wanted so the examinee can read several contents and topics; however it may cause loss of concentration and continuity (59).

- In the Reading Comprehension Section, several problems are found. The examinee is exposed to items that ask for literal answers; other items ask to obtain main ideas and details about the passage. There are few opportunities for interpretation of meaning and when these occur the examinee must guess the viewpoint or attitude of the writer (40).

- "The social context surrounding occurrence of dialogue items must be inferred by examinees, and there is only limited information in the linguistic and paralinguistic content of dialogues to guide this form of inference" (59).

Chen Yuan-zhen also mentions several problems with the TOEFL. These include:

- Students are only required to judge the answers and pick the best option.

- Speaking and composition-writing skills are not considered.

- The TOEFL does not help to measure the student's academic capacity.

- The TOEFL has limited diagnostic value.

- The student later presents problems of understanding technical words.

- The testee is not engaged in any productive work.

- Students may present problems in spelling, a skill that is not tested (26).

Madsen in criticizing the TOEFL says the TOEFL has been heavily criticized for its passive way of evaluating the proficiency of English; the examinee does no production of the language and all the questions are multiple choice. The introduction of the TSE and the TWE, he explains, may have been produced to solve this problem. He concludes that the "TOEFL is a poor predictor of success in college" (28).

In reviewing the description of the TOEFL, there are several areas that are important to this study. First of all, the definitions of the TOEFL help to understand the test and to determine if the ITESM placement tests are comparable in what they evaluate. It is important to consider the development of the TOEFL test items to understand how the test was constructed. It is also important to know that the TOEFL fits the basic definitions on reliability and validity. The last part of this section presented the advantages and disadvantages of the TOEFL, it was found that there are more problems with the test than there are advantages. The author believes this knowledge will help to determine if the two tests are comparable in what they evaluate.

2.3.2. The ITESM placement test

This section will look at the ITESM placement test. It will attempt to explain the development of the test, the content description, and the use of the test.

To satisfy the ELP objectives the students have to be placed in the English courses based on their proficiency in the English language. The ITESM placement test was developed by a special committee of the English Center faculty of the Monterrey Campus in 1990. Fourteen versions of the test were developed from the original document. This was done to avoid the problem of copying. On the average, the tests are administered to 800 students at the beginning of each semester. To be able to use the same placement test or one like it in all campuses, one original test is sent to each ITESM ELP and based on this sample they make up their own tests (See ITESM placement test in Appendix A).

The ITESM placement test is a one-hundred-two-question timed multiple-choice item test divided in three sections: Structure, Reading Comprehension, and Listening Comprehension. It measures the material covered in the *Spectrum* series, i.e., everything that is studied in the Remedial and Basic Modules. All the instructions are in Spanish.

The first section tests the students' knowledge of correct sentence structure and usage. It has ninety multiple-choice questions with four choices for possible answers but only one of which is correct. These questions are based on the grammatical structures found in each of the six levels of the *Spectrum* series. Every fifteen questions measure a different level, i.e., questions 1-15 measure the structures studied in *Spectrum 1*, questions 16-30 measure the structures of *Spectrum 2*, etc. To avoid an overlap of structures evaluated and to test the same content, a table of specifications was designed for each of the levels of the Spec-

trum series, a total of six tables with the most relevant structures of each level. As a result, question 1 of all the tests refers to the same grammatical structure, but its content is totally different.

The second section tests reading comprehension. This part has six short passages; each passage has one multiple-choice question and tests a different level of reading comprehension. The passages were selected based on the teaching experience the members of the English Committee had and according to the difficulty of the level tested. The questions are varied and include main-idea questions, factual questions, and inference questions.

The last section is Listening Comprehension. This part has six short dialogues which are read to the students by ELP teachers at each campus. Each dialogue has a multiple-choice question and tests a different level. These dialogues were designed by the members of the English committee, who took into consideration the level of material being tested.

Therefore, for each level there is a total of seventeen questions to measure proficiency, questions 1-15 measure *Spectrum 1* plus one question of the Reading Comprehension section and one of the Listening Comprehension section. A student must get 70% of the seventeen questions right in order to pass to the following level. Students who score lower than 70 will start the ELP at that level. The questions in each of the three sections progressively become more difficult. Since these questions measure the material contained in the six levels of the Spectrum method and the test is used exclusively for placing students in the English

courses, it could be assumed that it is a valid test. As previously stated, validity, according to Richards et al., is "the degree to which a test measures what it is supposed to measure, or can be used successfully for the purposes for which it is intended" (396). It could also be stated that it is a reliable test since the students are placed correctly in the corresponding level according to their proficiency in the language. Reliability, to reiterate, according to Richards et al., is "a measure of the degree to which a test gives consistent results. A test is said to be reliable if it gives the same results when it is given on different occasions or when it is used by different people" (314). Therefore the aforementioned statement of the validity of the ELP test is based only upon the opinion given by the teachers who teach the *Spectrum* courses and work with students that were placed in the level. No statistical studies have been done to test the reliability and validity of the ITESM test. If there is a student who seems to be misplaced, he is referred to the coordinator for location.

Before the semester courses start, the test is administered by the faculty of the English Center in a large room specially designed for this kind of evaluation. Answer sheets are scored by computer and the students are able to see their scores on a computer screen immediately after handing in the test. The test places the students in any of the three modules and in any of the levels within the Remedial and Basic Module.

All students, except ITESM bicultural students, are required to take this placement test. The test is administered two days before the beginning of classes each semester. The students are

scheduled for the hour and the day of the test by the academic department. On the day of the test, the students receive the eighteen-page test plus a computer-answer sheet with spaces for all the answers on one page. All the instructions are written in Spanish on the test. Students have to use a pencil, and they are given an hour and a half to answer the three sections. After the first thirty minutes of the test, the students are asked to turn to the section that measures Listening Comprehension and two teachers read the dialogues. Since the students know it is a placement test that will define their future language courses, they put forth their best efforts throughout the process in hopes of the highest possible results. There is no penalty for guessing on the test.

2.3.2.1. Advantages and disadvantages of the ITESM placement test

To be able to do a better comparison between the tests, it is also necessary to present the advantages and disadvantages of the ITESM test.

ADVANTAGES: Since the ELP first started, ITESM placement tests have been a helpful instrument for placing thousands of incoming students in the English courses. The tests were constructed exclusively for the ELP and fourteen versions were developed from the original document. The tests provide information that help to place students according to their abilities. The tests have saved time and effort for teachers of the ELP. They are easy to

administer, to score and to interpret. The tests are divided into three sections: Structure, Reading Comprehension, and Listening Comprehension. The test items measure the material covered in the six levels of the *Spectrum* series that is used in the ELP. All test items are multiple-choice questions.

DISADVANTAGES: This section will look at the limitations and problems with the ITESM placement test.

First of all, the tests were not developed scientifically. The test items have never been checked to see if the distractors are accurate.

It is believed that the placement tests are reliable because the students are placed correctly in the corresponding level according to their proficiency in the language. Unsatisfied students have taken the same placement test several times to verify the level and the results have been the same. But there has never been the case of a student who has taken two or more different versions of the placement tests to verify if the results of these tests are the same.

Very few complaints have been made by ELP teachers regarding the tests. It appears that the ELP teachers are satisfied with the placement tests, even though, the validity and reliability of the placement tests have never been measured scientifically.

The author believes the ITESM placement test is more a grammar test, because ninety test items measure structure and only six measure reading comprehension while another six measure listening comprehension. It mainly tests grammar and has few

items on listening comprehension, vocabulary, and reading comprehension.

The ITESM test does not measure proficiency. The test was developed based on the *Spectrum* series and is used to place students in the ELP program. It does not measure the student's global competence in a language.

In reviewing the ITESM placement tests, there are several aspects to consider. First of all, it is an in-house test developed by a special committee of the English Center faculty of the Monterey Campus in 1990; it was designed for the purposes of the ELP program. The placement tests measure some of the same sections the TOEFL does: Listening Comprehension, Structure, and Reading Comprehension. The tests have been used for four years. This information on the ITESM placement test will help to compare the two tests and have a better understanding of the study.

2.4. Review of TOEFL research studies

In order to know more about and have a broader view and understanding of the TOEFL, a review of some studies performed on the TOEFL will be provided in this section.

The following is a summary of some of these studies. Hicks conducted a study on the methods used in computerized testing in order to make a TOEFL computerized placement test. Hicks's idea was to get away from the paper-and-pencil version and work with a computerized test that offers several advantages (1-4). For example, boredom on the students and testing time are decreased;

test scores can be reported immediately and the exams are more secure because all the forms have a different sequence of items. The author found some limitations in ESL departments in the use of computerized testing; there was a lack of computers, and a problem of time and an absence of experience in computers on behalf of the administrators (19). Hicks comments that between the TOEFL computerized test and the paper-and-pencil version of the TOEFL, there are two points to consider; the measurement qualities of the tests that cause differences in the scores because the item data is still not well correlated between the two versions, and the other point is that the computerized TOEFL is not very practical for large test population (25-27). However, the score scale, the test specifications, and the interpretation of results are very similar between the two tests. The examinee only knows a score interval close to the equated score. Hicks makes remarks on the benefits of using the computerized tests, but again the paper-and-pencil version seems to be the best way of testing. Even though, the computerized version is a practical choice.

Another study was carried out by Hale on how the students' major-field interacts with his accuracy in answering items in the Reading Comprehension section of the TOEFL (1). Hale was interested to learn if performance on reading was influenced by the students previous knowledge, the schemata (4-5). Another concern he had was to know if the passages in the reading comprehension section had a balance of content assessment. The author comments that the reading passages are taken from general reading material not from any particular subject (19). Hale says that

if there is some relation between the students' knowledge and the content of the passage, it shows in only a few points on the general scale (43). There is a small effect but a reliable phenomenon. It was evident that the students' background knowledge was an advantage. The author also found that aspects of motivation and emotional factors influence the students' accuracy in reading performance (46). The suggestion the author presented was to offer a better balance in the reading material of the TOEFL (47). It is believed that Hale's finding is true, because the reading passages in the Reading Comprehension section of the TOEFL should offer a larger variety of readings. Otherwise, there might always be a favored examinee in the test.

Grant Henning performed a study to learn the effects of eight different multiple-choice items, which differed in length, kind, and quality of the stem, type of task, and embeddedness of item stems or answers (1-3). Henning points out a problem in the use of embedded-sentence stems in the vocabulary section. He says they are too long; there is too much context, and they do not help to understand the meaning of the word tested. If the examinees take all the necessary time to read the sentences, there would not be enough time to finish all the questions, comments the author (2). Maybe less context in the item stem or the use of cloze questions instead of matching synonyms would help. Henning explains that it was also found that matching-type items work better than supply-type multiple-choice items, in reliability, criterion-related validity, and item discriminability (14). This may occur because in the supply-format, the student should know more syntax

and also have semantic knowledge. He found that the students who have more exposure to English language classes and testing do better than those who have less familiarity with the language and item formats (14). Context helps students to answer questions on vocabulary. The use of embedded-item stems in reading passages will help to see reliability and criterion-related validity. He found that in vocabulary testing, familiar item formats and contextualized formats enhance students' answers.

Angelis, Swinton, and Cowell did a study to demonstrate how nonnative speakers compared with native speakers on three verbal aptitude tests and on the TOEFL. For the purpose of the study more attention was given to the findings of the TOEFL. The authors found the "identification of score levels on TOEFL at which scores on the other tests begin to be meaningful" (21). Any student who has taken TOEFL or any other test would be interested to know this information. It is also important for test designers so attention can be given for future refinement on a test.

Grant Henning and Eduardo Cascallar demonstrated how the TOEFL and other assessment instruments measure communicative competence (1). Their study discovered that any test of communicative linguistic performance involves a situation (21). They point out that there are variables in any communicative performance; for example pragmatic functions and social registers. These variables are in constant interaction, so it is not easy to identify a single model of communicative competence. This finding made the authors think that it would be necessary to identify the kind of communicative performance used in a test to guaran-

tee the validity of the evaluation. Henning and Cascallar made another suggestion; when communicative language tests are constructed, attention should be given to the use of appropriate contexts to assure the purpose of the communication and the evaluation of the context (23). After performing the study of communicative competence on the TOEFL, the authors stated that the structure and written expression section of the TOEFL is related to the ratings of communicative competence in the linguistic, discursal, sociolinguistic, and strategic aspects.

The following information was taken from the TOEFL Update Spring 1994. The TOEFL is currently being revised by the Educational Testing Service with the guide of the TOEFL Program and Policy Council; the TOEFL committee is also involved in this development. The project is to design TOEFL 2000 for use in July 1995. The decision was taken due to the modifications in teaching and testing English as a second language. The project will increase the qualities of TOEFL's evaluation of English proficiency. The objectives of the modifications are to

- Augment the context for the multiple-choice questions.
- Make a test that is more communicative in competence and performance.
- Show more information about the student's capacity to use English for Academic Purposes.

The general purpose of the TOEFL test will be maintained, also the basic form of the test, the scoring scale and interpretation, and the time allowed per section. No new kinds of questions will

be added. According to TOEFL Update Spring 1994, the changes will only be made to two sections.

In reviewing the ideas presented in this section, it is important to have knowledge about the TOEFL and the studies that have been performed on this test in order to determine if the TOEFL and the ITESM placement test are comparable in what they evaluate. This section only presents some of the studies performed on the TOEFL. As already stated, no scientific studies have been made on the ITESM placement test.

2.5. Review of research studies that compare the TOEFL with other tests

The aim of this study is to compare the TOEFL and the ITESM placement test. In order to develop the analysis, it was necessary to study recent reviews on language proficiency. According to Richards et al., language proficiency is "a person's skill in using a language for a specific purpose . . . proficiency refers to the degree of skill with which a person can use a language" (204). In looking for similar studies, it became apparent that almost no studies have been done in comparing the TOEFL with other specific tests. Studies that include part of what the author is attempting to do include.

Bachman, Davidson, and Foulkas performed a study to compare the Cambridge EFL (English as a Foreign Language) tests and the ETS (Educational Testing Service) tests of EFL. In the ETS tests, the TOEFL, the TWE, and the TSE are included. The main purpose of

this study was to compare the abilities evaluated in the tests. This included a content analysis of the tests and a study of the relationship between the students' performance on the test and what each test item measured. It was possible to compare the scores on the tests because they measure the same abilities. But some differences in the levels of reliability and in the equivalence of the forms were found.

Another study was performed by Angelis, Swinton, and Cowell, they wanted to see the relationship between the students' performance on the TOEFL and on other verbal tests: the verbal section of the Graduate Record Examinations Aptitude Test (GRE-V), the verbal section of the College Board Scholastic Aptitude test (SAT-V) and Test of Standard Written English (TSWE) (Hale 39-41). After the results of the study were analyzed, it was found that the SAT-V, GRE-V, and TSWE are hard tests for nonnatives. Even though the TOEFL and the GRE-V do not measure exactly the same skills, there is similarity between the tests except in the Listening Comprehension section because the GRE-V does not measure this skill. The same finding occurred for the SAT-V. Between the TSWE and the TOEFL, there was more similarity in the Structure and Written Expression section and less relationship in the Listening Comprehension section. It could be concluded that the Listening Comprehension section of the TOEFL has very little or no relationship with the verbal sections of the GRE and the SAT. While the Structure and Written Expression section and the Reading Comprehension sections do have some similarity.

Pack examined the relationship between equivalent sections and scores on the Michigan test and the TOEFL (Hale 160-161). The author was interested to see how the tests worked with different language groups and also looked at the predicative validity of the tests. The author found out that there is little correlation between the tests, so they could not be used alternated. The tests do have some relation with the grades obtained in the first courses of a language program, but they do not help to determine the students' success in the following courses or the possibility of graduating. It should be noted that the Michigan test is basically a traditional test of English grammar and structure. It is very close in content and form to the ITESM placement tests.

Another study was performed by Chase and Stallings. They sought to evaluate the relation of the grade-point average (GPA) to the TOEFL, to the Pennstate test developed at Pennsylvania State University, and to a test developed by Robert Lado at the University of Michigan. The sample taken were foreign students at Indiana University. The authors wanted to see if these tests could serve to help predict a foreign student's academic performance. It was found that these tests are helpful only for evaluating the English language ability but not for giving predictions about the success of a student's performance at school. This study allowed the authors to find out that the Lado tests and the TOEFL assess similar abilities. It was also found that the GPA in high-school in a foreign student is a less reliable indicator of success than in a native speaker (Hale 59-61).

Duran et al. conducted a project on the study of the communicative competence skills found in the TOEFL. He based his analysis on an article found in the TOEFL Research Reports #17 ("TOEFL from a Communicative Viewpoint on Language Proficiency: A Working Paper"). He used a checklist of competence skills taken from this study performed by Canale and Swain on language competence areas. Canale and Swain developed a range of four language competence areas that represent the components of the holistic language proficiency (6-7). They are as follows:

Grammatical competence: It refers to the quality of being highly skilled in the use of an arbitrary system of symbols, letters or words used in a language.

Sociolinguistic competence: It means to control the correct use of language in sociolinguistic settings considering meaning and form.

Discourse competence: It refers to the ability of writing a well structured text considering meanings and forms, as well as, cohesive devices and coherence rules.

Strategic competence: It refers to the skill of using verbal and nonverbal strategies that help to make up limitations and increase the effective expression in speech or writing.

These four components of communicative competence served as the basis for Duran et al.'s analysis.

In reviewing the ideas presented in this section, it is important to mention that all the studies were of help to the author because it was necessary to learn more about review studies that compare the TOEFL with other tests in order to develop the

TOEFL/ITESM content analysis. Some studies were of more importance than others because of the similarity between them. Bachman et al.'s study is a good sample of this because it has the objective to compare two tests in the abilities evaluated. They are also similar because Bachman et al.'s study includes a content analysis of the tests. This study was of help to the author in order to analyze what form of comparative studies to take. The author believes that it was also interesting to know that the TOEFL was found similar to the Lado tests in the abilities tested, that the TOEFL is similar in the Structure and Written Expression section and the Reading Comprehension section with the SAT-V, GRE-V, and the TSWE; and that the TOEFL has little relation with the Michigan test except in the grades obtained. Duran et al.'s analysis of the communicative competence skills found in the TOEFL served as a useful model for the author's comparison between the TOEFL/ITESM tests.

This chapter has reviewed the literature in the following areas: language testing, chronology of test development, approaches to language testing, aspects of language testing, communicative language testing, description of language tests, description of the TOEFL and the ITESM placement test and their advantages and disadvantages, and a review of TOEFL research studies. The information will be used in the subsequent chapters and especially in Chapters 4 and 5. The next section, Chapter 3, discusses the procedures used to conduct this study.

3. Strategy of the methodology

This chapter describes the methods and steps followed in the design and execution of the study. It begins with a brief overview of the problem. This will be followed by an explanation of the research methods used and why they were selected. Then it describes the instruments and techniques used for the collection and analysis of data. Finally it presents the methods used to analyze the data and present the results.

The objective of this study is to examine, through content analysis, the TOEFL and the ITESM placement test. According to Richards et al., content analysis refers to "a method used for analyzing and tabulating the frequency of occurrence of topics, ideas, opinions and other aspects of the content of written or spoken communication" (80). Another definition of content analysis is given by Vogt, he says content analysis refers to "any of several research techniques used to describe and systematically analyze the content of written, spoken, or pictorial communication" (7). This thesis compares the tests and identifies the differences and similarities. The information obtained will be of interest to ITESM administrators and will help them come to a decision about which test is a more valid instrument for placing students in the ELP. The results of this study will allow the administration and the English Language Center to make a judgement on the validity of replacing the current ITESM placement test with the TOEFL. It also contributes to the revision of the current placement test.

3.1. Methods of research used

In order to describe and compare the TOEFL and the ITESM placement test, it is important to have an understanding of methods of research. This section will look into this area. Definitions will be provided and the identification, description, and justification of the type of research selected for the study will be discussed.

The research method carried out in this investigation can be classified as descriptive. Isaac and Michael note that the descriptive approach is one of the nine basic methods of research. They say that the purpose of descriptive research is "to describe systematically a situation or area of interest factually and accurately" (42). According to Van Dalen and Meyer, "the purpose of a descriptive research is to know the situations, habits, and attitudes through the exact description of the activities, objects, processes, and persons" (226-229). According to Richards et al., the comparison and contrast method "describes the similarities or differences between two sets of items" (229).

3.1.1. Identification and description of the type of research method

The method of development used to do the analysis was a Comparison-and-Contrast method. In the case of this study, it refers to the sections of the tests and the test items found in the two tests analyzed. The tests will be described and the results will be compared and contrasted.

3.1.2. Justification of the type of research

In selecting the type of methodology to be used in this study, it was important to consider the idea of describing the content of the tests, i.e., the test items, then comparing the results and later analyzing the similarities or differences between the tests. The Comparison-and-Contrast method was selected because it helps the reader to see how the results of the analysis of the tests correlate.

There are research studies that have a similar objective to what the author is trying to develop, e.g., Bachman et al., Angelis et al., Pack, Chase and Stallings, and Duran et al. The study that has proved the most useful for this thesis research was done by Duran et al. In order to develop the study, it was necessary to find and analyze a descriptive study performed on language proficiency tests similar to the one Duran et al. performed on the TOEFL. Duran et al.'s study served as a model for this analysis and in the comparison of the tests. The study also provided complete information on the competence areas of the English language proficiency found in the TOEFL. He worked with a checklist of competence skills:

- Grammatical competence
- Sociolinguistic competence
- Discourse competence
- Strategic competence

These four components of communicative competence served as the basis for Duran et al. and also for this author in preparing a list of skills for the analysis of the tests.

3.2. Methods and techniques for the data collection

In this section, the author will present the instruments used in the study. Then the description and the method of selection of the instruments will be explained. Finally the methods and techniques followed to collect the data will be discussed.

Since the purpose of this study is the comparison and analysis of the two tests, the fundamental instruments are

- The ITESM placement tests
- Duran et al.'s study on the competence areas of the TOEFL

The author decided that it was not necessary to use the TOEFL test per se for the analysis because Duran et al.'s study provided all the information and material necessary for the comparative study of the tests.

The ITESM placement test is the instrument used to place the students in the courses of the English Program based on their proficiency in the English language. It consists of three sections (Structure, Reading Comprehension, and Listening Comprehension). It has one-hundred-two multiple-choice test items, and the testing time is about ninety minutes.

Duran et al.'s study on the competence areas of the TOEFL is an analysis of the skills of the English language proficiency found in the TOEFL. Duran et al. works with three competence areas: socio-linguistic, grammatical, and discourse.

There are fourteen versions of the ITESM placement test. For the purpose of this study, only three tests were selected randomly for the analysis. Duran et al.'s study on the TOEFL was selected after an exhaustive research of studies on the content of the

TOEFL. The author considered it to be a good model for the comparative analysis of the tests.

The data was gathered as follows:

- Select randomly and analyze the ITESM placement tests.
- Analyze Duran et al.'s study on the competence areas of the TOEFL.

3.3. Methods and techniques used to analyze the data and present the results

As previously mentioned in the above sections of this chapter, the author will use the competence areas from Duran et al.'s study. Then the checklist on the areas will be examined. Later the author will decide which skills the study will focus on. After that, the list of skills to analyze the ITESM placement tests will be made. The next step will be to analyze the content of the ITESM placement tests following Duran et al.'s study on the TOEFL. Finally the author will take the results of the ITESM checklist and compare them with Duran et al.'s list on the TOEFL.

3.3.1. Method of analysis

It was helpful to use the list of competence skills used by Duran et al. because his findings on the TOEFL helped the author to study the ITESM placement test. However, Duran et al. made some modifications to this list of four competence skills. He excluded the Strategic Competence because the examinees are not required

to produce language on the TOEFL test. For Duran et al.'s study of the TOEFL, he proposed to work only with three competence areas: sociolinguistic, grammatical, and discourse areas. For the purpose of the ITESM placement test vs. TOEFL comparative study, it was decided to exclude the sociolinguistic competence area because the items found in the ITESM placement test are not completely socially and situationally derived from authentic language. There are items that do not provide enough contextual information to evaluate the setting or topic of the discourse, the social roles and relationships among the speakers, etc. Occasionally, a possible situational context for an item was interpreted; other times there were several possible answers. This kind of circumstance made the study more complicated. It was decided to work only with the grammatical competence. It is divided in five skills: pronunciation, orthography, vocabulary, word formation, and sentence formation. These skills are also divided in subskills. Once the competence skills and subskills were selected, a checklist was made to analyze the tests. The following step is the comparison of the content of the tests. It is important to know and understand the area that will be used to do the analysis of the tests, because it will help to distinguish the similarities and differences found between the tests. In the analysis of the information, Duran et al. followed the same order of the sections presented in the TOEFL test. The author decided to use Duran et al.'s study since it would help to guide the analysis. While in the case of the ITESM placement test, it was decided to analyze the content of the tests. Therefore, in order to do the content analysis,

Duran et al.'s study was taken as a model to analyze the content of the ITESM placement test. The information on the TOEFL was taken directly from Duran et al.'s findings to do a comparison study with the ITESM placement test findings. In order to compare the tests, it was important to examine and study the content of the tests. Hence, the first step was to determine what a content analysis is. In the case of this study, content analysis refers to the study and comparison of the composition of the tests.

For the comparative analysis, tests #00020, #00060, and #00070 of the ITESM placement tests were randomly selected and used. The first ITESM placement test analyzed was #00020. Each individual item was studied carefully and analyzed according to the checklist made from Duran et al.'s study on the TOEFL. The first section analyzed was Listening Comprehension. Tallies were placed on the checklist every time a skill was found. These tallies were counted at the end of the analysis. The next section analyzed was Structure and Written Expression and the last section was Reading Comprehension. Following this procedure, the total number and the percentage of occurrences were obtained for each skill.

3.3.2. Method used to present results

All the findings are presented in comparative tables; contrasting the ITESM placement test with the TOEFL. Tables were made that showed the results of the content analysis of the tests. Each table presents the description and comparison of the items

of the three sections of the tests. The tables discuss the framework of the tests, the analysis of the grammar/structure and topics/themes, and the vocabulary of the tests.

The author feels this is a valid procedure of analysis since the purpose of the study is to examine the tests through a content analysis. Therefore, the comparison of the list of skills of the tests will show the similarities and differences among the tests. This procedure of analysis, hopefully, is valid because it will measure what it is supposed to measure.

4. Analysis of data and presentation of results

The purpose of this study is to compare, through content analysis, the TOEFL and the ITESM placement test. This thesis will compare the tests and examine their differences and similarities.

This chapter discusses the results of the comparison of the TOEFL test and the ITESM placement tests. It begins with an analysis of the framework of the tests. This is followed by an analysis of the grammar/structure. Finally, an examination and interpretation of the analysis will conclude the chapter.

4.1. Description and comparison of the framework: TOEFL and ITESM tests

In this first analysis, the frameworks of the tests will be studied and compared. The analysis was performed on all the sections of the tests in order to understand the content of the tests. Based on this writer's personal experience with both tests, it was expected to find more differences than similarities in the tests. In analyzing the framework of the two tests, the following areas were examined: listening comprehension, structure and written expression, and vocabulary and reading comprehension. The objective of these analyses is to determine how much emphasis is placed on each individual section of the two tests. For example, does the TOEFL place more or less emphasis than the ITESM test on listening comprehension?

Both the TOEFL and the ITESM placement tests are divided into three sections. Detailed descriptions of the sections have been

presented in Chapter 2: pages 29-32 for the TOEFL and pages 42-45 for the ITESM test. The TOEFL is a timed proficiency test, in which, each section is timed according to the ability tested, i.e., Section 1 (Listening Comprehension) 35 minutes, Section 2 (Structure and Written Expression) 25 minutes and Section 3 (Reading Comprehension) 45 minutes = 105 minutes. The ITESM is a timed placement test. The student is given ninety minutes to answer the three sections. The TOEFL has 150 items while the ITESM has 102. The analysis follows the order that the sections present on the TOEFL test.

4.1.1. Analysis of the listening comprehension section

The dialogue items in both tests require the students to distinguish the relation of ideas and sentences. In the TOEFL, the students hear the dialogues on a cassette, while in the ITESM placement test the dialogues are read to the students by native ELP teachers. Finally, in both tests, the students are allowed one listening of the Listening Comprehension section.

Tables 3 and 4 describe and compare Section I: Listening Comprehension

Table 3

Description and comparison of the listening comprehension section: TOEFL and ITESM presentation of items

TOEFL	ITESM
Dialogue items require students to distinguish the relation of ideas and sentences. The dialogues are produced by two native speakers.	Dialogue items require the students to distinguish the relation of ideas and sentences. The dialogues are read to the students by teachers. In most cases, the teachers are native speakers of English.
The students are allowed only one listening.	The students get to hear the teachers reading the dialogue one time.

Table 4

Description and comparison of the listening comprehension section:
TOEFL and ITESM number and types of test items

	TOEFL	ITESM
	#	#
Statements Items	20	0
Short Dialogue Items	15	6
Mini-talks and Long Conversation Items	15	0
TOTAL ITEMS:	50	6

The Listening Comprehension section of the TOEFL contains fifty items. The Listening Comprehension section of the ITESM placement test only has six. In comparing the number and types of items, the TOEFL is divided into twenty statements, fifteen short dialogues, and fifteen mini-talks and conversations. The ITESM placement test is divided into six short dialogues of adjacent pairs. There are no statements, mini-talks or conversations.

Some conclusions can be drawn from the analysis of the framework on the tests. It was found that of the 150 item TOEFL test, fifty (33%) items evaluate Listening Comprehension. While in the ITESM placement test, of 102 items only six (6%) evaluate Listening Comprehension. In comparing the types of items, the

TOEFL test has statements, short dialogues, mini-talks, and conversations. The type of items used in the ITESM placement test is very limited because it only tests the students' Listening Comprehension in short dialogues. Since in the TOEFL, the students hear the dialogues from a cassette and in the ITESM placement test the dialogues are read, it was found that there could be some sound interference in the ITESM test because the dialogues are read during the test, while the TOEFL Listening Comprehension section presents no problems because the material is recorded. From the previous three comparisons, it could be concluded that the ITESM test does not really evaluate the students' Listening Comprehension.

4.1.2. Analysis of the structure and written expression section

Tables 5 and 6 describe and compare Section II: Structure and Written Expression of the TOEFL and the ITESM placement tests.

Table 5

Description and comparison of the structure and written expression section: TOEFL and ITESM purpose/objective of the section

TOEFL	ITESM
This section tests the students' ability to identify structural and grammatical points, syntactic, and semantic characteristics, appropriate pragmatic and idiomatic usage of words, and correct diction in standard written English.	The first section tests the students' knowledge of correct sentence structure and usage, besides, the students' capacity to recognize the syntactic features of the English language.

As can be observed from the table, the TOEFL focuses on many more aspects than the ITESM placement test. The Structure and Written Expression section is more complete in the TOEFL.

Table 6

Description and comparison of the structure and written expression section: TOEFL and ITESM number and types of test items

	TOEFL	ITESM
	#	#
Structure Items	15	90
Written Expression Items	25	0
TOTAL ITEMS:	40	90

The structure and written expression section of the TOEFL contains forty items, while the ITESM contains ninety items. The structure and written expression section of the TOEFL is divided in fifteen items that test structure of formal written English and twenty-five that test written expression, while the ITESM test contains ninety items that test structure.

These ninety test items consist of the most representative material of the six levels of the *Spectrum* series. Every fifteen questions measure one level. All the test items are numbered according to the number followed on the test (the first digit) and to the *Spectrum* level measured (the second digit).

Level 1

- 1.1. WH questions
- 2.1. Simple present
- 3.1. Prepositions
- 4.1. Demonstrative adjectives
- 5.1. Time expressions
- 6.1. Possessive pronoun adjectives
- 7.1. Short answers, rejoinders, contractions
- 8.1. Homophones
- 9.1. Definite and indefinite articles
- 10.1. Past interrogative
- 11.1. Direct object pronouns
- 12.1. Simple present affirmative
- 13.1. Present continuous
- 14.1. Possessive with 's
- 15.1. Present progressive

Level 2

- 16.2. Verb and objective
- 17.2. Objective and infinitive
- 18.2. Comparative/superlative
- 19.2. Negative imperative
- 20.2. Auxiliaries "will, should, can"
- 21.2. How and adjective
- 22.2. Too, not enough
- 23.2. Sense verbs
- 24.2. Many, much, a few. some, a little
- 25.2. Look like

- 26.2. Direct and indirect object
- 27.2. So either/neither
- 28.2. Have got to
- 29.2. Feel like + gerund
- 30.2. Frequency adverbs

Level 3

- 31.3. Present perfect
- 32.2. As soon as/when = time clauses
- 33.3. Be . . . supposed to
- 34.3. Of + possessive pronoun
- 35.3. Relative clauses
- 36.3. Would rather/had better
- 37.3. Included questions
- 38.3. Direct-indirect object: say, teach, ask, explain, describe, introduce, return, tell, give, etc.
- 39.3. Present vs. past participle
- 40.3. Already, yet, still, anymore
- 41.3. Used to
- 42.3. Indefinite compounds
- 43.3. Past continuous
- 44.3. Noun modifiers
- 45.3. Tag questions

Level 4

- 46.4. Reflexive pronouns
- 47.4. So vs. such
- 48.4. If vs. unless
- 49.4. Gerunds after some expressions

- 50.4. Relative clauses with "whose"
- 51.4. Conditional sentences
- 52.4. Indefinite compounds with "except, but"
- 53.4. Past continuous vs. Past tense
- 54.4. May have, might have, must have, should have
- 55.4. Present perfect continuous
- 56.4. Passive/active form
- 57.4. Included yes/no questions
- 58.4. Direct vs. indirect speech
- 59.4. The whole, all, and every with time expressions
- 60.4. While vs. during

Level 5

- 61.5. So and such with result clause (include conjunctioning)
- 62.5. Too and not enough with infinitive
- 63.5. Past perfect: affirmative and negative
- 64.5. Past habitual
- 65.5. Future vs. future continuous
- 66.5. Must, mustn't, have to
- 67.5. Have, make, let, help, get (causative)
- 68.5. Wish and hope
- 69.5. Conditional contrary to fact
- 70.5. Passive and present perfect verbs
- 71.5. Passive modals present, future, and past
- 72.5. Verbs and expressions followed by a preposition
- 73.5. Past perfect vs. other tenses
- 74.5. Still with negative present perfect
- 75.5. Direct vs. indirect, speech with commands

Level 6

- 76.6. Verbs and expressions with subjunctive
- 77.6. Three word verbs
- 78.6. Order of adjectives
- 79.6. Conjunctions
- 80.6. Non-restrictive relative clauses
- 81.6. Subjunctive clauses vs. infinitive clauses
- 82.6. Double comparatives
- 83.6. Future perfect continuous
- 84.6. Mixed contrary to-fact sentences
- 85.6. Either/or, neither/nor, not only/but also
- 86.6. Noun clauses as subjects and objects
- 87.6. Before, after, when, while/general and specific statements
- 88.6. Comparisons-weight measurements
- 89.6. Placement of adverbs
- 90.6. Infinitives as subjects or gerunds

Some conclusions can be drawn from the previous analysis. In comparing the framework of the Structure and Written Expression of the tests, it was found that 26 % (40 items) of the TOEFL is dedicated to the analysis of structure and written expression. 82 % (90 items) of the ITESM test evaluates structure only. In studying the abilities tested, in the TOEFL the students are evaluated on structural, grammatical, syntactic, semantic, pragmatic, and idiomatic aspects. In the ITESM test, the students' ability is mainly focused on structural points and syntactic features. From the previous two comparisons, it could be concluded that the ITESM

test puts more emphasis on structure and syntax than the TOEFL and also dedicates more items to measure this point than the TOEFL. It should also be mentioned that the ITESM test does not evaluate the students' ability in written expression.

4.1.3. Analysis of the vocabulary and reading comprehension section

Tables 7 and 8 describe and compare Section III: Vocabulary and Reading Comprehension of the TOEFL and the ITESM placement tests.

Table 7

Description and comparison of the vocabulary and reading comprehension section: TOEFL and ITESM purpose/objective of the section

TOEFL	ITESM
<p>This section measures the students' capacity to understand reading passages, and also his knowledge of the meaning and use of words. It is divided into two parts: vocabulary and reading comprehension.</p>	<p>The third section evaluates the students' capacity to understand reading passages. It consists of one part: reading comprehension.</p>

Table 8

Description and comparison of the vocabulary and reading comprehension section: TOEFL and ITESM number and types of test items

	TOEFL	ITESM
	#	#
Items that test vocabulary	30	0
Items that test reading comprehension	30	6
TOTAL ITEMS:	60	6

In comparing the types of items found in the Vocabulary and Reading Comprehension section, the TOEFL test has main idea, factual, inference, analogy, organization and viewpoint items. The ITESM placement test has items on main ideas, factual, and inference. The Reading Comprehension section of the TOEFL test contains sixty items, while the ITESM test contains six items. The Reading Comprehension section of the TOEFL consists of thirty items that test vocabulary and thirty items that test reading comprehension, while the ITESM only consists of six items that test reading comprehension.

Some conclusions can be drawn from the previous analysis. In contrasting the framework of the tests, it was found that 40 % (sixty items) of the TOEFL test evaluates reading comprehension and vocabulary and only 6 % (six items) test reading comprehension and vocabulary in the ITESM test. It was also found that the TOEFL test consists of two parts: vocabulary and reading comprehension, while the ITESM test only has one part: reading comprehension. In contrasting the type of items found in the tests, it was found that the TOEFL test has six types, while the ITESM test only has three. It can be concluded that the Reading Comprehension section of the ITESM placement test is narrower. It only puts emphasis on the students' capacity to understand reading passages.

4.2. Conclusions and comparisons of the framework of the tests

Table 9 describes and compares the three sections of the TOEFL and the ITESM placement tests. It shows where the emphasis has been placed on the tests.

Table 9
Emphasis of sections on tests

Section	% on TOEFL	% on ITESM
Listening Comprehension	33 %	6 %
Structure and Written Expression	26 %	88 %
Vocabulary and Reading Comprehension	40 %	6 %

From the analysis of the framework of the tests, it can be concluded that the tests are very different. In the area of balance, the TOEFL test is much more balanced. The ITESM test appears to be only a grammar and structure test. The following statements can be made from the comparison of the tests.

In the Listening Comprehension section of the tests, two main differences were found. The first one is that in the TOEFL the dialogues are heard from a recording, while in the ITESM test two native ELP teachers read the dialogues. Considering the number and type of items, the second difference is that the TOEFL contains a variety of fifty items divided in statements, short dialogues, and mini-talks and long conversations, while the ITESM contains only six short dialogue items. It could be assumed that the comprehension of the listening section in the ITESM test may be distorted by external sounds since the dialogues are read at the moment of the test, while in the TOEFL test the section is record-

ed so this problem is not presented. It could be concluded that the ITESM listening comprehension section is very limited since it only contains short dialogue items. It is very narrow compared to the TOEFL test. It could be stated that the ITESM test measures the students' listening comprehension in a very limited manner.

In the Structure and Written Expression section of the tests, three main differences were found. First it was found that in the TOEFL the students are evaluated on structural, grammatical, syntactic, semantic, pragmatic and idiomatic aspects, while the ITESM test only measures structural and syntactic features. Another difference is considering the number of items, the TOEFL contains forty items that test structure and written expression, while the ITESM contains ninety items that measure structure and no items that test written expression. The last difference is that the ninety items in the ITESM test were made from the main grammar points presented in the *Spectrum* series. While in the TOEFL, the test items come from general English knowledge. From these statements, it could be concluded that the ITESM placement test is much more of a structure test than the TOEFL.

In the Reading Comprehension section of the tests, three main differences were found. The first one is that in the TOEFL, this section is formed by two parts: reading comprehension and vocabulary, while in the ITESM test there is only one part: reading comprehension. Another difference is that in the TOEFL the section is formed by sixty items, while in the ITESM it only has six items. The last difference is the type of items found. The TOEFL test has main idea, factual, inference, analogy, organization and

viewpoint items, while the ITESM placement test has items on main ideas, factual, and inference. From the previous three differences, it could be concluded that the ITESM test is very limited in measuring reading comprehension compared to the TOEFL. In addition, it does not test vocabulary.

4.3. Discussion and conclusion of the grammar/structure aspect of the tests

In this part of the analysis, a comparison of the grammar/structure aspect of the tests will be presented. It is expected to find more similarities than differences between the tests in this area. The first table presents the number of times items of compound-nouns (e.g. police station, post office, sidewalk) and compound-verbs (e.g. put on, take off, turn on) are found in the tests.

Table 10
Compound nouns and verbs

	TOEFL		ITESM	
	#	%	#	%
Compound-nouns	17/40	42 %	2/90	2 %
Compound-verbs	5/40	12 %	4/90	4 %
TOTAL ITEMS	22/40	54 %	6/90	6 %

The TOEFL puts more emphasis on compound-nouns and compound-verbs than the ITESM as the percentage on the table shows.

The following table shows the number of times the items that test the literal use of function words appear in the tests.

Table 11
Literal use of function words

	TOEFL		ITESM	
	#	%	#	%
for location, direction	14/40	35 %	5/90	5 %
for definite specificity	38/40	95 %	26/90	28 %
for indefinite specificity	24/40	60 %	13/90	14 %
for quantity; amount	15/40	37 %	4/90	4 %
for time: frequency	4/40	10 %	4/90	4 %
of occurrence and span				
for instrument or means	3/40	7 %	2/90	2 %
for possession "of"	15/40	37 %	1/90	1 %
for comparison/degree	5/40	12 %	3/90	3 %
for negation	1/40	2 %	6/90	3 %
TOTAL ITEMS	119/40	295 %	64/90	64 %

The ITESM placement test is less intense in the number of items that evaluate the literal use of function words than the TOEFL test except in the case of negation. According to Richards et al., function words "are words which have little meaning on their own, but which show grammatical relationships in and between sentences" (81).

Table 12 presents the number of times items that measure inflections appear in the tests.

Table 12
Inflections

	TOEFL		ITESM	
	#	%	#	%
Number	29/40	72 %	17/90	18 %
Possession "s"	2/40	5 %	2/90	2 %
Person in third person present	16/40	40 %	5/90	2 %
TOTAL ITEMS	47/40	117 %	24/90	22 %

There is a broader use of items with inflections in the TOEFL than in the ITESM placement test except in the case of the inflection: possession "s" that is very similar in both tests.

The next table shows the number of times the items that test the tense of verbs appear in the tests.

Table 13
Tense of verbs

	TOEFL		ITESM	
	#	%	#	%
Tense: Present				
Progressive	0/40	0 %	6/90	6 %
Tense: Simple				
past in regular and irregular form	16/40	40 %	5/90	5 %
Tense: Present				
perfect in regular and irregular forms	3/40	7 %	8/90	8 %
Tense: Past perfect	1/40	2 %	1/90	1 %
TOTAL ITEMS	20/40	49 %	20/90	20 %

The tests are very similar in the use of items that test the tense of the verbs except in the simple past regular and irregular form that appears more in the TOEFL test than in the ITESM test.

Table 14 presents the number of times items that evaluate declaratives are found in the tests.

Table 14
Declaratives

	TOEFL		ITESM	
	#	%	#	%
Declarative, active statements	31/40	77 %	49/90	54 %

The TOEFL test places more emphasis on declaratives than the ITESM test.

The following table shows the number of times items that test questions appear in the tests.

Table 15
Questions

	TOEFL		ITESM	
	#	%	#	%
Questions (yes/no or WH)	0/40	0 %	11/90	12 %

The ITESM placement test is more intense in the use of items that evaluate questions (yes/no or WH) than the TOEFL test.

Table 16 presents the number of times items that measure imperatives appear in the tests.

Table 16
Imperatives

	TOEFL		ITESM	
	#	%	#	%
Imperatives	0/40	0%	4/90	4%

The ITESM placement test has a broader use of items that measure imperatives than the TOEFL test.

The next table presents the number of times passives are measured in the tests.

Table 17
Passives

	TOEFL		ITESM	
	#	%	#	%
Passives	11/40	27%	1/90	1%

The ITESM placement test puts less emphasis on passives than the TOEFL.

Table 18 shows the number of times THERE statements appear in the tests.

Table 18
THERE statements

	TOEFL		ITESM	
	#	%	#	%
Existencial THERE statements	2/40	5%	1/90	1%

The ITESM placement test has a narrower use of items that test THERE statements than the TOEFL.

The following table presents the number of times clauses are found in the tests.

Table 19
Clauses

	TOEFL		ITESM	
	#	%	#	%
Coordinated main clause	3/40	7 %	2/90	2 %
Complex sentence with subordinate clause outside main clause	4/40	10 %	28/90	31 %
Noun phrase	2/40	5 %	3/90	3 %
Relative clause	5/40	12 %	2/90	2 %
TOTAL ITEMS	14/40	34 %	35/90	38 %

The TOEFL puts more emphasis on clauses than the ITESM placement test except in subordinate clauses outside main clauses. From the discussion of the grammar/structure aspect of the tests and contrary to expectations, it can be concluded that there are more differences than similarities between the tests. The ten tables previously described and discussed show the great differences that exist between the tests. The only area in which they are similar is in the number of items found in the tests that measure verb tenses (Table 13). The tests are similar in three

out of four tenses presented in the table, i.e., the simple past in regular and irregular form is different. Tables 10, 11, 12, 14, 17, 18, and 19 show that the TOEFL puts more emphasis on these areas than the ITESM placement test. Therefore, the TOEFL has more items that measure compound-nouns and verbs, the literal use of function words, inflections, declaratives, passive structures, and clauses. Tables 15 and 16 show that the ITESM test has more items in other areas than the TOEFL. This means, there is a larger amount of items in the ITESM test that evaluate questions (yes/no or WH), imperatives, and THERE statements than in the TOEFL. As the overall analysis of the grammar/structure shows, the tests do not have very much in common. There is only table 13 that shows some similarity between the tests, while the other nine tables present the great differences there exist.

It could be concluded that although the ITESM looks like a grammar/structure test and has more items than the TOEFL test, there are differences between the tests in the type of grammar points tested. The author thinks this occurs because the ITESM placement test was developed from the main points found in the *Spectrum* method; they are specific to the method, while the TOEFL is developed from standard American English.

5. Summary, conclusions and recommendations

This final chapter includes a summary of the study, the conclusions that the author has obtained from the analysis and the interpretation of the data collected, and some recommendations for the English Language Program.

5.1. Summary

The ITESM revises its study plan every five years in order to update the courses offered. Prior to 1990, many academic courses were using textbooks in English. All incoming students who did not pass a reading comprehension exam were required to take one semester of Reading English for Academic Purposes at the college level. The 1990 program made the three-semester English language sequence a requirement for graduation. The students were expected to obtain 550 on the TOEFL at the end of the English Language Program. The Remedial and Basic courses use a multiskill series textbook with a communicative approach. Students who demonstrate an advanced level of English proficiency are required to take either French or German or advanced-level English courses. All incoming students are required to take the English language placement test made by faculty members of the English Program.

The ITESM administration proposed the idea of using the TOEFL as a placement instrument instead of the ITESM placement test because they believe that the TOEFL is a valid and reliable measure of a student's ability to communicate in English. Therefore,

in order to make a judgement on the validity of replacing the current ITESM placement test with the TOEFL, a content analysis along with a comparison study of the tests was conducted. The goal was to study the similarities and differences of both tests, and to see how compatible the ITESM placement test is with the TOEFL.

The study began with a review of the literature on the history of language testing, a description of different types of language tests and what they measure. Of particular interest to the English Language Program is the communicative competence and English proficiency of the students. Therefore, definitions and opinions on proficiency and placement tests are studied and examined; especially because this kind of tests allow the comparison of the TOEFL and ITESM test. Using Hughe's definition of proficiency tests and Patkowski's on placement tests, the author had a better understanding of the kind of tests involved in the study.

The discussion of the TOEFL and the ITESM placement test included their historical origins, description, use, as well as the development of the test items and advantages and disadvantages of the tests. Several researchers, such as Patkowski, Duran et al., Madsen (1990), and Chen Yuan-zhen (1990) have questioned the TOEFL as a valid test. Likewise, the author discusses the limitations and problems with the ITESM placement test. The author believes that the main disadvantage found in the ITESM tests is that they are mainly grammar tests, therefore they do not measure the students' proficiency of the language. Another problem is that there has been no scientific measurement on the reliability and

validity of the tests, so it could be doubted whether they are accurate instruments for placing students.

Reviews of TOEFL research studies by several authors helped the author to broaden the view and understanding of the TOEFL. Among these, Hick's (1989) study on the possibility of making a TOEFL computerized placement test enlightened the author's understanding of the benefits of using the paper-and-pencil version of the TOEFL and the justification for not using it for placement purposes. Several other researchers compared the TOEFL with other tests. The author found of particular relevance to the study Duran et al.'s analysis of the communicative competence skills found in the TOEFL, because it served as a model to do the comparison between the tests. Bachman's (1993) study also contributed greatly because it includes a content analysis of tests similar to the one developed in the present study.

Having completed the literature review, the methodology of this study includes an explanation of the research methods used, as well as a content analysis of the TOEFL and the ITESM placement test. Basically the procedure followed to conduct the study was the content analysis carried out on the tests. The description of the content of the tests allowed the author to see how the tests correlated and served to distinguish the similarities and differences found between them. Lastly, all the findings are presented in comparative tables; contrasting the tests and discussing the framework, the analysis of the grammar/structure aspect and topics/themes, and the vocabulary of the tests.

Summary: The comparison of the framework of both tests yielded the following findings:

1. Listening Comprehension

ITESM: 6 items evaluate listening comprehension

TOEFL: 50 items evaluate listening comprehension

2. Grammar, Structure and Syntax

ITESM: 90 items of the test directly evaluate grammar, syntax, and structure

TOEFL: 15 items of the test directly evaluate grammar, syntax, and structure

3. Written Expression

ITESM: Does not evaluate written expression

TOEFL: 25 items evaluate written expression

4. Reading Comprehension

ITESM: 6 items that test reading comprehension

TOEFL: 30 items that test reading comprehension

5. Vocabulary

ITESM: Does not evaluate vocabulary

TOEFL: 30 items evaluate vocabulary

6. Speaking Proficiency

ITESM: Does not evaluate speaking proficiency

TOEFL: Does not evaluate speaking proficiency

The comparison of the framework of both tests revealed that the ITESM does not evaluate the students' Listening Comprehension. It also shows that the ITESM puts more emphasis on structure and syntax than the TOEFL and has more items to measure this point than the TOEFL. In addition, the ITESM test does not

evaluate the students' ability in written expression. Furthermore, it revealed that the Reading Comprehension section in the ITESM test is narrower than the TOEFL's. Finally, the ITESM test only puts emphasis on the students' capacity to understand reading passages. It could be concluded that the ITESM test measures the students' listening and reading comprehension in a very limited manner; it is more a structure test than the TOEFL, and it does not test vocabulary. Even though the ITESM test has more items that measure the grammar/structure aspect than the TOEFL, there are differences between the tests in the type of grammar points tested. The author thinks this occurs because the ITESM placement test was developed from the main points found in the *Spectrum* method; they are specific to the method, while the TOEFL is a test developed from standard American English.

Among the recommendations offered by the author to the English Language Program, the most relevant are that: even though the TOEFL is capable of assessing language proficiency, it cannot be used as a placement test; another recommendation is to use an in-house placement test developed by a combination of a proficiency, a diagnostic, and an achievement test based on a communicative approach to language testing, since that is the main objective of the ELP.

The author also recommends to include longer reading passages that can offer more context; the length and difficulty of the passages should also vary. In addition, it is recommended to include a holistic essay examination and a brief oral proficiency interview.

5.2. Conclusions

The purpose of this study has been to compare, through content analysis, the TOEFL and the ITESM placement tests. As a result of the literature review conducted for the study, as well as the analysis of the data collected and the content analysis of the tests, the author has come to the following conclusions:

1. The ITESM tests were designed exclusively to place students in the English Program. They were made with the material covered in the *Spectrum* series. Thus, all the test items refer to the language content presented in the series.
2. On the other hand, the TOEFL measures the students' proficiency of the language in general. It does it in a more ample manner than the ITESM placement tests. The author proved this after the comparison of the number of test items of both tests, it was found that in the TOEFL there are more items that measure reading and listening comprehension than in the ITESM tests; and in comparing the types of items, it was found that the TOEFL has a larger variety. Besides that, the TOEFL is not designed from any series or method.
3. It is clear from the results of the content analysis that the tests are very different. The ITESM placement tests do not measure the students' overall proficiency of the language. The ITESM tests are very specific tests, thus they were made using the material from the *Spectrum* series. They are mainly grammar tests. They measure reading and listening comprehension but in a very limited manner. They do not, to any extent, evaluate the students' reading and listening proficiency.

4. The ITESM placement tests put more emphasis on structure than on the other skills. This causes problems in placing students who are better in reading and listening comprehension than in structure.
5. Another limitation found in the ITESM tests was that the students' writing and speaking abilities are not measured. The TOEFL does not evaluate them either but there are supplementary tests the TWE and the TSE in the TOEFL program that take care of assessing writing and speaking.
6. Therefore, it is obvious that the current ITESM placement tests need to be modified, so they will be more appropriate for placing students in the ELP.
7. In order to achieve this, the ELP teachers would need to be trained in developing test items and in becoming writing and speaking raters. The following section will contain some suggestions for bringing about these changes.

5.3. Recommendations

In this section, recommendations will be aimed at discussing the need of revising the current ITESM placement tests.

After reviewing the conclusions, the author comments that the TOEFL is capable of assessing the language proficiency skills related to authentic language. It is not designed to be used as a placement test because it is not appropriate for placing students. It gives an overall view of the students' capacity but it does not

specify the students' abilities according to the content of the courses or the program in which they are placed.

Therefore, the author recommends to use an in-house placement test but there are several aspects that should be considered. The ideal placement test would be a combination of a proficiency, a diagnostic, and an achievement test. Because a proficiency test involves the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing), a diagnostic test gives specific information about the weaknesses and strengths about the student, and an achievement test includes a sample of the material studied in the language program.

The author recommends that a test be developed based on a communicative approach to language testing, since that is the main objective of the ELP. It should increase the level of naturalness on the test items. It should also be pragmatic, i.e., it makes the student use real communication within a context. It is recommendable to test grammatical, discourse, sociolinguistic, and strategic competence.

The author also recommends including longer reading passages that can offer more context; the length and difficulty of the passages should also vary.

In addition, it is recommended to include a holistic essay examination and a brief oral proficiency interview. To be able to complete this requirement, it is necessary to give the teachers a special training to become writing and speaking raters.

Lastly the author believes that the ITESM placement test should work as an instrument for assessing the overall language

proficiency of incoming students in order to place them in the appropriate *Spectrum* series level.

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Vitae

The author was born in Monterrey, Nuevo León, México, January 14 of 1960. Her parents are José Torres and Aurora Garza. She studied her first years of grade school in Sanger, California, USA. In 1976, she received a diploma as an English instructor from the Instituto Mexicano Norteamericano de Relaciones Culturales (IMNRC). In 1977, she started her teaching career. In 1983, she received a bachelor's degree in Applied Linguistics with a minor in English-Spanish Translation from the Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León (UANL). Her seventeen years of teaching experience in EFL have been in private elementary schools, public and private high schools, and at the UANL and ITESM. Since August of 1990, she is one of the coordinators of the English Program in the Humanities Department at ITESM Campus Monterrey. She is married to Ricardo Angel Molina Garza and has one son.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios
Superiores de Monterrey

EXAMEN DE UBICACION PARA LOS CURSOS DE
INGLES SPECTRUM

No. de Examen 00020

9.1. He ate _____ oysters and some fish.

- a) a
- b) to
- c) an
- d) the

10.1. _____ she _____ a new job last week?

- a) Does... got
- b) Did... got
- c) Does... get
- d) Did... get

11.1. Jack will call _____ again.

- a) him
- b) she
- c) he
- d) his

12.1. I'm sorry. I _____ speak French.

- a) do not
- b) am not
- c) does not
- d) know not

13.1. Jesús is _____ his math right now.

- a) studies
- b) studying
- c) studied
- d) study

14.1. This is _____ coat.

- a) Daniel's
- b) Daniels
- c) Daniel'
- d) Daniels'

15.1. _____ having a great time.

- a) We
- b) Were
- c) We're
- d) Where

16.2. I _____ my leg the day before yesterday.

- a) bought
- b) brought
- c) brake
- d) broke

- 64.5. During my childhood, I _____ in the pond every day.
- a) usually to swim c) would swim
b) would have swum d) used swim
- 65.5. Five years from now, I probably _____ anymore.
- a) will study c) won't be studying
b) will be studying d) will have been studying
- 66.5. We _____ call Susan; she already knows about the meeting.
- a) must not c) don't have to
b) don't d) can't
- 67.5. My parents are trying to _____ more.
- a) make me to study c) get me to study
b) force me study d) oblige me study
- 68.5. I wish I _____ to the movies tonight.
- a) will go c) went
b) am going d) were going
- 69.5. If you _____ so lucky, you wouldn't have won the lottery.
- a) aren't c) wouldn't be
b) haven't been d) hadn't been
- 70.5. There was a fire at the Statler last night. I think it _____ have been prevented.
- a) could c) may
b) will d) must
- 71.5. The reporter wondered if _____ .
- a) anyone sees the thief c) the thief had been seen anyone
b) did anyone see the thief d) anyone had seen the thief

87.6. After _____ a break, we'll get back to work.

- a) to take
- b) we'll take
- c) we're taking
- d) taking

88.6. How _____ do adult African bull elephants _____ ?

- a) many ...weigh
- b) heavy ...weigh
- c) much ... weigh
- d) heavier ...weight

89.6. Last night I was at home, _____ the piano.

- a) playing quietly
- b) quietly having played
- c) quietly played
- d) quietly playing

90.6. We can keep _____ for one more month.

- a) looking at a candidate
- b) consider the candidate
- c) imagine a candidate
- d) looking for a candidate

READING COMPREHENSION

Mary is a lab technician at Brookdale Hospital. Before that, she was a lab technician at Oakland Laboratory.

Mary doesn't like her job. It's interesting, but the hours are long. Her old job was hard work, and the pay was terrible.

91. Mary doesn't like her job because _____ .
- a) the pay is terrible
 - b) the hours are long
 - c) the work is interesting
 - d) the work is hard

Penny Grant says, "The TV programs I like are the soap operas and the game shows in the afternoon. I work nights, so I don't watch TV then".

92. Penny Grant _____ .
- a) sees her favorite shows during the day
 - b) watches TV at night
 - c) likes to see sports on TV
 - d) likes to go to the opera

Once again a tornado has hit the midwestern part of the United States. Twenty people are known to be dead outside Marshallton, Iowa, and property damage will probably reach 5 million dollars.

93. According to the text, _____ .
- a) In midwestern U.S. there are no tornadoes.
 - b) In midwestern U.S. there are many tornadoes.
 - c) Tornadoes are not dangerous.
 - d) Tornadoes cause little damage.

Bob is a manager in a large bank, and between company politics, customers who don't pay back their loans, and his heavy workload, he finds himself under what seems to be unrelenting pressure at work. The stress is beginning to affect his work and family life.

94. Bob's stress is caused by all of the following except...
- a) family life
 - b) overwork
 - c) bank politics
 - d) bad loans

Recently there has been a lot of disagreement about the award of \$15,000 by a circuit court judge to the parents of a ten-year old boy whose teacher slapped him and knocked out a tooth. The child had brought a live frog into the classroom, and the teacher "was really fed up with him." The court decided for the parents.

95. The teacher was apparently _____ .
- a) judging the parents and the court.
 - b) content with the judge's decision.
 - c) angry with the boy's behavior.
 - d) disinterested in science for the students.

The rattles with which a rattlesnake warns of its presence are formed by loosely interlocking hollow rings of hard skin, which make a buzzing sound when its tail is shaken. As a baby, the snake begins to form its rattles from the button at the very tip of its tail. Thereafter, each time it sheds its skin, a new ring is formed. Popular belief holds that a snake's age can be told by counting the rings, but this idea is fallacious. In fact, a snake may lose its old skin as often as four times a year. Also, rattles tend to wear or break off with time.

96. A rattlesnake's rattles _____ .
- a) lose their skin
 - b) are soundless
 - c) indicate the snake's age
 - d) alert the snake's enemies

LISTENING COMPREHENSION

97. About _____ people are coming to Carol and Judy's party.
a) thirty or forty c) one to ten
b) twenty or thirty d) ten or twelve
98. One of the speakers _____ .
a) was born in Venezuela c) doesn't know Spanish
b) lives in South America d) was born in New York
99. The speakers _____ .
a) were old college friends c) are traveling together
b) haven't changed at all d) have just met
100. At what time did this conversation take place?
a) 2:50 c) 3:10
b) 10:03 d) 3:00
101. From this dialogue, we can deduce that _____ .
a) the first speaker is going to take her little sister to a party.
b) the two speakers are going to the movies tonight.
c) one of the speakers is not going to the movies.
d) both speakers have little sisters.
102. What must Kyle do to prevent Michelle from quitting? He must ____ .
a) accept criticism so others can interpret his music
b) stop interrupting, so then she can finish her sentence
c) act differently and stop snapping at her
d) quit first so Michelle can stay with the band

Appendix B

Compound Nouns	//	=	2
Compound Verbs	////	=	4
Function Words			
- for location, direction	////	=	5
- for definite specificity	//// // //// // //	=	26
- for indefinite specificity	//// // 	=	13
- for quantity; amount	////	=	4

- for time:
frequency of
occurrence and
span

$$|||| = 4$$

- for instrument
or means

$$|| = 2$$

- for possession
"of"

$$| = 1$$

- for comparison/
degree

$$||| = 3$$

- for negation

$$\cancel{||||} | = 6$$

Inflections

- number

$$\cancel{||||} \cancel{||||} = 17$$

$$\cancel{||||} ||$$

- possession "s" || = 2

- person in third
person present |||| = 5

Tense of verbs

- Present progressive

|||| 1 = 6

- Simple past in
regular and irre-
gular form .

|||| = 5

- Present perfect in
regular and irre-
gular forms

||||
||| = 8

- Past perfect

1 = 1

Declaratives, active

|||| |||| ||||

state ments

|||| |||| |||| ||||

|||| |||| |||| = 49

Noun phrase

$$||| = 3$$

Relative clause

$$|| = 2$$