This study endeavored to analyze the NWU Placement Examination in English to establish its validity and draw implications for language teaching.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the achievement level of incoming freshman students as measured by their high school general average, the Placement Examination in English composite scores, and the results of the subtests scores (essay and objective)?

2. Is the placement examination in English composite score significantly related to the entrants’ high school general average, subtest score in English (objective), and subtest score in English (essay)?

3. Is the placement Examination in English composite score together with type of high school they graduated from and place of residence or origin significantly related to their high school average and College English Grades (Intensive English and English 1)?

4. Is choice of course or degree program enrolled in related to the placement test scores of the students?

5. What are the commonly committed errors of incoming freshman students of NU in the placement test for English?

6. What are the language proficiency levels of students in Intensive English Review and English 1?

The study utilized the descriptive cum evaluation method of research which described the achievement of incoming freshmen of Northwestern University, Laoag City based on their high school general average and their composite scores in the placement examination in English. It also determined the relationship of the placement examination score to high school average, subtest score, the high school they graduated from and their choice of degree program. It also identified the common errors made by incoming freshman students in the subtests, and the corresponding implications for language teaching.
The population of the study consisted of freshman who took the Placement Examination in English and who were admitted for the first semester, S. Y. 1999-2000 and those sophomores who have finished Intensive English Review and English 1 in college. The Stratified Random Sampling method was used to determine the number of respondents from each college, total respondents drawn for this study was 760; 278 for school year 1998-1999 and 482 for school year 1999-2000.

The statistical tool used to evaluate the test were test construction statistics: predictive and concurrent validity through Pearson R, this was through computing the coefficient of relationship between the test scores and high school average, the test scores and college grades in Intensive English Review and College English 1. Kuder-Richardson Formula (kd-21) was used to measure the reliability via internal sf. Other statistical treatments used were canonical correlation or lambda (~) coefficient to determine the relationship between the placement test scores and choice of course; Multiple R, to test relationship between variables in combinations; Tukey-Kramer HSD statistics was used to compare significant difference among levels of achievement of students in the test coming from different colleges.

Freshmen students enrolled at NU for the school year 1998-1999 had, in general, an average level of achievement (83.92).

In the placement examination in English, the mean score 35.56 shows that most of the students who took the placement test during SY 1998-1999 had low level of achievement; meaning most of them lack the different knowledge for College English subjects. During the school year 1999-2000, the average score of the students who took the examination was 38.07 with standard deviation of 7.9 suggests that most of them had low level of achievement in English. The College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) students had the highest average score among colleges for school year 1998-1999 and 1999-2000.

Among the subtests in the placement test, the students passed subtests 1, 111 and V11, while they failed in the rest of the subtests. Students had the greatest difficulty over subtests, V, V1, and V111. This meant that this students were deficient in composition writing and that they lacked the proper content words they needed in writing.

The placement test was an acceptable measure of English Language proficiency since its KR-21 coefficient of internal consistency was moderately significant. The two-sample school
years have the following consistency values, 1998-1999 (9.630) and 1999-2000 (0.689), which have both moderate significance.

The placement test scores of incoming freshmen of SY 1998-1999 had moderate but significant correlation to their high average, but not for school year 1999-2000.

The placement test scores of incoming freshmen of SY 1998-1999 and SY 1999-2000 correlated significantly to College English 1 grades, the test result significantly correlated to English Plus grades only for SY 1998-1999.

Hometown and type of high school graduated from contributed to placement test results in explaining the English proficiency level of students. The combination of these variables with test results had a moderate correlation to high school average grades. Similarly, the combination of the said variables had similar relationship to both English 1 and English Plus grades, moderate but significant.

The choice of course or degree program and placement test results showed no significant relationship, hence, they were dimmed as independent from NU setting.

Many items in the placement test in English discriminate poorly, hence, it is recommended that 15 items must be discarded or changed.

The three most common errors in writing made by the students are the use of transition markers, syntax and proper content words. Errors on tense of verbs and vocabulary are also eminent or common but not to most.

Majority of the students enrolled in English Plus for SY 1998-1999 and 1999-2000 have low level of achievement in the said subject. However, students enrolled in English 1 had a better level of language proficiency. These results demonstrate the disparity on the level of language proficiency of students – between passers and non-passers of the placement test. Hence, results manifest the accuracy of the test to determine and classify students among their levels in English learning skills.

The placement test used by NU gives an acceptable measure of achievement of and among the entering college students.

Most of the students entering NU have low competency level in English, in their High School grades, the test, and in English College subjects.

The placement test used by NU has a significant ability towards predicting or interpreting some intellectual levels of students.
Test results paired with locale and type of high school graduated from affect the efficiency or competency of students in College English subjects. Specifically, students coming from far places and from private schools have lower competency than those from Laoag City and other big municipalities.

Test results and choice of course of students are independent among students of Northwestern University. This in effect shows that the open admission policy of the university limits the predictability of performance of students in college. Hence, an aptitude or competency test is necessary in place of an admission test for further records of performance.

Test results show that the most common mistakes or difficulties among the respondents-students are in vocabulary and paragraph organization subtests. Item analysis also shows that Test III item number 6 (D = 0.04) and Test V111 item numbers 3 (D = 0.08) are the most common errors of students in the test.

It is then advised that English Plus subject must be improved as to its content topics. Test results also show that some of the test items need revision or change. Item analysis shows that 50% of the test items discriminate poorly among groups of students in English.

Students who were enrolled in English Plus subjects have lower level of competency than those students enrolled in English 1. This then affirmed the results of the placement test.