

MANAGING PLACEMENT & GRADE EXPECTATIONS

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MANAGING GRADE EXPECTATIONS

- Introduction: Presentation & Previous Literature in the field
- 'Grade Expectations' Analysis - A Case study: Liberal Arts Program in CIEE Alicante (Spain)
- Outcomes
- Conclusions
- Future Research
- References





Presentation

- Professor of Linguistics at the UA and other universities (**Spain**):
 - ca. **150 Spanish students** per year: undergraduate & postgraduate
 - Classes: *English Language, History of the English Language, Computers & Translation, etc*
 - Universities of Alicante, Barcelona (UPF), Valencia, etc

- Professor and Academic Coordinator for **CIEE-Alicante**:
 - ca. **150 American students** per year: undergraduate
 - Academic coordinator (evaluation criteria, academic appeals, etc)
 - Classes: *Advanced Spanish Grammar, Semantics & Lexicology, etc*
 - Also postgraduate students: Academic Director of Master Program in Spanish for CMU in Alicante (Summer)

Previous Literature

- Concern about '**reliability**' and '**authenticity**' of placement tests in foreign language education
 - Dunbar et al. (1991), Moss (1992); Burger and Burger (1993), Teschner (1993), Brennan and Johnson (1995); Messick (1995); Haug (1997); Neuliep & McCroskey (1997); Bachman (1990, 2000), ...
- Need to **standardize grading systems** in foreign language learning
 - Use of different models (ACTFL – IPA, OPI, TOEFL, DELE for Spanish)
 - Milton et al. (1986), North & Schneider (1998); Sparks et al. (1998); Tata (1999), Cherry, Ordoñez & Gilliland (2003), Fairclough (2006) ...
- Need to **standardize placement tests** and grading systems in study abroad programs:
 - Carsello & Creaser (1976), Opper et al, (1990), Martin & Rohrlich (1991), Goldstein & Kim (2005), Price and Gascoigne (2006) ...

“The ideology of ‘student as consumer’ has changed the power relationships within the academy, placing satisfaction higher than intellectual growth as a measure of success”

J. Dresner



Grading Systems Worldwide (some examples):

- **100-Point** grading scale: *Canada, Egypt, South Africa, India ...*
- **30-point** scale: *Italy*
- **20-point** scale: *France, Portugal, Peru, Venezuela ...*
- **12-point** scale: *Denmark*
- **10-point scale**: *Spain, Mexico, Argentina, Brazil, Holland ...*
- **7-point** scale: *Chile*
- **6-point** scale: *Bulgaria, Switzerland ...*
- **5-point** scale: *USA (chromatic variants with letter grade scale), Colombia, Russia, Hungary ...*
- **5-point scale (reverse)**: *Austria, Germany, Philippines ...*
- **4-point scale (reverse)**: *Czech Republic ...*

- **ECTS** (European Credit Transfer System): A (90-100), B (65-90), C (35-65), D (10-35), E (0-10), F and FX (Further work required before credit awarded).
- **Other standards**: British National Language Standards, Eurocentres Scale of Language Proficiency, the ALTE (Association of Language Testers in Europe) Framework, etc



- Three basic assumptions:
 - “**Teachers** are not taught **HOW** to **GRADE**” (international programs)
 - “**Teachers** are not taught **HOW** to **EXPLAIN** their grading system to the students”
 - “**Students** are not taught **HOW** to **INTERPRET** their final grades”

“The professionalization of language testing has two major thrusts: 1) the training of language testing professionals; and 2) the development of standards of practice and mechanisms for their implementation and enforcement”

Bachman (2000)



Spanish GRADING System

Sp. Grade	- Def. -	Meaning -	ECTS -	Record Grade
10	MH	Excellent	A	4
	(only 1 in every 30 students may obtain an 'A')			
9-9.9	Sob.	Very Good	B	3
7-8.9	Not.	Good	C	2
5-6.9	Suf.	Sufficient	D-E	1
0-4.9	Sus	Fail	F-Fx	

“There is no guarantee that the description of proficiency offered in a scale is accurate, valid or balanced”
North and Schneider (1998)



(UA) Spanish students:

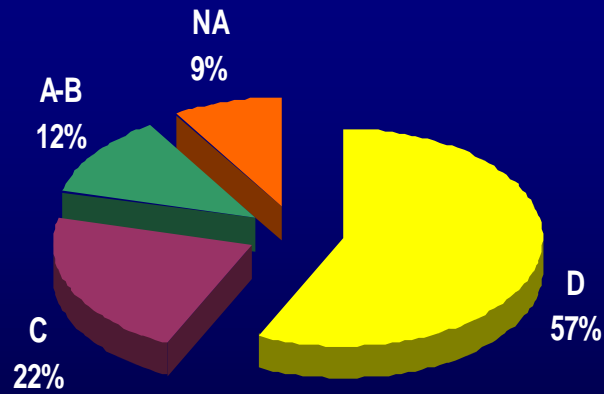
- large groups, less interactive, less participative ...
- Grade system based on final exams and some quizzes
- Results: 150 students approx.
 - 1/3 pass 1/3 fail 1/3 don't take exam
- Grades (average):
 - **40 % PASS** 30 % FAIL 30 % NO EXAM
 - **5% A 10% B 25% C-D 30% F**

(CIEE) American students:

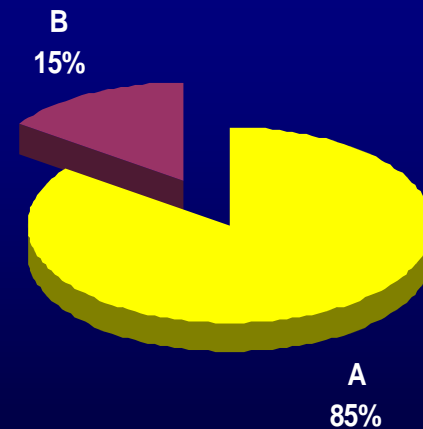
- small groups, more interactive, more participative ... **MORE demanding**
- Grade system based on quizzes, assignments, projects, presentations, papers, academic activities
- **Continuous assessment:** mid-terms & final, papers, projects, homework, participation, etc
- **Results:** 50 students approx. per term
 - **90% pass 10% Fail**
 - **15% A 45% B 30% C-D 10% F**
- **Academic Appeals**

- What grade do my students expect to obtain?

Spanish students



American students



[Grades Debate - Video](#)

Potential PROBLEMS:

- **MISPLACEMENT** (not adequate level):
 - Are students placed in the appropriate level?
 - Do they actually meet the language requirements for that level?

- **MISINTERPRETING** (not being realistic)
 - Do students know what they need to do to get an 'A, B, C'?
 - Are student expectations and faculty goals similar?

- **MISUNDERSTANDING** ('study abroad' = travel abroad, etc):
 - **'Academic'** Program
 - Cultural Immersion Program (activities, field trips, etc)

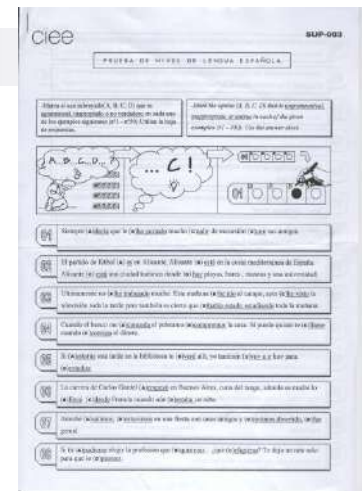


MISPLACEMENT Problems:

- **Reasons for students' unwillingness to move down:**
 - No transfer of credits
 - Overestimate skills / capacity
 - Fear of no academic progress

- **'Language and Academic Commitment':**
 - Close academic supervision (coordinator / teachers)
 - Progress evaluation
 - Tutoring service

- **Problems resultings from students misplacement:**
 - Academic Frustration
 - Lack of motivation, no integration
 - Lower the level in the group
 - Students' GPA



■ PLACEMENT TEST (CIEE Alicante)

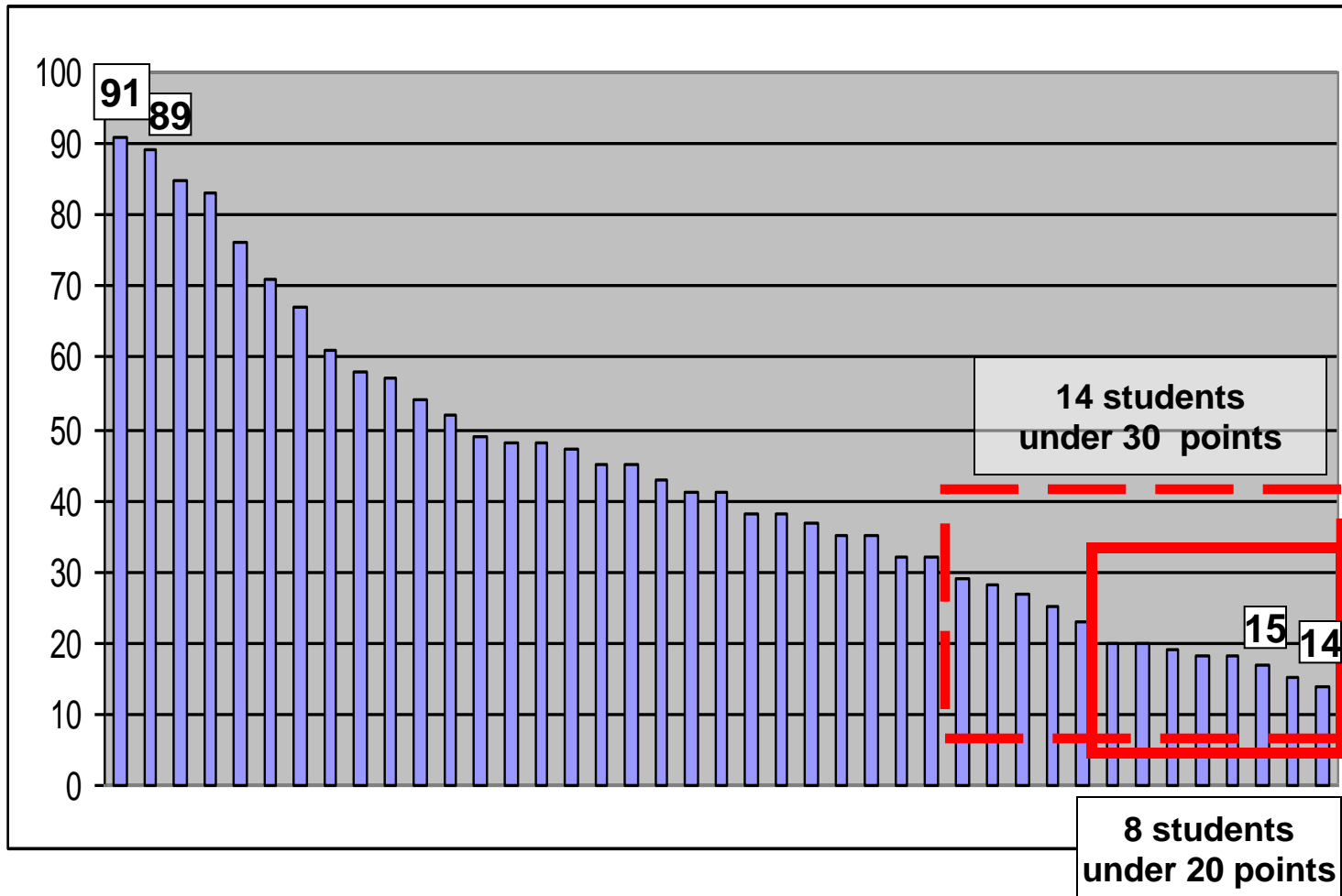
- Three different levels for the placement test
- Scores from 0 to 100
- If a student's result is lower than **30 points**, we consider the possibility of advising the student to move to another level
- Tendency: students willing to move UP (beginners → intermediate, intermediate → advanced) and not down.
- Confirmation from Study Abroad and Advisors and CIEE Maine

“Fairness judgments appear to be governed by an expectation matching proposition; whereby if the expectation is met, the outcome is fair”

Cherry, Ordóñez & Gilliland (2003)

Misplacement Problems:

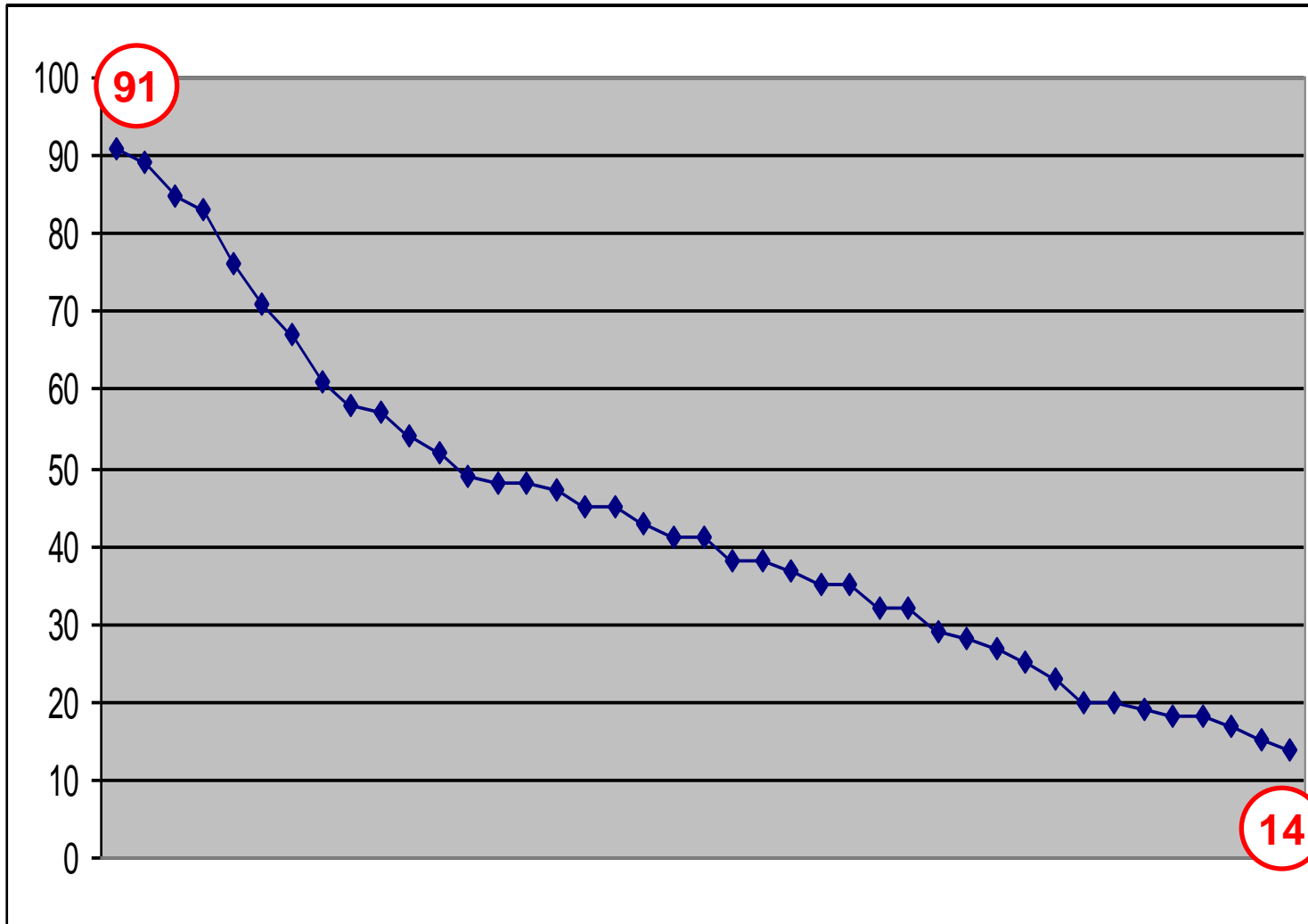
- Number of **students misplaced** in the 'Advanced' level has increased consistently --**PLACEMENT TEST**



**Liberal Arts
Fall 07
Placement Test
Result
(43 students)**

MISPLACEMENT Problems:

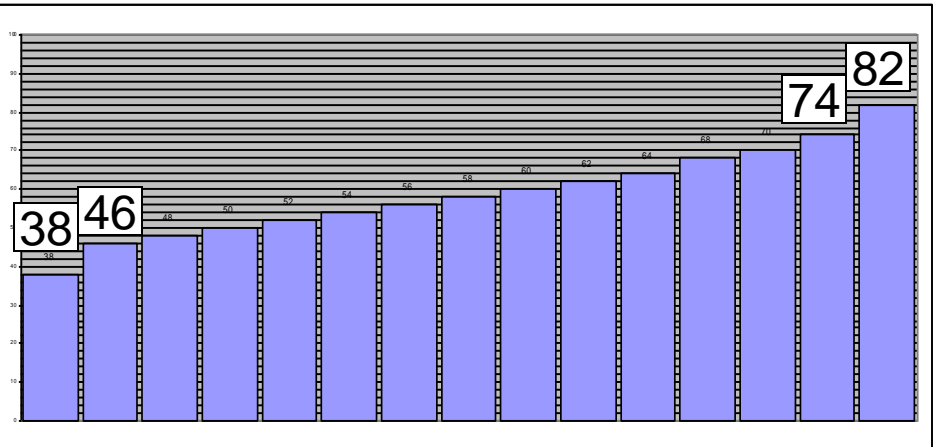
- LANGUAGE LEVEL GAP: **77 points**



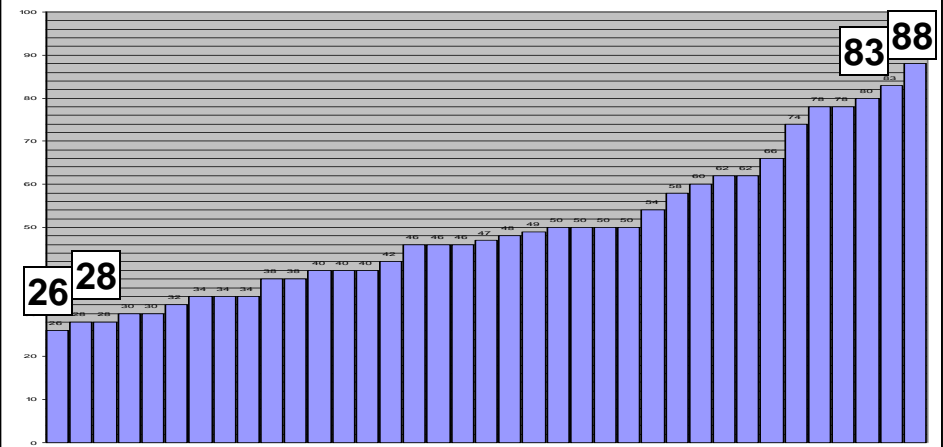
Liberal Arts
Fall 07
Placement Test
Result
(43 students)

Managing Grade & Placement Expectations

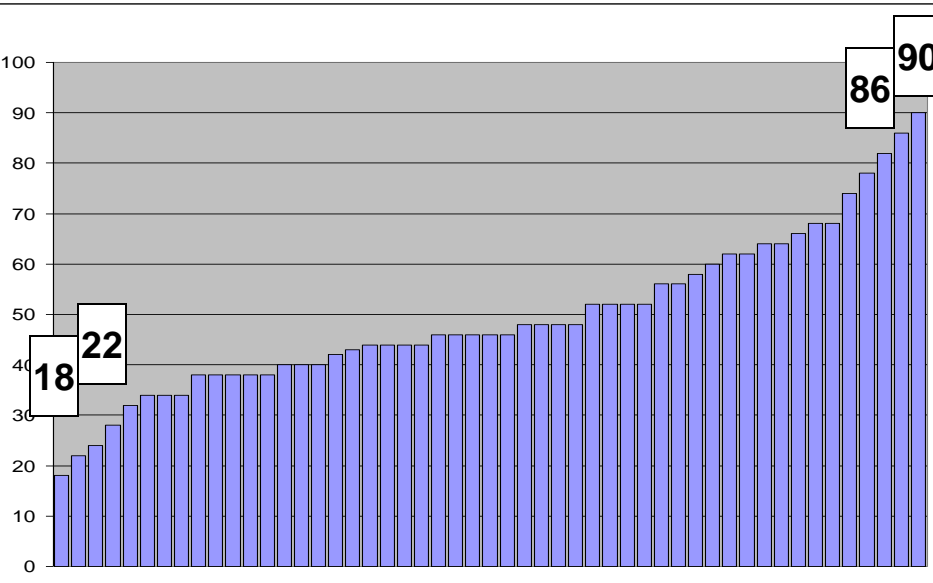
□ PLACEMENT TEST (CIEE Alicante), 4 last terms



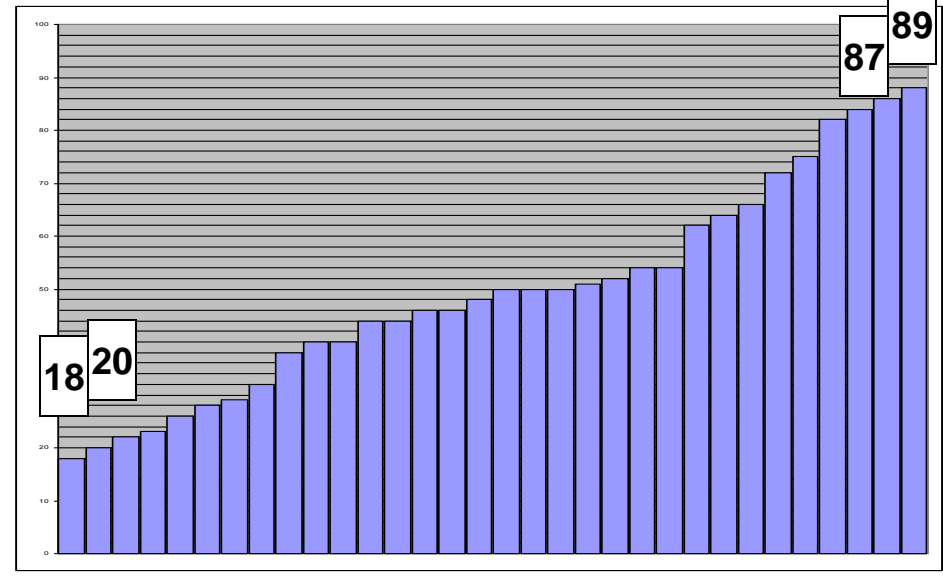
Summer 06



Fall 06



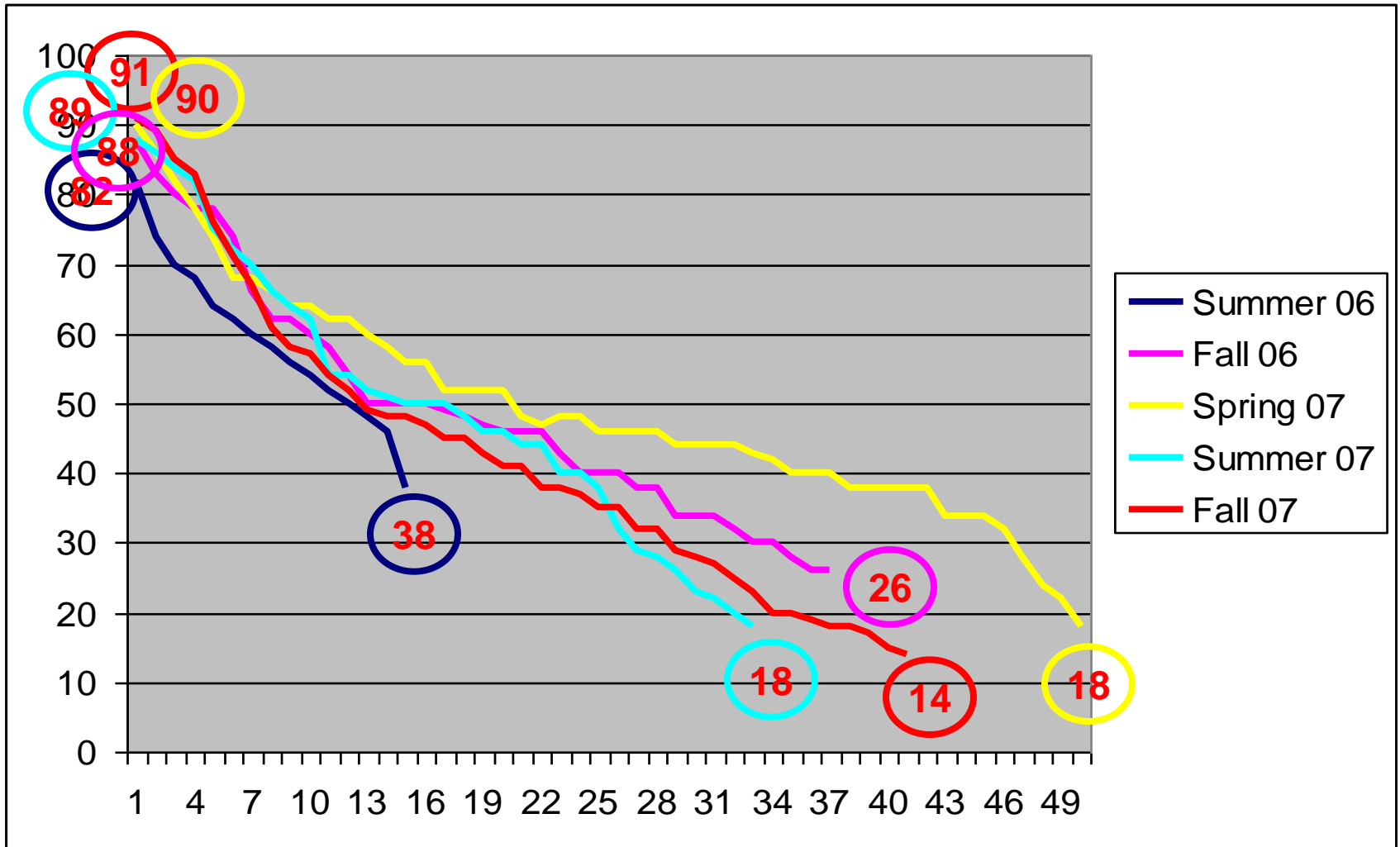
Spring 07



Summer 07

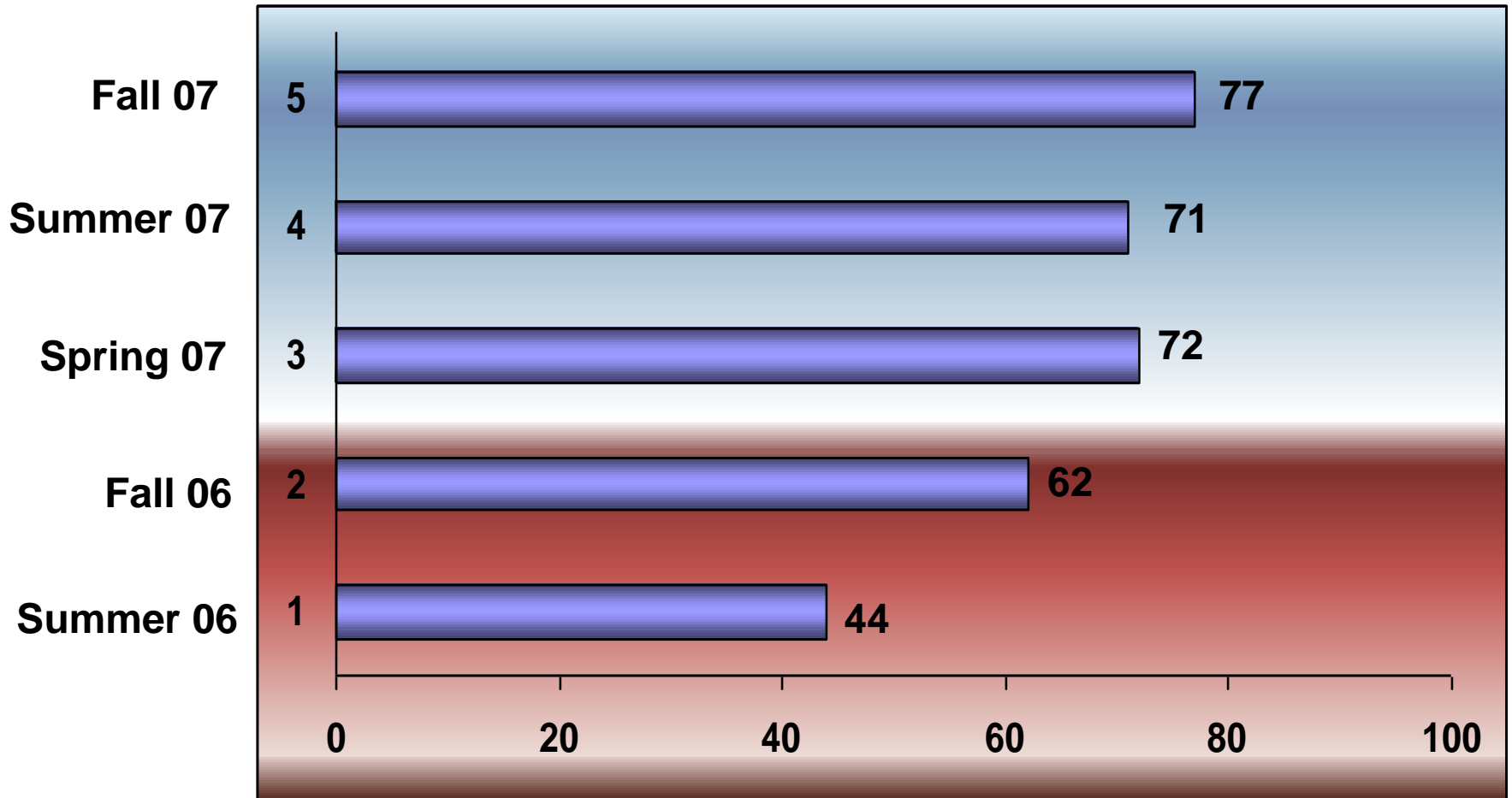
PLACEMENT Expectations

□ Placement Test EVOLUTION:



PLACEMENT Expectations

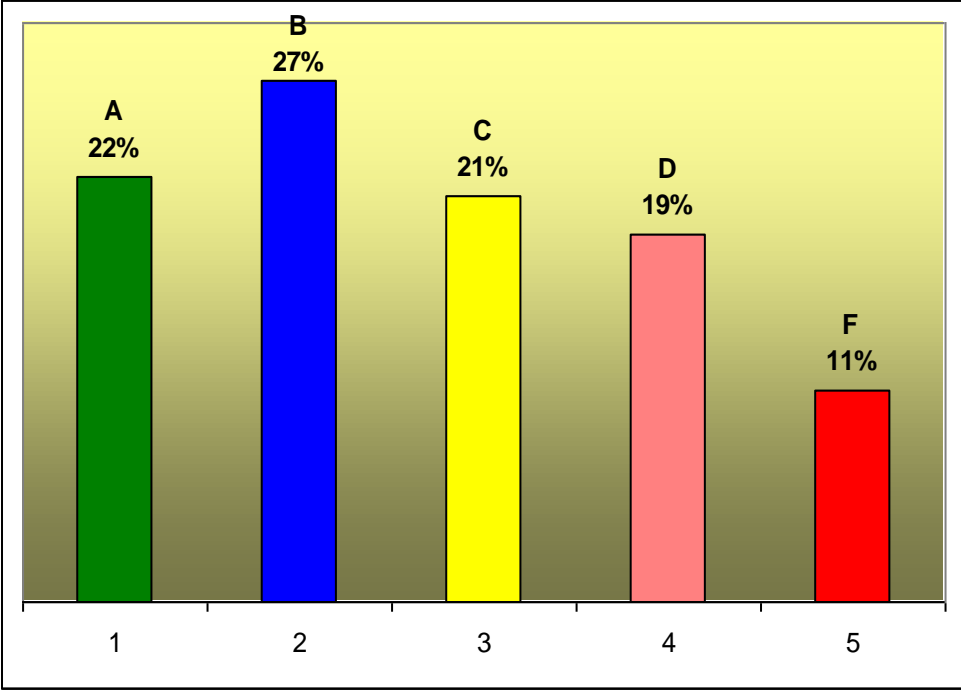
□ Placement Test EVOLUTION – LANGUAGE LEVEL GAP



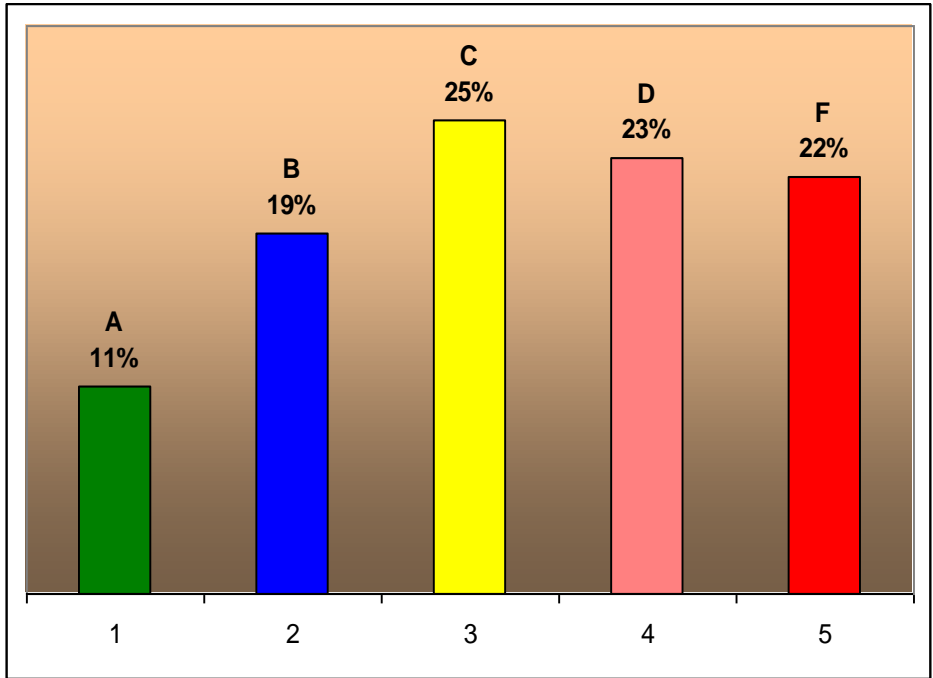


GRADE EXPECTATIONS

- **DELE Diploma (Instituto Cervantes):**
 - **Results for Fall 07 Students**



Intermedio - B2



Avanzado - C1, C2

- 1. **Preparing the field** (beginning):
 - **TEACHERS:**
 - Teacher Selection Committee (capacity to **evaluate** and 'grade')
 - Provide some past examples (exams)
 - Explain grading system, decide the criteria: **GRADE DISTRIBUTION (ranges)**
 - **STUDENTS:**
 - **Orientation:** explain Evaluation and Grading System
 - **GET** the students **INVOLVED**
 - Agree on the final **WEIGHT** for each item (ranges)
 - Final **PROJECTS** ---> **SELF-ASSESSMENT**
 - **GOALS** --> **Questionnaires (beginning & end)**



OUTCOMES:

GRADE DISTRIBUTION:

- Students may choose how the final grade will be distributed within certain ranges:

■ Quizzes	10 – 20 %	→
■ Midterm / Final	20 – 30 %	→
■ Paper	10 - 20 %	→
■ Participation	10 – 20 %	→
■ Homework	10 – 20%	→
■ Present. & Projects	20 - 30 %	→
	Total	→ 100 %

FINAL PROJECTS:

- Team work - End of Term 'Festival' (students' participation)
- Two different GRADES** (peer-evaluation and teacher-evaluation) → average

Managing Grade & Placement Expectations

OUTCOMES:

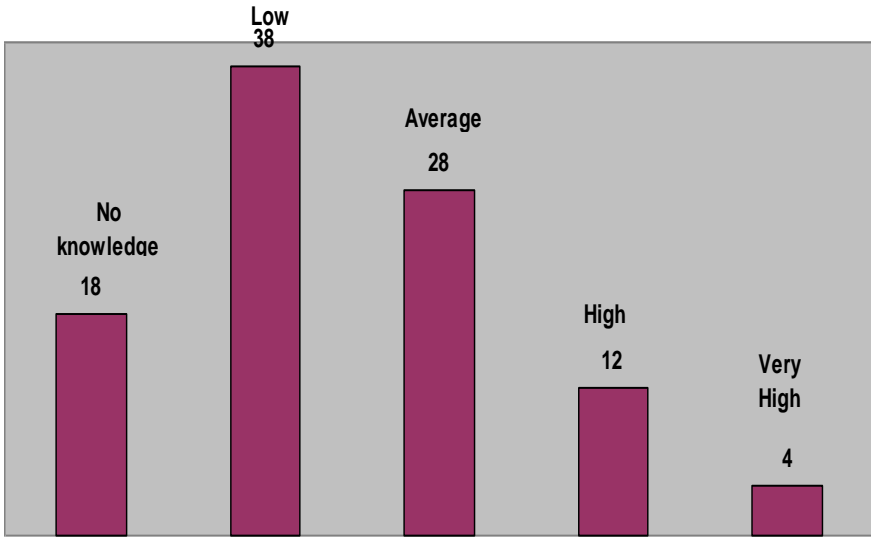
- Questionnaires (first and last week)
 - Language: Placement Test
 - Electives: 'Specific' Questionnaires

TEST INICIAL de CONOCIMIENTOS - SPANISH CINEMA

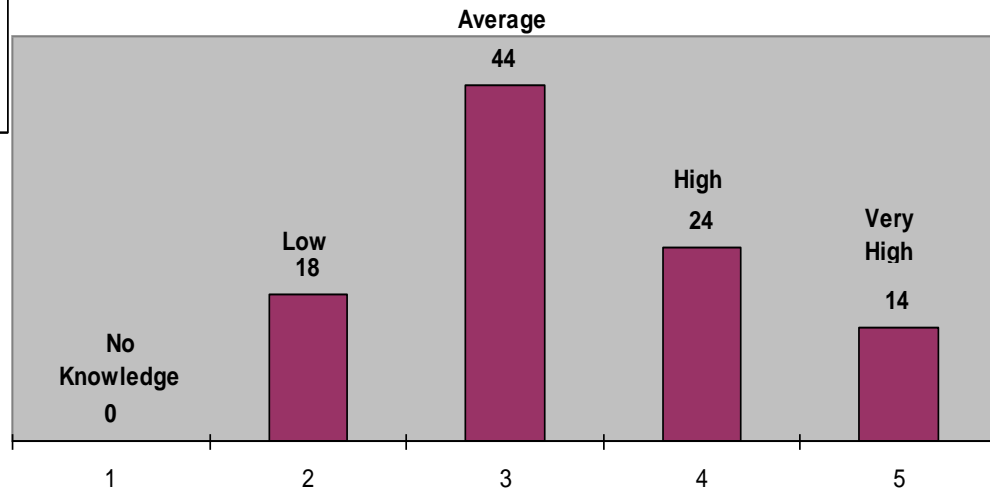
Esto es sólo un test para saber tus conocimientos previos en esta materia. Trata de responder todas las preguntas que conozcas y si no sabes la respuesta, no te preocupes.

- «¿Cuántas películas españolas (España) has visto? Mencionalas (títulos)»
a. _____ b. _____ c. _____
d. _____ e. _____ f. _____
- «¿Cuántos directores de cine español (España) conoces? Mencionalos»
a. _____ b. _____ c. _____
d. _____ e. _____ f. _____
- «¿Cuántos actores / actrices españoles (España) conoces? Mencionalos»
a. _____ b. _____ c. _____
d. _____ e. _____ f. _____
- «¿Cuál del siguiente vocabulario en español forma parte del cine?» (más de 1 opción)
 actriz piloto sucursal banda sonora balneario reduje
 carácter guión reparto laque de banda fabada realizador
- «¿Cómo se dicen en español las siguientes palabras del inglés relacionadas con el cine?»
 setting: _____ character: _____ script: _____ flashback: _____
- Relaciona las siguientes películas (títulos traducidos al inglés) con su país de origen
 - All about my mother • USA
 - Life is beautiful • Germany
 - Spanglish • Spain
 - The Motorcycle Diaries • England
 - The Road to Guantanamo • Italy
 - The Lives of Others • Argentina, Brazil, USA, Chile & Peru
- Relaciona las siguientes actores / actrices / directores / películas con su país de origen:
 - Paz Vega • México
 - If tu mamá también • Cuba
 - Pasa y Descárgate • España
 - Nicole Kidman • Australia
 - City of God • Brazil
 - Daniel Radcliffe • England
- «Aquí hay una lista de nombres relacionados con el arte, la cultura, la historia y la política de España, pero también hay otros que no son españoles (México, Argentina, Italia, etc). Marca (X) los nombres que sean de España»
 Calaver Frasca Zapatera Tumes Luis Buñuel Almódovar Sofia Loren
- «En la siguiente lista de personas famosas españolas, algunos nombres pertenecen al mundo del cine y otros no (deportes, política, sociedad, etc). Marca (X) los nombres relacionados con el cine»
 Picasso Múdem Alonso Nadal Amenábar Banderas Aznar
- «¿Cómo se llaman los premios de cine más famosos en España que da la Academia española cada año (equivalentes a los Oscar en EEUU)?»

How would you RATE your knowledge on this subject?



How would you RATE your knowledge of SPANISH for this class?



**Film & Literature:
Two Genres in One**



2. Evaluating student progress (during the course):

- **GRADING students academic progress (2 references):**
 - Personal grading reference (PGR **progress**): 7,8 / 6,8
 - Group grading reference (GGR **average**): 8,2 / 7,5

- **Academic Coordination and Supervision:**
 - Weekly Reports (teachers-coordinator)
 - Students evaluation of the class progress (oral & paper)

- **Academic Meeting:**
 - Week after midterm exams (teachers-coordinator)
 - Grade review



- **3. Matching results (end of course)**
 - **Final Grading Committee (3 teachers + coordinator)**
 - **“Same-class Grade Uniformity”**
 - Factors (number of students, students’ profile, teaching effectiveness, students-teacher interaction, student-student interaction, etc)
 - **“Same-student Grade Disparity”**
 - Students’ expectations and final results in all classes
 - * Direct Enrolment: exceptional cases
 - **“Potential Academic Appeals”**
 - Students with C or less (final report - Teacher & Coordinator)



CONCLUSIONS:

- **The language level gap has widened progressively**
- **Testing ‘uniformity’ and ‘coherence’: grading standards**
 - **Placing students (US universities, CIEE, international programs)**
- **Inform students (beginning, middle & end of program)**
- **Establish some academic parameters and provide ‘meaningful’ information <> ‘grade’**
- **Self-assessment: get students involved in their own evaluation (ranges, etc).**



MANAGING GRADE EXPECTATIONS:

□ **Food for thought:**

- What about other international students willing to go to American Universities?
 - How to **transfer** their **grades** into the US system?
 - How to **help** these students **adapt** themselves to the new system?
 - How to **overcome** academic **differences** between grading and evaluation systems worldwide?

[Video 'Best Grade'](#)

■ FUTURE RESEARCH:

■ More **research** needed about :

□ Student's **motivation** & final grade:

- Fits my schedule
- Transfer of credits (major/minor)
- Class related to the program-location
- It seemed 'fun' and 'interesting'
- Other factors: 'friends', 'teachers', 'don't know', etc

□ Student's real **performance** (workload, dedication, effectiveness) & final grade

□ Students' **expectations** & Faculty **goals**

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