COSUMNES RIVER COLLEGE

OFFICE OF RESEARCH & EQUITY

Evaluation of the Impact of Student Assistants in ESL Courses

Office of Research and Equity

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Executive Summary

Background

In English as a Second Language (ESL) courses at Cosumnes River College (CRC), student assistants (SA's) act as in-class tutors. Because they are directly available in the classroom, they are able to help with both the general content of the subject and the nuances of the specific course section. In Spring 2026 the Research Office at CRC, with help from the Tutoring Services Coordinator, sought to evaluate the impact of SA's in ESL. The sections for which an SA was assigned were gathered for Fall 2024 (18 total), Spring 2025 (15 total), and Fall 2025 (22 total). Success rates in courses with an assigned SA were compared to those without. Here a success rate is defined as the percentage of A, B, C, IP, or P grades out of the total number of enrollments. Additionally, because ESL achievement depends on progression through a course sequence, the evaluation also sought to identify an impact (or lack thereof) on student enrollment (persistence) into the next term.

Summary of Findings

1. Over the three-term period, there were few notable differences in course success between sections with an SA vs. those without. In one course – ESL 47 – the success rate was significantly higher for SA assigned sections (*Table 3*; page 4).
2. Students in the study sample who had at least one SA in an ESL section had slightly higher persistence rates into the next term. However, this difference was not statistically significant in Fall 2024, Spring 2025, or Fall 2025 (*Table 4*; page 5).

Conclusions and Recommendations

The present evaluation found very few differences between SA and non-SA assigned courses in ESL. Nevertheless, it is difficult to draw conclusions at the level of analysis described here. Future evaluations should work to gather a measure of usage (e.g., how many times each student got help from the SA) to conduct more detailed analyses.

Caveats and Limitations

Due to the level of analysis, it is difficult to draw strong conclusions from the findings presented here. We don't know how often students went to the SA for help and/or how the SA sought to help students. It is also possible for an SA to improve the chance of succeeding without an observed increase in success relative to other courses. For example, suppose two instructors have differences in teaching methods. The instructor with lower success rates may be more inclined to request an SA. Ultimately, although an SA may have raised success rates for this instructor, their course success may still not be higher relative to other courses/instructors.

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Background and Methodology

Method

In Spring 2026, the Tutoring Services Coordinator at CRC provided the Research Office with a list of ESL sections assigned an SA from Fall 2024 to Fall 2025. These data were then used to gather course success and demographic information for students in SA-assigned sections. For the purposes of this investigation, course success is defined as the percentage of students earning an A, B, C, IP, or P grade out of the total number of enrollments (including W's). For a given course (e.g., ESL 47) with at least one SA assigned section, data were also gathered for all other sections of that course in which no SA was assigned. These sections acted as the comparison group for the investigation described here.

In addition to course success, persistence data were gathered for each student in the sample described above. Here persistence is described as the percentage of students who enroll in the next major term (e.g. from Fall 2024 into Spring 2025). Students in SA assigned sections were then compared to those in non-SA assigned sections on the two previously described metrics of course success and persistence.

Student Demographics

A demographic breakdown of enrollment can be found in *Table 1* below for SA assigned and non-SA assigned sections, respectively. Note that "Low Income" is defined here as income below 200% of the federal poverty level. Across both SA and non-SA sections, students who spoke Farsi as their primary language constituted a large percentage of enrollments. Asian students also constituted the vast majority of enrollments. A slightly higher percentage of enrollments in non-SA sections were students with below poverty self-reported income.

Table 1. Enrollment Demographics for SA and non-SA Assigned Courses

		Assigned SA		No Assigned SA	
Demographic	**Group**	**Enrollment**	**%**	**Enrollment**	**%**
Primary Language	Arabic	17	1.3%	19	3.0%
	Chinese (Cantonese)	50	3.8%	13	2.1%
	Chinese (Mandarin)	101	7.6%	57	9.0%
	English	345	26.0%	187	29.6%
	Farsi (Persian)	372	28.0%	190	30.1%
	Other	64	4.8%	31	4.9%
	Russian	24	1.8%	18	2.9%
	Spanish	89	6.7%	24	3.8%
	Vietnamese	267	20.1%	92	14.6%
Race/Ethnicity	African American	15	1.1%	8	1.3%
	Asian	1018	76.6%	469	74.3%
	Filipino	1	0.1%	4	0.6%
	Hispanic/Latino	101	7.6%	29	4.6%

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	Multi-Race	19	1.4%	9	1.4%
	Unknown	6	0.5%	11	1.7%
	White	169	12.7%	101	16.0%
Gender	Female	902	67.9%	403	63.9%
	Male	409	30.8%	215	34.1%
	Other/Unknown	18	1.4%	13	2.1%
Age	24 or Younger	478	36.0%	239	37.9%
	25 or Older	851	64.0%	392	62.1%
Income	Below Poverty	748	56.3%	401	63.5%
	Low	286	21.5%	130	20.6%
	Middle and Above	135	10.2%	39	6.2%
	Unable to Determine	160	12.0%	61	9.7%
Total		**1329**		**631**	

Findings and Analysis

Course Success

Success rates for SA and non-SA assigned sections can be found in *Table 2* below. On average, success rates for ESL sections with an assigned SA were very slightly lower than those without an SA. Denominators for each rate can be found in *Table 1*.

Table 2. Success Rates in SA/non-SA Assigned Courses

		In an SA Course?		
Demographic	**Group**	**Yes**	**No**	**Difference (No - Yes)**
Primary Language	Arabic	76.5%	78.9%	-2.5%
	Chinese (Cantonese)	90.0%	100.0%	-10.0%
	Chinese (Mandarin)	88.1%	96.5%	-8.4%
	English	79.7%	80.7%	-1.0%
	Farsi (Persian)	73.9%	80.0%	-6.1%
	Other	84.4%	90.3%	-5.9%
	Russian	75.0%	83.3%	-8.3%
	Spanish	80.9%	41.7%	39.2%
	Vietnamese	91.4%	95.7%	-4.3%
Race/Ethnicity	African American	80.0%	87.5%	-7.5%
	Asian	81.8%	86.6%	-4.7%
	Filipino	100.0%	75.0%	25.0%
	Hispanic/Latino	80.2%	41.4%	38.8%
	Multi-Race	94.7%	77.8%	17.0%
	Unknown	83.3%	90.9%	-7.6%
	White	79.9%	81.2%	-1.3%
Gender	Female	82.9%	86.1%	-3.2%

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	Male	78.2%	78.1%	0.1%
	Other/Unknown	94.4%	92.3%	2.1%
Age	24 or Younger	77.6%	77.4%	0.2%
	25 or Older	83.9%	87.2%	-3.3%
Income	Below Poverty	80.1%	82.3%	-2.2%
	Low	88.1%	89.2%	-1.1%
	Middle and Above	79.3%	79.5%	-0.2%
	Unable to Determine	79.4%	82.0%	-2.6%
Total		**81.6%**	**83.5%**	**-1.9%**

Two-proportion *z*-tests were conducted for each course – comparing course success in sections with an SA vs. those without. In the case of a student making multiple attempts of a given course, the earliest attempt was used. Results of this analysis can be found in the table below. The "No Assigned SA" and "Assigned SA" columns provide data on the success rates for non-SA and SA sections, respectively. Note that these rates were calculated after the deduplication of multiple attempts described above. The difference between the two course success rates (SA subtracted from No SA) can be found in the "Difference" column. In order for this difference to attain "statistical significance", the *z*-value for the difference must be lower/greater than -/+ 1.96. In this case, we may conclude that the difference was larger than what we might expect by chance alone. Only one course attained such a *z*-value – ESL 47, such that students in the SA assigned sections had a significantly higher success rate.

Table 3. Significance tests for differences in Course Success

	No Assigned SA		Assigned SA				
Course	Success Rate	Enrollments	Success Rate	Enrollments	Difference (No SA - SA)	SE	*z*
ESL 110	81.3%	64	82.6%	144	-1.4%	0.0575	0.242
ESL 130	90.5%	116	92.7%	82	-2.2%	0.0404	0.536
ESL 27	66.7%	24	74.2%	178	-7.5%	0.0962	0.778
ESL 37	85.4%	89	92.6%	95	-7.2%	0.0459	1.576
ESL 47	70.4%	81	89.3%	159	-18.9%	0.0514	3.686
ESLG 120	96.2%	26	83.3%	48	12.8%	0.0796	-1.611
ESLG 31	95.8%	24	79.8%	163	16.1%	0.0843	-1.907
ESLG 41	85.7%	63	83.1%	118	2.7%	0.0572	-0.465
ESLL 111	92.6%	27	76.0%	25	16.6%	0.1001	-1.657
ESLL 121		0	69.2%	65			
ESLL 31	83.3%	66	79.1%	115	4.2%	0.0610	-0.689
ESLL 41	80.5%	41	79.3%	116	1.2%	0.0732	-0.161

Persistence

Persistence rates by term and demographic can be found in *Table 4* below. Denominators for each persistence rate in *Table 4* can be found in *Table 5*. A quick review of the "Total" row of *Table 4* suggests that students enrolled in at least one ESL course with an SA had slightly higher persistence rates. Within

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each term, logistic regressions were conducted to evaluate the statistical significance of the aforementioned differences. Each logistic regression controlled for the primary language, self-reported race, gender identity, age group, and income level of students. In less technical language, this means that these factors were held constant. Students with an SA were compared to students without an SA that had the same primary language, race/ethnicity, gender identity, age group and income level. Within all three of the terms (Fall 2024, Spring 2025, and Fall 2025), the persistence difference between SA and non-SA students was not statistically significant (z = 0.127; z = 1.014; and z = 0.546, respectively).

Table 4. Persistence Rates into the Next Term for Students with at Least One SA

		No SA			At Least One SA		
Demographic	**Demographic**	**Fall 2024**	**Spring 2025**	**Fall 2025**	**Fall 2024**	**Spring 2025**	**Fall 2025**
Primary Language	Arabic	71.4%	100.0%	50.0%	40.0%	80.0%	100.0%
	Chinese (Cantonese)	100.0%	100.0%	80.0%	71.4%	85.7%	76.9%
	Chinese (Mandarin)	88.9%	100.0%	100.0%	88.9%	73.7%	78.6%
	English	66.7%	70.5%	66.7%	77.5%	76.9%	81.7%
	Farsi (Persian)	78.4%	66.7%	76.5%	73.3%	75.9%	73.8%
	Other	55.6%	33.3%	75.0%	91.7%	75.0%	71.4%
	Russian	50.0%	25.0%	25.0%	62.5%	60.0%	33.3%
	Spanish	33.3%	50.0%	100.0%	66.7%	78.6%	73.7%
	Vietnamese	90.9%	80.0%	72.7%	74.6%	86.0%	79.0%
Race/Ethnicity	African American	66.7%	0.0%		100.0%	80.0%	80.0%
	Asian	76.5%	75.3%	76.4%	76.9%	79.6%	77.3%
	Filipino	0.0%		66.7%		100.0%	
	Hispanic/Latino	33.3%	66.7%	100.0%	72.7%	80.0%	78.3%
	Multi-Race		100.0%	50.0%	85.7%	100.0%	80.0%
	Unknown	100.0%	100.0%		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	White	67.9%	50.0%	50.0%	65.0%	65.9%	72.5%
Gender	Female	75.6%	78.0%	73.1%	77.7%	79.3%	80.9%
	Male	66.7%	59.0%	72.1%	69.9%	75.3%	68.7%
	Other/Unknown	66.7%	100.0%		100.0%	66.7%	80.0%
Age	24 or Younger	70.5%	72.1%	75.0%	80.8%	80.6%	74.6%
	25 or Older	74.0%	70.2%	71.8%	72.6%	76.5%	78.3%
Income	Below Poverty	68.5%	72.6%	69.4%	75.3%	77.6%	80.3%
	Low	81.8%	65.4%	82.6%	78.6%	77.2%	70.9%
	Middle And Above	71.4%	71.4%	83.3%	64.5%	72.7%	66.7%
	Unable to Determine	80.0%	80.0%	66.7%	79.4%	84.8%	81.3%
Total		**72.6%**	**71.0%**	**72.7%**	**75.4%**	**78.0%**	**77.0%**

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Table 5. Headcounts for Students with at Least One SA vs. Those Without

		No SA			At Least One SA		
Demographic	**Demographic**	**Fall 2024**	**Spring 2025**	**Fall 2025**	**Fall 2024**	**Spring 2025**	**Fall 2025**
Primary Language	Arabic	7	1	2	5	5	5
	Chinese (Cantonese)	1	2	5	14	7	13
	Chinese (Mandarin)	9	10	9	27	19	28
	English	36	44	39	71	65	109
	Farsi (Persian)	37	24	34	75	87	103
	Other	9	3	4	12	16	21
	Russian	4	4	4	8	5	6
	Spanish	3	2	2	18	14	19
	Vietnamese	11	10	11	71	50	62
Race/Ethnicity	African American	3	1	0	1	5	5
	Asian	81	73	89	229	201	291
	Filipino	1	0	3	NA	1	NA
	Hispanic/Latino	3	6	2	22	15	23
	Multi-Race	0	2	2	7	3	5
	Unknown	1	2	0	2	2	2
	White	28	16	14	40	41	40
Gender	Female	78	59	67	206	184	246
	Male	36	39	43	93	81	115
	Other/Unknown	3	2	0	2	3	5
Age	24 or Younger	44	43	32	104	98	126
	25 or Older	73	57	78	197	170	240
Income	Below Poverty	73	62	72	166	156	203
	Low	22	26	23	70	57	79
	Middle And Above	7	7	6	31	22	36
	Unable to Determine	15	5	9	34	33	48
Total		**117**	**100**	**110**	**301**	**268**	**366**

Conclusions and Recommendations

The present evaluation found very few differences between SA and non-SA assigned courses in ESL. Nevertheless, it is difficult to draw conclusions at the level of analysis described here. Future evaluations should work to gather a measure of usage (e.g., how many times each student got help from the SA) to conduct more detailed analyses.

Caveats and Limitations

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Due to the level of analysis, it is difficult to draw strong conclusions from the findings presented here. We don't know how often students went to the SA for help and/or how the SA sought to help students. It is also possible for an SA to improve the chance of succeeding without an observed increase in success relative to other courses. For example, suppose two instructors have differences in teaching methods. The instructor with lower success rates may be more inclined to request an SA. Ultimately, although an SA may have raised success rates for this instructor, their course success may still not be higher relative to other courses/instructors.