THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ENGLISH LEARNERS' ENGLISH LANGUAGE

PROFICIENCY AND HIGH STAKES ASSESSMENTS IN VIRGINIA

by

Jannette DuHart

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

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ABSTRACT

Due to increases in immigration patterns, U.S. schools face many challenges when educating this fast-growing minority immigrant population who confront many social, cultural, economic, and linguistic obstacles. Lack of English proficiency, in many instances, impedes this newly arrived group from fully integrating and participating within societal contexts. Children of immigrants have the dichotomous task of learning academic content and demonstrating subject knowledge on high stakes assessments while learning English as a new language. English Learners, Hispanics in particular, are twice as likely to drop out of school. Dropout rates create accountability issues for schools in the U.S. that have experienced a dramatic increase in the number of English Learners they service. The purpose of this quantitative correlational study was to determine if there was a statistical relationship between English Learners' English proficiency levels and high stakes reading test scores in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The researcher analyzed the relationship between these two variables for 2017 and 2018. A convenience sample of 324 secondary English Learners and Former English Learners was collected from three school divisions in the southeast of Virginia. A Pearson's r was used to test Null One. The results for Null Hypothesis One were $r (162) = .475, p = .000$. A Spearman rho rank correlation coefficient was used to test Null Two. The results for Null Hypothesis Two were $rho (162) = 0.563, p = 0.000$. The correlation described the direction and strength of the relationship between two high stakes assessments. The Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English state-to-state for English Language Learners or ACCESS for ELLs test is used to measure English proficiency levels and the Reading Standards of Learning test measures academic performance in reading skills in English. Based on the research findings, the results of the study may be used to inform decisions on instruction, best practices, targeted

professional development opportunities for teachers, and policy changes to support English Learners in the mainstream classroom.

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Dedication

It is with great pride and honor that I dedicate this dissertation to my beloved cousin Edgardo De La Cruz Cartagena, a teacher by profession and an educator at heart. You showed me the impact education has in one's life, as you answered my many questions with the patience only true educators display. Possibly unbeknown to you, your patience and willingness to entertain the questions of an impressionable youngster edged a clear pathway between the world beyond our little "barrio" Talas Viejas and how acquiring an education would lead me to explore so many other opportunities. In my child's eye, I figured if you could travel and go to the other side of the world, so could I. ¡Primo, muchísimas gracias por abrirme la Puerta al mundo!

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Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English state-to-state for English Language

Learners (ACCESS for ELLs)

Dually-Identified English Learners (DIEL)

Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)

English as a New Language (ENL)

English as a Second Language (ESL)

English language development (ELD) standards.

English Language Learner (ELL)

English Learners (EL)

English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

Former English Learners (FEL)

Language Acquisition (LA)

Language Instruction Educational Program (LIEP)

Local Education Agency (LEA)

Limited English Proficiency (LEP)

Native language (L1)

No Child Left Behind (NCLB)

Second Language Acquisition (SLA)

Standards of Learning (SOL)

State Educational Agencies (SEA)

Sustained Silent Reading (SSR)

Target or new language (L2)

Voluntary Reading (FVR)

WIDA-ACCESS Placement Test (W-APT)

World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

This study explored the impact of English Learners and Former or exited English Learners' English proficiency levels on the Reading standardized assessment outcomes in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Culturally and linguistically diverse students identified as English Learners continue to experience difficulty when required to demonstrate proficiency in content knowledge on high stakes assessments. This chapter discusses the study's background, problem statement, and purpose statement. The significance of the study, research question, and a list of terms are also included in this chapter.

Background

Immigration is a polarizing topic that has and continues to generate heated debates and a lack of consensus across the United States. Whereas human migration is considered a federal government issue, Holeywell (2012) stated the integration of immigrants into American civic life is mostly a local challenge. Due to recent changes in the landscape of the country's immigration laws and given the rapid growth of these populations, educational programs and resources available to children of immigrants are likely to differ from those of previous decades (Potochnick & Mooney, 2015). Due to limited resources, students' limited English proficiency, and educators' lack of knowledge on how to effectively service these students, many school divisions struggle to design high-yielding language instruction educational programs (LIEP). Further, Lopez and Ibarren (2014) discussed the persistent marginalization of culturally and linguistically diverse students in U.S. schools (Lopez & Ibarren, 2014). This group of students has challenged the equitability of U.S. education and its accountability system given the fact that specific groups of English Learners fail to make adequate academic progress. The lack of

academic success may be due in part to low English proficiency levels and their linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds. According to Filmore (2014), English Learners are likely to face many challenges in schools based on several factors such as fundamental misunderstandings of the students' needs, lack of native language supports, and scarcity of academic language development scaffolds in the regular classroom. Abedi (2010) ascertained that administering high stakes assessments that were developed for native English speakers poses a more significant challenge for English Learners than their non-English Learner peers. According to Llosa (2012) and McNeal (2016), the required academic accountability structures established by the No Child Left Behind (2001) and Every Student Succeed Act (2015) are driven by high stakes assessment outcomes and student progress monitoring. In turn, school divisions are obligated to create effective language programs using research-based models to serve these students adequately. The lack of consensus on current research on how to best service ELs and the various factors that impact their academic achievement makes it difficult for schools to design high-yielding language programs.

According to Cook, Boals and Lundberg (2011), many English Learners consistently achieve below grade level in all content areas when measured by required high stakes assessments. Underperforming on high stakes assessments for newly arrived and low proficiency English Learners is exacerbated at the secondary level. In Virginia, English Learners are expected to meet content knowledge proficiency on Standards of Learning and End-of-Course (EOC) standardized assessments to graduate high school, regardless of the students' English proficiency levels. Content teachers are often ill-prepared to teach and meet the cultural and linguistic needs of these students at the secondary level. Russell (2014) found that there is limited research on how content teachers at the high school level learn about language instruction

for English Learners in the mainstream classroom. This study's findings may contribute to the preparation of teachers teaching ELs, which in turn may impact ELs academic achievement outcomes, as teacher effectiveness is directly related to student achievement. Based on Virginia's accountability system, schools are required to create language instructional programs with a focus on improving test performance (Christoun, 2015).

Effective instructional programs should look beyond test performance to the alignment between standard-based curriculum, instructional delivery, and assessments. Data on ELs' educational performance and persistent academic achievement gaps in English and mathematics (see Table 1) reiterate the need for additional research. This research study focused on understanding the relationship between the independent and dependent variables and their impact on language development in the content classroom. Regardless of federal and state mandates and efforts to better service English Learners, this student population continues to score lower than their non-English Learner peers. Table 1 compares test outcomes between English Learners and all students in Virginia.

Table 1

Reading and mathematics test performance for English Learners and all student in the state of Virginia from 2015 to 2018.

Year	English Learners Reading Test	All Students Reading Test	English Learners Mathematics Test	All Students Mathematics Test
2017-2018	52	62	54	61
2016-2017	53	61	57	62
2015-2016	50	62	56	62

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), the 2001 reauthorization of Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, established a system of accountability measures that aimed to ensure school divisions met their obligation to meet the needs of all students including English Learners. The NCLB, nevertheless, established unattainable goals for student achievement, as 100% of all students were expected to score at academic proficiency level or above on standardized assessments by 2014. Under NCLB, Title III required states to measure English proficiency and content knowledge of English Learners. Moreover, assessments designed to measure language proficiency are utilized every year to ensure school divisions are monitoring each student's progress in acquiring English proficiency. States are using test scores to hold schools accountable for teaching and learning and to inform education policy decision-making (Sireci & Faulkner, 2015). McNeal (2016) agreed assessments are the driving force behind all accountability systems in public schools. Sireci and Faulkner (2015) believe monitoring academic progress for English Learners should include more than just standardized test results, as these assessments only offer a snapshot of the English Learner's academic ability.

As an alternative to assessing the progress of ELs, growth progress models may provide a better picture of what ELs know and are able to do in the content classroom over a period of time. Lakin and Young (2013) offered a word of caution as it relates to growth models and ELs. Their study showed that although value table models, projection models, and student growth percentile models are cognizant of EL status as it relates to classification accuracy, these models may not accurately predict ELs' future levels of achievement. Lakin and Young's (2013) study found that growth models have significant implications for accountability systems. In 2016-2017, Virginia transitioned from using a student growth percentile (SGP) model to a value tables model due to limitations with the SGP model (VDOE, 2015). Two disadvantages of using the

SGP model are that this method requires all students in the state to finish testing before any calculations could be made and results were not available to school divisions promptly. There are several benefits to using value table models over student growth percentile models. Contrary to SGP, a value table model allows for comparing students' current test scores with those of the student's previous years, accounts for the success of students, is available for more students, and is easier to understand.

In the U.S., all English Learners in grades K-12 are required to develop language skills in English as they learn content knowledge, which places these students at an increased risk for academic failure (Slama, 2014). Moreover, assessments alone are an inaccurate predictor of academic success for all students, but specifically for English Learners due in part to low English proficiency levels. Any evaluation instrument in English given to speakers of other languages with low English proficiency levels becomes a small measure of how much English the student knows. These assessments also render themselves useless in measuring academic knowledge, hence the feasibility of growth models to measure English Learners' academic progress. Fulmer and Polikoff (2014) ascertained the alignment of standards, instructional delivery, and assessment as the most significant factors for a valid interpretation of standardized test outcomes. Gall, Gall and Borg (2007) stated that test validity refers to how useful and meaningful test scores are when used to infer or predict outcomes. Consequently, administrators and teachers of ELs should exercise caution when using these test results to make programmatic decisions. Other data such as student's cultural and academic background, teacher reports, formative assessments, benchmarks tests, and ongoing progress monitoring tests should be considered when developing language instruction programs for ELs.

Gauging student learning is a complicated process and should involve multiple disciplines such as psychometrics and psychological measures, pedagogical theories, brain research, and sociological patterns, among others as reported by Brookhart (2004). As stated by Saunders and Marcelleti (2013), understanding the student's strengths and areas of need and the characteristics of an adequate language instructional program might offer an all-encompassing picture on how to best support these students and monitor Former English Learners in the content classroom. The National Education Association (2016) reported that disparities in educational outcomes persists among students as they relate to poverty levels, language proficiency in English, possible disabilities, possible giftedness, and racial and ethnic background despite shrinkage on academic gaps between English Learners and non-English Learners. Molle's (2013) study suggested many schools continue to face challenges in meeting the needs of the students they serve, English Learners in particular. Teaching English to English Learners in the mainstream classroom requires an honest look at available studies on best practices and research-based strategies to ensure ELs have an equitable opportunity to access the curriculum in the mainstream classroom and experience academic success.

A series of Supreme Court cases (e.g. *Castañeda v. Pickard*, 1981 and *Lau v Nichols*, 1974) established the right of ELs to access high quality education and adequately funded language programs that are aligned with their level of academic and English proficiency (e.g., *Castañeda v. Pickard*, 1981; *Lau v. Nichols*, 1974; and Slama, 2014). In 2015, for the first time since *Lau* (1974) and *Castañeda* (1981), the federal government issued guidance to states and school districts through the release of a joint document from the Department of Education Office of Civil Rights and the Department of Justice. The Dear Colleague Letter of January 7, 2015 provided guidance on specific compliance issues related to servicing English Learners in the

mainstream classroom (Department of Justice & Office of Civil Rights, 2015). Subsequently, the federal government created a tool kit to provide specific assistance to states and school divisions in the country (see Appendix A for the letter and tool kit links). In order for public schools to comply with their legal obligations under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, they must take affirmative steps to ensure that students with limited English proficiency (LEP) can meaningfully participate in the schools' educational programs and services (DOJ & OCR, 2015).

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), the 2015 reauthorization of Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, builds on ESEA's legacy as a civil rights law and seeks to ensure that every child, regardless of race, income, background, origin or where they live has the opportunity to obtain and have access to a high-quality education (ESEA, 2016). To develop such high-yielding educational programs, Gareis and Grant (2015), in agreement with Marzano (2003) and Stronge (2007) stated an effective learning and teaching model should include three essential components: curriculum, instruction, and assessment. In order for English Learners to access the curriculum in the mainstream classroom and perform well in high stakes assessments, school districts must create optimum conditions for English language development both in the LIEP and mainstream classrooms. In this regard, effective teachers of ELs promote language learning, create safe environments, and build trust to reduce anxiety (TESOL, 2018). Cook et al. (2011) suggested, "The academic achievement of English Learners in American schools is inextricably tied to long-term support for academic language development within socio-culturally appropriate environments" (p. 69). Moreover, providing culturally and linguistically responsive teaching and learning environments where ELs' affective filters are lowered and risk-taking output is encouraged constitutes the duty of every teacher of ELs. The

academic success of English Learners is a shared responsibility between instructional

stakeholders and should not rest solely on Language Instruction Educational Program (LIEP)

personnel. Shared responsibility and collaboration among stakeholders are key when developing

and implementing LIEPs (TESOL, 2018). The academic success of English Learners is

dependent upon educational staff taking up the responsibility to educate, assist, mentor, and

guide these students in their schools (TESOL, 2018).

States, under ESSA, are also required to monitor the academic progress of English

Learners until they exit language programs. Former English Learners (FEL) or exited ELs must

also be monitored for four years after they have exited EL status. Based on test scores and

persistent achievement gaps between ELs and non-ELs, English Learners continue to have

difficulty acquiring adequate academic proficiency levels to perform well on high stakes tests.

English Learners are significantly less likely than their non-English Learners peers to score at or

above a basic level of achievement regardless of the subject (Fry, 2007). To clearly understand

the academic expectations of English Learners in the mainstream classroom, academic English,

or academic language in English must first be clearly defined. The construct of academic

English is defined as the vocabulary, sentence structure, and discourse associated with the

language used to teach academic content as well as the language used to navigate the school

setting more generally (Bailey & Huang, 2011). To meet the needs of this particular group,

teachers are to differentiate instruction within the content classroom effectively. Successful

teachers will be proficient in "modifying task complexity as either a means toward, or a

simplified culmination of, the intended instructional goals" (Toth & Davin, 2016, p. 153).

Teachers of English Learners must recognize that it is important to effectively teach social and

academic language within the context of mainstream classrooms, these educators must also have

a comprehensive understanding of language acquisition processes, theories, methodologies, and cultural backgrounds, and be intentional when developing necessary and beneficial conditions for language learning within their classrooms. Effective teachers understand that language development involves active learning, collaboration, and interactions (TESOL, 2018).

Understanding Second Language Acquisition (SLA), or language acquisition (LA) processes are essential when teaching English Learners, especially for the student for whom English is a third or fourth language. Gass, Behney and Plonsky (2013) defined second language acquisition (SLA) as the process of learning a new language after the native language has been learned. Educators should also have a thorough understanding of the five stages of second language acquisition: Preproduction or silent period, Early Production, Speech Emergence, Intermediate Fluency, and Advanced Fluency (Krashen & Terrell, 1983). Knowledge of SLA and its five stages can improve the ability of mainstream teachers to serve the culturally and linguistically diverse students in their classrooms (Fillmore & Snow, 2002). For ELs to access the curriculum, much more than practices associated with *good teaching* is necessary (De Jong & Harper, 2005). Comprehensive knowledge of English Language Development (ELD) standards and English Language proficiency (ELP) levels is vital when making instructional decisions to service English Learners (see Appendix B for the five ELD standards). The six English Language proficiency (ELP) levels are as follows: Entering (level 1), Emerging (level 2), Developing (level 3), Expanding (level 4), Bridging (level 5), and Reaching (level 6). See Appendix B for the link to find the WIDA performance definition for each ELP level.

Chomsky (1965), Krashen (2003), and Cummins (2006) are three of the most influential theorists in the field of language acquisition. According to Behme and Deacon (2008), Chomsky (1965) revolutionized linguistics and continues to impact the philosophy of language. Chomsky

was more concerned with the mechanics of language acquisition than with creating a language acquisition model. This linguist theorized that the observable data for language acquisition did not favor a behaviorist approach (Malone, 2012) and called the ability to learn language the language acquisition device (LAD). Current brain research supports Chomsky's notion that there is an area in the brain that deals with language learning. It is well documented that the brain's left hemisphere houses language processing systems (Sousa, 2011).

Contrary to Chomsky (1965), Krashen (2003) developed a language acquisition model. He called it the Monitor Model, which is grounded on five hypotheses: Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis, Natural Order Hypothesis, Monitor Hypothesis, Input Hypothesis, and Affective Filter Hypothesis. These hypotheses posit that students will learn what they are able to understand. As for Cummins (2003), he suggested that to conceptualize English proficiency as it relates to academic language development, one must make a distinction between conversational and academic proficiency. Cummins (2003) coined the terms Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) in 1979. These researchers' contributions are very significant to the language acquisition field. Figure 3 on page 42 presents a visual representation of this study's theoretical framework. Chomsky's LAD explains the human ability to learn languages, whereas Cummins's (1979) BICS and CALP delineate the structure in which language should be contextualized, differentiated, and taught. Furthermore, Krashen's comprehensive theory laid the groundwork for other researchers in the LA field and attempted to explain how a new language is learned.

Due to the increase of immigrants entering the country, U.S. schools are challenged with educating a fast-growing minority population that faces many social, cultural, economic, and linguistic obstacles (Potochnick et al., 2015). Castro-Olivo, Preciado, Sanford and Perry (2011)

agreed that English Learners urgently need more attention, especially those students enrolled in secondary schools. Within the educational context, English proficiency, among other factors, has contributed to the persistent academic lag of many English Learners. A growing body of evidence indicates that English Learners do not have equitable access to mainstream curricula, even after many years in a language instructional program (Scanlan & Lopez, 2012). This study aimed to determine if there was a relationship between English Learners and Former English Learners' English proficiency, as measured by the overall scores on the ACCESS for ELLs test (see Appendix C for complete test overview), and academic content knowledge in English, as measured by the scores on the Reading Standards of Learning assessment in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Problem Statement

According to McNeal (2016), Solano-Flores and Li (2008), and the Office of English Language Acquisition (2016), standardized assessment data inform best practices in the content or mainstream classroom and decision-making processes at the federal, state, and local level. Kenyon, MacGregor, Li, and Cook's (2011) study suggests low English proficiency levels impact access to the content curricula and outcomes of content high stakes assessments. Many English Learners are failing standardized assessments, which may potentially prevent on-time graduation and increase dropout rates among specific ethnic groups, mainly Hispanic English Learners. According to Richards-Tutor, Baker, Gersten, Baker, and Smith (2016), future research should focus on different interventions for English Learners at various levels of English proficiency to determine what supports and interventions may provide the most significant outcomes. English Learners, for the most part, continue to perform below grade level in all content areas and accountability measures (Cook et al., 2011). According to McNeal (2016),

Slama (2014), and Blowe et al. (2012), additional research on the relationship between instruction and assessment of English Learners should be the topic for further study. The problem is that there is not enough literature to clearly understand how English proficiency levels impact English Learners and Former English learners' performance on standardized Reading assessments in English.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this quantitative correlational study was to determine if a relationship exists between the independent variable, English language proficiency, as measured by the overall scores of the Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English state-to-state for English Language Learners (ACCESS for ELLs) test and the dependent variable, academic content knowledge in English, as measured by scores of the Virginia Reading Standards of Learning assessment of secondary English Learners and Former English Learners from 2017 to 2018. (see Appendix C for a table with recent changes on ACCESS and SOL tests.) The population for this study was secondary English Learners (ELs) and Former or Exited English Learners from Southeast Virginia. English Learners are students that have English as a new language (ENL). Virginia uses an English Language proficiency screener, specifically the WIDA Online screener, to identify English Learners. The researcher collected a convenience sample from three school divisions located within the southeast region of Virginia. The independent variable, English language proficiency levels, relates to the level of English proficiency necessary to perform and describe what English Learners can do within each language domain (reading, writing, listening, and speaking). The dependent variable, academic content knowledge in English, determines what students should know and be able to do at the end of each grade or course in English (VDOE, 2017).

Significance of the Study

English Learners, Hispanics in particular, continue to fare poorly on high stakes assessments. Seeking to improve Latino educational outcomes, the White House (2011) reported about 13% of Latinos to have a bachelor's degree and only 4% have completed graduate programs. These figures have slightly improved since 2011. Flores, Lopez, and Radford, (2017) reported 61% of Hispanics at age 25 or older have attained high school diplomas, 24% have completed a two-year degree, and only 15% have a bachelor's degree or beyond. These statistics may be directly related to ELs' academic performance at the secondary level. Even though McNeal (2016) suggested that accurate data are needed when teaching and meeting the needs of this population, the reliability of English-only high stakes assessments may not present an accurate academic representation of ELs' content knowledge due to the impact of English language proficiency levels on tests outcomes. Academic success for ELs, according to Umansky (2016), may translate into adequate access and exposure to educational content, without neglecting language development processes. English Learners must learn academic content through content-based language instructional programs regardless of English proficiency levels (Dreyer, 2015). When developing these content-based language programs, school divisions are required to align academic or content standards with the English language development (ELD) standards. Beardsley's study (2015) found that English Learners at the secondary level are unlikely to reach the highest proficiency levels in English before high school graduation. This study also found that the ELs' native language has an impact on the timelines on the acquisition of English proficiency (Beardsley, 2015).

McNeal's (2016) study found a strong relationship between ACCESS for ELLs scores and Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competencies scores. School districts and teachers in

Virginia and possibly other locales may use the results of this study to make informed decisions on instruction, best practices for language acquisition, professional development opportunities for teachers, and policy changes to support English Learners in the content classroom. Doran (2016) suggested that to support all learners to include ELs, school districts should be offering quality and ongoing professional development for all teachers. According to Master, Loeb, Whitney, and Wyckoff (2012), to close the achievement gap between ELs and their non-EL peers, researchers should study best practices and practical instructional skills, as it relates to language instruction for ELs. Llosa (2012), Richards-Tutor et al. (2016) and McNeal (2016) suggested that further research should be conducted on the relationship between English proficiency levels and test structures.

Research Question

RQ1: Is there a relationship between English language proficiency, as measured by the overall scores on the Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English state-to-state for English Language Learners (ACCESS for ELLs) test, and academic content knowledge in English, as measured by the scores on the Virginia Reading Standards of Learning (SOL) assessments, for English Learners and Former English Learners at the secondary level?

Definitions

1. *Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English state-to-state for English Language Learners* - the ACCESS for ELLs test was created to monitor student progress in English language proficiency (ELP) on a yearly basis and to serve as a criterion to aid in determining when ELLs have attained language proficiency comparable to that of their English-proficient peers (WIDA, 2015).

2. *Codeswitching* - Code-switching is also depicted as the alternation of two languages (Hornberger & Link, 2012).

3. *Content or academic language* - language related to academic subjects, such as English, mathematics, science, or social studies (Cook et al., 2011)

4. *English Learners or English Language Learner* - English Learner as a student 3 to 21 years old who enrolls in an elementary or secondary school, who may have been born in the U.S. or abroad, and "whose difficulties in speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language may be sufficient to deny the individual from successfully meeting state's proficient levels of achievement, access content curriculum, and to be socially successful" (VDOE, 2016).

5. *English as a New Language* - ENL is a term coined by National Board for Professional Teaching Standards to signify English learning for speakers of other languages (NBCTS, 2010).

6. *English language proficiency* - ELP is defined as the social and academic language understanding and functionality level (WIDA, 2017).

7. *Former English Learners* - FEL are ELs that have reached level 6 in English Proficiency and no longer need direct language instruction (VDOE, 2016).

8. *Language Instruction Educational Programs (LIEP)* - these programs are designed to assist states, districts, and schools in serving English learners and immigrant youth (USDE, 2012).

9. *Limited English Proficiency* - LEP is a term use under ESSA to name the parent of English learners (ESSA, 2015).

10. *Reading Standards of Learning assessment* - The test was created to "measure student performance on Virginia's content standards in the area of reading" (VDOE, 2016).

11. *Second Language Acquisition* - SLA is the study of how second languages are learned (Gass, Behney, & Plonsky, 2013).

12. *Translanguaging* - considering and using the first language as a resourceful tool or strategy in order to acquire a second language (Herrera & Murphy, 2011).

13. *WIDA-ACCESS Placement Test* - the W-APT test is an English Language proficiency screener use to identify English Learners (WIDA, 2017).

14. *World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment* - the acronym WIDA was chosen to name the organization that would create the first official English proficiency assessment. World-class Instructional Design and Assessment was created to fit the acronym (WIDA, 2015).

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

Chapter Two includes an overview of the theories that frame the study, following a review of the literature related to language acquisition theories, immigration trends in the U.S., educational reform as it relates to English Learners, and a brief description of the study's instruments, ACCESS for ELLs English proficiency, and Virginia Reading Standards of Learning (SOLs) assessments. The chapter also includes available testing accommodations for English Learners and Former English Learners and the chapter's summary. This research study aimed to investigate if there was a relationship between overall composite scores for English proficiency levels, as measured by the ACCESS for ELLs test and content knowledge in English, as measured by the scores on the Reading SOL assessment of English Learners and Former English Learners in grades six through twelve.

Theoretical Framework

Language Acquisition Theories

The theoretical framework for this study relates to language acquisition processes for English Learners and their impact on academic performance, as measured by standardized assessments in the Commonwealth of Virginia (see Appendix E for additional information on Virginia SOL Test administration and development). Newly arrived English Learners at all grade levels are faced with the dual task of learning content knowledge in all core subjects, e.g. language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies while learning literacy skills in English. Educational policy at the federal, state, and local level requires school districts to create optimum conditions for language development when servicing English Learners, so these students may experience social and academic success, as defined by the state's accountability system (see

Appendix E for complete information on ELs participation and inclusion in the state's

accountability system). Regardless of the changes that have taken place through the last eight

reauthorizations of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), academic gaps persist

between English Learners and non-English Learners. Perhaps these academic gaps persist due to

the complexity of test structures and lack of comprehension skills in English. According to

TESOL (2018), English Learners must develop functional, grade level use of English, so they

may experience academic success in content courses that follow state standards.

Under Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015, states must annually assess the

English language proficiency of all English Learners, provide reasonable accommodations for

these students on state assessments, and develop new accountability systems that include long-

term goals and measures of progress for ELs (USDE, 2018). States are also required to monitor

the academic achievement of Former English Learners (FEL) for four years after they have

exited language instruction educational programs (LIEP) and develop effective LIEP to provide

direct language instruction for ELs.

In a longitudinal language acquisition study of 700,000 English Learners from 1982 to

1996, Thomas and Collier (1997) found to learn English and experience academic success, as

determined by standardized assessments, ELs took anywhere from 5 to 10 years. For students

with substantial formal schooling in their native language, it took 5 to 7 years to attain full

English proficiency. For those students who receive little to no formal instruction in their native

language, learning English will require 7-10 years or more. Another study also supports the

notion that academic language development takes longer than oral English proficiency. Hakuta,

Butler, and Witt (2000) argued that the range for academic English proficiency development

takes between 4 to 7 years, and to attain oral English proficiency takes 3 to 5 years.

The rate at which English Learners acquire language has, and will continue to have, the most significant impact on academic outcomes for this group of students, as accountability systems in education may indirectly dictate the time ELs spent in language programs. In Virginia, an English Learner who stays in a language program for more than five years is considered a Long-Term English Learner (LTEL). Linguistic competence is complex, and even the most privileged English language learners take a significant amount of time to achieve mastery, especially for the level of language required for school success (Hakuta, Butler, & Witt, 2000). According to Thomas and Collier (1997) and Hakuta, Butler, and Witt (2000), English Learners who arrived in the country at the lower elementary school level and have had sufficient time to develop academic and oral English proficiency through effective LIEPs will perform better academically than those students that arrive at the upper elementary or secondary level. Conversely, Cummins (2016) argued that older school-age students with a well-developed academic proficiency in the native language make faster progress when acquiring academic proficiency in English than younger ELs. Cummins may have referred to the transferability of language literacy skills between the native and target language.

Translanguaging and code-switching have received particular attention as promising language learning strategies, though there is limited research available on its classroom applicability. The use of the native language vocabulary to facilitate the process of learning a new language or navigate meaning is known as translanguaging. Code-switching, on the other hand, is when the learner moves between the native and new language to navigate complex contexts. Canagarajah (2011) found promising results on his study of a Saudi Arabian multilingual student in essay writing context. Chicaiza (2018) concluded that receptive skills were most improved when implementing translanguaging strategies in the new or L2 language

classroom. More research on these strategies is needed before formal pedagogical applications may be developed to assist ELs in increasing their proficiency in English.

Federal, state, and local educational agencies should take into consideration research that studies the time it takes to develop academic proficiency in English. School districts should consider these studies' findings when developing language instruction educational programs (LEIP) to ensure that English Learners are given ample time to develop oral and academic English proficiency. A more sensible policy would be one that sets aside the entire spectrum of the elementary grades as the realistic range within which English acquisition is accomplished (Hakuta, Butler, & Witt, 2000). Long-term English Learners (LTEL), students who spend five years or more in a language instructional program, require additional supports, and school districts are to provide data on the academic progress of these group of students.

Newly arrived ELs at the secondary level, in particular 9th through 12th grade, face many different challenges than those of younger ELs at the elementary and even middle school level. The older the student, the lower the rate of language acquisition, unless the student brings high academic proficiency in their native language. Consequently, the number of years of schooling in the native language will be a significant factor in English language acquisition rates. The common underlying proficiency (CUP) mentioned in Figure 1 on page 40 makes possible the transfer of concepts, skills, and learning strategies across languages (Cummins, 2016) (see Appendix G for permission). Translanguaging and codeswitching research should be considered further if one is to use L1 to support the learning of a new language.

Many newly arrived ELs at the secondary level have persistently underperformed on standardized assessments due to low English proficiency, low academic proficiency in L1 or native language, ineffective language programs, ill-prepared teachers, lack of research-based

interventions, and/or unrealistic policies and strategies that were misaligned with current research. According to the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine (2017), evidence indicates that progress towards proficiency in English among English Learners occurs more rapidly during the first year after school entry and declines in subsequent elementary grades. Unless school divisions understand how English proficiency levels impact standardized assessment outcomes, ELs will continue to struggle to demonstrate academic mastery in high stakes assessments. Additional research in this area is needed to further expand the language acquisition literature. Thus, this study adds to the body of evidence in the LA field.

English Learners are required to learn English while learning the academic language of language arts, mathematics, science, and history. Effective language instruction educational programs employ teaching methodologies that are research-based and take into consideration factors that may impact English language acquisition processes. According to Thomas and Collier (1995), there are three significant variables as predictors for the success of English Learners. These variables are providing native language supports while teaching English through content-based instruction, the use of current approaches while teaching academic vocabulary in a bilingual setting, and a transformed and welcoming sociocultural school environments. If bilingual programs are not available, native language (L1) support for students learning English is of great benefit for English Learners. Thomas and Collier found that the time students spent receiving formal schooling in their native language is a reliable indicator of the time it will take for the student to develop English proficiency. The stronger the academic competence in L1, the faster the EL will develop academic proficiency in L2.

Gass, Behney, and Plonsky (2013) defined second language acquisition (SLA) as the process of learning a new language after the native language is learned. SLA theories were

developed along the lines of first language acquisition theories (Gitsaki, 1998). According to VanPatten and Williams (2015), second language acquisition theories explain observed phenomena in the process of learning a language other than the individual's first (L1) or native language. Other theories such as Vygotsky (1999) and Swain (1995) have also made significant contributions to the language acquisition (LA) field. Vygotsky defined the role of interaction in SLA as a socio-cultural theory of human mental processing (Lightbrown & Spada, 1999). Swain (1995) postulated the comprehensible output hypothesis, which suggests that English Learners will use mental processes to evaluate output before it is verbally articulated.

For this study, Chomsky (1965), Cummins (2006), and Krashen's (2003) theories are particularly relevant. These experts are three of the most influential theorists in the field of language acquisition and language development. First, Chomsky (1965) postulated that children are born with an innate capacity for language learning. This theorist called this ability the language acquisition device (LAD). Next, Cummins (2006) postulated there is a clear distinction between social and academic language, basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) and cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP). Lastly, Krashen's Monitor Model (2003) is grounded on five hypotheses: a) Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis, b) Natural Order Hypothesis, c) Monitor Hypothesis, d) Input Hypothesis, and e) Affective Filter hypothesis (Krashen, 2003). These hypotheses pose that students will learn what they understand. Schutz (2005) agrees with Krashen (2003) in that the best methods to teach language to English Learners are those that offer comprehensible input in low anxiety situations and including messages that students really want to hear.

Chomsky. Chomsky (1965) revolutionized linguistics, and his work continues to impact the philosophical definition of language. Chomsky (1985) posed that children learned to

understand language and speak at a very young age; therefore, all children have an inherent ability to learn and use language. This theorist postulated that children learn language organizational structures well before they are able to articulate a word. Chomsky's (1965) Language Acquisition Devise (LAD) is the area in the brain where a person learns to use language. Chomsky's LAD was a groundbreaking theory at the time and led to a new SLA approach called "generative phonology and transformational grammar" (Malone, 2012). Based on this theory, understanding the function of Chomsky's LAD may provide significant information not only to teachers in early childhood education but also to teachers of English Learners at all grade levels in all subjects. According to Chomsky's (1985) LAD, every person is theoretically capable of learning multiple languages. Current brain research has confirmed Chomsky's premise that every child has the potential to learn various languages. The capability to learn new languages is possible due to very specific neuro-interconnectivity and language functionality in the bilingual mind not found in the monolingual brain. The brain of bilingual children, as ascertained by Sousa (2011), shows language activity in both the brain's hemispheres as opposed to the left hemisphere in the monolingual brain. Chomsky's (1985) LAD may be considered a precursor postulate into modern brain research. Nonetheless, the two disadvantages of Chomsky's theory were the lack of focus on the spoken language and how people acquired a new language. The need to increase knowledge of how an individual learns a language led to the development of other LA theories. Moreover, other theorists such as Cummins and Krashen made additional contributions to the LA field.

Cummins. Conforming to Cummins' early research (1980, 1981), DiCerbo et al. (2104) stated oral proficiency assessments for English Learners were inappropriate tools to determine the reasons why English Learners had difficulties when performing academic tasks in school.

Cummins (1979) was concerned English Learners' lack of high academic achieving in school was leading to a disproportionately high number of ELs identified as having special needs. As a result of his investigations, Cummins discovered the linguistic complexity of the academic tasks ELs were required to complete was beyond the students' cognitive levels in the new language. Cummins coined the terms Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) in 1979 as an attempt to qualify Oller's (1979) oversimplified global language proficiency. The theorist suggested that to conceptualize English proficiency as it relates to academic language development, one must make a distinction between social conversation and academic competence.

Figure 1 on the next page shows Cummins's (2016) Language Interdependence hypothesis. Cummins postulated that there is a psychological connection between the development of the native language and the new language. Cummins stated that the common underlying proficiency (CUP) construct is "supported by hundreds of studies carried out over the past 35 years" (p. 942). These studies have shown moderate but consistent relationships between L1 and L2 literacy-related competencies. These findings are significant for teachers of English Learners. Understanding the relationship between the development of L1 and L2 will determine appropriate instructional delivery methods, which in turn may facilitate the access of academic content for ELs. Calderon et al. (2011) stated schools that are successfully teaching ELs focus their efforts on school structures, formative assessments for ELs, targeted professional development, teacher support, and ELs' effective instruction.

Native and New Language Interdependence for English Learners

Surface

Surface features of Native Language (L1)

Surface features of New Language (L2)

BICS

CALP

Common Underlying Proficiency (CUP)
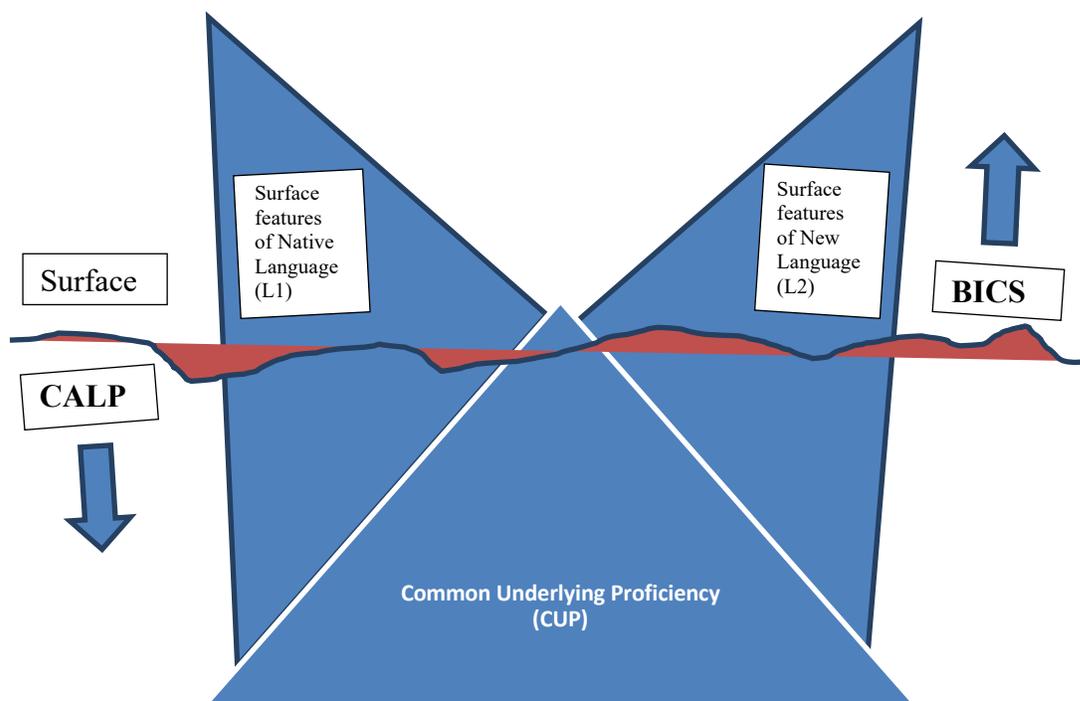
Figure 1. Cummins' Native and New Language Interdependence Hypothesis. This pictorial diagram explains the intricate relationship between an English Learner's social (BICS) and academic (CALP) language proficiency. (Appendix G for permission request.)

Cummins (1980) cautions, however, that the relationships between the development of L1 and L2 are non-existent when observed outside the context of an affective or experiential environment. New languages are learned in pockets based on the contextualization of a given language development situation. Knowledge transfer between languages "will depend on the context, specific opportunities to develop both languages within the school, and motivation to do so" (Cummins, 2016, p. 941). Is essential to note the significance of the relationship between

languages as it may positively impact literacy skills transferability while learning and using language.

Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS). Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) is viewed as context-embedded and low in cognitive complexity (Bailey & Huang, 2011). BICS is the social language the majority of ELs acquire first. According to Cummins (1979), it takes one to two years to develop BICS. Cummins argued there are differences in the acquisition of BICS and CALP and is imperative that teachers develop a comprehensive understanding of these differences in LA to teach ELs effectively in the content classroom. BICS is learned at the unconscious level, while CALP must be taught explicitly and with a focused intent. Cummins (2006) ascertained that research presents a clear gap of several years, on average, between the attainment of conversational (BICS) and academic (CALP) language when learning a second or new language.

Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). Cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) is viewed as context-reduced and high in cognitive complexity (Bailey & Huang, 2011). It was not Cummins's intention to launch BICS/CALP as a comprehensive theory, as language acquisition encompasses other perspectives. Therefore, BICS and CALP should not be used in isolation to prepare teachers to teach English Learners to learn a new language, as other factors may impact the rate and speed in which a new language is developed or acquired. Understanding how children develop CALP should have an impact on curriculum, lesson planning, and instruction delivery, as CALP is the language used in standardized assessments.

Cummins (2008) built his theory on the work of other researchers who pointed to a distinction in language proficiency. When teaching and assessing English Learners, various

theories must be considered. This theorist stated the amount of context and the degree of

difficulty of the academic tasks would determine the rate in which ELs learn content. Cummins

(1979) illustrated his theoretical framework using four quadrants, as shown in Figure 2. In

keeping with Cummins (1979), Malone (2012) stated BICS is developed primarily in quadrant

one; however, BICS language abilities may also fall into quadrants two and three. The

development of CALP lays mostly in quadrant four.

Low Cognitive Demand

	1 Quadrant	2 Quadrant	
High Context	High context Low Cognivive Demand EASIEST	Low Context Low Cognitive Demand HARD	Low Context
	3 Quadrant	4 Quadrant	
	High Context High Cognitive Demand HARDER	Low Context High Cognitive Demand HARDEST	

High Cognitive Demand
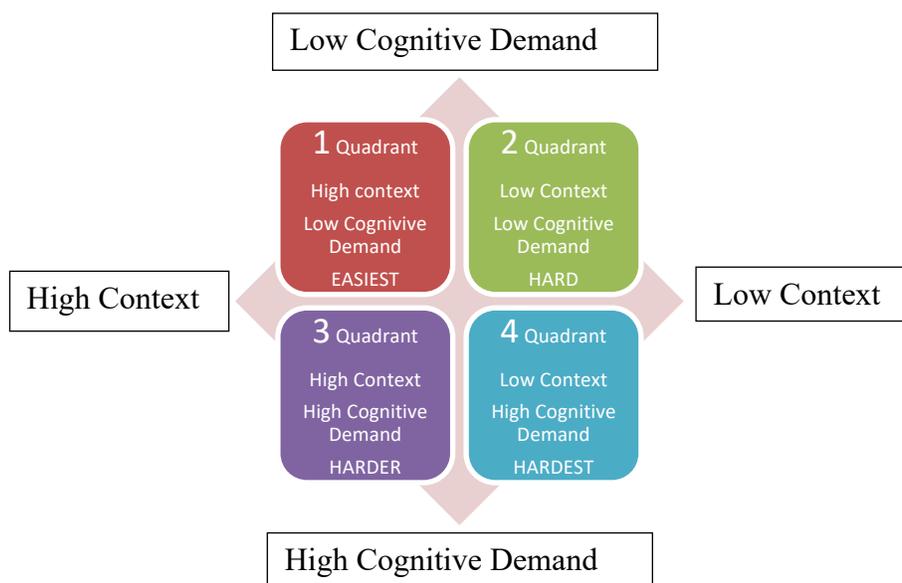
Figure 2. Cummins Framework: The BICS and CALP Quadrants (Malone, 2012).

(Appendix G for permission.)

The implications of this theory on the acquisition of English language proficiency are

significant. The distinction between BICS and CALP has influenced both policy and practice

related to the instruction and assessment of English Learners (Cummins, 2008). Cummins also

suggests that additional research should consider school and classroom environments that are

focused on the maximization of language and literacy development. Reading is an essential

component of academic language. According to Guthrie (2003), reading engagement may

facilitate the attainment of language proficiency. Recently, Krashen (2016) conducted several

studies on free voluntary reading (FVR). These studies support the notion that reading for pleasure will impact language acquisition and literacy. It is worthy to note the impact of Krashen's (2016) free voluntary reading studies on language development, as participants showed higher literacy competencies. If encouraged, FVR may benefit English Learners in developing literacy skills in English. This phenomenon may be due in part to the student's motivation, as the selection of the reading material is the student's choice.

Krashen and the monitor theory. Similarly, Krashen (2003) postulated a more comprehensive language acquisition theory called the Monitor Model (See Appendix G for permission). According to Gitsaki (1998) and Malone (2012), this theory, unlike Chomsky, had significant implications and applicability in the classroom for students learning a new language. Krashen (2003) postulated five hypotheses that encompass his Monitor model: a) Acquisition-learning hypothesis, b) Natural order hypothesis, c) Monitor Hypothesis, d) Input hypothesis, and e) Affective filter hypothesis (Krashen, 1981). The Monitor theory poses that students will most likely learn what they understand. According to Krashen's theory, best practices for language acquisition are those that provide comprehensible input in a low anxiety and safe environment that is conducive for language development and contain messages and printed materials that students really want to hear and read (Schutz, 2005). For language acquisition to take place, students must first receive understandable and meaningful messages that are a little beyond the student's comprehension level; and second, they must learn in an environment where there is little or no anxiety (Collier, 1995; Krashen, 1981, 1982; TESOL, 2018; Vygotsky, 1978).

Acquisition-learning hypothesis. The acquisition-learning hypothesis has a twofold definition. This means that acquiring language is a subconscious or mental process, where children and adults are unaware of what is being learned and where this new knowledge is being

stored (Krashen, 2003). On the contrary, language learning is a conscious process that occurs through formal schooling. If English Learners are expected to learn academic content to be successful in high-stakes tests, language teachers and content teachers of ELs should understand this distinction and provide opportunities to develop both processes. The significance of creating conditions for language development in the LIEP classroom, mainstream classroom, and school is of utmost importance to increase English language proficiency. Students must have a solid foundation on phonemic awareness and receive explicit, systematic phonics instruction. Hall, Roberts, Cho, McCully, Carrol, and Vaughn (2016) found that explicitly teaching vocabulary, comprehension, content knowledge, and writing skills in grades 4 to 8 will improve reading outcomes.

Natural Order hypothesis. The natural order hypothesis postulates that language is acquired in a specific and predictable natural order, which is unrelated to the level of the target language complexity or rules. Krashen (2003) believes there are similarities in the processes in which a person learns the native and new language. Moreover, when learning a new language, Krashen (2005) rejects the notion of teaching grammatical sequencing as a mode for language acquisition. Language instructional programs depending heavily on grammatical rules and sequencing may be less effective than those programs which focus on teaching phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary and academic language, reading comprehension, and language structures, among other literacy aspects. The British Council (2006) stated this hypothesis signals a shift in the way traditional English was taught, as grammar was the primary focus when teaching English Learners. Grieve and Haining (2011) considered this hypothesis extremely important when teaching young children. Nonetheless, grammatical structures still are important in language acquisition and should not be totally eliminated. Unfortunately, newly arrived ELs

at the high school level have no time for such timeline, as these students are expected to graduate in the same four years as their non-ELs counterparts.

Monitor Hypothesis. The monitor hypothesis attempts to explain how acquisition and learning are used (Krashen, 2003). In other words, students will use their linguistic competence to formulate, evaluate, and correct a sentence before they speak in another language. This process is a self-correction strategy. Krashen (2005) hypothesized language acquisition occurs only when the learner understands the message or receives comprehensible input. Krashen's monitoring hypothesis has grave implications for older students. Older learners, such as newly arrived ELs at the secondary level with a heightened affective filter, may refrain from using the newly-learned language in the classroom for fear of failure. According to Haas et al. (2016) to meet minimum levels of academic achievement in the transition to mainstream English-only classrooms, middle and high school students may need one to three years of intensive English language development supports.

Input (comprehension) Hypothesis. The input (comprehension) hypothesis claims that providing comprehensible messages to English Learners is the only way language is acquired. Current research and theory, as reported by Krashen, Wang, and Lee (2016) indicate comprehensible input is effective when teaching ELs, as students are able to negotiate meaning. With the use of all available technology, Krashen, Wang, and Lee (2016) predict an explosion of undeniable comprehensible input within the language instruction classroom. The use of technology in the mainstream classroom today afford teachers the opportunity to support English Learners in their native language; however, lack of research in this area prevents researchers from corroborating the prediction Krashen et al. made in 2016. The implications of this hypothesis in the content classroom are potentially significant in that teachers of ELs may deliver

instruction in such a way to ensure all students are able to understand what is being taught.

Comprehensible input may come from native language supports or the target language being

taught in a way where meaning is not compromised.

Affective filter hypothesis. The last hypothesis of the original Monitor Theory is the

affective filter hypothesis. The affective filter hypothesis, according to Krashen (2003), states

that affective variables will impact language acquisition indirectly, as they may prevent input

from reaching the language acquisition device (LAD), which is the part of the brain responsible

for language development. Anxiety caused by stress, lack of motivation or fear of failure

(among other factors) may have the potential to delay or impede the language acquisition

processes.

Reading Hypothesis. Apart from the Model Theory, Krashen (2011) postulated a new

hypothesis for the development of academic proficiency, the reading hypothesis. According to

Krashen and Brown (2007), the major path to academic language proficiency is reading,

specifically, wide self-selected reading, which must be eventually supplemented by reading in

the specific area of interest. Krashen (2011) and Guthrie (2003) agree that reading is an essential

component of language proficiency attainment. Linguistic competence helps in the acquisition

of content knowledge, and content knowledge can make input more comprehensible, which helps

the development of linguistic proficiency (Krashen, 2011).

Language acquisition theories provide the foundational framework for all language

instruction educational programs (LIEP). Another factor for effective LIEPs are effective

teachers. Conversely, when teaching ELs at the secondary level, less is known about how high-

school content teachers learn about effective instruction for English Learners in the context of

work and in their classrooms (Russell, 2014). In order to educate all students to include ELs,

teacher preparation programs and professional development opportunities are to include best practices that are culturally and linguistically responsive. Additional research is needed in this area to ensure teachers of ELs are proficient in second language acquisition theories, methodologies, and best practices. To better service culturally and linguistically diverse students in the mainstream classroom, Fillmore and Snow (2002) and Hamayan (1990) suggest content teachers would benefit from developing an understanding of second language acquisition processes and theories. With academic success as a guiding principle, teachers of ELs must not only understand LA theories, but also know how these theories will impact instruction delivery and assessment outcomes. For English Learners to perform well on standardized assessments, Gitsaki (1998) found educators must consider different variables such as the years of formal schooling in the native language, cognitive style, motivational disposition, and proficiency in the target language. These factors are critically important to consider, as academic gaps among minority groups persist. Tables 4 and 5 on pages 61 and 62 show a comparison of academic performance in reading between English Learners and non-English Learners.

According to Slama (2012), the academic difficulties of many early and late-exit English Learners or long-term ELs suggest that large proportions of English Learners are not faring well academically, regardless of the time spent in language learning programs. Students who are not yet proficient in English may benefit from an intervention focused on both language and reading development (Richards-Tutor et al., 2016). There are a number of factors that impact ELs academic performance. Hall et al. (2016) found teaching vocabulary alone is not as effective as the combination of vocabulary and comprehension instruction had on comprehension outcomes. Effective instruction for ELs also focuses on all four domain of the language (reading, writing, listening and speaking). Cummins (1979), Krashen (1980), Slama (2012), Thomas and Collier

(1997), and Haas, Tran, and Huang, (2016) agree English Learners' first language proficiency will play a critical role in the attainment of academic language proficiency in English. Haas et al. (2016) found a growing gap seems to develop between the English proficiency level needed to score well on the English language proficiency assessment and the academic literacy needed to pass the English language arts and math content tests. The development of literacy skills, reading competencies, word study, and understanding reading engagement may facilitate language acquisition processes. Figure 3 provides a visual representation of Chomsky (1965), Cummins (2006), and Krashen's (2003) theories.
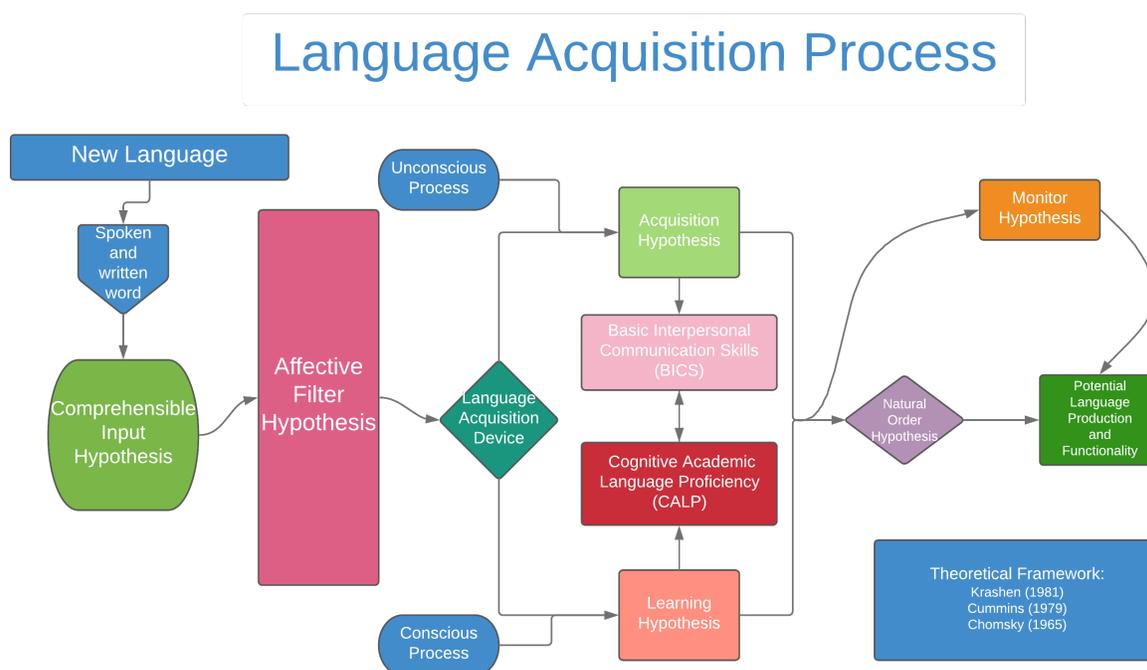
Figure 3. LA Theoretical Framework: Monitor Theory (Krashen, 1981), BICS and CALP (Cummins, 1979, and Language Acquisition Device (Chomsky, 1965). (Appendix G and H for permission.)

Related Literature

Immigration Trends and English Learners

For the past several decades, an increase in immigration to the United States has fomented a boisterous debate across several political and civic sectors. The number of immigrants living in the country increased dramatically, from 14 million immigrants in 1980 to 43.7 million in 2016 (Radford & Buddiman, 2016). Immigration, as it relates to citizenship status, has greatly contributed to the polarizing political climate surrounding both documented and undocumented immigrants. According to Suárez-Orozco, Gáytan, Bang, Pakes, O'Connor, and Rhodes (2010) and Tienda and Haskins (2011), one in four students in the nation is an immigrant student. These researchers projected that by the year 2050, one in three students in the country will be an immigrant or a child of immigrants who speak languages other than English at home. As a byproduct, this increase has had, and will continue to have, a strenuous effect on education and its accountability systems throughout the country. State and local educational agencies face multiple challenges when designing Language Instruction Educational Programs (LIEP) to service English Learners. In order to design effective programs to service English Learners, English proficiency levels and academic knowledge in the individuals' native language must be considered among other factors. According to recent immigration numbers as reported by Batalova and McHugh (2010), the EL population in the United States will very likely continue to increase. School administrators are tasked with developing effective programs to educate high-ability ELs which is as significant a task as serving ELs with learning disabilities or ELs with interrupted formal education, as stated by Pereira and Olivera (2015). Whether schools are serving English Learners with limited or interrupted formal education (e.g., SLIFE or academically advanced ELs), Obinna (2015) reported newly arrived ELs are marginalized, to a

certain extent, by the social and linguistic difficulties this group faces as they negotiate meaning in the mainstream classroom, due to low English language proficiency levels. These students are likely to experience lower academic productivity if their teachers are ill-prepared to teach them or have had limited training in this area.

Regardless of the immigration status of these students, the federal government has established requirements and regulations to ensure every State Educational Agencies (SEA) in the country fulfills its obligation to educate all children to include immigrants or children of immigrants (USDE, 2017, ESSA, Sec. 3102). The *Plyer v. Doe* (1982) Supreme Court ruling determined that all children regardless of their immigration status have the right to receive free public education (*Plyer v. Doe,* 547 U.S. 202, 1982). The federal government requires that states create learning standards and standardized assessments to determine academic proficiency and performance for all students. Raising academic standards for all students and measuring student achievement to hold schools accountable for educational progress are central strategies for promoting educational excellence and equity in our Nation's schools (USDE, 2017). Brisk (2006) identified three domains characterizing school communities that effectively educate ELs by promoting inclusive learning environments: a) cultivating language proficiency to academic grade level, b) ensuring access to high-quality curriculum within effective teaching and learning environments, and c) promoting the socio-cultural integration of all students. Nonetheless, English Learners will most likely continue to be a challenge for many school divisions (Lopez & Ibarren, 2014).

Though non-prescriptive, the federal Government, under Title I, Title III, and Title VI laws offer guidelines on how to service English Learners in grades K-12. School divisions are required to educate English Learners who are speakers of languages other than English and may

be culturally and linguistically diverse individuals; however, persistent academic

underperformance of English Learners and increased dropout rates among Latino students may

be an indicator that more work needs to be done to improve such programs. Table 3 on page 61

shows a comparison of graduation and dropout rates between ELs and non-ELs. Tienda and

Haskins (2011) found immigrant children also experience problems with education due to

physical health, mental health, and poverty, as well as issues with misguided assimilation

tendencies into the American society. As the character of immigration grows and transforms,

Potochnick and Mooney (2015) believe children of immigrants today will have a different

educational experience and will have access to a divergent set of resources. As the number of

culturally and linguistically diverse students increase in the U.S., school divisions must provide

language supports to ensure these students experience social and academic success. According

to Scanlan and Lopez (2012), available research and literature will offer school leaders a set of

guidelines to support culturally and linguistically responsive teaching and learning for these

children. Although not recent, available research such as Cummins (1975), Krashen (2003),

Tienda and Haskins (2011), or Scanlan and Lopez (2012), offer significant information on how

to service ELs through language acquisition best practices and facilitate high quality curriculum

access within the mainstream and language instruction classroom.

Immigration issues will continue to affect this country's political and social climate.

Regardless of the current political climate, school divisions need to understand their shared

responsibility in educating immigrants or children of immigrants and should not be impacted by

political instabilities. The Supreme Court has made it clear that all children regardless of

migratory status, origin, language, or gender have the right to a free high-quality education. In

addition, Title VI prohibits discrimination on the grounds of race, color, or national origin by

recipients of federal financial assistance (USDE, 2018). Any institution that receives federal funding is responsible to teach ELs and must comply with this statute. The Title VI regulatory requirements have been interpreted to prohibit denial of equal access to education because of a student's limited proficiency in English (USDE, 2018). School divisions are to create programs that effectively service these minority groups regardless of budgetary constraints, staffing shortage, or limited resources.

Educational Reform and English Learners

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 was originally created to ensure disadvantaged children had access to high quality education and has been reauthorized eight times since 1965. Each reauthorization brought a plethora of changes in the educational scene. The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 established a system of accountability measures to ensure school divisions in the country met the needs of all students to include English Learners. Under NCLB, all states were required to use standardized assessments to measure academic mastery for all students to include ELs and English proficiency for English Learners. Standardized tests, as reported by Sireci and Faulkner (2015), are used to inform education policymakers as well as to hold teachers and school administrators accountable for student learning. Formative and summative assessments are indispensable to inform and evaluate the teaching and learning process. McNeal (2016) agreed assessments drive accountability in public-school systems. To educate ELs, school divisions must recognize the particular needs of this group. In order to do so, administrators may consider test prediction models to improve the identification of ELs' academic and language needs. Furthermore, to meet the needs of these students, school divisions must collaborate with all stakeholders and have a sense of shared responsibilities to effectively coordinate services and resources for ELs.

Lau v. Nichols (1974) came as the result of concerned parents of English Learners in the state of California. These parents argued their children were not given the same educational opportunities as their English-speaking peers, as these English Learners struggled to develop English proficiency. To remedy the situation, these concerned parents filed lawsuits against school districts seeking to rectify the situation and ensure that their children received the services they needed to succeed academically. As a consequence of these lawsuits, various Supreme Court cases (e.g., *Castañeda v. Pickard*, 1981; *Lau v. Nichols*, 1974; and *Plyer v. Doe*, 1982) made the determination that English Learners have the right to access high quality education through adequately funded language programs. *Castañeda v. Pickard* (1981), *Lau v. Nichols* (1974), and Slama (2014) agree that these programs are to be aligned with the students' academic and English proficiency levels.

With the *Lau v. Nichols* (1974) court decision, the federal government has the authority to seek alternative options on how to service and meet the needs of English Learners. In 1975, the Office of Civil Rights (1974) released the Lau remedies, which set minimum standards for English Learners' instruction. School divisions are now required to have clear procedures as related to student identification, evaluation and instruction delivery, mainstream classroom readiness, and teacher professional standards when teaching language minority students. *Castaneda v. Pickard* (1981) outlined criteria for schools to follow and comply with the Civil Rights Act of 1964 requirements. The court's criteria required schools to develop language programs based on sound educational theory, implement the program with adequate staffing and resources, and to regularly evaluate the program's effectiveness (648 F.2d 989, 5th Circuit, 1981). These cases challenged the educational establishment and led to changes at the federal, state, and local levels.

The federal government, for the first time, issued explicit guidance to state educational

agencies (SEA) and local educational agencies (LEA) through the release of a Dear Colleague

Letter as a joint effort between the Department of Education Office of Civil Rights and the

Department of Justice (see Appendix A). The Dear Colleague Letter of January 7, 2015

provided SEA and LEA guidance on compliance issues as related to servicing English Learners

in the general education classroom. In order for public schools to comply with their legal

obligations under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VI), school divisions must take

affirmative steps to ensure that students with limited English proficiency (LEP) can meaningfully

participate in the schools' educational programs and services (DOJ & OCR, 2015). The

Department of Education Office of Civil Rights and the Department of Justice developed an

English Learner Tool Kit, which is comprised of ten chapters of guidance for school divisions on

how to service ELs, which outlines federal laws and other compliance requirements (see

Appendix A for link to English Learner Tool Kit).

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015, the latest reauthorization of ESEA of 1965,

builds on the ESEA's legacy as a civil rights law and seeks to ensure that every child, regardless

of race, income, background, or where they live, has the opportunity to access a high-quality

education (ESEA, 2016). ESSA introduced several changes that would strengthen language

education requirements for the education of English Learners. These changes include

streamlined identification, screening, and placement procedures, in addition to a parent

notification letter for screening, rigorous exit criteria, and extended monitoring time for Former

English Learners (FEL). Under ESSA, high stakes assessments will also continue to be at the

center of school divisions' accountability measures. Consequently, this study adds to the

literature by better understanding the relationship between English proficiency levels and content

knowledge assessments outcomes. The study's findings may facilitate decision-making processes when developing language instructional programs for English Learners.

As part of the No Child Left Behind reauthorization process, every state was required to submit a Consolidated State Plan to the U.S. Department of Education (see Appendix H for the complete Virginia Consolidated State Plan). It is important to note that as part of the state plan development process, Virginia was able to negotiate some changes that benefit school districts and places the spotlight on ELs' academic performance. For the school year 2018-2019, Virginia used a new growth model to track ELs progress in acquiring English proficiency. Progress for ELs is determined based on a new composite proficiency level gains, which reflects the decrease in language acquisition rates as students transition from elementary to secondary levels or lower to upper grades. Table 2 below shows the Virginia Department of Education progress measurements based on English proficiency levels and expected progress by grade levels.

Table 2

Composite Proficiency Level Gains Table to measure progress for ELs based on ACCESS for ELLs scores.

Proficiency level	Grade K-2	Grades 3-5	Grades 6-12
1.0 - 2.4	1.0	0.7	0.4
2.5 - 3.4	0.4	0.4	0.2
3.5 - 4.3	0.2	0.2	0.1

Note. Adapted from the Virginia Consolidated State Plan (VDOE, 2018, p. 18).

According to the National Academies of Science Engineering, and Medicine (2017), younger ELs appear to attain English proficiency easier at school entry when compared to older

ELs. Based on the information presented on Table 2, Virginia took these learning rates into consideration when developing their measure of progress for ELs. The state of Virginia has also adopted a new set of accountability measures to monitor students' academic content knowledge. Though not eliminated, the number of required standardized tests for all students has been reduced at the elementary level, as well as the 18-19 student cohort at the secondary level.

According to Gareis and Grant (2015), Marzano (2003) and Stronge (2007) an effective learning and teaching model should include three essential components: a) curriculum, b) instruction, and c) assessment. Though some of these studies are not current, the findings continue to be relevant to the field. Fulmer and Polikoff (2014) agree alignment among tests, standards, and written and taught curriculum is significant when standardized test validity is being considered. The academic achievement of English Learners in American schools is inextricably tied to long-term support for academic language development within socio-culturally appropriate environments (Cook et al., 2011). Accountability measures in the country prompt schools to explore theories and best practices to ensure that their language programs for English Learners are effective in building English proficiency for this group. According to Christoun (2015), the design of language programs to support English Learners should be focused on how ELs learn English instead of high stakes assessments outcomes alone. The accountability system in Virginia addresses academic progress, academic achievement, school quality, graduation rates, and progress on gaining proficiency in English. The changes in accreditation requirements under ESSA bring positive changes for English Learners and improve the process to develop effective language programs to better service this population. Nevertheless, more needs to be done to provide newly arrived ELs at the high school level the opportunity to succeed academically and graduate on time.

Standards of Learning Curriculum Framework

In 1995, the Virginia Board of Education adopted Standards of Learning (SOLs), as the state was determined to establish "high academic standards, tests to measure progress, and accountability" (VDOE, 2015). In the Commonwealth of Virginia, public schools must use the Standards of Learning (SOL) curriculum framework to guide curriculum, instruction, and assessments. All students are required to "earn at least 22 standard units of credit by taking and passing required courses and electives and earn at least six verified credits by passing End-of-Course (EOC) SOL tests or other alternative assessments approved by the Board of Education" (VDOE, 2017). The General assembly in Virginia made several changes to the state's accountability system in 2018. The class of 2022 and beyond is only required to attain five verified credits by taking one reading SOL test, one writing SOL test, one mathematics SOL test, one science SOL test, and one history SOL test to receive a high school diploma. Even though an SOL test passing score is 400 or above, it is important to note starting in 2018 any student may receive three local credits, which requires the student to score 375 or above in any given required SOL test. For the purpose of this study, a score of 400 or above was considered passing score. In order to graduate, all English Learners and their English-speaking peers are required to take and pass all core subjects and standardized tests (See Appendix E). For grades 6th through 8th, students are required to take at least a reading and mathematics SOL test each year and writing SOL test in 8th grade (See Appendix J for guidelines for participation in the Virginia assessment program).

Limited research is available on the impact of English proficiency levels on standardized test outcomes. Haas, Tran, Huang, and Yu (2016) found ELs at higher levels of English proficiency tended to have higher passing scores on content tests. According to Haas et al.

(2016), additional research is needed to shed light on how English proficiency levels will impact standardized test performance. This is particularly significant for newly arrived English Learners at the secondary level. Older English Learners generally tend to learn English at a slower rate than do younger English Learners, unless they are academically proficient in their native language.

English Language Development Standards

Content-based language instruction is one of the most effective models available. DiCerbo et al. (2014) found engaging ELs in the use of academic language in the context of professional and academic communities is significant when developing academic English. The Virginia Department of Education (2014) stated that the goal of a language instruction educational program for ELs is to increase both English Language proficiency and academic knowledge mastery in content area classrooms. In such a model, collaboration among stakeholders is key to ensuring that ELs experience social and academic success. Saunders and Marcelleti (2013) reported that to better support less successful ELs, school divisions must spend time understanding the student's strength and areas of need. Research suggests successful programs focus on collaboration and shared accountability and responsibility for the success of ELs (VDOE, 2014, TESOL, 2018).

High Stakes Assessments and English Learners

Assessments are an essential component of any teaching and learning model. Fletcher and Shaw (2012) and Loschert (2000) agree that assessing students' competencies is a common occurrence on any educational accountability system. Loschert (2000) describes high-stakes tests as tools to measure student performance within an educational setting. These tests are standardized, which means the administration conditions, content, and scoring are consistent

across all test takers (Sireci & Failkner-Bond, 2015). Assessing academic performance of English Learners presents a constant challenge for school divisions in the country (see Appendix J for test participation guidelines). Hopkins, Thompson, Linquanti, Hakuta, and August (2013) stated the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 failed to make a connection between English Learners' expected progress in developing English proficiency under Title III and the expected academic progress and proficiency under Title I. Using ELs test scores to determine academic achievement without taking into consideration the level of English proficiency of the student provides an incomplete depiction of the student's level of knowledge, understanding, and capabilities in the assessed content. Sireci and Faulkner-Bond (2015) believed that measuring academic progress for English Learners using high stakes tests is particularly challenging, as these tests only offer a one-time academic snapshot of what ELs know and are able to do in English.

Interdisciplinary collaboration offers a contextual community of practice in which education professionals may exchange best practices and ideas to better service English Learners. Measuring student learning is a difficult process; consequently, Brookhart (2004) and TESOL (2018) speak of the importance of collaboration among multi-disciplinary field experts, such as psychologists, sociologists, and data analysts. Collaboration among educational stakeholders is key to having positive academic outcomes. According to Filmore (2014), many school divisions with English Learners across the country have made little or no significant progress, as it relates to the impact of language acquisition theories or educational research on the organizations' decision-making processes. Tables 4 and 5 on pages 61 and 62 show a comparison of SOL reading test scores between non-ELs and ELs in Virginia. For all test takers, the American Educational Research Association, American Psychological Association, and the

National Council on Measurement in Education (1999) agree any test that employs language is, in part, a measure of the students' language skills. Virginia is an English only state; thus, all standardized assessments are administered in English without L1 supports. ELs are offered a bilingual dictionary as an accommodation during testing. In order to use this accommodation, ELs must be proficient in their native language.

Filmore (2014) believes English Learners face obstacles in our schools due to fundamental misunderstandings of their needs and the supports they need to develop language and academic knowledge at the same time. Llosa (2012) explained high stakes assessment outcomes and student progress monitoring are extremely important for accountability purposes. According to Cook, Boals and Lundberg (2011), most English Learners consistently underperform in all content areas on accountability measures, which is further exacerbated at the secondary level. Even though research on high-stakes assessment outcomes for English Learners is limited and dated before recent years, Abedi (2010); Cook, Boals and Lundberg (2011); and Llosa (2012) make significant contributions on the topic.

Preparing students for higher education, career readiness, and graduation should be the ultimate goal of K-12 education. In order to graduate from a high school in Virginia, English Learners, like their native English-speaking peers, are expected to demonstrate academic mastery in core subjects by taking and passing standardized test regardless of the ELs' English proficiency levels. Graduation rates in Virginia have increased; nonetheless, the gap between ELs and non-ELs persists. Table 3 on the next page shows a comparison of graduation rates and dropout rate between English Learners and non-English Learners.

Table 3

Graduation rate and dropout rate for English Learners and Non-English Learners (all students) in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Year	English Learners Graduation Rate	All students Graduation Rate	English Learners Dropout Rate	All students Dropout Rate
2017-2018	73.0%	91.6%	24.5%	5.5%
2016-2017	74.5%	91.1%	24%	6%
2015-2016	69.0%	91.3%	29%	6%
2014-2015	70.7%	90.5%	26%	6%
2013-2014	72.4%	89.9%	23%	6%

Note. Adapted from the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE, 2018).

To close the achievement gap, school divisions must develop effective programs and prepare teachers to serve ELs and increase the oral English proficiency and academic proficiency of this population. Change in policy may be necessary to alleviate this issue and meet the needs of this group. Tables 4 on this page and table 5 on the next page show a three-year comparison of Reading SOL test score in grades 6-12 for ELs and non-ELs.

Table 4

Reading Standards of Learning (SOL) test passing rate for English Learners in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Year	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	End-of-course (grade 9-12)
2017-2018	66%	64%	47%	53%
2016-2017	66%	67%	48%	59%
2015-2016	52%	52%	41%	64%

Note. Adapted from the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE, 2018).

Table 5

Reading Standards of Learning (SOL) test passing rate for Non-English Learners (all student) in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Year	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	End-of-course (grade 9-12)
2017-2018	80%	81%	77%	87%
2016-2017	78%	82%	76%	87%
2015-2016	77%	82%	75%	89%

Note. Adapted from the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE, 2018).

When the teaching of ELs in the general education classroom is ineffective, ELs' English proficiency levels will increase at a slower rate and academic mastery will be stifled -- if not halted. To effectively teach ELs, Russell (2014) believes educators must establish authentic academic purposes in which students may learn language within an authentic school context. Until recently, Richards-Tutor, Baker, Gerstein, Baker, and Smith (2016) found few studies have been published which describe the effectiveness of interventions and support programs for English Learners.

ACCESS of ELLs Assessment. All states are required to use a standardized assessment to measure proficiency for English Learners each year. School divisions in the country are required to identify English Learners using a research-based assessment that evaluates the student's English language proficiency (ELP) level. The Commonwealth of Virginia and 39 other states use Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English state-to-state for English Language Learners (ACCESS for ELLs) to accurately measure the students' ELP levels (WIDA, 2018). The purpose of the ACCESS for ELLs test is to monitor student progress in attaining ELP on a yearly basis and to serve as a criterion to aid in determining when ELLs have

attained language proficiency comparable to that of their English-proficient peers (WIDA, 2015). School divisions may use test scores to inform instruction and policy legislation, support language acquisition processes, and provide ELs the opportunity to access curricular content in the mainstream classroom. Taherbhai, Seo, and O'Malley (2014) recognized students achieve differently and believed understanding these differences will assist school divisions set realistic goals for English Learners.

To meet federal guidelines and mandates to assess English Learners' proficiency every year, the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) tasked the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (WDPI) with creating a K-12 English proficiency test. USDE awarded WDPI a grant, which launched the creation of the World-Class Instruction Design and Assessment (WIDA) Consortium (see Appendix K for complete timeline). Currently, 40 states are using ACCESS for ELLs to annually measure English proficiency for their English Learners. In 2003, the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) and the WIDA Consortium (2004) developed the English Language Development (ELD) standards (see English Language development (ELD) standards on Appendix B).

The WIDA Consortium designed the ACCESS for ELLs test to represent the "social and academic language demands within a school setting as exemplified in the five WIDA English Language Development (ELD) Standards" (WIDA, 2017, p. 4) (see Appendix L for sample test items.). This assessment is grounded on ELD standards, which are based on social and instructional language, language of English Language Arts, language of Mathematics, language of Science, and the language of Social Studies. ACCESS for ELLs test is organized into clusters by grade. These clusters are K, 1st - 2nd, 3rd - 5th, 6th - 8th, and 9th - 12th grade. The researcher will collect data from ELs and FELs in the 6th to 12th grade clusters. ACCESS tests are also divided

into tiers A, and B/C within the four English language domains of listening, reading, writing, and

speaking. Each tier measures to a common proficiency scale (WIDA, 2004).

> It is important to note that changes in ACCESS for ELLs test rigor and scoring scales took place in 2016. These changes will impact test scores in 2017. WIDA conducted two standard setting studies. The results of the second study (new cut scores) have been implemented into the scoring processes of ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 for the 2016-2017 school year and will have an impact on students' scores. WIDA advises caution when comparing 2016-2017 ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 scores to those of 2015-2016 as a measure of growth (WIDA, 2017, p. 5-6).

The Virginia Department of Education decided to follow the WIDA consortium's

recommendation not to compare 2015-2016 ACCESS for ELLs with subsequent scores due to

the changes in the WIDA scoring scale. Moreover, Virginia has implemented a different system

of accountability to calculate ELs progress in attaining English proficiency. The state will use a

new growth progress model, the value tables, to track ELs' gains in language acquisition. Table

2 on page 55 shows measure of progress for English Learners.

Reading standards of learning test. Reading Standards of Learning assessment is a

standardized test. VDOE (2016) created standardized reading tests to measure student

performance in the area of language arts or English. High school tests were designed to address

specific course content, regardless of the student's current enrolled grade (VDOE, 2015). After

the adoption of the Standards of Learning (SOLs) in 1995, the Virginia Department of Education

began the process to develop test items in 1996. A group of educational stakeholders to include

content teachers, instruction specialists, and administrators created SOL test items and conducted

field-test administration. In 1998, VDOE administered its first paper and pencil SOL test to

Virginia students. The general assembly required the Virginia Department of Education to

develop web-based assessments, and the first online EOC SOL tests were administered in the fall

of 2001.

The Virginia Department of Education provides training opportunities for testing

administrators (see Appendix L for testing manual). SOL test administrators and proctors must read the *Test Security Guidelines* and sign the *Test Security Agreement* (VDOE, 2015). Although not timed, these SOL assessments must be completed within the test administration dates, unless otherwise indicated in the student's Individualized Educational Plan (IEP). The administration of Standards of Learning (SOL) assessments is a cooperative effort involving VDOE staff, teachers, and administrators in the commonwealth's 132 school divisions (VDOE, 2016).

Testing accommodations for English Learners. English Learners (ELs) and Former English Learners (FEL) on monitoring year 1 and 2 may have access to direct and indirect linguistic accommodations during SOL testing, a change for FELs from previous years. (See Appendix M for testing manual.) Direct linguistic accommodations are a word-to-word bilingual dictionary and English-English dictionary (VDOE, 2014). Indirect linguistic testing accommodations may alter testing conditions and the environment. ELs and FELs may access indirect linguistic accommodations, such as a flexible schedule, visual aids, and transcription (i.e., student indicates a response as a scribe takes note) just like non-ELs. (See Appendix M) Blowe and Price (2012); Fulmer and Polikoff (2013); and Stronge, Ward, Tucker, and Hindman, (2007) have used SOL assessments to support their research. Fulmer and Polikoff, (2013) found that there is a strong relationship between SOL assessments and SOL standards. Consequently, when making high-stakes decisions based on these assessments, misalignment between tests, standards, and instructional delivery will impact test scores. Blowe and Price (2012) recommend additional research on the implications of SOL assessments on academic achievement and graduation rates for all students. Stronge, Ward, Tucker, and Hindman (2007) found that test outcomes may impact academic achievement if test results are used to enhance content and

language instruction. An accountability system is essential to ensure ELs' high academic achievement. Standardized assessments are the measure of choice for educational accountability systems in the country. Conversely, the developmental nature of language acquisition has implications for defining the EL subgroup for accountability purposes and for setting expectations on academic achievement for these students' linguistic and academic progress (Hopkins et al., 2013).

Summary

The increase in the number of immigrants living in the United States has created a series of challenges regarding the education and the inclusion of these fast-growing minority groups in the country's accountability systems. These groups face many social, cultural, economic, and linguistic difficulties. The varied English language proficiency levels and academic levels in the native language, in many instances, hinder English Learners from learning academic content and demonstrating academic mastery in standardized assessments. Under the Every Student Succeeds Act (2017), state educational agencies (SEA) and local educational agencies (LEA) are held accountable for the inclusion of English Learners in all high-stakes assessments. To effectively educate these students, the literature review has shown more time should be spent studying and implementing instructional strategies and models that focus more on language development and less on test preparation techniques. This study's purpose was to determine if there was a statistically significant relationship between the overall scores of English Learners' English proficiency and the scores of the reading SOL test in the Commonwealth of Virginia. This study adds to the body of evidence in the field of language instruction and assessment of ELs and may be used to inform decision-making processes to improve instruction, best practices,

and professional development opportunities for administrators and teachers. It may also aid in

changing policies which support English Learners in the mainstream classroom.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

This quantitative study intended to determine if there was a relationship between English

Learners' English proficiency overall composite scores and their scores on Virginia's standard-

based Reading assessments. This chapter will discuss the study's design, research question, null

hypotheses, instrumentation, procedures, and data analysis. The study's participants and setting

will also be discussed.

Design

A correlational design was used to analyze the overall composite scores on the Assessing

Comprehension and Communication in English state-to-state for English Language Learners

(ACCESS for ELLs) assessment and the scores on the Virginia Reading Standards of Learning

(SOL) assessment of secondary level English Learners and Former English Learners. The

researcher analyzed the relationship between these two variables over a two-year period from

2017 to 2018. A correlational design was suitable for this study as the researcher intended "to

measure the strength and direction of the relationship between two variable" (Gall, Gall, & Borg,

2007, p. 336). The independent variable in this study was English proficiency, as measured by

ACCESS for ELLs assessment. English proficiency is defined as the social and academic

language understanding and functionality level (WIDA, 2017). English Learners are expected to

acquire proficiency in both Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive

Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) (Cummins, 1979).

The dependent variable was academic content knowledge in English, which is defined as

what students should know and are able to do at the end of each grade or course in English

(VDOE, 2017), as measured by the Reading Standards of Learning (SOL) test. Standards of

Learning (SOL) for Virginia Public Schools establish minimum expectations for what students should know and be able to do at the end of each grade or course in English, mathematics, science, history/social science and other subjects (VDOE, 2016). ELs must demonstrate mastery in reading skills in order to pass standardized tests as their non-EL peers.

Research Question

RQ1: Is there a relationship between English language proficiency, as measured by the overall scores on the Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English state-to-state for English Language Learners (ACCESS for ELLs) test, and academic content knowledge in English, as measured by the scores on the Virginia Reading Standards of Learning (SOL) assessments, for English Learners and Former English Learners at the secondary level?

Null Hypotheses

The null hypotheses for this study are:

$H_0$1: There is no significant relationship between overall scores on the Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English state-to-state for English Language Learners (ACCESS for ELLs) test, and scores on the Reading Standards of Learning test for secondary English Learners and Former English Learners for the year 2018.

$H_0$2: There is no significant relationship between overall scores on ACCESS for ELLs test and the scores on the Reading Standards of Learning test for secondary English Learners and Former English Learners for the year 2017.

Participants and Setting

Population

The population for this study was secondary level English Learners (ELs) and Former English Learners (FELs) from the Southeast of Virginia. English Learners are students that have

English as a new language (ENL). Former English Leaners are students that have English as a new language, reached English proficiency level of 4.4 or above and have exited the school's Language Instruction Educational Program (LIEP) within four year. FELs, however, must be monitored for four years to ensure they continue to experience academic success. After four years, these students are considered non-ELs. Virginia uses an English Language proficiency screener, WIDA Screener Placement Test, to identify English Learners. The Department of Education (2016) defined an English Learner as a student three to 21 years old who enrolls in an elementary or secondary school, who may have been born in the U.S. or abroad, and "whose difficulties in speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language may be sufficient to deny the individual from successfully meeting state's proficient levels of achievement, access content curriculum, and to be socially successful" (VDOE, 2016). For this study, all participants were characterized by having English as a New Language (ENL), have various levels of proficiency from level 1.0 to level 6.0, are at the secondary level (6th - 12th grade), and are 11 to 21 years of age.

Sample

The 2018 sample consisted of English Learners and Former English Learners at the secondary level (45 in sixth grade, 31 in seventh grade, 25 in eighth grade, 6 in ninth grades, 8 in 10th grade, 39 in 11th grade, and 7 in 12th grade). The total sample size for this year was 162, which met the requirements of a minimum of 66 participants for a medium effect size with statistical power at 0.7 at the 0.05 alpha level (Gall et al., 2007). There were 82 males and 80 females.

The 2017 sample consisted of English Learners and Former English Learners at the secondary level (45 in sixth grade, 31 in seventh grade, 25 in eighth grade, 6 in ninth grades, 8 in

10th grade, 39 in 11th grade, and 7 in 12th grade). The total sample size for this year was 162, which met the requirements of a minimum of 66 participants for a medium effect size with statistical power at 0.7 at the 0.05 alpha level (Gall et al., 2007). There was 81 males and 81 females.

The sampling procedure was a convenience sample because "the researcher selected a sample from readily accessible school divisions that suited the purpose of the study" (Gall et al., 2007, p. 175). The participating school divisions provided a list of students labeled with numerical codes. One school division provided two years of data for each participant. The other divisions listed students separately by year.

Setting

In this study, participating English Learners and Former English Learners attended three urban and suburban middle and high schools in the southeast of Virginia. Public schools in the state are required to use Standards of Learning (SOL) curriculum framework and objectives to guide the school divisions' curriculum, instruction, and assessments. Teachers of English Learners are also required to implement English Language Development (ELD) Standards during instruction to ensure ELs learning is focused not only on content, but also on language acquisition. In order to graduate and receive a diploma, every student in Virginia "must earn at least 22 standard units of credit by passing required courses and electives and earn at least six verified credits by passing End-of-Course (EOC) SOL tests or other assessments approved by the Board of Education" (VDOE, 2017). In sixth through eighth grades, students are required to take Reading SOL assessments every year. Students in 9th to 12th are required to take and pass English courses at 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th grade. They are also required to take and pass Reading and Writing SOL end-of-course tests in the 10th, 11th and 12th grades to earn two verified credits

in English.

Even though students must take and pass coursework in English, math, science, social studies or history, and several electives, this study only focused on Reading SOL test scores of secondary English Learners and Former English Learners. These students, regardless of their English Language proficiency levels, must fulfill all graduation requirements to receive a high school diploma. According to Slama (2014), ELs are at an increased risk of failure due to the monumental task of learning English and content knowledge simultaneously. The participating school divisions place ELs in mainstream classrooms regardless of English proficiency level and also in the appropriate LIEP. According to the Virginia Department of Education (2014), the goal of a language instruction program for ELs is to increase both English Language proficiency and academic language proficiency in mainstream classrooms. For ELs to succeed in this type of model, collaboration between the content teacher and the English as a New Language (ENL) teacher is essential. Understanding the student and program variables associated with successful ELs might shed important light on how to best support those that are less successful (Saunders & Marcelleti, 2013). Successful language instruction educational programs (LIEP) must share teaching and learning responsibilities, focus on collaboration, and share accountability for the success of all students to include ELs.

Instrumentation

For this study, the independent variable instrument was Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English state-to-state for English Language Learners (ACCESS for ELLs) assessment. The dependent variable instrument was the Reading Standards of Learning (SOL) test. Both instruments are considered high stakes tests in Virginia and must be administered and scored under very strict parameters (see Appendix M for test manuals and procedures).

Independent Variable Instrument

The purpose of Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English state-to-state for English Language Learners (ACCESS for ELLs) test is to monitor student progress in attaining English language proficiency (ELP) on a yearly basis and to serve as a criterion to aid in determining when ELLs have attained language proficiency comparable to that of their non-English Learner peers (WIDA, 2015). ACCESS for ELLs was "carefully designed to be representative of the social and academic language demands within a school setting as exemplified in the five WIDA English Language Development (ELD) Standards" (WIDA, 2017, para.3, p.3). The five ELD standards are social and instructional language, the language of English Language Arts, Math, Science, and Social Studies. The ACCESS for ELLs test is administered based on grade level clusters K, 1st- 2nd, 3rd-5th, 6th-8th, and 9th -12th. For this study, the researcher only collected data from the grade clusters 6th-8th and 9th-12th. ACCESS tests are divided into tiers A and B/C. Each tier measures to a common proficiency scale (WIDA, 2004). This test also takes into consideration the four English language domains: listening, reading, writing, and speaking.

In 2001, the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) charged the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (WDPI) with the task to develop a K-12 English proficiency test. WDPI received a grant, and the three state World-Class Instruction Design and Assessment (WIDA) Consortium was founded. Today, 40 states and U.S. territories use ACCESS for ELLs to annually measure English proficiency for English Learners. WIDA (2004) in collaboration with the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) began the process of developing the English proficiency test in 2003 after the English Language Development (ELD) standards were created. Afterwards, test items were developed following the WIDA test items specifications. The

consortium conducted its first pilot field-testing in 2004. After this first pilot test, WIDA

underwent a "second round of item development" and conducted a second pilot test (p.4). Based

on the pilot results, test items were edited or eliminated and the first ACCESS for ELLs test

booklet was created. The ACCESS for ELLs test's first administration took place in 2005 in

three states. In 2009, Virginia joined the WIDA consortium.

ACCESS is vertically scaled across tiers and grade level clusters so that interpretation of

scores is identical across grades. The scale scores "describe student performance in terms of the

six WIDA language proficiency levels (1-Entering, 2-Beginning, 3-Developing, 4-Expanding, 5-

Bridging, and 6-Reaching)" (WIDA, 2011, p. 6). Scale scores for ACCESS range from 100 to

600, and the test is divided into four sections: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. WIDA

has an advanced scoring system, which assures over 99.99% scoring accuracy. The students'

reading and speaking ability will determine the number of items on the test.

> The test produces three types of scores: (a) *raw scores* indicate the number of items/tasks a test taker responded to correctly out of the total number of items or tasks on the test; (b) psychometrically derived *scale scores* from 100 to 600, which report on grade levels in relation to the continuum of language development, allowing test users to compare student progress across the grades from Kindergarten to grade 12; and (c) *proficiency level scores* which interpret scale scores (Fox & Fairbairn, 2011).

For this study, the researcher utilized overall composite proficiency scores. The overall

composite proficiency levels are interpretive scores, and as such do not represent interval or ratio

data (WIDA, 2018). The ACCESS overall composite score weighs all four language domains at

the rate of 15% listening, 15% speaking, 35% reading and 35% writing. The English Language

Proficiency (ELP) levels assign a numeric value to the ACCESS scale scores. The levels are

represented in whole and decimal numbers in a point scale of 1 through 6. The whole number in

an ELP level 3.5 represents the level of proficiency as it relates to English language development

standards, what is more the decimal number "indicates the proportion within the proficiency

level range the student's scale score represents, rounded to the nearest tenth" (WIDA, 2018).

These scale score representations are grade specific and describe the EL's location on the

spectrum of the language development continuum. Furthermore, English Learners' progress in

Virginia is also represented using ELP levels as shown on Table 2 on page 55. Administrators,

teachers, and other instructional staff also use ELP levels to make beginning of the year, day-to-

day, and end of year instructional decisions for the teaching and learning of ELs. The researcher

decided to use ELP levels as opposed to scale scores because using ELP levels would make the

study's findings relevant to instructional stakeholders including administrators, teachers,

instructional staff, and other researchers.

Table 6

Overall Composite Scores from ACCESS for ELLs Scale Scores to Proficiency Levels.

Grade	PL2	PL3	PL4	PL5	PL6
0	229	261	293	325	350
1	242	274	315	344	368
2	254	289	329	359	383
3	265	300	340	371	396
4	279	309	350	382	406
5	286	317	358	390	415
6	291	324	365	399	423
7	298	331	372	406	431
8	304	337	378	412	438
9	311	344	385	418	446
10	318	350	391	424	453
11	325	356	397	429	459
12	331	362	402	434	466

Note: Adapted from the ACCESS for ELLs Scale Scores to Proficiency Levels document (WIDA, 2017, p. 4)

The Cronbach's alpha value for the reading domain in the 6th-12th grade level cluster of ACCESS is .800 (WIDA, 2015). According to McNeal (2016), ACCESS has been piloted, field tested, and reviewed to ensure that students are assessed on the standards. Other researchers have utilized the ACCESS for ELLs assessment in their studies, such as Bailey and Huang (2011), Fox and Fairbairn (2012), Cook et al. (2011), and Beardsley (2015).

The Virginia Department of Education prescribes testing procedures, training, administrations manuals, affidavits, and testing materials for these high-stakes assessments. Test materials for ACCESS for ELLs are purchased through the WIDA consortium (see Appendix O for purchase order sample). Test materials must be kept secure at all times and only school testing coordinators may handle the materials until testing day. Testing administrators and proctors will administer the ACCESS test. This assessment is computer-based; however, kindergarten's ACCESS test is paper and pencil.

> It is important to note changes in ACCESS for ELLs test scoring scale took place in 2016. These changes impacted test scores in 2017. WIDA conducted two standard setting studies. The results of the second study (new cut scores) have been implemented into the scoring processes of ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 for the 2016-17 school year and will have an impact on students' scores. WIDA advises caution when comparing 2016-17 ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 scores to those of 2015–- as a measure of growth (WIDA, 2017, p. 5-6).

An important scoring change for the ACCESS is the cut off score for exiting the language instruction educational programs in Virginia. An EL with an English language proficiency (ELP) level of 4.4 or above will exit the program and will not take the ACCESS test in subsequent years unless the student is reclassified as an English Learner once again. In order to reclassify a Former English learner (FEL), the school division must have a reclassification protocol in place and a body of evidence indicating the student's language development progress has regressed.

Dependent Variable Instrument

The purpose of the Reading Standards of Learning assessment is to "measure student performance on Virginia's content standards in the area of reading" (VDOE, 2016, p. 1). High school tests were designed to address specific course content, regardless of the student's current enrolled grade (VDOE, 2015). The Virginia Board of Education adopted Standards of Learning in 1995, as the state was determined to establish "high academic standards, test to measure

progress, and accountability" (VDOE, 2015). The Virginia Department of Education began the development of this instrument in 1996. In 1997, SOL test items were developed and field-tested with the assistance of education stakeholders (e.g., content teachers, instructional specialists, administrators, etc.). The first SOL test was administered to Virginia students in the spring of 1998. SOL tests were originally administered on its paper and pencil format. In the year 2000, the general assembly required the Virginia Department of Education to develop web-based assessments. As a result of this legislation, the first online EOC SOL tests were administered in the fall of 2001.

The Virginia Department of Education, in collaboration with teachers and Pearson-Access (test development company) developed SOL test items using test blueprints, review committees, and field-test sessions on a yearly basis. The process to develop SOL test items was complex and provided ample opportunity to test for validity and reliability. According to Gall, Gall, and Borg (2007), test validity refers to how useful, meaningful, and appropriate test scores are. On the other hand, test reliability refers to the test scores' precision, stability, and consistency. To begin the process of test items development, external writers are hired to develop test items based on SOL specifications. Pearson reviews and edits these items for content and grade-level accuracy, quality construction, accessibility, and fairness. Before the items are submitted to the VDOE for review and final approval, a group of experts in the field provides additional feedback, comments, suggestions, and recommendations to edit, improve or reject test items. Once the reviewing committee and VDOE (2015) approve these test items, they are eligible for field-testing during the spring SOL test administration window. Field-tested items data are collected, and "committee members are asked to review the appropriateness of items' content, using field-test item statistics to inform their judgments, as appropriate" (p. 9).

These data include classical statistics and item response theory (IRT) statistics (Rasch measurement model) (VDOE, 2015). After the reviewing committee makes its recommendation, new test items are included on SOL tests only after VDOE approves the test items.

The direct relationship of the SOL curriculum framework with the SOL test blueprint and the SOL assessments lends support to the content validity of the SOL assessments (VDOE, 2015, p. 38). To further increase test validity, the VDOE also partnered with the Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) to conduct alignment studies between SOL content standards and SOL tests on four categories: "categorical concurrence, depth of knowledge consistency, range of knowledge correspondence, and balance of representation" (p. 38). The VCU panel found, based on the criteria, that the tests and standards were well aligned. Statistically, the Reading SOL has Cronbach's alpha reliability of 0.85 for the total group and a stratified Alpha ranged from 0.87 to 0.88 (p. 56) (see Appendix P for 2014-2015 Technical Report).

Reading SOL tests contain approximately 55 multiple-choice items. Once the student completes the online assessment, Pearson-Access scores the tests. The individual receives a raw score that equals the number of correct responses. Due to the differences in item types and numbers, this raw score may not be compared to other scores unless converted to scale scores. This conversion is particularly useful when comparing multi-year test data. SOL test scores range from 0 to 600, and test results for Reading SOL tests are reported in three performance levels: fail/does not meet, pass/proficient, pass/advanced, or advanced/college path. The cut score for pass/proficient level will always start at 400 and pass/advance at 500 or above.

The Virginia Department of Education provides training to all testing coordinators at the school division level. In turn, school districts are responsible to train all test administrators and proctors. SOL test administrators and proctors must read the *Test Security Guidelines* and sign

the *Test Security Agreement* (VDOE, 2015). It is important to note that SOL assessments are not timed; however, assessments must be completed within the test administration dates. The administration of Standards of Learning (SOL) assessments is a cooperative effort involving VDOE, educators, and administrators in the commonwealth's 132 school divisions (VDOE, 2016) (see Appendices M for training manuals, materials, and procedures).

English Learners and Former English Learners in year 1 and 2 of monitoring may have access to two types of accommodations during SOL testing: direct and indirect linguistic accommodations. Direct linguistic accommodations are as follows: Bilingual Dictionary and English Dictionary (VDOE, 2014). Indirect linguistic testing accommodations are those that may adjust or change the testing conditions and environment. The following indirect linguistic testing accommodations are available to ELs on the SOL assessments: flexible schedule, visual aids, and student indicates a response to a scribe. Other researchers, such as Stronge, Ward, Tucker, and Hindman (2007); Blowe and Price (2012); and Fulmer and Polikoff (2013) used SOL assessments to support their studies.

Procedures

First, the researcher sought study approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB). The research participants were English Learners (ELs) and Former English Learners (FEL) at the middle and high school level from three Virginia school districts. The researcher only collected test ELP scores on the ACCESS for ELLs assessments and Virginia Reading SOL assessment scores over the 2017 and 2018 time period. The researcher collected two data points to account for changes in test scoring scale and format, as the WIDA consortium did not recommend to compare test results prior to 2015-2016. Permission to collect data from three school divisions was requested and approved.

For this study, contact with participants was not required, as assessment data was collected directly from the school divisions' testing coordinator or designee with the permission of the divisions' superintendents or research committee (see Appendix R for email of participating school divisions). The researcher sent an email to participating school divisions with detailed instructions of the study's procedure (see Appendix Q to find a copy of the email). The researcher requested the study approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) after a successful proposal defense (see Appendix S for the IRB approval). After IRB approval was received, the researcher contacted the divisions' testing coordinators or designee via email to request access to the data and set an appointment or date for data retrieval (see Appendix T, U, V, and W for a copy of the emails and letters).

To collect the ELs' data, the researcher requested the three school divisions to transfer data files in a .csv format. The researcher retrieved the sample's collected data via email. After the data was collected and transferred to a spreadsheet, the researcher saved the information in a memory stick and stored it in a secured location. Each participant's data was coded with a number to protect the students' identities. Confidentiality helps protect individuals who may report information, which threatens the reputation of themselves or their institution (Creswell, 2013). Data screening was conducted to scan for errors and discrepancies. Finally, formal data analysis began.

Data Analysis

A correlational design was used to test the null hypotheses to determine the direction and strength of the relationship between the ACCESS for ELLs English language proficiency (ELP) levels and Virginia Reading Standards of Learning (SOL) assessments scores for middle and high school English Learners and Former English Learners over a four-year period. According

to Gall, Gall, and Borg (2007), a correlational study is designed "to measure the degree and direction of the relationship between two or more variables" (p. 336). Data screening was conducted using scatter plots to scan for errors and discrepancies. The researcher analyzed the data to check for violations on the assumptions of independent observations, bivariate normal distribution, bivariate outliers, linearity, and level of measurement. A histogram was visually assessed to determine if scores are "bell-shaped and symmetric" (Warner, 2013, p. 147). A Box and Whiskers Plot was used to identify extreme bivariate outliers. A scatter plot was used to determine if there was a linear relationship between the study's two variables. Due to a Bonferroni correction and the testing of two null hypothesis, the researcher used an alpha level of .0167 (two-tailed). To test the null hypotheses, the researcher used a Pearson's *r* to test the 2018 data set. However, a change to a non-parametric measure of correlation was necessary to test the 2017 data as the assumption of normality was violated. Warner (2013) recommends the use of Spearman's *rho* when the independent variable is categorical, and the dependent variable is quantitative in nature (p.27). A Spearman's *rho* correlation was performed to determine whether there was a statistically significant relationship between the ACCESS for ELLs English Language Proficiency (ELP) levels and Virginia Reading Standards of Learning (SOL) assessments scores for middle and high school English Learners (ELs) and Former English Learners (FELs).

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The literature suggests that many English Learners are underperforming on high-stakes assessments due in part to low English Language Proficiency. The purpose of this study was to determine if there was a statistically significant relationship between overall English Language Proficiency levels and the scores on Virginia's Reading Standards of Learning Assessment. In this chapter, the reader will find the research question, hypotheses, descriptive statistics, data screening, and the study's results.

Research Question

RQ1: Is there a relationship between English Language Proficiency, as measured by the overall composite scores on the Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English state-to-state for English Language Learners (ACCESS for ELLs) test, and academic content knowledge in English, as measured by the scores on the Virginia Reading Standards of Learning (SOL) assessments for English Learners and Former English Learners at the secondary level?

Null Hypotheses

The null hypotheses for this study are:

$H_0 1$: There is no significant relationship between overall composite scores on the ACCESS for ELLs test, and scores on the Reading Standards of Learning test for secondary English Learners and Former English Learners for the year 2018.

$H_0 2$: There is no significant relationship between overall composite scores on ACCESS for ELLs test and the scores on the Reading Standards of Learning test for secondary English Learners and Former English Learners for the year 2017.

Descriptive Statistics

Range, mean, and standard deviation for the 2018 independent variable, English language proficiency levels, may be found in Table 7. Range, mean, and standard deviation for the 2018 dependent variable, academic content knowledge in English, may be found in Table 8.

Table 7

Descriptive Statistics of 2018 and 2017 Independent Variable

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Overall ELP Level 2018	162	1.0	6.0	3.637	1.1743

Table 8

Descriptive Statistics of 2018 and 2017 Dependent Variable

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Reading SOL Score 2018	162	214	600	385.36	60.629

Range, mean, and standard deviation for the 2017 independent variable, English language proficiency levels, may be found in Table 9. Range, mean, and standard deviation for the 2017 dependent variable, academic content knowledge in English, may be found in Table 10.

Table 9

Descriptive Statistics of 2017 Independent Variable

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Overall ELP level 2017	162	1.0	6.0	3.701	1.3060

Table 10

Descriptive Statistics of 2017 Dependent Variable

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Reading SOL Scores 2017	162	202	507	383.78	55.793

Data Screening

To assess whether there was a statistically significant relationship between the ACCESS for ELLs English Language Proficiency (ELP) levels and Virginia Reading Standards of Learning (SOL) assessments scores for middle and high school English Learners (ELs) and Former English Learners (FELs), a correlational design was used. A screening of the 2018 raw data was conducted to scan for missing data, outliers, and discrepancies. Participant code number 360 was missing a test score for 2018. The particular participant's information was eliminated (Warner, 2013, p. 133-135). A screening of the 2017 raw data was conducted to scan for missing data, outliers, and discrepancies. Participant code number 120 was missing a test score. The information of the particular participant number 120 was eliminated (Warner, 2013, p. 133-135).

Data screening was conducted on the 2018 independent variable, English Language Proficiency, to determine if any inconsistencies or outliers were present (Warner, 2013, p. 132-137). A box-and-whisker plot was used to locate outliers on the data for ELP overall composite scores (Warner, 2013, p. 153-156). None was found. See Figure 4 on the next page for the box-and-whisker plot of overall composite English Language Proficiency scores for 2018.

Figure 4. Box and Whisker Plot for the Overall Composite English Language Proficiency scores for 2018.

Data screening was conducted on the 2018 dependent variable, academic content knowledge in English, to determine if any inconsistencies or outliers were present. Three outliers were detected, participants 54, 29, and 65, as shown in Figure 5 on page 87. Participants 54, 29, and 65 were eliminated and the 2018 data sample was screened once more. An additional outlier was detected in participant 61. The researcher decided to maintain the integrity of the original sample of *N*=162 (Warner, 2013, p. 155-157). All participants were included in the data analysis, as these scores were within the study's parameters and the test minimum and maximum range. See Figure 5 on page 87 for the box-and-whisker plot of the 2018 Reading SOL test scores.
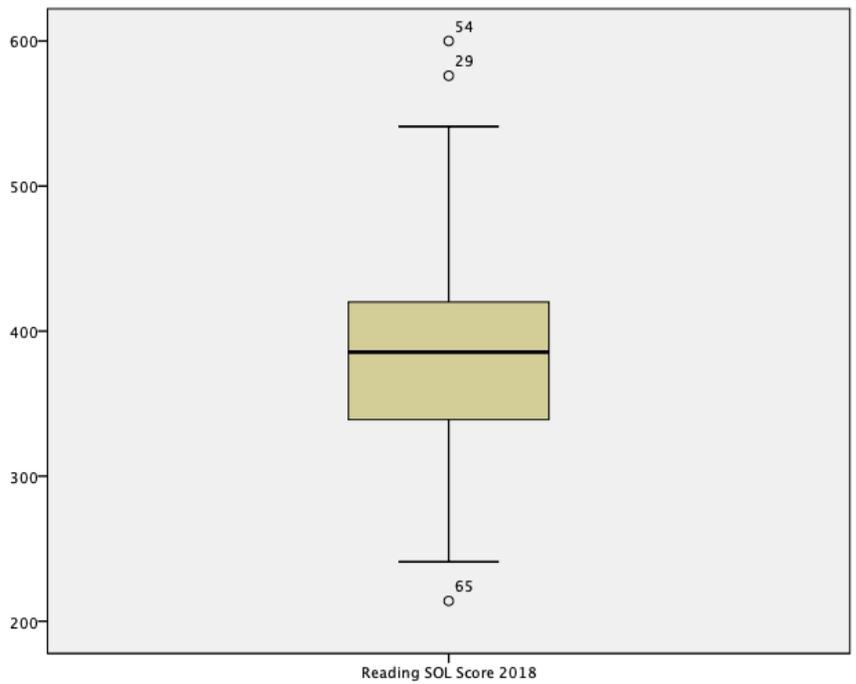
Figure 5. Box and Whisker Plot for Academic Content Knowledge in English in 2018.

Data screening was conducted on the 2017 independent variable, English Language Proficiency, to determine if any inconsistencies or outliers were present (Warner, 2013, p.132-137). A box-and-whisker plot was used to locate outliers on the data for ELP overall composite scores (Warner, 2013, p.153-156). None were found. See Figure 6 on page 88 for the 2017 box-and-whisker plot of English language proficiency.

Overall ELP level 2017
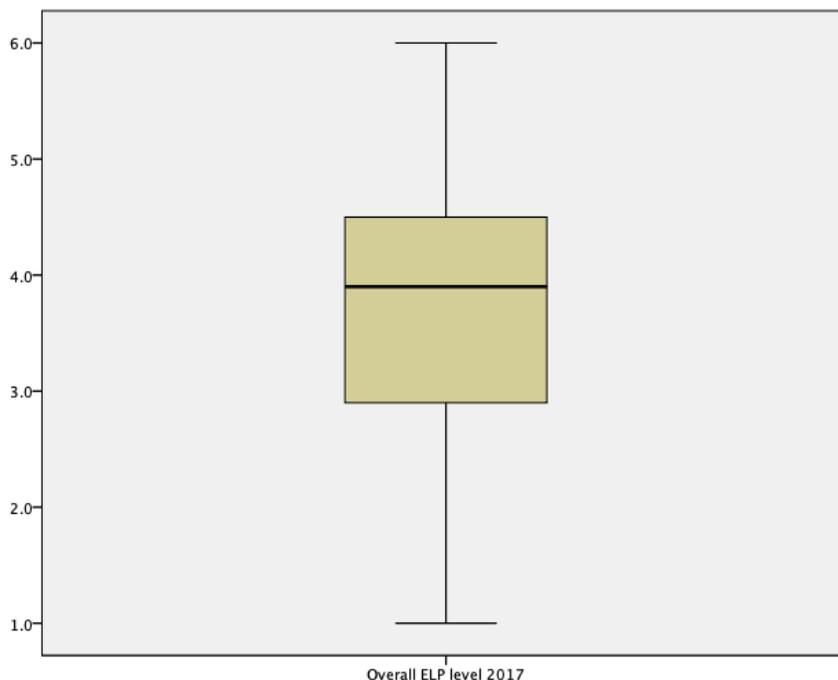
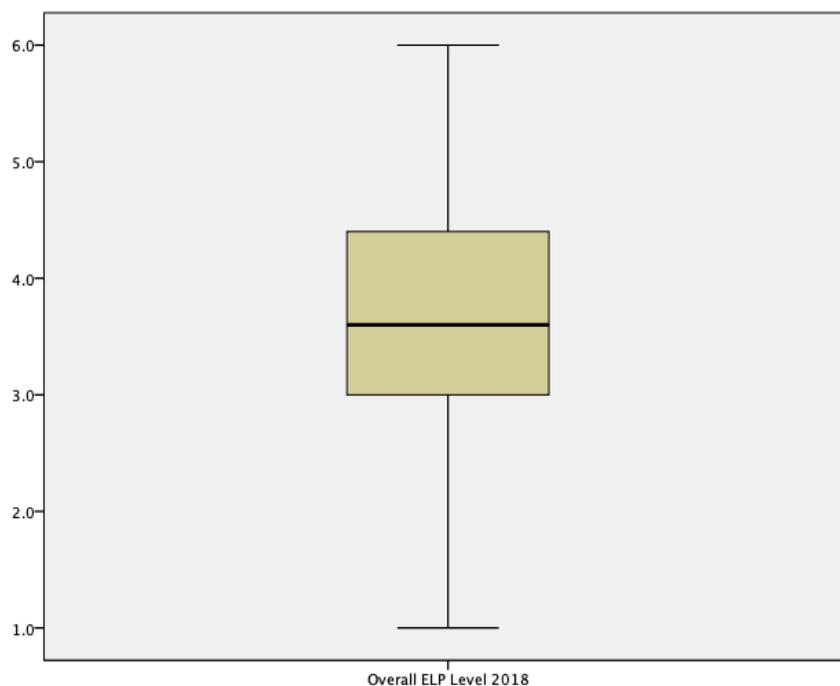*Figure 6.* Box and Whisker Plot for English Language Proficiency for 2017.

Data screening was conducted on the 2017 dependent variable, academic content knowledge in English, to determine if any inconsistencies or outliers were present. Two outliers were detected in participants 84 and 47, as shown in Figure 7 on page 89. Participants 84 and 47 were eliminated and the 2017 data sample was screened once more. Additional outliers were detected in participants 78, 83, 101, and 113. The researcher decided to maintain the integrity of the original sample of N=162 (Warner, 2013, p. 155-157). Participants 84 and 47 were included in the data analysis, as these scores, although low, were within the study's parameters and the test minimum range. See Figure 7 on page 89 for the box-and-whisker plot of the 2017 Reading SOL test scores.
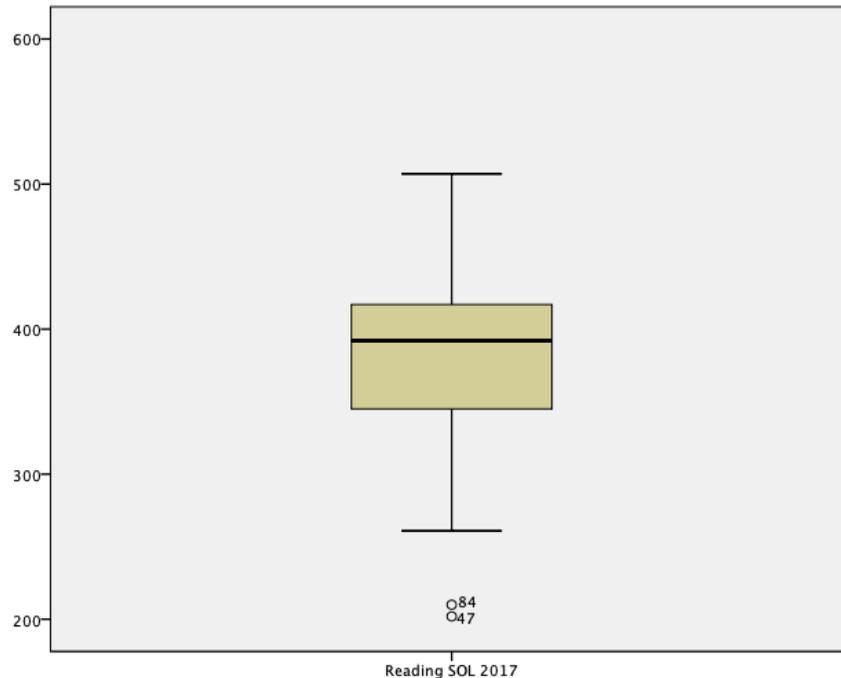
Figure 7. Box and Whisker Plot for the Reading SOL Test Scores for 2017.

Results

Null Hypothesis One

The first hypothesis stated the study would not find a statistically significant relationship between overall composite scores on the ACCESS for ELLs test, and scores on the Reading Standards of Learning (SOLs) test for secondary English Learners and Former English Learners for the year 2018.

Assumption Tests

To determine if a Pearson's *r* correlation could be used, the researcher analyzed the data to check for violations on the assumptions of independent observations, bivariate normal distribution, bivariate outliers, linearity, and level of measurement. For the assumption of independent observations, the scores for the independent and dependent variables were found to be independent of each other (Warner, 2013, p. 25, 267). For the assumption of bivariate

outliers, a scatter plot was examined to determine if extreme outliers were present (see Figure 8

for the Scatter Plot of bivariate outliers). As stated in the data screening session, the researcher

decided to include all subjects as the test scores represent the test minimum and maximum

ranges. See Figure 8 for the Scatter Plot for bivariate outliers. For the assumption of normality,

histograms for each variable were visually assessed to determine if scores were "bell-shaped and

symmetric" (Warner, 2013, p. 147). See Figures 9 and 10 on pages 91 for the Histograms for the

2018 English Language Proficiency Levels and the 2018 Reading SOL Test Scores respectively.

To further test the data, the researcher applied a Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for the 2018 data set,

as the sample size was greater than 50 participants. See Table 11 on page 92 for the

Kolmogorov-Smirnov test of normality. Both the independent variable and the dependent

variable for 2018 with a sample size of N=162 met the assumption of normality with a statistic

value of .054 and a p-value of .200 and statistic value of .052 and a p-value of .200 respectively,

as shown in Table 11 on page 92.
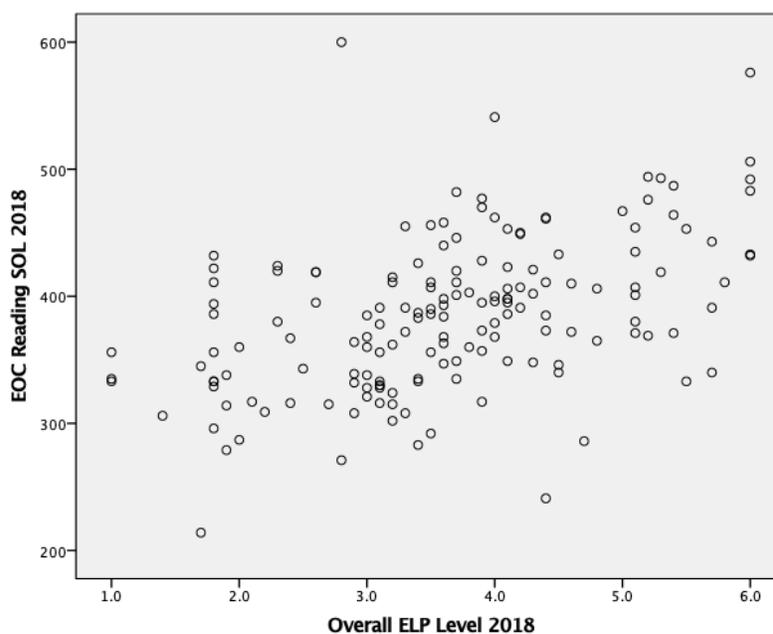
Figure 8. Scatter Plot for 2018 English language proficiency and academic content

knowledge in English Bivariate Outliers.
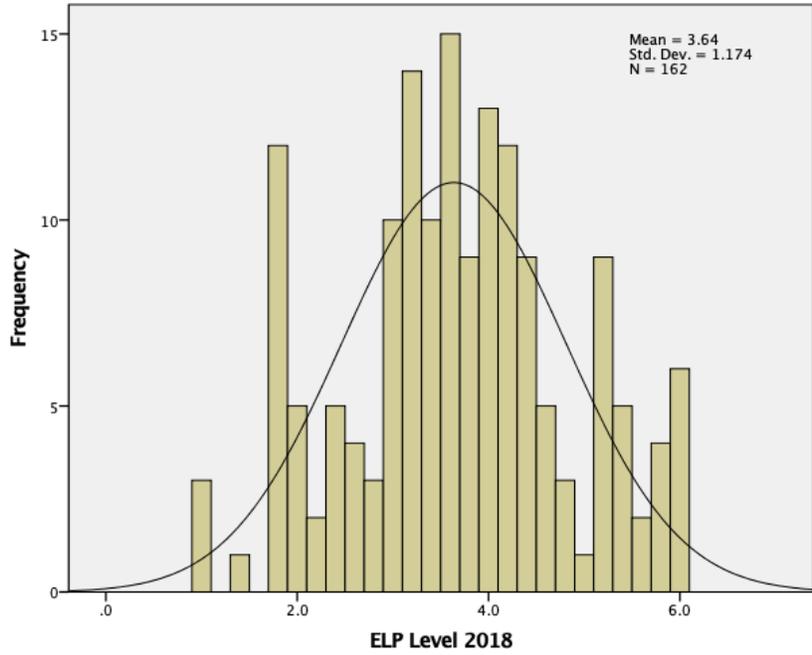
Figure 9. Histogram for the 2018 English Language Proficiency Levels
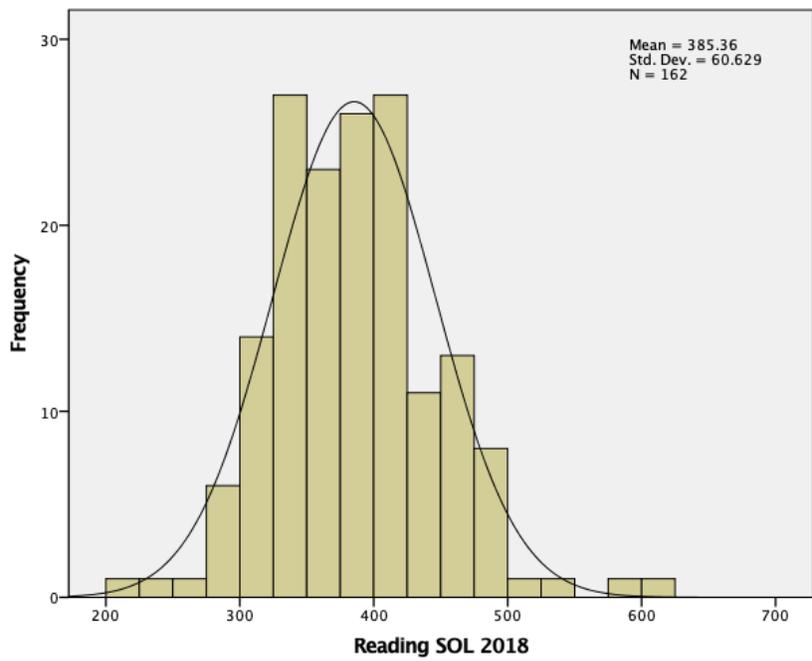
Figure 10. Histogram for the 2018 Reading SOL Test Scores.

Table 11

Kolmogorov-Smirnov test of Normality

| | Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a] | | |
	Statistic	df	Sig.
ELP Level 2018	.054	162	.200[*]
Reading SOL 2018	.052	162	.200[*]

*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

For the assumption of linearity, a scatter plot was used to determine if there was a linear relationship between the study's independent and dependent variables. No curvilinear plots were detected making the assumption of linearity adequate (Warner, 2013, p. 267-270). See Figure 11 for the Scatter Plot of the 2018 independent, English language proficiency, and the dependent, academic content knowledge in English variables.
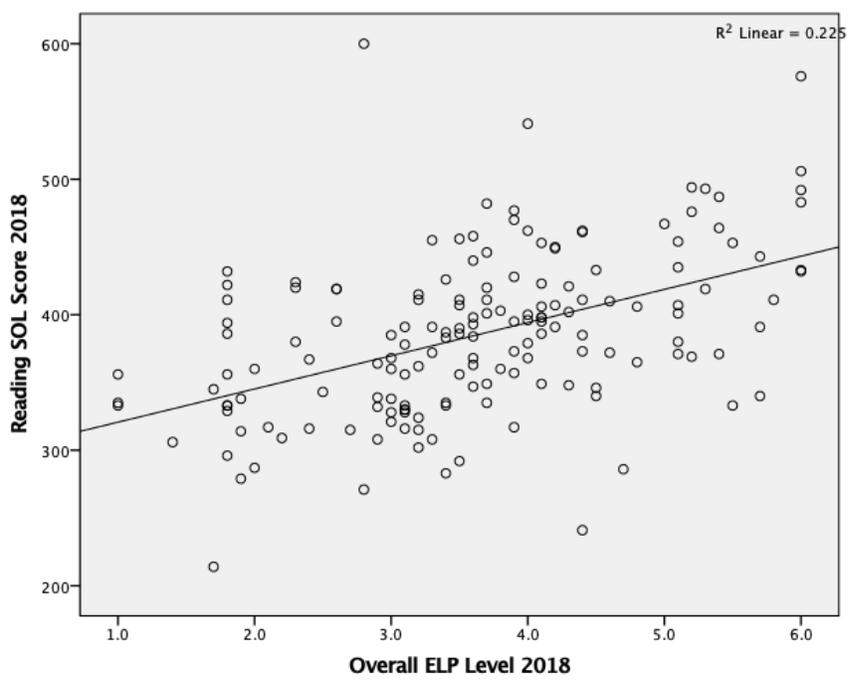
Figure 11. Scatter Plot for 2018 English language proficiency and academic content knowledge in English.

For the level of measurement assumption, the reading standards of learning scores are reported as scale scores with a value range of 0 to 600, therefore, satisfying this assumption. The overall composite English Language Proficiency (ELP) levels, on the other hand, are interpretive scores, and as such, do not represent interval data (WIDA, 2018). The ELP levels assign a numeric value to the ACCESS scale scores. Warner (2013) explained that in some instances using point scale scores when applying a Pearson r is a common practice (p. 267-268), hence the significance of quantitative and normally distributed scores. The levels are represented in whole and decimal numbers in a point scale of 1 through 6. The researcher determined to apply the Pearson's r using these proficiency levels.

Statistical Analysis

A Pearson's r correlation was used to test null hypothesis one. The researcher found a statistically significant relationship between English language proficiency and academic content knowledge in English, $r (162) = .475, p = .000$. Therefore, the researcher rejected the null hypothesis one. Based on Cohen's effect-size index (Warner, 2013, p. 208), the effect-size is very large. See Table 12 for A Pearson's r Correlation Results for the 2018 Data Sample $N=162$.

Table 12

A Pearson's r Correlation Results for the 2018 Data Sample N=162

		Overall ELP Level 2018	EOC Reading SOL 2018
Overall ELP Level 2018	Pearson Correlation	1	.475[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	162	162
EOC Reading SOL 2018	Pearson Correlation	.475[**]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	162	162

[**]. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Null Hypothesis Two

The second hypothesis stated the study would not find a statistically significant relationship between overall composite ACCESS for ELLs test scores and the scores on the Reading Standards of Learning (SOLs) test for secondary English Learners and Former English Learners for the year 2017.

Assumption Tests

To determine if a Pearson's *r* correlation could be used, the researcher analyzed the data to check for violations on the assumptions of independent observations, bivariate normal distribution, bivariate outliers, linearity, and level of measurement. For the assumption of independent observations, the scores for the independent and dependent variables were found to be independent of each other (Warner, 2013, p. 25, 267). For the assumption of normality, histograms for each variable were visually assessed to determine if scores were "bell-shaped and symmetric" (Warner, 2013, p. 147). The analysis revealed that the data did not meet the assumptions required to use a Pearson's *r* correlation. See Figures 12 and 13 on pages 95 and 96 for the Histograms for the 2017 English Language Proficiency Levels and the 2017 Reading SOL Test Scores.

To further test the data, the researcher applied a Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for the 2017 data set, as the sample size was greater than 50 participants. Both the independent variable and the dependent variable for 2017 with a sample size of N=162 did not meet the assumption of normality with a statistic value of .105 and a *p*-value of .000 and a statistic value of .093 and a *p*-value of .002 respectively, as shown in Table 13 on page 96. A change to a non-parametric measure of correlation was necessary as the assumption of a bivariate normal distribution for the independent variable and dependent variable on the 2017 data was violated. Warner (2013)

recommended the use of Spearman's *rho* when the predictor or independent variable is

categorical, and the dependent or criterion variable is quantitative, as is the case in this study

(p.27). The 2017 data set met the Spearman's *rho* assumptions. The independent variable

scores, ELP levels, are categorical and the dependent variable scores, Reading SOL test scores,

are quantitative in nature. The 2017 data set also shared a monotonic relationship, as shown on

Figure 13 on the next page.
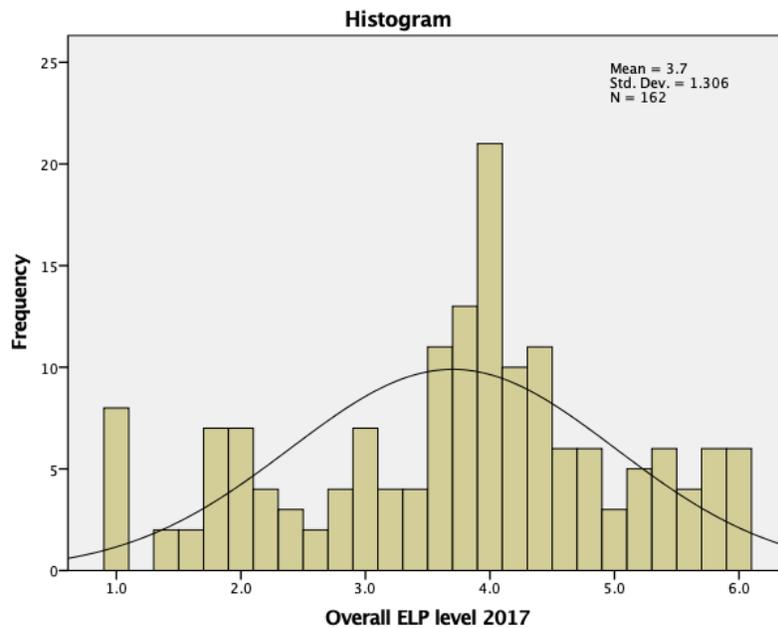
Figure 12. Histogram for the 2017 English Language Proficiency Levels.
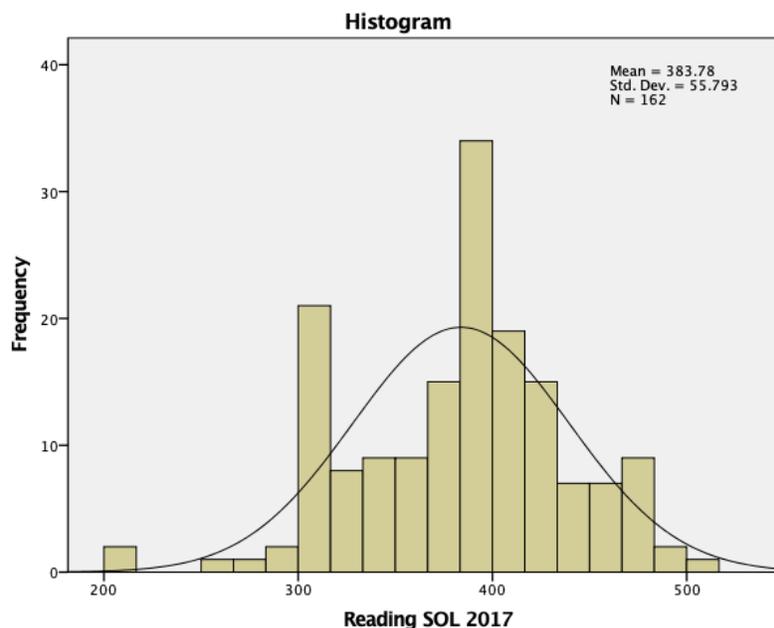
Figure 13. Histogram for the 2017 Reading SOL Test Scores.

A change to a non-parametric measure of correlation was necessary as the assumption of bivariate normal distribution for the independent variable and dependent variable on the 2017 data was violated. Warner (2013) recommended the use of Spearman's *rho* when the predictor or independent variable is categorical and the dependent or criterion variable is quantitative as is the case in this study (p.27). The 2017 data set met the Spearman's *rho* assumptions. The independent variable scores, ELP levels, are categorical and the dependent variable scores, Reading SOL test scores, are quantitative in nature. The 2017 data set also shared a monotonic relationship as shown in Figure 14 on the next page.

Table 13

Kolmogorov-Smirnov test of Normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]		
	Statistic	df	Sig.
Overall ELP level 2017	.105	162	.000
Reading SOL 2017	.093	162	.002
a. Lilliefors Significance Correction			
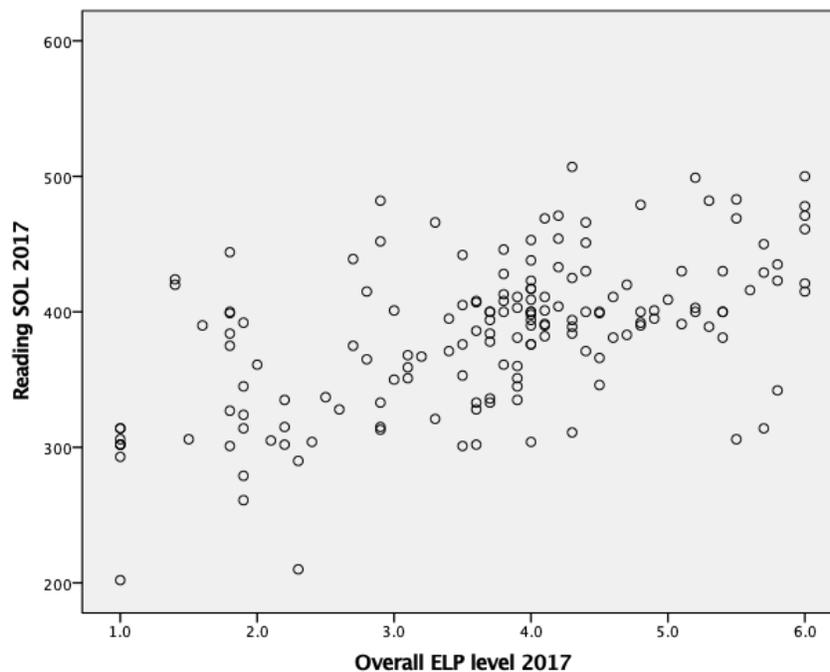
Figure 14. Scatterplot for the 2017 ELP Levels and Reading SOL Test Scores.

Statistical Analysis

A Spearman's *rho* rank correlation was used to test null hypothesis two. The non-parametric measure was necessary as the assumption of bivariate normal distribution for the independent variable and dependent variable on the 2017 data was violated.

The researcher found a statistically significant relationship between overall composite English Language Proficiency scores and the Reading SOL test scores; therefore, the researcher rejected null hypothesis two, *rho* (162) = 0.563, p = 0.000. Based on Cohen's effect-size index (Warner, 2013, p. 208), the effect-size is very large. See Table 14 on the next page for the 2017 Spearman's *rho* correlation results for the 2017 overall composite English Language Proficiency test scores and Reading SOL test scores.

Table 14

Non-parametric Spearman's rho Correlation Results for the 2017 Data Sample N=162

			Overall ELP level 2017	Reading SOL 2017
Spearman's rho	Overall ELP level 2017	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.536**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	162	162
	Reading SOL 2017	Correlation Coefficient	.536**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	162	162

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

Overview

This quantitative correlational study intended to determine if there was a statistically significant relationship between English Learners and Former English Learners' English Language Proficiency levels and the Virginia's Reading Standard of Learning assessments scores. This chapter will overview the study's discussion, implications, limitations, and recommendations for further research studies.

Discussion

The purpose of this quantitative correlational study was to determine if there was a statistically significant relationship between English language proficiency levels and academic content knowledge in English, as measured by the ACCESS for ELLs and Virginia Reading Standards of Learning assessment scores of secondary English Learners and Former English Learners in Virginia. The literature review was clear in establishing that many English Learners (ELs) continue to fail standardized assessments due in part to their varied English language proficiency (ELP) levels. Sireci and Faulkner-Bond (2015), Filmore (2014), Llosa (2012), and Beardsley (2015) agreed that using once-a-year standardized assessments to measure academic progress for ELs is challenging because it limits ELs data to a single score. This fast-growing heterogeneous group of immigrants or children of immigrants who speak languages other than English at home are entering U.S. schools in high numbers and require specialized educational services. Consequently, scarce research on how English language proficiency levels impact standardized assessments outcomes contribute to the lack of consensus on how to effectively service this heterogeneous group.

The researcher used the ACCESS for ELLs and the Reading Standards of Learning

assessments as instruments to quantitatively determine whether there was a statistically

significant relationship between English Language Proficiency (ELP) overall composite scores

and the Reading SOL test scores. Both high stakes assessments, ACCESS for ELLs and Reading

SOL tests, are annually used in Virginia to measure English Learners' ELP levels and content

knowledge in reading comprehension skills in English, respectively. The collection of accurate

and relevant data drives educational accountability systems in the U.S. As such, understanding

how these tests' data relate and interact will better inform educational decision-making processes

when serving English Learners at the federal, state, and local level. Anderman, Gimbert,

O'Connell, and Riegel (2015) ascertained that the inappropriate use of psychometrically

unreliable or invalid test scores to measure student academic growth or teacher performance

could have serious consequences, as unjust or unfair decisions could be reached. The collected

2018-2017 data and subsequent analyses were used to answer the research question: Is there a

relationship between ELP overall composite test scores and Reading SOL test scores for English

Learners and Former English Learners at the secondary level?

To measure the direction and strength of the relationship between the independent

variable, ELP overall composite test scores, and the dependent variable, Reading SOL test scores

for ELs and FELs, the researcher used a Pearson's *r* correlation for the 2018 data set. A

Spearman rank correlation coefficient test was used for the 2017 data set. The researcher

decided to use this non-parametric analysis due to the 2017 ELP scores violating the normality

test for a Pearson's *r* correlation. Kutner, Nachtsheim, Neter, and Li (2005) stated a

nonparametric rank correlation may be used for making inferences about the association of

variables (p. 87). According to Walpole, Myers, Myers, and Ye (2007), this test may be used even when there are no ties among either set of observations (p. 690-691).

The researcher found a statistically significant correlation between English language proficiency overall composite levels and the scores on the Reading Standards of Learning test with a very large effect size N=162. The researcher found the results of this study are consistent with McNeal's (2016) study. The results for the year 2018, Pearson r (162) = .475, p = .000 reflected a strong correlation between variables. Moreover, the 2017 data results also reflected a strong correlation between variables, Spearman's rho = .536, p = ≤.001. McNeal (2016) found a strong correlation between ACCESS for ELLs test scale scores and a Georgia reading assessment in listening, speaking, reading and writing with a Pearson's r calculated separately for each domain: listening r = .64, speaking r = .46, reading r = .49, and writing r = .66 with a medium effect size for N=116 (McNeal, 2016).

The current study used ACCESS for ELLs overall composite scores for N=162 for each year, which included all four language domains of listening, speaking, reading and writing at a weighted rate of 15% listening, 15% speaking, 35% reading, and 35% writing. Furthermore, Beardsley (2015) also used ACCESS for ELLs overall composite scores to examine if newcomers at the high school level would attain English proficiency or reach ELP level 5 before graduation. The study found that approximately 23% of ELs with an N=1878 attained English proficiency or reached ELP level 5, which in turn also indicated that 77% of ELs at the secondary level did not reach ELP 5 before graduation. Beardsley also found that there was a difference in proficiency attainment based on the students' native language. The median of English proficiency attainment for ELs at the secondary level was 2.75 for Spanish, 4.0 for Nepali, 4.0 for Somali, 4.0 for Arabic, 4.0 Mai Mai, 4.21 for other, and 3.6 for unknown.

Contrary to Beardsley's study, findings in other studies such as Thomas and Collier (1997),

Hakuat et al. (2000) and NASEM (2017) indicated English proficiency attainment takes between

three and 10 years.

Null Hypothesis One

For Null Hypothesis One, this study found a statistically significant correlation between

overall composite scores on the ACCESS for ELLs test, and scores on the Reading Standards of

Learning test for secondary English Learners and Former English Learners for the year 2018.

The findings of the current study showed that there was a strong correlation between

ACCESS for ELLs overall proficiency levels may be used to predict Reading SOL test scores.

The literature review supports the results of the study in that standardized assessments in

isolation provide an inadequate depiction of English Learners' academic profile and academic

progress due to the strong impact of low ELP levels and higher academic language complexities

on standardized test for secondary ELs and possibly some FELs. Haas, Tran, Huang and Yu's

(2016) study supports the findings in this study. Haas et al. found ELs with higher English

proficiency levels scored higher on standardized tests than ELs at lower levels of proficiency.

The current study did not account for the impact of specific testing accommodations for

its participants on test scores other than what the state of Virginia permits, which is bilingual

dictionaries and flexible scheduling. Conversely, Beardsley (2015) found a modification on

language complexities as an accommodation for ELs yielded higher scores on math assessments

than providing dictionaries and flexible schedules alone. Slama (2014) and Christoun (2015)

argued that more focus should be placed on the development of high-yielding language programs

and interventions for ELs. McNeal (2016), Fletcher and Shaw (2011), Loschert (2011), Sireci

and Failkner (2015), and Llosa (2012) agreed that high stakes assessments data are used to make

programmatic, budgetary, and accreditation decisions, as test outcomes are an integral component of the U.S. educational accountability systems. It is important to note, however, that the time necessary to attain English proficiency for ELs arriving at the secondary level will not only impact academic success in the classroom for these students, but also dropout and graduation rates. Research on the time necessary for English proficiency attainment varies greatly, as language acquisition may take anywhere from three to ten years. Solórzano (2008) warns that the research on the best teaching and testing of ELs should drive educational accountability systems.

The results of this study suggest that the higher the level of proficiency the higher the probability for English Learners to obtain a passing score of 400 or above on the Reading SOL test. Moreover, further observation of the raw data N=324 indicated that participants at the highest ELP level 6, 12 ELs in all, scored 400 or above 100% of the time. Though limited in nature due to the sample size of this study, further research may provide the necessary evidence to support the need for effective strategies and interventions in ELs classrooms to increase ELP to the highest levels. Contrary to common practice, additional supports should also be provided to those students that are at a higher level of proficiency but have yet to exit LIEPs. Scarinci and Howell (2018) found promising results on increasing ELP by adding a cultural element based on American culture to an existing ESL program. To ensure that English Learners acquire high levels of English proficiency, social and academic language structures must be explicitly and intentionally taught. Translanguaging, the use of L1 when negotiating meaning in L2, and code-switching, moving from L1 to L2 to navigate complex contexts, are two promising modalities that may enhance language proficiency and mediation of meaning for English Learners, according to Canagarajah (2011) and Chicaiza (2018).

SOL Passing Rate by ELP Level

ELP Level	Passing Rate
ELP 1	16
ELP 2	23
ELP 3	33
ELP 4	52
ELP 5	70
ELP 6	100
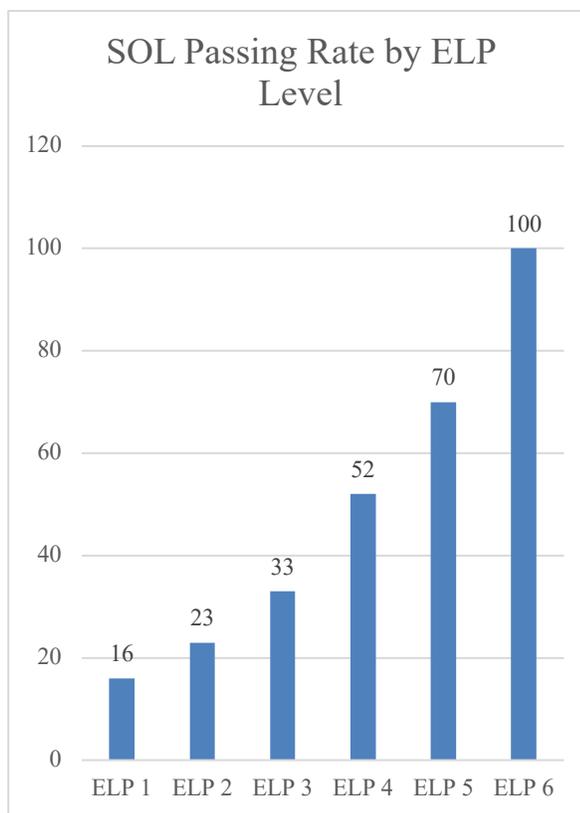
Figure 15. Graph for the 2018 and 2017, *N*=324, Reading SOL Passing Rate by ELP Levels.

The researcher found a statistically significant correlation between the independent and dependent variables, therefore, the language acquisition theoretical framework in chapter two provides the appropriate foundation to support this study. First, Chomsky (1965) suggested that every child has the capability to learn languages based on the language acquisition device (LAD). With this premise in mind, one may infer that every child is capable of learning any given language. Consequently, ELs in the mainstream classroom have the potential to learn English as a new language. Beardsley (2015) cautions that new language acquisition takes time and that ELs at the secondary level are at an increased risk of failure based on state's accountability systems. These students may not have enough time to learn academic vocabulary, language structures, and the content necessary to perform well on high-stakes assessments.

Current brain research supports Chomsky's notion that there is an area in the brain that is dedicated to language and cognitive learning processing. The Broca area is the region in the brain believed to house the processing center for vocabulary, syntax, and rule of grammar (Sousa, 2011). Next, Cummins's (1979) distinction between social and academic language adds context to the process of language acquisition in the mainstream classroom. Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills, (BICS) or social language, is acquired much faster than Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP), or the academic language, necessary to demonstrate content knowledge proficiency in standardized assessments. Teachers of ELs should not confuse BICS's fluency for CALP's proficiency, as ELs may communicate well in the school setting but may have a difficult time negotiating meaning within content knowledge due to low academic proficiency, or CALP. Contrary to Thomas and Collier (1997), Hakuta et al. (2000), and NASEM (2017), Cummins (2016) stated older students acquire language at a faster pace if the student has attained high academic proficiency levels in the native language or L1. Metacognitive strategies used in the ELs' classroom, according to Ardasheva (2015), were found to be more stable than cognitive strategies, which may explain transferability of skills and concepts between L1 and L2 for older ELs. Lastly, Krashen's (2003) Model theorized ELs in the mainstream classroom may learn language at an increased rate if the students' affective filter is lowered, the message is comprehensible, content is relatable and relevant to the student, and the environment is conducive for language development. Due to the limited amount of time English Learners have to learn English at the secondary level, the use of native language may also be used as an instructional strategy to expedite language acquisition and reading comprehension in English through skills and concepts transferability. Fung, Wilkinson, and Moore (2002) found improved reading comprehension when students were taught reading comprehension skills in the

native language. Goodwin and Jimenez (2016) found students who participated in

TRANSLATE activities (i.e., modified guided reading, collaborative translation, and

metacognitive reflection) improved their strategic reading, translation, and engagement, which

then improve their English reading comprehension skills (p.624).

Null Hypothesis Two

For Null Hypothesis Two, this study found a statistically significant correlation between

overall composite scores on the ACCESS for ELLs test and scores on the Reading Standards of

Learning test for secondary English Learners and Former English Learners for the year 2017.

For hypothesis two, the study's findings for the 2017 sample indicate that more than just

the standardized assessments outcome must be considered when determining ELs progress. The

literature shows the impact low ELP levels have on ELs' standardized test outcomes renders

progress determination processes inadequate and inaccurate if test scores are used in isolation.

Unfortunately, at this time, the accountability system in Virginia only considers test scores to

determine ELs' progress in attaining proficiency and academic progress in core subjects. ELs at

higher level of proficiency were more likely to obtain a higher score on the Reading SOL test

than those at lower levels of ELP. Umansky (2016) ascertained ELs are persistently

marginalized and acutely underrepresented in honors or advance courses due mostly to low

English language proficiency levels or prior academic achievement outcomes. Slama (2014)

posed that language instructional programs should not only be aligned with the students'

academic proficiencies but also ELP levels. Christoun (2015) ascertained language programs for

ELs should focus more on increasing language proficiency in English without neglecting

academic literacy performance.

Ensuring academic success for ELs entails understanding the definition of the term. In Virginia, a successful student achieves and applies appropriate academic and technical knowledge; demonstrates productive workplace skills, qualities, and behaviors; builds connections and value interactions with others as a responsible and responsive citizen; and aligns knowledge, skills and personal interests with career opportunities (VDOE, 2019, p. 6-7). This expectation transfers to all subgroups of students regardless of their learning ability or intellectual level, cultural and language differences, gender, or country of origin. For accountability purposes, the federal government aims to address ELs' academic needs in order that states may plan highly effective language instructional programs to service this group. The ultimate goal of the federal government is to ensure school divisions meet the needs of all their students to include ELs.

> Robust learning and high-quality instruction should be the expected outcomes of school practices. ELs should acquire grade level content with high standards in learning environment with highly prepared teachers. Continued progress toward developing academic English, reading comprehension skills, and academic content language are important related goals that should be monitored and assessed until students are achieving (USDE, 2008).

For English Learners to acquire language at a faster rate, teachers of ELs must thoroughly understand the students' academic, socio-cultural, and linguistic needs. Understanding language acquisition processes as supported by the theoretical framework of this study, how to provide language supports to these students in the mainstream classroom, and promoting language learning in safe and language-enriched environments within relevant and pertinent academic contexts are also an important factor in the teaching and learning of ELs. Calderon, Slavin, and Sanchez (2011) asserted that the most significant factor in educating ELs is the quality of instruction. Exposure to language without the intentionality of increased comprehensibility renders language learning processes ineffective. Teachers of ELs need to implement the

appropriate supports and structures necessary to support ELs in the mainstream classroom (Calderon et al., 2011).

Conclusion

In conclusion, a lack of research on how English proficiency levels impact high stakes assessment outcomes for English Learners offers a skewed depiction of how these students truly fair on accountability systems. The misunderstanding of the linguistic and cultural needs for this diverse group may lead to the development of ineffective LIEPs if school divisions use data limited to these standardized assessments. These challenges indirectly contribute to inequitable access to content curriculum even when educational law requires the very opposite. Umansky (2016) found adequate access to content curriculum, English language proficiency, and the exposure to academic content vocabulary through a variety of course offerings at the secondary level may provide ELs the opportunity to experience academic success. Low English proficiency levels should not preclude English Learners from fully participating in any educational offering; therefore, content-based language instructional programs are the most promising when serving ELs in the mainstream classroom (Dreyer, 2015). On the contrary, the lack of consensus and available research on what constitutes effective language programs for ELs and limited resources due to lack of funding will adversely impact ELs' academic achievement outcomes. Promoting the socio-cultural integration of all students, developing positive language development environments in the school, and providing access to the high-quality curriculum are some of the characteristics of schools that effectively educate ELs (Lopez and Iribarren, 2012). Uccelli, Galloway, Barr, Meneses and Dobbs (2015) found middle school ELs with lower socio-economic status (SES) performed considerably lower than students classified as non-ELs and from higher SES.

Research supports the notion that for English Learners to succeed academically, educators and administrators need to understand the difference between social and academic language and how each is acquired. Stakeholders must also understand the implications and challenges of learning content in the mainstream classroom while learning a new language to increase English language proficiency levels. Policy changes are in order if these students are to have equitable opportunities to succeed academically. Intensive Newcomers programs, additional time to learn English, alternative options to high stakes assessments, and a different set of accommodations are all examples of changes in policy needed to provide this group of students better opportunities to reach academic success and ultimately graduate high school. Innovative practices when serving ELs developed by bold practitioners may be the only way to close the academic gap between ELs and non-ELs.

High-stakes assessments used for accountability purposes are the same tests used to measure ELs' academic proficiency. These assessments were created and field-tested for non-EL students. According to Gall, Gall, and Borg (2007), using standardized assessments which were created for a different group of students to measure academic proficiency which were created for a different group of students may compromise test validity, as low ELP levels may negatively impact the usefulness and meaningfulness of test outcomes. Abedi (2008) found that ELs with low ELP levels may have difficulty accessing test items due to the complexity of the language used in the test. Sato, Rabinowitz, Gallagher, and Huang (2010) agreed ELs performed better when test items were modified to meet the linguistic abilities of the students being tested, as ELs may lack the comprehension skills necessary to demonstrate academic proficiency.

Accountability systems in Virginia require the use of SOL test scores and ACCESS for ELLs scores to be used to evaluate the progress of English Learners. Therefore, the findings of

this study have direct and immediate applicability in the instruction of ELs in the content classroom. English language proficiency levels should drive the differentiation of instruction when planning, teaching, and delivering the written and taught curriculum. In addition, knowledge on brain research and how language is processed, the distinction between social and academic language, language attainment rates, and the process in which language is acquired will provide policymakers, administrators, teachers, instructional staff, and other researchers the opportunity to make informed decisions to better service ELs and FELs. The study's theoretical framework and understanding the association between ELP levels and Reading SOL test scores also promotes, if used appropriately, the opportunity for ELs to set their own academic goals. Fletcher and Shaw (2012) found that students learned better if they use test results to plan and assess their learning.

Implications

Recent increases in immigration patterns in the United States have created challenges educational institutions must address, as they attempt to educate and meet the needs of this fast-growing heterogeneous group. These challenges are magnified by limited funding and resources, which in turn makes it difficult to comply with federal and state mandates. To provide context, Radford and Buddiman (2016) reported there were approximately 44 million immigrants in the U.S in 2016, which tripled since 1980, with 14 million immigrants at the time. English Learners at the secondary level face a myriad of challenges that may prevent these students from experiencing academic success, which may translate into failure to attain high school graduation, higher-paying jobs, or higher education degrees. Solórzano (2008) found English proficiency to be the most substantial contributor to high academic achievement for English Learners. Among the most negatively impactful factors on academic achievement are low English proficiency

levels, low academic proficiency in L1, ineffective language programs, and lack of native language supports in the mainstream classroom. Subsequently, these challenges may prevent ELs from achieving on-time graduation and ultimately lead many of these students to drop out of school altogether, affecting their future as young adults. In a systematic literature review, Freeman and Simonsen (2015) reported individuals that do not complete high school are likely to be unemployed, apply for welfare, or make less money than their high school graduate counterparts.

The purpose of this study was to determine if there was a statistically significant relationship between English language proficiency levels and Reading SOL test scores for English Learners and Former English Learners at the secondary level. The analysis of the data showed a strong positive correlation between ELP levels and Reading SOL test scores. Based on the findings, the implications of this study are significant for English Learners and Former English Learners at the secondary levels. Additionally, teachers of ELs, administrators, and policymakers may also benefit from the findings of the study. Potochnick and Mooney (2015) ascertained policymakers must consider not only the rapid growth of this population but also their changing needs. The findings indicate that the higher the level of proficiency, the higher the probability for English Learners and Former English Learners to obtain a passing score of 400 or above on a Reading SOL test in Virginia. See Figure 15 on page 104. Suzuki (2017) found that teachers of ELs have the potential, with proper training, to create language learning environments in the classroom that foster complex language acquisition processes.

Furthermore, research shows newly arrived ELs with low ELP levels may be precluded from attaining high academic achievement. NASEM (2017) found to assess the instructional needs and developmental status of ELs accurately, language skills in both languages must be

examined. At the secondary level, the stakes are considerably higher, as these students must demonstrate academic proficiency on five or six standardized tests in Virginia, dependent upon their cohort, to graduate.

When serving ELs, the law is clear. Equitable services and effective programs at all grade levels and in every subject are mandated. How ELs are serviced, however, continues to be the source of debate. The researcher intended to draw attention to the many educational difficulties stakeholders face in the teaching and learning of newly arrived English Learners at the secondary level, whereas these students attempt to learn English while learning content in the mainstream classroom in four years. Learning a new language takes time, and expecting a newly arrived EL to take and pass all required coursework and assessments seems like an impossible task. According to Beardsley (2015), only 23% of newly arrived ELs at the high school level attained ELP level 5 before graduation. Based on available research, it is unrealistic to expect newly arrived English Learners to pass a standardized test for graduation requirements unless strictly structured newcomers' programs and effective content-based LIEPs are designed to service these students.

Teachers of ELs at the secondary level must be well prepared and knowledgeable of the latest research-based strategies and interventions. Other factors may also adversely impact ELP progress. Learning disabilities, limited or interrupted formal schooling in the native language, lack of motivation, or parents with limited schooling levels are among those indicators that may hinder language proficiency increases. The opposite is also true; high academic proficiency in the native language, giftedness, multilingualism, knowledge of metacognitive strategies, or parents with high schooling levels may accelerate language acquisition processes. Unless LIEP developers spend time getting to know the students they serve and building collaborative

relationships, effective LIEPs will be but a flitting dream. LIEPs must be designed and reasonably calculated to enable EL students to attain both English proficiency and parity of participation in the standard instructional program within a reasonable length of time (OCR & DOJ, 2015). The U.S. Department of Education developed a ten-chapter English Learner Tool Kit to assist states and school divisions to develop adequate language instruction educational programs.

Nevertheless, school districts are the ultimate authority in designing LIEPs, as the federal government provides non-prescriptive guidelines. Local Educational Agencies (LEA) are required to offer language support services until ELs are able to meaningfully access content curriculum without EL supports (USDE, 2015). Teaching ELs is a shared responsibility and cannot be relegated to the ESOL teacher alone. Collaboration among stakeholders when developing LIEPs should not only be encouraged but expected. School districts have the responsibility to search for best practices supported by sound theory. Similarly, state educational agencies have the task to ensure ELs are being serviced using effective research-based programs.

To graduate on time, ELs would have to learn oral proficiency and academic language (BICS and CALP) in four years or less regardless of the many factors that may impede such progress; hence, the significance of interdisciplinary stakeholders' collaboration during the planning, developing, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating of LIEPs. Previous research shows that attaining academic language takes anywhere from five to ten years to develop (Thomas & Collier, 1997; Hakuta, Butler & Witt, 2000). Conversely, Beardsley (2015) study found that Spanish speaking ELs attained ELP level 5 in 2.75 years on average, which provides a new perspective for LIEP developers and stakeholders. Changes in policy in Virginia have improved accreditation formulas. Starting in the school year 2018-2019, ELs with two years or

more of SOLs and ACCESS for ELLs data and that have demonstrated progress in both tests will count as a passing score for the school.

Unfortunately, ELs' progress does not translate into earned credits necessary for high school graduation. English Learners at the high school level are required to accumulate 22 credit units and pass five or six SOL assessments, based on their cohort, like their non-ELs counterparts regardless of their ELP levels. The implications of the results of this study for policymakers are noteworthy. Policymakers must take a closer look at accountability systems and their impact on newly arrived ELs at the high school level. A system that mimics Virginia's accreditation formula might offer this group a reprieve and provide an equitable solution to this issue if verified credits were to be awarded for progress made in both assessments. Even though Virginia is an English-only state, providing native language supports for these students during testing may also prove useful, as academic proficiency in the native language is one of the most important indicators of ELP attainment. Changes in policy could offer school districts the opportunity to increase ELP levels without the added pressure of teaching to the test and ensure ELs have the opportunity to access the content curriculum equitably. A revised policy may have the added benefit of reducing dropout rates among ELs and directly increasing the on-time graduation rate. At this time, it is essential to note that any student in Virginia may take the WorkKeys (ACT, 2019) alternative assessment for reading and writing if the student fails to pass the reading or writing SOL tests. Another consideration is the new mandate from the Virginia School Board allowing school districts to award local credits to students scoring 375 or above on any given SOL test. However, only three local credits may be awarded to each student in their senior year.

The Department of Justice and the Education Office of Civil Rights stated that all

students, to include ELs, must have the opportunity to reach full academic potential through

equitable access to high-quality education (DOJ & OCR, 2015).

> School districts and all public schools must meet their legal obligations to ensure
> that EL students can participate meaningfully and equally in educational programs
> and services. To provide appropriate and adequate EL program services based on
> each EL student's individual needs, and to facilitate the transition out of such
> services within a reasonable period, a school district will typically have to provide
> more EL services for the least English proficient EL students than for the more
> proficient ones. Also, districts should provide designated English Language
> Development (ELD)/English as a Second Language (ESL) services for EL students
> at the same or comparable ELP levels to ensure these services are targeted and
> appropriate to their ELP levels (Dear Colleague letter 2015, p. 5-13).

Developing effective programs for ELs takes more than just hiring ESOL teachers to service

these students. Effective programs for ELs must be anchored not only on the students' specific

cultural and linguistic needs, but also on research-based strategies and interventions, and targeted

services to increase ELP levels and academic proficiency. The findings of this study add to a

limited body of knowledge as it relates to the relationship between English language proficiency

levels and high-stakes test scores.

Limitations

Even though the researcher found a strong correlation between English language

proficiency levels and Reading SOL scores, there were some known limitations to the study.

First, the data provided by three school divisions in the southeast of Virginia were limited to

gender, grade, student classification (e.g., EL, FEL), ACCESS for ELLs scores, and Reading

SOL test scores. The exclusion of years of schooling in the native language, academic

proficiency in the native language, country of origin, socio-economic status, type of LIEP, and

time spent in LIEPs may have added new perspectives into the study's results. Next, the validity

of the Reading SOL test of ELs at ELP levels one and two may be compromised and their

usefulness to make decisions may be inappropriate. Gall, Gall, and Borg (2007) ascertain test

validity refers to the score applicability to make inferences or predictions.

Similarly, composite scores are considered compensatory. Extremely low or high scores in one domain may inflate or deflate overall composite scores for ELs. The study's sample only included overall composite scores for all participants and individual scores by domain were not included. In addition, lower than average scores in the speaking domain has been problematic in the administration of ACCESS for ELLs in the last few years due in part to technical difficulties, as these assessments are administered online and scoring is done based on the EL's recording. Student's low levels of self-confidence may have also negatively affected the overall composite scores on the ACCESS for ELLs test.

Recommendations for Future Research

Further research may control for additional factors besides grade level, overall composite proficiency levels, and Reading SOL scores. Insufficient data on the students' background such as years of schooling in a native language, time spent in language instruction educational programs, socioeconomic level, parents' educational level, type of language instruction educational program, and the number of times (expedited test retakes) the student has taken the SOL assessment may limit the generalization of the finding for specific groups. The following are some recommendations for further research.

1. Conduct a follow-up study with a different sample using other content subject (e.g., math, science, history). This study including English Learners and Former English Learners was limited to Reading SOL tests scores.

2. Other researchers may consider replicating this study including only English Learners and excluding Former or exited English Learners (FELs). FELs are students that have reach proficiency levels similar to that of non-ELs. It is important to note that

FELs at year 1 and 2 of monitoring will be included in the school accreditation formula in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

3. Using scale scores as opposed to English language proficiency level scores to replicate this study may provide different results or may support the findings of this study. The researcher's intention when using ELP levels was to make the results of the study more relatable and relevant for teachers of ELs, educational leaders, and instructional staff, as ELP levels are commonly used in the classroom to impact instruction delivery, on decision-making processes, and tracking progress for ELs. Furthermore, Virginia uses ELP levels to track ELs progress, as indicated on the state's consolidated plan.

4. An additional follow-up research study controlling for country of origin, language, years of formal schooling in the native language, type of language instruction program, years in the language instruction program, and EL classification may add a different perspective to the study's findings.

5. A recommendation for further study is to limit the study to one or two grade levels. The current study included seven grade levels within the $N=162$ sample for each year.

6. Additional research may include the time it takes to learn English as a variable. Researchers may consider the timeline of attaining ELP levels of 4.4 or above and how this relates to standardized assessments. The study found a strong relationship between ELP levels and Reading SOL scores. To ensure ELs are learning English at the highest rates, research on ELP timeline attainment will benefit all stakeholders to include teachers, ELs and other researchers.

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Appendix A

Dear Colleague Letter of January 7, 2015

The following link provides access to the full Office of Civil Rights and Department of Justice

Dear Colleague Letter of January 7, 2015:

https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/letters/colleague-el-201501.pdf

English Learner Tool Kit

The following link provides access to the Office of English Language Acquisition and the full

English Learner Tool Kit (10 chapters):

https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oela/english-learner-toolkit/index.html

Appendix B

WIDA English Language Development Standards for English Learners

Standard 1:   English language learners communicate for **Social and Instructional** purposes within the school setting.
Standard 2: English language learners communicate for information, ideas and concepts necessary for academic success in the content area of Language Arts.
Standard 3: English language learners communicate for information, ideas and concepts necessary for academic success in the content area of Mathematics.
Standard 4: English language learners communicate for information, ideas and concepts necessary for academic success in the content area of Science.
Standard 5: English language learners communicate for information, ideas and concepts necessary for academic success in the content area of Social Studies.

Find the WIDA Performance Definition for Listening, Reading, Speaking and Writing on pages

6-7 following the link below (2012 Amplification of The English Language Development

Standards K-12):

https://wida.wisc.edu/sites/default/files/resource/2012-ELD-Standards.pdf

Appendix C

ACCESS for ELLs Assessment Overview

The following link provides access to the ACCESS for ELLs Assessment Overview on the

WIDA website:

https://www.wida.us/assessment/ACCESS20.aspx

The following link provides access to the Spring 2019 Interpretive Guide for Score Reports K-12

on the WIDA website:

https://wida.wisc.edu/sites/default/files/resource/Interpretive-Guide.pdf

Appendix D

Comparison of Changes on SOL and ACCESS Assessments

Table 1.

A Comparison of Changes on SOL and ACCESS Assessments

Year	Reading SOL Tests	ACCESS for ELLs
2014	• No changes	• Change from paper and pencil to electronic form
2015	• No changes	• Change in rigor • Change in scoring scale
2016	• Standard Setting Studies: New 2017 Standards	• No changes
2017	• 2017 SOL standards approved	• No changes

Note: Virginia Department of Education will NOT compare ACCESS for ELLS and SOL data from year 2016 with the data from 2017 and 2018.

Appendix E

SOL Test Administration and Development

The following link provides access to the Virginia Department of Education testing

administration and development:

http://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/test_administration/index.shtml

SOL Tests List

The following link provides access to the Virginia Department of Education SOL tests list by

grade:

https://www.pwcs.edu/UserFiles/Servers/Server_340140/File/Accountability/Testing/SOL%20T

ests.pdf

Appendix F

SOL Test Participation and Inclusion

The following link provides access to the Virginia Department of Education testing participation

and inclusion information:

http://doe.virginia.gov/testing/participation/index.shtml

Appendix G

Email correspondence between the researcher and Dr. Jim Cummins

Permission request to use/create pictorial model of Cummins (1981) Iceberg theory and

BICS/CALP Quadrants via email.

Found in Sent - iCloud Mailbox

Jannette DuHart   June 3, 2018 at 12:26 PM   JD
Permission to use Iceberg theory and Cummins framework
To: jcummins@oise.utoronto.ca

Good afternoon!

My name is Jannette DuHart, and I am a doctoral student at Liberty University in Virginia. For my theoretical framework, I am using Dr. Cummins theory and framework. I would like to use the Iceberg theory diagram and framework diagrams for my dissertation, but there are too many copies out there to distinguish between which one is from Dr. Cummins or from others. Please let me know where I could find the original diagrams or if I have permission to create a diagram based on your theory.

Cordially,

Jannette

☆ **James Cummins**   June 20, 2018 at 11:10 AM   JC
Re: Permission to use Iceberg theory and Cummins framework
To: Jannette DuHart,   jcummins@oise.utoronto.ca

Dear Janette:

Sorry about the delay in getting back to you. It is fine to use any version of the iceberg diagram that appeared in any of my publications. If it's in a publication that I didn't author, then someone else probably created the diagram.

It is also fine to go ahead and create your own version.

Good luck with your dissertation.

Best wishes,

Jim Cummins

See More from Jannette DuHart

Appendix H

Email correspondence between the researcher and Dr. Stephen Krashen

Permission request to use/create pictorial model of Dr. Krashen Model theory via email.

Found in Sent - iCloud Mailbox

Jannette DuHart   Yesterday at 11:40 AM   JD
Monitor Model - permission to use
To: skrashen@yahoo.com

Good. Morning, Dr. Krashen!

My name is Jannette DuHart and I am a doctoral candidate from Liberty University. As I work on my dissertation, I am using your Monitor model as part of my theoretical framework. I would like to create a pictorial description of the model but would need your permission to include it in my dissertation. Do you have a model that better reflects these hypotheses? Or could I create a monitor model that describes your hypotheses and use it in my manuscript?

Thank you in advance for your assistance!

Jannette DuHart

Stephen Krashen   Yesterday at 1:10 PM   SK
Re: Monitor Model - permission to use
To: Jannette DuHart

You are free to include your own diagrams in your dissertation, without my permission or approval. I haven't made any diagrams in years and years. Enjoy!

See More from Jannette DuHart

Appendix I

Accountability and Virginia Public Schools

The following link provides access to the full Virginia Consolidated State Plan – Approved April

24, 2018 by the US Department of Education:

https://www2.ed.gov/admins/lead/account/stateplan17/vaconsolidatedstateplanfinal.pdf

The Virginia Department of Education submitted an amendment to the state's consolidated plan

in January 24, 2019. On June 20, 2019, this amendment was presented to the Virginia Board of

Education for its first review.

Appendix J

English Learners: Guidelines for Participation in the Virginia Assessment Program

The following link provides access to the Virginia Department of Education English Learners:

Guidelines for Participation in the Virginia Assessment Program booklet:

http://doe.virginia.gov/testing/participation/el-participation-guidelines.pdf

The following link provides access to the VDOE Participation and Inclusion webpage:

http://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/participation/index.shtml

Appendix K

ACCESS for ELLs Test Development Timeline

      The following link provides access to the full WIDA Consortium WIDA History timeline from 2001 to 2014.

https://www.wida.us/aboutus/mission.aspx

WIDA History

	Milestone Events		By the Numbers
2001	No Child Left Behind Act, Title III brings English language learners into the spotlight		
2002	WIDA grant proposal submitted		
2003	WIDA is born after an Enhanced Assessment Grant was awarded to the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, WIDA's first home		
	The Center for Applied Linguistics is named in the grant as WIDA's test development partner		
2004	WIDA English Language Proficiency Standards completed	2004	Initial ACCESS for ELLs field test of Listening, Reading, and Writing administered in IL, WI, AR, RI, DC, DE, ME, and VT to 6,662 students
	First Standards-Based Test Item Writing course offered		Initial ACCESS for ELLs field test of Speaking administered in WI and DC to 523 students
			Initial Kindergarten ACCESS for ELLs field test administered in the DC to 154 students
2005	W-APT first administered for identification and placement of ELL students	2005	Spring - ACCESS for ELLs administered in AL, ME, and VT to 18,000 students — 2005-2006 ACCESS for ELLs administered in 12 states to 369,386 students

Appendix L

ACCESS for ELLs Test Sample Items

The following link provides access to the Quickstart Guide for Preparing Students for ACCESS

Online:

https://wida.wisc.edu/assess/access/preparing-students link

The following link provides access to the WIDA Consortium ACCESS for ELLs Listening,

Reading, Writing, and Speaking Sample Items 2008 Grades 1-12 booklet.

https://www.wida.us/assessment/access/access_sample_items.pdf

Appendix M

Virginia Standards of Learning Assessments Examiner's Manual

The following link provides access to the Virginia Standards of Learning and Testing:

http://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/index.shtml

Appendix N

SOL EOC Reading Test Release Items

The following link provides access to the Virginia Department of Education Spring 2008 Release

Test for End-of-Course Reading test:

http://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/sol/released_tests/2008/test08_eoc_english_reading.pdf

Appendix O

WIDA Test Materials Order Sample

This document is a sample of an ACCESS for ELLs testing material's order.

2016-2017 English Language Proficiency Assessments Test Administration Schedule		
Activity	**Start Date**	**End Date**
Division Upload Pre-ID Data Files in WIDA AMS[1]	10/10/2016	11/11/2016
Divisions Place Test Materials Orders in WIDA AMS[1]	10/10/2016	11/11/2016
Divisions Setup Online Test Sessions in WIDA AMS[1]	11/21/2016	3/31/2017
Divisions Receive Test Materials	1/3/2017	1/6/2017
Testing Window[2]	1/9/2017	3/31/2017
Divisions Place Additional Test Materials Orders in WIDA AMS[1]	1/3/2017	3/24/2017
Deadline for Divisions to Ship Completed Test Materials to DRC	4/7/2017	
Pre-Reporting Data Validation Window	5/8/2017	5/19/2017
Divisions Receive Reports - Printed and Online	6/2/2017	
Post-Reporting Data Validation Window[3]	6/2/2017	6/30/2017
DRC Provides Final State-Level Data to VDOE	7/7/2017	

Data Recognition Corporation (DRC) is the test vendor for the online and paper ACCESS for ELLs® 2.0 tests, the Kindergarten ACCESS for ELLs test, and the Alternate ACCESS for ELLs™ test. DRC hosts the WIDA Assessment Management System (AMS), the online portal to the administrative functions of the DRC testing system. DRC requires divisions to place a test materials order, regardless of testing method (online or paper), and to submit a purchase order for the test materials ordered. The cost for each ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 and Kindergarten ACCESS for ELLs test is $25.75, and the cost for each Alternate ACCESS for ELLs test is $75. Payment for these assessments is the responsibility of school divisions. DRC Customer Service is available to provide support and technical assistance by e-mail at WIDA@datarecognitioncorp.com or by telephone at (855) 787-9615.

For details, refer to the corresponding online training module posted in the ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 Training Course under the Online Test Coordinator Checklist at the **WIDA Web site** (requires a username and password to access).

Divisions must administer the Virginia English Language Proficiency Checklists during this testing window.

The Post-Reporting Data Validation Window allows divisions to update student-level information after score reports are received. Changes to student-level information will be reflected in an updated data file; however, score reports reflecting these changes will not be provided.

Appendix P

Virginia Standard of Learning Assessments Technical Report 2014-2015

The following link provides access to the most recent Virginia Standard of Learning

Assessments Technical Report:

http://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/test_administration/technical_reports/sol_technical_report_2

014-15_administration_cycle.pdf

Appendix Q

Approval letters from participating school divisions.
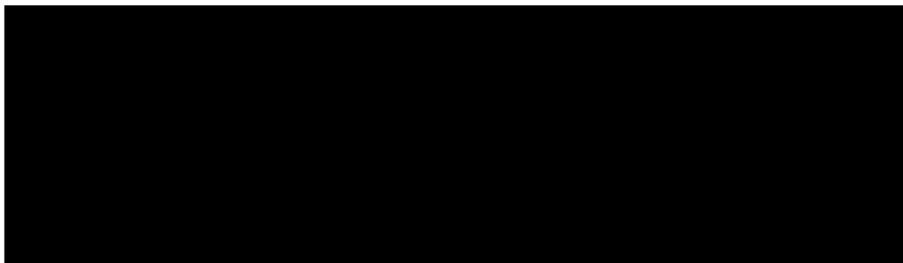
September 13, 2018

Jannette DuHart
Doctoral student
9258 Kurnas Lane

Dear Mrs. DuHart

After careful review of your research proposal entitled "The Relationship Between English Learners' English Language Proficiency and High Stakes Assessments in Virginia", we have decided to grant you permission to conduct your study in █████████████████

You may use the students' ACCESS for ELLs and SOL test data. Reminder: Students' identity must be protected. Please submit a copy of the results upon study completion and/or publication.

If you have any questions or I can be of any assistance, contact me at ██████████
██████████████████
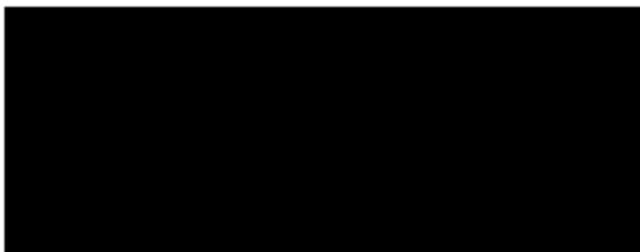
November 19, 2018

Dear Mrs. DuHart:

After review of your research proposal entitled "The Relationship Between English Learners' English Language Proficiency and High Stakes Assessments in Virginia", we have decided to grant you permission to utilize data from ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ s part of your research study. The data includes ACCESS for ELLs and SOL test data.

Please know that a condition of this permission is that the identity of all students and of our division must be protected in your study. We also ask that you submit a copy of the results upon completion of the study.

If you have any questions or I can be of any assistance, contact me at ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮

Sincerely,
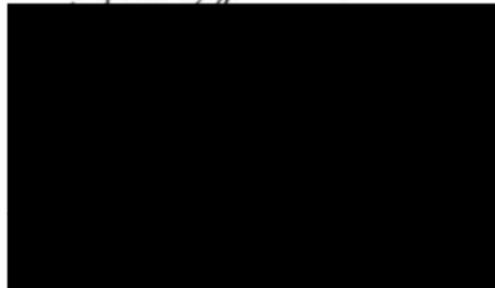
[REDACTED]

October 17, 2017

Ms. Jannette DuHart
9258 Kurnas Lane
Prince George, VA 23860

Dear Ms. DuHart:

It is my pleasure to inform you that the [REDACTED] has approved your research entitled *The Relationship between English Learners' English Language Proficiency and High Stakes Assessment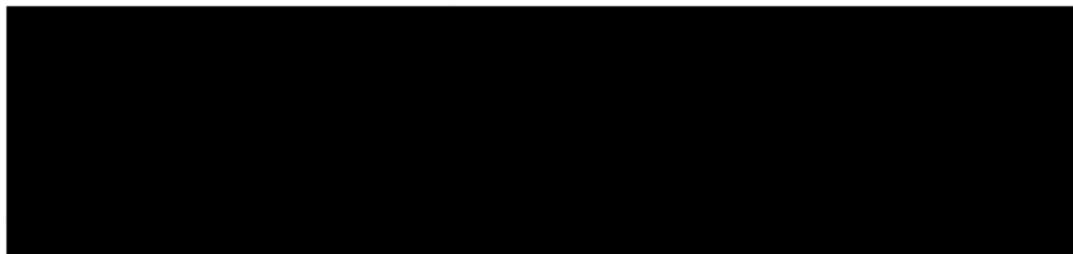s in Virginia.* Please include a copy of this letter in any communication with the central office personnel [REDACTED] regarding your study. Your research interests must remain confined to the provisions outlined in your approved research request application. Authorizations for additional research or changes in your current procedures must first be submitted to the [REDACTED] review.

The [REDACTED] will handle the following information to assist you with your research:

1.) All assembly and coding of student EOC Reading SOL and ACCESS for ELLs assessment data

The [REDACTED] mandates that all research applicants use pseudonyms in place of the names of students, staff, and schools in any documentation produced from your study. The use of pseudonyms in your study must include any mention of [REDACTED] s as this would inadvertently identify the school division. Coding of the student data is a precaution taken to ensure the safety and anonymity of all persons included in the study. It also safeguards the division from analyses produced from inaccurate and/or faulty methodologies and adds to the rigor and integrity of all reported results.

I wish you much success on your work, and look forward to reading the results of your final study. The [REDACTED] requests that a written final summary of all research be submitted to the chairperson upon completion. Please feel free to contact me at [REDACTED] at [REDACTED] with any additional questions.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

Appendix R

Research Procedure Letter to participating school divisions

Participant Information

Subject line: Research procedures

Dear participant,

First, thank you so much for choosing to participate in my research study. I really appreciate your willingness to collect and supply student data.

I have finished my dissertation proposal and soon will begin collecting data. In preparation for this step, I have included my research procedure for your convenience.

Regards,

Jannette

Research Study Procedures

1. Sample: English Learners (ELs) and Former English Learners (FEL) at the high school level from three Virginia school districts.

2. Collect test scores on ACCESS for ELLs assessments and Virginia EOC Reading SOL assessment scores for 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 school year.

3. Collect two data points to account for changes in test rigor and format.

4. Permission to collect data from 3 school divisions will be requested. Complete and submit all forms based on the division's research protocol.

5. For this study, contact with participants is not required, as assessment data will be collected directly from the school division's testing coordinator with the permission of the division's superintendents or research committee.

6. Send an email with detail instructions of the procedure.

7. Defend research proposal.

8. Request the study approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) after a successful proposal defense.

9. After IRB approval is received, contact the division's testing coordinators via email to request access to the data and set an appointment for data retrieval or coordinate a secure folder to share student data.

10. Request data submission via email from the 3 participating school divisions:

    a. Provide a data collection form to participating school divisions.

    b. Correspond with school division's contact person.

    c. Schedule date to collect data with school division's contact person.

    d. Submit data files in a .csv format (please substitute students' names with a numerical identifier) to researcher via email,

    e. Transfer data to flash drive, and

    f. Maintain data in a secure location.

    g. Destroy memory stick after study is completed.

    h. Provide a copy of the study's results to each participating division.

11. Once data is collected, send a thank you letter to the school divisions for their participation.

12. After the data is collected and transferred to a spreadsheet, store the memory stick in a secure location. The data will be stored for one year, then it will be destroyed.

13. Data screening will be conducted to scan for errors and discrepancies.

14. Formal data analysis will commence.

Appendix S

IRB Approval Letter

From: IRB, IRB
Sent: Thursday, November 29, 2018 9:32 AM
To: Duhart, Jannette
Cc: Lunde, Rebecca M (Doctor of Education); Matthews, Geoffrey A (School of Education); IRB, IRB
Subject: IRB Exemption 3556.112918: The Relationship Between English Learners' English Language Proficiency and High Stakes Assessments in Virginia

Dear Jannette DuHart,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under exemption category 46.101(b)(4), which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:101(b):

(4) Research involving the collection or study of existing data, documents, records, pathological specimens, or diagnostic specimens, if these sources are publicly available or if the information is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.

Please retain this letter for your records. Also, if you are conducting research as part of the requirements for a master's thesis or doctoral dissertation, this approval letter should be included as an appendix to your completed thesis or dissertation.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any changes to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by submitting a change in protocol form or a new application to the IRB and referencing the above IRB Exemption number.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible changes to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,
G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
The Graduate School

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Appendix T

Data collection Letter to participating school divisions

Participant Information

Subject line: Research data collection

Dear participant,

I greatly appreciate your participation in my research study.

It is now time to collect student data, as I have successfully defended my proposal and have received IRB approval.

As you noticed on my previous email, I am providing you with two data collection methods. I may visit your school division to pick up student data via flash drive or we may share data via email. Please let me know which method you prefer. The email access information will be shared at a later time if you were to choose to go that route. In order to facilitate the data collection process, I am sharing with you a spreadsheet I created. Find attached the data collection document. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Best regards,

Jannette

Appendix U

Data Collection Form

Participating school divisions will receive the following spreadsheet to collect English learners and Former English Learners data.

	English Learners	Participant identifier	Grade	Gender Male/Female	Date of birth	Age	Hispanic Yes/No	Caucasian	African American	Asian	Other	Ethnicity: Black, white, asian,	Free lunch Yes/No	Reduced Lunch Yes/No	Country of origin	Overall ELP level 16-17	Listening	Reading	Speaking	Writing	ELP Level 17-18	Listening	Reading	Speaking	Writing	EOC Reading SOL 16-17	EOC Reading SOL, Retake 1	EOC Reading SOL, Retake 2	EOC Reading SOL, Retake 3	EOC Reading SOL 17-18	EOC Reading SOL, Retake 1	EOC Reading SOL, Retake 2	EOC Reading SOL, Retake 3	FEL 1	FEL 2	FEL 3	FEL 4	LTELa Yes/No	Direct ELs Services Yes/No	Immigrant	Monitor	SpEd	SOA	504	GIFTED	Retained	Grade Retained (9, 10, 11,12)	Opt-Out (yes/No)	Home language	
1	Juan Del Pueblo	1	11	M	2/1/99	19	Y	Y				Y			Guatemala	3.4	4.2	2.1	5.3	2.4	3.9	4.2	3	4.9	2.3	356	307	325	356	407	375	407	N/A					N	Y	N	N	Y	Y	N	NO	Y	9	N	Spanish	EXAMPLE

EL — English learner
FEL — Formerly English learner
ELP — English Language Proficiency
LTEL — Long term English Leaner (5+ years as EL)
SOA — Standards of accrediatation adjustment (11 semesters or less in
IY — Immigrant (3 years or less in the USA)

Appendix V

Thank you Letter to participating school divisions

Participant Information

Subject line: Thank You

Dear participant,

Thank you so very much for participating in my research study. I really appreciate your

willingness to collect and supply student data.

It is helpful to have someone who has had experience with similar tasks and is

knowledgeable and willing to answer my many questions.

I know _____ is happy to have you in this department.

Let me know if you need anything from me.

Regards,

Jannette

Appendix W

Research Study Procedures

1. Sample: English Learners (ELs) and Former English Learners (FEL) at the high school level from three Virginia school districts.

2. Collect test scores on ACCESS for ELLs assessments and Virginia EOC Reading SOL assessment scores for 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 school year.

3. Collect two data points to account for changes in test rigor and format.

4. Permission to collect data from 3 school divisions will be requested. Complete and submit all forms based on the division's research protocol.

5. For this study, contact with participants is not required, as assessment data will be collected directly from the school division's testing coordinator with the permission of the division's superintendents or research committee.

6. Send an email with detail instructions of the procedure.

7. Defend research proposal.

8. Request the study approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) after a successful proposal defense.

9. After IRB approval is received, contact the division's testing coordinators via email to request access to the data and set an appointment for data retrieval or coordinate a secure folder to share student data.

10. Request data submission via email from the 3 participating school divisions:

    a. Provide a data collection form to participating school divisions.

    b. Correspond with school division's contact person.

    c. Schedule date to collect data with school division's contact person.

    d. Submit data files in a .csv format (please substitute students' names with a numerical identifier) to researcher via email,

    e. Transfer data to flash drive, and

    f. Maintain data in a secure location.

    g. Destroy memory stick after study is completed.

    h. Provide a copy of the study's results to each participating division.

11. Once data is collected, send a thank you letter to the school divisions for their participation.

12. After the data is collected and transferred to a spreadsheet, store the memory stick in a secure location. The data will be stored for one year, then it will be destroyed.

13. Data screening will be conducted to scan for errors and discrepancies.

14. Formal data analysis will commence.