CORRELATING ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNER CRCT SCORES ON THE BASIS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNER ACCESS SCORES

by

Nancy Louise McNeal

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this quantitative correlational study was to test the sociocultural theory that relates English language learner students' scores on the Georgia Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State to State (ACCESS) test to English language learner students' scores on the Georgia Criterion Referenced Competency Test (CRCT). The assessments scored students in language use and proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, writing, English/language arts, math, science and social studies. Specifically, the study assessed the predictive power of student scores on the ACCESS test on the criterion variable of student scores on the Georgia CRCT. The participants in the study were third grade English language learner students enrolled in a Northeast Georgia school system for the 2013-2014 school year. Once the data was gathered, descriptive statistics were computed before the correlational analysis. Pearson correlations were used to examine the relationships between variables. The results showed a strong positive significant correlation between student scores on the ACCESS test and student scores on the CRCT. The results are discussed in terms of policy and student learning.

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List of Abbreviations

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA)

Annual Measureable Achievement Objectives (AMAO)

Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State (ACCESS)

Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL)

Common Core Georgia Performance Standards (CCGPS)

Common Core State Standards (CCSS),

Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO)

Criterion Referenced Competency Test (CRCT)

English Language Development (ELD)

English Language Learners (ELL)

English Language Proficiency (ELP)

English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL).

Limited English Proficiency (LEP)

Local Education Agencies (LEAs)

Mediated Learning Experience (MLE)

National Governors Association Center (NGA)

No Child Left Behind Act of 2001(NCLB)

Proficiency Level (PL)

Quality Core Curriculum (QCC)

School year (SY)

Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM)

Standard error of measurement (*SE*)

Teach for America (TFA)

The New Teacher Project (TNTP)

World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment Consortium (WIDA)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

This study investigated whether there is a relationship between English language learner students' performance on the Georgia Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State (ACCESS) test and the Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Test (CRCT). Test prediction has been used for years as a tool to determine how well English language learner students will perform on standardized tests and to determine the appropriate accommodations needed for these students (Coltrane, 2002). The problem is choosing the appropriate test to reflect accurately what the student knows. This study was conducted to determine if the ACCESS test accurately reflects academic knowledge of English language learner students. This information can then be used for ability grouping and appropriate test accommodations in preparation for when the students take the Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Test.

Background

Accountability in the public school system is driven by assessment. With the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001(No Child Left Behind [NCLB], 2002) school systems must show that all students are meeting the minimum proficiency standards determined for their grade level. In the past, English language learner students were not at all times included in high stakes testing (Coltrane, 2002). This omission led to a lack of accountability and inconsistency in the testing process. The problem for school systems is that NCLB requires that 100 percent of students, including those students within subgroups such as English language learners, achieve the same standards met by their peers. If schools fail to achieve this mandate, they will not qualify as a school meeting adequate yearly progress. This result will lead to sanctions being placed upon the school with harsher guidelines to follow (U. S. Department of Education, 2012). In order to achieve this objective, schools must identify English language

learner students who are struggling and develop curriculum that will strengthen students' deficits.

Research has been conducted on how English language learner students perform on high-stakes tests. The majority of the research indicates that English language learners are taking tests that "were designed for English-speaking students and, as such, may be culturally and linguistically inappropriate for ELLs" (Honigsfeld & Giouroukakis, 2011, p. 8). Such examinations may include test questions about issues specific to the culture in the U. S. Therefore, English language learners would be at a disadvantage. Another common problem that arises in the research is that teachers all too often resort to teaching to the test. This approach would result in a void of meaningful instruction and cultural emphasis (Collier & Thomas, 2010). According to recent research, students benefit from appropriate cultural and linguistic instructional practices (Honigsfeld & Giouroukakis, 2011).

This proposed study used the ACCESS test to extend the existing research on test prediction and accommodation. According to Fox and Fairbairn (2011), the ACCESS test for ELL students "is a large-scale, high-takes,standards-based, and criterion-referenced English language proficiency test administered in the USA annually to more than 840,000 English language learners." (p. 425). The World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment Consortium (WIDA), which was formed in 2003 through the U.S. Department of Education in order to develop a standards based assessment for English language learners and to satisfy the requirements of NCLB, developed the test.

The test assesses both social and academic English use in reading, speaking, listening and writing. It further assesses language use in language arts, math, science and social studies and is aligned with WIDA proficiency standards (Fox & Fairbairn, 2011). The test takes careful

consideration of the language used throughout the test so that the test a student takes is in accordance with that student's individual proficiency level. There are also adequate graphic and visual supports throughout the test for appropriate support (Fox & Fairbairn, 2011). Ensuring language use suited to individual proficiency and the use of graphic and visual supports throughout the test align with the theoretical framework applied in this study. The sociocultural approach to children's learning involves the use of culture in learning. Culture consists of social settings and includes "shared symbols, such as images, concepts, and narratives, to make sense of their experience" (Miller, 2011, p. 172). This study will seek to determine if a relationship exists between the ACCESS test and the Criterion-Referenced Competency Test.

Problem Statement

Standardized tests in the U. S. are given to ELL students in English. Many English language learner students have not developed a proficiency in English and are struggling to score well on high-stakes tests (Coltrane, 2002). In order to meet the needs of this growing population, accurate data is needed. Ability grouping, interventions, and curricular tracks are provided for such students in order to obtain reliable test data. With millions of dollars spent on test preparation, schools also need a reliable method for predicting student performance on high-stakes tests (Han & Bridglall, 2009). Additionally, the number of immigrant, school-aged students is projected to increase by 5 million students in the U. S. by 2020 (Han & Bridglall, 2009). Undoubtedly, a significant number of these students will be classified as English language learner students and require special services in our school systems. In order to meet the needs of these students, school administrators have turned to test prediction models for improved identification of the academic and language needs of the English language learner population. This study sought to determine if there is a relationship between English language learner

students ACCESS test scores and achievement on the Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Test.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this quantitative correlational study is to test the relationship of students' scores on the ACCESS test to their scores on the Criterion-Referenced Competency Test. Specifically, the study assessed the predictive power of the ACCESS test on the Criterion-Referenced Competency Test for English language learner students. The study relates ACCESS scores to Criterion-Referenced Competency Test scores for English language learner students who are in a Northeast Georgia school system. The independent variable is defined as scores on the ACCESS test in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The dependent variable is defined as Criterion-Referenced Competency Test scores in English/language arts, math, science and social studies.

Significance of the Study

The ACCESS test scores were found to be strong predictors of Criterion-Referenced Competency Test scores. Therefore, ready data that the school system can use for instructional interventions, curriculum planning, ability grouping, and appropriate test accommodation interventions are available. Furthermore, having predictive data for teachers to use at the beginning of a school year allows for interventions to be implemented on the first day of school, thus eliminating wasted time.

Research Questions

RQ1: Is there a relationship between student performance on the Georgia Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State test measuring proficiency in

listening, speaking, reading and writing and the Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Test in listening, speaking, reading and writing?

RQ2: Is there a relationship between student performance on the Georgia Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State test measuring proficiency in listening, speaking, reading and writing and the Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Tests measuring language use in math, science, and social studies?

Null Hypotheses

$H_0$1: There is no significant correlation between student performance on the Georgia Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State test measuring proficiency in listening and student performance on the Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Test in listening.

$H_0$2: There is no significant correlation between student performance on the Georgia Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State test measuring proficiency in speaking and student performance on the Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Test in speaking.

$H_0$3: There is no significant correlation between student performance on the Georgia Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State test measuring proficiency in reading and student performance on the Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Test in reading.

$H_0$4: There is no significant correlation between student performance on the Georgia Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State test measuring proficiency in writing and student performance on the Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Test in writing.

$H_0$5: There is no significant correlation between student performance on the Georgia Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State test measuring proficiency in listening and student performance on the Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Test measuring language use in math.

$H_0$6: There is no significant correlation between student performance on the Georgia Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State test measuring proficiency in speaking and student performance on the Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Test measuring language use in math.

$H_0$7: There is no significant correlation between student performance on the Georgia Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State test measuring proficiency in reading and student performance on the Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Test measuring language use in math.

$H_0$8: There is no significant correlation between student performance on the Georgia Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State test measuring proficiency in writing and student performance on the Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Test measuring language use in math.

$H_0$9: There is no significant correlation between student performance on the Georgia Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State test measuring proficiency in listening and student performance on the Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Test measuring language use in science.

$H_0$10: There is no significant correlation between student performance on the Georgia Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State test measuring

proficiency in speaking and student performance on the Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Test measuring language use in science.

$H_0$11: There is no significant correlation between student performance on the Georgia Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State test measuring proficiency in reading and student performance on the Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Test measuring language use in science.

$H_0$12: There is no significant correlation between student performance on the Georgia Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State test measuring proficiency in writing and student performance on the Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Test measuring language use in science.

$H_0$13: There is no significant correlation between student performance on the Georgia Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State test measuring proficiency in listening and student performance on the Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Test measuring language use in social studies.

$H_0$14: There is no significant correlation between student performance on the Georgia Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State test measuring proficiency in speaking and student performance on the Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Test measuring language use in social studies.

$H_0$15: There is no significant correlation between student performance on the Georgia Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State test measuring proficiency in reading and student performance on the Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Test measuring language use in social studies.

$H_0$16: There is no significant correlation between student performance on the Georgia Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State test measuring proficiency in writing and student performance on the Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Test measuring language use in social studies.

Identification of Variables

The independent variable is defined as the scores on the Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State test in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The dependent variable is defined as Criterion-Referenced Competency Test scores in English/language arts, math, science, and social studies.

Definitions

All terms are defined by the author unless otherwise designated.

1. *ACCESS test* - Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State for English Language Learners (*ACCESS for ELLs*®), is a large-scale, high-stakes, standards-based, and criterion-referenced English language proficiency test (Fox & Fairbairn, 2011).
2. *AARA* - American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, is an act passed by Congress and the President intended to be a stimulus in the form of tax cuts, funding, federal contracts, grants and loans (Recovery.gov, 2010).
3. *CCSS* - Common Core State Standards, are a set of kindergarten – 12^{th} grade standards developed by The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) in English language arts, mathematics, literacy in science, and history/social studies (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2012).

4. *CCSSO* - Council of Chief State School Officers is a national, nonprofit membership organization of educational leaders from each state (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010).

5. *CRCT* - Criterion Referenced Competency Test is a test designed to measure how well students acquire the skills and knowledge described in the state adopted curriculum including the Common Core Georgia Performance Standards (CCGPS) in reading, English/language arts, and mathematics and the Georgia Performance Standards (GPS) in science and social studies (Georgia Department of Education, 2012a).

6. *ELLs* – English Language Learners.

7. *ELD* - English Language Development.

8. *ELP* - English Language Proficiency.

9. *ESOL* - English to Speakers of Other Languages (Georgia Department of Education, 2012).

10. *LEAs* - Local Education Agencies.

11. *MLE* - Mediated Learning Experience (Feuerstein, 1981).

12. *NCLB* - No Child Left Behind is a Federal education act signed into law in 2001

13. *NGA Center* - National Governors Association Center for Best Practices

14. *RT1* - Race to the Top Phase One (U. S. Department of Education, 2009).

15. *RT2* - Race to the Top Phase Two (U. S. Department of Education, 2009).

16. *RT3* - Race to the Top Phase Three (U. S. Department of Education, 2009).

17. *STEM* - Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics.

18. *TFA* - Teach for America.

19. *TNTP* - The New Teacher Project.

20. *WIDA* - World Class Instructional Design and Assessment was created 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 (WIDA, 2010).

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Standardized assessments have become the measurement tool to gauge student and school success. With the passage of No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2001), all students in grades three through eight must be assessed in reading and math (Coltrane, 2002). This requirement, while increasing standards for students, can be a disadvantage for English language learners (ELLs). As Coltrane (2002) notes, "The vast majority of high-stakes tests are written and administered only in English, often leaving ELLs at a disadvantage and raising questions as to how the test results should be interpreted" (para. 4). Many students end up taking a test in a language they are not proficient in. In addition, what often is at stake is funding for schools, grade promotion, and graduation. With so much importance placed upon these tests, schools need to provide the instruction necessary for students to perform well on these tests. The following theoretical framework will outline how teachers can aid their students in language acquisition and test-taking skills.

Theoretical Background

The theoretical foundation for this study begins with the sociocultural theory of Vygotsky (1978). In his work with children, Vygotsky observed that the mind is naturally social. In his work, Vygotsky (1978) maintained "The path from object to child and from child to object passes through another person" (p. 30). Thus, children develop in a social context that includes an activity. The activities children participate in are defined by their culture. Socioculturists place emphasis on a child's cultural practice defining it as "an event that occurs routinely in everyday life in the culture" (Miller, 2011, p. 171). These routine events include the activities

within the classroom. As children develop, they increase their interactions with the activity and with others. This growth leads to transformation in cognition for the child.

In Vygotsky's zone of proximal development, cognition is explained by examining a child's actual development level and a child's potential development level. Here, the classroom culture of the teacher and peers help can aid English language learner students in reaching their potential development level. Vygotsky explained, "Learning awakens a variety of internal developmental processes that are able to operate only when the child is interacting with people in his environment and in cooperation with his peers" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 90). This interaction acts as a scaffold as English language learner students construct new knowledge and mastery.

Another theorist who examined the role of interaction among children, activities and adults is Feuerstein (1981). Feuerstein's theory of Mediated Learning Experience (MLE) asserts that MLE:

> Occurs in a situation when experienced, well intentioned and active human beings (parents, teachers, more competent peers) interpose themselves between the child and the sources of stimulation. They select, change, schedule and interpret stimuli to the child, thus creating in him or her an experience of mediated learning. (Kozulin, 2002, p. 11-12)

This type of instruction can be particularly helpful for English language learner students because the teacher is able to act as the mediator and get involved with the student's thinking process.

According to Feuerstein (1981), the mediator must use four interventions. First, the mediator helps the student identify how he/she is using his/her brain in thinking about the problem. Next, reciprocity must be present. Reciprocity refers to intentionality, and that "it is not possible to have an interaction without some level of shared interest and investment; there cannot be an effective sender without a willing receiver" (Feuerstein, Klein, & Tannenbaum,

1991, p. 276). Then, mediation of meaning happens as the mediator interprets the significance of the learning for the learner while encouraging him/her to reflect upon how the solution was reached. Finally, transcendence must occur as the learning experience is transferred into new situations (Gonzalez, Palencia, Umana, Galindo, & Villafrade, 2008, p. 312). Using this model, English language learners are led to discover knowledge which encourages intrinsic learning. Similar to Vygotsky's model, scaffolding helps take learners from where they are to where they can be with mediation.

Historical Background

The United States is known as a melting pot (U. S. Department of State, 2010). This term is used to signify many cultures coming together through immigration and assimilating into one American culture. However, this scenario has changed over the history of immigration in our country. Immigration to North America has been a matter of significance since before the foundations of our nation (U. S. Department of State, 2010). Beginning with the Colonists, people groups have always had divisions of language and culture. Historically, the goal of immigration policy was to allow people groups into the U. S. using a quota system. This system allowed for immigrants to learn the American culture and language and then to adopt it as their own. However, the Hart-Celler Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 (Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, 1965) changed this policy. The act "abolished the national origins quota system (originally established in 1921 and most recently modified in 1952), while attempting to keep immigration to a manageable level" (Center for Immigration Studies, 1995, para. 18). With an unbalanced number of immigrants, pockets of people groups form which can become a barrier to language acquisition. Espenshade & Fu (1997) note language environment:

> Sociologists…emphasize that the density, size, and residential segregation of non-English speaking immigrant groups foster the maintenance of minority-language institutions and socially structured encounters, further reinforcing the use of the immigrant's mother tongue and reducing opportunities and incentives to learn English. (para. 15)

Historical Method of English Acquisition

According to the U. S. Census Bureau (2007), English is the most common spoken language in the United States. Therefore, it is important for students to become proficient in English to be successful in school and society. Bilingual education, or second language acquisition, has been a part of our school system since the beginning of our nation. As immigrants have come to our country, our school systems have had to develop ways in which to educate students who are acquiring a second language. A variety of approaches have been incorporated. Schools developed specifically for instruction in the student's primary language were tried early on and total immersion in English is also an approach that has been taken.

Early attempts at bilingual education in the pre 1800's resulted in private parochial schools and in some cases, the immigrants opened their own schools (Cerda & Hernandez, 2006). We see from more recent history that by the 1920s, 34 states had laws mandating English-only instruction. However, the 1958 National Defense Education Act (National Defense Education Act of 1958, 1958) provided aid for English as a Second Language programs (Cerda & Hernandez, 2006).

The largest legislation to date came in 1968 with the Bilingual Education Act of 1968 (1968). This law provided for a number of items. It mandated that school systems provide bilingual education programs, provided funding to support school systems to try approaches that

incorporated native-language instruction; it decriminalized use of a second language in the classroom, and initially funded 76 bilingual education programs and served students from 14 different language groups (Cerda & Hernandez, 2006).

With the changing legislation and lack of leadership concerning language instruction for English language learner students, it is easy to understand how these students could fall behind the standards set for our students. Most recently, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB, 2002) addressed instruction for English language learner students. NCLB requires that all teachers teaching bilingual education must be fluent in English, and it gives parents the option to enroll their child in a bilingual program. However, after three years in a bilingual program, English-only instruction must be employed (Cerda & Hernandez, 2006).

Common Core Standards Based Curriculum

Before we examine ELL students' curriculum and assessment requirements in depth, it may be beneficial to look first at recent reforms that have impacted education instruction. The use of Common Core Standards in curriculum and assessment has changed educational requirements for ELL and non-ELL students alike. In an attempt to establish common curriculum goals and accurately reflect what students know and can do, The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the National Governors Association (NGA) Center for Best Practices partnered together to develop kindergarten through twelfth grade Common Core state Standards in English language arts, mathematics, literacy in science, and history/social studies. The standards were adopted by forty-five states (including Georgia), the District of Columbia, and two territories. Common Core standards were created to "clearly communicate what is expected of students at each grade level" (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010, para. 2). The implementation of a

consistent framework in curriculum development allows individual benchmarks to be set for each student. The National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers (2010) introduce the standards in this way:

> Teachers, parents and community leaders have all weighed in to help create the Common Core State Standards. The standards clearly communicate what is expected of students at each grade level. This will allow our teachers to be better equipped to know exactly what they need to do to help students learn and establish individualized benchmarks for them. The Common Core State Standards focus on core conceptual understandings and procedures starting in the early grades, thus enabling teachers to take the time needed to teach core concepts and procedures well- and to give students the opportunity to master them. (para. 2)

Supporters of core curriculum say that with contributions from all stakeholders, a consistent framework has been put into place that will prepare students for their current and future educational challenges. The standards encourage equity by making certain that all students, regardless of their home state, are equipped with the necessary knowledge to work in partnership and compete with their peers in preparation for college, careers in the United States, and larger world (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). This approach promotes collaboration between the states instead of the previous system of standards that were exclusive to each state. Now uniformity can exist in a range of instruction and materials including textbooks, digital media, setting of goals, and assessments.

Opponents of Common Core Curriculum

While many states have signed onto these reforms and are implementing Common Core standards, it must be noted that there are opponents of the new standards. There are valid criticisms that need to be addressed when comparing Common Core standards to those of other nations. The majority of these criticisms have come with the implementation of the math standards. Stanford University's mathematics professor R. James Milgram, who served on the Common Core Validation Committee, declined to sign off on the standards and wrote:

> This is where the problem with these standards is most marked. While the difference between these standards and those of the top states at the end of eighth grade is perhaps somewhat more than one year, the difference is more like two years when compared to the expectations of the high achieving countries-particularly most of the nations of East Asia. (Wurman & Wilson, 2012, p. 49)

Indeed, this viewpoint is even acknowledged by one of the three main writers of the Common Core math standards. Wurman and Wilson (2012) spoke about Professor William McCallum's views, saying "While acknowledging the concerns about front-loading demand in early grades, [McCallum] said that the overall standards would not be too high, certainly not in comparison [with] other nations, including East Asia, where math education excels" (p. 49). Additionally, while the Common Core website boasts of its ability to prepare students for college, there are challengers that say just the opposite. Ze'ev Wurman, a former U. S. Department of Education official under George W. Bush, claims that the standards have actually been lowered:

> College readiness is defined by what colleges require as prerequisites from their incoming freshmen. The enrollment requirements of four-year state colleges overwhelmingly consist of at least three years of high school mathematics including algebra 1, algebra 2, and geometry, or beyond. Yet Common Core's "college readiness" definition omits content typically considered part of algebra 2 (and geometry), such as complex numbers, vectors, trigonometry, polynomial identities, the Binomial Theorem, logarithms, logarithmic and exponential functions, composite and inverse functions, matrices, ellipses and hyperbolae, and a few more. (Wurman, & Wilson, 2012, p. 49)

Clearly, there are inconsistencies in viewpoints. The mission statement of the Common Core standards proclaims that the standards were formed to communicate clearly what students should know and be able to do. Yet, there are many, including members of their own validation committee, who do not agree with the standards set. "We, in this country, are still not on the same page about what content is most important, even if everyone says they'll take Common Core" (Wurman & Wilson, 2012, p. 49).

Further content discrepancies exist within the language arts standards as well. Many concerns have been raised about the omission of English literature and other traditional foundations in education including history and science, marking a sharp turn from traditional education. "For many…the new standards represent a troubling departure from an expansive vision of liberal arts education stretching from its origins in antiquity to the founding of 19th century public schools and continuing through the present" (Bartholomew, 2012, p. 82). This view asserts that "students should be broadly

educated in the traditions, documents, literature, history, and understandings imparted by their forebears" (Bartholomew, 2012, p. 82). This shift may be because of the many voices that say students should be prepared to compete in a global economy. For example:

> In the area of English language arts, the common core places applications- identifying main ideas, writing clearly, understanding text and sentence structure, knowing vocabulary and mechanics, and so on- squarely in the center ring to drive analytic and written communication skills taught across the curriculum in science, social studies, and technical subjects. (Bartholomew, 2012, p. 83)

This approach is a shift from rigorous learning of literature and essay writing to a growing importance on demonstrating knowledge of informational texts highlighting their analytical reasoning skills. The probable result is "classrooms built upon the idea of English as communication-of text with a sender, a message, a receiver" (Bartholomew, 2012, p. 83), as opposed to "the traditional focus reflecting the classical idea that through literature we come to understand the patterns and truths within ourselves and about our world" (Bartholomew, 2012, p. 84). While the Common Core does support literature in their objectives, it is lacking in assessment within this content area. Many fear that as assessment drives instruction, literature will be lost as schools compete for grant monies. The critics' fears could be summarized in this way:

> Rewarding A while hoping for B is exactly what schools have been doing under the continuing drill-and-test climate of No Child Left Behind, as we reward annually yearly progress achieved by whatever draconian means it

> takes, while hoping that students and their teachers are engaged in a mutual love of learning. Once this approach is applied to an unrestrained common core curriculum, it is only a slight exaggeration to say that we could see technically themed lessons flood the curriculum-while hoping that students will somehow develop an appreciation of the beauty and tragedy of our humanity and their own place in this world. (Bartholomew, 2012, p. 85)

Common Core Standards Based Assessment

Before standards based assessments, the most prevalent form of testing was the giving of grades. "In the past most education systems assessed student results in terms of marks and these marks were reported in the context of a norm-referenced model" (Tognolini & Stanley, 2007, p. 134). Part of the difficulty in using this system is that the grades themselves are vague unless properly defined and then that definition communicated appropriately. Tognolini & Stanley (2007) explain, "While marks have been used to summarize student achievement it must be remembered that marks by themselves have no clear meaning. They need to be referenced to some external criterion to be given explicit meaning" (p. 134). They further state:

> For example, one piece of information that is required is the maximum score for the task or test. Another piece of information that is required is the mean or average mark of the group on the examination or test. This average gives an indication of the relative difficulty of the test for the group taking the test. In some situations the spread of the marks on the test (standard deviation) is also provided to give an indication of how the scores of the students on the test were spread out around the average or mean. (p. 134)

While the advantage to this system is the consistency of interpretation of the grades annually or in relation to the curriculum, a disadvantage is that it does not provide much information about what the students individually know. "It provides little meaningful information about what students know and can do other than the implicit understanding made about the standard of the group performance remaining constant from year-to-year and from subject-to-subject" (Togolini & Stanley, 2007, p. 135). In an attempt to remedy these disadvantages, standards based curriculum and assessment have been implemented in many states. When assessment takes place, students are evaluated on achievement of mastering the standard, not comparing their scores to that of their peers. It is a move toward a criterion-referenced grading system where students are assessed in relation to learning a task instead of a norm-referenced grading system where students are assessed in relation to their status within a group. Tognolini & Stanley (2007) characterize it this way: "It builds upon criterion referencing, but instead of referencing achievement to the myriad of behaviours that comprise an examination, course or unit of study, the achievement is referenced to predetermined standards of performance. It is called standards referencing" (p. 131).

This method of instruction and assessment is gaining support with teachers and administrators because "a standards-referenced system comprises a curriculum, syllabus or framework that through its statement of aims, objectives, learning outcomes and content describes what it means for a student to grow in an area of learning" (Tognolini & Stanley, 2007, p. 133). Thus, with the standards referencing system, students are given time to learn skills in the curriculum. If the student does not achieve the skill right away,

he or she has time to try again until the skill is mastered, meeting the individual benchmark in his/her own developmental time frame.

Common Core Standards for ELLs

With the implementation of core standards curriculum, ELL students are required to meet all standards and objectives the same as non-ELL students. Conversely, "ELLs have the challenge of learning academic content and oral and written language skills and conventions simultaneously" (Coleman & Goldenberg, 2012, p. 46). While educational equity is the goal in revised instruction and assessment, it may take ELL students a considerable amount of time to attain the language needed to be successful on these assessments. That is why in the NCLB legislation, each state is required to develop English language proficiency (ELP) standards to monitor student progress in achieving ELP while also setting reasonable objectives (Wolf, Farnsworth, & Herman, 2008). The state of Georgia uses the WIDA Consortium English Language Development (ELD) standards. "Classroom teachers integrate these ELD standards with the Georgia Performance Standards to enable ELs to both communicate in English and demonstrate their academic, social, and cultural proficiency" (Georgia Department of Education, 2012, para. 1).

The Common Core standards website does not segregate the curriculum for ELL students, but it only concedes the challenges associated with their dilemma and gives suggestions for ELL supports. They include:

(1) Appropriate instructional supports to make grade-level course work comprehensible.

(2) Modified assessments that allow ELLs to demonstrate their content knowledge.

(3) Additional time for ELLs to complete tasks and assessments.

(4) Opportunities for classroom interactions (both listening and speaking) that develop concepts and academic language in the disciplines.

(5) Opportunities for ELLs to interact with proficient English speakers.

(6) Opportunities for ELLs to build on their strengths, prior experiences, and background knowledge.

(7) Qualified teachers who use practices found to be effective in improving student achievement. (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2010, p. 1-2)

While these supports are appropriate, some argue that they are too vague and are lacking specificity. The challenge for teachers is to make the academic content accessible to ELL students while also giving them the specific supports they need in oral and written language skills necessary to use that content. It is helpful to remember that ELL students are not very different from English speaking students. Coleman and Goldenberg (2012) state, "Effective teaching for ELLs is similar in many ways to effective teaching for English speakers. All learners benefit from clear goals and objectives" (p. 48). Clear content instruction usually provides tasks that are well-structured with appropriate interaction time and frequent assessment to guide instruction. However, ELLs may also need "focused development of oral reading fluency, vocabulary, reading comprehension, and writing in addition to enriched literacy instruction that targets complex sets of skill and concepts" (Coleman & Goldenberg, 2012, p. 48). Increased attention to vocabulary will help ELL students in language acquisition as well as in their reading comprehension. Writing practice helps develop their awareness of print and fosters schema connections. These more specific strategies are important because teachers need explicit strategies they can incorporate into their teaching as they help the students learn the

rigorous content while also learning a new language. Coleman & Goldenberg (2012) list additional specific supports:

(1) Target both language and content objectives in all lessons.

(2) Make instruction and expectations extremely clear, focused, and systematic.

(3) Employ visuals, charts, and diagrams to aid comprehension.

(4) Use the primary language for support (e. g., preview what students will read and use cognates for vocabulary instruction).

(5) Choose reading matter with familiar content.

(6) Provide additional practice and repetition. (Coleman & Goldenberg, 2012, p. 48)

As teachers implement these strategies, it is important to assess the success of these supports for ELL students. This is an important element in the standards based curriculum. It is designed to give students, parents, and teachers feedback as benchmarks are set. The assessments should guide the curriculum. "Teachers and administrators in schools and districts can learn those strategies and determine for themselves which ones are practical, feasible, and effective in their particular situations" (Coleman & Goldenberg, 2012, p. 48).

Race to the Top

President Barak Obama signed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009 into law on February 17, 2009. This legislation provides for investment in certain sectors of our nation, one being education. The Race to the Top executive summary (U.S. Department of Education, 2009) categorizes the investment in this way: "The ARRA lays the foundation for education reform by supporting investments in innovative strategies that are most likely to lead to improved results for students, long-term gains in school and school system

capacity, and increased productivity and effectiveness" (p. 2). The ARRA initially provided $4.35 billion in Race to the Top funds, available to states in a competitive grant program. The grant program rewards school systems that take steps toward reforms in the following areas:

> (1) Adopting standards and assessments that prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace and to compete in the global economy.
>
> (2) Building data systems that measure student growth and success, and inform teachers and principals about how they can improve instruction.
>
> (3) Recruiting, developing, rewarding and retaining effective teachers and principals, especially where they are needed most.
>
> (4) Turning around our lowest-achieving schools. (Race to the Top Executive Summary, 2009, p. 2)

States may apply for the grant money and the grants will be distributed in two phases. States who are ready to meet the requirements may apply in the first phase. If states need more time to put reforms into place, they may wait and apply in the second phase. If a state applies for a grant in the first phase but does not receive the grant, they may reapply in the second phase. Once awarded grant money, states may not apply in upcoming phases. The Race to the Top Executive Summary lays out selection criteria and defines the point system that is used to award states their score. Additionally, the summary defines eligibility requirements for the states as:

> (1) The state's applications for funding under Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund program must be approved by the Department prior to the state being awarded a Race to the Top grant.
>
> (2) At the time the state submits its application, there must not be any legal, statutory, or regulatory barriers at the state level to linking data on student

> achievement (as defined in this notice) or student growth (as defined in this notice) to teachers and principals for the purpose of teacher and principal evaluation. (U. S. Department of Education, 2009, p. 4).

Race to the Top in Georgia

Georgia applied for the Race to the Top federal grant in phase one. Although, there were only two winners in phase one (Delaware and Tennessee), Georgia was one of 16 finalists (U. S. Department of Education, 2009, p. 1). Georgia again applied for the grant in phase two and was one of 10 winning applications. Georgia's vision as set forth in their application states:

> To equip all Georgia students, through effective teachers and leaders through creating the right conditions in Georgia's schools and classrooms, with the knowledge and skills to empower them to 1) graduate from high school, 2) be successful in college and/or professional careers, and 3) be competitive with their peers throughout the United States and the world. (Georgia Department of Education, 2012b, para. 3)

The Governor's Office, the Georgia Department of Education, the Governor's Office of Student Achievement, and education stakeholders partnered together to write Georgia's winning application. Georgia was awarded $400 million in grant monies that will be implemented into 26 school systems within the state:

> Half of the funds will remain at the state level and half will go directly to partnering local education authorities…these districts, which make up 40 percent of public school students, 46 percent of Georgia's students in poverty, 53 percent of Georgia's African American students, 48 percent of Hispanics and 68 percent

> of the state's lowest achieving schools. (Georgia Department of Education, 2012b, para. 5)

These funds were awarded during the first year of implementation in Georgia, and the state saw many accomplishments. These include "awarding the State's first five Race to the Top Innovation Fund competitive grants, securing the Georgia Board of Education's approval for key contracts across the reform areas, and developing a comprehensive project management system" (Georgia Department of Education, 2011, p. 4). The Race to the Top Innovation Fund is awarded to Local Education Agencies (LEAs), which are colleges and businesses that partner together to identify reforms through such things as learning opportunities and teacher effectiveness. Georgia awarded five competitive grants in the summer of 2011. The Georgia Board of Education's approval of key contracts included the state partnering with Teach for America (TFA) and The New Teacher Project (TNTP) in order to ensure that Georgia is filling classrooms with effective and innovative teachers. Georgia's Comprehensive Project Management System consisted of implementing the use of SharePoint. SharePoint is a document-managing website that educators can use to share information between the State and contributing LEAs.

Georgia's first year of implementation also included some challenges that were identified in order to show ongoing improvement for subsequent years. Georgia failed to meet the timeline requirements put forth in their application and additionally had challenges with the hiring of qualified staff members. Along with these failings, Georgia also went through the election of a new Governor and State Superintendent of Education.

These challenges were to be rectified in the second year of implementation (Georgia Department of Education, 2011).

Year two of Georgia's Race to the Top implementation saw increased accomplishments in reforms. The Race to the Top Innovative Fund awards increased from five to 24 grants. LEAs resources increased to include webinars, newsletters and curriculum frameworks. Additionally, teachers received:

> Professional development, face-to-face support from English language arts (ELA) and mathematics specialists that will help implement the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), referred to as the Common Core Georgia Performance Standards (CCGPS) in Georgia in school year (SY) 2012-2013. (Georgia Department of Education, 2012b, p. 3)

Finally, Georgia remained on their scheduled timeframe in development of their data system. The challenges that Georgia continues to face have to do with their educator evaluation system, benchmark assessments, and implementation of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields (Georgia Department of Education, 2012b).

In looking ahead to implementation of Race to the Top for year three, Georgia has identified clear and reasonable goals. First, the state plans to expand processes that will help them manage their Race to the Top projects. Second, it will build upon their current formative and benchmark assessments. Additionally, it will help LEAs to fully implement the CCGPS. Finally, Georgia plans to finalize its educator evaluation system (Georgia Department of Education, 2012b).

Race to the Top for ELLs

As Race to the Top is in its third year of implementation, states have already begun to implement reforms that are aimed to improve student achievement. However, little has been said about how this legislation will particularly impact ELL students. It is important for future research to examine how RTT can provide instruction and assessment opportunities for ELL students. Linquanti (2009) gives a list of specific factors to consider when evaluating RTT's impact of ELLs. He cautions that there is a great deal of variation within the ELL population:

(1) U. S. born vs. Recent Immigrant.

(2) Tine in U. S. school/age-grade on entry.

(3) Literate vs. not (prior schooling).

(4) School attendance/consistency.

(5) Beginner vs. Intermediate vs. Advanced ELP (overall composite vs. subskills).

(6) Socio-cultural/dialectical differences. (Linquanti, 2009, p. 3)

English to Speakers of Other Languages in Georgia

The state funded instructional program for English language learners in Georgia is called English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). This program, enacted in 1985, serves English language learners in grades K-12 according to Georgia School Law Section 20-2-156 Code 1981, Sec. 20-2-156 (Georgia Department of Education, (2009). The program is aligned with the state and with World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) standards and Georgia is an official member of the WIDA consortium. There are five WIDA English Language Proficiency Standards that measure common standards and progress for English language learners. Thus, students in the ESOL program must demonstrate English proficiency in order to exit the

program. The state of Georgia has approved six delivery models available to schools servicing English language learners:

(1) The pull-out model provides for English language learner students to be taken out of non-academic class time for small group instruction in language acquisition.

(2) The push-in model provides for English language learner students to remain in their regular classroom while receiving instruction in content from their classroom teacher and language instruction from the ESOL teacher using a co-teaching model.

(3) The cluster center model provides for English language learner students to be transported for instruction with other students from two or more schools. This model is for intensive training.

(4) The resource center/laboratory model provides for English language learner students to receive language instruction in a group setting using multi-media materials.

(5) The scheduled class model provides for students in middle or high school to receive instruction in language acquisition as well as content instruction in a class consisting only of English language learner students.

(6) Schools may implement an alternative model if approved in advance by the Department of Education. Criteria for this model can be found in the Georgia Department of Education Title III ESOL Resource Guide. (Georgia Department of Education, 2009)

Assessment

Because of the language barrier, English language learner students have not typically been included in standardized tests. Some factors that have contributed to this practice have been the transient nature of the English language learner population, but also because students who cannot speak English find it difficult to be assessed in that language. "In the past most states have typically exempted students who have been in the United States or in an ESL/bilingual program for less than 3 years or who have not attained a certain level of English proficiency" (Holmes, Hedlund, & Nickerson, 2000). With the passage of No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2002), instruction for English language learners was addressed as well as assessment. In regards to assessment, NCLB mandates that every state assess every public school student's growth in reading and math for students in grades three through eight (NCLB, 2002). Additionally, the students must be assessed once again between grades 10-12 (Cerda & Hernandez, 2006). While it is important to assess English language learner students and to hold them to equally high standards, difficulties crop up regarding the validity and reliability of standardized tests for this population. It is important to analyze what the test is measuring. Because of the language barriers, it is important to establish whether the test is measuring academic skills or if it is measuring language skills. If the test simply reflects language skills, then the reliability of the test is questionable because of its failure to assess academic knowledge.

Another problem that can arise with the reliability of standardized tests is their reference to cultural situations that English language learners may have no schema of:

> Test items may contain references to ideas or events that are unfamiliar to ELLs because they have not been exposed to similar concepts in their native culture and have not lived in the United States for a long period of time. (Coltrane, 2002, p. 1)

Therefore, English language learner students who would be able to answer a question in their native language may not be able to answer a similar question from the perspective of a U. S. citizen. In an attempt to remedy these difficulties, accommodations are allowed in most cases. Some common accommodations include: increased time or breaks, small group setting, an explanation of directions or in some cases a translation into the students' primary language, and allowing English language learners to respond in their native language or dictate their responses to the test supervisor (Coltrane, 2002).

Suggestions for Instruction

Teachers who work with English language learners can implement curricula that will represent cultural and linguistic standards. First, the curriculum must be aligned to the state standards to ensure the proper content is being covered. Next, teachers can give attention to cultural and linguistic design. Honigsfeld & Giouroukakis (2011) give five culturally responsive practices and six linguistically responsive practices:

Culturally Responsive Practices

(1) Incorporate content topics and instructional materials and resources that are relevant to students' diverse home cultures.

(2) Relate to and validate English language learners' out-of-school, lived experiences by addressing local issues and current events embedded in the taught curriculum.

(3) Use a variety of motivational techniques that allow students to engage with the curriculum in authentic and personally meaningful ways.

(4) Embrace your English language learners' "funds of knowledge" (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992) and allow them to show their expertise (rather than deficiencies) in the classroom.

(5) Expand your ongoing, formative assessments to include authentic, performance based, project-based or task-based assessment tools. Rather than relying on outcomes from one measure, give students multiple opportunities to demonstrate their content and linguistic knowledge.

Linguistically Responsive Practices

(1) Use chunking by breaking down challenging academic tasks to make learning manageable. Offer step-by-step linguistic modeling through think-alouds, read-alouds, and write-alouds.

(2) Provide adequate wait time for students to process and respond to questions and prompts.

(3) Create ample opportunities for oral rehearsal of new skills through small-group interactions and other cooperative group structures.

(4) Modify reading assignments, worksheets, and both in-class and homework assignments by simplifying the linguistic complexity.

(5) Use students' native language for clarification and to teach dictionary skills.

(6) Introduce key testing vocabulary and sentence structures unique to standardized tests. (Honigsfeld and Giouroukakis, 2011, p. 9)

Suggestions for Assessment

In addition to ensuring that the curriculum is appropriately selected for English language learners, teachers who have input in selecting the assessments can ensure that the tests reflect the

curriculum. "Educators who are responsible for selecting the tests that will be used for high-stakes assessment must examine how closely a test reflects the curriculum and standards being used in their state or district" (Coltrane, 2011, para. 12). It is for this reason that teachers of English language learner students should be included in the test selection process. Another important point to remember in regards to test selection is accommodations. When choosing appropriate accommodations, teachers should examine which handicaps the accommodations will aid. For example, "translation of a test into a student's native language may be helpful for ELLs with a high level of cognitive-academic proficiency in his/her native language, but not for students whose native language skills are weak" (Coltrane, 2011, para. 13). Presentation in assessment is important as well. Some students may do well with accommodations that allow verbal responses or allow for repetition of test questions.

> Depending on a learner's language proficiency level, it may be beneficial to allow accommodations that affect how the test is presented and how students may respond to it (e.g., repetition and explanation of test items, or allowing students to dictate responses to a test administrator), in addition to testing modifications related to timing/scheduling and setting. (Coltrane, 2011, para. 13)

Implementing the correct accommodations can go a long way in ensuring that English language learner students can demonstrate their knowledge of the standards and curriculum.

While teachers will readily assert that teaching to the test is void of meaningful learning, it can be beneficial for English language learner students to have instruction in test-taking skills. This type of instruction can be a meaningful source of background knowledge for English language learners because many may have a lack of familiarity with standardized tests. "ELLs may not be familiar with the kind of language that is used in tests, including many predictable

patterns and phrases" (Coltrane, 2011, para. 14). This is also an area where mediated learning can play a role. Translation error in test taking can be very common not only for English language learner students but for other learners as well. Research conducted on code switching shows that translation skills are essential for assessments. An observational study conducted by Knestrict and Schoensteadt (2005) indicated that when translation skills were taught, students had a better understanding of what was expected of them. As the teacher presents information, if a student is uncertain about what is being asked, he or she can ask for a translation. The teacher as well as the students can assist in translating the unclear instruction. This translation instruction can be important for student application on formal assessments. Knestrict and Schoensteadt (2005) stated, "On practice assignments and practice tests, teachers spend a lot of time explaining the terms being used on the test and in the instructions so the students have a better understanding of what is being asked of them" (p. 178) Translation mediation can be beneficial to English language learner students because test translation error is very problematic. Solano-Flores maintained that, regarding translation error, "while it cannot be eliminated, translation error can be minimized" (p. 81).

Feuerstein's (1981) theory can be applied here by having the teacher act as a mediator. The mediator can aid the student in test interpretations. This approach is valuable to the learner in that it gives the student a strategy as they seek to complete the test. When taking a test, students often find it difficult to extract important vocabulary and apply it appropriately. Not only students, but adults as well, find the problem to be "that of identifying and extracting the relevant data from the corpus" (O'Halloran, 2007, p. 10). The mediator can also help bring a relationship to the learner, emphasizing again the importance of sociocultural forces in a child's learning. "When a person goes from a situated-learning environment to formalized schooling,

learning becomes decontextualized; the relationships and context are largely taken away" (Payne, 2009, p. 371).

The mediator can help bridge this gap for the learner by helping him/her decide the best way to approach a question.

> It may also be beneficial to teach test-taking skills (e.g., how to approach a multiple-choice question, how to locate the main idea in a reading passage) to help prepare ELLs for specific types of test items they may encounter. (Coltrane, 2011, para. 13)

This instruction can prove to be very valuable for English language learner students. Once equipped with background knowledge and test-taking skills, English language learners have a better chance of demonstrating their knowledge on standardized assessments.

Test Accommodations

Much debate exists on how to best include English language learners in standardized tests. Many place an emphasis on test accommodations for these students. However, research indicates varied results in the effectiveness of accommodations. This may be in part due to the current approach for implementing accommodations.

> Much of this research has been conducted using test accommodations with ELLs that has used a blanket method of accommodations—the usage of the same set of one or more accommodations with all ELLs in a group regardless of individual characteristics (i.e., different levels of English Language Proficiency (ELP) or proficiency in their primary language [L1]). (Kopriva, Emick, Hipolito-Delgado, & Cameron, C., 2007, p. 12)

In fact, many teachers working with English language learner students find it difficult to identify appropriately specific accommodations necessary for their students. "While teachers or specialists may not be able to clearly differentiate recommended accommodations, their "fall

back" approach often seems to be to assign all possible accommodations" (Kopriva et al., 2007, p. 13). This is neither helpful for the student nor fair in the testing process, as some students may be given an advantage. Recent research has shown that "assignment of accommodations to ELLs has largely been based on anecdotal information and in some cases it is not clear how these decisions are made" (Kopriva et al., 2007, p. 13). This random implementation of accommodations does not lend itself to test validity.

> Almost no research has been done to investigate the effectiveness of specific accommodations for those students who need them (versus those who do not). Further, little research has been done to examine the validity of accommodation assignment—specifically does validity improve if accommodations are assigned systematically based on individual characteristics. (Kopriva et al., 2007, p. 12)

A systematic approach to test accommodations could prove to be more effective than the random approach. However, this is an area that needs further research. Kopriva et al., 2007, states:

> If accommodations are to be utilized as a primary approach to include a large percentage of English language learners, it appears that proper assignment of accommodations based on student need may address some of the shortcomings and confusion highlighted in the research. Also, it seems that systematic needs-based assignment of accommodations should help produce clearer guidance to the field about which accommodations are useful and for whom. (p. 13)

Appropriate Accommodations

Developing appropriate accommodations for each student requires appropriate assessments to determine student needs. Students whose needs are correctly identified

can be placed in appropriate academic groups and progress monitoring can occur. This identification will help ensure that students are properly prepared for upcoming standardized tests. Coleman & Goldenberg (2012) suggest choosing accommodations that promote English language proficiency. This will enable ELLs to go beyond conversational English to "academic language that is essential for high levels of achievement in the content areas" (p. 49). Below are strategies that Coleman & Goldenberg (2012) propose:

(1) English language development (ELD) should be a priority beginning on the first day.

(2) Daily language instruction that focuses on English language. Instruction should include explicit teaching elements of English (e. g., vocabulary, syntax, and conventions).

(3) ELLs must have ample opportunities for authentic and functional use of English including opportunities to use English elements in meaningful communication.

(4) Academic language is needed for learning and discussing content in math, language arts, social studies, science, and all other curricular areas.

(5) Academic language is needed for syntax and text structures. Understanding how to construct a sentence or paragraph (orally or in writing).

(6) Structured student talk. Provide opportunities for student language production.

(7) Sufficient duration of services. ELD instruction should continue at least until students reach level four (advanced intermediate).

(8) Grouping is important. Although ELLs should not be in classrooms segregated by language proficiency levels, grouping by language proficiency specifically during ELD instruction is likely to be effective as long as instruction is carefully tailored to students' language-learning needs.

(9) Encourage verbal interactions. Structure tasks and prepare students for interactions with English speakers so that students focus on participating in productive verbal exchanges, rather than simply finishing tasks. Teach and model strategies for successful interactions between ELLs and English speakers. (p. 49-50)

ACCESS for ELLs

The U. S. government mandates that students with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) must be assessed yearly in English language until they reach a level which is considered to be English language proficient (Fox & Fairbairn, 2011). Many schools have chosen to use the ACCESS test.

> Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State for English Language Learners (*ACCESS for ELLs)* is a large-scale, high-stakes, standards-based, and criterion-referenced English language proficiency test administered in the USA annually to more than 840,000 English Language Learners (ELLs), in K-12 classrooms. (Fox & Fairbairn, 2011, p. 425).

The ACCESS for ELLs test was developed by the World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) Consortium. WIDA was created through the U. S. Department of Education Enhanced Education Grant in 2003. The states of Wisconsin, Delaware, and Arkansas developed the test as a standards and assessment system to support curriculum in English language development and to satisfy the assessment obligations enacted in NCLB (Fox & Fairbairn, 2011, para. 2). There are a number of English language learner proficiency assessments available for schools to use. However, there are advantages to using the ACCESS test:

> (1) the size of the Consortium of states using the test, which has since grown to 24; (2) the number of resources available to situate the test within pedagogical practice; and (3) the care with which WIDA has attempted to systematically align the test with proficiency standards (see *WIDA English language Proficiency Standards*, 2004, 2007) and classroom practice. (Fox & Fairbairn, 2011, p, 425).

The resources available to schools through the use of the ACCESS test are an advantage for school systems financially. Additionally, the alignment of each state's standards to the test helps ensure that the students will be assessed over the content they have been taught.

ACCESS Test Purpose and Development

The ACCESS test assesses social and academic knowledge of English for English Language Learner students. The test assesses proficiency in speaking and listening and reading and writing. Additionally, it assesses language used in math, science, social studies, and language arts. Assessments in these areas are evaluated in accordance with the WIDA English Language Proficiency Standards of 2004 and 2007. The WIDA standards have been aligned with the standards of the 24 member states. The development of the test in 2005 formed a

partnership between the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) and the Wisconsin Center for Education Research. Procedural details available on the WIDA website attest to the comprehensive research that founded and continues to shape the test. One area in need of development is a criteria for maintaining proficiency.

> The test developer has not identified a 'Monitoring and Maintaining' level of ELL proficiency, beyond the *Reaching* threshold. Thus, there are no criteria that define characteristics of ELL learners who, having reached the proficiency threshold, continue to demonstrate effective engagement with academic work in on-going classroom activity. (Fox & Fairbairn, 2011, p, 426).

However, according to Boals' (2008) assessment recommendations, test development is thoroughly connected to many WIDA-organized pedagogical standards that enhance language acquisition for English language learners.

ACCESS Test Design and Use

The ACCESS test format has thematic elements that are related to the five standards, those being one section that assesses social language and then four sections that assess the content areas of language arts, math, social studies and science. There are five levels of proficiency assessed by the test.

> The tests operationalize the five language proficiency levels defined by the test's *Test review* 427 construct, from 'entering' (level 1) to 'bridging' (level 5).3 Anchored in the *WIDA ELP Standards* (2004, 2007), test forms are generated annually for five grade level clusters, namely, kindergarten, grades 1–2, 3–5, 6–8, and 9–12.
>
> (Fox & Fairbairn, 2011, p, 426).

Within each grade level, vertical dimension, as described by the developers, has been added to the assessment by dividing the levels into tiers. There are beginning, intermediate, and advanced levels referred to as tiers A, B, and C. "The vertical dimension (or scaling) allows test users to assess finer-grain differences in student performance as students move across *tiers* both within or across grade level clusters" (Fox & Fairbairn, 2011, p, 427). These vertical degrees allow for identification of differences in proficiency as students advance.

The ACCESS test has no corresponding practice tests available for classroom use to prepare students for the test. However, the WIDA website provides model samples for teacher and student use. Additionally, within the test there are warm-up questions and pictorial examples available for the students. Support is provided for test administrators in the form of training and format design. "The Consortium provides online test administrator training courses, sample items, tasks, and rubrics in order to facilitate classroom activities tied to the standards and representative of the kinds of language production expected on the *ACCESS for ELLs*®" (Fox & Fairbairn, 2011, p, 427).

CRCT Design and Use

The Quality Basic Education Act of 1985 mandates that Georgia must implement and uphold a curriculum that identifies what students are expected to know in each subject and grade (Georgia Department of Education, 2009). In response to this mandate, Georgia had established a Quality Core Curriculum (QCC). However, a 2002 audit of the QCC determined that the curriculum "lacked depth and could not be covered in a reasonable amount of time" (Georgia Department of Education, 2009, p. 2) and in fact did not even meet national standards. This led Georgia to develop the Georgia Performance Standards. The standards were developed by "teacher teams, state and national experts, and consultants" (Georgia Department of Education,

2009, p. 3). The vigorous new standards now drive instruction and assessment in that assessments are now aligned with the content standards. The standards were implemented by a phase-in plan beginning in 2004 to 2006 for English/language arts. Mathematics were implemented from 2005-2007, science curriculum was implemented from 2006 to 2008, and social studies from 2007-2009.

Georgia law enacted in 2000 necessitates that all students in grades three through eight take the CRCT in the content areas of reading, English/language arts, and math. Additionally, passing the CRCT is a requirement for promotion in grades three, five, and eight (CRCT Score Interpretation Guide, 2010). The CRCT gauges academic achievement at the "student, class, school, system and state levels" (CRCT Score Interpretation Guide, 2014, p. 1). The information gained from the CRCT is a useful measure of individual student strengths and weaknesses in relation to the curriculum. Given the high-stakes nature of the test, school systems need to take advantage of opportunities to better prepare students for this assessment.

Summary

Accountability through high-stakes testing has become the most prevalent issue in our school systems today. The passage of NCLB (NCLB, 2002) has required states to implement instructional strategies that align curriculum content to state standards. With the mandate that all students, including English language learners, must be included in standardized tests, schools must take steps to ensure that they meet the social and academic needs of their increasing English language learner population.

> The demographics of U.S. schools continue to change and include increasing numbers of ELLs who have unique cultural and linguistic needs. Nevertheless, educators spend an increasing amount of instructional time on standardized test preparation, and policy

> makers continue to neglect what research indicates about best instructional and assessment practices for ELLs. (Honigsfeld & Giouroukakis, 2011, p. 9)

The theoretical framework shows that progress can be made with English language learner students through socio-development and mediation. The literature has revealed that there is pressure on school systems to perform well on high-stakes accountability tests. Additionally, true reflective data are needed in order for states and school systems to understand how they can meet the needs of their English language learner students. The matter that needs further examination is how the use of ACCESS tests can be used to predict the performance of English language learner students on future high-stakes tests, namely the Criterion-Referenced Competency Test. Furthermore, when school systems have the English language learners ACCESS score, how can that information be used to drive meaningful instruction that meets the social and academic needs of English language learner students? In an effort to understand the relationship between ACCESS tests and Criterion-Referenced Competency Test performance, the researcher chose to conduct a study that correlates the two tests.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

This quantitative study is designed to evaluate the use of ACCESS test scores as a tool for schools to use in predicting students' chances of passing the Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Test for third grade students. The research shows that the ACCESS test identifies academic language proficiency in English as well as language use in math, science, social studies, and language arts. Identifying students who lack skills in these areas can be helpful for ability grouping and instruction prior to the Criterion-Referenced Competency Test.

The Georgia ACCESS test was administered in January of the 2013-2014 school year. Students' 2013-2014 ACCESS test scores measuring proficiency in listening, speaking, reading and writing will be compared to students' scores on the 2013-2014 Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Test in May. Additionally, students' 2013-2014 ACCESS test scores measuring language use in language arts, math, and social studies were compared to students' scores on the 2013-2014 Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Test. These results were analyzed and used to determine weaknesses in proficiency and language use for English language learner students in third grade. These results will hold significance in addressing the academic needs of the English language learner population and in developing early interventions for future students who have low ACCESS test scores.

Design

A correlational design was used to examine any potential relationships between student scores on the Georgia ACCESS test for third grade students measuring proficiency in listening, speaking, reading and writing, and language use in language arts, math, science, and social studies and their scores on the Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Test. A correlational model will be used in this study. Correlation research designs are used when the researcher

wishes to show the association between two or more variables by gathering data on two or more variables for each individual in a sample and calculating a correlation coefficient (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007).

Research Questions

RQ1: Is there a relationship between student performance on the Georgia Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State test measuring proficiency in listening, speaking, reading and writing and the Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Test in listening, speaking, reading and writing?

RQ2: Is there a relationship between student performance on the Georgia Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State test measuring proficiency in listening, speaking, reading and writing and the Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Tests measuring language use in math, science, and social studies?

Null Hypotheses

$H_0$1: There is no significant correlation between student performance on the Georgia Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State test measuring proficiency in listening and student performance on the Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Test in listening.

$H_0$2: There is no significant correlation between student performance on the Georgia Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State test measuring proficiency in speaking and student performance on the Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Test in speaking.

$H_0$3: There is no significant correlation between student performance on the Georgia Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State test measuring

proficiency in reading and student performance on the Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Test reading.

$H_0$4: There is no significant correlation between student performance on the Georgia Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State test measuring proficiency in writing and student performance on the Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Test in writing.

$H_0$5: There is no significant correlation between student performance on the Georgia Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State test measuring proficiency in listening and student performance on the Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Test measuring language use in math.

$H_0$6: There is no significant correlation between student performance on the Georgia Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State test measuring proficiency in speaking and student performance on the Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Test measuring language use in math.

$H_0$7: There is no significant correlation between student performance on the Georgia Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State test measuring proficiency in reading and student performance on the Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Test measuring language use in math.

$H_0$8: There is no significant correlation between student performance on the Georgia Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State test measuring proficiency in writing and student performance on the Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Test measuring language use in math.

$H_0$9: There is no significant correlation between student performance on the Georgia Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State test measuring proficiency in listening and student performance on the Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Test measuring language use in science.

$H_0$10: There is no significant correlation between student performance on the Georgia Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State test measuring proficiency in speaking and student performance on the Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Test measuring language use in science.

$H_0$11: There is no significant correlation between student performance on the Georgia Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State test measuring proficiency in reading and student performance on the Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Test measuring language use in science.

$H_0$12: There is no significant correlation between student performance on the Georgia Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State test measuring proficiency in writing and student performance on the Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Test measuring language use in science.

$H_0$13: There is no significant correlation between student performance on the Georgia Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State test measuring proficiency in listening and student performance on the Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Test measuring language use in social studies.

$H_0$14: There is no significant correlation between student performance on the Georgia Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State test measuring

proficiency in speaking and student performance on the Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Test measuring language use in social studies.

$H_0$15: There is no significant correlation between student performance on the Georgia Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State test measuring proficiency in reading and student performance on the Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Test measuring language use in social studies.

$H_0$16: There is no significant correlation between student performance on the Georgia Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State test measuring proficiency in writing and student performance on the Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Test measuring language use in social studies.

Participants and Setting

The participants were both male and female elementary English language learner students in the third grade. The participants' ages ranged between eight and ten years. These students were targeted because of the difficulty English language learner students have with high-stakes tests and because of the difficulty of the third grade curriculum. Students who perform poorly in the third grade are more likely to perform poorly in grades four and five (Jenkins, Hudson, & Johnson, 2007). The students took the ACCESS test in the winter of the 2013-2014 school year and the Criterion-Referenced Competency Test in the spring of the 2013-2014 school year. The school system has approximately 117 third grade English language learner students. Approximately 117 third grade English language learner students within the district in the 2013-2014 school year took the Georgia ACCESS test and the Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Test.

The school system is in a rural area of Northeast Georgia with a small population. The study took place in the county school system. The school system has a population of approximately 570 third grade students. Approximately 117 of those students are Hispanic English language learner students. The school system population is made up of 69% Caucasian, 2% Black, 3% Asian, and 24% Hispanic (Georgia Department of Education, 2014).

Instrumentation

The independent variable was measured by scores on the Georgia ACCESS test in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The dependent variable was the Criterion-Referenced Competency Test scores in English/language arts, math, science, and social studies. Reliability data is provided for in numerous reports on the WIDA website. This data reflects that ACCESS for English language learners has been piloted, field tested, and reviewed for each performance-based activity to ensure that students are assessed on the standards. The overall composite proficiency score, which is a reflection of student achievement in listening, speaking, reading, and writing, is the primary score used for making decisions about gains in student proficiency, exiting from language support services, and for Annual Measureable Achievement Objectives (AMAO) (WIDA Consortium, 2010). Results reflect that the reliability of the overall composite score for Series 201 is high for all grade-level clusters. For grades three through five, the score was .928 for the 2009-2010 school year. The scores are measured on the Logit scale, which needs to be transformed for reporting purposes. Scores on the Logit scale scores were transformed to a reporting scale by means of a linear transformation of the Logit scores, which in this case is the ACCESS score scale. There is a separate scale for each of the four domains: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. (WIDA, Consortium, 2010).

In reporting, the data reflects three tiers: A, B, and C. Tier A represents students at the lowest level of the language proficiency continuum. Tier B represents students in the mid-range level of the language proficiency continuum, and Tier C represents students at the highest level of the language proficiency continuum. In order to reflect internal consistency in the categorization of the data, a single reliability estimate was calculated across all three tiers. "For the domains, this was a weighted reliability estimate (Cronbach's α). In other words, it is the average reliability weighted by the number of students who were administered that tier form" (WIDA, Consortium, 2010, p. 7). Table 1 reflects the overall composite reliability (Cronbach's α) score.

Table 1

ACCESS Overall Composite Reliability: Over 3-5 S202

Component	Weight	Variance	Reliability
Listening	0.15	1199.160	0.624
Reading	0.35	737.402	0.770
Speaking	0.15	2171.148	0.894
Writing	0.35	610.929	0.913
Cronbach's α		608.557	0.930

Note. Adapted from *ACCESS Score Interpretation Guide*, p. 95, by WIDA Consortium, 2010, Madison, WI: WIDA Consortium.

Reliability Figures for CRCT

Reliability of assessment for the Georgia CRCT is measured by two indicators: Cronbach's alpha and the standard error of measurement (*SE*). These indicators are a valuable tool in order to show consistency of the assessment. "Cronbach's alpha measures the internal consistency over the responses to a set of items measuring an underlying unidimensional trait"

(Georgia Department of Education, 2009, p. 6). The second indicator used is the *SE*, which can be calculated in either raw scores or scale scores. *SE* is defined as "an index of the random variability in test scores" (Georgia Department of Education, 2009, p. 6). These two indexes are associated by the plausible repeated scores which should fall "within a band of plus one *SE* and minus one *SE* about two-thirds of the time" (Georgia Department of Education, 2009, p. 6). Table 2 presents the reliability coefficients for accommodated versus non-accommodated ELL students.

Table 2

Reliability Coefficients for Accommodated Versus Non-Accommodated Third Grade ELL

Reading		English Language-Arts		Mathematics	
Accom	Non-Accom	Accom	Non-Accom	Accom	Non-Accom
.85	.85	.87	.88	.90	.89

Notes. Accom=accommodated; Non-Accom = non-accommodated. Adapted from *Technical brief: Accommodation usage on the 2009 criterion-referenced competency tests and Georgia high school graduation tests,* p. 7, by Georgia Department of Education, 2009.

Table 3

Standard Error of Measurement for Accommodated Versus Non-Accommodated Third Grade ELL

Reading		English Language-Arts		Mathematics	
Acom.	Non-Accom.	Accom.	Non-Accom.	Accom.	Non-Accom.
8.76	8.86	8.19	8.22	10.89	11.98

Notes. Accom=accommodated; Non-Accom = non-accommodated. Adapted from *Technical brief: Accommodation usage on the 2009 criterion-referenced competency tests and Georgia high school graduation tests,* p. 7, by Georgia Department of Education, 2009.

Procedures

The students involved in the study were students enrolled in the third grade in a chosen Northeast Georgia school system for the 2013-2014 school year. Before the students were able to take the ACCESS test, they were evaluated and registered for the test. Once the students took the ACCESS test, their tests were graded and their scores saved. At the end of the school year in the spring, the students took the Georgia CRCT. Their tests were graded and their scores saved.

Once the research was approved by the research committee, permission was requested from the school system to use the third grade Georgia ACCESS and CRCT scores for the 2013-2014 school year. Once approval from the school system was granted, permission was requested from the IRB. After IRB approval, the researcher requested that the school system provide the ACCESS test and Criterion-Referenced Competency Test data for the 2013-2014 school year.

Data Analysis

The researcher received ACCESS test scores which included English language proficiency scores, composite scores and scale scores. CRCT scores were received, which consisted of scale scores. This data was gathered from the school system's data clerk. Once the data was received from the school system, the researcher began analysis. In order to test the research hypotheses, the following data analysis procedures were followed: descriptive statistics consisting of the mean, standard deviation, and range were computed with SAS version 9.2 for each set of test scores. Skewness and kurtosis, as depicted by histograms, were used to assess whether each variable was sufficiently normally distributed. Pearson correlations were used to analyze the relationships between variables.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

The literature suggests that standardized assessments will continue to dominate education in the United States (Coltrane, 2002). Research by Honigsfeld and Giouroukakis (2011) suggests there is a relationship between test preparation and performance for ELL students on high stakes tests. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the use of ACCESS test scores as a tool for schools to use in predicting students' chances of passing the Georgia CRCT for third grade ELL students. This chapter presents the sample demographics, assumption testing and the results of the data analyses performed for this study.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to draw conclusions from the sample tested. The data was analyzed using the statistical software of SAS, version 9.2. General statistics were run for variables including the mean, standard deviation, and range. Correlation coefficients were determined using the Pearson Correlation. Histograms were also generated using the univariate procedure of SAS. All analyses were tested to a significance level of 0.05. Correlation analyses were used to assess the research questions.

Research Questions

RQ1: Is there a relationship between student performance on the Georgia Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State test measuring proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing and the Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Test in listening, speaking, reading and writing?

RQ2: Is there a relationship between student performance on the Georgia Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State test measuring proficiency in

listening, speaking, reading, and writing and the Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Test measuring language use in math, science, and social studies?

Table 4

Study Variables and Statistical Test Used to Evaluate Research Questions One and Two

Research Question	Criterion Variable	Predictor Variable	Statistical Test	Significance
One	CRCT	ACCESS Test	Correlation	≤.001
Two	CRCT	ACCESS Test	Correlation	≤.001

In analyzing the research questions, data examination was undertaken in order to make sure that the variables of interest met the proper statistical assumptions. The variables were first assessed for univariate-normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity. Next, zero-order correlation analyses were ran to establish whether there were any relationships between the variables. In examining the scatter plots, one outlier was identified and removed from subsequent analyses in order to assure that data conformed to assumptions.

Demographics

The sample population for this study consisted of 117 third grade English Language Learner students in a rural school district in Georgia during the 2013-2014 school year. Specifically, the sample consisted of 60 males and 57 females between the ages of eight to ten years old. The mean age at the time of the ACCESS assessment for males was 109.0 months and 108.0 months for females. The mean age at the time of the CRCT assessment for males was 111.9 months and 110.9 months for females. Of the sample, 107 identified themselves as Hispanic ethnicity with ten identifying as Other. Additionally, the sample consisted of 112

Spanish language speakers, three Lao language speakers, one European language speaker, and one Amharic, Tigrinya, and Tigre language speaker.

Hypotheses One and Two

In order to test the two hypotheses, zero-order correlation analyses were employed to determine whether or not a significant relationship could be found between the ACCESS test and the CRCT. Specifically, the predictor variable for research question one was student scores on the ACCESS test in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The criterion variable for research question one was student scores on the CRCT in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The predictor variable for research question two was student performance on the ACCESS test in listening, speaking reading, and writing (English/language arts). The criterion variable for research question two was student scores on the CRCT measuring language use in math, science, and social studies. However, due to the format of the CRCT, listening, speaking, and writing are encompassed within the English/language arts score on the CRCT. Scores for the ACCESS test were reported in scale scores, proficiency level scores, and in composite scores (ACCESS for ELLs Score Interpretive Guide, 2010). CRCT scores were reported as scale scores (CRCT Interpretive Guide, 2010).

Data Cleaning

Before assessments were made of the hypotheses, the data was screened for missing data and univariate outliers. For both the ACCESS test and the CRCT, the data was received already transformed into scale scores. The researcher found one outlier student with scores in the 940's for the ACCESS test. This same student left the school system and was not present for the CRCT. Therefore, the outlier was thrown out.

Comparison of Mean, Standard Deviation, and Range for Variables

In order to examine the consistency of the data, an analysis of the mean, the standard deviation and range were determined. Specifically, the data was found to be fairly consistent, as is evidenced by the standard deviation being consistent among the variables. Table 5 illustrates the range in data.

Table 5

Mean, Standard Deviation, and Range for Variables Collected from Third Grade ACCESS Test.

Variable	*M*	*SD*	Range	
			Min	Max
Age at time of assessment	109.0	5.4	100.9	124.4
Listening Proficiency Level	5.0	.97	1.0	6.0
Reading Proficiency Level	5.1	1.0	1.0	6.0
Writing Proficiency Level	4.3	0.8	1.0	5.9
Speaking Proficiency Level	4.6	1.5	1.0	6.0
Literacy Proficiency Level	4.7	0.8	2.7	6.0
Listening Scale Score	349.2	27.1	284.0	424.0
Reading Scale Score	337.4	20.1	273.0	412.0
Writing Scale Score	340.5	24.5	266.0	380.0
Speaking Scale Score	366.4	42.7	236.0	403.0
Literacy Scale Score	339.1	19.6	291.0	396.0
English Language Proficiency Composite Proficiency Level	4.7	0.9	1.0	6.0
English Language Proficiency Overall Results	344.2	20.8	295.0	394.0
Special Education	1.9	1.2	1.0	5.0

Note. n =116

Table 6

Mean, Standard Deviation, and Range for Variables Collected from Third Grade CRCT

Variable	*M*	*SD*	Range	
			Min	Max
Age at time of assessment	111.9	5.3	103.9	127.4
Innovative Delivery Model	1.8	0.3	1.0	2.0
Georgia ESOL for Content Area Teachers (GECAT)	1.8	0.3	1.0	2.0
Months in School System	40.3	14.7	1.2	56.6
Reading Scale Score	826.3	20.1	776.0	876.0
English Language Arts Scale Score	822.9	21.1	768.0	893.0
Math Scale Score	816.1	29.4	754.0	887.0
Science Scale Score	807.8	28.7	745.0	887.0
Social Studies Scale Score	814.8	23.0	763.0	869.0

Note. $n = 116$

Descriptive Statistics

Histograms

The following figures (Figures 1-8) are an analysis of the histograms run for the ACCESS test and CRCT. Most histograms reflect normal distribution. Skewness was found in the speaking histogram and slightly in the writing scale scores for the ACCESS test. However, the skewness was not extreme and not likely to affect the correlations (Gall et al., 2007).

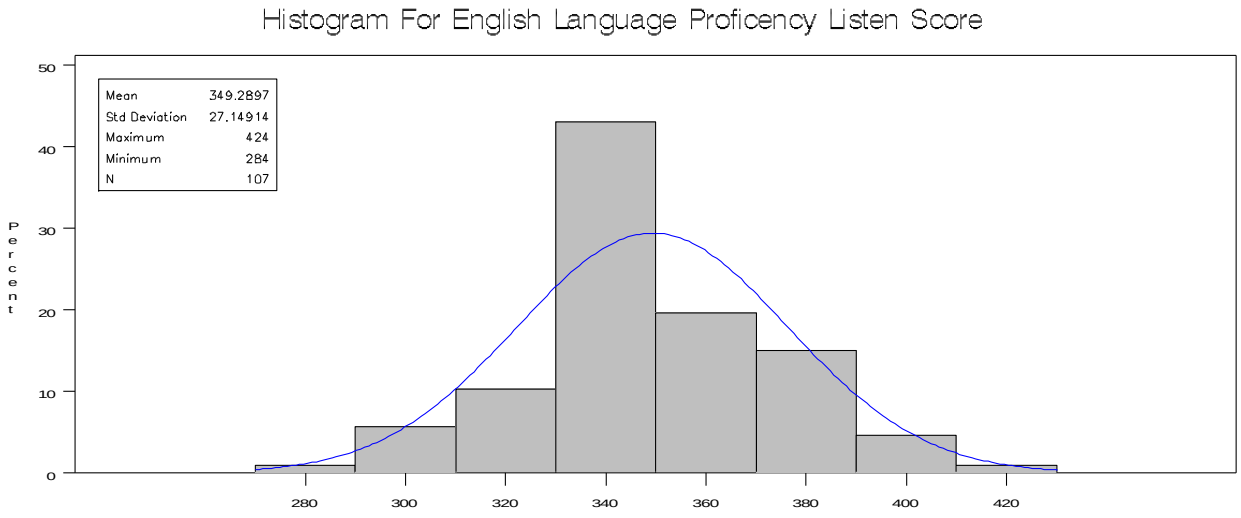

Figure 1. Histogram of ELL ELP listening scale scores for the ACCESS Test.

The histogram in Figure 1 contains the distribution points of the ACCESS Listening Scale Score from the students in the study. This data illustrates a mound-shaped pattern that is normally distributed. The minimum score was 284. The maximum score was 424. The mean score was 349. The number of participants was 107. The standard deviation of the mean was 27.1.

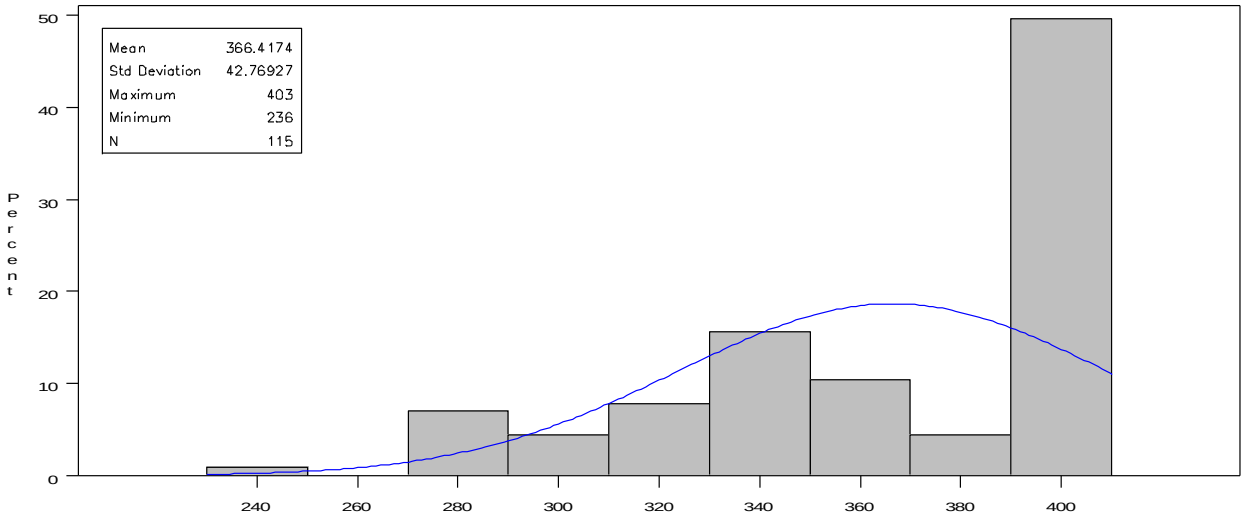

Figure 2. Histogram of ELL ELP speaking scale scores for the ACCESS Test.

Figure 2 contains the distribution points of the ACCESS speaking scale scores for the students in this study. The histogram illustrates that the data is negatively skewed with an unusual percent of the students with high scores. The minimum score was 236. The maximum score was 403. The mean score was 366. The number of participants was 115. The standard deviation of the mean was 42.7.

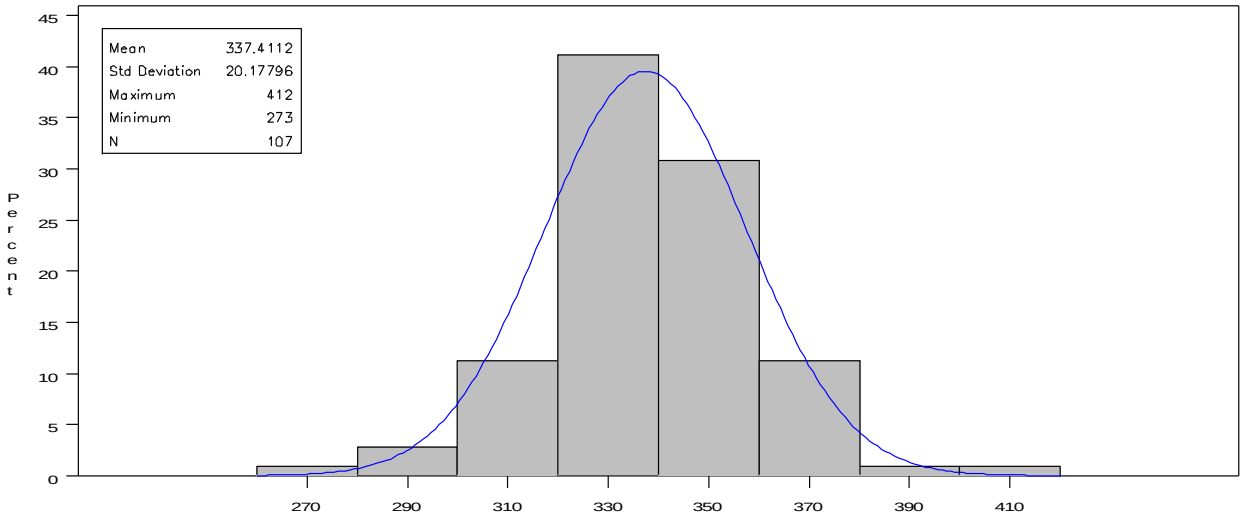

Figure 3. Histogram of ELL ELP reading scale scores for the ACCESS Test.

Figure 3 contains the distribution points of the ACCESS reading scale scores for the students in this study. The data illustrates a mound shaped pattern with the data normally distributed. The minimum score was 273. The maximum score was 412. The mean score was 337. The number of participants was 107. The standard deviation of the mean was 20.1.

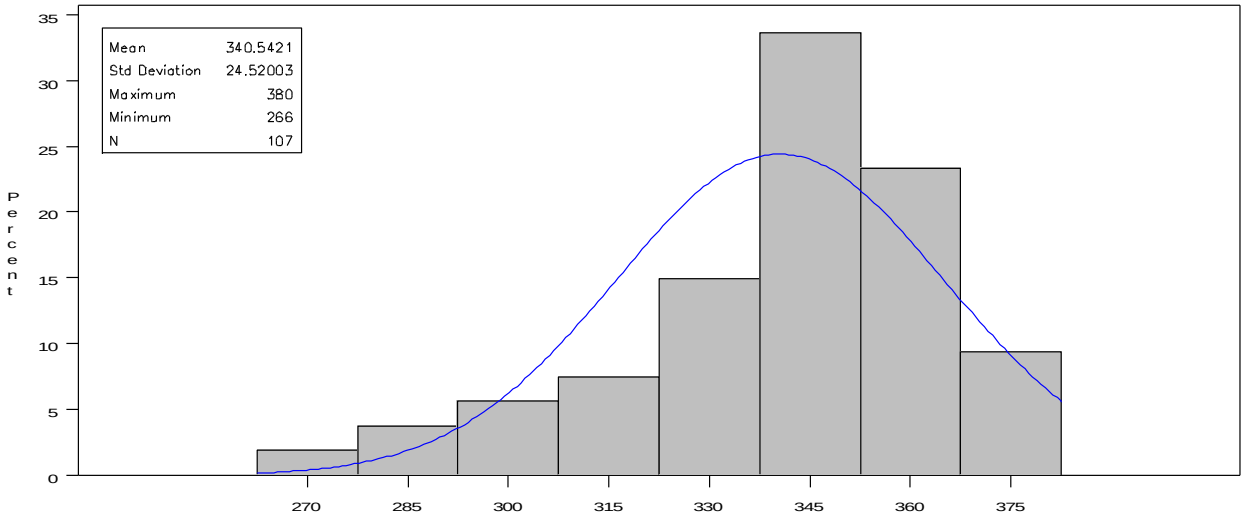

Figure 4. Histogram of ELL ELP writing scale scores for the ACCESS Test.

Figure 4 contains the distribution points of the ACCESS writing scale scores for the students in this study. The data illustrates the data being slightly negatively skewed. The

minimum score was 266. The maximum score was 380. The mean score was 340. The number of participants was 107. The standard deviation of the mean was 24.5.

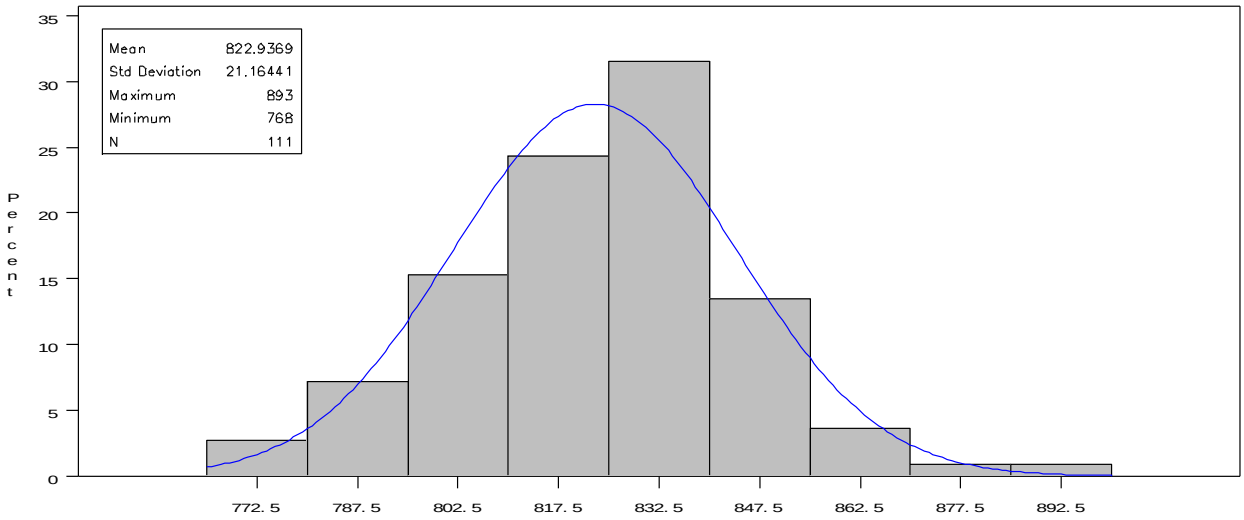

Figure 5. Histogram of ELL English language arts scale scores on the CRCT.

Figure 5 contains the distribution points of the CRCT English Language Arts scores for the students in this study. The data illustrates a mound shaped pattern with the data being slightly positively skewed. The minimum score was 768. The maximum score was 893. The mean score was 822. The number of participants was 111. The standard deviation of the mean was 21.1.

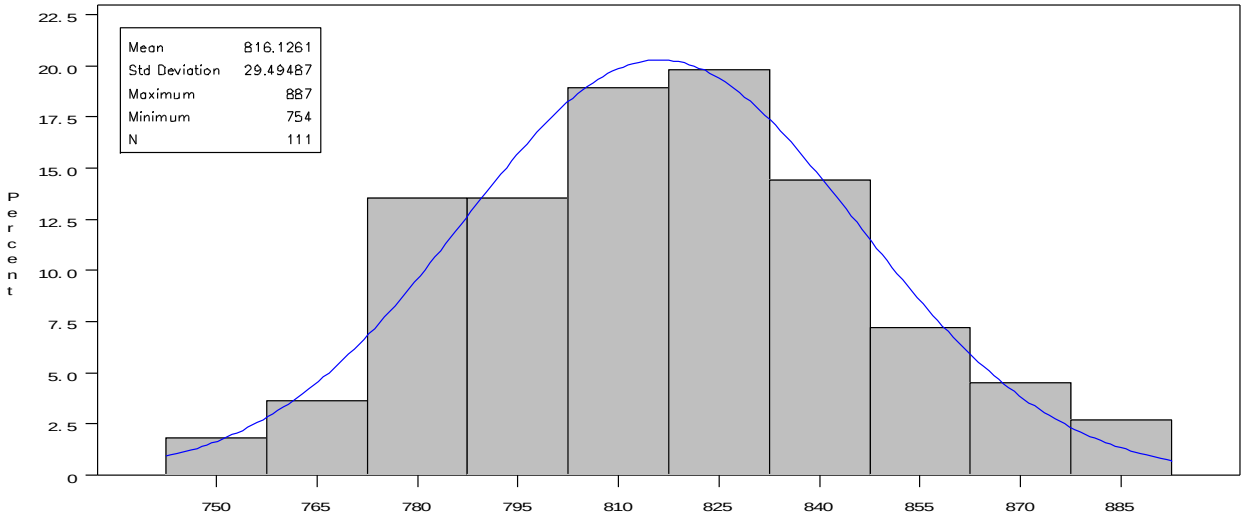

Figure 6. Histogram of ELL math scale scores on the CRCT.

Figure 6 contains the distribution points of the CRCT Math scores for the students in this study. The data illustrates a mound shaped pattern that is normally distributed. The minimum score was 754. The maximum score was 887. The mean score was 816. The number of participants was 111. The standard deviation of the mean was 29.4.

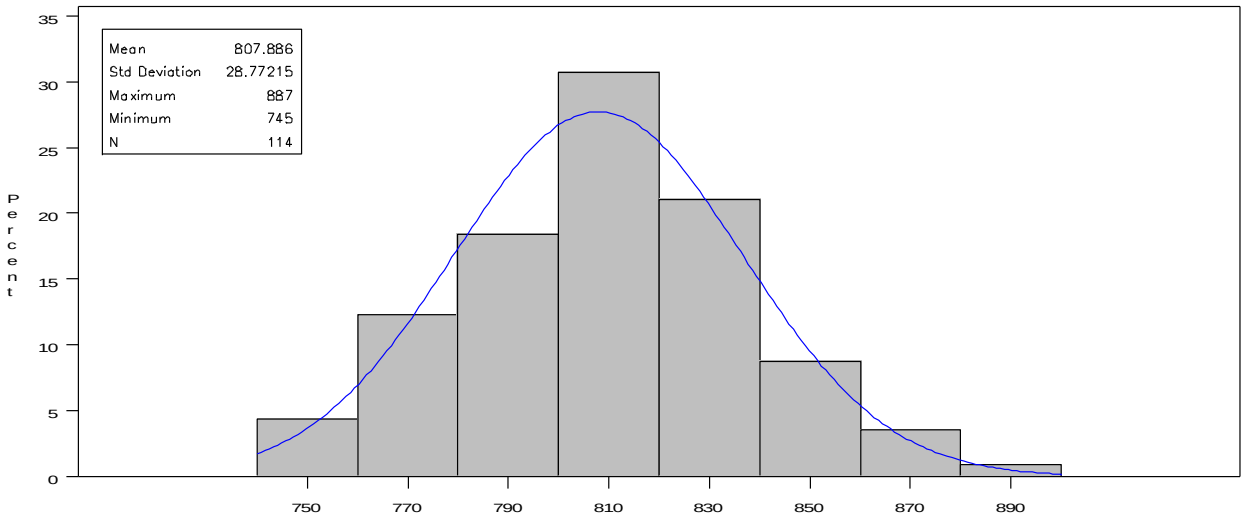

Figure 7. Histogram of ELL science scale scores on the CRCT.

Figure 7 contains the distribution points of the CRCT science scores for the students in this study. The data illustrates a mound shaped pattern that is slightly positively skewed. The

minimum score was 745. The maximum score was 887. The mean score was 807. The number of participants was 114. The standard deviation of the mean was 26.7.

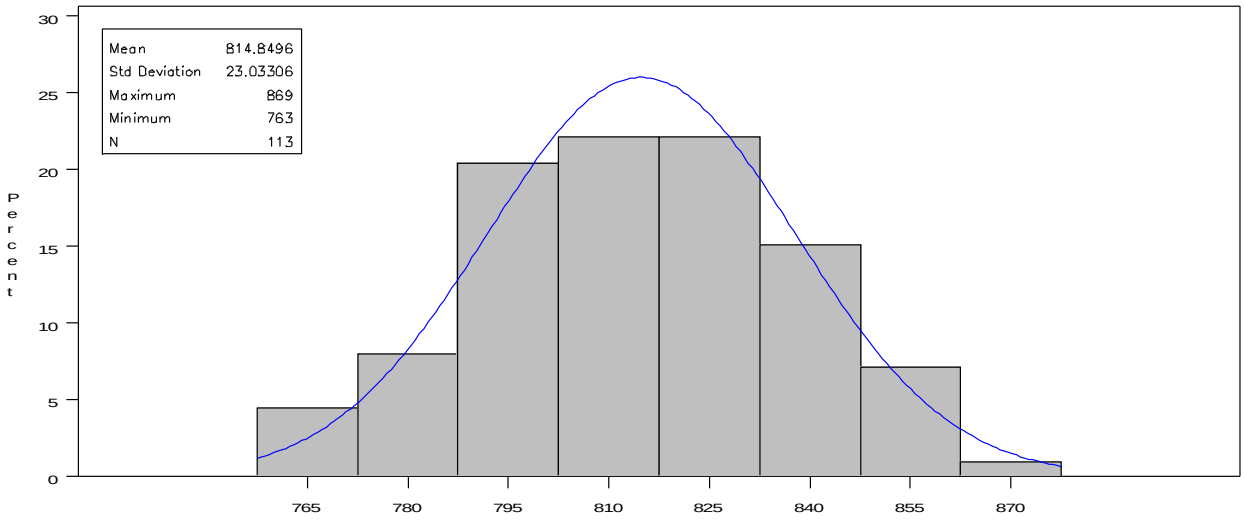

Figure 8. Histogram of ELL social studies scale scores on the CRCT.

Figure 8 contains the distribution points of the CRCT social studies scores for the students in this study. The data illustrates a mound shaped pattern that is normally distributed. The minimum score was 763. The maximum score was 869. The mean score was 814. The number of participants was 113. The standard deviation of the mean was 23.0.

The final review indicates a majority of the histograms reflect normal distribution with the exception of one to two negatively skewed histograms. Therefore, the properties of the data suggested that analysis could proceed.

Results

Null Hypothesis One

$H_0$1: There is no significant correlation between student performance on the Georgia Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State test measuring proficiency in listening and student performance on the Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Test in listening. Using the statistical software program SAS version 9.2, a

correlation analysis was performed to assess the relationship between student performance on the Georgia ACCESS test and the Georgia CRCT in listening. Results indicated there was a statistically significant relationship between the Georgia ACCESS tests and the Georgia CRCT in listening. Specifically, there was a statistically significant positive relationship between the ACCESS listening scale score and the CRCT English/language arts scale score, Pearson's r = .64, $p \leq .001$ (see Table 7).

Null Hypothesis Two

$H_0$2: There is no significant correlation between student performance on the Georgia Accessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State test measuring proficiency in speaking and student performance on the Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Test in speaking. Using the statistical software program SAS version 9.2, a correlation analysis was performed to assess the relationship between student performance on the Georgia ACCESS test and the Georgia CRCT in speaking. Results indicated there was a statistically significant positive relationship between the ACCESS speaking scale score and the CRCT English/language arts scale score, Pearson's r = .46, $p \leq .001$ (see Table 7).

Null Hypothesis Three

$H_0$3: There is no significant correlation between student performance on the Georgia Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State test measuring proficiency in reading and student performance on the Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Test in reading. Using the statistical software program SAS version 9.2, a correlation analysis was performed to assess the relationship between student performance on the Georgia ACCESS test and the Georgia CRCT in reading. Results indicated there was a

statistically significant positive relationship between the ACCESS reading scale score and the CRCT reading scale score, Pearson's $r = .49$, $p \leq .001$ (see Table 7).

Null Hypothesis Four

$H_0$4: There is no significant correlation between student performance on the Georgia Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State test measuring proficiency in writing and student performance on the Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Test in writing. Using the statistical software program SAS version 9.2, a correlation analysis was performed to assess the relationship between student performance on the Georgia ACCESS test and the Georgia CRCT in writing. Results indicated there was a statistically significant positive relationship between the ACCESS writing scale score and the CRCT English/language arts scale score, Pearson's $r = .66$, $p \leq .001$ (see Table 7).

Thus, the null hypotheses for Research Question One were rejected in favor of the research hypotheses. A positive correlation indicates a positive association between the variables. Increasing values in one variable correspond to increasing values in the other variable. In this study, there is a significant positive correlation between student performance on the Georgia Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State test measuring proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing and the Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Test in listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Null Hypothesis Five

$H_0$5: There is no significant correlation between student performance on the Georgia Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State test measuring proficiency in listening and student performance on the Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Test measuring language use in math. Using the statistical software program SAS

version 9.2, a correlation analysis was performed to assess the relationship between student performance on the Georgia ACCESS test in listening and the Georgia CRCT in math. Results indicated there was a statistically significant positive relationship between the ACCESS test listening scale score and the CRCT math scale score, Pearson's $r = .50$, $p \leq .001$ (see Table 7).

Null Hypothesis Six

$H_0$6: There is no significant correlation between student performance on the Georgia Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State test measuring proficiency in speaking and student performance on the Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Test measuring language use in math. Using the statistical software program SAS version 9.2, a correlation analysis was performed to assess the relationship between student performance on the Georgia ACCESS test in speaking and the Georgia CRCT in math. Results indicated there was a statistically significant positive relationship between the ACCESS speaking scale score and the CRCT math scale score, Pearson's $r = .39$, $p \leq .001$ (see Table 7).

Null Hypothesis Seven

$H_0$7: There is no significant correlation between student performance on the Georgia Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State test measuring proficiency in reading and student performance on the Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Test measuring language use in math. Using the statistical software program SAS version 9.2, a correlation analysis was performed to assess the relationship between student performance on the Georgia ACCESS test in reading and the Georgia CRCT in math. Results indicated there was a statistically significant positive relationship between the ACCESS reading scale score and the CRCT math scale score, Pearson's $r = .54$, $p \leq .001$ (see Table 7).

Null Hypothesis Eight

$H_0$8: There is no significant correlation between student performance on the Georgia Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State test measuring proficiency in writing and student performance on the Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Test measuring language use in math. Using the statistical software program SAS version 9.2, a correlation analysis was performed to assess the relationship between student performance on the Georgia ACCESS test in writing and the Georgia CRCT in math. Results indicated there was a statistically significant positive relationship between the ACCESS writing scale score and the CRCT math scale score, Pearson's $r = .55$, $p \leq .001$ (see Table 7).

Null Hypothesis Nine

$H_0$9: There is no significant correlation between student performance on the Georgia Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State test measuring proficiency in listening and student performance on the Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Test measuring language use in science. Using the statistical software program SAS version 9.2, a correlation analysis was performed to assess the relationship between student performance on the Georgia ACCESS test in listening and the Georgia CRCT in science. Results indicated there was a statistically significant positive relationship between the ACCESS listening scale score and the CRCT science scale score, Pearson's $r = .68$, $p \leq .001$ (see Table 7).

Null Hypothesis Ten

$H_0$10: There is no significant correlation between student performance on the Georgia Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State test measuring proficiency in speaking and student performance on the Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Test measuring language use in science. Using the statistical software program SAS version 9.2, a correlation analysis was performed to assess the relationship between student

performance on the Georgia ACCESS test in speaking and the Georgia CRCT in science. Results indicated there was a statistically significant positive relationship between the ACCESS speaking scale score and the CRCT science scale score, Pearson's $r = .51$, $p \leq .001$ (see Table 7).

Null Hypothesis Eleven

$H_0$11: There is no significant correlation between student performance on the Georgia Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State test measuring proficiency in reading and student performance on the Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Test measuring language use in science. Using the statistical software program SAS version 9.2, a correlation analysis was performed to assess the relationship between student performance on the Georgia ACCESS test in reading and the Georgia CRCT in science. Results indicated there was a statistically significant positive relationship between the ACCESS reading scale score and the CRCT science scale score, Pearson's $r = .50$, $p \leq .001$ (see Table 7).

Null Hypothesis Twelve

$H_0$12: There is no significant correlation between student performance on the Georgia Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State test measuring proficiency in writing and student performance on the Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Test measuring language use in science. Using the statistical software program SAS version 9.2, a correlation analysis was performed to assess the relationship between student performance on the Georgia ACCESS test in writing and the Georgia CRCT in science. Results indicated there was a statistically significant positive relationship between the ACCESS writing scale score and the CRCT science scale score, Pearson's $r = .64$, $p \leq .001$ (see Table 7).

Null Hypothesis Thirteen

$H_0$13: There is no significant correlation between student performance on the Georgia Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State test measuring proficiency in listening and student performance on the Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Test measuring language use in social studies. Using the statistical software program SAS version 9.2, a correlation analysis was performed to assess the relationship between student performance on the Georgia ACCESS test in listening and the Georgia CRCT in social studies. Results indicated there was a statistically significant positive relationship between the ACCESS listening scale score and the CRCT social studies scale score, Pearson's $r = .63$, $p \leq .001$ (see Table 7).

Null Hypothesis Fourteen

$H_0$14: There is no significant correlation between student performance on the Georgia Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State test measuring proficiency in speaking and student performance on the Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Test measuring language use in social studies. Using the statistical software program SAS version 9.2, a correlation analysis was performed to assess the relationship between student performance on the Georgia ACCESS test in speaking and the Georgia CRCT in social studies. Results indicated there was a statistically significant positive relationship between the ACCESS speaking scale score and the CRCT social studies scale score, Pearson's $r = .49$, $p \leq .001$ (see Table 3).

Null Hypothesis Fifteen

$H_0$15: There is no significant correlation between student performance on the Georgia Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State test measuring proficiency in reading and student performance on the Georgia Criterion-Referenced

Competency Test measuring language use in social studies. Using the statistical software program SAS version 9.2, a correlation analysis was performed to assess the relationship between student performance on the Georgia ACCESS test in reading and the Georgia CRCT in social studies. Results indicated there was a statistically significant positive relationship between the ACCESS reading scale score and the CRCT social studies scale score, Pearson's $r = .51$, $p \leq .001$ (see Table 7).

Null Hypothesis Sixteen

$H_0$16: There is no significant correlation between student performance on the Georgia Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State test measuring proficiency in writing and student performance on the Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Test measuring language use in social studies. Using the statistical software program SAS version 9.2, a correlation analysis was performed to assess the relationship between student performance on the Georgia ACCESS test in writing and the Georgia CRCT in social studies. Results indicated there was a statistically significant positive relationship between the ACCESS writing scale score and the CRCT social studies scale score, Pearson's $r = .62$, $p \leq .001$ (see Table 7).

Thus, the null hypotheses for Research Question Two were rejected in favor of the research hypotheses. A positive correlation indicates a positive association between the variables. Increasing values in one variable correspond to increasing values in the other variable. In this study, there is a statistically significant positive correlation between student performance on the Georgia Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State test measuring proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing and the Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Test measuring language use in math, science, and social studies.

Table 7

Correlation Matrix of Dependent and Independent Variables Entered in Regression Models for Third Grade ACCESS test and CRCT

	[2]Reading Scale Score	[2]English/Language Arts Scale Score	[2]Math Scale Score	[2]Science Scale Score	[2]Social Studies Scale Score
[1]Listening Scale Score	0.63*** *n*=102	0.64*** *n*=103	0.50*** *n*=103	0.68*** *n*=106	0.63*** *n*=106
[1]Reading Scale Score	0.49*** *n*=102	0.57*** *n*=103	0.54*** *n*=103	0.50*** *n*=106	0.51*** *n*=106
[1]Writing Scale Score	0.61*** *n*=102	0.66*** *n*=103	0.55*** *n*=103	0.64*** *n*=106	0.62*** *n*=106
[1]Speaking Scale Score	0.43*** *n*=110	0.46*** *n*=111	0.39*** *n*=111	0.51*** *n*=114	0.49*** *n*=113
[1]ELP Composite PL	0.67*** *n*=102	0.72*** *n*=103	0.61*** *n*=103	0.71*** *n*=106	0.70*** *n*=106
[1]ELP Overall PL	0.69*** *n*=102	0.74*** *n*=103	0.64*** *n*=103	0.73*** *n*=106	0.72*** *n*=106

Notes. PL = Proficiency level. ELP = English Language Proficiency. Proficiency level scores are an interpretation of the scale scores. Composite score is derived from a combination of weighted scale scores. Overall scale score reflects a weighted score based on the scale scores for listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Scale scores are a mathematical transformation of the raw score.
*p=<.05. **p=<.01. ***p=≤.001
[1]ACCESS Variables
[2]CRCT Variables

Table 8

Correlation Matrix of Dependent and Independent Variables Entered in Regression Models for Third Grade ACCESS test and CRCT

	[2]Reading Scale Score	[2]English/Language Arts Scale Score	[2]Math Scale Score	[2]Science Scale Score	[2]Social Studies Scale Score
[1]Tier Level	0.34*** n=110	0.36*** n=111	0.29** n=111	0.39*** n=114	0.34*** n=113
[1]ELP Listening PL	0.58*** n=102	0.59*** n=103	0.45*** n=103	0.59*** n=106	0.59*** n=106
[1]ELP Reading PL	0.39*** n=102	0.46*** n=103	0.42*** n=103	0.37*** n=106	0.39*** n=106
[1]ELP Writing PL	0.61*** n=102	0.68*** n=103	0.55*** n=103	0.64*** n=106	0.63*** n=106
[1]ELP Speaking PL	0.42*** n=110	0.45*** n=111	0.39*** n=111	0.50*** n=114	0.48*** n=113
[1]ELP Literacy PL	0.63*** n=102	0.69*** n=103	0.61*** n=103	0.65*** n=106	0.64*** n=106

Notes. PL = Proficiency level. ELP = English Language Proficiency. Scale scores are a mathematical transformation of the raw score.
*p=<.05. **p=<.01. ***p=≤.001
[1]ACCESS Variables
[2]CRCT Variables

Summary

This study examined 117 English language learner students' scores on the 2013 ACCESS test and the 2014 CRCT in listening, speaking, reading, writing, English/language arts, math, science, and social studies. Specifically, the study sought to determine if there was a relationship between student performance on the ACCESS test and the Georgia CRCT measuring proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing (English/language arts). Additionally, the study sought to determine if there was a relationship between student performance on the ACCESS test

measuring proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing and the Georgia CRCT measuring language use in math, science, and social studies.

Data was found to be consistent as evidenced by the consistency of the standard deviations among the variables. Histograms reflect the skewness and kurtosis of the data, with the majority of the histograms reflecting normal distribution with the exception of one to two negatively skewed histograms. For research questions one and two all correlations were confirmed. Relationships between the variables were in the expected direction and significant.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The findings of this study clearly support Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory. Vygotsky's theory predicts that through culture (such as the social and academic culture of school) children acquire information and skills. Vygotsky's zone of proximal development asserts that when children collaborate with an adult in acquiring new skills, the adult is able to help children move from where they are to where they can be as maturation takes place. This research also reinforces Feuerstein's (1981) theory of mediated learning experience (MLE). Feuerstein asserts that MLE occurs when an adult or more competent peer acts as a mediator between children and the instruction occurring.

The purpose of this research was to test the correlational strength between the ACCESS test and the Georgia CRCT for third grade ELL students. The academic domains tested were listening, speaking, reading, writing, English/language arts, math, science, and social studies. Each of these variables was examined to determine if significance existed.

Summary of Findings

The overall results of this study supported the theory that a significant relationship existed between the ACCESS test and the Georgia CRCT. All domains tested met traditional significance levels of $p \leq .05$. In fact, all relationships of interest showed a significance level of $p \leq .01$, which suggests a very low probability of chance findings. The correlations themselves were robust. The correlations ranged from $r = .37$ to $r = .74$. These correlations ranged from moderate to strong (Cohen, 1988). Students' scores on the ACCESS test predicted their scores on the Georgia CRCT.

Discussion of Findings

The key findings of this study center in the strength of the correlations revealing a significant relationship between the variables. These findings indicate that the ACCESS test is a good predictor of the Georgia CRCT and thus can be used to strengthen student deficits in weak areas before the high-stakes test occurs. As the literature reveals in Chapter Two, interventions that help students improve test performance are critical, as passing the CRCT is a requirement for grade promotion in grades three through five in Georgia (CRCT Score Interpretation Guide, 2010). Additionally, modifying the curriculum to prepare students for assessments is specifically suggested for ELL learners in the new Common Core objectives (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2012). The significant relationship between the variables reveals that the two tests, while not identical in content, are closely correlated and are appropriate for measuring student performance.

Further evidence of the significant value of this research can be linked to a well known and studied phenomenon known as the testing effect. Research by Hornqvist, Jonsson and Nyberg (2014) found that tests can be used not only to measure what students know but also serve to facilitate learning. "Findings from empirical memory studies have shown that taking repeated tests before the administration of a final retention test improve the performance compared to traditional restudy of materials, particularly on delayed recall tests" Hornqvist, Jonsson & Nyberg, 2011, p. 10). This effect seems to be due to how the brain retrieves information. The testing process allows the memory to re-encode information while conventional restudy practice relies on repeated encoding. Thus, it is an advantage for students to have the opportunity to take a test similar in length, administration, and content before the high-stakes test occurs.

The results of this study confirmed much of the literature on mediation and learning. In particular, this study supported much of the research surrounding Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory as well as Feuerstein's (1981) mediated learning theory. Vygotsky's sociocultural emphasized collaboration between student and teacher in the culture of school. This study clearly supports a collaborative effort between the teacher and student in using the ACCESS test to predict student achievement on the Georgia CRCT. Vygotsky's seminal work centered on the zone of proximal development, where student achievement is attained through the guidance of an adult in order to help the child move from his/her actual level to where he/she can be with aid. "The zone of proximal development defines those functions that have not yet matured but are in the process of maturation….the actual developmental level characterized mental development retrospectively, while the zone of proximal development characterizes mental development prospectively" (Miller, 2011, p. 176). The robust size of the correlation coefficients in the current study suggests confidence in these previous studies.

Feuerstein (1979) also noted the role of culture when students acquire new skills. Feuerstein's primary work led him to establish interventions that the mediator must use in helping the child construct meaning: identifying the thinking process, intentionality, interpretation and transcendence. Because language is so closely tied to culture, and culture is tied to language (Vygotsky, 1978), policy makers must recognize the importance of cultural literacy as a part of language learning. As noted in Chapter Two, culturally responsive practices can be incorporated into the curriculum in order to facilitate students' linguistic design and culture. One practice of relative importance to the findings is repeated measures. Giving students more than one opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge is beneficial to the outcome of the assessment (Honigsfeld & Giouroukakis, 2011). The use of the ACCESS test to assess

knowledge and establish interventions will lead to a better score on the CRCT, as evidenced by the significant correlations.

As students demonstrate their knowledge, teachers must be confident in the validity of a test. With criterion-referenced tests, students are given a score on how they have mastered a particular skill, as opposed to a norm-referenced test that evaluates students in relation to other populations. Research by Cerda and Hernandez (2006) suggests that it is important to analyze what the test is measuring; for example, the researcher must determine if the test is measuring the student's academic skills or language skills. Coltrane (2002) suggests that ELL students must have a schema of situations found in the test in order to be able to understand the concepts described. Additionally, a study by Coleman & Goldenberg (2012) found that increased attention to vocabulary will help ELL students in language acquisition as well as in reading comprehension. Knestrict and Schoensteadt (2005) found that when students were taught translation skills, their understanding of what was expected from them increased. Solano-Flores (2009) found that translation skills can help reduce the occurrence of translation error. The WIDA Consortium has implemented comprehensive research in these areas when developing the test design of the ACESS test. In addition, the confidence bands give evidence of the reliability of the assessment.

Implications for Policy and Practice

For many school systems, high-stakes testing is the indicator which is used to measure whether or not student achievement is being raised for all students, regardless of ethnic or socio-economic status. This is particularly evident when the high-stakes tests are tied to public perceptions of achievement and to government regulations, interventions, and funding. When states invest millions of dollars in testing, it is vital that those assessments accurately reflect

student knowledge and achievement. Additionally, once a state adopts a test, a commitment has been made to the fidelity of the assessment and is usually a long-term investment. The importance of this study for policy is in the strength of the correlations between the two tests. The strong correlations reflect that the ACCESS test is a very good predictor of the CRCT, which is an indication that the choice of the ACCESS test is a wise investment for the state. Not only that, but it also has value for other states as well who may seek research before investing in assessments for their students. In this way, states across the country have a model to follow when selecting which tests most accurately reflect student knowledge.

Another important policy aspect is integration. Given that the students in Georgia already take the ACCESS test and the CRCT, integration challenges will not be in the administration of the tests, but attention should be paid to integrating interventions. Once the ACCESS test reveals areas of weaknesses for the students, appropriate, research based interventions should be coordinated into the curriculum. Investments in researched based intervention programs should be sustainable in the budget. Also, administrators should recognize that any new program will take time to implement and develop a methodology in the administration. This is where school systems can provide professional development for their educators. Considerations will include both time and monetary constraints. Since the ACCESS test was shown to be a strong predictor of student performance on the Georgia CRCT, focused policies can also include the resources available through the WIDA consortium. As members of the consortium, teachers and administrators have many resources available for student practice and teacher education. The main source for these materials is the ACCESS website. Materials include instructional videos, professional workshops, lesson plan share, sample tests, and scoring notes, to name just a few. The ACCESS test is increasing in importance as more states join the

consortium (WIDA Consortium, 2010). School systems would do well to consider the benefits of membership in the Consortium in order to implement appropriate accommodations for ELL students.

Limitations

The first limitation of the study rests with the relatively low reliability of the listening portion of the ACCESS test. All reliability scores, with the exception of the listening score, were at least .7, which fall within traditionally accepted ranges for the Cronbachs alpha. However, .62 is not extremely low but not as robust as it could be. Therefore, results related to this variable should be interpreted with caution. Initially, the researcher intended to control for time spent in the U. S. and the extent of English spoken at home in this study. This data was not available to the researcher from the school system. However, the researcher decided to continue without this data and conduct a type of exploratory study. Part of the reasoning was that third grade is a primary grade, and any effect on the study of time would be minimal. For example, if a study examined the effects on students who had been in the school system for a substantial amount of time, such as 12th grade students, one would expect a more extreme effect. Furthermore, this study used test scores from third grade ELL students, limiting the study to a single year and grade level. Longitudinal data and a larger sample population would yield a broader view of results. In addition, the sample was limited to one school district. Results could differ depending on the geographical culture of the sample. One final limitation is not related to the study itself but to the potential utility of the findings. The state of Georgia is moving to a new standardized test that will replace the CRCT, which is a different criterion variable in the context of the current study. This change may limit the applicability of the study's results. However,

this study could serve as a benchmark for future studies seeking to identify the predictive value of the ACCESS test for the new criterion variable.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study's results provide a benchmark for assessing the predictive value of the ACCESS test on the new criterion test. Future research might explore the extent to which this new criterion variable is predicted by the ACCESS test and therefore calls for attention by educators to similar kinds of accommodations suggested by this study. Future research might explore additional measures of the variables of interest. The measurement of variables in the current study, although appropriate for the hypotheses and research questions, did not correspond as specifically as they might have due to the construction of the two tests. This research was limited by available data within the school system. Future researchers may be able to obtain permission to include more precise measures of variables of interest to provide even greater confidence in the psychometric properties of the variables. Additionally, future research could include a study where the control variables of time spent in the U. S. and the amount of English spoken at home is available. The researcher was limited to the data collected by the school system. However, future researchers could request additional data, perhaps in the form of questionnaires or interviews with the population to obtain this data.

Given the strong correlations found in this study, future research could test the effectiveness of different accommodations for English language learners. As the population of ELL students increases, as noted by Han and Bridglall (2009), such accommodations will continue to be necessary as school systems respond to this important population. Regardless of one's position on immigration, it is important for educators work constructively with this population. The existential moment in front of us calls for such a constructive response. Indeed,

this moment is not new. As Brubacher and Rudy (1997) note, higher education has dealt many times with unexpected audiences, from returning military personnel to non-traditional students seeking higher education. Throughout history, all levels of education have had to adapt to changing populations of students with varying skills levels ranging from language to cultural issues (U. S. Department of State, 2010). The resilience of United States elementary and secondary education system will be tested and proved once again.

Conclusions

This study sought to determine the strength and nature of the relationships between the ACCESS test and the Georgia CRCT in listening, speaking, reading, writing, English/language arts, math, science, and social studies. The study collected test data from third grade, ELL students in a rural school system in northeast Georgia.

Bivariate correlations models confirmed the strength of the relationship between the two tests. The results of this study determined a statistically significant relationship between the two tests, thus supporting the research hypotheses that the ACCESS test is a strong predictor of the Georgia CRCT. Revision of policies indicate that a new criterion referenced competency test has been adopted (Georgia Department of Education, 2014), calling for future studies to confirm the relationships found in this study.

As English language learners continue to enter the United States school system, educators and policy makers will need to respond with practices and policies to support this population. This study suggests the wisdom of interventions tailored to specific student needs as determined by the ACCESS test which clearly predicts the scores of the Georgia CRCT. Future research must determine whether the new criterion referenced competency test has the same strong relationship with the ACCESS test.

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APPENDIX A

Institutional Review Board Notification and Authorization

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

June 27, 2014

Nancy L. McNeal
IRB Application 1896.062714: Correlating English Language Learner CRCT Scores on the Basis of English Language Learner ACCESS Scores

Dear Nancy,

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 does not classify as human subjects research. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application.

Your study does not classify as human subjects research because your research involves deidentified archival data.

Please note that this decision only applies to your current research application, and that any changes to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty IRB for verification of continued non-human subjects research status. You may report these changes by submitting a new application to the IRB and referencing the above IRB Application number.

If you have any questions about this determination, or need assistance in identifying whether possible changes to your protocol would change your application's status, please email us at [redacted]

Sincerely,

[redacted]

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