A Research Question of Reading Fluency, 
Comprehension, and Standardized Test 
with English Second Language Students 

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Dedication and Acknowledgements

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my husband James and my son Alexander (Xander), for their support and love throughout my Masters studies. I want to thank my parents Dennis, Sue, Alan and Robin for their encouragement and support. To my family, and friends, for making me laugh when I wanted to cry. Lastly I want to thank my mentors Dr. Carol Winkle, Dr. Rui Nu-Cooper, Jenny Htang, and Mr. Sean Townsin for standing by my side throughout the entirety of my thesis. I couldn’t have done this without you all!

Abstract
This research paper was organized into five sections. The sections are The Purpose of the Study, Background and Review of Literature, Procedures, Results Analysis and Data, Discussions and Conclusions. The Background and Review of Literature section will provide the information about education, strategies, fluency and comprehension, and Standardized tests. The standardized tests that will be mentioned are Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA), World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment, and M-Step (Michigan Student Test of Education Progress). Looking at the academic language skills required for these standardized tests “CALPs involve systematic thought processes, the cognitive toolbox needed to categorize, compare, analyze, and accommodate new experiences and is therefore key to acquiring the in-depth knowledge needed in a complex modern society” (Diaz-Rico, 2012, p.170). When Diaz-Rico was talking about these skills it seems to follow along with WIDA, a standardized English proficiency test. The literature explores English Second Language (ESL) students on reading strategies for fluency/comprehension, and standardized testing. The last section of this research has outlined the results that the impact that Fluency, and comprehension have on proficiency for standardized tests.
Dedication and Acknowledgements ........................................................................... 1
Abstract ...................................................................................................................... 1
Table of Contents ...................................................................................................... 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Purpose of the Study</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Justification for the Study</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Research Question and Hypothesis</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Definition of Terms</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Background and Review of Literature</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Background</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Procedures</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Description of the Research Design</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Description of the Sample</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Description of the Instruments Used</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Explanations of the Specific Procedures</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Results, Analysis, and Data</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Discussion of Internal Validity</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Discussion of External Validity</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Description of the Statistical Techniques</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Discussions and Conclusion</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td></td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 1 – Problem

Introduction

There has been an increase in the United States with the English Second Language (ESL) population. The State and Federal requirements for ESL curriculum are getting more demanding and rigorous because there are more ESL students in classrooms within the United States. Teachers are developing lesson plans that have additional scaffolding and are participating in professional development that targets ESL education. Strong concentrations for schools within the United States are the academics of ESL students because of standardized tests and the correlation to rankings/ funds.

English as a Second Language has become more common in the classroom. Teachers have identified that Sheltered Instruction (SI) for individual students has become a requirement when imparting knowledge from the common core state standards. It is essential for teachers to consistently incorporate a multitude of various reading techniques and strategies, as well as trying to strive to minimize the educational reading gap. An example of an educational gap in reading would be when ESL students in second grade are only reading at a first grade level compared to their monolingual English peers. ESL students are typically behind their monolingual peers in Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). Students grasp BICS quicker than CALPs because of the necessity in social communication, facilitating easier interaction with their peers.

Looking at the academic language skills “CALPs involve systematic thought processes, the cognitive toolbox needed to categorize, compare, analyze, and accommodate
new experiences and is therefore key to acquiring the in-depth knowledge needed in a complex modern society” (Diaz-Rico, 2012, p.170). When Diaz-Rico was talking about these skills it seems to follow along with World-Class International Design and Assessment (WIDA), a standardized English proficiency test. ESL students who are in general education classrooms are usually at a lower mastery level in reading, writing, listening, and speaking. When comparing ESL students to monolingual students, ESL students have a difficult time linking fluency to comprehension at an appropriate grade level for reading. With the delay in fluency and comprehension, ESL students have a difficult time reaching grade level standards. Nonetheless, the younger the ESL student, the easier to reach/master grade level standards. The growth towards grade level content standards comes from scaffolding lessons. Scaffolding lessons means that the material is less but still enriched with content material. Scaffolding is not lowering expectations it is just less information for the students to sort through.

“Students who were able to carry on good conversations in English within a year or two of first enrolling in U.S. schools struggled for a substantially longer time up to 7 years) to learn to use English effectively in academic classes.” (Cook, Wilmes, Boals, & Santos, 2008, p. 4). The student’s oral social language fools educational staff into thinking that ESL students understand the academic content. The research question: “What struggles do ESL students face when learning English in a school setting?”
Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this content analysis was to analyze content through resources found online pertaining to comprehension, fluency, and standardized testing. In this study, the analysis will prove that there has been a need for additional support throughout the school year based on correlations with fluency and comprehension for standardized tests. The need for additional support between reading fluency, comprehension, and standardized tests is evident when looking further into the research. The validity of this study will validate the importance of additional support that ESL students use and require in a classroom. Solutions for academic gaps that are becoming more prominent over school breaks have to have a resolution. Equivalent teacher expectations should be established in both inner city and suburban classrooms. “The achievement gap needs to be reexamined based on a two year reading gap by the time students enter sixth grade” (Allington, McGill-Franzen R, & McGill-Frazen A, 2013, p.2).

Identifying diversities within classrooms facilitates unique individual classroom cultures. The analysis will illustrate that most students are learning at the same rates throughout the school year. This study also displays the education behind ESL reading fluency, comprehension, and standardized tests. The researcher wants to know if the geographical location would add to the struggles for ESL students when learning English in a school setting.

Justification for the Study

This analysis will demonstrate that ESL students have the ability to learn at the same rate as their monolingual peers in the school/educational settings. The analysis will also reflect that students learn at different paces; yet they will develop academically in
comprehension while learning to succeed in fluency. Through teaching grade level content scaffolding is extremely important for ESL students to achieve knowledge at the same rate as their monolingual peers. Integration of demographic location would not impact ESL students whom are improving academically. The conclusion has been that educational opportunities for ESL students are comparable in a vast demographic area. The ways those educational opportunities are taught and received are different because of socio-economic statuses.

**Research Question and Hypothesis**

The research question for this study was “What struggles do ESL students face when learning English in a school setting?” ESL students might not be testing at grade level standards, however the individual student could have made the same growth as a monolingual peer. The researcher believes that the mastery of fluency and difficulty in fluency reflects on comprehension, causing lower standardized testing scores. Also, ESL students are capable of attaining educational information at the same rate as monolingual peers. The researcher would merely say that the growth would be the same in different geographical locations throughout the school year between ESL students.

**Definition of Terms**

**Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS):** Those skills that allow students in school to communicate in social contexts similar to those of the home (Diaz-Rico, 2004,) In this study BICS refers to informal and social settings.
Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALPS): involve systematic thought processes, the cognitive toolbox needed to categorize, compare, analyze, and accommodate new experiences and is therefore key to acquiring the in-depth knowledge needed in a complex modern society (Diaz-Rico, 2004 170). In this study CALPS is referred to as language in the classroom.

Comprehension: The act or action of grasping with the intellect (Webster’s Dictionary). In this study Comprehension will be referred to as the ability to understand what students are being read or to understand vocabulary.

Fluency: The ability to do something in a way that seems easy (Webster Learner’s Dictionary). In this study fluency will be used to describe the smoothness and ease of reading sentences in English.

English Foreign Language: The teaching of English as a foreign language (Webster Learner’s Dictionary). This study will refer to EFL for purposes in which references use this definition.

English Language Learner: English language learner (Webster Learner’s Dictionary). In this study ELL will refer to English Language Learners whose first language would not be English.
English Second Language: The teaching of English to people who speak a different language and who live in a country where English is the main language spoken (Webster Learner’s Dictionary). In this study this refers to students who have been classified ESL by their home district/school.

L1 (First Language): The language you learn from your parents as you grow up. (Cambridge dictionary). In this study first language refers to the language that the student speaks in the home.

L2 (Second Language): A language that a person can speak that is not the first language they learned naturally as a child (Cambridge Dictionary). In this study second language will refer to the second language a student is learning to read, write, speak, or understand verbally.

Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA): a global not-for-profit educational services organization (http://www.nwea.org). In this study NWEA is one of the standardized test that will be used when discussing standardized tests.

Realia: Objects or activities used to relate classroom teaching to the real life especially in peoples studied (Webster’s Dictionary). In this study realia will be used as a definition for hands on learning.

Standardized test: a test (as of intelligence, achievement, or personality) whose reliability has been established by obtaining an average score of a significantly large number of
individuals for use as a standard of comparison (Webster’s Dictionary). In this study standardized testing will refer to English based tests given to the whole student population.

**World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA):** WIDA advances academic language development and academic achievement for children and youth who are culturally and linguistically diverse through high quality standards, assessments, research, and professional learning for educators (http://www.wida.us). In this study WIDA will be referred to as an English Proficiency standardized test.
Chapter 2- Background and Review of Literature

Background

**Education** “Reading in a foreign or second language is often a laborious process, often caused by underdeveloped word recognition skills, among other things, of second and foreign language readers” (Gorsuch, Taguchi, 2008, p.253). Education today requires teachers to focus upon reading comprehension and fluency daily. Monolingual and secondary English student’s mastery levels in fluency and comprehension clash for the most part when compared even though the same fluency skills are worked at the same time.

Federal laws have encouraged (English language learners) ELL development academically. “By the time No Child Left Behind was enacted in 2001, the force of federal law backed the idea that ELL’s must be included in school-level accountability and hence assessed in both academic content and English proficiency.” (Cook et al., 2008, p.5). All classrooms that have ESL students are working harder to make sufficient gain in academics. Teachers are working on I can statements so that students learn what and why they are learning the information that is being taught. These are also known as learning targets. Learning targets for ESL students have content and language objectives.

Through No Child Left Behind (NCLB) required assessments have been implemented by the “blueprint for materials developed, lesson plans, classroom management, and staff development” (Cook et al., 2008, p.5). Through years of teaching experience students recognize the social cues in language before they can comprehend reading materials. Frequently, students learn to read physical body cues prior to verbal communication. When moving from reading body language and BICS (Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills),
ESL students begin decoding verbal language by applying their background knowledge from their first language to the language that they are learning.

As educators test students, time in the classroom becomes scarce. Testing NWEA (Northwest Evaluation Association), WIDA (World-class Instructional Design and Assessment), and M-Step (Michigan Student Test of Educational Progress) run from the beginning of January to the end of May. “However, the NCLB Act, mandates testing on state achievement tests, in English after children have been in U.S. schools for three years. The mandated tests are in English and the outcomes are compared to outcomes of monolingual English Children. These test results are used to determine which schools are failing or meeting federal/state standards.” (Cook et al., p. 440)

“Compared to monolingual English readers who have learned the mother tongue orally before learning to read, English Second Language readers are handicapped in terms of the amount of exposure to the language they are learning. ESL readers’ oral language and reading development may start at the same time” (Gorsuch, Taguchi, 2008. p.254). This is a portion of the standardized tests that is not at a fair place for ESL students. Monolingual students have had 5 years minimum of exposure to the language before any formal schooling has began. ESL students may or may not have been exposed to this second language let alone continuous formal education.

English Language Learners are able to learn the specialized skills that are needed when completing their formal academics. However, it will take them longer than an English as a first Language student. Cook et al., (2008) says:
“Students who were able to carry on good conversations in English within a year or two of first enrolling in the U. S. schools struggled for a substantially longer time (up to 7 years) to learn English effectively in academic classes. (p.4). 

Cook et al’s statement implies that students will get to a developing stage in their second language and then fall through cracks in the education system. As a result educators cannot always assume that because a student is using the language content that the student is able to comprehend or grasp everything in academic terms. August, Shanahan, Escamilla, (2009) also agree with students abilities to learn by stating “word-level skills of language-minority students (e.g., decoding, spelling) are much more likely to be at levels equal to monolingual English speakers. However, this is not the case for text level skills” (p.434). When referencing the text level skills students are not able to comprehend at grade level textbooks. Scaffolding is very important to developing students because they are still learning the content however teachers are making the information more attainable to comprehend by tailoring to every students individual need. With English proficiency taking an average of 7 years, (Cook et al, 2008, p.4) the amount of time to grasp academic proficiency was a surprise.

The location of where an ESL student’s education took place had been and currently is a factor to an ESL student’s ability to become successful outside of the classroom. Although geographical location has not been proven a factor for success with ESL students, poverty impacts accessibility for ESL families. According to Allington et al., (2013)

“Unlike many families from low-socioeconomic levels, during the summer months, middle-class and more affluent families are more likely to take their children to museums and libraries, travel to distant places, and spend more hours per day reading.
Middle class parents have the resources to buy their children computers, age appropriate books, and reading games; engage them more often in conversations using expansive vocabulary; and model reading as a form of enjoyment in their own lives” (p.74).

When it comes to ESL students and their reading Oliver, & Young, (2016) write:

Poor readers read less, become poorer readers, and learn fewer words. Competent readers read more; they learn more words and have better comprehension. Reading is a highly self-motivational activity and the inability to read well may lead to a loss of motivation and increase levels of frustration that, in turn may also result in students reading less. There is an additional flow-on effect of poor reading skills for university-bound students, namely a reduced quality in their writing skills, which are also essential for university success. (p.2)

When poor readers get discouraged and stop reading the love of reading from many teachers is how the student gets help. Poor readers are readers who give up and then slowly start to not do homework or simply are quiet during reading class. Students have to have the ability to take on reading with the help of teachers because without their support the student becomes illiterate. Taguchi, Gorsuch, and Sasamoto (2006) agree with Oliver and Young by stating, “Slow readers do not read much, and if they do not read much, they do not understand. If they do not understand, then they cannot enjoy reading” (p.2).

It is essential for students to have the availability of age appropriate books, no matter whether a good reader or a poor reader. One resource that was found to support lower socioeconomic families for books was “The Reading Teacher journal, for example,
publishes a list every November of over 300 newly published books for children and adolescents that have been reviewed and recommended by teachers” (Alyousef, 2006, p.66).

**Strategies** When students begin to read they initially are encouraged to read pictures and provide narrations of the pictures. Students’ narrative vocabulary becomes extensive when they have supplementary exposure to the language. When learning to read Derwing, Munro, & Thomson (2007) state, “An investigating developmental aspect of adult immigrant ESL learners’ speech production, take into account exposure to English outside the classroom.” (p.359). Many ESL students are only learning English within the classroom. The exposure in home is very little or the family is learning together. Students who are learning to read English in a classroom and have homework have to read in English for homework causing a challenge for parents to help with homework.

When beginning to look closer at how students learn to read with fluency and comprehension we could say, “The first condition is that English Second Language readers may decode without comprehension” (Ching, Hui Min, & Lay Wah, 2014, p. 20).

When regarding the process of fluency and comprehension Ching et al., (2014) wrote: “In the first language context, when a reader can pronounce the word aloud, he or she will automatically draw upon his or her oral word bank to find a semantic match for the word meaning. In contrast, second language (L2) readers may be able to decode the text but there is no guarantee that they will effectively extract the meaning. Another condition is that L2 learners may be able to comprehend without being able to decode or pronounce. This means that L2 readers may know the meaning when reading silently yet they are unable to pronounce the word if they were asked to read aloud” (p. 20).
When ESL students begin the process of learning another language they begin acquisition with reading strategies. As a result, there are many different strategies that are used to support reading fluency and comprehension in the classroom. The definition of fluency has been “The ability to read rapidly with ease and accuracy, and to read with appropriate expression and phrasing. It involves a long incremental process and text comprehension is the expected outcome” (Grabe, 2010, p. 72). ESL students focus an exorbitant amount of time focusing on fluency before they can even get to comprehension in a text. The definition of comprehension by Torgesen, & Hudson (2006) has been

“When readers embed appropriate volume, emphasis, phrasing, and other elements in oral expression, they are giving evidence of actively interpreting or constructing meaning from the passage. This embedding of prosody shows that the reader is trying to make sense of or comprehend the text” (p. 5).

When researching different ways to help students learn to comprehend and read fluently; there are so many. One strategy that Students have access to would be a strategy that Torgesen, & Hudson (2006) discuss “Intensive remedial intervention could produce very large gains in reading ability in a group of students who began with very impaired reading skills. (p. 3). Intensive remedial intervention is very hands on, small group or one on one instruction. It is also known as response to intervention (RTI). During this time students are getting support with learning or behavior needs.
Strategies to help with fluency and comprehension can be broken down by DelliCarpini (2011) and Chard, Pikulski (2005).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step 1</td>
<td>Anticipation Guide: as a prereading scaffold.</td>
<td>Building the graph phonic foundations for fluency, including phonological awareness, letter familiarity, and phonics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 2</td>
<td>Vocabulary self-selection (VSS): to facilitate meaningful vocabulary development, followed by a vocabulary squares activity to help the student solidify the vocabulary through strong personal connection.</td>
<td>Building and extending vocabulary and oral language skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 3</td>
<td>Direct Reading-Thinking Activity (DR-TA): During reading, scaffold, and guided discussion and strategy.</td>
<td>Providing expert instruction and practice in the recognition of high-fluency vocabulary.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Step 4
A GIST: Activity, an after-reading scaffold and writing prompt.  
Teaching common word parts and spelling patterns Cont.

### Step 5
Teaching, modeling, and providing practice in the application of a decoding strategy.

### Step 6
Using appropriate texts to coach strategic behaviors and to build reading speed.

### Step 7
Using repeated reading procedures as an intervention approach for struggling readers.

### Step 8
Extending growing fluency through wide independent reading.

### Step 9
Monitoring fluency development through appropriate assessment measures.

Chard and Pikulski have identified these certain steps to demonstrate the break down process in fluency with some comprehension. In Pikulski’s (2005) step 7 he mentions “Using repeated reading procedures as an intervention approach for struggling readers” (p. 513). Taguchi et al., (2006) also mention repeated reading but go further in depth to state
that there are different repeated reading programs. The repeated reading that Taguchi (2006) goes into depth on are “Unassisted Repeated Reading which does not involve a reading model, assisted Repeated Reading which uses a live or audiotaped model of reading, and Reading-While-Listening allows students to read continuous text along with a taped version of the text” (p. 4).

There are many ways to support different reading strategies for ESL students. According to Torgesen, & Hudson (2006):

“Logical analysis suggests the following primary components that might underlie individual differences in text reading fluency as defined: Proportion of words in a passage that can be recognized “by sight”, Variations in speed with which “sight words” are processed, Speed of decoding processes used to identify unknown words (decoding fluency), Use of Content to speed word identification, Speed with which word meanings are identified, Speed with which overall meaning is constructed, and in the relative value a child places on speed vs. accuracy in reading (p. 6-8).

“Effective L1 (first language) reading comprehension generally assumes reading fluency- a person reading at a reasonable rate, between 250-300 words per minute, using very efficient and fast word recognition skills, and combining information from various sources while reading under fairly intense time constraints” (Grabe, 2010, p. 72).

Upon literature review some comprehension strategies Hashim, & Seng (2006) share are:

When it comes to some comprehension strategies “bottom-up vocabulary strategies such as simply rereading difficult segments and guessing the meaning of an unknown word from context or looking up the word in the dictionary, to more comprehensive
strategies such as summarizing and relating what is being read to the reader’s background knowledge. Put simply reading strategies are “plans for solving problems encountered in constructing meaning (p. 31-32).

Implementing and applying strategies to help students with reading fluency and comprehension becomes beneficial for students when making connections to first language (L1) while learning English. According to Hashim & Seng (2006),

Students use their L1 while learning L2. English Second Language student’s transition frequently between both languages as needed to process information; also they rely on translation as a cognitive strategy. ESL students use L1 in comprehension of their L2 texts and that reliance is related to the level of their proficiency. Translations can be unproductive when it is done in a word-by-word fashion without integration of meaning. The reading process is seen as involving both an array of low-level rapid, automatic identification skills and an array of higher-level comprehension/interpretation skills (p. 30-31).

The less decoding, word recognition, and other mastery reading skills that English Second Language students have then the less proficient the students will be in reading comprehension and fluency. The student’s second language will suffer because of the deficiency in background knowledge that is required to support make connections between the student’s first language (L1) and the second/third language (L2/L3). “Using pedagogical translation is encouraged to practice reading, writing, vocabulary, grammar, and speaking. Translation is recognized as the fifth skill and the most important social skill since it promotes communication and understanding.” (Ranjabar, & Akef, 2015, p. 57).
**Standardized tests** Reading fluency and comprehension all lead into standardized testing within the United States. Standardized testing has been a method of measuring students English Proficiency and academic proficiency. “There are three things that qualify as English proficient: state content assessments, success in the classroom, and full participation in society” (Cook et al., 2008, p. 29). Through teaching within inner city schools the definition of non-English proficient can be given to many inner city students as well. These students who fall into the category as ESL students for English Proficient are called LEP (Low English Proficient). Cook et al., (2008) declares:

An English proficient student could be one who has the ability to perform proficiently on state tests, successfully participate in classes in which only English is spoken, and fully participate in English-speaking social environments (p. 29). Yet, it can be argued that students who are monolingual could be considered as not English proficient on any standardized test if they cannot perform proficiently according to the definition of English proficient.

While students are required to take standardized tests “oral reading fluency is a strong indicator of reading competence and therefore fluency needs to be indicated in reading assessments” (Jeon, 2012, p. 189). Jeon conducted nine different reading fluency tests involving ESL students who studied English. The tests that Jeon () conducted were:

Three oral reading tests (Pseudoword Reading Test, Word Reading Test, and Passage Reading Test), and six non-oral reading fluency tests (Morphological Awareness Test, Work Knowledge Test, Grammar Knowledge Test, Reading Comprehension Test, Listening Comprehension Test, and Metacognitive Awareness Reading Questionnaire)
(Jeon, 2012, pg. 191). Jeon’s test could be used for struggling monolingual students as well as ESL students.

When ESL and monolingual English students take standardized tests it becomes surprising that there are such narrow guidelines to follow while taking the test. ESL students are learning skills that most monolingual students have mastered before even starting primary school. First language acquisition states that “when children start to utter single words to represent the whole meaning of an entire sentence the so-called holophrastic utterance meaning when a child says ball they mean throw the ball” (Diaz-Rico, 2004, p. 48). ESL students are required to partake in English only standardized tests instead of prearranged standardized tests scaffolding their first language (L1) and English second language, (L2) to ensure success in testing. First language support in a standardized test for ESL students might differentiate scoring as proficient versus not proficient rankings on standardized tests.

Testing students in only English has been skewing the results on academic standardized tests. Students who are ESL must know the language to take the standardized test and then the academic content also in English. The academic information that standardized tests are looking for could be a portion of the students’ previous background knowledge, but because of the insufficient knowledge of English, testing does not truly replicate the mastery of the academic knowledge.

When comparing different requirement standards for ESL students to successfully pass to the next grade level the requirements are all different based on geographical location. According to Torgesen, & Hudson (2006):

Performance on the FCAT (Florida’s Comprehensive Assessment Test) is categorized in five levels (one-five), with level three being considered grade level performance.
Students must perform at level two or higher on the FCAT to be eligible for promotion from 3rd to 4th grade, and they must also attain a given level of proficiency on the test in order to be eligible for a regular high school diploma (pg. 2).

With successful requirements for passing a grade level being left to the states and districts there is not a federal guideline. Federal guidelines for ESL programs do need more guidance based on some states and districts being to laidback while others to rigorous. Federal guidelines could also help students who are inner city. “Students who are living in inner city areas are behind two years in reading by the time they hit sixth grade” (Allington et al., 2013, p. 2). Although, funding should not be based on lack of success with reading making mandatory summer school on Federal funding could be there to help close academic gaps. ESL students are absorbing academic material at about the identical rate as their peers. Yet ESL students are playing catch up with all the skills that First Language English/monolingual students learned when they were infants and toddlers. Vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension are at different mastery levels than their peers because of differences with support outside the school. However, student growth is approximately identical throughout a school year. According to Allington et al., (2013);

In short, very little of the enormous difference in word knowledge performance appears to be attributable to what goes on in school; most of it comes from out of school…[and can] be accounted for by the differential effects of summer vacations (p. 75).

When concentrating on the achievement gap, there are different resources outside of schools that can encourage academics. Computer programs that target ESL/ ELL learners help establish background knowledge and vocabulary. ESL students can use apps as
academic resources, which are an abundant tool for academic intervention outside the classroom. Apps allow students the ability to have individualized learning outside the classroom, since not all parents will be able to assist with the second language. Apps for a cell phone or a tablet that are free could possibly start minimizing the educational gap over the summer. A technological program for ESL students that was referenced was Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL). CALL has been a program that has the possibility to close the individual learning gap for every ESL student at home. Peng (2010) describes Computer Assisted Language Learning as follows:

Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) is working towards individual learner pacing and interactive lessons so that students are able to learn a second language on technology. There are three parts to CALL. The first is Behavioristic CALL, The second is focused on drills and practice activities, and the third is Communicative CALL. CALL focuses on using language as a medium to achieve a certain purpose (i.e. shopping, applying for a job, etc.) of learning. Thus, meaningful CALL activities such as skill practice and language games evolved. Integrative CALL put an emphasis on authentic learning environments, self-paced learning, and resourceful support from the technology that benefited both language instruction and learning (p. 22-23)

ESL students are besieged with standardized tests due to the amount of time that they are spending to gain CALPS (Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency) before taking standardized tests. ESL students’ prerequisites for growth improvement are Standardized tests such as NWEA. NWEA shows academic gains per student allowing individual growth plans. Nonetheless NWEA is only one test. ESL students deserve empowerment from
taking tests and not discouragement at not passing a test or not scoring what teachers and administrators call “at grade level”. ESL students are doing poorly on tests because of the shortage in vocabulary and background knowledge within the English language. Nevertheless, in the United States students are mandated to take the standardized test because it is linked to state and federal funding for the school.

ESL students should have realistic goals for successfully completing a grade level. Standardized tests are not a realistic way to show gains with ESL students unless the growth is individual and not compared to Grade level standards. Grade level expectations are still the academic goal however ESL students should be based on their growth academically over the year not what a monolingual L1 English student should be held accountable to in testing.

When looking at accommodations for ESL students we need to look further into special services for these students. ESL students are occasionally grouped as a language deficiency when the student truly qualifies for Special Education. Outcomes are that ESL student do not make academic gains because “it’s a language barrier” but there are other needs that should be addressed. An outcome from grouping these students as a lack of L2 is that ESL students do not get special education services as quickly as needed.

When looking at today’s ESL programs we need to remember not to discourage student’s first language and cultural beliefs. The researcher would like to confirm that there is no quick solution to help ESL students learn English quickly. The researcher also would like to illustrate that through assimilation into the English language that these students ought to be encouraged to use their first language so that it does not vanish. America is a melting pot of numerous different languages and cultures. Speaking multiple languages has become
a skill that needs to be encouraged throughout American society. We don’t want to repeat the mistakes made from the past.

**History** The pressure that was in the past to learn and be proficient in English still takes place in the present for students, just not to the same extent. Still it can be detrimental to their culture and language. An example of when assimilation was extremely disrespectful to ESL students and their families was the Native American assimilation into European culture. Consequently children were sent to boarding schools that only allowed English to be spoken. These students spent half the day learning academics and the other half of the day learning how to live like Europeans. “When we entered the Mission School, we experienced a greater hardship, for there we encountered a rule that prohibited the use of our own language, which rule was rigidly enforced with a hickory rod, so that the new-comer, however socially inclined, was obliged to go about like a little dummy until he learned to express himself in English (Reyhner, Eder, 2004, p.75). These students soon lost their first language. Through assimilation many children were misplaced in not merely their native language but also English. These students didn’t have the connection with their families anymore because their first language vanished along with their cultural background. These children while they didn’t fit in to European culture didn’t fit in with their Native culture either. These children were isolated.

Educators and policymakers require the training to be culturally cognizant of ESL students. They essentially should be encouraged about diverse cultural backgrounds and should demand it be a high priority when building upon English Proficiency. There is no quick solution to ESL students learning. It is laborious work and should be required to be done with compassion, encouragement, and care for ESL students so that history does not
repeat itself. Standardized testing that is required almost immediately after starting to learn English is not fair to the student and as a result could be harmful later in life to those students in assimilating to a dual cultural and linguistic lifestyle.
Description of the Research Design

The researcher commenced working on a content analysis after having to switch her research project due to changes in administration at Escuela Avancemos! Academy. This Masters project began in September 2015, and concluded by May 2017. The change to a content analysis was executed from August 2016-April 2017. The research question for the content analysis was “What struggles do ESL students face when learning English in a school setting?” This content analysis has been comprised from research found at scholarly websites on reading fluency, comprehension, and standardized testing for ESL students. This Masters project, content analysis, began in September 2015, and concluded by May 2017.

This study includes looking at the relationship desired between fluency and comprehension for success on standardized tests. The researcher has analyzed published data on the differences and similarities in reading fluency, comprehension, and standardized tests. The content analysis has proven that fluency and comprehension are fundamental for proficiency in standardized tests. There have been three sections observed in the research; Reading fluency, Reading Comprehension, and Standardized tests. The researcher has focused on education, strategies, and the testing for ESL students. Nonetheless, the research is restricted because only 20 different resources have been analyzed for this investigation. To make the study even limited further the research articles are from around the world, so the research is vast in location while only a very small population has been documented. The data from this content analysis has demonstrated that reading strategies with ESL students has been the same around the world. Nevertheless, it is critical for students who are ESL or
even LEP (Limited English Proficient) to have a strong background in fluency and comprehension before taking standardized test.

**Description of the Sample**

The researcher considered numerous different types of journals and scholarly articles. There are plenty of articles and journals on this investigation topic. However, countless resources available are older than ten years since their publication date. The researcher did not use articles or journals that were published ten years ago or later based on how rapidly technology and research has transformed. Research to support the content analysis was collected from article and journals within the last decade so that the information was current.

**Description of the Instruments Used**

The data expended in the content analysis were located online through Google scholar. The researcher discovered journals and articles that pertained to at least one of the three main categories in the research question. The question the researcher asked for the criteria of the references was “Does the article or journal discuss reading fluency or comprehension and standardized tests with ESL students?” Textbooks that discussed reading with ESL students also were considered as resources. The article and journal resources can be found online that are cited for this content analysis. Most of the articles and journals found online were free resources for this content analysis. There are a few textbooks that were cited as references based on criteria that fit the research question.

**Explanations of the Specific Procedures Followed**

Throughout this content analysis, it has been made clear that ESL/ELL/EFL students around the world are all absorbing information and generating improvements towards proficiency (no matter the language they are learning). The conclusion was students are
learning at approximately the same rate whether monolingual or ESL. Yet ESL students are learning at different academic levels based on the background knowledge, support, and skill level in their first or second language skills. The fluency, comprehension, and standardized testing resources were chosen based on the validity of the question for this analysis. When researching articles to use in this analysis, Google scholar and published journals were the sources. As a result ERIC (Education Resource Information Center) was used to find many articles online however to take note these articles were printed.
Chapter 4- Results, Analysis, and Data

Discussion of Internal Validity

Based on the design of this study, one might argue that there could be a conflict of interest because the researcher is only looking for research based on ESL students versus monolingual students. The researcher demonstrates that the research is extremely limited because it is from around the world and not impartial in a one geographical location. However, when using ESL students in research projects the research should be based on the whole population not just the researchers geographical location.

Discussion of External Validity

This study could easily be replicated on a larger scale with more researchers and resources based on ESL students. The study can be more exhaustive by using ESL participants in different age categories and geographical locations. By extending the range of the research there can be more concrete data to describe the educational strategies that may work superlative for different age groups and countries/states. The limited number of references makes this analysis extremely restricted.

Description of the Statistical Techniques and Methods of Analysis

The researcher has analyzed the data by comparing and contrasting findings throughout the references on reading fluency, comprehension, and standardized testing. The researcher has proven that the relationships between these three concentrations are very strong. This has allowed the researcher to create a worldwide statement about ESL learning in fluency, comprehension, and standardized testing.
Chapter 5- Discussions and Conclusion

The struggles that English Second Language (ESL) students face are that the strategies they are learning in the classroom cannot be reinforced in the home because of language barriers. The academic gap is capable of closing however these students need the support outside of the classroom to achieve the grade level standards that the state is setting. ESL students are learning at approximately the same rate as their monolingual peers however, the development is behind those of monolingual students. These students need less to sort through and more concise information (No filler information). ESL students are starting the skill levels that monolingual students learned at the age of approximately two. Approximately is because every student learns at a different pace and proficiency whether ESL or monolingual. ESL students need the support in the classroom with Scaffolding, and sentence stems to help them become more confident in their new language. ESL students can be as successful as a monolingual student. However, standardized test are taking up to much of our valuable time as teachers for the support that our students need. Testing should not continuously run from January through the end of May in a school year. This is valuable time these students could be learning!

When taking this research project and finding different ways to expand it there are a few different ways to go further in depth. Future researchers can study different age ranges of ESL students, different geographical locations, and different proficiency levels. When researching what struggles ESL students have within a classroom having two different test groups could also help define which strategies are best or combined strategies are best. ESL students are across the world, so the more geographical
locations that participate in the study the more accurate the data becomes based on the total population worldwide.
References:


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