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An evaluation of the college readiness of graduating English language learners in Utah public schools.

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AN EVALUATION OF THE COLLEGE READINESS OF GRADUATING ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS IN UTAH PUBLIC SCHOOLS

By

Lizette L. Rogers

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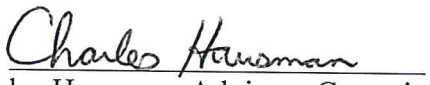

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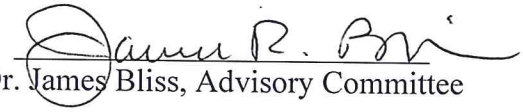

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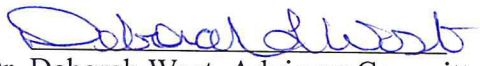

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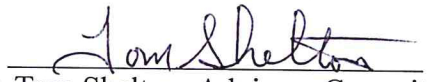

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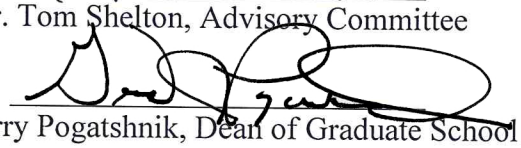

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to husband, John Rogers, and my children Trevor, Brandon, and Sean, for their unwavering support.

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ABSTRACT

The linguistic diversity that began with immigration in the early 20th century continues today. The impact of this growing population is directly affecting the economy and workforce in our nation. This dissertation focused on the college readiness of graduating English language learner (ELL) students in one western mountain state. The variables of gender, language proficiency levels, and free or reduced lunch status were studied, seeking to understand if those variables were independent of ELL students being college ready. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the ACT test scores for 668 English language learner graduates. A Chi-Square test for independence was also used to determine the level independence among the variables and college readiness. After analyzing the ACT scores, it was evident that many ELL graduates were not college ready at graduation. The variables of gender, language proficiency, and free or reduced lunch status statistically impact college readiness. However, the variable of gender had the least impact on college readiness status for ELL graduates. The study concluded with the recommendations for policies and practices that may better prepare the ELL student for college.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

As test scores reflect, the college readiness of the English language learner (ELL) is a growing concern with lasting implications. The need of the English language learner encompasses learning a new language structure and academic subject matter simultaneously. The greatest need is to educate ELL students in a manner that produces a student who has the choice to attend college. Passel and Cohn (2008) asserted that "the Latino population, already the nation's largest minority group, will triple in size and will account for most of the nation's population growth from 2005 through 2050." Through trend analysis, Passel and Cohn (2008) found that "Hispanics will make up 29% of the U.S. population in 2050, compared to 14% in 2005" (p. 1). This growth, while focused on Hispanics, does not encompass the other English language learners that will also be present in the United States by 2050. Chinese is the second most common language, spoken in the home of 4% ELL students, followed by Vietnamese at 4%, and French/Haitian Creole at 2% in the United States (Ruiz Soto, Hooker, & Batalova, 2015).

New America (n.d.) defines the English language learner as:

> An individual who, due to any of the reasons listed below, has sufficient difficulty speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language to be denied the opportunity to learn successfully in classrooms where the language of instruction is English or to participate fully in the larger U.S. society. Such an individual (1) was not born in the United States or has a native language other than English; (2) comes from environments where a language other than English is dominant; or (3) is an American Indian or Alaska Native and comes from environments where a language other than English has had a significant impact on the individual's level

of English language proficiency. (English Language Learner/English Learner section, para. 2)

The category of the English language learners goes by many names such as, English for Speakers of other Language (ESOL), Limited English Proficient (LEP), or English as a Second Language (ESL). The fact remains English language learners (ELL) are an emergent group in the United States. For the purpose of this study, the term English language learner (ELL) was used when referring to any student whose first language in not English.

The background of the ELL students is often complex. An ELL student may be a new comer to the United States, where English was not the primary language. These students may or may not have had a formal education based on socioeconomic and political troubles in their home country. The ELL student could also be born in the United States, but reside in a home where English is not the primary language. In this case, the student may have some rudimentary English skills, but would be lacking a foundation in both their native language and English.

Statement of Problem

The issues of college readiness among the English language learner's (ELL) population is a growing concern. Shim (2013) stated that "English language learners (ELLs) is the fastest growing population among the school age group in the nation" (p. 18). Callahan (2005) asserted, "Nearly one in five school age youth speaks a language other than English in the home" (p. 305). An important concern lies in the readiness of high school ELL students who will graduate, pursue college and still have little command of the English language. Despite reforms such as Elementary and Secondary Education

Act (ESEA) and No Child Left Behind (NCLB), achievement gaps continue. Gandara (2008) reported little progress in the college completion of a bachelors, or higher, for Hispanic students ages 25-29, as compared to White and African Americans. In 1975, Hispanics had a 9% college completion rate, that number in 2005 was 11.2%. In 1975, Whites had a 24% college completion rate, that number in 2005 was 34.1%. In 1975, African Americans had an 11% college completion rate, that number in 2005 was 17.5% (Gandara, 2008). Large-scale education reform acts are not the only answer to college readiness for ELLs, but a systematic examination of current practices, pre-service teacher curriculum, and unbiased assessment language is needed.

The American Dream of a better life and financial freedom may be fading for an ELL student aspiring to attend college. Currently, ACT College and Career Readiness (CCRS) scores serve as an indicator for a high school student's success in college. According to ACT (2015), college readiness remains a weakness among underserved groups. Dougherty and Fleming (2012) reported that in states where all eleventh graders took the ACT in 2010, only 27% of low-income students met college readiness benchmarks in reading, 16% in mathematics, and 11% in science.

This study focused on the college readiness of ELL high school graduates in Utah. The framework for this study consisted of examining the 2014 ACT scores for graduating ELL students. The researcher sorted students into three categories, gender and language proficiency levels, and free or reduced lunch status. In October 2104, ELL enrollment was 34,910. In 2015, this number grew to 36,049 (Utah State Office of Education, 2014). This increase is expected to continue. Learning English skills is an ongoing process for all students. It would be unrealistic to expect an ELL student to receive a proficient score

on standardized tests, without giving consideration to when the student entered an American school. The 2013 Mathematics Utah State report for 8th grade public schools reported that "Hispanic students had an average score that was 33 points lower than White students" (Nation's Report Card, 2013, p. 1). The 2013 Reading Utah State report for 8th grade public schools reported that Hispanics had "an average score that was 18 points lower than White students" (Nations Report Card, 2013, p. 1). This gap profoundly impacts the college readiness of those students who will enter high school. While classroom interventions are needed, Cho, Rios, Trent, and Mayfield. (2012) stated that just "being immersed in English in a classroom does not guarantee academic and/or linguistic success" (p, 74). High school students, particularly, need intensive interventions and time to reach a passable level of proficiency for testing. The following chart shows the number of ELL students who received services in 2013-2014 (National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition [NCELA], 2014).

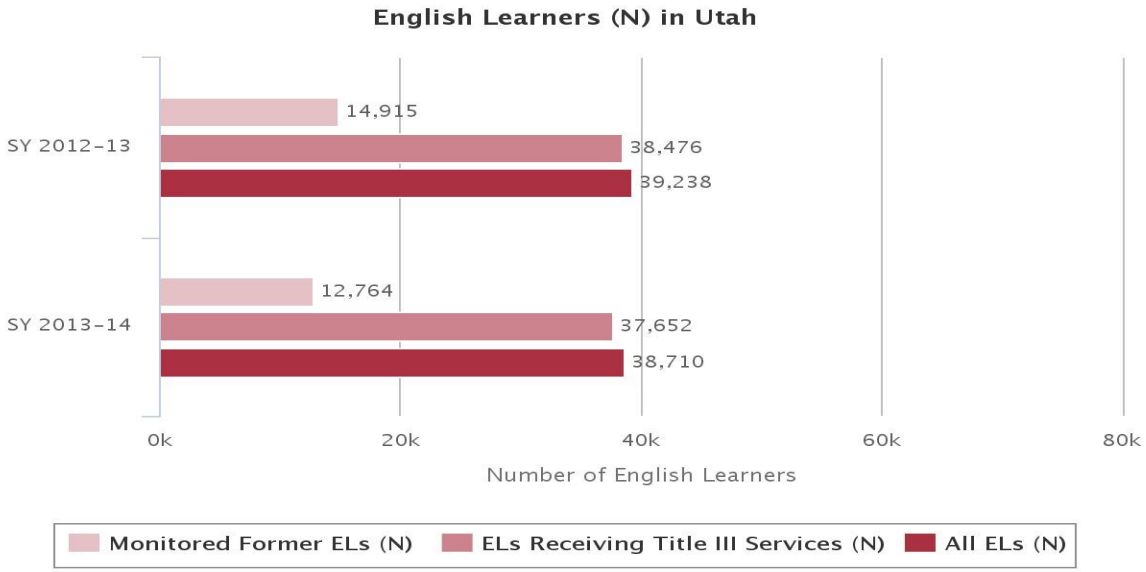

Figure 1.1. English Language Learners in Utah

This achievement gap is not unique to urban cities but extends to rural areas. According to the Utah Foundation (2012), "22.5% of students in Utah were racial or ethnic minorities" (p. 9). In rural Utah, "16.8% of students were minorities" (p. 8). From 1998 to 2011, the Hispanic or Latino population increased 121% rural areas and 164.5 % non-rural areas (Utah Foundation, 2012, p. 9). The United States has always been a haven for refugees escaping persecution. Since the onset of the Syrian Civil War, the United States has relocated over 2,000 Syrian refugees. The current administration is considering raising the admission from 85,000 refugees for fiscal year 2015 to 100,000 the next year (Capps & Fix, 2015). With world tensions high and many seeking asylum in the United States, it is safe to assume the school-age ELL population will grow. The ages of these immigrants will vary, but concern over language deficits and the educational needs of ELLs remains an area of focus.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine the college readiness of graduating English language learners in one mountain west state. The analysis of data consisted of descriptive statistics. The collected data reported the mean score, frequencies, and standard deviation of graduating ELL students, using ACT scores. The data identified any statistical differences that exist among college readiness in males versus females and language proficiency levels, and if a student's free or reduced lunch status impacted college readiness.

Research Question

This study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. How are English language learner graduates performing in terms of college readiness?

2. Are gender and college readiness levels independent of one another for graduating English language learners?

3. Are language proficiency levels and college readiness levels independent of one another for graduating English language learner?

4. Is the free or reduced lunch status and college readiness level independent of one another for graduating English language learners?

The long term ramification of graduating ELLs who are not prepared for college may have powerful negative economic effects. When a student exits high school with little command of the English language, job prospects remain low. Nationally, in the second quarter of 2015, the Latino unemployment rate was 6.6% (Wilson, 2015). Wilson (2015) reported that one mountain west state's Hispanic unemployment rate was 5.3%. "Increasing access to college for Latina/o students is of national concern, in particular for the Southwest and geographic areas that are experiencing growth in their Latina/o population" (Yamamura, Martinez, & Saenz, 2010, p. 126). While many studies highlight Hispanics and Asians, the ELL demographic in Utah is changing. Refugees from the Middle East and Africa are being relocated to Utah. Currently, 60,000 refugees from Burma, Iraq, Somalia, and the Congo have been resettled in Utah (Nico, 2016).

The burden falls onto the education system to ensure proper support for all learners. While educational reforms stay in the forefront of policy, improvements have not adequately address the needs of students whose are culturally and linguistically diverse (CDL) at the high school level. To prepare these students for a profitable future, further examination of current educational strategies for immigrants and second generation students (children of immigrants) is required. The 21st century classroom

cannot mirror the 20th century assembly line education, but must evolve with the changing demographics and student needs in our society.

Conceptual Framework

The framework for this study consisted of examining the difficulty in language acquisition, the college readiness of graduating ELL high school students, and barriers to college readiness for English learners.

Language acquisition requires time and the willingness of the participant. With an influx of immigrants and second-generation children, whose home language is not English, attention to theory and practical language strategies demand the attention of educational policy makers. While ELL curriculum is present and helpful, the amount of time required for language proficiency to grow is an issue. Further discussion on reform at the high school level is needed.

Aside from the pedagogical need, there is also the legal requirement mandated by the Supreme Court's decision in Lau v. Nichols (1974) that classroom instruction must be meaningful to students even if their English language proficiency is limited. Most recently, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), signed in 2015, requires that "all students in America be taught to high academic standards that will prepare them to succeed in college and careers." (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.) Yet, Callahan (2005) noted that second language studies generally involved educators and students in grades K-6, with fewer studies in the secondary education. If education is to focus on all students, then more research on current practices in high school is justified.

College readiness is defined as "the level of preparation a student needs in order to reenroll and succeed, without remediation, a credit-bearing general education course"

(Tierney & Sablan, 2014). While education is often seen as the remedy for societal inequality, districts continue to see student achievement discrepancies. The children of many immigrant parents are born in the United States, but enter schools with little or no English. This phenomenon of being born in a country, where the native language is not spoken in the home, presents an issue for educators. The ESSA, as did NCLB, offers preschool to all students, as a measure towards being prepared for schooling. While this step is in the right direction, if the language is only spoken in school, the student remains at a deficit in linguistic capital.

This study seeks to determine if gender and language proficiency levels impact the college readiness of English language learners. The barriers to college readiness are numerous and will depend on the student ability and motivation to learn. A review of literature discovered many other obstacles that may impede college readiness. Several are described in the review of the literature.

Significance of the Study

The significance in examining the college readiness of graduating ELL students is primarily economic. Students who exit high school are expected to enter the society as productive members. While not all high school graduates will attend college, attending college has a positive financial correlation on long-term earnings. Gandara and Rumberger (2009) reflected that until recently the primary goal was to simply graduate ELLs from high school. This gave little thought to long range plans and the economic future of ELLs. The 2011 Census estimated the population in the United States at 291,524,091 people. Individuals that only spoke English was 230,947,071. Therefore, 60,577,020 individuals spoke a language other than English (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015).

Currently, the Latino population are an underrepresented racial group in higher education (Zarate & Burciaga, 2010). Yet, with the influx of refugees, it is safe to assert that all ethnic groups will be facing the same issues as Hispanics. These ethnic groups, specifically ELLs, are at risk for future financial success, when language plays a role in seeking college or careers. Slama (2012) stated that "adolescent ELLs who have not developed academic language skills to be successful in school are at elevated risk of dropping out of school before graduation" (p. 266). If true, the trajectory for these students is one of an unstable future, leading to low paying jobs, potential unsecured debt, and ultimately a life of poverty.

Cho et al. (2012) maintained that learning English should be a primary need for children, as it is the "language of power and privilege which is central to opening doors of opportunities" in the United States (p. 66). No educator disputes that academic English is central to ELL college readiness, yet many struggle with the proper action in assisting ELLs in language proficiency. If educational policies and language interventions programs desire ELLs to be college ready by graduation, more attention to successful researched based strategies, particularly at the high school level, is warranted. Educators must be clear on where to focus attention, be able to identify academic gaps, and be provided with the proper tools to prepare ELLs for their future.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Purpose

The purpose of this chapter is to analyze and report the scholarly literature that exists regarding the college readiness of English language learner's (ELL) graduating from high school. The literature reports the current demographics, educational policies and their impact on the existing ELL population. Second, the literature reflects on historical legislation and current initiatives that influence the college readiness of ELL students. Third, the literature analyzes historical and contemporary academic theories that support language acquisition. Finally, the literature reviews education practices that may impact the college readiness graduating seniors.

Demographics of the English Language Learner

The 2015 NCES report on the Condition of Education estimated that there are 4.4 million the English Language Learner (ELL) in U.S. schools (NCES, 2015, p. 48). While the Latino population remains dominant, other languages are present. According to the 2011 Census report, approximately 60.6 million people over the age of five, or 21% of the population, speak a language other than English. Of that 21% of the population, the Census Bureau tabulates that 381 of the world's 6,500 languages are represented in the United States (Ryan, 2013). This growth is not limited to Spanish speakers, African languages saw a 111% growth, along with Asian language growth at 115% (Ryan, 2013). The American classroom dynamic is rapidly changing, and college readiness for ELL high school students is currently understudied.

If English language proficiency levels for graduating ELL students does not grow, then college readiness benchmark scores become unattainable. An adult's quality of life

can be directly linked to one's earnings. A 2011 U.S. Census report showed that in 2008, of all individuals 25 years and older 85% had only a high school diploma. Of this same group, 27% had a bachelor's degree or higher. Individuals with higher levels of education are more likely to be employed full-time, year-round. It is understood that the average earnings of full-time, year-round employment is likely to be higher than part-time work (Day & Newburger, 2002; Julian & Kominski, 2011). Graduation from high school coupled with a post-secondary degree is a catalyst for a robust American economy.

Historical Background of ELL Students in America

The history the English language in America dates back to exploration and the early colonies. However, the field of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) did not become a profession until the 1960s (Gray, 1997). The 1965 Immigration and Naturalization Act (Hart-Celler Act) brought a flood of new comers to America. Previous quotas were lifted and changes allowed for a population growth (CIS, 1995). From the 1954-1955 school year to the 1965-1966 school year, foreign student enrollment in American institutions doubled. They went from 34,232 students to 82,045 students—with an annual percentage increase of 9.7% (Gray, 1997). Thus, creating the demand for educators trained to teach non-English speakers. Subsequently, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, the 1968 Education Professions Development Act, and the 1968 Bilingual Education Act reinforced the demand for English language support programs (Gray, 1997)

Legislative Impact on English Language Learners

The mid-twentieth century Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibited discrimination on the bases of race, color, or national origin, established the need for

further examination of the education of bilingual students. The Bilingual Education Act of 1968 and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), Title VII, further supported the need for equal access to education programs and programs that would improve English language proficiency. These laws also ensured ELL students were not incorrectly identified as specials needs because of their lack of English proficiency. The 1960's immigration reforms forced the educators to rethink how to meet the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students beyond teaching how to read.

While the need for improvement continued, Lau v. Nichols (1974) decision did not specify policy, but rather required districts to take "affirmative steps" towards providing equal educational opportunities for all students. Until this point, students were failing, while being provided access the same materials and curriculum, but unable to understand the language. Equality may not look the same for each student, equal education is only equal when the students understand the information presented. Following this case, more legislation reform came about and Title VII of ESEA was amended to support teacher professional development in language acquisition.

In the years ahead, No Child Left Behind (NCLB) of 2001 required states to focus on English language proficiency, along with increased accountability. Under NCLB, student achievement is assessed by grade level and broken into subgroups, such as ethnicity, disabilities, and English proficiency. Under this law, schools were required to assess students in English and show grade level proficiency (National Educational Association [NEA], 2008). Most recently, ESSA (2015), Title III funding is dedicated to the education of English learners. Under ESSA, ELL students may be excluded for one year from taking standardize tests and be excluded from the school accountability system.

During the ELL students second year of enrollment in a U.S. school, testing accountability will include growth score. In the third year of school, the second time testing, proficiency scores on tests will be included in the accountability system.

To gain perspective, researchers estimated that since 1965 about 11.6 million immigrants have come from Mexico. Another 60% of immigrants during this time came from Latin American countries as well as Asian countries (Chishti, Hipsman, & Ball, 2015). The face of American's classroom is comprised of diversity that literally spans the globe. Figure 2.1 shows the top 10 immigrant groups spanning from the 1960s to present day.

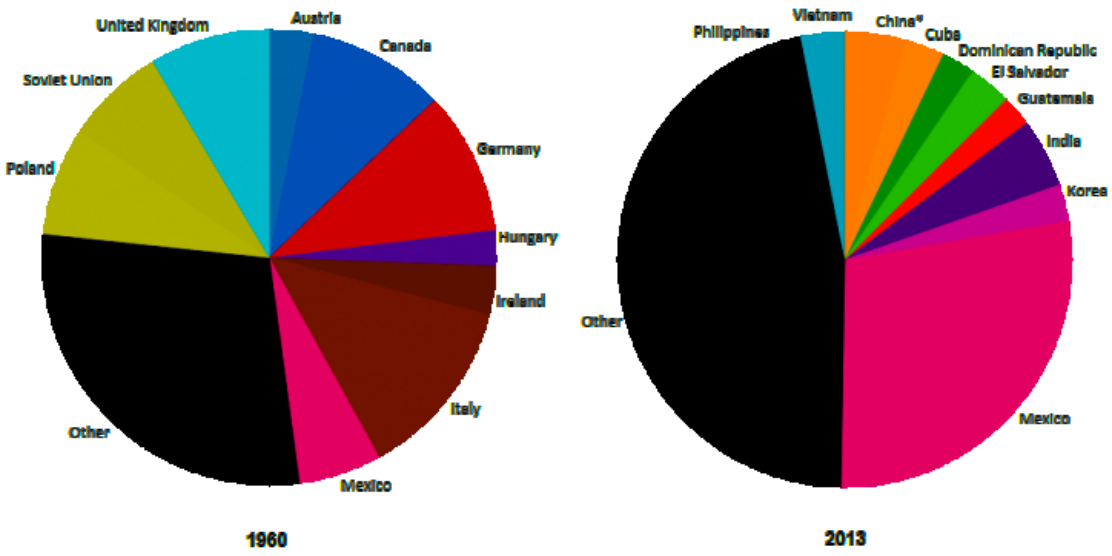

Figure 2.1. Top 10 Largest Immigrant Groups, 1960 and 2013

Language Development Theory

There are many contributors to the study of second language acquisition. However, before understanding how a second language is acquired, one should consider how our first language is developed. Chomsky and Krashen are two leaders in language

development theories. Second language acquisition theory does factor in the understanding of first language.

Chomsky's Language Acquisition Theory

The process by which a person acquires language differ. The seminal work of behavioral theorist suggest that language development is "influenced by environmental stimuli, such as imitation, rewards, and practices" (Abedi, 2008). Chomsky believed that "language is modeled by internal factors and then shaped through experience" (as cited in Abedi, 2008). Chomsky believed that language was innate and everyone has the ability to learn language. Students learn categories of language, such as nouns and verbs, and will turn those words into phrases. These process take time and there is the issue for the testing accountability model, time and language proficiency are ignored.

Krashen's Language Acquisition Theory

Krashen believed that, "humans are born with the ability to learn language (Abedi, 2008). Individuals will acquire a language through a natural process, subconscious activity by listening and observing the home language (Abukhattala, 2012). Krashen believed that developing a second language is more about the process, the student's conscious processes in the structure. (Abukhattala, 2012). The process is developmental and individualized depending on the student's development of their first language. For students to grown in language proficiency, a rich academic classroom environment is needed. One with activities that involve everyday activities and interactions, with trained educators and proper materials, will impact the acquisition of English.

Second Language Acquisition

When acquiring a second language, one must understand these learners need more than just, "memorizing a system of grammatical rules," but that students need to use their "first language and culture as model for comparison" (Conley, 2007, p. 16). Increasing language proficiency is a natural progression that requires social interactions and context for proper development. Krashen (2013) referring to second language, as "involuntary," students are given input. It is the input/output in the context of conversation that assists in meaning language development.

Hakuta, Butler, and Witt (2000) stated that the academic language needed for students to be successful is difficult for language learners. Researchers estimated that it could take "3-5 years for second language learners to become proficient in conversational English but at least 4-7 years for students to develop academic proficiency" (Hakuta, Butler, & Witt, 2000, p. 12). Slama (2012) that language proficiency can take, "6-8 years for ELLs who immigrated between ages 12-15 years" (p. 266). Further research by Mancila-Martinez and Lasaux (2011) showed that the rate at which vocabulary and reading for language learners can exceed that of national norms, but their findings depended on the use of English in the home. This rate of achievement is too slow for high school students to become college ready, especially if English is not present in the home. The work of Cummins (1979) discussed the relationship between basic communication and cognitive language proficiency. His work defined early communication as basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS). In BICS, students gain conversational language and can have their basic needs met. A deeper level of language is defined as cognitive academic language proficiency (CALPS). In CALPS, students gain language

and understanding needed to be successful in school. They can read, evaluate, and infer meanings found in textbooks or presented in class.

Linguistic Capital Theory

The responsibility of the student in their learning should not be ignored as a factor in achievement. Identify investment has been defined as "how a person understands his or her relationship to the work, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how that person understand possibility for the future" (as cited in Cohen, 2012, p. 266). This notion was described as "imagined communities," referencing a larger community where the new language is spoken and the ELL desires to be a part of (Cohen, 2012, p. 266).

The role of the student in creating their linguistic capital cannot be undersold. Nawyn, Gjokai, LaFa Agbenyiga, and Grace (2012) cited a definition of linguistic capital as "the acquired skills of speaking a dominant or 'official' language according to the specification to those in power" (p. 258). ELLs must see the long-term investment in learning a new language. Nawyn et al. (2012) stated that the lack of speaking the dominant language skills can leave immigrants feeling "isolated from their communities" (p. 258). The dominant language is necessary for forward social mobility.

The importance of having that linguistic capitol gives students confidence. Student anxiety may play a role in classroom engagement for an ELL student. One study examines depth of anxiety when it came to writing. Goodwin (2014) stated that "student participation in verbal interaction offers language learners the opportunity to follow up on new words and structures to which they have been exposed during language lessons and to practice them in context" (p. 91). Yet, the teacher must create the classroom culture of

respect and compassion, so students will be comfortable speaking and making mistakes without fear or embarrassment. This practice with peers may provide motivation to improve conversation skills and become confident in the language.

Culturally Responsive Teaching Theory

Lopez and Iribarren (2014) discussed the state of Wisconsin's approach to culturally responsive teaching. A consulting group met with leaderships to promote equitable activities for all students. The result was "Culturally Responsive Education for All: Training and Enhancement" with the objective of closing achievement gaps through training and varied strategies. In response to the growth of immigrants, the state established a support network for the communities and schools to offer training and educational programs for to assist refugees in assimilating. While seeking out multicultural content may require additional time, the return on investment may provide for a stronger educational outcome for students.

The Bilingual Education Act of 1968 included provision for teaching about culture in the classroom. This was in part to combat negative prejudices and discrimination among minorities in the United States (Gandara & Rumberger, 2009). When educators intentionally and authentically seek to include a student's culture into academic content, opportunities for deeper learning are made. While this may not be enough to prepare each ELL student for college, Gay's (2002) work in being a culturally responsive teacher did warns against controversial issues and how to use culture to scaffold learning. By avoiding controversial issues and including culturally diverse authors, students from other countries are able to connect with their heritage, thus

increasing engagement. Students should be able to use their culture and experiences to expand their knowledge to gain academic achievement.

Soto-Hinman (2010) indicated that there is value in the practice of ELL student shadowing, by educators, as a means to increase cultural knowledge and insight. The shadowing of ELLs consists of the random selection of a student to gain information about their academic and social engagement. One discovery, through this process, was that the teacher was doing most of the talking, while the primary responsibility was to develop the student's language. The impact in shadowing allows for educators to be reflective of their classroom practices. "Teachers with good professional preparation make the differences in students' learning" (Gandara, Rumberger, Maxwell-Jolly, & Callahan, 2003, p. 9). ELLs need to be active in listening and speaking activities to increase achievement. Those components coupled with responding in writing, will give ELL students more confidence when it comes to their written English.

While the student does need to assimilate into the society, losing one's heritage is not required. A student with deep linguistic and cultural roots is a tremendous resource in the global world. Unfortunately, a large percentage of high school dropouts are ELL (Collier & Thomas, 2001). Historically, immigrant settled in communities with similar spoken languages, lived and worked, and never really learned English. It was their children who became bilingual, followed by a third generation who began to lose that primary non English language. Today's ELL, documented or undocumented, have experienced a disruption in their lives that brought them to a new place. Therefore, culturally responsive education is obligatory to assist in settling students into a new environment while assessing and meeting their educational needs.

Aside from academics, Lopez and Iribarren (2014) discussed sociocultural integration and the need for students to belong. Schools that promote and foster positive student interactions will increase self-efficacy. Positive school experiences, along with home to school connections, can impact student achievement. With high school coursework being challenging, and student to teacher interactions being limited, this theory of being culturally responsive to language learners becomes even more vital to student achievement.

Analysis of College Readiness

College readiness is currently defined as "the level of preparation a student needs in order to enroll and succeed, without remediation, in a credit-bearing general education course at a postsecondary institution that offers a baccalaureate degree or transfer to a baccalaureate program" (Tierney & Sablan, 2014, p. 943). At the heart of college readiness is the idea of students entering the college system, prepared to understand, interpret, and communicate information they have learned. As of 2013, 15% of Hispanics ages 25-29 have a bachelor's degree or higher (Krogstad, 2016). By comparison, 40% of whites, 20% of African Americans, and 60% of Asians in the same age group have a bachelor's degree or higher. While the increase in collegial aspiration is a positive, the road to college for an ELL is still paved with difficulties. Krogstad (2016) did report a 201% increase in Hispanics enrollment in college from 1993-2013; however, many do not complete their degrees.

A student is deemed college ready, when enrolled in credit bearing course work, with no remediation. Conley (2007) defined four elements of college readiness as, having key cognitive strategies, key content knowledge, key academic behaviors, and key

contextual skills and awareness). Conley (2007) defined key cognitive strategies as a student's ability to learn a range of content. This included the ability to research, analyze, and communicate in an academic setting. The key content knowledge required by students consists of content terminology, facts, and the ability to make academic connections within the context of what is being taught. The key learning skills or academic behaviors required student ownership of learning. This involved self-monitoring, goal setting, time management and note taking skills are just a few that college ready students demonstrate. Finally, key contextual skills and awareness are needed to navigate the requirements needed for college. For instance, how to choose an institution, work through the admissions and financial aid process, and navigate the independent life of a college student. When connecting Conley's Elements to College Readiness (2007) model of readiness to Vygotsky's social development theory, the ELL student's cognitive development is based, in part, on the environment. Second language students learn language, simultaneously, through classroom and social experiences. However, that language is often social, functional and not highly academic. Therefore, high school ELL students fail in Conley's Elements to College Readiness (2007) model of readiness, not because they are not intelligent, but lacking the time to development readiness. His model, shown in Figure 2.2, the concentric circles indicate that college ready students exhibit certain traits or behaviors.

Figure 2.2. Conley's Elements to College Readiness

At present, college readiness accountability for the language learner rests with the general education classroom teacher. Pre-service teachers receive training in educational theories and practice, yet most are assigned to work with a diverse student population, with little or no diverse cultural or linguistic background. Ball (2009) and Dianda (2008) estimated that by 2020, the individuals ages 25-64 will be about 30% Latino and Black. Both groups have a high school graduation rate of below 60%. Investment in teacher pre-service language course work, along with professional development in language acquisition is needed to support this exploding population of students.

ACT Standards for College Readiness

The use of college entrance exams, taken by high school juniors, is the current standard for entrance into a four-year college and university. When students take the ACT exam and score well, the option of college becomes an opportunity for a life of higher earnings. However, the entrance exam for college admission remains a barrier to enrollment. The ACT exam assess aptitude in English (language mechanics),

mathematics, reading comprehension, science, with an optional writing test. Once students take the test, a composite score, the average of the four scores is calculated. Students' scores can range from 1 (low) to 36 (high). At present, colleges use the ACT student score to determine admission, course placement, academic advising, and scholarships.

ACT College Readiness Benchmark

The ACT College Readiness Benchmarks are the minimum scores required on each subject test on the ACT for a student to be deemed as having a high probability of success in credit-bearing courses (Clough & Montgomery, 2015). To prepare students for higher education opportunities, ACT has created the *ACT Aspire*, previously known as *ACT Explore*. This assessment has set benchmarks for grades 3-10 that indicates how students are progressing to become ready for college ready upon graduation. In 10th grade, students take the ACT Plan assessment, furthering their growth to reach college readiness by graduation. The ACT Aspire and Plan assessments are a positive step forward thinking that encourages educators, students, and parents the opportunity to assess areas that need remediation. Table 2.1 provides the breakdown of ACT benchmark scores.

Table 2.1

ACT College Benchmark Scores, 2016

College Course	ACT Subject-Area Test	ACT Explore® Benchmark Grade 8	ACT Explore® Benchmark Grade 9	ACT Plan® Benchmark	The ACT® Benchmark
English Composition	English	13	14	15	18
College Algebra	Mathematics	17	18	19	22
Social Sciences	Reading	16	17	18	22
Biology	Science	18	19	20	23

Source: ACT College Readiness Benchmarks, (2016). Retrieved from https://www.act.org/content/act/en/education-and-career-planning/college-and-career-readiness-standards/benchmarks.html

Table 2.1 shows the ACT college benchmark scores and provides the minimum score a student may obtain in each subject area. By 11th grade, high school students are encouraged, in some states required, to take the ACT exam. These minimum scores serve as predictors of how students will perform academically. To further explain, each score represents the lowest level a student may obtain to possibly score a C or higher in a first-year, credit-bearing course in college in the same content area (ACT, 2016).

The 2015 ACT report of the conditions of college and career readiness, show that 64% of students tested met the benchmark in English, 46% met the reading benchmark, 42% met the math benchmark, and 38% met the science benchmark (ACT, 2015). Camara (2013) noted that the primary purpose of the cut scores for college and career readiness (CCR) is to examine the correlation between student performance on high

school assessments and post-secondary success. While these numbers include all students, the scores grouped by ethnicity showed deficits in achieving benchmark standards, but dual language spoke is not identified. This makes it difficult to determine if the language proficiency played a role in scores. However, of those who identified themselves as Hispanic, 47% did not meet English benchmark scores, 31% did not meet reading benchmark scores, 29% did not reach math benchmark scores, and 23% did not reach science benchmark scores.

The 2015 ACT Condition of College & Career Readiness report of students from low income families revealed that most students are not college ready and low income students are vulnerable (ACT, 2015). Students in high school need a curriculum that is core to being college ready. Educational practices in course placement, along with interventions, must be adequately supported. Non-cognitive skills also play a vital role in collegial success. Students may lack the behavioral skills needed to study and need mentoring. These factors while focused on low income students apply to language learners in college, as well as first year college student.

At present, college readiness accountability of the language learner is focused on the general education classroom teacher. Preserve teachers receive training in educational theories and practice, yet most are assigned to work with a diverse student population, with little or no diverse cultural or linguistic background (Ball, 2009). Properly trained classroom teachers can deeply impact the success of students. Investment in pre-service language course work, along with professional development in language acquisition is needed to support this population of students.

College Readiness Barriers and English Language Learners

Access to college may be impacted by many factors. The literature review exposed several barriers that ELL students face. The current practices in student placement, equitable curriculum and the complexity of assessment language deeply impact student achievement and possible collegial path.

A home language survey is given when a student registers in school. The purpose of this form is to identify linguistic needs. If parents identify a language, other than English, spoken at home students may be given a language proficiency assessment. The validity of such forms could be questionable. In some cases, parents may provide inconsistent information or may not see their child as needed language services. Many students classified as English learners have been in America schools since kindergarten.

In many states, the yearly ACCESS (Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State) assessment is given to students in grades K through 12 who have been identified as ELL. Students are tested in tiers ranging from a beginning level to an advanced level (WIDA, 2016). This assessment identifies proficiency levels which allows educators to develop a plan for meaningful student accommodations. To ensure validity and fidelity, the assessment is given under standard conditions, during a designated testing window, and by a certified administrator (WIDA, 2016).

Once students test and receive a score, parents and teachers are given a report. For the educator, the report will provide “CAN DO Descriptors” that explain the expected performance at each level of English proficiency. The CAN DO Descriptors is not an inclusive list of what they student can do, but offers a start (WIDA, 2016). This tool

provides a beginning point for the general education teacher and ELL certified teachers to collaborate and plan for a particular student. The student profile is comprised of the scale score in listening, speaking, reading, and writing, along with proficiency level. This profile, established from scores, is the support for the differentiated instruction and accommodations the student will receive. Growth is determined after the second consecutive year in school when a student's score can be compared to the previous year.

Gender

Gender equity is often measured to determine if there is a link in high stakes testing. Brennan, Kim, Wenz-Gross, and Siperstein's (2001) study focused on middle/junior high students, reported that the adolescent girls who perform poorly in math and science on standardized test, may go on to disassociate themselves with being good in these subjects. Therefore, widening the gap could have potential negative effects on college coursework and career path for women. Conner and Vargyas (2013) reported that "minority females suffer a double jeopardy as they often score lower than bother white females and males of their own racial or ethnic group" (p. 16).

Duckworth and Seligman (2006) reported that females outperform males on classroom report card grades, partly because they are more self-disciplined. School-age girls are better at handling heightened emotions (Duckworth & Seligman, 2006). This observation contrasts with the fact that if women are better emotionally and score well in the classroom, why do they perform poorly on standardized test compared to their male peers. Furthermore, if girls are outperforming boys in classroom grades, but not on standardized assessment, is there a discrepancy or bias in the test questions?

It is well researched that ELL students score low, what warrants attention is male and female motivation to increase student achievement. Hyde (2005) noted that specific learning outcomes did not indicate differences in males and females. Yet, scores often showed that males outperformed females in math and females outperformed males in reading. Cornwell, Mustard, and Van Parys (2011) looked at the educational outcomes of males vs females, and reported that girls in every racial category outperformed boys on reading exams. Perhaps due to the stereotypical behaviors where students believe boys do poorly in reading and girls are better in reading. Student motivation and interest toward a subject cannot be discounted. Honigsfeld and Dunn (2003) conducted a gender differences study, looking at students in five countries, including the United States. The findings spanned a variety of outcomes, including morning vs afternoon working preferences, temperature of the room, kinesthetic activities, and levels of noise noted had effects on learning. This research, along with the understanding of learning style, is important to educators in attempting to create conditions for ELLs to become successful in the classroom. However, Conner and Vargyas (2013) contend that little research still exists is on why minority women score low.

Language Proficiency Level

Language proficiency levels plays a role in academic achievement. The Pew Hispanic Center report (2004) found that "Latinos insist that schools should teach English to students who are immigrants or the children of immigrants" (p. 2). Families want their children to learn English, but also maintain the "family's native tongue." (Pew Hispanic Center, p. 3). Hopkins (2013) research pointed out that bilingual educators made meaningful gains in connecting to bilingual students. While only teaching in English,

some educators drew on their cross linguistic practices to build background. Collier and Thomas (2001) stated, "students attending one-way and two-way enrichment bilingual schools can close the gap in achievement, by reaching the 50th percentile in their second language after 5-6 years of bilingual schooling" (p. 70).

For the ELL student, mastery of complex reading and vocabulary is paramount to success in academics. High-stakes testing, such state exams or the ACT exam, are predictors of student success outside of school. Second language learners, who lack English proficiency, fall behind their peers and may end up dropping out of high school. "Recently arrived adolescent immigrant students were at greater risk of dropping out of high school than their immigrant peers who had spent more time in the United States" (Slama, 2012, p. 267). Slama's 2012 study also reported that 60% of high school ELL students were born in the United States, spent at minimum nine years in a U.S. school without "developing a minimum level of academic language needed to perform mainstream academic work in English" (p. 265). Whether the ELL student is new to the U.S. or born in the U.S. attention to how language instruction is delivered shows requires review.

Solorzano (2008) reported the general concern over standardized testing as a barrier to the ELL student. The fairness and bias within these exams hinder ELL student achievement, due to the language proficiency levels. In addition, Solorzano (2008) traced inadequacies in education of ELLs to substandard schooling, underprepared teachers, and inappropriate instructional placement for ELLs. The general education teacher is the first line in accountability and current practices do not fully support the growing population of ELL students.

Bilingual Student Academic Placement

The English language learner is expected to master the same academic standards as their peers and be college ready by graduation. However, many of the current placement practices thwart that readiness factor. Placement of ELL students in lower tracks are often determined by a home language survey, coupled with scores from the WIDA assessment. Counselors and ELL teachers greatly influence the placement of students and need to consider the impact of placement, particularly if the student was a high achiever in their home country. Kanno and Kangas (2014) examined one school's process of placing ELL students into low academic track courses to boost language support. A longitudinal study showed that while some students test out of the ELL course work, they entered remedial courses, never reaching a college readiness track. If this is the case, then the use of track placements may result unequal growth and student achievement for language learners.

Flores and Drake (2014) found that the lack of access to demanding curriculum was a factor in college students needing remedial education in their first year. Cornwell, Mustard, and Van Parys (2011) reported that "teacher assigned grades are arguably more consequential, given the role they play in class placement, high school graduation, and college admissibility" (p. 238). Therefore, if colleges place a deep value on high school course work and grade point averages, ELL students' low level coursework will not be a qualifier.

Yonezawa, Wells, and Serna (2002) examined the "Freedom of choice" track in six schools and found that choice failed. While creating heterogeneous groupings are largely supported in education, researchers determined that the, "tracks are politically and

socially significant spaces because we assign meaning to them." Unfortunately, cultural prejudice can play a role in high school social circles. Yonezawa, Wells, and Serna (2002) asserted that the "segregated nature of the tracked spaces shapes the relationships and identifies students, parents, and educators by limiting their supportive and informative relationships with diverse groups" (p. 37). Therefore, being recognized as smart or having collegial aspiration can be viewed as a negative among peer groups.

While accelerated courses and educational equality is guaranteed to all students, it remains clear why ELLs are not making academic gains. Effective reading instruction is needed, as well as intensity, if secondary ELL students are going to make proficiency gains. Slama's (2012) conclusions were that the majority of secondary-level ELLs do not reach adequate levels of academic English proficiency to exit from the ELL program until close to the end of high school. While there are many variables that could impact this, the students in this study were U.S. born and performing at an intermediate level of language proficiency. Zarate and Burciaga (2010) stated that "only 54 percent of U.S. educated Latinos complete high school" (p. 25). As a result, their trajectory could result in one of poverty.

Student placement of ELL students can have a lingering effect, even when a student exits the ELL program. Gonzalez, Stoner, and Jovel's (2003) study showed that students who, either through testing or teacher recommendations, were placed in advanced classes (gifted programs) were more likely to be placed in higher track courses in high school. However, due to language barriers, ELL high school students do not always receive the same instruction as their English speaking peers and this brings into

question the fairness of state mandated testing. In other words, ELL students are being assessed on standards that they may or may not have been taught.

On Track Indicators

Kemple, Segeritz, and Stephenson (2013) reported the value of on track indicators to predict high school graduation. Their research followed one group of ninth grade students and tracked their earned credits in ninth grade, along with state test scores to predict graduation. Observed was the expected differences among SES groups, stating that "African American and Hispanic young men are much less likely to be on track at the end of ninth grade" as compared to whites and Asians (Kemple, Segeritz, & Stephenson, 2013, p. 24).

An analysis of ELL ninth graders who entered high school with limited English, but were on track by the end of ninth were more likely to graduate, barring any unforeseen circumstance. However, Kemple, Segeritz, and Stephenson (2013) reported that students who failed a single academic subject in ninth grade are almost half as likely to graduate with their cohort. Not discussed or examined was student attendance, which, along with academic performance, are pathways to college readiness. A focus on current educational practices and on track indicators would positively impact student growth, thus preparing students for college and careers.

Growth models are one form of accountability in closing achievement gaps for student groups. Marzano and Toth (2013) described growth models as tracking of student test scores from one point in time to another. This data will track gains or losses if using equivalent tests, such as benchmark standards assessment. If ACT is conducting longitudinal studies using standardize testing, then tracking student growth within

schools would not be too difficult. While school districts are tracking the proficiency of all students, the validity of the growth models is not widely researched. Lakin and Young (2013) examined the growth models as a means to predict future proficiency. The concern in the growth models exist around the changes in the use of testing accommodations. A large body of research reported that districts provide a "disservice to ELLs when they offer a reductionist curriculum focusing primarily on skills and drills" (Gandara et al., 2003). A further study on schools with successful growth models is needed.

Equitable Curriculum

Equitable curriculum should be afforded to all students. Lopez and Iribarren (2014) shared supporting research that promoted content taught in the students' native language can promote equitable opportunities to learn and gain deeper content understanding. For many ELLs, the opportunity for higher content is limited due to track placements. Yet, many researchers conducted longitudinal studies that concluded that "being schooled in ones' second language is not a quick and easy process" (Collier & Thomas, 2001). Their research went on to show that "schooling through students' two languages provides the conditions needed for students to eventually reach grade-level performance in a second language in 4-7 years" (Collier & Thomas, 2001).

With many programs, such as bilingual education or dual language programs, school leadership should consider a student's native language as part of the learning process and not a hindrance. Callahan (2005) insisted that ELLs "must be exposed to twice as much instruction as native English speakers in terms of both language and content" (p. 324). With twice as much instruction, it is reasonable to employ the student's

native language to make academic connections. Gandara and Rumberger (2009) reported that immigrant students need the same "rich and broad curriculum" that will afford them a positive social mobility (p. 755).

Instructional needs of ELL students differ, as second language development is complex. In some cases, ELL students enter U.S. schools with below grade level language in their native language. This gap deeply impacts their ability to achieve literacy in a new language. Short and Fitzsimmons (2007) supported the theory that students need a strong foundation in their native language to make progress in their second language. Therefore, instruction and intervention support must factor in to a curriculum plan for language students.

Academic testing in primary and secondary school also plays a role in student placements. Gonzalez, Stoner, and Jovel's (2003) study showed that students who, either through testing or teacher recommendations, were placed in advanced classes in primary or middle school were more likely to be placed in higher track courses in high school. These higher track programs are often void of ELL students, even after students test out of ELL services. Abedi (2008) pointed out that incorrect placement of ELL students who may be "at a higher level of English proficiency into remedial or special education programs" can result in promotion and graduation delays (p. 28). These improper placements or delays in reclassification deny students to post-secondary education. The education community must carefully assess ELL students to ensure proper placement and opportunities are afforded to all English language learners.

With the use of sheltered or low track instruction of ELLs and the accommodations students receive, the validity of the student score is questionable. Reyes

(2008) made the point that some bilingual educators may cheat by using the student's native language to explain a part of instruction, when the state, district, or school mandates an English only policy. Ramos (2005) reported that teachers who used Spanish to teach English were able to help "ELLs achieve higher levels of linguistic and academic development in English" (p. 429). While the use of other language during instruction may be frowned upon or illegal, there is merit to facilitating learning through a student's native language, while teaching in English. Analysis of previous research on the use of native language in teaching showed that after accounting for the controlled variables of socioeconomic status and parents' level of education, the use of bilingual education programs was effective (Reyes, 2008).

Language Complexity in Assessments

Abedi (2002) explained that the language background of students adds another perspective to testing outcomes. When an ELL student takes a standardized test, he or she may be subject to a host of issues. Abedi (2002) showed that most standardized tests are, "administered in English and normed on native English speaking test populations" (p. 232). This fact may impact ELL test takers who are not able to identify vocabulary or mistakenly interpret text (Abedi, 2002). Depending on the student's background, knowledge, and time spent in an English speaking school can influence an achievement score on a standardize test. The complexity of the language and rigor of the questions may cause native speakers to struggle, yet, academia's expectations for language learners achieve a proficiency is unrealistic. As Abedi (2008) reported, native English speakers often fall below cutoff points on standardized tests. Therefore, measure for assessing English proficiency can be unfair.

Testing language can be obscure and difficulty for native speakers. Abedi and Dietel (2004) suggested that language modification on a test can increase student performance, as much as 10-20%. In Massachusetts, six years of data examined did show some growth among ELL 10th grade students, the gap still widens among ELLs and non-ELL (Abedi & Dietel, 2004). Abedi and Dietel (2004) communicated that growth was in part to language modification without reducing rigor. The examination of complex language on state assessment should be examined, at minimum to remove cultural bias, without lowering standards.

Walpole et al. (2005) studied the insights of 227 urban African Americans and Latino high school students. The results showed that students found the standardized assessments as an impediment to college. For a fee, many organizations, offer academic test preparatory courses. In some districts, some schools offer free preparatory classes as well. Many low income families lack resources to pay for those classes and that can leave many students feeling underprepared.

Olson, Land, Anselmi, and AuBuchon (2011) reported the findings of a national survey of high school and college professors were asked to identify important skills for college students, revealed the ability to identify the theme of a text, making inferences, and drawing conclusions. In addition to reading skills, writing skills were equally important. Yet, research continues to show that ELLs are placed in skill courses to improve English and receive little time with academic content (Gandara et al., 2003).

Academic and Linguistic Identification of English Language Learners

Callahan (2005) cited a 1984 study that caution exists among educators as to the "confusion between language proficiency and academic readiness" (p. 306). If

requirements for exiting the English learner programs are simplified, students enter mainstream classroom with linguistic incompetence. If the requirements are too stringent, students never grow academically, thus creating more of an achievement gap among ELLs and their peers. The average native speakers will gain, "about 10 months of academic growth in one 10-month academic year" (Thomas & Collier, 2000, p. 19). This does not take into account any special needs or barriers a student may have. Now consider the difficulty many ELLs face when entering the United States. Some students may be coming as refugees, displaced from their homes, living in poverty, perhaps having little or inconstant schooling. Yet, the expectations are set to become English proficient quickly.

Rosenberry-McKibben and Brice (2000) suggested that ELLs must make one and a half years of progress in a single year in order to catch up to peers. It may take an ELL student around two years to learn basic English. Then the transition to academic language and content understanding it could take five to seven years to become equal to peers. The learning process and rate of which skills are acquired is different for all students, especially if the student was struggling academically in their home nation.

In many states, ELL students receive English as a Second Language (ESL) pullout by and ESL teacher for up to two hours (Collier & Thomas, 2001). However, previous research by Thomas and Collier (2000), showed that "the largest number of LCD dropouts come from this program model of English-only instruction" (p. 71). While many models of instruction exist, the socio cultural perspective insists on a, "safe and risk-free environment for student learning, together with the provision of opportunities for student verbalization" (Xu, 2015, p. 155) While no one model of instruction for this

group of students is the perfect answer, Cohen (2011) studied a southwestern high school where ELLs had varied levels of 2-hour blocks of instruction existed. Cohen's (2011) study focused on content taught at a beginning, intermediate, and advanced level of English as a second language class of language arts instruction. Cohen's (2011) findings showed that students, while feeling safe in their ELL classes, wanted more challenge work and wanted to be "mainstreamed" and held accountable.

Gandara and Rumberger (2009) supported the need for instructional time, such as pull-out programs or extended day school in order to grow in language proficiency. Gold (2006) proposed that secondary ELL students should be given an extra year or two to complete high school. ELLs face many academic struggles that include instruction in English, assessments that are not intentionally culturally bias, goals to be mastered in a language that is unfamiliar may seem impossible. Even when balanced with teacher support, the requirement and strain placed on the student is great. Students in this situation need to feel valued, empowered, and in some control of the outcomes to help encourage them to keep moving forward.

Reclassification to Fluent English Proficient

The reclassification of English language students to proficiency is determined through exam scores. Under federal law, school districts will annually assess a student's proficiency. Upon reaching the minimum score to be exited from ELL services, students are monitored for two years after being reclassified (Education Commission of the States, 2014). The criteria for exiting a student from ELL services is currently determined by the department of education for each state.

Abedi (2008) argued that using standardized achievement tests and language proficiency tests are inappropriate when it comes to exit criteria, because of the complexity of the language used in test questions. Varied criteria for exiting ELLs included assessments, teacher evaluation, and parent input (Abedi, 2008). Nine districts had varied approaches to exit criteria (Abedi, 2008). Among the criteria were cut scores, monitoring of student readiness and basic skills. The criteria for being reclassified varies. This inconsistency is a disservice to students. Abedi's 2008 study results reported that it took "10 semesters for Hispanic students to be reclassified" out of ELL status to predesignated fluent English proficient (RFEP) (p. 25). This study was conducted focused on K-12, this study does show the time factor and how that deeply impacts high school students who enter the United States as non-English speakers.

Teacher Effectiveness

The Pew Hispanic Center report (2004) found that "Latinos insist that schools should teach English to students who are immigrants or the children of immigrants" (p. 2). Yet, the families also stated they wanted children to maintain the "family's native tongue" (p. 2). Clearly, the general education teacher role is changing into more just teaching academic content, they are responsible for teaching a language as well. Callahan (2005) noted that the "direct effect of teacher expectations on achievement is difficult to quantify" (p. 308). While positive relationships are part of the formula for student achievement, attention to teacher preparation through pre-service university programs and professional development of current educators who are with working with language learners need consideration. Not all states require an ELL teacher endorsement, therefore,

not all teachers are adequately prepared. If closing the achievement gaps is desired, then equipping educators with the latest researched strategies must be part of the process.

The need for trained educators in language acquisition should not be understated. Perhaps more today than ever before, teachers need multicultural instructional strategies to teach to ethnically diverse students. Pre-service teachers or teachers who work in high income areas and then move to low income schools may not understand the difficulties students living in poverty face. Student achievement may not stem from a lack of effort, but from the effects of poverty (Taylor, 2005). Educators who do not understand the psychological effects of living in poverty may not fully understand how to effectively connect with students.

Lucas and Villegas (2013) believed the trend of mainstreaming ELLs into general education classroom, where, "teachers with little or no preparation" are teaching language learners is a disservice (p. 99). While many educators do seek professional development, it would be advantageous to include language acquisition coursework in pre-service teacher education curriculum. While this is not the sole answer, Tigchelaar and Korthagen (2004) stated that there continues to be a gap in "linking experiences of student teachers and theory" (p. 677). Feiman-Nemser (2001) believed that pre-service teachers fall into the trap of thinking that "teaching is the passing of knowledge and learning as absorbing and memorizing" (p. 1017). Teacher candidates must abandon any illusion that students will sit and absorb information. Pre-service programs should seek authentic opportunities to practice theories, beyond the student teaching requirement, especially in districts with high numbers of ELLs.

Parental Involvement

One factor that cannot be ignored is parental influence on academic achievement. While many ELL families may not have the ability to read to students in English, some can, and those close proficiency gaps. "Parents reading to Latina girls more frequently than to boys" could play a role in language fluency (Zarate & Burciaga, 2010). Parental involvement cannot be understated. Niehaus and Adelson (2014) reported that a parent's positive involvement in their child's education can enhance their social and emotional adjustments. When children are socially relaxed they have fewer behavioral issues which often impede learning. While many schools have parent-school outreach programs, families of limited English proficiency may not always participate in what is offered. Moreover, many of those outreach programs or after hour's school events take place in an elementary setting. It is rare, apart from open house or orientation, to see middle and high schools hold events, beyond sports, that include families outreach.

Socioeconomic/Poverty

A student's socioeconomic status has been a reliable predictor of student achievement. Low socioeconomic status is a category encompassing individuals who qualify for free or reduced lunch, for the purpose of tracking demographics. The facets of poverty that have negative impacts can be inadequate heath care, unstable living arrangements, or lack of parent support can impact a child's school readiness. Markham and Gordon (2008) summarized: "the risk factors that challenged the ELLs in developing English proficiency, which include prior educational experiences, socioeconomic class, cultural heritage, and levels of language and literacy proficiency in both their native language and English" (p. 73). Scarcella (2003) supported this point and emphasized the

value of learning academic English as a means to closing the socioeconomic gap that exists. However, many living in low income areas are often in resource poor communities, making learning the dominant language difficult. The future of ELLs depends on how well public schools can close achievement gaps and prepare this large percentage of the population for college or career. Gold (2006) stated that many high school counselors focus primarily on graduating students instead of college readiness.

Taylor (2005) stated that children who are faced with "limited resources and often attending poor-quality schools, are at an increased risk of not succeeding academically" (p. 54). Therefore, the role of education is to provide equitable curriculum and highly trained educators who can assist with the closing achievement gaps and prepare students for higher education. While programs exist to academically support low income and ELL students, many programs lack sustained academic and social support with older students (Taylor, 2005). Many of those educational programs target early intervention in primary grades. Therefore, attention to secondary education programs to increase English proficiency, close achievement gaps and prepare this group of students for a competitive job market is needed.

Many second generation immigrant children have low, at home, exposure to speaking English. Goldberg, Paradis, and Crago (2008) supported the idea that children with more home literacy in English would positively impact student growth in English. The peril exists during the summer, when presumably, nightly or weekly reading routines become nonexistent. Developing language, building vocabulary, and making sense of written language comes in part from reading. The "SES gap in summer reading gains amounts to about 3 months of schooling" (Gershenson, 2013, p. 1221). While the access

to technology will vary among individual students and families, the emphasis in promoting summer programs through a virtual platform is one approach to sustaining and advancing students during the summer month. Gold (2006) discussed the use of virtual schooling as an option for closing the proficiency and achievement gaps for students. While this would require highly motivated students and proper tools, many students do see the capital in learning the language and advancing themselves.

Conclusion

In summary, the literature supports the problem that secondary ELL students are not college ready by graduation. The need for serious examination of practices at the secondary level for high school English language learners. The three major points discussed in this review of literature includes the difficulties in acquiring language proficiency, the college readiness factors for graduating students, and barriers to college readiness faced by the English language learners. This student group struggles greatly with time frame given to acquire proficiency as it pertains to testing. Unfortunately for the high school ELL student, extended time 43 prior to graduation is not available. This particular group of students must self-monitor and work hard to achieve some level of proficiency before ACT testing.

The college readiness success of English language student's rests on the quality of instruction and access to academic content. The use of low-track student placement restricts their opportunity to coursework that will help them qualify for a four-year college. Currently, ELL students face obstacles, such as low track placement, lack of linguistic capital, and resource poor communities where support is lacking. While not all students will be college ready upon graduation, the job of education is to prepare students

for their next steps. Pre-service teacher education programs and endorsements of current professionals in each state would enhance the understanding of language acquisitions and strategies for effective teaching. Teachers with little or no experience in language theory will struggle with being culturally responsive in their teaching.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this quantitative study was to analyze the college readiness of high school English language learners (ELL). Presently, many ELL high school graduates are not adequately prepared to pass a credit bearing course at the college level. This study assessed the ACT scores of ELL high school graduates, report the college readiness based on gender, language proficiency levels, and free or reduced lunch status using data from Utah.

Research Questions

1. How are English language learner graduates performing in terms of college readiness?
2. Are gender and college readiness levels independent of one another for graduating English language learners?
3. Are language proficiency levels and college readiness levels independent of one another for graduating English language learner?
4. Is the free or reduced lunch status and college readiness level independent of one another for graduating English language learners?

Participants

This participant sample was comprised of 1013 ELL high school juniors from Utah who took the ACT in 2014. Their anticipated graduation date was 2015. The ethnicity primarily encompasses Hispanics and Asians, with other races represented. No contact personal is required for this study.

Table 3.1 identifies the English language proficiency of 2015 graduates. The sample population was divided by five language proficiency levels. Each proficiency level identifies the number of participants included in that category. The monitored status

category describes students who have met proficiency, based on ACCESS testing and have tested out. Per federal mandates, once a student has tested proficient, they remain in a monitored status for two years. For the purpose of this study, the monitored status students was included in this study. The final category identifies all 2015 graduates in Utah whose native language is English. The native English speaker is included to provide a comparison for this study.

Table. 3.1

English Language Proficiency of 2015 Graduates

		Frequency	Valid %	Cumulative %
Valid	Entering	36	.1	.1
	Beginning	89	.3	.4
	Developing	197	.6	1.0
	Expanding	187	.6	1.5
	Bridging	81	.2	1.8
	Monitored Status	425	1.3	3.1
	Native English Speaker	32059	96.9	100.0
	Total	33074	100.0	

Table 3.2 identifies the number of English language learners by gender. The gender split is almost equivalent with 47.6% being female ad 52.4% being male.

Table 3.2

English Language Learner Gender

		Frequency	Valid %
Valid	Female	482	47.6
	Male	531	52.4
	Total	1013	100.0

Table 3.3 identifies the number of 2015 graduating English language learners that qualify for free or reduced lunch in Utah. As the table states, 51.7% of ELL students in Utah are receiving free or reduced lunch. In contrast, 48.3% report that they are not eligible for free or reduced lunch. The split among this group is almost comparable.

Table 3.3

Eligibility for Free or Reduced Lunch

		Frequency	Valid %
Valid	No	489	48.3
	Yes	524	51.7
	Total	1013	100.0

Setting

A 2014 Census reported the population of this western mountain state to be 2,942,902, a 6% increase from the 2010 census. In 2014, the minority population was one in five residents. Languages spoken other than English were reported at 14.6%. The census data stated 30.6% of persons 25 years of age or older held a bachelor's degree or higher, with a median household income of $59,846 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016).

The 2014-2015 racial makeup of public schools in this western mountain state consist of 75.9% White, 1.1 percent African American, 1.7% Asian, 1.5% Pacific Island alone, 16.3% Hispanic/Latino, and 2.2% Multi race. In 2014, this western mountain state had a total enrollment of 622, 153 students. Collectively, the state total of minority students is 24.1% (Utah State Office of Education [USOE], 2014).

Reported in Table 3.4 is the racial or ethnic makeup of the 2015 graduating English language learners in this study. The table shows the largest ELL group; 67.5% identify as being Hispanic. The next largest group, at 13.1% identifying as 13.1% Asian.

Table 3.4

Race or Ethnicity of Graduating English Language Learners

		Frequency	Valid %	Cumulative %
Valid	African American/Black	52	5.1	5.1
	Asian	133	13.1	18.3
	Caucasian/White	56	5.5	23.8
	Hispanic/Latino	684	67.5	91.3
	Multiracial	8	.8	92.1
	Native American	31	3.1	95.2
	Pacific Islander	49	4.8	100.0
	Total	1013	100.0	

Variables and Measures

Language Proficiency Assessment

WIDA, formally known as World Class Instructional Design and Assessment, is currently a nonprofit cooperative group whose purpose is to develop standards and assessments that, "promote educational equity for English language learners" (WIDA, 2016). Presently, any student identified as an English language learner is assessed using a test called Assessing and Communication in English State to State (ACCESS). This assessment is used to measure a student's language progress. ACCESS testing is

standards based, criterion referenced English proficiency test. The test is used to measure social and instruction English used in schools, associated with language arts, math, social studies, and science, using the four domains of listening, speaking, reading, and writing (WIDA, 2016). The five WIDA English Language Proficiency (ELP) Standards are:

- English Language Proficiency Standard 1: English language learners communicate for Social and Instructional purposes within the school setting.
- English Language Proficiency Standard 2: English language learners communicate information, ideas, and concepts necessary for academic success in the content area of Language Arts.
- English Language Proficiency Standard 3: English language learners communicate information, ideas, and concepts necessary for academic success in the content area of Mathematics.
- English Language Proficiency Standard 4: English language learners communicate information, ideas, and concepts necessary for academic success in the content area of Science.
- English Language Proficiency Standard 5: English language learners communicate information, ideas, and concepts necessary for academic success in the content area of Social Studies. (Utah Education Network [UEN], n.d.)

These standards provide educators a progression and understanding of what students can do at varied levels of proficiency. These standards reflect an academic expectation related to language and instruction in given context. The four language domains: listening, speaking, reading, and writing are how educators can structure learning.

- Listening - process, understand, interpret, and evaluate spoken language in a variety of situations
- Speaking - engage in oral communication in a variety of situations for a variety of purposes and audiences
- Reading - process, understand, interpret, and evaluate written language, symbols and text with understanding and fluency
- Writing - engage in written communication in a variety of situations for a variety of purposes and audiences. (WIDA, 2016)

ACCESS for English Language Learners Assessment

ACCESS for ELLs assessment, given annually, is used to asses a student's current level of English language proficiency. ELL students are assessed in the areas of speaking, listening to, comprehending, reading, and writing academic English. The assessment has three forms within grade level clusters. The tiers are: Tier A for Beginning, Tier B for Intermediate, or Tier C for Advanced. In addition, the paper forms are grade level clustered from grades 4-12: Grade 4-5, Grade 6-8, and Grade 9-12, Grades K-3 are not clustered.

The ACCESS for ELLs test contains multiple choice questions and constructed response tasks to assess the four domains: listening, reading, writing, and speaking. Students will receive four different composite scores for each section and an overall composite score for all sections. In addition, a confidence band is provided with the scale score. The confidence band takes into account the Standard Error of Measurement (SEM) which provides a score range. In other words, a student taking the same test on a different day would still score in that same, assuming there were no changes in the student's

ability. The Data Recognition Corp's scores system assures an accuracy of 99.99% (WIDA, 2016).

Scale Scores for ACCESS for ELLs

Student receive a scale score and an English language proficiency level score for each domain. In addition, scale score and proficiency levels are combined to form a composition scores. The composite scores are: Oral language (listening and speaking sections), literacy (reading and writing sections), comprehension (listening and reading sections), and overall composite score (combination of all four domains) (WIDA, 2016). Table 3.5 provides the percentage breakdown of how WIDA scores are calculated.

Table 3.5

Weighting Used to Calculate Each Composite Scale Score

Type of Composite Score	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing
Oral Language	50%	50%	-	-
Literacy	-	-	50%	50%
Comprehension	30%	-	70%	-
Overall	15%	15%	35%	35%

On a vertical scale, the student score across the grade can be compared within in each domain. Each domain has a separate score, therefore scores in one domain should not be compared to scores in another. The ranges of possible scores from Kindergarten through grade 12 is 100-600. Yet, depending on the grade and tier levels, the range may vary. For example, the Kindergarten range is 100-400. The tiers, A-C reflect difficulty, with Tier A being the easiest. A student taking Tier C will receive a higher score than a student taking Tier A, even when both students answer all items correctly.

Proficiency Scores for ACCESS for ELLs

Student's proficiency level are categorized into 6 English proficiency levels: 1 - Entering, 2 - Emerging, 3 - Developing, 4 - Expanding, 5 - Bridging, 6 - Reaching. (WIDA, 2016). A student's proficiency level is presented as a whole number followed by a decimal. The whole number is the student's language proficiency level based on the WIDA standards. The decimal represents the proportion with the proficiency level range. The proficiency levels will also report what a student can do given their level. For example, a proficiency score of 3.5, half way between 3.0 and 4.0, indicates the student is half way between the levels of developing and expanding. In order to accurately assess a student's growth, the first assessment stands as a baseline score. Therefore, the second and subsequent results from yearly assessment will provide an opportunity to examine a trend for each student. An ELL student is recommended for exiting services when their score is 4.5 or higher. After this point, the student is then monitored for a period of two years.

American College Testing (ACT)

The American College Testing (ACT) currently serves as a measure of college readiness for high school students. A student's score relates to the skills needed to be successful beyond high school. Presently, the benchmark score is the minimum score needed on the ACT, in a particular subject, that suggests a 50% change of obtaining a B or higher or a 75% chance of obtaining a C or higher in a corresponding credit bearing college course. The benchmark scores came from actual performance of students in college (ACT, 2014). The national average composite score is 21.

Students are assessed in four subject areas: English, Math, Reading, and Natural Sciences. The English section contains 75 questions with a 45-minute time limit. The English section measures written English skills. The math section contains 60 questions with a 60-minute time limit. The math section measures mathematical skills that have been acquired through courses taken up to grade 12. The reading section contains 40 questions and a 35-minute time limit. The reading section measures reading comprehension. The science section contains 40 questions with a time limit of 35 minutes. The science section measures the ability to the interpretation, analysis, reasoning and problem solving skills required in science. An optional written component of one prompt and 40 minutes is provided. The written component measures writing skills emphasized in high school and in entry level college composition courses.

The ACT College Readiness Benchmarks served as the dependent variable in this study. Once a student has taken the test, a composite score, or average of all four tests is calculated, as the students overall ACT score. The scores range from 1 (low) to 36 (high). The minimum benchmark scores for each subject are: English, 18; Math, 22; Reading, 22; and Science, 23. These are the minimum scores required on each subject test on the ACT for a student to be deemed as having a high probability of success in credit bearing courses. These minimum scores serve as predictors of how students perform academically. In other words, the scores represent the typical, lowest level a student may obtain to possibly score a C or higher in a first year, credit bearing course in college (ACT, 2016).

Data Collection and Analysis

The data collected came from one western mountain state, Utah. The number of ELL students taking the ACT was 1,013. Those students self-identified as sophomores, juniors, or seniors who were scheduled to graduate in 2015. The ACT scored serve as the dependent variable. The independent variables for this study were English language learners gender, language proficiency levels, and free and reduced lunch status.

As previously discussed in Chapter One, there is a growing number of ELL students in the United States is. Many ELL children live in homes where English is not the primary language. The study questioned the college readiness of high school English language learner graduates utilizing ACT scores. The design consisted of using descriptive methods. Specifically, the researcher reported percentages, means, and frequencies describe the college readiness of English Learners. Results were disaggregated by gender and English proficiency levels. Further analysis included Chi-Square tests independence between college readiness and gender and English proficiency level, and free or reduced lunch status.

Limitations

There are several limitations recognized in this study. The first limitation in this study was the sample size only focusing on one state. This factors may limit the ability to generalize. The results may not be representative of all western states with similar conditions. The data received from this state may also contain thousands of errors. The researcher used the data provided and report it accurately, with the understanding that the data received may contain multiple errors. The researcher hoped the data will be used to

further assist with developmentally appropriate instruction for ELL students. The results may not be representative of all western states with similar conditions.

The second limitation is the reliability of assessing language proficiency levels. Students are tested on what they have learned each year. The assessment questions could contain content and vocabulary the students have not yet mastered. Another factor is the ACCESS test format does not mirror classroom based assessments. The ACCESS tests contain images with teacher directed prompts, which does not mirror classroom assessments. This format difference could impede understanding.

A third limitation questions the fact that does the ACT assessment take into consideration native language proficiency levels. Presently, there is no form of ACT administered in others languages. ACT is using language that is meant to measure how a student will perform in an American university. Administering this assessment in a different language would not benefit universities in determining a student's college readiness in an American university. A student's language proficiency level, especially a student entering an American school during the high school years, may be a limitation in this study.

A fourth limitation would be the timing of when an ELL student enters an American school. The data provided information on when each student was identified as an English learner. Therefore, the amount of time spent in an American school, before taking the ACT, may be a limitation in this study.

In conclusion, despite these limitations there is much to be learned from this quantitative study. The data collected served to examine the college readiness of ELL students in one western mountain state. While this is a generalization, the data showed a

deficiency in ELL student obtaining college readiness that needs to be addressed. Future researchers will be able to collect similar data and to make comparisons within the western states with similar demographics in the United States.

CHAPTER 4: OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS

This chapter will present the quantitative results which examined four research questions that pertained to the college readiness of Utah's 2015 graduating ELL students who took the ACT. This research was designed to assess the college readiness of graduating ELL students. The first research question studied the overall readiness of the English learner. Questions two through four examined the connection between college readiness and three factors: gender, language proficiency levels, and free or reduced lunch status. The results of this study were used to determine if a relationship exists between the selected variables for the English language learner high school graduate and the ACT benchmark scores for college readiness. The analysis of this study led to the findings that many ELL students are graduating high school and are not college ready. The results of those questions are presented in this chapter.

Participants

The participants in this sample consist of 668 high school English language learners graduates from Utah. The 2015 graduating class for the state of Utah consisted of 1,413 English language students. When examining the ACT test scores; the data reflected that only 668 English language students took the ACT. Therefore, there are unaccounted for students. It is possible that those students dropped out of school or chose not to take ACT.

College Readiness Percentage of English Language Learners

Research Question One

How are English language learner graduates performing in terms of college readiness?

Presently, the national average ACT composite score is 21 (ACT, 2014). To be considered college ready, ACT sets the individual content scores at: English, 18; Math, 22; Reading, 22; and Science, 23. In Table 4.1, the mean ACT scores for 688 graduating Utah ELL students are presented. The overall composite score was 14.51 (*SD* = 3.19), falling well below the national average score of 21. In comparison, those students who took the ACT, but were not identifying as English learners earned an overall composite score of 21.38 (*SD* = 5.03), yielding a six-point difference. Table 4.6 contains data showing the college readiness of ELL graduates based on the number of benchmarks attained. This data indicated that 2.5% of this sample obtained proficient on 3 or more of the ACT benchmarks, making them college ready. In contrast, 88% of the sample did not score proficient in any of the tested areas.

A comparison of mean scores between ELL students and native English speakers reflected that ELL students scored significantly lower. The ELL students' mean score in English was 12.02 (*SD* = 4.28), as compared to their English speaking peers who scored 20.8 (*SD* = 6.26), The percentage of college ready ELL students in English was 9%, compared to 68.4% of their English speaking peers were college ready (see Table 4.2). In the area of math, the ELL students' mean score was 15.76 (*SD* = 3.07), as compared to their English speaking peers who scored 20.9 (*SD* = 5.02). The percentage of college ready ELL students' in math was 6.0%, compared to 44.4% of their English speaking peers who were college ready (see Table 4.3). In reading, the ELL students' mean score

was 14.41 (*SD* = 3.88), as compared to their English speaking peers who scored 22.13 (6.15). The percentage of college ready ELL students in reading was 4.5%, as compared to 48.5% of their English speaking peers who were college ready (see Table 4.4). Finally, in the area of science, the ELL students mean score was 15.66 (*SD* = 3.88), as compared to their English speaking peer who scored 21.61 (*SD* = 4.85). The percentage of college ready ELL students in science was 4.2%, as compared to 41.3% of their English speaking peers who were college ready (see Table 4.5).

Table 4.1

Mean ACT Scores of English Language Learner Graduates

English Language Learner		ACT Composite Score	ACT English Score	ACT Math Score	ACT Reading Score	ACT Science Score
No	Mean	21.38	20.83	20.96	22.13	21.61
	N	28140	28140	28140	28140	28140
	Std. Deviation	5.039	6.267	5.025	6.154	4.854
Yes	Mean	14.51	12.02	15.76	14.41	15.66
	N	668	668	668	668	668
	Std. Deviation	3.190	4.282	3.076	3.889	3.880
Total	Mean	21.22	20.63	20.84	21.95	21.47
	N	28808	28808	28808	28808	28808
	Std. Deviation	5.109	6.367	5.049	6.221	4.915

Tables 4.2-4.5 reported the college readiness percentiles for English, math, reading, and science for ELL and non-ELL students. In each table, percentages are given to demonstrate the absence of college readiness for the 668 Utah graduating student in this study. In the tested area of English, 91.0% of ELL students were identified as not

being college ready. In comparison to English speakers, 31.6% were identified as not college ready. Table 4.2 specifically shows the college readiness percentiles for ELL students.

Table 4.2

College Ready in English by English Language Learner

			College Ready English		Total
			No	Yes	
English Language Learner	No	Count	8903	19237	28140
		% within English Language Learner	31.6%	68.4%	100.0%
	Yes	Count	608	60	668
		% within English Language Learner	91.0%	9.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	9511	19297	28808
		% within English Language Learner	33.0%	67.0%	100.0%

The data in Table 4.3 provides information on the math portion of the ACT. The data showed of the 668 students who took the math, 40 (94%) were considered not college ready. Unfortunately, the data also reflected that 15,650 (55.6%) of non-ELL students were also not college ready.

Table 4.3

College Ready in Math by English Language Learner

			College Ready Math		Total
			No	Yes	
English Language Learners	No	Count	15650	12490	28140
		% within English Language Learner	55.6%	44.4%	100.0%
	Yes	Count	628	40	668
		% within English Language Learner	94.0%	6.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	16278	12530	28808
		% within English Language Learner	56.5%	43.5%	100.0%

In the tested area of reading, 638 ELL students (95.5%) were not college ready in. In contrast, 14, 498 native English speakers (51.5%) were identified as not college ready. Table 4.4 provides data that demonstrates the lack of college readiness of graduating English language learners.

Table 4.4

College Ready in Reading by English Language Learner

			College Ready Reading		Total
			No	Yes	
English Language Learners	No	Count	14498	13642	28140
		% within English Language Learner	51.5%	48.5%	100.0%
	Yes	Count	638	30	668
		% within English Language Learner	95.5%	4.5%	100.0%
Total		Count	15136	13672	28808
		% within English Language Learner	52.5%	47.5%	100.0%

In the tested area of science, 95.8% of ELL students, compared to 58.7% of non-ELL students, tested identified as not college ready. Table 4.5 specifically shows the college readiness percentiles for science by ELL students.

Table 4.5

College Ready in Science by English Language Learner

			College Ready Science		Total
			No	Yes	
English Language Learners	No	Count	16528	11612	28140
		% within English Language Learner	58.7%	41.3%	100.0%
	Yes	Count	640	28	668
		% within English Language Learner	95.8%	4.2%	100.0%
Total		Count	17168	11640	28808
		% within English Language Learner	59.6%	40.4%	100.0%

In Table 4.6, percentile scores for obtaining a college readiness benchmark score for all tested areas for ELL and non-ELL students. Also reported is the break down for obtaining a college readiness benchmark score in at least 3, 2, 1, or 0 of the tested areas.

The percentage of ELL students who obtained a college readiness score in all 4 tested areas was 1.9%, compared to 29.6% of non-ELL students. The percentage of ELL students who obtained a college readiness score in at least 3 tested areas was 1.2%, compared to 13.3% of non-ELL students. 13.3%. The percentage of ELL students who obtained a college readiness score in at least 2 tested areas was 3.4%, compared to 14% of non-ELL students. The percentage of ELL students who obtained a college readiness score in at least 1 tested area was 5.4%, compared to 16.0% of non-ELL students. The percentage of ELL students who obtained a zero benchmark mark scores in the four tested areas was 88%, compared to 27% of non-ELL students.

Table 4.6

Number of College Readiness Benchmark Attained in 2014

			Number of College Ready Benchmarks Attained 2014					Total
			0	1	2	3	4	
English Language Learner	No	Count	7606	4504	3950	3743	8337	28140
		% within English Language Learner	27.0%	16.0%	14.0%	13.3%	29.6%	100.0%
	Yes	Count	588	36	23	8	13	668
		% within English Language Learner	88.0%	5.4%	3.4%	1.2%	1.9%	100.0%
Total		Count	8194	4540	3973	3751	8350	28808
		% within English Language Learner	28.4%	15.8%	13.8%	13.0%	29.0%	100.0%

Research Question Two

Are gender and college readiness levels independent of one another for graduating English language learners?

The sample size for question two consisted of 354 males and 314 females. While some of the percentages showed females or males outperforming each other, it is important to remind the reader there are more males than females in this sample. Tables

4.7-4.11 examine if there is a statistical significant relationship between gender and college readiness benchmarks in four tested areas.

The Chi-Square test in Table 4.7 examined the English benchmark for college readiness by gender. The number of college ready males (*N*= 30) was 9.6% vs. females (*N*= 30) which was 8.5%. The result was 60 students, or 9% of the 668 students met the English benchmark on ACT. While the percentage of females outperforming the males was greater there were less females taking the exam. Finally, the data showed there is a slight statistical difference for the English college readiness benchmark for males vs. female (χ^2 (1) = 0.626, $p < .05$).

Table 4.7

Chi-Square: College Ready in English of English Learners by Gender

Crosstab					
			College Ready English		Total
			No	Yes	
Gender	Female	Count	284	30	314
		% within Gender	90.4%	9.6%	100.0%
	Male	Count	324	30	354
		% within Gender	91.5%	8.5%	100.0%
Total		Count	608	60	668
		% within Gender	91.0%	9.0%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymp.Sig (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.237 [a]	1	.626

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 28.20.

The Chi-Square test in Table 4.8 examined the math benchmark for college readiness by gender. The number of college ready males (*N*= 25) was 7.1% vs. females

(*N*= 15) which was 4.8%. As a result, 40 students, or 6%, of the 668 students who tested met the English benchmark on ACT. While the literature review did support that males outperform females in math, 94% combined gender demonstrated a lack of math proficiency (Brennen et al., 2001). There is a slight statistical difference for the math college readiness benchmark for males vs. females (χ^2 (1) = .214, $p < .05$).

Table 4.8

Chi-Square: College Ready in Math of English Learners by Gender

Crosstab					
			College Ready Math		Total
			No	Yes	
Gender	Female	Count	299	15	314
		% within Gender	95.2%	4.8%	100.0%
	Male	Count	329	25	354
		% within Gender	92.9%	7.1%	100.0%
Total		Count	628	40	668
		% within Gender	94.0%	6.0%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymp.Sig (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	1.543[a]	1	.214

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 18.80.

The Chi-Square test in Table 4.9 evaluated the reading benchmark for college readiness by gender. The number of college ready males (*N*= 17) was 4.8% vs. females (*N*= 13) which was 4.1%. Therefore 30 students, or 4.5% of the 668 students met the reading benchmark on ACT. Both males and females rank in the 95th percentile for not meeting the reading ACT benchmark score. The Chi-Square test for independence

concluded there is a slight statistical difference for the reading college readiness benchmark for males vs. females (χ^2 (1) = .680, $p < .05$).

Table 4.9

Chi-Square: College Ready in Reading of English Learners by Gender

Crosstab					
			College Ready Reading		Total
			No	Yes	
Gender	Female	Count	301	13	314
		% within Gender	95.9%	4.1%	100.0%
	Male	Count	337	17	354
		% within Gender	95.2%	4.8%	100.0%
Total		Count	638	30	668
		% within Gender	95.5%	4.5%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymp.Sig (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.170[a]	1	.680

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 14.10.

The Chi-Square test in Table 4.10 evaluated the science benchmark for college readiness by gender. The number of college ready males (*N*= 18) was 5.1% vs. females (*N*= 10) which was 3.2%. Consequently 28 students, or 4.2% of the 668 students met the reading benchmark on ACT. Both males and females ranked between the 96-94th percentile for not meeting the science ACT benchmark score. The data showed a slight statistical difference for the science college readiness benchmark for males vs. females (χ^2 (1) = 0.221, $p < .05$).

Table 4.10

Chi-Square: College Ready in Science of English Learners by Gender

Crosstab					
			College Ready Science		Total
			No	Yes	
Gender	Female	Count	304	10	314
		% within Gender	96.8%	3.2%	100.0%
	Male	Count	336	18	354
		% within Gender	94.9%	5.1%	100.0%
Total		Count	640	28	668
		% within Gender	95.8%	4.2%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymp.Sig (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	1.496[a]	1	.221

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 13.16.

The number of college ready benchmark scores attained by English learners based on gender are provided in Table 4.11. A Chi-Square test revealed that 1.5% (*N*= 5) females and 2.3% (*N*= 8) males obtained benchmark scores in all four tested areas. On three college readiness benchmark tested area only 0.6% (*N*= 2) females and 1.7% (*N*= 6) males attained proficient scores. The percentage of students scoring readiness in two benchmark content areas were 3.5% (*N*= 11) females and 3.4% (*N*= 12) males. The percentage of students score readiness in one benchmark content area was 6.4% (*N*= 20) females and 4.5% (*N*= 16) males. The percentage of students who scored readiness in zero content areas of the ACT was 87.9% (*N*= 275) females and 88.1% (*N*= 312) males. The data reflected the there is a statistical difference for the college readiness benchmark

for males vs. females on the number of college ready benchmark scores attained in 2014 (χ^2 (4) = 0.558, $p < .05$).

Table 4.11

Chi-Square: Number of College Ready Benchmarks Attained by English Learners by Gender

Crosstab								
			Number of College Ready Benchmarks Attained 2014					Total
			0	1	2	3	4	
Gender	Female	Count	276	20	11	2	5	314
		% within Gender	87.9%	6.4%	3.5%	0.6%	1.6%	100.0%
	Male	Count	312	16	12	6	8	354
		% within Gender	88.1%	4.5%	3.4%	1.7%	2.3%	100.0%
Total		Count	588	36	23	8	13	668
		% within Gender	88.0%	5.4%	3.4%	1.2%	1.9%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymp.Sig (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	3.000[a]	4	.558

a. 2 cells (20.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 3.76

Research Question Three

Are language proficiency levels and college readiness levels independent of one another for graduating English language learner?

The variable of language proficiency levels and college readiness is presented in Table 4.12. The mean composite scores for graduating ELL students are reported for each of the five English language proficiency levels, including students who fall into the

Monitored Status and Native English speakers. The mean ACT score for each tested area (English, Math, Reading, and Science) is also reported for each English proficiency level.

The Entering Level, Level 1 or lowest level, revealed a mean ACT Composite score of 13.36 (*SD*= 1.43) for 11 ELL students. In English, the mean ACT score was 11.55 (*SD*= 2.65). In math, the mean ACT score was14.27 (*SD*= .78). In reading, the mean ACT score was 13.73 (*SD*= 2.79). In science, the mean ACT science score was 13.82 (*SD*= 2.85).

At the Beginning Level, Level 2, mean ACT composite score for 38 ELL students was 12.79 (*SD*= 2.04). In English, the mean ACT score was 10.03 (*SD*= 2.83). In math, the mean ACT score was 14.21 (*SD*= 1.67). In reading, the mean ACT score was 12.47 (*SD*= 2.78). In science, the mean ACT score was 14.31 (*SD* = 3.66).

At the Developing Level, Level 3, mean ACT composite score for 123 ELL students was 13.05 (*SD*= 1.83). In English, the mean ACT score was 10.03 (*SD*= 2.39). In math, the mean ACT score was 14.80 (*SD*= 2.03). In reading, the mean ACT score was 12.84 (*SD*= 2.82). In science, the mean ACT score was 14.17 (*SD*= 3.09).

At the Expanding Level, Level 4, mean ACT composite score for 136 ELL students was 13.54 (*SD*= 1.95). In English, the mean ACT score was 10.84 (*SD*= 2.78). In math, the mean ACT score was 15.12 (*SD*= 1.53). In reading, the mean ACT score was 13.43 (*SD*= 3.05). In science, the mean ACT was 14.70 (*SD*= 3.51).

At the Bridging Level, Level 5 or highest level before exiting ELL services, the mean ACT composite score for 61 ELL students was 15.38 (*SD*= 2.49). In English, the mean ACT score was 12.93 (*SD*= 3.50). In math, the mean ACT score was 16.59 (*SD*=

2.98). In reading, the mean ACT score was 14.90 (*SD*= 3.82). In science, the mean ACT score was 16.93 (*SD*= 3.42).

For the purpose of comparison, there were 301 students in the Monitored status whose composite ACT was 15.65 (*SD*= 3.82). These are students who tested out of receiving ELL services, but remain in a monitored status for 2 years. The 301 students are part of the sample of 668. In addition, there were 28, 138 Native English Speakers who received a composite ACT score of 21.38 (*SD*= 5.03). This category was included to provide context to the question of are English proficiency levels and college readiness independent of each other.

Table 4.12

Mean ACT Scores by English Proficiency Levels for ELL Graduates

English Language Proficiency		ACT Composite Score	ACT English Score	ACT Math Score	ACT Reading Score	ACT Science Score
Entering	Mean	13.36	11.55	14.27	13.73	13.82
	N	11	11	11	11	11
	Std. Deviation	1.433	2.659	.786	2.796	2.857
Beginning	Mean	12.79	10.03	14.21	12.47	14.13
	N	38	38	38	38	38
	Std. Deviation	2.042	2.833	1.679	2.787	3.663
Developing	Mean	13.05	10.01	14.80	12.84	14.17
	N	123	123	123	123	123
	Std. Deviation	1.833	2.397	2.032	2.824	3.099
Expanding	Mean	13.54	10.84	15.12	13.43	14.70
	N	136	136	136	136	136
	Std. Deviation	1.955	2.787	1.535	3.005	3.516
Bridging	Mean	15.38	12.93	16.59	14.90	16.93
	N	61	61	61	61	61
	Std. Deviation	2.491	3.502	2.980	3.820	3.420
Monitored Status	Mean	15.65	13.48	16.54	15.66	16.73
	N	301	301	301	301	301
	Std. Deviation	3.821	5.136	3.814	4.316	4.086
Native English Speaker	Mean	21.38	20.83	20.96	22.13	21.61
	N	28138	28138	28138	28138	28138
	Std. Deviation	5.039	6.266	5.025	6.154	4.854
Total	Mean	21.22	20.63	20.84	21.95	21.47
	N	28808	28808	28808	28808	28808
	Std. Deviation	5.109	6.367	5.049	6.221	4.915

Table 4.13 provides the college readiness English scores of ELL graduates based on language proficiency. On the English portion of the ACT assessment, 60 (9.0%) students of the 668 showed English proficiency levels on the ACT assessment did not impact college readiness. Consequently, 91% of the students in this sample were affected at some level by their English proficiency on the English portion of the ACT assessment. The Chi-Square test data shows there is a relationship between a student's English proficiency levels and obtaining proficiency on the English portion of the ACT (χ^2 (1) = 0.000, $p < .05$).

Table 4.13

Chi-Square: College Ready English by English Proficiency Level

Crosstab					
			College Ready English		
			No	Yes	Total
English Language Proficiency	Entering	Count	11	0	11
		% within English Language Proficiency	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%
	Beginning	Count	37	1	38
		% within English Language Proficiency	97.4%	2.6%	100.0%
	Developing	Count	123	0	123
		% within English Language Proficiency	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%

Table 4.13 (continued)

Crosstab					
			College Ready English		
			No	Yes	Total
English Language Proficiency	Expanding	Count	131	4	135
		% within English Language Proficiency	97.0%	3.0%	100.0%
	Bridging	Count	56	4	60
		% within English Language Proficiency	93.3%	6.7%	100.0%
	Monitored Status	Count	250	51	301
		% within English Language Proficiency	83.1%	16.9%	100.0%
Total		Count	608	60	668
		% within English Language Proficiency	91.0%	9.0%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	44.812[a]	5	.000

a. 2 cells (16.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .99.

In Table 4.14, the math portion of the ACT assessment revealed that 40 (6.0%) students of the 668 showed English proficiency levels on the ACT assessment did not impact college readiness. Therefore, 94% of the students in this sample were affected at some level by their English proficiency on the math portion of the ACT assessment. The

Chi-Square test revealed there is a relationship between a student's English proficiency levels and obtaining proficiency on the math portion of the ACT (χ^2 (5) = 0.001, $p < .05$).

Table 4.14

Chi-Square: College Ready Math by English Proficiency Level

Crosstab					
			College Ready Math		
			No	Yes	Total
English Language Proficiency	Entering	Count	11	0	11
		% within English Language Proficiency	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%
	Beginning	Count	38	0	38
		% within English Language Proficiency	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%
	Developing	Count	119	4	123
		% within English Language Proficiency	96.7%	3.3%	100.0%
	Expanding	Count	134	1	135
		% within English Language Proficiency	99.3%	0.7%	100.0%

Table 4.14 (continued)

Crosstab					
			College Ready Math		
			No	Yes	Total
English Language Proficiency	Bridging	Count	53	7	60
		% within English Language Proficiency	88.3%	11.7%	100.0%
	Monitored Status	Count	273	28	301
		% within English Language Proficiency	90.7%	9.3%	100.0%
Total		Count	628	40	668
		% within English Language Proficiency	94.0%	6.0%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	20.670[a]	5	.001

a. 3 cells (25.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .66.

Table 4.15 shows the results of the reading portion of the ACT assessment. Thirty (4.5%) students of the 668 showed English proficiency levels on the ACT assessment did not impact college readiness. Therefore, 95.5% of the students in this sample were affected at some level by their English proficiency on the reading portion of the ACT assessment. The Chi-Square test found that there is a relationship between a student's English proficiency levels and obtaining proficiency on the reading portion of the ACT (χ^2 (1) = 0.061, $p < .05$).

Table 4.15

Chi-Square: College Ready Reading by English Proficiency Level

Crosstab					
			College Ready Reading		
			No	Yes	Total
English Language Proficiency	Entering	Count	11	0	11
		% within English Language Proficiency	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%
	Beginning	Count	37	1	38
		% within English Language Proficiency	97.4%	2.6%	100.0%
	Developing	Count	121	2	123
		% within English Language Proficiency	98.4%	1.6%	100.0%
	Expanding	Count	132	3	135
		% within English Language Proficiency	97.8%	2.2%	100.0%
	Bridging	Count	58	2	60
		% within English Language Proficiency	96.7%	3.3%	100.0%
	Monitored Status	Count	279	22	301
		% within English Language Proficiency	92.7%	7.3%	100.0%

Table 4.15 (continued)

Crosstab					
			College Ready Reading		
			No	Yes	Total
Total		Count	638	30	668
		% within English Language Proficiency	95.5%	4.5%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	10.557[a]	5	.061
a. 3 cells (25.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .49.			

Table 4.16 provides the college readiness science scores based on English proficiency. On the science portion of the ACT assessment, 28 (4.2%) students of the 668 showed English proficiency levels on the ACT assessment did not impact college readiness. The remaining 95.8% of the students in this sample were affected at some level by their English proficiency on the science portion of the ACT assessment. The Chi-Square test finding show that there is a relationship between a student's English proficiency levels and obtaining proficiency on the science portion of the ACT (χ^2 (5) = 0.002, $p < .05$).

Table 4.16

Chi-Square: College Ready Science by English Proficiency Level

Crosstab					
			College Ready Science		
			No	Yes	Total
English Language Proficiency	Entering	Count	11	0	11
		% within English Language Proficiency	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%
	Beginning	Count	37	1	38
		% within English Language Proficiency	97.4%	2.6%	100.0%
	Developing	Count	123	0	123
		% within English Language Proficiency	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%
	Expanding	Count	134	1	135
		% within English Language Proficiency	99.3%	0.7%	100.0%
	Bridging	Count	57	3	60
		% within English Language Proficiency	95.0%	5.0%	100.0%
	Monitored Status	Count	278	23	301
		% within English Language Proficiency	92.4%	7.6%	100.0%

Table 4.16 (continued)

Crosstab				
		College Ready Science		
		No	Yes	Total
Total	Count	640	28	668
	% within English Language Proficiency	95.8%	4.2%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	19.113[a]	5	.002
a. 3 cells (25.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .46.			

The number of college ready benchmark scores are sorted by language proficiency levels in Table 4.17. A Chi square test revealed that at the entering level (*N*= 11) 0% of ELL students obtained proficient benchmark scores in all four tested areas. At the Beginning level (*N*= 38), 2.6% of ELL students attained college readiness proficiency on three college readiness benchmark tested areas. The remaining 97.4% were not proficient in any tested area.

At the Developing level (*N*= 123), 0.8% (1 student) was proficient in two tested areas, 3.3% (4 students), was proficient in one tested area, and 95.9% were not proficient in any tested areas. In the Expanding level (*N*= 130), 0.7% (1 student) was proficient in three tested areas, 1.5% (2 students) were proficient in two tested areas, 1.5% (2 students) were proficient in one tested area, and 96.3% were not proficient in any tested area.

At the Bridging level (*N*= 60), 8.3% (5 students) were proficient in two tested areas, 10% (6 students) were proficient in one tested areas, and 81.7% were not proficient

in any tested area. In the category of Monitored Status (*N*= 301), 80.7% were not proficient in any tested area, with only 4.3% achieving proficiency in all four tested areas. The Chi-square test produced a *p*-value of 0.000 showing there is a significant association between language proficiency levels and reaching college readiness benchmark scores (χ^2 (20) = 0.000 $p < .05$).

Table 4.17

Chi-Square: Number of College Ready Benchmarks Attained by English Proficiency Level

			Crosstab					
			Number of College Ready Benchmarks Attained 2014					Total
			0	1	2	3	4	
English Language Proficiency	Entering	Count	11	0	0	0	0	11
		% within English Language Proficiency	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
	Beginning	Count	37	0	0	1	0	38
		% within English Language Proficiency	97.4%	0.0%	0.0%	2.6%	0.0%	100.0%
	Developing	Count	118	4	1	0	0	123
		% within English Language Proficiency	95.9%	3.3%	0.8%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%

Table 4.17 (continued)

Crosstab								
			Number of College Ready Benchmarks Attained 2014					Total
			0	1	2	3	4	
English Language Proficiency	Expanding	Count	130	2	2	1	0	135
		% within English Language Proficiency	96.3%	1.5%	1.5%	0.7%	0.0%	100.0%
	Bridging	Count	49	6	5	0	0	60
		% within English Language Proficiency	81.7%	10.0%	8.3%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
	Monitored Status	Count	243	24	15	6	13	301
		% within English Language Proficiency	80.7%	8.0%	5.0%	2.0%	4.3%	100.0%
Total		Count	588	36	23	8	13	668
		% within English Language Proficiency	88.0%	5.4%	3.4%	1.2%	1.9%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	50.741[a]	20	.000

a. 19 cells (63.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .13.

Research Question Four

Is the free or reduced lunch status and college readiness level independent of one another for graduating English language learners?

The effect of free or reduced lunch status and obtaining college readiness in English is examined in Table. 4.18. In this sample, 369 ELL students identified as having free or reduced lunch status and 299 ELL students identified as not receiving free or reduced lunch.

On the English portion of the ACT assessment, within that category of free or reduced lunch status, 93.7% (*N*= 343) were not college ready. By comparison, 88.6% (*N*= 265) ELL students in the sample, who do not qualify for free or reduced lunch status, were not college ready either. The Chi-Square *p*-value was .052 indicating that in this sample, there is an association between low income ELL student and being college ready (χ^2 (1) = 0.052, $p < .05$).

Table 4.18

Chi-Square: College Ready in English of English Learners by Free/Reduced Lunch Status

Crosstab					
			College Ready English		
			No	Yes	Total
Low Income	No	Count	265	34	299
		% within Low Income	88.6%	11.4%	100.0%
	Yes	Count	343	26	369
		% within Low Income	93.0%	7.0%	100.0%

Table 4.18 (continued)

Crosstab				
		College Ready English		
		No	Yes	Total
Total	Count	608	60	668
	% within Low Income	91.0%	9.0%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	3.779[a]	1	.052

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 26.86.

The effect of free or reduced lunch status and obtaining college readiness in math is examined in Table 4.19. On the math portion of the ACT assessment, within the category of free or reduced lunch status, 95.7% (*N*= 353) were not college ready. By comparison, 92% (*N*= 275) of ELL students in the sample, who do not qualify for free or reduced lunch status, were not college ready either. The Chi-Square *p*-value was .046 indicating that in this sample, there may be an association between low income ELL student and being college ready in math (χ^2 (1) = 0.046, $p < .05$).

Table 4.19

Chi-Square: College Ready in Math of English Learners by Free/Reduced Lunch Status

Crosstab					
			College Ready Math		
			No	Yes	Total
Low Income	No	Count	275	24	299
		% within Low Income	92.0%	8.0%	100.0%
	Yes	Count	353	16	369
		% within Low Income	95.7%	4.3%	100.0%
Total		Count	628	40	668
		% within Low Income	94.0%	6.0%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	3.996[a]	1	.046

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 17.90.

The effect of free or reduced lunch status and obtaining college readiness in reading is examined in Table 4.20. On the reading portion of the ACT assessment, within the category of free or reduced lunch status, 95.7% (*N*= 353) were not college ready. By comparison, 95.3% (*N*= 285) of ELL students in the sample, who do not qualify for free or reduced lunch status, were not college ready either. The Chi-Square *p*-value was .830 indicating that in this sample, there is a strong association between a low income ELL student and being college ready in reading (χ^2 (1) = 0.830, $p < .05$).

Table 4.20

Chi-Square: College Ready in Reading of English Learners by Free/Reduced Lunch Status

Crosstab					
			College Ready Reading		
			No	Yes	Total
Low Income	No	Count	285	14	299
		% within Low Income	95.3%	4.7%	100.0%
	Yes	Count	353	16	369
		% within Low Income	95.7%	4.3%	100.0%
Total		Count	638	30	668
		% within Low Income	95.5%	4.5%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.046[a]	1	.830

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 13.43.

The effect of free or reduced lunch status and obtaining college readiness in science is examined in Table 4.21. On the science portion of the ACT assessment, within the category of free or reduced lunch status, 96.7% (*N*= 357) were not college ready. By comparison, 94.6% (*N*= 283) of ELL students in the sample, who do not qualify for free or reduced lunch status, were not college ready either. The Chi-Square *p*-value was .178 indicating that in this sample, there is an association between a low income ELL student and being college ready in science (χ^2 (1) = 0.178, $p < .05$).

Table 4.21

Chi-Square: College Ready in Science of English Learners by Free/Reduced Lunch Status

Crosstab					
			College Ready Science		
			No	Yes	Total
Low Income	No	Count	283	16	299
		% within Low Income	94.6%	5.4%	100.0%
	Yes	Count	357	12	369
		% within Low Income	96.7%	3.3%	100.0%
Total		Count	640	28	668
		% within Low Income	95.8%	4.2%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	1.812[a]	1	.178

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 12.53.

Synopsis of English Language Learners and College Readiness

This study was conducted to determine the college readiness of English language learners. The determination for this study was based on student ACT scores. Further analysis looked into three variables: gender, language level proficiency, and free or reduced lunch status are markers for college readiness.

Gender, as a variable, did not yield significant differences in student achievement. However, language proficiency strongly impacted student achievement on the ACT. Specifically, language proficiency levels in English, reading, and science had higher significance than math. Overall, only 1.9% of ELL students scored proficient in all tested areas of the ACT, as shown in Table 4.17. The free or reduced lunch status variable

showed less significance being college ready. In other words, in this sample for each tested area, between 91-95% of students, regardless of their income status, were not college ready.

The variables used in this study generated results that showed that graduating ELL students were not scoring college ready on the ACT assessment. This research data can be useful in support of high school ELL program reform and assist states in making instructional decisions to support these students.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter will communicate the findings based on the data analysis from Chapter Four. This chapter will begin with the purpose of this study followed by a findings summary for each of the four research questions. The next section will include a discussion of the opportunities for further research to assist ELL students in becoming college ready. The conclusion will provide final thoughts for policy makers, educators, and future research. The conclusion will provide final comments.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study to examine the college readiness of graduating English language learners in one western state. Most studies encompassing English learners focus on primary grades, where researchers have time to collect data. There are few studies on high school English language learners because long term studies are not practical. The goal in studying the college readiness of graduating English learners was to focus on this underprepared population that is exiting high school.

In this sample, the variables of gender, language proficiency levels, and free or reduced lunch status were chosen. The objective was to determine if these variables and college readiness were independent of each other. The overall findings from this study demonstrate that English language learners are not achieving college readiness by the time they are taking the ACT in 11th grade. The findings for each research question will be discussed and include potential areas for further research.

A review of the literature supported that each English language learner enters the American classroom with diverse English skills. Some enter with little or no education in English and some are U.S. born but are not fluent in English. Slama (2012) reported that

60% of high school ELL students were born in the United States and spent about nine years in American schools. This is alarming because the findings for this study focused on high school ELL students and found that ELL students are not college ready at graduation. If the ACT is a predictor of success in college and ELL students are graduating without access to college, then their future earnings potential may be bleak.

Summary of Findings

The research focused on four questions to seeking to determine the college readiness of graduating English learners in one western mountain state. With an increase in English learners in American schools, the need for research and support in this area is great. While many studies focused on primary grades and practices, there is little research directed at the high school ELL students. Therefore, this study sought to contribute to a high needs student population. The four research questions were:

1. How are English language learner graduates performing in terms of college readiness?
2. Are gender and college readiness levels independent of one another for graduating English language learners?
3. Are language proficiency levels and college readiness levels independent of one another for graduating English language learner?
4. Is the free or reduced lunch status and college readiness level independent of one another for graduating English language learners?

English Learners and College Readiness

The purpose of the first question, how are English learner graduates performing in terms of college readiness, was to determine if graduating ELL students were meeting

proficiency standards as set by the ACT assessment. This question focused solely on mean ACT composite scores as the measure of college readiness. The conclusions for this sample found the mean ACT composite score for graduating ELL students was 14.51, far below the national average of 21 (ACT, 2014). The ACT consist of four tested areas. Therefore, this finding required a further look into how this sample scored on individual portions of the ACT.

The mean score for the English portion of the ACT yielded the lowest score, 12.02. Subsequent mean scores varied slightly between 14 and 15, with math yielding the highest score, 15.76. While math was higher, the significance was minimal because students are required to compute word problems, as well as computation problems. The reality is that ELL students struggle with the academic language that appears in standardized tests, no matter the content area. Areas such as math and science show a slightly higher score, but that could be attributed to straight computation or factual information that does not require inferential skills.

Gender and College Readiness

The second question sought to determine if gender and college readiness were independent of one another for English learners. The literature review pointed out that females and males often outperform each other in classroom work. In most studies, the males were outperforming females in math and females were outperforming males in English. (Duckworth & Seligman, 2006; Brennen et al., 2001). One study went on to point out that the female minority was in “double jeopardy” of being an at risk student in some content areas as a result of being a female and being from an ethic group (Conner & Vargyas, 2013). In contrast, Hyde (2005) did not find major difference in learning

outcomes between males and females. Therefore, this study sought to add to that research by reviewing mean ACT scores for males versus females.

The sample consisted of 354 males and 314 females. While the number of males to females is not equal, the results did reflect a p – value of .6 showing there was not statistical difference in college readiness based on gender. When taking a closer look at each tested area, females slightly outperformed males in English only. The literature supported that females generally outperform males in school work. The conclusion drawn from this study finds that English language learner males are outperforming females on standardized assessments. The implication for future research would be to closely ask why there is a disparity between classroom work grades and standardize testing, if class work is meant to prepare students for standardize testing.

Language Proficiency and College Readiness

The third question sought to discover if language proficiency levels and college readiness were independent of one another. Students with low language proficiency, specifically in low academic language proficiency, are at a higher risk of dropping out of school (Slama, 2012). The literature review stated that language acquisition may take students several years. However, the high school English learner does not have years to gain proficiency in academic English. The results of this study reflected that many ELL students did not achieve benchmark scores on ACT. Therefore, language proficiency is not independent of college readiness.

For further analysis, question three focused deeper into the five language proficiency level scores, including students in a monitored status. The goal was to see if there was a level of language proficiency that was independent of college readiness. The

study concluded that in the category of the ACT composite score, no single group obtained the minimum benchmark score for the ACT. If fact, the scores ranged from 13-15, five points or more below what is considered the benchmark minimum, as shown in Table 2.1.

With the ACT composite scores being lower than the benchmark minimum, scores for individually tested area and each level of English proficiency was evaluated. The findings concluded that the Bridging level (highest level before exiting services) had higher mean ACT scores in math (16.59) and science (16.93). This could be attributed to rote work that is done in content areas such as math and science. In most cases, math and science questions are straightforward questions seeking factual responses.

At the Entering, Beginning, and Developing language levels (level 1, 2, and 3), this researcher was surprised to see higher than anticipated math and science ACT mean scores. In these tested areas, student scores were remained lower than needed to be considered passing, the scores were 1 -3 points higher than in English. While language is a barrier, subjects such as math and science are more concrete and require less inferential thinking, which may be why scores are higher in those areas (as shown in Table 4.12).

The tested area of English remains a challenge for ELL students. Students in the monitored status, students no longer receiving ELL services, scored a mean of 13. 48. A troubling finding was that students in the Beginning, Developing, and Expanding levels (levels, 2, 3, and 4) had mean ACT scores between 10.03 and 10.84. As shown in Table 4.12, those levels are mid-range levels of support and one might think that scores would show more growth in this area.

The English portion of the ACT assess grammar, requires understanding of rigorous vocabulary, and context of a passage. In some instance, ELL student placement impedes their access to higher level academic content. Depending on their language proficiency level and time in a U.S. school, many ELL students will not have adequate background vocabulary to be successful. Furthermore, passages may be biased to culture groups or regions in the United States; therefore, the ELL student has little or no context.

In contrast, the mean reading scores for this sample ranged from 13.73 (Entering level) to 15.66 (Monitored Level). Depending on the passage and background of the ELL student, some may not have enough background knowledge or exposure to scenarios displayed in literature. In order to understand context in a story, students need to exposure to various types of literature, such as various fiction and non-fiction. Then the classroom teacher works to create background knowledge and have students relate the connection to some event in their life. Some ELL students, depending on the home nation's educational system, they may have little or no access to literature. Fortunately, this study did reveal that mean scores for this group showed overall growth. Therefore, how to best educate, specifically high school ELL students, in reading should be an area for further research.

Free or Reduced Lunch Status and College Readiness

The fourth question examined if a student's free or reduced lunch status was independent of college readiness for graduating English learners. Research has shown that a student's socioeconomic status has multiple effects on student learning outcomes. However, when socioeconomic status is coupled with low English proficiency levels, a heightened disadvantage is added. In the literature review, Scarella (2003) pointed out

that poorer communities, with few resources, can make learning the dominant language problematic. Furthermore, Gold (2006) found that the greater focus is simply graduating students instead of graduating college ready students. This line of thinking must change if we want all our graduates to be financially self-sufficient adults.

In the sample, 369 students of the 668 were identified as having free or reduced lunch status. The data collected reviewed each tested area of the ACT to see if one subject area was impacted more by poverty than other. The findings from this study show that about 95% of the students, in all four tested areas, who identify as free or reduced lunch exited high school did not meet ACT benchmark scores for college readiness.

In contrast, there were 299 ELL students that identified as not being free or reduced lunch status, who also scored low in all tested areas. In English, 88% tested as not college ready. This trend for not achieving benchmark scores continues in math (92%), reading (95%), and science (94%). The assumption here is that while poverty does play a role in not achieving college readiness, ELL students poor or not are not achieving college readiness. These findings support the need for more research in programs that support language proficiency.

Implications for Future Practice and Policy

College readiness for the English language learner is an area that needs improvement. The analysis of the data indicated that ELL students are not graduating ready for college, this implication can last a lifetime. The educational challenges for educators working with high school ELL students will vary. However, to gain positive educational outcomes, several factors can be evaluated to explore the greatest potential for growth.

The first question, are English learner's college ready, reported a strong no. While this study did not focus on curriculum, this study did prove that ELL students in high school in one western mountain state were not college ready at graduation. The literature review identified equity in curriculum as a possible barrier to achieving college readiness. The implication here is that ELL programs are ineffective and reform in how to provide support should be reexamined. In the areas of reading and English, ELL students may need more instruction in how to glean meaning from a passage, understanding figurative language, and other skills that require inferential thinking. While the ELL student needs instruction in all areas, gaining a language proficiency should be foremost priority.

As evident in Table 4.6, 88% of students were not able to achieve a college ready benchmark score in any tested areas. While this study demonstrated that students were not college ready, the study does not have detailed data on time in the United States. With an influx of refugees, along with other immigrants, the approach to working with English language students requires further research. Many of the incoming refugees have experienced interrupted schooling, social and emotional turmoil and need support. While many will need academic support, social and emotional support to avoid isolation is something to consider. Schools should seek out mentorship programs to support those needs and help refugees who resettle in American, feel a part of their community.

While there are many programs to assist the English learner, further research into how to achieve a higher English proficiency quicker for those students who are entering middle or high school is needed. Intensive programs are expensive, and immersion is certainly significant, but graduating students should not be the only goal. That thinking

places the burden on society where a high school dropout's opportunities are few, which repeats the poverty cycle or worse, a life of crime.

Language Acquisition

This study shed light on the lack of college readiness based on language proficiency levels. The larger problem for this group is the amount of time it takes to obtain language and the lack of time they have in acquiring the dominant language. If the rate of acquiring academic language is longer than the students stays in school, then the possibility of being college ready at graduation is an impossibility. Therefore, the English learner may be at a greater risk for living longer in a poverty status. The reality of not attending college can have a lasting impact on future earnings. The implication for future practice will require educators and policy makers to seek interventions that support language acquisition.

The literature review also cites Solorzano's (2008) claim that inadequacies in education hinder achievement. More research in the area of specific programs aimed at high school language acquisition is important that work would benefit thousands. This study did not look at specific programs, however, the literature did support bilingual programs (Reyes, 2008). The literature pointed to how schooling in a student's native language, along with English, showed grade level performance in as little as four years (Collier & Thomas, 2001). While staffing schools in multiple languages would be expensive, policymakers should consider the return on the investment because there is evidence that supports dual language instruction. While our society is in favor of English only and acculturation, it is wrong to ask a group to lose their culture completely. The goal should be to use language and culture to link instruction and academic growth.

Students in high school may need to use both languages to bridge from their language to English.

Academic Placement

Currently graduating ELL students are struggling meeting ACT benchmark scores. Therefore, a closer look at current practices, such as academic student placement, are needed. A study by Kanno and Kangas (2014) examined the academic placement of ELL students. The study revealed that once students exited language services, they were placed in remedial courses. With little or no access to content that supports success on ACT and in college, the ELL student is essentially forced into coursework that may be slower paced and negatively impacting student growth. This presents the need for more research in the area of sheltered instruction. In this environment, the ELL students is learning English along with academic content. With immigration on the rise, varied languages present in U.S. schools, this option is costly but could be worth the investment if the end result is high levels of language proficiency and college ready graduates.

Language Endorsement

While looking at curriculum is certainly a positive step forward, research in the areas of pre-service teacher preparation programs is needed. Many of the classroom teachers have little or no training in how to service English learners (Lucas & Villegas, 2013). The classroom educator has a great impact on English learners. Yet, many states do not require classroom teachers to receive endorsements.

It would be in the best interest for universities to work with states to require ELL coursework for pre-service teachers. The implications for students in classrooms with underprepared teachers, teachers with little or no language acquisition understanding, is

long lasting. Current educators, in areas with high ELL populations should seek out language professional development and ultimately endorsements to better service ELL students. While this one mountain west state does require an endorsement for all educators, this is a policy that should be enacted across the nation.

Academic Testing Bias

The language bias in the ACT assessment is another area of study for possible research and change in policy. At this time, the ACT is given only in English. In doing so, what an ELL student really knows is unknown. In the review of literature, Abedi (2008) discussed the complexity of language on standardized testing and the difficulty native speakers have; therefore, the impact on non-native speakers is even greater. While educational reform does call for rich content and rigor. The rigorous language, inferential skill, and lack of language are all factors that can lead to low student achievement for many ELL students. If ACT scores are showing a gap among ethnic groups, then consideration in giving the ACT in the student's native language is case for study.

Conclusion

This study focused on area of the country, today's ELL student is in classroom across the United States. The goal of graduating the ELL student is not enough. Society practically demands students graduate and attend college. Our ELL students need to graduate, able to communicate and prepared to for college, even technical schools. The implications for not learning the dominant language and missing out on college can lead to a life of poverty.

This study also challenges the educators and policy makers to look deeply into how to service ELL high school students. Specifically, policy makers should consider the

value of the immigrants in our nation, the time it takes to gain language proficiency, and offer more language programs to support. The amount of time it takes to acquire academic English is lengthy; therefore, the post-graduation college prospects for the ELL student is dismal.

In addition, not only are students learning English, but simultaneously learning content. This requires more of the ELL student than their English speaking peers. The assumption is that students will learn English over time, but time is a great barrier for the high school ELL student. If the work load is doubled without a realistic timeline is given, their future will not be the American Dream. Many will give up and possibly drop out, which may lead to a life of constant struggle and generational poverty. With this population growing, their academic outcomes should alarm policy makers. Reform should examine how to use a student's native language to bridge language barriers, along with programs that support academic growth for the ELL student.

For educators, this study confirms that high school ELL students are not meeting college benchmark scores. First, examination of student placement and support could be a first step in ensuring equal access to higher level content. Also, seeking out curriculum that supports varied levels of the ELL student in all content areas is needed. The variables of language proficiency and free or reduced lunch are areas that school districts can specifically address. The variable of poverty, while serious, is difficult for educators to overcome in the classroom. A family's socioeconomic status is one that schools or teachers cannot change. Yet, schools do offer family support and services that can impact motivation and that is key to learning a new language and becoming part of the community.

For researchers, this study confirms that more studies on effective language programs and services in high school is needed. To better understand this issue, researchers should examine the variables of language proficiency and free or reduced lunch status as barriers for the ELL student and college readiness. The variable of poverty, while serious, is impossible to change for a child. However, there may be opportunities when studying poverty to determine opportunities that motivate this student group. Also, while levels of English proficiency will vary significantly, the need for programs that support high school ELL students is a benefit that should not be overlooked. This is an area where teachers and support staff can make a difference.

The academic success and future of the ELL student is at risk. The data gathered and analyzed supports the need for a deeper study into how to best service high school ELL students. While not all students will choose college, each student should be able to choose. This study adds to the literature on college readiness and the English learner in hopes that educators and policy makers will consider the critical educational needs of this growing student population.

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