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The Relationship Between The Level of Language Acquisition and Reading Achievement Among English Language Learners

Kathleen Barrett

George Fox University, kbarrett03@georgefox.edu

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE LEVEL OF LANGUAGE ACQUISITION AND
READING ACHIEVEMENT AMONG ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

by

KATHLEEN BARRETT

FACULTY RESEARCH COMMITTEE:

Chair: Suzanne Harrison, PhD

Member: Terry Huffman, PhD

Member: Gary Tiffin, PhD

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“THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE LEVEL OF LANGUAGE ACQUISITION AND READING ACHIEVEMENT AMONG ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS,” a Doctoral research project prepared by KATHLEEN BARRETT in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Education degree in the Educational Foundations and Leadership Department.

This dissertation has been approved and accepted by:

4/7/15 Sue Harrison

Date

Sue Harrison, PhD

Committee Chair

Assistant Professor of Education

4/7/15 Terry Huffman

Date

Terry Huffman, PhD

Professor of Education

4/7/15 Gary Tiffin

Date

Gary Tiffin, PhD

Associate Professor of Education

ABSTRACT

This study examined two research questions: How are reading proficiency and English language proficiency assessment scores in third and fourth grades associated with fifth grade reading proficiency? As well as: How are reading proficiency and English language proficiency assessment scores in third and fourth grades associated with fifth grade English language proficiency? The purpose of this study was to better understand the relationship between English language proficiency and reading achievement in English Language Learners.

This study included one cohort of English Language Learners from a middle sized district in the Portland, Oregon metro area, enrolled from their third grade school year through their fifth grade school year (n=26). Archived data were analyzed using a Pearson Correlation, which included the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills Oral Reading Fluency (DIBELS ORF) test scores and the Oregon English Language Proficiency Assessment (ELPA) scores for this cohort.

Results of the correlations indicated a significant relationship between third grade ELPA scores and both the fourth and fifth grade ELPA scores. Significant correlations were also found between the fourth grade DIBELS ORF and both the fifth grade ORF and the fifth grade ELPA scores. This study may be used as a pilot study for future research into the relationship between reading achievement and English language proficiency.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The achievement gap is a pervasive and troublesome issue in public education in the United States (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2013). The gap does not just exist between students of color and Caucasian students; rather the gap I am referring to is between native speakers of English and English language learning students. The National Center for Education Statistics (2013) indicate that nationally in the 2012-2013 school year there was a 38-point difference between English Language Learning (ELL) students and non-ELL students in standardized reading scores. According to the Oregon Department of Education (2013b), only 48% of elementary English Language Learners met or exceeded the state standardized reading test in the 2012-2013 school year, in stark contrast to the 71.9% rate for all elementary school students in the state. In addition to reading, English language acquisition rates have an impact on academic success. According to their study, Halle, Hair, Wandner, McNamara, and Chien (2011) found that ELL students, who do not achieve English proficiency by the spring of their first grade year, have substantially lower reading outcomes through eighth grade than do their English-speaking peers. This study seeks to help understand the potential link between language acquisition and reading achievement for English language learning students.

Cummins (1981a) found that it took students from a non-English speaking background at least five to seven years before they attained grade norms in English proficiency. In a public school setting, students do not reach that five to seven year mark until fourth to sixth grade. In this light, it is understandable that many ELL students do not achieve English proficiency by the end of first grade. However, they do continue to grow in their language acquisition and reading achievement throughout their school career. Schools provide English Language Development programs, in addition to core reading instruction, to meet the specific language acquisition needs

of ELL students. Testing of language acquisition takes place through statewide language assessments to determine student growth in this area.

In the area of reading, many studies have examined the relationship between oral reading fluency and the development of reading skills and found a correlation between increased fluency and reading achievement (Baker, et al., 2008, Wood, 2006). Therefore, educators must assist ELL students to increase their reading fluency in tandem with acquisition of language skills in order to make rigorous gains and thus close the achievement gap.

Statement of the Problem

This study explores the general issue of predicting reading and English language proficiency at 5th grade. The researcher analyzed existing data with a small data set in order to provide initial investigation on how DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency and ELPA composite assessment data from earlier grades are associated with proficiency levels at 5th grade. An objective of this study was to gain insight on ways in which existing assessment data may be used to better serve students and help to close the achievement gap for English Language Learners.

Research Questions

Two important questions formed the basis of consideration within this research. The first was: How are reading proficiency and English language proficiency assessment scores in third and fourth grades associated with fifth grade reading proficiency among English Language Learners? The second question was: How are reading proficiency and English language proficiency assessment scores in third and fourth grades associated with fifth grade English language proficiency among English Language Learners?

Definition of Key Terms

As is the case in other areas of education, many acronyms are used to describe language learning students, programs, and assessments. This study used these acronyms, as well as acronyms for assessments given to all Oregon students, to identify the population under study as well as the programs and assessments used with this population.

- **English Language Learner (ELL or EL):** A student who is a national origin minority student with limited-English-proficiency (Oregon Department of Education, 2014).
- **Limited English proficient (LEP):** A federal term used in the No Child Left Behind literature (United States Department of Education, 2005).
- **L1:** Term used to denote the student's native language (Oregon Department of Education, 2014).
- **L2:** Term used to denote the English language when referring to an ELL student (Oregon Department of Education, 2014).
- **Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS):** A set of procedures and measures to assess the acquisition of early literacy skills from kindergarten through sixth grade (Center on Teaching and Learning, 2012).
- **Oral Reading Fluency (ORF):** A subset of the DIBELS assessment (Center on Teaching and Learning, 2012) administered three times a year to students in this study in grades third through fifth grade.
- **English Language Proficiency Assessment (ELPA):** For identified ELL students, the summative assessment to measure language proficiency administered yearly (Oregon Department of Education, n.d.). The ELPA results categorize the students' language acquisition into levels identified as *Beginning*, *Early Intermediate*, *Intermediate*, *Early*

Advanced, and *Advanced*. These levels define the progressive levels of competence in the use of English (Educational Policy Improvement Center, 2013).

Limitations

This research, as is the case with all research endeavors, has limitations. Due to the use of pre-existing data in this study, there exists a lack of control over the variables within the school setting such as teacher quality, implementation of curriculum, and school culture. Additionally, as this was archived data, the researcher did not have input into the determination by the district as to what data would be maintained and available for use. The original intent of the researcher was to include data of the cohort under study from kindergarten through their eighth grade year. However, this was not possible due to limiting factors such as the absence of important data points, which resulted in a smaller than anticipated data set included in this study.

Additional limitations in the area of assessment include test environment, test administration, technical computer malfunctions during assessment, and fidelity to assessment protocol. Furthermore, it is important to note that family dynamics, socio-economic status, parental education, and student motivation may have also had an impact on academic success of students.

Delimitations

This study included three years of language and oral reading fluency assessment data from students in one cohort of all district students eligible for English Language Development in third grade. The cohort included students who attended one mid-sized district in the Portland, Oregon metro area and began third grade during the 2008-2009 school year. For this reason, a timeframe binds this study to include the years this cohort attended school between third and fifth grade from 2008 through the school year of 2010-2011. The population of elementary English Language Learning students in this district was approximately 1,400 students. The

research included individual ELL student achievement in oral reading fluency, as indicated by the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) from their third through fifth grade years ($n=26$). The district administered the DIBELS standardized assessment three times a school year to all third through fifth grade students in the district. The researcher also analyzed each student's language acquisition rate through the English Language Proficiency Assessment (ELPA) administered by the district each year to determine language proficiency of ELL students. Using these assessments allowed the researcher to analyze yearly progress towards grade level proficiency in oral reading fluency and language acquisition.

CHAPTER 2

Review of the Literature

Introduction

When contemplating the relationship between language acquisition rates and oral reading fluency achievement we must explore the framework around language acquisition used in this study as well as the pertinent literature around English Language Learners and their language acquisition and reading acquisition. The theoretical framework for language acquisition sets the stage to better understand the acquisition process and its ties to education. Further, important findings in the areas of second language acquisition for students, as well as discoveries in reading achievement for ELLs will uncover the practical application of the framework. Prior research that combines these two areas round out the understanding of this complex subject. In addition, as this study relies heavily on the data derived from standardized assessments, it is important to review the literature around both the DIBELS assessment and the ELPA assessment. Together, the topics of theoretical framework, language acquisition, reading achievement, and assessments put into perspective the need and purpose for this current study.

Existing Theoretical Frameworks

For over 40 years, researchers have been interested in how speakers of other languages acquire English. While many studied adult language learners, other researchers began to realize the need to understand how second language children acquired language. This was especially important to schools receiving second language students in their classrooms. Some of these researchers looked at the environments and methods needed to acquire a second language.

Cummins (1981b) espoused a view that for students there are two types of language acquisition. One of types was the basic interpersonal communicative skill he referred to as BICS, and the other was the language of academics, or the cognitive/academic language

directions. This type of language acquisition allows the ELL student to communicate with native speakers to complete daily social tasks. Educators must be cognizant not to interpret students' mastery of this type of acquisition as complete language acquisition that easily transfers to academic ability.

The cognitively demanding language is the CALP; the higher level and complex language needed for academic understanding of concepts. CALP, or context-embedded and cognitively demanding communication, would be activities such as demonstrations, audio/visual assisted lessons, or social studies project. The context-reduced and cognitively demanding end would include gathering needed information from reading a textbook, explaining abstract concepts, or gleaning information from a lecture with few illustrations of content. This level of language allows students to understand and accurately apply complex, content specific vocabulary in reading, math, and science. Educators must scaffold and support this type of language for English Language Learning students. Studies looking at the academic language and in the area of reading have found support for this thinking.

Cummins (1981) also maintained that this level of language acquisition took an average of five to seven years for students to fully acquire. If Cummins' (1981b) idea of CALPs is accurate, and students need this high level of academic language for reading success, one might predict that reading achievement would be quite limited for ELL students in the elementary grades. However, Cummins (1981b) also provided the Common Underlying Proficiency Model of bilingual proficiency or CUP model.

The CUP model suggested that both the student's first language as well as the second language helped develop CALP. This model suggested that students' L1 could be an additional avenue for academic language understanding. Cummins (1981b) proposed that in the elementary grades the continued development of a student's L1 could benefit L2 CALP in "the deeper

cognitive and academic skills that underlie the development of literacy in both the bilingual's languages" (p. 23). This might be an argument for either bilingual education or, at a minimum, native language literacy programs. The author also suggested that students not be exited from English Language Development classes until at least the fifth or sixth grades; a time at which they would have experienced the needed five to six years of growth in CALP (Cummins, 1981b). This added an additional layer of language support in conjunction with reading instruction for student achievement. Studies in the area of reading have found support for Cummins' assertions around the relationship between the skills gained in the first language aiding the growth in reading skills in the second language (Gottardo, 2002, Lugo-Neris, Jackson, & Goldstein, 2010, Shin & Milroy, 1999).

Krashen (1981) developed the "Fundamental Principle" of language acquisition, which stated that language is acquired when the information input is comprehensible to the learner, and the learner's anxiety is low, but confidence and motivation are high, thus allowing the learner to process the information successfully. Similar to Cummins (1981b), the implication of this principle is that the success of a student's second language acquisition is largely in the hands of educators and the environment in which teaching and learning occur.

Both Cummins and Krashen are respected researchers and their work is seminal in the area of language acquisition and bilingual education. Although their works were the primary framework from which this present study was based, more recently other researchers have added important information to consider in the area of language acquisition.

In 2014, Konishi, Kanero, Freeman, Golinkoff, and Hirsh-Pasek reviewed over 130 sources and developed six principles they believed promoted second language development. These factors included a need to provide high levels of contextualized and meaningful L2 input that is interesting and engaging to students, in a setting that promotes interactive and responsive

participation by students. The authors also promoted the need for students to hear diverse examples of words and language structure, and for educators to understand that grammar and vocabulary development are reciprocal processes. Again, we see the connection between the school environment and second language development.

Looking at these theoretical frameworks, there is a realization that it was important to investigate the findings between second language acquisition and reading achievement in school settings, as these settings seem to have a great impact on the success of a student's acquisition of a second language.

Second Language Acquisition

As previously stated, studies show that proficiency in a first language may have an impact on second language acquisition. Educators would thus have the added ability to assess first language reading achievement to help support students in the area of English language reading. Findings in a study of vocabulary acquisition in Spanish-speaking five to six year olds in a summer migrant education program, indicated that ELL students with stronger L1s made greater gains in vocabulary acquisition than those students who had low-level skills in both languages (Lugo-Neris, Jackson, & Goldstein, 2010). Additionally, in a small participant study of Korean first grade students, Shin and Milroy (1999) found that second language acquisition was affected by the level of knowledge a student had in their native language, and influenced their second language acquisition of grammar. These studies lend support to Cummins (1981) assertion that second language students should continue to develop their first language, which will support their acquisition of their second language.

Furthermore, a study of 96 fifth grade Spanish-speaking ELL students reported that home literacy had an impact on vocabulary development. Although the study indicated a relationship between the children's linguistic proficiency and the language spoken at home, the research

suggested that parents who spoke Spanish rather than English did not determine the potential for students becoming and staying proficient in English (Duursma et al., 2007). This mirrored earlier findings by Gutierrez-Clellen and Kreiter (2003) determining that children who had no exposure to English at home were able to reach high levels of English proficiency from school instruction only.

Equally important to understand are the methods used in the acquisition of the second language. In a study of 80 native Polish children that investigated the connection between the influences of L2 prosody on language acquisition, Campfield and Murphy (2014) found that rhythm and song had an impact on second language acquisition. This study analyzed methods for student understanding of the structure of English sentences. Students in the group exposed to input with rhythm at the whole text level were better able to imitate the cue sentences, and improved in both accuracy and fluency of the imitations. The researchers concluded, “children should be exposed to and learn good examples of the living language which later become the scaffolding for building fluency and freedom of expression in L2” (Campfield & Murphy, 2014).

As students begin to use their new language and interact with native English speakers, they may have an opportunity to learn new language skills. In an early and small study of second language students in Australia, Oliver (1995) found that young L2 learners responded to implicit negative feedback from native language speaking peers. L2 students then used this feedback to adjust their subsequent second language production. Building upon that research was an additional study regarding the development of English question formation and the use of interactional feedback. The research indicated that students who took part in conversations and received interactional feedback from a native speaking adult acquired the skill of questioning at a higher level than the control group. Additionally, the positive effect of the feedback on the students’ language was immediate and sustained over a length time (Mackey & Oliver, 2002).

As with many areas of learning, variability may occur in second language acquisition. A study of 20 elementary ESL students explored whether or not variability existed in English language acquisition and in what aspects of language that variability might be found. The analyzed error counts in the grammar assessments indicated that variability was real and observable, although not predictable across task types (Flanigan, 1991). Moreover, a large study determining the shape of language growth trajectories of 1,723 native Spanish-speaking ELL elementary students found variability of performance in students that could not be attributed to the studied variables of gender or summer vacation (Rojas & Inglesias, 2013).

Alternatively, variability was not found to exist in the acquisition process in other studies of students with different native languages. In a study of Chinese and Spanish speaking children, Dulay and Burt (1974) sought to build on earlier studies that indicated a similar process for second language acquisition regardless of first language. In this particular study, the researchers analyzed the acquisition of certain English grammatical structures among children with Chinese or Spanish first languages to determine possible differences in rate or error types in the process of becoming bilingual. The results indicated that in the area of syntactic structure, the order in which children acquired 11 function words was relatively the same.

When considering the idea of variability, one must also take into account the impact of the environment on second language acquisition. Research conducted in the area of vocabulary growth rates in Spanish-speaking and Cantonese-speaking ELLs from kindergarten through second grade, determined that early exposure to English, along with attendance in mainstream classrooms, predicted monolingual-like norms for ELLs in the area of vocabulary (Uchikoshi, 2014). Likewise, a study investigating the receptive vocabulary and language comprehension of 83 children living in a Puerto Rican neighborhood in Central Pennsylvania found that two years attendance in the Head Start program resulted in growth in students' English language skills

(Hammer, Lawrence, & Miccio, 2008). This study confirmed the researcher's hypothesis that the timing of exposure to English in relation to school entry was an important factor in second language acquisition.

Counter to the previous studies' findings on age and exposure were the findings by Collier (1987). A portion of this study researched the influence of age on arrival on rate of acquisition of cognitive academic second language proficiency in 1,548 English language-learning students. The findings indicated that students arriving between the ages of eight and eleven were the fastest achievers in all subject areas. In addition, the researcher argued that students who arrived at ages five to seven would acquire academic English more rapidly if provided with cognitive academic development in their native languages for an additional two years.

A subsequent five-year longitudinal study of 1,509 preschool to first grade students in a U.S. International School setting also investigated the rate of second language acquisition. This study explored areas of environment such as K/1 language expectation alignment, teacher technique versus teacher's native language, and age of exposure. The findings suggested that teacher technique, and not the teacher's native language, was the possible influencing factor in second language development. In addition, this study found that pre-school students who attended schools with an aligned English language development philosophy (i.e. all instruction and conversation entirely in English) in kindergarten and first grade achieved language acquisition faster than those with different language expectations, or those students who did not attend a pre-school program at all (Billak, 2013).

The difference between these studies brings to light the need to further distinguish between social language development and academic language development in the literature.

Reading Achievement for English Language Learners

Just as in research that found a relationship between a child's first language and second language acquisition, other studies have found a similar characteristic between the strength of knowledge in L1 and its impact on L2 reading described as cross-language transfer (Durgunoglu, Nagy, & Hancin-Bhatt, 1993). In a study that investigated various factors that influenced English word identification in Spanish-speaking beginning readers, it was determined that there was a relationship between phonological awareness in Spanish and word recognition ability in English. The researchers also proposed that this is not necessarily language specific (Durgunoglu, Nagy, & Hancin-Bhatt, 1993). Substantiating this view was another study of English-speaking students in a French immersion reading class. This research noted that student knowledge in kindergarten of English phonemes and letter naming in both English and French were practical predictors of reading ability in both English and French two years later (Haigh, Savage, Erdos, & Genesee, 2011). However, one study noted this cross language relationship was only able to exist if the student had literacy in the reading skill in their first language (August et al., 2006).

With this cross language transfer understanding, an important consideration is the predictive value of first language literacy skills and reading achievement. A study of 251 Spanish-speaking ELL students in kindergarten, first, and second grades explored the predictive value of four different reading categories. The results indicated that Spanish skills in kindergarten in the reading components of print knowledge, phonological awareness, and rapid object naming, correlated with English reading skills in second grade, with print knowledge identified as the strongest indicator (Manis, Lindsey, & Bailey, 2004). Similar findings were discovered in a longitudinal investigation researching the relationship between early literacy skills in both Spanish and English and their influence on English oral reading fluency. This

study of 150 Spanish-speaking ELL students found that in early stages of literacy development in kindergarten some Spanish measures of reading, such as phonemic awareness and decoding, were predictive of English oral reading fluency in first grade. In addition, English measures in letter knowledge, phonological awareness, and receptive vocabulary all predicted English oral reading fluency, with phonological awareness identified as a predictor in both first and second grades (Solari et al., 2014).

Another consideration under review is the impact that the acquisition of the second language has on reading achievement. In their study of 81 bilingual children attending the Head Start program, Davison, Hammer, and Lawrence (2011) sought to determine the relationship between receptive language development and reading outcomes in first grade. The findings indicated that the growth in students' English receptive language abilities in Head Start positively predicted their English reading outcomes at the end of first grade. These findings add to earlier as well as subsequent research regarding English literacy skills predicting ELL reading outcomes. Case in point was a study investigating the predictive value of ELL students' first grade oral reading fluency from kindergarten literacy skills. The results of this study determined that English letter naming fluency in kindergarten was the best predictor of oral reading fluency with vocabulary skills and initial sound fluency being the second and third best predictors (Yesil-Dagli, 2011). In a comparison study focusing on word recognition skills among 70 native English speaking first graders and 200 ELL first graders of differing L1s, the results indicated that regardless of individual oral language proficiency, word recognition skills were closely related to the level of phonological awareness skills (Geva, Yaghoub-Zadeh, & Schuster, 2000). However, additional research into reading comprehension and reading fluency in ELL students noted that while phonological awareness influences word-level reading, once the ELL has developed that skill, phonological awareness no longer influenced the higher level components

of reading fluency and reading comprehension. Furthermore, it was determined that individual differences in language proficiency were directly related to subsequent reading comprehension and fluency (Zadeh, Farnia, & Geva, 2012).

Understanding the results of the aforementioned studies leads to the subject of comparing native speaking peers with ELL students in terms of reading achievement. In a continued longitudinal study of 978, second grade students, the researchers analyzed the reading development of two groups of students. One group consisted of native English speakers and the second group included students with different first languages. The findings indicated that phonological awareness instruction in kindergarten, in the context of a balanced literacy program, was as effective for ELL students as it was for L1 speakers in the early grades. Additionally, the researchers noted that although the ELL students struggled more in kindergarten, they caught up or surpassed their peers by second grade (Lesaux & Siegel, 2003). Continued research in this area included additional studies that had findings that supported the view that ELLs and native English speaking students acquire reading similarly (Chiappe & Siegel, 2006; Chiappe, Siegel, & Wade-Woolley, 2002; Geva & Massey-Garrison, 2012; Geva & Yaghoub-Zadeh, 2006). Conversely, one very small study of second language development in a sample of 12 Korean students two English speaking students, and 13 students with native languages other than Korean or English in a large urban city found different results when looking specifically at grammatical sequences. The authors suggested that L1 and L2 learners of English did not acquire English grammatical features in the same sequence and that the results indicated that there were language specific influences on the learning of a second language (Shin & Milroy, 1999).

Looking at the area of reading assessment, a study of 1,724 native English speaking and 1,724 Spanish-speaking kindergarteners investigated the viability of using literacy assessments

administered in English as predictors of first grade reading achievement in Spanish-speaking ELL students. The researchers concluded that the kindergarten measures of phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge, and orthographic knowledge measured in English predicted end of year first grade reading achievement in Spanish-speaking ELL students as effectively as they did for native English-speaking students (Ford, Invernizzi & Huang, 2014).

Language Acquisition and Reading Achievement

In order for educators to better understand how language acquisition and reading achievement are related, there is a need to consider literature focused on both elements. Although there seems to be a paucity of research in this area, a few studies are important to view.

Considering the use of assessments to measure reading achievement, it is important to note the study conducted to determine if kindergarten assessments to identify students at risk for reading deficiency were adequate measures for students from different language backgrounds. This study examined 540 English-speaking students, 59 bilingual students who spoke English and one other language at home, and 60 students identified as ELL who did not speak English at home. The results, in part, indicated that children's language background influenced their English proficiency even though the acquisition of basic literacy skills developed in a similar manner for all three groups. Students with higher levels of English proficiency performed at higher levels in literacy skills such as rhyme detection than those with lower levels of English proficiency (Chiappe, Siegel, & Gottardo, 2002).

An interesting longitudinal study encompassing the development of ELL students was conducted with 19,890 first time kindergartens with an included subset of 2,700 ELL students. Part of this study investigated student achievement and language levels. The results indicated that ELL students that entered kindergarten English proficient performed at the same level as English speaking peers in reading. Most importantly, results suggested that ELL students who

did not become English proficient by the end of their first grade year, “have substantially worse reading, math, and approaches to learning outcomes, both initially and through fifth and eighth grade compared to their native English-speaking peers, net of child, family, teacher, classroom, and school covariates” (Halle et al., 2012, p. 14). Since not all ELL students attend English speaking schools at the start of their school careers, it is also important to study the impact that a beginning level student faces when entering English speaking school for the first time. In a study of 1,548 LEP students at beginning language levels, Collier (1987) found that age of arrival in an English speaking school had an impact on language acquisition due in part to the strength of the student’s first language. The findings indicated that students arriving to English speaking schools between the ages of eight and eleven were the fastest achievers in reading over those students arriving at ages five to six due to their experience in school in their native language. The recommendation by the researcher was that five to six year olds should receive continued development of their first language in order to achieve a higher rate of acquisition of their second language.

Still other studies investigated the links between these differing language levels and certain literacy skills. One such study examined the relationship between language skills and the acquisition rate of sight words among ELL students. Included in this study were 43 second-grade students from three urban schools; these students were Hmong speaking students, a lesser-studied language group. Results showed a significant positive correlation between language levels and sight word achievement indicating a relationship between the two (Burns & Helman, 2009). One particular study, examining language proficiency and reading growth conducted a secondary analysis of the data from a nationwide longitudinal report, found that the language minority students that entered kindergarten proficient in oral English were more successful in developing reading skills. Alternatively, those that entered with limited English proficiency

struggled throughout their elementary school years (Kieffer, 2008). Furthermore, a non-experimental study of 840 students studied in part the relationship between reading achievement and individual English proficiency. After using hierarchical linear modeling, the results showed that English proficiency was the strongest predictor of reading achievement at the student level (Ardasheva & Tretter, 2013).

Most relevant to this particular study, were the results of research of 260 ELL second grade students to determine if group differences between language levels were evident on early literacy assessment tools. This study is of particular interest because the assessment tool used was the DIBELS assessment and the current study will utilize the same assessment tool. The results indicated a strong relationship between language levels and literacy skills as measured by DIBELS, as students in the lowest level of English proficiency grew at a different rate than those at higher acquisition levels within this measure (Gutierrez & Vanderwood, 2013).

A further area of study within language acquisition and reading achievement is the language of instruction. Although the current study will not be comparing bilingual classrooms, dual language classrooms, or native literacy with English only instruction, these studies are still important to note as they do add to the knowledge of ELL achievement in reading. One such investigation compared the development of reading skills between groups of ELL students in three different instructional programs. These programs included a transitional bilingual program, a dual-language program, and an English immersion program for students in kindergarten through third grade. Although this study noted many limitations, the authors discussed that the implications of the results indicated that the students in the two bilingual settings were similar in their levels of language acquisition and reading achievement in both English and Spanish, however, the students in the English immersion setting scored higher in English achievement (Nakamoto, Lindsey, & Manis, 2010).

Investigating the effects of primary language support on reading achievement through the use of a computer program, Rodriguez, Filler, and Higgins (2012) studied 28 first grade LEP Spanish-speaking students in an eight week reading intervention program. The students were placed in control and treatment groups to determine if the group that received instructions in Spanish achieved at higher rates than those who received instructions in English. The results indicated no differences between the two groups in the areas of fluency or word reading, but significant differences in the area of reading comprehension. The students who received instructions in Spanish scored higher than those who received instructions in English indicating that presenting comprehensible input in their native language provided students with the understanding necessary to gain the needed skills for reading comprehension.

This use of native language to support English reading skills was again explored in a study of 22 Spanish-speaking students aged four to six who attended a short four week summer migrant program. This research looked at English vocabulary acquisition rates between students receiving English only instruction and a group that received instruction with input supported in Spanish. Strong limitations were noted, but the results indicated that although the effects for vocabulary growth overall were small, the group receiving support in Spanish had comparable or greater growth in expressive knowledge of the target vocabulary words. The authors also noted the observation that students with limited skills in both English and Spanish showed less responsiveness to the intervention (Lugo-Negriz, Jackson, & Goldstein, 2010).

An additional area of research in language acquisition and reading focused on vocabulary instruction. Investigating whether vocabulary improvement relates to reading comprehension improvement in ELLs, a study of 254 bilingual and monolingual fifth grade students determined that a rigorous curriculum focused on teaching academic vocabulary in specific ways did improve the performance of ELL students as well as English-only students. This improved

vocabulary and word analysis skills in turn improved the reading comprehension of the ELL students (Carlo et al., 2004). Building on this literature was a study of 65 ELL kindergarten students of various native languages and 25 native English speaking kindergarten students in a Calgary area school. This study sought to gain greater insight into the variables in early literacy development. The results found that although ELL students caught up or surpassed their English-speaking peers in the early literacy skills of phonemic awareness and phonics, as vocabulary development fell behind the literacy gap widened until in the upper elementary grades ELL students were more than a year behind their English-speaking peers. The researchers emphasized a need for ELL students to acquire thousands of new words taught in context and directly instructed in order to decrease the gap (Roessingh & Elgie, 2009).

Additionally, a study conducted to determine if the same variables that predicted English reading comprehension for Spanish-speaking ELL students and monolingual English-speaking students were the same for Cantonese-speaking ELL students found similar results in the area of vocabulary. Within the sample of the 101 Cantonese-speaking second graders it was found that this group of students performed at grade level or above in English decoding and reading comprehension, but below grade level in the area of oral proficiency measures of vocabulary, highlighting the importance of vocabulary instruction for ELL students (Uchikoshi, 2012).

Assessments

As this study relies mainly on results of standardized assessments, it is important to review the literature around both the DIBELS and the ELPA.

The Dynamic Indicator of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) assessment was created by the University of Oregon's Center on Teaching and Learning and has been used by educators since 2001 (University of Oregon Center on Teaching and Learning, n.d.). Studies on the validity and reliability of the DIBELS assessment by researchers such as Goffreda and Diperna

(2010) reported strong evidence of both reliability and validity for the Oral Reading Fluency (ORF) section of DIBELS. Furthermore, a myriad of studies have supported the use of the ORF subtest of DIBELS to be a strong indicator of reading success particularly in the area of reading comprehension (Bellinger & Diperna, 2011; Hosp, Hosp, & Dole, 2011; Munger, LoFaro, Kawryga, Sovocool, & Medina, 2014). Still other studies reported that the DIBELS ORF scores predicted achievement on additional standardized reading assessments (Ditkowsky & Koonce, 2010; Goffreda, Diperna, & Pedersen, 2009; Roehrig, Petscher, Nettles, Hudson, & Torgesen, 2008). One study in particular sought to determine if the DIBELS assessment would predict ELL student success on additional statewide assessments (Scheffel, Lefly, & Houser, 2012). The results of this study indicated that DIBELS correctly classified children “at risk” for reading difficulties better for ELL students than for non-ELL students in the third grade. This important finding directly relates to the current study.

Although sufficient literature exists for the DIBELS assessment, the Oregon ELPA has fewer reviews outside of the state technical reports, as it is a state specific assessment. The objective of the Oregon English Language Proficiency Assessment was to determine the level of proficiency of Oregon ELL students across time in the areas of reading, writing, speaking, listening, and comprehension (Oregon Department of Education, 2013a). Test items were created with field test questions embedded by Oregon’s test vendor, American Institutes for Research (AIR), and reviewed by specialists at both AIR and the Oregon Department of Education. Final approval by the ELPA Content and Assessment Panel, a group of Oregon ELD educators and specialists, took place before the ELPA was administered to all Oregon ELL students (Oregon Department of Education, 2013a). Reliability and validity tests conducted by the American Institutes for Research and reported in the Oregon Department of Education’s

2012-2013 ELPA Annual Report (Oregon Department of Education, 2013a) show this assessment to be both valid and reliable.

Conclusions

When contemplating the wide variety of topics within the realm of second language students and reading achievement, it is clear to see that the topic is a complicated one. There seems to be such a myriad of variables that could be considered when addressing the subject that researchers must narrow their focus to such an extent that literature specific to language acquisition and reading achievement is sparse. The most important point covered appears to be the variability in achievement within the group of English language learners due to language level. This was a critical point of this current research.

CHAPTER 3

Methods

Introduction

Using existing data consisting of language acquisition levels and oral reading fluency achievement measures, this study sought to explore the general issue of predicting reading and English language proficiency at fifth grade.

Setting

The research took place in one mid-sized district in the Portland, Oregon metro area. The district encompassed 34 square miles and served approximately 74,100 students. The average length of teacher experience in the district was 13.32 years. There were ten elementary schools with an estimated enrollment of 5,585 students. Within this district, 24% of students in grades K-5 were designated English Language Learners (ELL). Table 1 presents the demographic information regarding ELL population for each of the schools within the study.

Participants

The units of analyses were the identified ELL students in the studied district. Although the original intent was to study these students from their kindergarten through eighth grade years, the amount of missing data resulted in only including those students enrolled in their third grade (2008-2009) through fifth grade (2010-2011) school years ($n=26$). Having used this specific cohort of students identified as ELL in their third grade year of 2008 along with their language acquisition rates and reading achievement from their third through fifth grade years allowed the researcher the ability to analyze the longitudinal data of ELL students.

Table 1.

District Demographics for Elementary Schools' English Language Learning Students

Elementary School	English Language Learner Population
School A	15%
School B	50%
School C	10%
School D	28%
School E	18%
School F	23%
School G	38%
School H	26%
School I	27%
School J	09%

Note. Information obtained from Oregon Report Card 2012-2013 and district demographics.

Research Design

This was a quantitative research design using archived district data to include ELPA scores from third to fifth grade and DIBELS ORF data from third to fifth grade. The researcher was interested in exploring the relationship between language acquisition and reading achievement. The research questions were: “How are reading proficiency and English language proficiency assessment scores in third and fourth grade associated with fifth grade reading proficiency?” and “How are reading proficiency and English language proficiency assessment scores in the third and fourth grade associated with fifth grade English language proficiency?” To answer these questions correlation analysis was employed with existing data composed of third, fourth, and fifth grade DIBELS ORF and ELPA assessment scores.

Correlational research is defined as research used to determine whether, and to what extent, a relationship exists between two continuous variables that are quantifiable (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2012). For this study specifically, the researcher used the students' level of language acquisition, as measured by the ELPA assessment and the students' rate of reading achievement, as measured by DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency in grades third through fifth, as the variables under examination. Due to the small sample size, this study could be considered a pilot study on how these data can be used on a wider scale to help design core programs and interventions to assist our English Language Learners in both language and reading achievement.

Nature of the Data Set and Analytical Procedure

The data set consisted of both DIBELS ORF results and ELPA results for each student. The end of year DIBELS ORF scores were included for the years the students were in grades four and five, with the third grade year omitted, as insufficient data was present for some students. Yearly ELPA composite scores were included from each student's third, fourth, and fifth grade school years.

The Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) was developed to help educators identify students at risk of reading difficulties through assessments of Initial Sound Fluency (ISF), Phoneme Segmentation Fluency (PSF), Nonsense Word Fluency (NWF), Letter Naming Fluency (LNF), and Oral Reading Fluency (ORF), the foundational components to reading success (Good et al., 2004). The literature suggested that the ORF score was the most predictive of reading success (Bellinger & Diperna, 2011; Hosp, Hosp, & Dole, 2011; Munger, LoFaro, Kawryga, Sovocool, & Medina, 2014) and DIBELS ORF does not seem biased against ELL students (Roehrig, Petscher, Nettles, Hudson, & Torgesen, 2007). In addition, the literature indicates that the use of ORF seemed to be predictive of achievement on state reading assessments (Duesbery, Braun-Monegan, Werblow, & Braun, 2012) as well as a predictor for

reading success for ELs (Solari et al., 2014). Due to these findings this study focused only on the ORF student scores.

The ORF subtest score was comprised of one-minute reads (see Appendix A) of three previously unread and different stories read by the student. The number of errors were counted, and then that number was subtracted from the total words read, resulting in a score for each story. The median score of the three stories was the final ORF score.

The ELPA test was created with the purpose of assessing academic English ability in reading, writing, speaking, and listening for ELLs attending kindergarten through twelfth grades in Oregon public schools to satisfy the provisions of Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (Oregon Department of Education, 2013b). The ELPA solely assessed achievement in the English Language Proficiency standards and the validity was based on those standards, not the English Language Arts standards (Oregon Department of Education, 2013b).

The ELPA composite scores were determined from the results of the subtests in the areas of reading, writing, speaking, and listening (See Appendix B). These scores were then compiled into a composite score using the ELPA Test Specifications and Test Blueprints.

The resulting data were analyzed by the study researcher using a Pearson Correlation with a .50 significance level.

Research Ethics

Using existing data and with approval from the district obtained previously (see Appendix C), George Fox University Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was not required for this study. The analyzing of data occurred without student names identified, resulting in the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher is a ten-year veteran of elementary education in the state of Oregon with an endorsement in English for Speakers of Other Languages. After receiving extensive training in Sheltered Instruction and Guided Language Acquisition Design, the researcher became a building mentor and trainer for implementing these best practices for ELL students. The researcher currently teaches in the district under study and is the primary investigator of this study.

Potential Contributions of the Research

Currently, there is a paucity of research specifically studying language acquisition levels together with reading achievement results consequently this study would add to the body of research regarding English language learners. In addition, by exploring the potential correlation between the two variables, school districts have one more piece of information to add to the complex subject of ELL student education and achievement. It is already a widely held belief that students learn to read in kindergarten through third grade and then read to learn from fourth grade through graduation. Gaining a clearer insight into the role that language acquisition plays in this equation is incredibly important for helping to close the perpetual achievement gap found within the subgroup of English Language Learners. This insight can better serve ELL students, as their school districts would better understand the link between language acquisition and reading, allowing the schools to provide refined educational practices to increase student achievement in both language acquisition and reading within this population of students.

At the initiation of this study, I had hoped to examine the correlation between language acquisition levels and oral reading fluency from grades one through eighth grade in this cohort of students. My hope was to then continue forth and use regression to explore whether language acquisition levels were predictors for oral reading fluency achievement. Unfortunately, the data

provided was not complete enough to reach that level of analysis on that scale. Ultimately, this is a pilot study, which can be used as a starting point for further research in the area of English language acquisition as it relates to reading achievement for ELL students.

Chapter 4

Findings

Introduction

This chapter examines the relationship between levels of language acquisition and oral reading fluency achievement in English Language Learning students. Existing assessment data were analyzed using a Pearson Correlation at the .05 significance level to explore the role that levels of English language acquisition played in reading achievement among English Language Learners from third grade through fifth grade.

Findings

Table 2 represents the Pearson Correlation findings among the variables. Significant correlations were found between some of the variables tested. Statistically significant correlations were found between the variable of third grade ELPA and the variables: fourth grade ELPA, $r = .804, p < .01$ and fifth grade ELPA, $r = .717, p < .01$. Likewise, the variable of fourth grade ELPA was found to be significantly correlated with fifth grade ELPA, $r = .711, p < .01$. Additionally, fourth grade ORF showed a significant correlation with both fifth grade ORF, $r = .893, p < .01$ as well as fifth grade ELPA, $r = .517, p < .01$. Finally, fifth grade ORF significantly correlated with fifth grade ELPA, $r = .548, p < .01$.

Table 2.
Pearson Correlations

Variable	3rd ELPA	4 th ORF	4 th ELPA	5 th ORF	5 th ELPA
3 rd ELPA	---				
4 th ORF	.311	---			
4 th ELPA	.804*	.337	---		
5 th ORF	.245	.893*	.306	---	
5 th ELPA	.717*	.517*	.711*	.548*	---

* $p < .01$

Examining the first research question of how are reading proficiency and English language proficiency assessment scores in third and fourth grades associated with fifth grade reading proficiency for ELL students, the findings suggest that only the fourth grade oral reading fluency scores have a significant correlation to the fifth grade oral reading fluency scores.

The results suggest that there is a positive relationship between fourth grade oral reading fluency scores and fifth grade oral reading fluency scores such that those who tend to have higher fourth grade ORF scores tend to have higher fifth grade ORF scores.

The second question was: How are reading proficiency and English language proficiency assessment scores in third and fourth grades associated with fifth grade English language proficiency among English Language Learners? Here is where the majority of the correlations were found. It appears that reading measures from fourth and fifth grades were correlated with the fifth grade language scores.

The findings appear to reveal a positive relationship between fourth grade ORF scores and fifth grade ELPA scores such that those who tend to have higher fourth grade ORF scores tend to have a higher fifth grade ELPA score. Additionally, there exists a positive relationship between fourth grade ORF scores and fifth grade ORF scores such that those with higher fourth grade ORF scores tend to have higher fifth grade ORF scores.

One relationship that may be significant enough to be considered for further research was the positive relationship between the third grade ELPA and the fourth and fifth grade ELPAs. There exists a positive relationship between the third grade ELPA and the fourth and fifth grade ELPAs such that those who scored higher on the third grade ELPA tended to score higher on the fourth and fifth grade ELPAs.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion and Conclusions

Discussion

The purpose of this study was the general issue of predicting reading and English language proficiency at 5th grade among English Language Learners. The first research question was how reading proficiency and English language proficiency assessment scores in third and fourth grades are associated with fifth grade reading proficiency. The results of the study required this question to be broken down into the two separate parts of understanding how third and fourth grade reading related to fifth grade reading and how English language scores in third and fourth grade related to fifth grade reading.

The correlation provided evidence suggesting that reading proficiency in the fourth grade was related to fifth grade reading proficiency among English Language Learners. This seemed to support research that DIBELS is effective in identifying ELLs at risk for reading underachievement (Scheffel, Lefly, & Houser, 2012). There may also be a relationship between oral reading fluency in the third grade and fifth grade reading proficiency; however, this study was unable to explore that link as there was insufficient data in the area of third grade oral reading fluency to test that relationship. This left only the fourth grade reading scores as significantly correlated.

When the correlation between English language scores in the third and fourth grades along with reading scores in fifth grade were analyzed no relationships were indicated. This was an unexpected result as there was literature to support a link between language levels and reading achievement in the younger grades (Gutierrez & Vanderwood, 2013). A small sample size and lack of sufficient data to fully analyze may be considered the explanation for the findings within this study.

The second research question was: How are reading proficiency and English language proficiency scores in the third and fourth grades associated with fifth grade English language proficiency? Again, this question must be broken down into the more specific components of the relationship between third and fourth grade reading outcomes and fifth-grade language outcomes as one result and then third and fourth grade language outcomes and fifth-grade language outcomes as the second result.

The relationship between younger grade reading outcomes and fifth-grade language outcomes resulted in only one significantly correlated relationship. There was found a statistically significant relationship between fourth grade ORF and fifth grade ORF. This finding supports findings by Chiappe, Siegel, and Wade-Woolley (2002) that indicated that ELLs acquire literacy skills the same as native speakers of English, so once on that upward trajectory they should continue from year to year.

The surprising finding was within the relationship between third and fourth grade ELPA outcomes and fifth grade ELPA outcomes. Here significantly correlated relationships were indicated between third grade ELPA and fourth grade ELPA, third grade ELPA and fifth grade ELPA, as well as a relationship between fourth grade ELPA and fifth grade ELPA. These findings may be most important as they may suggest a strong need for ELL students to acquire high levels of English proficiency by the third grade in order to impact the fourth grade reading relationships indicated by this study.

Recommendations

The relationship between English language proficiency and reading achievement is a very complicated one. Narrowing the focus to only DIBELS ORF and ELPA scores can help educators to better pinpoint specific needs of ELLs in the area of reading and language acquisition. In addition, it is imperative that districts keep meticulous and detailed records of

sufficient student data to assure that research can be conducted appropriately in order to produce accurate results.

Just by having the indication of a relationship between language acquisition in the younger grades and fifth grade is important information. This understanding can prompt educators to assure that their English Language Development programs, core curriculum, and teaching practices are the most effective for their English Language Learners. Additionally, districts should monitor ELL students to assure that they are making sufficient growth from kindergarten to third grade in both language and reading, in order for students to be set up for high levels of growth in the fourth and fifth grades.

Implications for Future Study

A limitation of this study was the small sample size due to the amount of missing data in the larger data set. However, this study could serve as a pilot study for further research into the area of reading and language acquisition as it provides insight on how hypotheses could be created for a larger scale study. Researchers who are interested in a longitudinal study and collect the appropriate data over the course of years would have the ability to have a large enough data set to analyze the strength of the relationships indicated by the current study.

Likewise, employing a larger sample size by using one cohort in several similar districts could help researchers to take this study to the next step of regression in order to determine whether or not language acquisition in the third, fourth, and fifth grades could possibly be predictors of reading achievement in fifth grade.

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Appendices

Appendix A

DIBELS Fourth Grade Benchmark ORF Assessment

Benchmark 3.3
DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency

She Reached for the Stars

Two hundred years ago when Maria Mitchell was born, most girls did not get a formal education. Instead, they learned how to cook, sew, and run a house. Boys, on the other hand, went to school to learn about math and science. Because there were few educated women, people took notice of them. Maria Mitchell was one such woman.

Maria Mitchell was born on Nantucket Island. She was lucky to have been born in this whaling village. Women were expected to be independent while the men were at sea. Maria was lucky in another way. Her father believed girls should be educated. He encouraged Maria's interest in astronomy.

Maria took a teaching job when she was sixteen years old. Then, two years later, she became a librarian. This job was perfect for her. She earned a good salary and had time to read the books that interested her.

One night, Maria was looking through her father's telescope. She enjoyed her time on the roof, studying the planets and stars. On this night, she noticed a new star. She watched it for several nights. Soon she decided it was not a star at all. It was a comet! The king of Denmark, who offered gold medals to those who discovered comets, heard of Maria's work. She was awarded a medal, and the comet was named "Miss Mitchell's Comet."

By this time, Maria had become well known. She traveled widely and worked with scientists around the world. She

Appendix B

ELPA Test Question Examples

ELPA Grades 4 - 5

LISTENING

Score
Reporting
Category **3**

The listening domain evaluates a student's competency in understanding the English language in its spoken form. Generally, two types of comprehension processes are assumed: local and global. Local processes refer to detecting information within a clause, while global processes refer to comprehending information across clauses. Proficient listening requires the use of both these processes in complementary fashion.

The listening domain consists of a series of passages such as dialogues, monologues, or statements. The length of each dialogue, monologue, statement or word is set up to 60 seconds. The questions assess a test-taker's ability to understand the meaning of the passage as well as extract detailed information. The passages and questions are performed by native speakers of English and are delivered at an appropriate speed.

ITEM



- ⓐ go to class
 ⓑ play on computers
 ⓒ play with friends
 ⓓ check out books

ATTRIBUTES

Oregon Code: E055033
 Domain: Listening
 Grade: K-1
 Academic Context: Language Arts
 Assessment Point: Grammatical Competence-Morphology
 Language Function: Asking Clarifying Questions
 Item Format: Multiple Choice
 Sound Cue: Listen Choose Answer
 Tutorial: Listening Multiple Choice
 Answer Key: D
 Item Point: 1
 Role: Practice

Audio Script: At the library, we check out books. What do they do at the library?

READING

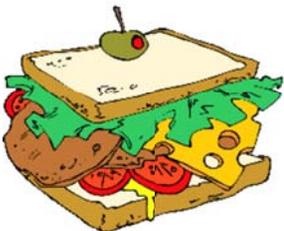
Score Reporting Category **1**

The reading domain is designed to evaluate a student’s ability to scan written passages for understanding and to extract detailed information. The reading test is based on the premise that reading proficiency is the ability to extract information from written texts for a particular purpose. The reading test acknowledges the interaction between the proficiency of the reader and the difficulty of a text. At lower levels of proficiency, readers will be limited to understanding learned words or phrases. Therefore, the text used at the lower levels represents immediate personal needs, the ability to read signs, timetables, and short notes. As reading proficiency increases, a wider variety of texts are used.

All the reading passages are written to mimic authentic reading tasks, such as reading signs or journal entries. The reading materials range from individual words, phrases, and sentences to longer texts.

ITEM

ATTRIBUTES



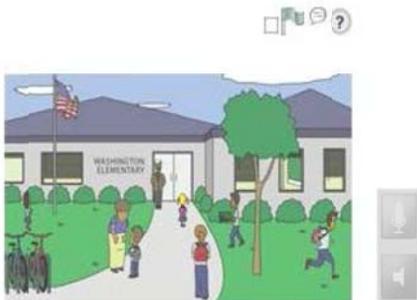
This is a _____.

- (A) cake
- (B) snow
- (C) snake
- (D) sandwich

Oregon Code:	1R-MC-NA6307
Domain:	Reading
Grade:	K-1
Academic Context:	Supplementary
Assessment Point:	Grammatical Competence/Vocabulary
Language Function:	Describing people, places and things
Item Format:	Multiple Choice
Sound Cue:	Choose Answer
Tutorial:	Reading Multiple Choice
Answer Key:	D
Item Point	1
Role:	Practice

SPEAKINGScore
Reporting
Category **4**

The speaking domain evaluates the student's competency to understand the English language and to produce the language orally. The speaking tasks are non-interactive (i.e. not an interview or conversation). Test-takers record their responses directly into the computer using a headset. Responses are graded by professional raters according to rubrics based on the Oregon English Language Proficiency Standards.

ITEM

Using a complete sentence, tell what's happening in this picture.

ATTRIBUTES

Oregon Code: 1S-S2-NA6287
 Domain: Speaking
 Grade: K-1
 Academic Context: Art, music, drama, sports, recess, library, cafeteria
 Assessment Point: Illocutionary Competence-Ideational
 Language Function: Describing people, places, and things
 Item Format: Speaking Short Response
 Sound Cue: Listen Respond
 Tutorial: Speaking Short Response – Describe
 Answer Key: SSR
 Item Point: 4
 Response type: Microphone
 Role: Practice

WRITING

Score Reporting Category **2**

The writing domain tests the student’s writing ability in the English language in terms of organization, mechanics and grammatical competence. Students respond to the tasks by clicking on the correct answer, selecting letter(s) from the onscreen keyboard or keyboarding directly, depending on the tasks. Professional human raters will evaluate any extended written responses according to a rubric based on the Oregon English Language Proficiency Standards. Multiple Choice and Word Builder items will be electronically scored.

ITEM



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ATTRIBUTES

Oregon Code:	P-W-02
Domain:	Writing
Grade:	K-1
Academic Context:	Language Arts
Assessment Point:	Grammatical Competence/Morphology
Language Function:	Describing people, places, and things
Item Format:	Word Builder
Sound Cue:	Fill in the box
Tutorial:	Writing Word Builder
Answer Key:	WB
Item Point:	1
Response type:	Keyboard custom
Cloze answers:	d
Role:	Practice

Appendix C

Letter of Consent

Comparing the Rate of Language Acquisition with Reading Achievement Among English Language Learners

Dear Director of Curriculum and Instruction,

My name is Kathleen Barrett, first grade teacher at Templeton Elementary and doctoral student at George Fox University in Newberg, Oregon. As part of the requirement for completing the EdD degree, I am conducting research regarding English Language Learning (ELL) students' language acquisition rate and reading achievement. I am inviting your district to participate in this study by providing pre-existing data (DIBELS and ELPA scores) for the ELL cohort who began third grade in September of 2008 through their fifth grade year ending in June of 2011.

The findings from this research may reveal greater insight into reading achievement among English language learning students and may provide additional information to help inform the education process for English language learning students.

The risks associated with this research are minimal. The data being used does not identify any student by name so parent consent would not be necessary. Nevertheless, please be aware that your participation is voluntary and you may decline to continue at any time.

The results of this study will only be used for research purposes, may be used for presentations at a professional conference, and/or academic publications. Information will be analyzed and presented in an anonymous fashion and no school will be identified by name. I affirm to keep any personal information and identities confidential.

All research materials will be locked in separate, secure locations for a period of no less than three years. I will be the only individual who will have access to these materials. After three years, I will personally destroy all relevant materials.

I thank you for your time considering this project. If you choose to participate, please know that you are contributing to furthering the research in the area of English language learners. If you have any questions regarding this research, please contact me at (503) 320-9104. If you have additional questions, you may contact my dissertation chair, Dr. Suzanne Harrison at (503) 554-2855.

If you understand the use of this research and agree to participate, please sign below.

Authorizing participant signature _____

Researcher signature _____