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## **An empirical evaluation of the progress and achievement of English language learners in a suburban school district**

Marlynn Kessler Martin

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AN EMPIRICAL EVALUATION OF THE PROGRESS AND  
ACHIEVEMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS  
IN A SUBURBAN SCHOOL DISTRICT

By

Marlynn Kessler Martin

A Dissertation  
Submitted to the Faculty of  
Mississippi State University  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
in Elementary, Middle, and Secondary Administration  
in the Department of Leadership and Foundations

Mississippi State, Mississippi

December 2009

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2009

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IN A SUBURBAN SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Candidate for Degree of Doctorate of Philosophy

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) has brought to educators' attention the need and demand that all children are guaranteed an equitable education. In support of this mandate, Assistant Deputy Secretary of the United States Department of Education Kathleen Leos (2006) states, "There are approximately 5 ½ million non-English-speaking students in the United States public schools, speaking 440 different languages and 80% of those English language learners speak Spanish" (p. 2). Continuing, Leos reports that English language learners are the fastest growing K–12 population in the United States with 16 states reporting a 200% increase in English language learner enrollment from 1991–2001, (NCELA, 2006b). The Mississippi English language learner population has steadily grown between 50–100% during this same time period (NCELA, 2006b).

NCLB includes basic principles that require stronger accountability in all realms of education including, expanding options for parents, emphasizing utilizing teaching methods that work in other school programs, providing assistance to schools in need of improvement, providing better information to teachers and administrators, ensuring

teacher quality is a high priority, and giving more resources to schools to accomplish these goals (USDE, 2004). Furthermore, this law has prioritized that all school-age children must make the grade state-defined education standards by the end of the 2013–2014 school year. Stemming from this legislation, educators and school districts have become more aware of their obligations to identify and provide English language instruction for immigrant students in order for them to understand and perform successfully in an all-English-speaking academic setting.

Because of the impact of immigration in Mississippi and NCLB this study was designed to determine the progress of English language acquisition of English language learners (ELLs) on the Stanford English Language Proficiency test (SELP), and the relationship, if any, to the progress of English language learners on the Mississippi Curriculum Test (MCT). The results of this study show that ELLs demonstrated English language acquisition on the (SELP) and academic progress on the Mississippi Curriculum Test (MCT) and that there was a significant positive relationship between the two assessments administered during the 3-year period of this study in the Rankin County School District in Mississippi.

Key words: NCLB, English language learner, progress, and achievement

## DEDICATION

It is only by the grace of Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior, that I have accomplished this goal and have earned the Doctorate of Philosophy in Educational Leadership. It is not by my strength alone but through the wisdom and knowledge that God has given me, and to Him I dedicate this accomplishment to His glory and in His service for all mankind. “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Philippians 4:13).

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
DEDICATION .....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	iii
LIST OF TABLES .....	vii
LIST OF FIGURES .....	ix
CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION .....	1
Statement of Problem.....	3
Research Questions .....	4
Implied Theoretical Grounding.....	5
Justification for the Study .....	6
Delimitation of the Study.....	12
Limitations of the Study.....	12
Definition of Terms.....	13
II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE .....	23
Impact of Immigration on States and Schools .....	24
Legal Issues Related to English Language Learners .....	29
Federal Laws .....	29
Constitution of the United States, Fourteenth Amendment .....	29
Civil Rights Act, Title VI.....	29
Equal Educational Opportunities Act .....	30
Supreme Court Cases .....	31
<i>Meyer v. Nebraska, 262 U.S. 390 (1923)</i> .....	31
<i>Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, 347 U.S. 483 (1954)</i> .....	31
<i>Lau v. Nichols, 414 U.S. 563 (1974)</i> .....	32
<i>Plyler v. Doe, 457 U.S. 202 (1982)</i> .....	32
<i>Alexander v. Sandoval, 532 U.S. 275 (2001)</i> .....	34
Federal Court Cases .....	35

	<i>Aspira of New York, Inc. v. New York Board of Education, Consent Decree, 72 Cir. 4002 (1074)</i> .....	35
	<i>Serna v. Portales Municipal, 499 F.2d . 1147 (10th Cir. 1975)</i> .....	36
	<i>Cintron et al. v. Brentwood Union Free School District, 33 Fed. Reg. 4956</i> .....	36
	<i>Rios v. Reed, 480 F. Supp. 14 (E.D.N.Y., 1978)</i> .....	37
	<i>Castaneda v. Pickard, 648 F.2d 989 (5th Cir. 1981)</i> .....	37
	<i>Gomez v. Illinois, 811 F.2d 1030 (Ill. 1987)</i> .....	38
	<i>Idaho Migrant Council v. Board of Education, 647 F.2d 69 (9th Cir. 1981)</i> .....	38
	<i>The League of United Latin American Citizens v. Southern Board of Education Consent Decree, Southern Florida (Case #90-1913)</i> .....	39
	<i>Flores v. Arizona, 48 F. Supp. 2d 937 (D. Ariz. 1999)</i> .....	39
	New Regulations for English Language Learners .....	40
	NCLB Legislation.....	40
	NCLB Standards and Objectives .....	41
	Title III of NCLB .....	42
	Title I of NCLB.....	44
	Accountability.....	46
	State Assessments and English Language Learners .....	49
	History of Assessment .....	49
	English Language Assessment in Mississippi .....	50
	Academic Content Assessment in Mississippi .....	53
	Assessment Accommodations .....	54
	Mixed Responses to Assessment of English Language Learners.....	57
	Assessment Requirements .....	60
	Gaps in ELL Research .....	64
	Summary of Literature Review.....	65
III.	METHODS .....	70
	Introduction.....	70
	Research Design.....	70
	Population .....	73
	Instrumentation .....	75
	SELP – Measure of English Language Acquisition .....	75
	Validity .....	77
	Reliability.....	78
	MCT – Measure of Academic Achievement .....	79
	Validity .....	79
	Reliability.....	80
	Procedures.....	81
	Limitations of the Procedures .....	81

Data Analysis .....	82
IV. RESULTS .....	84
Demographics of Population.....	87
Effect of Demographic Variables on SELP Scores .....	91
Effect of Demographic Variables on MCT Scores .....	93
Summary of Results.....	101
V. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	103
Summary .....	103
Conclusions.....	104
Recommendations.....	107
REFERENCES .....	111
APPENDIX	
A. MISSISSIPPI CURRICULUM TEST PROFICIENCY LEVELS .....	123
B. ACCOMMODATIONS FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNER STUDENTS .....	125
C. LETTER OF REQUEST TO SUPERINTENDENT .....	129
D. SUPERINTENDENT’S LETTER OF PERMISSION .....	131
E. INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL .....	133

## LIST OF TABLES

1. U.S. Census Bureau 2004 .....	24
2. Pair SELP 2003–SELP 2004 (N = 64).....	85
3. Pair SELP 2004–SELP 2005 (N = 64).....	85
4. Pair MCT 2003–MCT 2004(N = 64).....	86
5. Pair MCT 2004–MCT 2005(N = 64).....	87
6. Demographics of Population (N = 64).....	88
7. Analysis of Variance for Grade and SELP 2004 (N = 64) .....	91
8. Descriptive Statistics for Grade and SELP 2004 .....	92
9. Analysis of Variance for Grade and SELP 2005 .....	92
10. Descriptive Statistics for Grade and SELP 2005 .....	92
11. Analysis of Variance for Grade and MCT 2003.....	93
12. Descriptive Statistics for Grade and MCT 2003.....	93
13. Analysis of Variance for Grade and MCT 2004.....	94
14. Descriptive Statistics for Grade and MCT 2004.....	94
15. Analysis of Variance for Grade and MCT 2005.....	95
16. Descriptive Statistics for Grade and MCT 2005.....	95
17. Pearson Correlation of MCT and SELP 2003 (N = 63).....	96
18. Pearson Correlation of MCT and SELP 2004 (N = 57).....	98
19. Pearson Correlation of MCT and SELP 2005.....	100

## LIST OF FIGURES

1.	Number of Immigrants Living in the United States, 1995–2005.....	27
2.	States must align English Language Proficiency Standards to the English Language Proficiency Assessments, the state curriculum, and the ELP Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives.....	42
3.	The overlap and union of the Title I and Title III programs reflect the educational expectations as required by NCLB, 2002.....	45
4.	The Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives relate directly to English language acquisition in order to meet the academic standards.....	47
5.	Ethnic Representation of ELL students .....	73
6.	District ELL distributions by gender .....	89
7.	District ELL distributions by grade .....	89
8.	District ELL distributions by first language .....	90
9.	District ELL distributions by number of years in ELL program .....	90
10.	Scatter plot for 2003 MCT and SELP.....	97
11.	Scatter plot for the 2004 MCT and SELP.....	99
12.	Scatter plot for the 2005 MCT and SELP.....	101

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The United States has a diverse, multicultural population (Center for Immigration Studies, 2007), which derives from a variety of ethnic, geographic, economic, and religious backgrounds (USDE, 2005). Diversity and multiculturalism have been particularly noticed since the mid 1800s, when Europeans, Asians, Pacific Islanders, and Hispanics entered America to settle its land (Immigration History, 2007). The wide range of people and cultures that represents today's America has heightened societal and educational institutions concerns (Leos, 2006).

The 2000 U.S. Census confirmed that minority groups are increasing at a rapid rate. The country is more ethnically, linguistically, and culturally diverse than ever. Major factors contributing to this rapid rate of growth include the following (Guion, 2005):

- Large-scale immigration
- Globalization of goods, services, and finances
- Current immigration policy focusing on family unification
- New rules allowing immigrants to claim more than one race for the first time in history

Many of these factors contribute to ethnic groups moving into and out of school districts across the nation.

Kathleen Leos (2005), Assistant Deputy Secretary and Director of the Office of English Language Acquisition (United States Department of Education), stated there were 8 million English language learners (ELLs) in U.S. public and private school systems that represented 460 different languages. In 2006, one out of every nine, or 11% of the students in the United States, was identified as an English language learner, and it is predicted that one out of every four, or 25% of the students in U.S. education systems, will be identified as an English language learner by 2025 (Leos, 2006).

The U.S. Census Bureau (2004) reported that in Mississippi in 2000, there were 95,522 people 5 years and older who spoke a language other than English at home compared to the year 1990 when 25,061 people over 5 years of age were recorded as speaking a language other than English at home. This indicates a 281% increase in the number of people 5 years of age and over in Mississippi who speak a language other than English at home. In this suburban school district in Mississippi, the U.S. Census Bureau (2004) reported that in 2000 there were 3,908 people 5 years of age and over who spoke a language other than English in the home, compared to the year 1990 with 840 people 5 years of age and over speaking a language other than English in the home. These figures indicate a 365% increase in the number of people 5 years of age and over in this school district in Mississippi who speaks a language other than English at home. The increase in the number of students presents challenges for school districts as they strive to provide equal educational opportunities to students of various cultural and language backgrounds (National Center for Education Statistics, 2007).

Continuing increases in the number of immigrant children and youth in the American educational institutions pose challenges and raise questions about the ability of these institutions to meet the needs of growing ELL populations (Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees, 2001). Thus, the educational issues and questions that will be addressed in this study are as follows:

1. ELLs' acquisition of the English language
2. The English language and academic progress of ELLs as measured on the Stanford English Language Proficiency test (SELP) and the Mississippi Curriculum Test (MCT), respectively
3. The effect, if any, of demographic variables on the progress of ELLs on the SELP and the MCT assessments
4. The relationship, if any, of the progress of ELLs on the SELP and the MCT assessments under the mandates of No Child Left Behind

#### Statement of Problem

From 2002 to 2005, the school district in this study experienced a 101.2% increase in the enrollment of ELLs. The Mississippi Department of Education, Office of Innovative Support requires a survey of each school district's Limited English Proficient (LEP) students be reported by October 1 of each school year. Based on the Consolidated Federal Report requiring this information, the LEP numbers reported in this school district were as follows (Mississippi Department of Education, 2002–2005):

- 2001: 36 ELLs
- 2002: 165 ELLs

- 2003: 224 ELLs
- 2004: 239 ELLs
- 2005: 332 ELLs

These statistics reveal an increasing number of ELLs enrolling in the school district with the greatest increase occurring between October 2001 and October 2002 with a 358% increase noted.

No Child Left Behind mandates equitable education for ELLs, to include monitoring student English language acquisition progress and ELL progress on state-mandated tests. However, the gap in the research is there has not been a study of the progress of the ELL English language acquisition progress and academic progress in a school district in Mississippi, nor have there been any findings as to the relationship, if any, between the two assessments. This study was conducted over a 3-year period during the 2002–2005 school years. The time frame of the study corresponds with the MDE mandating the SELP and the authorization of NCLB. This study examines ELL student progress on the SELP and the academic progress of the same group of students on the MCT. Student progress was analyzed in terms of the data acquired from both assessments within the requirements and interpretation of NCLB.

### Research Questions

This study addresses the following questions:

1. What was the English language acquisition progress, as measured by the SELP, of ELLs in grades 2–8 during the 2002–2005 school years in the suburban public school district in Mississippi?

2. What was the academic progress, as measured by the MCT, of ELLs in grades 2–8 during the 2002–2005 school years in the suburban public school district in Mississippi?
3. What demographic variables, if any, affected ELLs’ progress and academic progress in grades 2–8 during the 2002–2005 school years in the suburban public school district in Mississippi?
4. What is the relationship, if any, between the ELLs’ progress and academic progress in grades 2–8 during the 2002–2005 school years in the suburban public school district in Mississippi?

#### Implied Theoretical Grounding

According to Creswell (2002), a theory is a set of interrelated variables, definitions, and propositions that presents a systematic view of phenomena by specifying relations among variables, with the purpose of explaining natural phenomena. In formulating a theoretical perspective for studying the progress of English language learners’ progress acquiring English as well as their progress in their academics, assessment in these areas is a useful prototype.

In this study, the SELP and the MCT provided the data to achieve valid results and included 3 consecutive school year assessment reports. The SELP and MCT were the dependent variables, and the independent variables were the length of time an ELL student has been enrolled in a United States school and his or her English language acquisition impact on the MCT academic scores. Logically speaking, the ELL student’s progress on the SELP will be dependent on the length of time the he or she has been in

school in the United States, and his or her progress on the MCT is dependent on his or her progress on the SELP. This would support the rationale that the longer an ELL student has been in a school in the United States, the greater the English language acquisition, resulting in the ELL student performing better on the MCT. This information may also show evidence of any relationship that might exist between the two assessments.

### Justification for the Study

The current research shows that diversity in the United States' population is rapidly growing, particularly along the southern portion of the country, including the states of California, Texas, Louisiana, and Mississippi (NCES, 2007). Therefore, the high influx of multicultural families moving into Mississippi has presented educational, social, and cultural challenges for the local school districts, communities, and state. Challenges facing school districts related to ELL parents and students include the following (Hartman, 2007):

- Cultural values
- Belief and morals
- Inter- and intra-culture relational conflicts
- Deficient ELL programs
- Mandated student state assessment
- Students' mastering a new language both for social and academic success
- Insufficient funding and financial commitment in school districts
- Shortage of comprehensive and ongoing staff development for teachers

Challenges facing communities include the following (Wrigley, 2001):

- Lack of adult literacy programs
- Affordable housing
- Medical services
- Language barrier, both written and verbal
- Cultural values
- Religion

Challenges facing the states are as follows (NREL, 2005):

- Students' mastering content area skills in academics
- Students receiving lower grades
- Attitude and perception of teachers toward other cultures
- Lack of cross-cultural competency
- Adequate training for classroom teachers of ELLs
- Meeting the requirements of NCLB

The challenges initiated by this growth have coincided with the landmark education reform that was signed into law by U.S. President George W. Bush on January 8, 2002. NCLB represents major changes in federal support of elementary and secondary education but has also placed requirements on the states and local districts that are also demanding and challenging.

NCLB has presented numerous requirements for states, local administrators, educators, and ELL students in particular. The requirements for ELL students, based on Part A, Sec. 3102 of NCLB, are as follows:

- Ensure that LEP children and youth develop high levels of academic attainment in English and meet the same challenging academic requirements as all children and youth are expected to meet.
- Assist all LEP children and youth to achieve at high levels in core academic subjects.
- Develop high-quality language instruction programs designed to assist state, local, and school agencies in teaching LEP children.
- Assist state and local agencies to develop high-quality instructional programs to prepare LEP children to enter all English instructional settings.
- Promote parental and community participation in language instruction programs for parents and communities of LEP children.
- Hold state and local agencies and schools accountable for increases in English proficiency and core academic knowledge of LEP children.
- Require improvements in LEP English proficiency each fiscal year.
- Require improvements in adequate yearly progress for LEP children.
- Utilizes flexibility to implement language instructional programs, based on scientific research to teach English to LEP children.

One guideline of concern for ELLs in NCLB is accountability. NCLB has set the goal of ensuring that every child in grades 2–8 is able to perform at grade level by the end of the 2013–2014 school year (Abedi, 2004). The MCT in reading, language arts, and mathematics measures academic achievement for ELL students in Mississippi. NCLB requires states to disaggregate student achievement data, holding schools accountable for

subgroups, such as ELLs, so that no child falls through the cracks (United States Department of Education, 2004). States and local school districts have received more federal funds for education than ever before for programs under NCLB. In 2001, the federal government awarded \$8.4 billion to states and schools districts in an effort to hold schools accountable for students' achievement (USDE, 2001). The federal government, in 2004, granted \$12.4 billion for Title I to support implementing the reforms of NCLB (USDE, 2004). A large portion of these funds is for grants under Title I of NCLB, called "Improving the Academic Achievement of the Disadvantaged" (USDE, 2004). These funds are applicable to ELLs. In addition, states may apply for additional funds for ELLs under Title III of NCLB. School districts must have at least 50 ELL students to apply for Title III funds. States and school districts with larger numbers of ELLs receive additional funds, under Title III of NCLB, to meet the challenge of educating ELL students (USDE, 2004).

Another provision of NCLB is the assessment of academic progress of every child, including those learning English, in reading, math, language arts, and eventually science. All ELLs are assessed annually to measure how well they are learning English so parents and teachers will know how well they are progressing and states and schools are held accountable for these results. States must provide assessments to new ELLs in their native language to the extent that is feasible, or with language accommodations (such as having the directions on a math test read to them; USDE, 2004).

NCLB also allows states to work with districts to determine appropriate tests for new ELLs. In 2003, the Mississippi State Department of Education mandated that the SELP test be administered to all new ELLs entering a school district. The same test is

also administered every February to track all English language learners' progress from year to year in school districts within the state (MDE, 2003). In addition to this new English language proficiency test, all students, including ELLs, must take all state-required assessments, such as the MCT.

NCLB requires that all states have ELL standards that are aligned with the standards of every core content area. NCLB also mandates that the English language proficiency assessments be aligned with the state's content standards and English language proficiency standards. NCLB indicates that if the student shows progress in English language acquisition, then the student would also show progress on the academic core content state assessments (USDE, 2004). Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) Joint Committee's Standard 9 (Testing Individuals of Diverse Linguistic Backgrounds) state "any test that employs language is, in part, a measure of [test takers'] language skills. This is of particular concern for test takers whose first language is not the language of the test" (TESOL, 2005, p. 91). Thus, testing is difficult when an ELL takes a content area test to determine if the results reflect his or her knowledge of English or his or her content area knowledge (TESOL, 2005).

Not only is there discussion from TESOL regarding NCLB and the English language learners' content testing and ELL language proficiency testing, but also according to Crawford (2007) President of the Institute for Language and Education Policy, a rebellion against NCLB is appearing all over the United States. In Virginia, state and local officials are opposing a federal order to test English language learners in a language they do not completely understand. However, Margaret Spellings, U.S. Education Secretary, stated that after 1 year in the United States, English language

learners must take the standardized tests as native English speakers, despite the level of the language barrier (Crawford). Queens College professor Menken (2005) states, “English language learners are far more likely to fail standardized tests than native English-speakers, but this does not indicate that the students or those who are educating them are failing—only that the tests are not designed to measure what the children have learned” (p.146).

There are social and cultural challenges for both ELL students and schools, and there are educational challenges that are controversial, but, nevertheless, required under NCLB. Some of these controversial areas include knowledge of cross-cultural competency, learning English and academic language simultaneously, achieving proficiency on the SELP test and on the MCT, and determining whether these tests actually measure language or academic progress or both. NCLB requires every child to perform at grade level by 2014 and holds every local and state agency accountable for ELL student progress in English language proficiency and progress in core academic knowledge. The district of this study is aware of the NCLB mandates and is monitoring the progress of the ELL students on their English language acquisition and their academic progress. However, there has been no research in the Rankin County School District in Mississippi related to the relationship, if any, between the progress of ELL students on the SELP and the MCT. Thus, this study was conducted during the 2002–2005 school years, which coincided with the newly MDE-mandated SELP and the authorization of NCLB.

### Delimitation of the Study

This study was delimited to a group of second through eighth grade ELL students in a suburban school district in Mississippi. The students selected were the accessible population in that they were enrolled in the school district consecutively during the 2002–2005 school years when the study took place.

### Limitations of the Study

The accessible population of this study may limit the findings of the study. A thorough review of the research information did not reveal another ELL group with like characteristics within or outside the state of Mississippi that could be compared to the group in this study. Internal validity may be impeded due to the attitude of the students toward test taking, data collector characteristics, data collector bias, implementation bias, instrument decay, location of testing, maturation, subject characteristics, and testing obstructions. The five stages of English language acquisition—listening, reading, writing, comprehension, and speaking—with diverse, multicultural students and varying types of testing accommodations may support questioning internal validity. For example, a student may be at a different stage of language acquisition, at a different level of progress, and that stage may be threatened by maturation at this level but not affected at all on another stage at a different level.

The study was conducted during 3 academic school years, thus contributing important information relevant to the long-term impact of English language learners' language progress and academic achievement. Language proficiency and academic achievement are two distinct constructs that function closely together, but both areas

should be measured separately in order to collect accurate data (Mahoney & MacSwan, 2005).

#### Definition of Terms

1. *Accommodation*: Adapting language (spoken or written) to make it more understandable to second language learners. In assessment, accommodations may be made to the presentation, response method, or timing/scheduling of the assessment (MDE, 2005).
2. *Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives (AMAO)*: Annual goals that are set by the states to climb to 100% proficiency on state-determined standardized test in reading and mathematics (Batt, 2005)
3. *Annual Yearly Progress (AYP)*: Adequate yearly progress shall be defined as schools that meet all of the AMAOs for a certain school year and testing at least 95% of the students in each subgroup (Batt, 2005).
4. *Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS)*: The language ability required for face-to-face communication where linguistic interactions are embedded in a situational context (MDE, 2006)
5. *Center for Immigration Studies (CIS)*: A non-partisan immigration reduction-oriented, nonprofit research organization
6. *Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP)*: The type of abstract language needed for academic success. The language ability required for academic achievement in a context reduced environment such as classroom lectures and

- textbook reading assignments. This may take from 5 to 7 years to develop (MDE, 2005).
7. *Criterion-Reference Test (CRT)*: Tests that are nationally or locally available, are designed to determine whether students have mastered specific content, and allow comparisons with other students taking the same assessment (National Center for English Language Acquisition, 2006)
  8. *Current Population Survey (CPS)*: An ongoing national survey of very high quality conducted by the Bureau of the Census. The CPS is the best source of current population statistics (Nustats, 2008).
  9. *Department of Education and the Institute of Education Sciences*: The primary federal entity for collecting and analyzing data related to education (NCES, 2007)
  10. *Diversity*: Students that come from a variety of ethnic, geographic, economic, and religious backgrounds and how these diverse cultural and/or academic backgrounds impact the instructional process (MDE, 2005)
  11. *Dominant Language*: The language with which the speaker has greater proficiency and/or uses most often (MDE, 2005)
  12. *Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)*: This federal statute was signed into law, April 11, 1965, under President Lyndon B. Johnson. It is the principal law funding primary and secondary education that specifically improved education opportunities for minority and disadvantaged students. It was reauthorized in 1994 as the Improving America's Schools Act and again reauthorized under NCLB (NCELA, 2006a).

13. *English Language Learner (ELL)*: The language in the NCLB identifies language minority students as limited English proficient students or LEPs. The MDE follows the suggestions of the National Research Council with the identification of these students as English language learners or ELLs since this term highlights the positive aspect of the English language acquisition process. The terms for ELL and LEP may be used interchangeably. According to Title III of NCLB, an English language learner is an individual:

- a. who is aged 3 through 21; was not born in the United States or whose native language is a language other than English and comes from an environment where a language other than English is dominant; or is a Native American or Alaska Native or who is a native resident of the outlying areas and comes from an environment where a language other than English has had a significant impact on such individual's level of English language proficiency; or is migratory and whose native language is other than English and comes from an environment where a language other than English is dominant; and
- b. who has sufficient difficulties speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language and whose difficulties may deny such individual the opportunity to learn successfully in classrooms where the language of instruction is English or to participate fully in our society (NCELA, 2002b, p.1731).

14. *English as a Second Language (ESL)*: An educational approach in which ELL students are instructed in the use of the English language. Instruction is based on

- special curricula that typically involve little or no use of the native language and is usually taught during specific school periods. For the rest of the school day, students may be placed in mainstream classrooms, an immersion program, or a bilingual program (MDE, 2005).
15. *Equal Education Opportunities Act of 1974 (EEOA)*: This civil rights statute prohibits states from denying equal educational opportunity to an individual on account of his or her race, color, sex, or national origin. The statute specifically prohibits states from denying equal educational opportunity by the failure of an educational agency to take appropriate action to overcome language barriers that impede equal participation by its students in its instructional programs [20 U.S.C. 1203(f)].
  16. *Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)*: A federal law passed in 1974 that defines educational records and indicates who, and what circumstances, an individual (including parents) may have access to a student's educational record without written consent of the student (Susquehanna, 2007)
  17. *Fluent (or fully) English Proficient (FEP)*: The term describes students who understand English in written and spoken form. They are still considered ELL, but at the highest end of the proficiency scale (MDE, 2005).
  18. *Grant makers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees (GCIR)*: A national network of foundations interested in issues affecting the growing newcomer immigrant population, including integration issues including education, health, employment, civic participation, race and intergroup relations, and other concerns affecting immigrant children, youth, and families (GCIR, 2007)

19. *High-Stakes Testing*: Any assessment that is used to make a critical decision about a student, such as whether or not a student will move on to the next grade or receive a diploma. School officials using such tests must ensure that students are tested on a curriculum they have had a fair opportunity to learn so that certain subgroups of students, such as racial and ethnic minority students or students with a disability or limited English proficiency, are not systemically excluded or disadvantaged by the test or the test-taking conditions. Furthermore, high-stakes decisions should not be made on the basis of a single test score, because a single test can only provide a “snapshot” of a student’s achievement and may not accurately reflect an entire year’s worth of student progress and achievement (NCELA, 2006a).
20. *Home Language Survey (HLS)*: Form completed by parents/guardians that gives information about a student’s language background. This form must be on file for every ELL student (MDE, 2005).
21. *Immigrant Child*: According to Title III of the NCLB, an immigrant child is an individual who:
- a. is aged 3 through 21;
  - b. was not born in any State of the United States; and
  - c. has not been attending one or more schools in any one or more States for more than three (3) full academic years (MDE, 2005).
22. *Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS)*: The agency having jurisdiction, supervision, and control over the entry of aliens into the United States, and officers of that agency have the right to administer oaths, and to take and consider evidence,

- concerning the right or privilege of any alien to enter, re-enter, pass through, or remain in the United States (Lectric Law, 2007).
23. *Individualized Education Plan (IEP)*: A written document prepared by a committee for a named student that specifies the learning goals that are to be achieved over a set period of time and the teaching strategies, resources, and supports necessary to achieve those goals (NCSE, 2006)
24. *Landmark*: An event or development that marks a turning point or stage. (Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, 2008).
25. *Language Acquisition*: The ability of the brain that allows humans to acquire language (MDE, 2005)
26. *Language Minority Speaker*: A student who speaks a language other than English as the first, home, or dominant language. ELL students are a subset of all language minority students. For example, a person living in the United States whose first language is not English is referred to as a language minority speaker (MDE, 2005).
27. *Language Proficiency*: Refers to the degree to which the student exhibits control over the use of language, including the measurement of expressive and receptive language skills in the areas of phonology, syntax, vocabulary, and semantics and including the areas of pragmatics or language use within various domains or social circumstances. Proficiency in a language is judged independently and does not imply a lack of proficiency in another language (MDE, 2005).
28. *Limited English Proficient (LEP)*: The term used by the federal government to identify those students who have insufficient English to succeed in English-only classrooms. LEP refers to students who are limited in their ability to speak, read,

- comprehend, or write English proficiently as determined by objective assessments (MDE, 2005). Refer to ELL, definition #13.
29. *Local Education Agency (LEA)*: The local school district (MDE, 2005)
30. *Mississippi Curriculum Test (MCT)*: A criterion-referenced statewide test in math, language arts, and reading administered annually (MDE, 2005)
31. *Mississippi Department of Education (MDE)*: State education agency (MDE, 2005)
32. *Mississippi Student Information Systems (MSIS)*: A statistical information program that records and tracks test scores, attendance, discipline, and so forth of Mississippi public school students. It was created to comply with the Performance Based Accreditation Model established by the Education Reform Act of 1982. It also allows for collection and storage of data about teachers, administrators, and school board members. It allows for tracking students from state to state and meets state and federal requirements (MDE, 2006).
33. *National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES)*: Located within the U.S. Department of Education and Institute of Education Sciences, NCES is the primary federal entity for collecting and analyzing data related to education (NCES, 2007).
34. *National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition and Language Instruction Educational Programs (NCELA)*: The NCELA is funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of English Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and Academic Achievement for Limited English Proficient Students (OELA) to collect, analyze, synthesize, and disseminate information related to the education for linguistically and culturally diverse students (NCELA, 2006).

35. *National Origin Minority Student*: A student whose home language is other than English and who is not performing up to district standards of proficiency (Ochoa, 1982)
36. *Native Language*: The first language learned in the home, or the home language. Often, it continues to be the student's stronger language in terms of competence and its function (MDE, 2005).
37. *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB)*: Federal law that sets broad and in-depth accountability requirements for English language learners (MDE, 2005), which was signed into law by President George W. Bush on January 8, 2002, then referred to as No Child Left Behind. Refer to ESEA, definition #12.
38. *Non-English Proficient (NEP)*: This term describes students who are just beginning to learn English. They are also considered ELL, but at the lowest end of the proficiency scale (MDE, 2005).
39. *Norm-Referenced Test (NRT)*: Tests that are nationally, commercially available, are designed to discriminate among groups of students, and allow comparisons across years, grade levels, schools, and other variables (NCELA, 2006)
40. *Office for Civil Rights (OCR)*: The Office for Civil Rights of the U.S. Department of Education is responsible for enforcing Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination based on race, color, national origin, disability, sex, or age (MDE, 2005).
41. *Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA)*: The Office of English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and Academic Achievement for Limited English Proficient Students (OELA) in the U.S. Department of Education was

- established in 1974 by Congress to help school districts meet their responsibility to provide an equal education opportunity to English language learners (NCELA, 2006).
42. *Stage*: Periods of language development that are typically used in discussion of language ability instead of ages to refer to a child's progress in second language development, such as Pre-Production, Production Emergent, Intermediate, High Intermediate, and Transitional (MDE, 2005)
43. *Stanford English Language Proficiency Test (SELP)*: The SELP is the English language proficiency test mandated by the Mississippi Department of Education. This test is given upon enrollment in a school district and administered annually statewide to indicate ELL language acquisition progress (MDE, 2005).
44. *State Education Agency (SEA)*: Agency such as the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE, 2006)
45. *Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL)*: This is the international professional organization of Teachers of English to speakers of other languages and is the acronym that refers to the professional association, the profession, and the field itself (TESOL, 2007).
46. *Title I*: Title I of the No Child Left Behind Act supports programs to assist economically disadvantaged students and students at risk of not meeting educational standards. The reauthorized Title I makes it clear that ELL students are eligible for services on the same basis as other students (MDE, 2005).
47. *Title III*: Title III of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 ensures that ELL students, including immigrant children and youth, develop English proficiency and meet the same academic content and academic achievement standards that other children are

expected to meet. Title III effectively establishes national policy by acknowledging the needs of ELL students and their families (MDE, 2005).

48. *Title VI*: Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin in programs and activities that receive federal financial assistance (MDE, 2005).

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The need for this study is rooted in the continuing and growing influx of immigrant families to the United States coupled with the NCLB legislation of 2002. Diversity and multiculturalism have been evident since the early 1800s with reports of over 68,217,419 immigrants entering America from 1820–2002, from all parts of the world (Immigration History, 2004). The growth has primarily impacted the states of California, Nevada, New Mexico, Texas, and Florida in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). In recent years, the migration of immigrants has increased in Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, North and South Carolina (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). Immigration is not new, but immigration is now raising new concerns, including new federal regulations, implementation of regulations, and new research studies. The review of the literature provides information on the impact of immigration on states and schools, legal issues related to ELLs, new regulations for ELLs, an overview of state assessments of ELLs, and the mixed responses to ELLs and assessments. Information derived from the study will yield implications for ELLs' academic progress and English language acquisition progress.

## Impact of Immigration on States and Schools

Of the immigrant population, the largest and fastest growing minority group in the United States is Hispanic (NCES, 2007). According to the federal government, a Hispanic is defined as a person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, or South or Central American culture or origin regardless of race. The term *Hispanic*, as used by the U.S. Census Bureau, refers to all individuals who report they are Hispanic or Latino (U.S. Census Bureau, 2004c). In a similar description, the Asian population is not homogeneous and includes many groups that may differ in language and culture. Representative of Asians are Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, Asian Indian, and Pakistani (2004b).

Between 1990 and 2004, there was a 45% growth in Hispanics nationwide compared to a 209% growth of Hispanics in the state of Mississippi (U.S. Census Bureau, 2004c). In the county of this study, the U.S. Census Bureau (2007) reported a 61% increase in the Hispanic population of 1,520 in 2000 to 2,445 Hispanics reported in 2006. Table 1 reflects a comparison of the growth and increase in the percentage of Hispanics in the United States contrasted with the growth of Hispanics in Mississippi.

Table 1

U.S. Census Bureau 2004

<b>Comparison of Growth of Hispanic Population</b>				
	<b>United States</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Mississippi</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>1990</b>	22,354,059		15,931	
<b>2000</b>	35,305,818	36.68%	39,569	59.73%
<b>2004</b>	40,459,196	12.73%	46,348	14.62%

As of July 2006, there were 44.3 million Hispanics in the United States equaling 14.8% of the total U.S. population of 299 million. Between 2000 and 2006, Hispanics accounted for one half of the nation's growth with the Hispanic growth rate at 24.3%, which is three times the growth rate of the total population of 6.1% (U.S. Census, 2006). In 2007, there were approximately 45 million Hispanic immigrants in the United States (U.S. Census, 2007).

According to the Center for Immigration Studies (2007), an average of more than 1.3 million immigrants—legal and illegal—settle in the United States each year. Between January 2000 and March 2002, 3.3 million immigrants arrived in the United States (CIS, 2007). If the current immigration trends continue for the next 50 years, the Census Bureau (2007) estimates the population of the United States will be 400 million people. The U.S. Census Bureau states that by 2012, 33.1 million foreign-born immigrants will equal 11.5 % of the total United States population of 302,941,546 (2007). These figures become very relevant when many of these numbers will be entering United States public schools, and as these immigrants settle in the United States, it is probable to assume that the population of children will increase. An analysis of Census Bureau data shows that the nation's foreign-born or immigrant population (legal and illegal) reached a new record of more than 35 million in March 2005. The data also indicate that the first half of this decade has been the highest 5-year period of immigration in American history (U.S. Census Bureau).

The Census Bureau (2007) also reports these findings:

- 35.2 million immigrants (legal and illegal) living in the country in March 2005 is the highest number ever recorded—two and a half times the 13.5 million during the peak of the last great wave of immigration in 1910.
- Between January 2000 and March 2005, 7.9 million new immigrants (legal and illegal) settled in the country, making it the highest 5-year period of immigration in American history.
- Immigrants account for 12.1% of the total population, the highest percentage in eight decades. If current trends continue, within a decade it will surpass the high of 14.7% reached in 1910.
- States with the largest increase in immigrants are California, Texas, Georgia, New Jersey, Maryland, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Washington, Virginia, Arizona, Tennessee, Minnesota, Nevada, New Mexico, South Carolina, and Mississippi.
- Immigration accounts for virtually all of the national increase in public school enrollment over the last two decades. In 2005, there were 10.3 million school-age children from immigrant families in the United States (Camarota, 2005).

As shown in Figure 1, the Center for Immigration Studies (2007) reported the number of immigrants living in the United States based on the Current Population Survey (CPS) collected in March of each year from 1995 through 2005. The figure shows that between March 1995 and March 2000, the foreign-born population grew by 5.7 million, or 1.14 million per year. Thus, it appears that the growth in the foreign-born population during

the economic expansion in the second half of the 1990s was the same as during the recession and recovery—2000 to 2005 (CIS, 2007). The Federation for American Immigration Reform (2006) projects 1.1 million additional immigrants will enter the United States by the end of the year 2007.

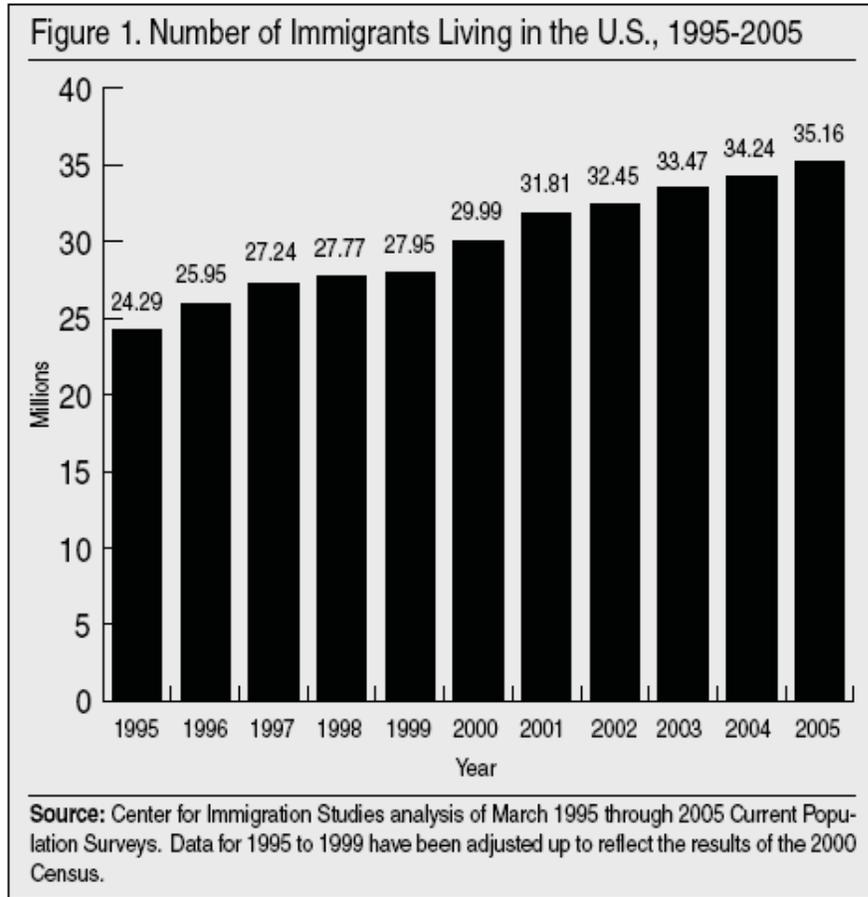


Figure 1 Number of Immigrants Living in the United States, 1995–2005

The diversity created in the population, due to immigration in the United States, has influenced societal and educational institutions' concerns (Leos, 2006). There are approximately 5.5 million non-English-speaking students in United States public schools representing over 460 different languages with 80% of these English language learners

speaking Spanish as their first language (Leos). The numbers of non-English-speaking students in the schools give rise to educational concerns regarding students' ability to understand and perform successfully in an all-English classroom. Providing adequate language services, instructional materials, and programming in a non-threatening setting for immigrant students prompts concerns for school officials. ELL students' ability to progress and continue to perform successfully on state-mandated assessments is the ultimate concern of administrators and school districts as they strive to meet the requirements of NCLB (Abedi, 2004).

In order to ensure accountability and compliance under NCLB, school districts across Mississippi began the process of requiring all students, regardless of their ethnicity, to complete a Home Language Survey (HLS). This form identifies whether a student, parent, or other relative living in the home speaks another language other than English in the home (Lyons, 1992). Every student across the nation is required to complete this form, thus alleviating any notion of discrimination toward any one culture (*Lau v. Nichols*, 414 U.S. 563, 1974). This HLS form of identification satisfies the requirement of NCLB, Part A, Subpart 1, Sec. III, C. If another language other than English is noted on the HLS, the student is then screened for an ELL program.

The HLS requirement determined in 2002–2005 that there were approximately 4,681 English language learners enrolled in public and private schools across the state of Mississippi, reflecting a 43.6% increase from 2002 with 2,916 English language learners (NCELA, 2006). During this same period of time, students enrolled and identified as ELLs in the school district of this study increased from 19 to 332, an increase of 6.07% ELL students in the district (MSIS, 2005).

The impact of immigration in the last two decades not only has been important in census numbers but also has been evidenced significantly in public school enrollment. Projections for future immigration figures linked with NCLB requirements through 2014 support concerns of leaders in education. Striving to provide equitable language programs, academic instruction programs, and qualified personnel and ensure equitable assessment of the progress of ELLs in the education setting will be a challenging task for school leaders as they strive to meet accountability requirements of NCLB.

### Legal Issues Related to English Language Learners

#### **Federal Laws**

Key legislation, court rulings, administrative regulations, and influential decisions have been made addressing language minority students' rights under federal law. The following federal laws specifically address a national effort to secure equal educational opportunities for all American students, including protecting the rights of national origin minority students and those who are limited English proficient.

#### Constitution of the United States, Fourteenth Amendment

The first of these laws was in 1868, when the Constitution of the United States, Fourteenth Amendment, stated, "No State shall...deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws."

#### Civil Rights Act, Title VI

Second, in 1964, the Civil Rights Act, Title VI, stated that "[n]o person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin...be denied the

benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance” (Pub. L. 88-352, Title VI, Sec. 601, 78 Stat. 252).

### Equal Educational Opportunities Act

Third, in 1974, the Equal Educational Opportunities Act (EEOA) ensured that “[n]o state shall deny equal educational opportunity to an individual on account of his or her race, color, sex or national origin, by...the failure of an educational agency to take appropriate action to overcome language barriers that impede equal education” (20 USC Sec. 1703). By following these laws, education systems have guidance for decision-making regarding adequate service to national origin minority students that is guaranteed by America’s democratic society (Lyons, 1992).

Prior to NCLB, ELLs were protected under federal laws that required the participation of all students in assessments used to gauge student performance. Those laws included Goals 2000, Title I (Helping Disadvantaged Children Meet High Standards) and Title VII (Bilingual Education) of the Improving America’s Schools Act of 1994 and the reauthorization of the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (Title IX of Goals 2000). Previous laws have protected English language learners, but, foremost, they have paved the way for NCLB to mandate requirements for ELLs and formulate in a law the accountability of providing an equitable education and tracking and assessing the language acquisition and academic progress of all ELLs in school districts (NCLB, Part A, Sec. 3102.8, 2002).

The federal laws mentioned were written to guarantee the rights of all people and students in the United States and to give guidance and direction to state and local governments and education institutions. NCLB has now mandated the obligations of the

states to provide equitable education services and opportunities for all students, regardless of race, color, sex, nationality, creed, or language (NCELA, 2002b).

### **Supreme Court Cases**

#### *Meyer v. Nebraska, 262 U.S. 390 (1923)*

Both the Supreme Court and federal courts have made influential decisions that have impacted the education for language minority students in the United States. As far back as 1923 in *Meyer v. Nebraska* 262 U.S. 390 (1923), the United States Supreme Court reversed the 1919 Nebraska decision, which stated that “no person, individually or as a teacher, shall in a private denominational, parochial, or public school teach any subject to any person in any language other than the English language.” The Supreme Court ruled that the state’s restriction “of the people” was in violation of the 14th Amendment to the United States Constitution and overstepped the state’s role (107 Neb. 657, reversed).

#### *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, 347 U.S. 483 (1954)*

In 1954, *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, 347 U.S. 483 (1954), was another historic U.S. Supreme Court decision that reversed the 1896 court case *Plessy v. Ferguson*, 163 U.S. 537 (1896), which allowed schools to be “separate but equal” with regard to race. *Brown v. Board of Education*, while not addressing bilingual education, established the precedent that equality in education was first and foremost for all children. At a later time, this precedent was used to address issues facing English language learners (Lyons, 1992).

*Lau v. Nichols, 414 U.S. 563 (1974)*

One of the most renowned cases representing language minority students was *Lau v. Nichols*, 414 U.S. 563 (1974). In 1974, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the failure of the San Francisco school system to provide specialized English language instruction to approximately 1,800 students of Chinese ancestry who did not speak English denied them a meaningful opportunity to participate fully in the public education program and thus also violated the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Because of the 1974 unanimous decision of the U.S. Supreme Court in *Lau v. Nichols*, the Equal Educational Opportunity Act of 1974 and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 stated that all school districts are required to take positive action to correct language deficiencies. The *Lau v. Nichols* decision also required all school districts to open all of their instructional programs to all students, especially those minority students whose English language skills prohibit them from total participation in the educational programs (Sosa, 1994).

*Plyler v. Doe, 457 U.S. 202 (1982)*

*Plyler v. Doe* in 1982 was another U.S. Supreme Court case that had a dynamic impact on the future education of language minority students. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Plyler v. Doe*, 457 U.S. 202 (1982), that the 14th Amendment prohibits states from denying undocumented immigrant children and youth a free public education in the U.S. public primary and secondary schools even if they or their parents are undocumented. As any other students, undocumented students are required under state

law to attend school until they reach a mandated age. As a result of the *Plyler v. Doe* ruling, public schools may not do the following:

1. Deny admission to undocumented students during enrollment or at any other time based on their undocumented status
2. Treat undocumented students disparately to determine residency
3. Engage in any practices that may “chill” the right of access to any public school as established by *Plyler v. Doe* (1982)
4. Require parents or students to disclose or share information regarding their immigration status
5. Inquire of parents or students information that would expose their undocumented status
6. Require Social Security numbers from all students, as it may expose undocumented status (*Plyler v. Doe*, 1982)

When a school has a student file that contains information that would expose the student’s undocumented status, the FERPA and other state privacy agencies prohibit the school from sharing this information outside the school, to include the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), without asking the permission of the parents (*Plyler v. Doe*, 457 U.S. 202,1982). Also, school superintendents should inform school personnel, especially those involved with the registration and intake activities, that they are under no legal obligation to enforce the U.S. immigration laws (*Plyler v. Doe* 1982). Furthermore, parents applying for free lunch and/or breakfast programs for their student need only to indicate on the free application form that they do not have a Social Security number (*Plyler v. Doe*).

*Alexander v. Sandoval, 532 U.S. 275 (2001)*

Another suit that dealt with discrimination on the basis of language was *Alexander v. Sandoval, 532 U.S. 275 (2001)*. The Supreme Court ruled that a private citizen could not sue the federal government under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The ruling furthermore stated that the plaintiff has to prove that actions taken against him or her were intentional acts of discrimination. And, finally, the court stated that a language is not considered to be an act of discrimination under the Civil Rights Act; only race, color, and national origin are to be considered acts of discrimination (NCELA, 2006). This class action lawsuit contended that Alabama excluded non-English speakers from receiving a driver's license because it was an English-only test, discriminating against them based on their national origin. The U.S. District Court ruled in the plaintiff's favor and ordered Alabama to accommodate non-English speakers (Kimmel, 2002). Thus, the decision of this case could be related to non-English-speaking students in schools. The decision would be a supportive factor to accommodate ELLs in their daily classroom as well as possibly administer other alternate assessments to measure their English language progress and academic progress.

The 14th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution guaranteed equal protection under the law. And the EEOA of 1974 ensured educational equality for all students. However, Supreme Court cases appeared as early as 1923 with rebuttals to the nation's laws that were written with equality in mind for all. With the rise of immigration in the United States and the influx of language minority students into the school systems, violations in education equality emerged. Some of the educational issues the courts faced were as follows:

- Teach classes in only English.
- Provide adequate comprehensible instruction in English to students of other languages.
- Correct language deficiencies of language minority students.
- Understand undocumented status of students and parents is private and protected under FERPA of 1974.

These Supreme Court cases have set precedent for states and schools to utilize as foundations for providing equitable, valid programs for language minority students in their schools.

### **Federal Court Cases**

*Aspira of New York, Inc. v. New York Board of Education, Consent Decree,*

*72 Cir. 4002 (1074)*

The federal courts have also had many cases pertaining to national origin language minority students in the past 30 years. The following cases were brought to court in different states and federal circuits and were won on behalf of language minority students in different federal courts (Lyons, 1992). In 1974, the U.S. Court of Appeals ruled against the New York Board of Education in *Aspira of New York, Inc. v. New York Board of Education, Consent Decree, 72 Cir. 4002 (S.D.N.Y., August 28, 1974)*. This suit was by parents and students who believed that school districts were not fulfilling their duty to educate non-native-English-speaking students. A consent decree resulted when the New York Board of Education drafted an agreement to create and provide

assessment to ELLs and provide appropriate instruction and materials to educate and support non-native ELLs (NCELA, 2006).

*Serna v. Portales Municipal, 499 F.2d . 1147 (10th Cir. 1975)*

Also in 1974, the U.S. Court of Appeals case, *Serna v. Portales Municipal Schools*, 499 F.2d. 1147 (10th Cir. 1974), found “undisputed evidence that Spanish surnamed students did not reach the achievement levels attained by their Anglo counterparts.” The 10th Circuit Court of Appeals ordered the Portales Municipal Schools in Albuquerque, New Mexico, to create an educational plan that would address national origin minority students’ needs by implementing a bilingual and bicultural curriculum, revising testing procedures to assess academic achievement, and recruiting and hiring bilingual school personnel (Lyons, 1992).

*Cintron et al. v. Brentwood Union Free School District, 33 Fed. Reg. 4956*

Another court case appeared in 1978, when the Federal District Court for the Eastern District of New York rejected the Brentwood School District’s plan to restructure its bilingual program. Brentwood Union Free School District violated the “Lau Guidelines” by keeping Spanish-speaking students separate and apart from English-speaking students in music and art classes. *Elis Cintron et al. v. Brentwood Union Free School District*, 33 Fed. Reg. 4956, also found the program at fault by not exiting students from the bilingual program whose English language was proficient. Not exiting these students deprived them from the benefits of regular mainstream English instruction (NCELA, 1992).

*Rios v. Reed, 480 F. Supp. 14 (E.D.N.Y., 1978)*

Following in 1978, in *Rios v. Reed*, 480 F. Supp. 14 (E.D.N.Y., 1978), the Federal District Court for the Eastern School District of New York ruled that the Pastchogue-Medford School District's transitional bilingual program was a course in English acquisition and did not provide an equal educational opportunity for Hispanic students who spoke Spanish. The court ruled that the school could not provide a program, in the first years of schooling, in English only without more extensive Spanish instruction (NCELA, 1992).

*Castaneda v. Pickard, 648 F.2d 989 (5th Cir. 1981)*

The most significant court decision affecting language minority students after *Lau* was *Castaneda v. Pickard*, 648 F.2d 989 (5th Cir. 1981). This case centered on Raymondville, Texas Independent School District's language remediation programs that violated the Equal Educational Opportunities Act (EEOA) of 1974. From this case, the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals devised a test to determine the school district's compliance with the Equal Educational Opportunities Act of 1974. This three-part "Castaneda Test" includes the following criteria (NCELA, 1992):

1. *Theory*: The school must pursue a program based on an educational theory recognized as sound or a legitimate experimental strategy.
2. *Practice*: The school implements the program with instructional practices, resources, and staff necessary to transfer theory to results.
3. *Results*: The school must not continue in a program that fails to produce results.

The Castaneda Test reappeared and was applied in court in two later cases. In the first case, *Keyes v. School District #1*, 576 F. Supp. 1503 (D. Colo., 1983), a U.S. District Court found a Denver public school district had failed the second element of the Castaneda Test. The school was failing to provide an adequate educational plan for the language minority students. In this case, the school district had to prove that it was not intentionally segregating language minority students from other students.

*Gomez v. Illinois, 811 F.2d 1030 (Ill. 1987)*

The second case that was impacted by the Castaneda Test was *Gomez v. Illinois*, 811 F.2d 1030 (Ill. 1987). The plaintiffs in this case filed against the Peoria School District, claiming that ELL students were not afforded the identification, placement, and training that English language learners needed. The Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that the SEA and the LEA were required under the EEOA of 1974 to ensure that language minority students' educational needs are met (Lyons, 1992).

*Idaho Migrant Council v. Board of Education, 647 F.2d 69 (9th Cir. 1981)*

The Ninth Circuit Court case, *Idaho Migrant Council v. Board of Education*, 647 F.2d 69 (9th Cir. 1981), presented inequalities related to English language learners from a different perspective than previous cases. This case mandated that state education agencies be required to supervise the local school districts to ensure compliance. The courts ruled in favor of the Idaho Migrant Council representing the English language learners from Idaho's public schools. The Migrant Council argued that the state and the school board were failing to supervise and ensure that the appellants received an equal education (NCELA, 1992).

*The League of United Latin American Citizens v. Southern Board of Education Consent Decree, Southern Florida (Case #90-1913)*

In 1990, another court case, *The League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) v. Southern Board of Education Consent Decree, Southern Florida (Case #90-1913)* related to equal treatment of English language learning. The court ruled that under the Civil Rights Act, the board of education had to ensure to identify and assess; provide adequate placement, certified staff, and supplemental services as needed; and evaluate the ELL program to ensure compliance and accuracy (NCELA, 1992).

*Flores v. Arizona, 48 F. Supp. 2d 937 (D. Ariz. 1999)*

In 1992, the district court case *Flores v. Arizona, 48 F. Supp. 2d 937 (D. Ariz. 1999)*, ruled that Arizona was not sufficiently funding its English as second language program, which was in direct violation of the EEOA of 1974. At this time, the court ruled that until funding was provided, the ELL students were to be exempt from the state's high school English exam. This case appeared again in 2002, *Flores v. Arizona, 160 F. Supp. 2d 1043 (D. Ariz. 2000)*, when a federal judge ruled that Arizona had to pass adequate legislation to increase ELL funding by January 28, 2006, or face fines daily until the legislation became law. By March 2006, legislation became law, but \$21 million in fines had been incurred and would be distributed to the ELL population throughout the state (NCELA, 2006).

These federal court cases highlighted concerns for language minority students' education. Some of the issues resounding in courts included the following:

- Create and implement a bilingual educational plan to address language minority student needs.

- Provide appropriate instruction and materials, assessment, identification, appropriate placement, and staff training for language minority programs and students.
- Provide training for teachers and staff of language minority students, with supplemental services provided as needed, and evaluate to ensure compliance.
- Provide sufficient funding for language minority students and instruction programs.

Because of these federal court cases, concerns for ELLs have been highlighted. The decisions of these cases paved the way for the groundwork of NCLB.

#### New Regulations for English Language Learners

#### **NCLB Legislation**

NCLB has brought to educators' attention the requirements and mandates that all children be afforded an equitable education. The four basic principles of NCLB include stronger accountability in all realms of education, increased flexibility and local control, expanded options for parents, and an emphasis on teaching methods that have been proven to work (NCLB, Part A, Sec. 3102). Furthermore, this law has prioritized that all school-age children must make the grade on state-defined education standards by the end of the 2013–2014 school year. Other stipulations of NCLB include providing schools in need of improvement with assistance, providing better information to teachers and administrators, ensuring teacher quality is a high priority, and giving more resources to the schools to accomplish these goals (NCLB, Part A, Subpart 1, Sec. 3111).

Stemming from this legislation, educators and school districts have become more aware of and in tune with their obligations to identify and provide English language instruction for immigrant students, in order for them to understand and perform successfully in an all-English-speaking academic setting.

### **NCLB Standards and Objectives**

NCLB mandated certain requirements for states to follow in order to meet the needs of ELLs in a nondiscriminatory and equitable manner. NCLB (b)(2) describes how the state agency will establish standards and objectives that are aligned to the English proficiency levels. These levels of English proficiency will be derived from the four domains of speaking, listening, reading and writing. These levels of English proficiency will then be aligned with the achievement levels of the challenging state academic content and student achievement standards described in NCLB, 1111 (b)(1).

Section 3113 of NCLB presents an integrated system of standards and assessment that requires all states to develop English language proficiency standards aligned to the state academic content standards and the state academic achievement targets set by the state for all students. State departments of education must align the English language proficiency standards to the English language proficiency annual measurable achievement objectives and the state curriculum and instruction. The Mississippi Curriculum Frameworks contain the curriculum and objectives for instruction in Mississippi. The English language proficiency standards are linked to the content achievement standards, curriculum and instruction, and the English language proficiency annual measurable achievement objectives, as seen in Figure 2.

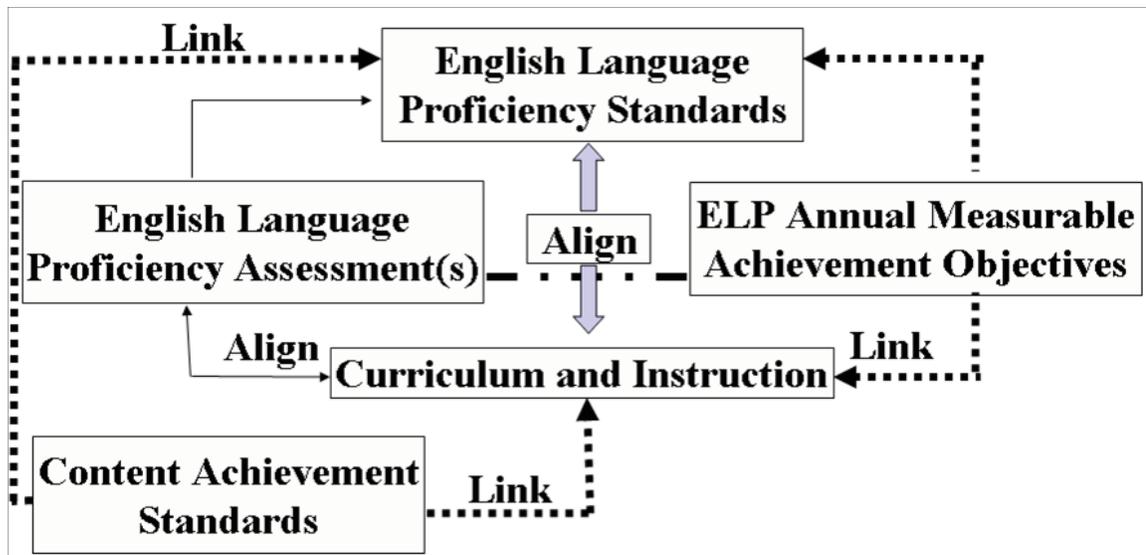


Figure 2 States must align English Language Proficiency Standards to the English Language Proficiency Assessments, the state curriculum, and the ELP Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives.

### **Title III of NCLB**

Title III NCLB federal funds are provided and explicitly set aside for states and school districts that apply for the money to assist culturally diverse students in English language acquisition. The Office of English Language Acquisition, United States Department of Education, implements Title III of NCLB by including various elements of school reform in programs designed to assist English language learners. Such programs place emphasis on high academic standards, school accountability, school flexibility, research-based practices, professional development, family literacy, reading, and partnerships between parents, schools, and communities. The purposes of Title III as set forth in PL 107-110 are to do the following (Title III, Part A, Sec. 3102):

1. Assist LEP students in attaining English proficiency
2. Assist LEP students in progressing toward higher levels of achievement in the core academic subjects
3. Provide guidance to the SEA and the LEA in developing and enhancing instructional education programs
4. Provide technical assistance to the SEA, LEA, and the schools in building their capacity to establish, implement and sustain language instructional education programs.
5. Assist in promoting parental and community participation.
6. Provide language instructional programs to SEAs and LEAs through grant formulas.
7. Ensure accountability of the SEAs, LEAs, and the schools for measured increases in English language proficiency and in the core academic content knowledge of LEP students as shown in English proficiency and adequate yearly progress (AYP)
8. Allow the SEAs and the LEAs flexibility implementing programs that are grounded in scientifically based research

Title III of NCLB provides each state with a state formula grant program. Each SEA submits a plan to the Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA), USDE, and contingent on its approval, is annually awarded a formula grant determined by the number of LEP and immigrant students and youth in the state. In turn, the SEAs use their allotment to award subgrants to LEAs whose Title III LEP/Immigrant plans have been approved by the SEA.

The USDE distributes Title III, Part A funds to states according to a formula that provides 80% of the funds based on the number of LEP students and 20% based on the number of immigrant students in the state. The amount of funding for the number of LEP and immigrant students and youth in the LEA is then determined by the state educational agency. Once the SEA has approved the district plan, it allots funding to the local school districts based on the number of LEP and immigrant students in that district (Title III, Part A, Subpart 1, Sec. 3111, 3, A, i, ii).

### **Title I of NCLB**

NCLB Title I funds are set aside for states and school districts that have met the requirements of receiving these funds, which are the improvement of academic achievement of the disadvantaged. The purpose of Title I is to ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach, at a minimum, proficiency on challenging state academic achievement standards and state achievement assessments. This purpose is aimed toward ensuring meeting the needs and fostering the academic success of low-achieving children in high-poverty schools, limited English proficient children, migratory children, children with disabilities, neglected or delinquent children, and young children in need of reading assistance (ESEA, 2002).

Title I funds are available to the SEA and LEA based on application and plan approval. Receiving Title I funds requires a description of how to use funds, a plan to implement use of the funds, and a plan to evaluate programs and projects assisted under this title. PL107-100 states that Title I funds may include joint planning among local, state, and educational programs serving migratory children, including language

instruction educational programs, state academic assessment, student achievement, and standards-based accountability to ensure that all students are properly served under Part B of Title III. Furthermore, Title I and Title III are intertwined providing support for all students, including ELLs, to meet the academic content standards and the academic achievement standards and to progress yearly to meet the annual measurable achievement program goals and outcomes for that year of study. (Title I, Part C, Sec. 1304). Thus, the education goal for all students, including the ELL population, shows a direct union of the two federal titles financially and educationally, as shown in Figure 3.

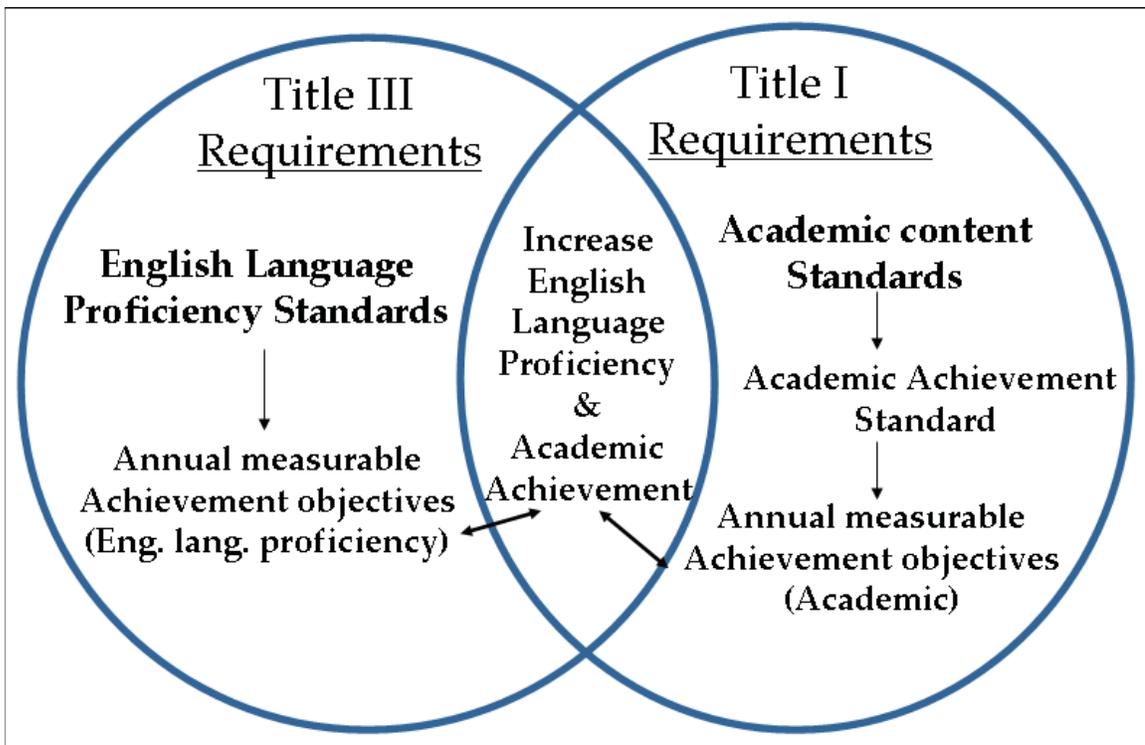


Figure 3 The overlap and union of the Title I and Title III programs reflect the educational expectations as required by NCLB, 2002.

The overlap and union of Title I and Title III are noted as follows:

- English Language Proficiency Standards, Title III (for LEP students only)
- Academic Content Standards, Title I (for all students including LEP students)
- Student Academic Achievement Standards, Title I (for all students including LEP students)
- Title III English Language Proficiency Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives (for LEP students only)
- Title I Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives (for all students including LEP students)

Thus, English language proficiency standards define progressive levels of competence in the use of the English language, and the English language proficiency levels set clear benchmarks of progress that reflect differences for students entering school at various grade levels.

### **Accountability**

States are not only required to develop standards and objectives for ELLs but are also required to annually assess and evaluate English language proficiency for K–12 students identified as LEP. All students identified as LEP must be assessed annually even if they are not served under Title III or I. Also, as of the 2002–2003 school year, all LEP students in grades 3–12 are to participate in all state academic content area assessments (NCLB, 2002). These assessments provide for and ensure a stronger accountability of the SEAs and the LEAs, thus supporting stronger academic standards (Leos, 2006).

Linked to the accountability for LEP students are the evaluation requirements of the SEA and the LEA under NCLB. The evaluations are based on the number of students enrolled in the Title III programs and must include the percentage of students who are making progress in acquiring English language proficiency, including students who have achieved English language proficiency, those students who have transitioned into instructional settings that are not designed for LEP students, and those students who are meeting the same state academic content and student academic achievement standards as all students are expected to meet under the law (Miller, 2003). English language proficiency and academic achievement of ELLs is imperative in order for ELLs to meet the same annual measurable achievement objectives of all students as required by Title I and Title III under NCLB as shown in Figure 4.

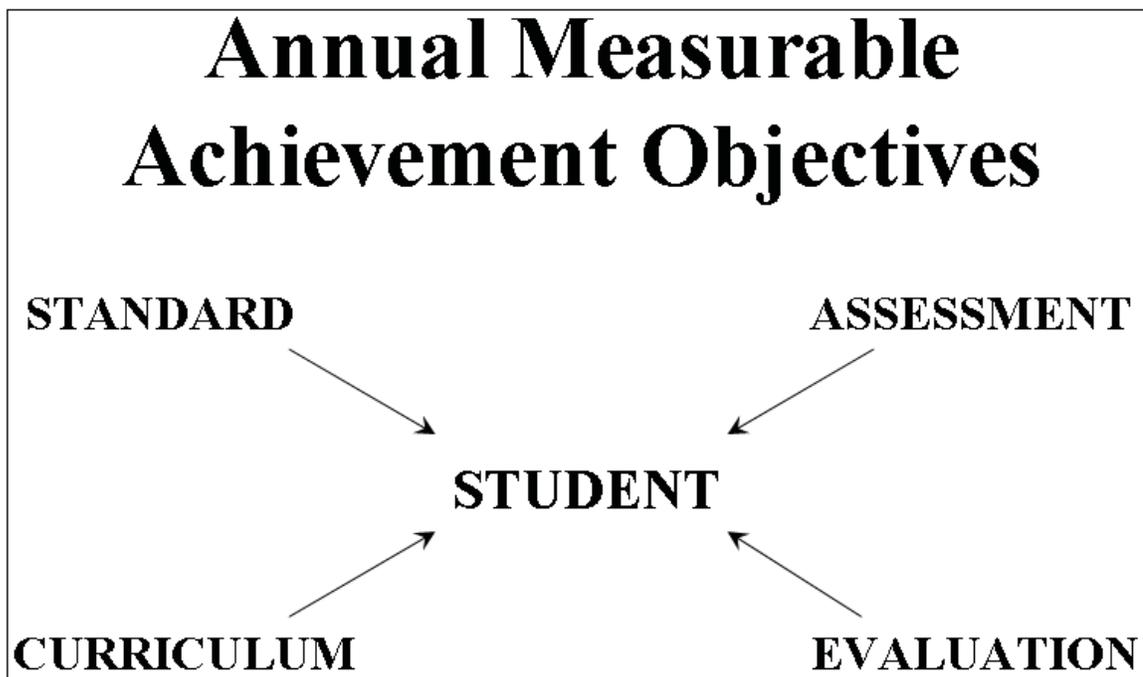


Figure 4 The Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives relate directly to English language acquisition in order to meet the academic standards.

The evaluation measures of LEP students should also be designed to assess the progress of the students attaining English proficiency. No Child Left Behind continually reinforces that all students must achieve a level of proficient in state assessments by the 2013–2014 school year (USDE, 2001).

According to Leos (2006), evaluation measures should be designed to assess the following:

- Progress of children in attaining English proficiency, including the level of comprehension, speaking, listening, reading, and writing in English
- Student attainment on state academic achievement standards on state-required content assessments
- Progress in meeting the annual measurable achievement objectives for English language proficiency

The SEA and LEA must then use these evaluations to do the following:

- Improve programs and activities
- Determine the effectiveness of programs and activities in assisting LEP children to attain English language proficiency and meet state academic standards
- Determine whether or not to continue specific programs or activities
- Determine if ELLs have met English language proficiency annual measurable objectives, including AYP

### **History of Assessment**

According to Webster (2006, p.134), assessment is described as “appraisal, the action or instance of assessing, or the amount assessed.” A more recent thought on assessment might be this one from Suske: “All assessment is a perpetual work in progress” (Mason, 1993, p. 4). Assessment is not new. As early as 2000 B.C., Socrates “used verbally mediated evaluations as part of the learning process” (Menges, 1997, p.3). Formal evaluations of students in the United States began during the mid-1800s (Travers, 1983). Prior to this time, politics and religion dictated education in the United States, and most efforts concentrated on programs rather than on improvement of student learning (Menges, 1997).

By the late 1800s, two purposes for educational assessment had evolved. One purpose was to make decisions regarding advanced placement, retention, special education for learning impaired students, and university acceptance. The second purpose of educational assessment was one of accountability due to specially funded programs (Menges, 1997).

During the 1830s, Mann and Barnard introduced data collection that would impact educational decision-making. Mann reported to the Board of Education in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts similar educational concerns of today such as teacher training and more support for economically disadvantaged students (Menges, 1997).

The testing movement was in full swing by 1918. Criterion-referenced tests, created to assess whether a student was mastering specific skills, were used to make educational and psychological decisions. Test formats that were conducted verbally

shifted to multiple choice and short answer to minimize testing and scoring time (Madaus, 1994). By 1920, the testing evolution had moved to norm-referenced standardized achievement tests for comparison, reliability, and increased efficiency. By 1930, half of the United States was implementing some form of a statewide testing program (Menges, 1997).

Events during the 1940s and 1950s, such as World War II, highlighted concerns about the effectiveness of the testing measurements and evaluation of the American public school systems. The launching of Sputnik in 1958 by the Russians and the civil rights movement beckoned for meaningful educational opportunities for all students, including second language learners. As a result of Sputnik, the National Defense Act of 1958 provided millions of dollars for educational programs in math, science, and foreign languages. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 focused on equal educational opportunities for all minority students and provided the impetus for the passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). This led to the development of program evaluation with federal dollars made available to schools. Senator Robert Kennedy challenged the Senate to assure that the ESEA requires educators to be accountable for federal funding (Fege, 2006). Court orders, the influx of cultural diversity in the classrooms, and federal mandates paved the way to reform in the areas of student learning and the assessment of student learning in the United States, including Mississippi.

### **English Language Assessment in Mississippi**

Prior to and during the 2002–2003 school year, school districts in Mississippi were permitted to choose the English language assessment they would administer to students of other cultures. According to Kaase (2004) at MDE, school districts were

predominantly administering the Language Assessment Scale (LAS) and the Individual Proficiency Test (IPT) to determine what level of English language acquisition the student was able to accurately use in the areas of listening, reading, writing, speaking, and comprehension. During this same period of time, Mississippi determined, based on compliance regulations with Title III, Title VI, and with the NCLB legislation, that there was a need for a uniform and consistent tool for measuring English language acquisition of language minority students. The Office of Academic Education, Mississippi Department of Education convened an English Language Acquisition Assessment committee to review and make recommendations to the MDE for an assessment for ELLs. This assessment was needed not only to measure English language acquisition but also to allow districts and the state department to track the progress of ELLs within a district as well as throughout the state uniformly over a period of time (Office of Academic Education, MDE, 2003). Recommended by the Practitioners Committee and approved by MDE was the SELP, which was implemented in February 2003.

The SELP test is a scientifically research-based assessment currently contracted in Mississippi for 5 years (Harcourt Educational Measurement, 2003). The SELP test is a standards-based assessment of English language proficiency grades K–12 (Harcourt Technical Manual, 2005). The SELP test published three forms: Forms A, B, and C. The SELP test is arranged in the categories Primary (K, 1, 2), Elementary (3, 4, 5), Middle (6, 7, 8), and High School (9, 10, 11, 12) (Harcourt Educational Measurement, 2003).

According to Harcourt Assessment Inc., (2005), the SELP was developed “to offer comprehensive solutions to help schools guide ELL students toward fully participating in English-language classrooms” (p. 5). Harcourt continues by reporting that

“this research-based test evaluates the listening, reading, writing, speaking, and comprehension skills of ELLs in grades K–12 and the score reports indicate whether students have acquired the basic oral and academic English skills to participate in English instructional settings.” In addition, Harcourt (2005) states, “because there is a wide variety of language groups and levels of proficiencies describing ELLs, the most meaningful information compares performance to benchmarks of proficiency”(p. 5). Harcourt reports that the SELP also measures proficiency in both academic (Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency, CALP) and social language usage (Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills, BICS). The SELP meets the requirements of NCLB by providing scores in the following skills: Productive (speaking and writing), Comprehension (listening and speaking), Social (listening and speaking), and Academic (reading, writing, and writing conventions; Abedi, 2007). The English language performance level of the student is based on a total combined score of each content area assessed (Slitt, 2003). According to Abedi (2007), prior to NCLB, previous English language assessments were not based on an operationally defined concept of English proficiency, had limited academic content coverage, were not consistent with states’ content standards, and had psychometric flaws.

Many variables exist in learning a second language and academic progress, e.g., literacy in the child’s first or home language, level and consistency of education in the child’s home country, ELL school environment, cultural differences, socioeconomic conditions, and transfer skills (Harcourt Assessment, Inc., 2005). Regardless, ELLs must quickly become adept at social language interaction for survival, but they are also expected to be able to understand, read, write, and explain concepts at an academic level

appropriate to their age and cognitive development at an increasingly rapid rate (The University of the State of New York, 2000).

### **Academic Content Assessment in Mississippi**

During the same time period that MDE was searching for an appropriate English language learner assessment and NCLB became law, MDE was also reviewing the results of the initial administration of the MCT in May 2001. The MCT is a criterion-referenced test (CRT) that is aligned with the Mississippi 2000 Curriculum Frameworks.

The criterion-referenced test implemented in Mississippi (MCT) may be used as one piece of information to determine how well the students are learning the desired curriculum and how well the school is teaching that curriculum. CRTs give detailed information about how well a student has performed on each of the individual benchmarks on the test. For example, “a CRT score might describe which arithmetic operations a student can perform or the level of reading difficulty he or she can comprehend” (U.S. Congress, OTA, 1992, p.170). As long as the content of the test matches the content that is considered important to learn, the CRT gives the student, the parent, and the teacher more information about how much of the valued content has been learned. Assessment of this type might also produce information that tells how well the student takes tests or how well a student makes correct guesses on a test.

The MCT is administered annually to all students in grades 2–8 and assesses reading, language, and mathematics. The MCT is designed to measure what Mississippi students are learning in Mississippi classrooms. The MCT has four proficiency levels (from lowest to highest): “minimal,” “basic,” “proficient,” and “advanced.” Students at the “basic” level demonstrate partial mastery of the content area knowledge and skills

required for success at the next grade level, whereas students at the “proficient” level demonstrate solid academic performance and mastery of the content area knowledge and skills required for success at the next grade level (see Appendix A for a detailed description of the MCT proficiency levels).

### **Assessment Accommodations**

The school district of this study follows the suggested avenues of accommodations as suggested in the Mississippi Guidelines for English Language Learners: Policies, Procedures, and Assessment (2005). Mississippi Code 37-16-9 ensures testing accommodations. Testing accommodations are considered changes in testing procedures that provide ELL students an equal opportunity to participate in situations and to demonstrate their knowledge and abilities. Accommodations can change the method in which test items are presented to a student and the ability of the student’s response to test items. Accommodations fall under four general areas:

1. Setting conditions, e.g., in a small group
2. Timing/scheduling conditions, e.g., additional time to complete the test
3. Presentation conditions, e.g., cue student to stay on task
4. Response conditions, e.g., native language dictionaries for ELL students  
(see Appendix B, Mississippi Guidelines, 2005)

At the secondary level, district governing boards determine whether to allow for linguistic accommodations for LEP students. In language arts, LEP students may be allowed the following accommodations (ADE, 2005):

- Translation dictionary
- Administer test in separate location.
- Administer test to small group.
- Reread directions for each page.
- Simplify the language in directions.

Even with accommodations, the argument continues among educators that the LEP students' academic and English language scores are not valid. According to Abedi, performance gaps for ELLs are mainly due to language factors. Accommodations, on the other hand, may yield unfair advantages for the ELLs (Abedi, 2002). Shelly Spiegel-Coleman emphasized that NCLB is pretty clear when it says there needs to be accommodations that yield valid and reliable results.

Recognizing that both federal and state legislation require that ELLs be included in large-scale assessments, Abedi (2004) pointed out that even though accommodations are intended to level the playing field when measuring performance, the use of accommodations requires a complex set of practical and technical decisions, and there is not enough research in support of this practice. According to Abedi, the decisions to use accommodations for ELL testing require the following information (Abedi, 2004):

1. Validity: Does this accommodation alter the construct of the assessment?
2. Effectiveness: What accommodations would be most effective in reducing the performance gaps between ELL students and non-ELL students that are due to language factors?
3. Differential impact: Which student background characteristics impact accommodated assessment?

4. Feasibility: Which accommodation(s) are more feasible, particularly in large-scale assessments?

Of these, Abedi states that validity is the most important. Accommodations should not give LEP students an “unfair advantage” over non-LEP students. However, the National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST, 2004) points out that accommodations may actually threaten the validity of an assessment. The CRESST research shows that the only accommodation that narrowed the gap between ELL and non-ELL students was linguistic modification of the test questions with excessive language demands. Therefore, Abedi concludes that more research is needed in regard to the complexity of accommodations and the impact of accommodations on high-stakes testing (Abedi, 2001).

When the federal ESEA was re-authorized in 1994 as the Improving America’s School Act (IASA), it mandated the annual testing of LEP students in Title I programs and required that all states create final assessment systems that would be inclusive of all students by the beginning of the 2001–2002 school year. In the 1998–1999 school year, states were trying out accommodations for ELLs in assessments. A study of the states’ process showed that most states were using accommodations that were designed for students with disabilities rather than accommodations designed to meet the linguistic needs of the ELLs (Rivera, Stansfield, Scialdone, & Sharkey, 2000). Appropriate accommodations are intended to ensure the validity of the test for all students yet not give an advantage to students who receive them over students who do not receive the accommodations. Education and measurement professional groups, such as the American Educational Research Association, the American Psychological Association, and the

National Council on Measurement in Education, have requested research information to assist in identifying appropriate, valid, and reliable accommodations for ELLs. Some reports have begun to appear in the literature, but studies involving accommodations are seldom seen. Thus, it is difficult to determine the effects of accommodations on the validity, reliability, and score comparability on core content assessments (Stansfield & Rivera, 2001). The MCT is untimed and allows for many accommodations for students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and ELL students (MDE, 2002).

#### Mixed Responses to Assessment of English Language Learners

According to Abedi (2007), literature on the assessments of ELL students has raised concerns over the validity of information from the variety of existing tests of English language proficiency. With the demands of NCLB, test makers and publication editors have actively sought to improve tests and products that will support assessments that are aligned to educational teaching strategies and methods. Many areas that have come to the forefront in this reform race have been to integrate and align areas of the curriculum, vertically and horizontally. Alignment of the curriculum has taken place with the standards and benchmarks but also with assessment instruments. Reformers emphasize that assessment is more than better tests. It affects the entire network of classroom practices (Mitchell, 1992).

The role of assessment with ELL students has presented many concerns and issues for educators, test makers, and policy makers for years. Cummins (2001) stated that the use of non-standardized, English-only academic language measures will underestimate bilingual students' progress and potential for at least 5 years after the

students start learning English. The use of standardized verbal ability tests for special education diagnosis and placement has resulted in significant overrepresentation of bilingual and culturally diverse students in classes for students with disabilities (e.g., “learning disability”) and under-representation of such students in classes for gifted and talented students (Cummins).

In support of bilingual education, Senator Edward M. Kennedy had this to say on the Senate floor on May 20, 1974, during the debate on what would become the 1974 Bilingual Education Act: “When the United States is the fifth largest Spanish-speaking country in the world and when a near majority of people in this hemisphere speak Spanish, surely our educational system should not be designed so that it destroys the language and culture of children from Spanish-speaking backgrounds.”

NCLB has led educators to take a much closer look at student learning and assessment of that learning. Jennings and Stark-Renter (2004) summarized this: “Clearly, our children are our future, and too many of our neediest children are being left behind” (p. 47). While NCLB now mandates the inclusion of LEP students in high-stakes tests; this has not always been the case in past years. Previous to this new mandate, the USDE has exempted students who have been in the United States or in an LEP/bilingual program for less than 3 years or who had not attained a certain level of proficiency (Holmes, Hedlund, & Nickerson, 2000). According to MDE, school districts were required to complete exemption forms from state testing for LEP students. This information would assist in documenting and tracking the number of years an ELL had been in a school system, the number of years in an English language acquisition program,

and the amount of time each student needed to acquire a basis of the English language system.

Additional flexibility under NCLB was implemented in determining AYP with the inclusion of first-year ELL students. MDE received approval from the USDE to exclude the test scores of ELL students who had been receiving ELL services for 1 year or less. NCLB requires that all students, including ELLs, be included in the accountability system and requires the establishment of separate measurable annual objectives in both mathematics and reading/language arts, for each of several target groups of students, including ELLs [20 U.S.C. §6311(b)(2)]. In order for a public school to achieve AYP, it must have a 95% participation rate in the required academic assessments for each target group of students [20 U.S.C. §6311(b)(2)(I)].

A school district may choose to include an ELL student's test scores in its calculations. If this is the desire of the district, an inclusion form must be filled out and submitted to the state department (MDE, 2004). In accordance with Mississippi Code 37-16-9, appropriate test modifications/accommodations are ensured to eligible ELL students.

LEP students are a unique subgroup among all of the NCLB subgroups, which include race, ethnicity, poverty, and disabilities. LEP students tend to exit the subgroup over a period of time, based upon each individual's rate of progress, and upon attaining proficiency in the English language (Schwartzbeck, 2003). "Exiting" may present new concerns for the ELL student, such as lack of security, and for teachers, such as a lack of ELL professional development, in regard to state assessment.

## **Assessment Requirements**

NCLB requires that all students in grades 3–8 be tested every year in reading, math, language arts, and science. Schools and districts must be able to demonstrate AYP, or corrective actions may be imposed on the school system (Coltrane, 2002). NCLB does not represent the first time that LEP students have been assessed. The ESEA of 1994 required states to adopt a standards-based system in which all students, including LEP students, were expected to reach the highest standards (Schwartzbeck, 2003).

With these laws, it is still reported that the achievement gap between the rich and poor and white and minority students continues to widen. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reported in 2000 that only 32% of fourth-graders could read proficiently and show academic achievement. Even though scores for high-performing students have improved over time, America's lowest-performing students' scores have continued to decline (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2001). Abedi and Dietel (2004) reported that there is often an achievement gap of 20–30 percentage points between ELLs and other students on statewide assessments, with ELLs scoring lower than their peers at the same grade level.

Escamilla (2003) reported in the research on the Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP) that Latinos taking an exam in Spanish scored the same or sometimes higher than Latinos taking the exam in English. However, all of the tested third- and fourth-grade Latino students' scores were significantly lower than all the third- and fourth-graders in the state. This report reflects that the achievement gap remains regardless of the language of the test. In Massachusetts a 10th-grade language arts state test was studied over 5 years and reported that only 8% of the ELLs scored in the

proficient range on the test. Compared to a 38% rate for all Massachusetts students, these results revealed a 30% gap in achievement for ELLs (Abedi, 2004). NCLB requires that schools report test scores to determine AYP. If AYP is not met in all tested content areas by all students for 2 consecutive years, including subgroups, e.g. ELLs, then a district may be placed “in need of improvement” (NCLB, Part A, Sec. 3122, (b)(2)).

Title III and Title I of NCLB require two types of assessments for ELLs: academic and English language proficiency. English language proficiency is not mandated for non-ELLs. This means that ELLs and their educators must work out the “trouble areas” of the additional assessments when compared to the regular mainstream group of students. States are required to evaluate the progress and achievement of ELLs in meeting the state’s reading/language arts academic standards. States must include all ELLs in their core content assessments for mathematics and science as well, provide testing accommodations (MS Code 37-16-9), and/or administer the test in the students’ native language (NCLB, Title I, Part A, Sec. 1111, (3)(D)(6)).

ELLs must be included in the state assessment plan immediately; the only exemption is if the student has been enrolled in a U.S. school for less than 1 year (MDE, 2005). Prior to NCLB, ELLs’ scores could be omitted for 3 years and possibly an additional 2 years while the students learned English. There are no longer any exemptions based on the lack of time to acquire the English language (USDE, 2003). Title I Section 1111 (b)(7) requires each state to annually assess the English proficiency of all ELLs in all areas of learning English. Even limited English proficient students (LEPs) must be included in the academic assessment system. According to Title I of NCLB, ELLs assessed in the core academic areas must be assured the following:

1. Reasonable accommodations
2. Assessments that are in the language that will provide results on what the students actually know in those core content areas, regardless of their English language proficiency level

Under Title I, states must provide the following information and report it annually as part of the assessment requirements and process:

1. Identify students' languages in the population tested.
2. Identify languages that are needed for academic assessments.

Coupled with Title I, Title III of NCLB, mandates the following requirements in association with assessment of ELLs:

1. States must develop annual measurable achievement objectives (AMAO) to measure the English language acquisition progress.
2. Meet state academic standards in the core content areas.
3. Provide how long the ELL has been enrolled in an English language educational program.
4. Provide the percentage and number of ELLs showing progress in English language acquisition and/or attaining proficiency in the English language process, as indicated on a reliable English language proficiency assessment, as indicated in Title I, Section 1111 (b)(7).
5. Provide the percentage and number of ELLs achieving adequate yearly progress (AYP) as required in Title I, Section 1111 (b)(2)(B).

## Gaps in ELL Research

The Coachella Valley Unified School District v. California, No. 05-505334 (Cal. Super. Ct., May 25, 2007) was a suit over how the Coachella Valley Unified School District tests ELLs in California. Under California law, all ELLs must participate in the California state tests in English after 1 year in school. The state trial court ruled that the State of California was not required to provide state assessments in the native languages of the LEP students in order to be in compliance with NCLB. Due to poor ELL achievement test scores, the Coachella district did not meet AYP and thus was classified “in need of improvement” (Coachella Valley Unified Dist. v. Calif., No. 05-505334).

Cases such as Coachella Valley Unified School District v. California verify that much emphasis is being placed on the academic assessment of ELLs because of the requirements of NCLB and how test scores impact schools’ and district ratings and levels. However, there is still another side of assessment for ELLs—English language assessment. Even though the federal government grants flexibility to states to choose their English language assessments and their ELL programs, the USDE is questioning the choice of test.

For example, Virginia utilizes the SELP, as Mississippi, for its English language proficiency test and to assess the students’ reading achievement. The SELP does not measure grade-level proficiency, which gives an incomplete picture of the student’s academic progress. Virginia stated that it would select a more comprehensive exam to meet the needs of the ELL students but reversed that decision and asked for an extension to continue using the SELP for reading. This makes Virginia the only state requesting not to use a standards-based exam to assess reading (USDE, 2007). In response, U.S.

Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings (2007) stated that NCLB calls for ELLs to “meet the same challenging state academic content and student achievement standards as all children are expected to meet. It’s a key tool in an effort to combat the ‘soft bigotry of low expectations’”(para. 5-6). Continuing, she stated, “If we want them [ELLs] to learn with their peers and achieve the American dream, we have to pick up the pace. The Education Department has been more than accommodating to Virginia; Virginia is dragging its feet”(para. 2).

Posed throughout the research in regard to ELL students are the same recurring gaps. First, concern is noted with the English language and academic progress of ELLs. Second, there is controversy over the validity of assessment of ELLs. Third, there is a recurring concern nationally if states and local districts are in compliance with NCLB. And last, “ELLs are the nation’s fastest growing student population in the United States” (Spellings, 2007). According to Abedi (2004), besides the increasing numbers of ELLs, other variables contributing to the gap of ELLs’ academic progress and English language acquisition progress include the need for highly qualified teachers, tutoring programs, valid accommodations, smaller classes, and a research-based program that is effective with a diversity of ELLs in one school and/or within a district. Abedi (2004) states that accommodations can affect ELLs’ performance on standardized tests. Abedi’s research shows that other forms of exams are the most reliable to assess an ELL’s true knowledge.

Jennings and Stark-Renter (2004) reported that only one third of the ESL teachers in the United States have received special training in the ESL field. Cynthia Ryan, director of the OELA Professional Development Division, states, “Many states are not traditionally known for having programs to serve ELLs, so we have a growing number of

teachers who have ELLs in their classrooms but who have little or no preparation” (Shreve, 2005, para. 6). With ELL students’ being among the neediest of any subgroup, logic follows that they require the most help (Jennings & Stark-Renter, 2004). The success of ELLs is a major issue for school districts. According to Dillon (2005), “if we fail this group, we fail the students and fail to provide trained workers for our state’s economy” (p.14).

NCLB holds states and local agencies and schools accountable to monitor and report English language acquisition progress and academic progress of ELLs each year. NCLB requires that ELLs show progress each fiscal year and that English language learners demonstrate improvement in adequate yearly progress. The need for this study is not only to show the progress of ELLs on the SELP and the MCT but also to show the relationship, if any that may exist between the two assessments. This longitudinal study over a 3-year period has not previously been researched in a district in Mississippi. Filling this gap in the literature may possibly provide insight for curriculum, teacher professional development trainings, and alternate methods of assessing English language learners.

#### Summary of Literature Review

Public schools’ obligation under NCLB, with the guidance of state and federal agencies, is to provide an equitable education for language minority students including identification, placement, assessment, equitable instructional programs, certified staff, and supplemental services as needed (NCLB, Part A, Subpart 1, Sec. 3111).

Accountability beginning in the late 1800s preceded NCLB. Because of the accountability mandate in NCLB, the use of data collection and test results was

implemented to monitor student progress and influence educationally sound decision-making. These processes paved the way for wide-scale assessment, and by 1920 the testing evolution had moved to norm-referenced and standardized achievement tests. With the launching of Sputnik in 1958 and the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the focus was on equal opportunities for minority students. Due to the influx of cultural diversity in the classroom and the impact of the ESEA of 1994, parents, educators, and other stakeholders questioned areas of assessment.

From this era, norm-referenced, criterion-referenced, standard-based, and standardized achievement tests created an assessment roller coaster ride for ELL students, their parents, educators, and stakeholders. According to Leos (2005), one factor prompting the need for a new form of assessment was the influx of cultural diversity in America's schools.

NCLB now mandates that ELLs be included in high-stakes testing. This has not always been the case. At one point, USDE exempted ELLs from testing, if they had been in the United States or in a LEP/bilingual program for less than 3 years or had not attained a certain level of English language proficiency (Holmes, Hedlund, & Nickerson, 2000). Currently, the only exception from high-stakes testing is if the ELL has been enrolled in a public school for less than a full school year (MDE, 2006).

High-stakes testing is required of all students as an evaluation of content-area knowledge. The ESEA of 1994 required states to adapt a standards-based system in which all students, including ELLs, would be held to the highest standards (Schwartzbeck, 2003). The research shows that an ELL taking a standardized test in English may be greatly influenced by the student's English language proficiency; testing

is most always done in English and thus does not necessarily measure the content-based knowledge of an ELL but rather their English skills (Council of Great City Schools National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition, 2002).

Federally funded monies under NCLB Title I and Title III (Section 1111 (b)(7)) also guide the equitable education of ELLs. Title I and Title III mandate academic and English language proficiency assessment of ELL students. Coupled with these assessment mandates are testing accommodations ensured by Mississippi Code 37-16-9. According to Abedi (2004), there is not enough research to support the implementation of accommodations and the validity of the assessment. A study of the state assessment process, utilizing accommodations, indicated that most states, including Mississippi, were using accommodations that were designed for students with disabilities rather than accommodations to meet the linguistic needs of ELLs (Rivera, 2000). Abedi and Rivera (2004) concurred that support for appropriate accommodations is intended to ensure validity of the test for all students yet not give the ELL an advantage over the non-ELL student. Thus, the evaluation measurement groups, including the American Educational Research Association and the American Psychological Association, have requested additional research information to assist in identifying appropriate, valid, and reliable accommodations for ELLs (Stansfield, 2001).

Because of the growing numbers of ELLs in Mississippi and the requirements of NCLB, the purpose of this study is to investigate the gap between English language acquisition progress and academic progress of ELL students in a suburban school district in Mississippi. This study will reveal the level of compliance with NCLB and Title III and the alignment of ELL standards to state assessments.

According to Abedi (2007), assessment impacts ELLs' academic lives in different ways. Assessment of ELL students, in the classroom, affects planning of their curriculum and instruction on a daily basis. ELL assessment plays a major role in the classification and grouping of ELLs. Thus the student's level of English proficiency serves as the most important criteria for classification that determines the level of proficiency in English. This, in turn, guides the prescription of any needed instruction and instructional materials that will ultimately impact the ELLs' progress, achievement, and assessment.

Other variables noted that are mandated under NCLB and that affect the progress of ELL content and English language acquisition assessment include highly qualified staff, tutoring programs, smaller classes, research-based programs, accommodations, modifications of content tailored to meet students' needs in the classrooms, testing conditions, and trained test administrators (NCLB, 2002).

“Call it the Standards Clause. To help students achieve, we must first know how they are doing. NCLB calls for schools to help limited-English-proficient students” (Spellings, 2007, para.6). USDE recognizes the urgency for these mandates to be addressed in order that English language learners do not drop out of school, face a life of diminished opportunity, or fall through the cracks (USDE, 2004).

The fair and valid assessment of ELL students is among the top priorities on the national agenda (Francis, Rivera, Lesaux, Kieffer, & Rivera, 2006). NCLB mandates the reporting of adequate yearly progress (AYP), and NCLB Title III requires states to assess ELLs' level of English language proficiency using reliable and valid assessments. These results are needed to guide instruction, placement, progress reporting, and decision making (Abedi, 2007). Congress passed the NCLB Act with the goal of increasing

academic achievement and closing achievement gaps among different student groups, including those with limited English proficiency. Under NCLB, state agencies are held accountable for the progress of ELLs with regard to both language proficiency and academic content (NCELA, 2002a). Based on an in-depth search by the researcher, no other study has been located that relates to the academic progress and English language acquisition progress of ELLs in the state of Mississippi.

The researcher notes that one other study in Colorin, Colorado, is similar in its research efforts, but no other studies were found in a district in Mississippi to ascertain information from a critical evaluation of the progress and achievement of ELLs on the SELP and the MCT in Mississippi, determining the relationship, if any, between the two assessments. This study will endeavor to do so.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODS

#### Introduction

NCLB was the impetus for this study to research the academic progress and English language acquisition progress of ELLs. Because NCLB mandates that states and school districts show ELLs' progress in acquiring English and ELLs' progress in academic achievement, the purpose of this study was to determine the relationship, if any, of the English language acquisition progress of ELLs on the SELP and their academic progress on the MCT in a suburban school district in Mississippi. The research has shown that, except for a similar study in Colorado, this study has not been conducted in Mississippi. This chapter presents the research design, the participants involved in the study, a description of the instrumentation used in collecting the relevant data, procedures, and analysis of the data collected.

#### Research Design

The research methodology of this study is a non-experimental quantitative approach. The quantitative approach was chosen because data were collected from test scores of a convenience sample group and statistically analyzed in order to answer the questions in the study. The convenience sample yielded 64 ELLs in grades 2–8 who were

enrolled in the school district of this study for 3 consecutive years. The sample was obtained through the school record system.

Statistical tests used to analyze the data in order to answer the research questions included the *t*-test, the ANOVA (analysis of variance), and the Pearson correlation. The *t*-test was used to assess the mean scores of the ELLs on the MCT and SELP. The ANOVA was used to analyze the data to determine if there were significant differences between the means, if any, of the independent variables on the MCT and SELP (e.g., grade and MCT, language and MCT, grade and SELP, etc.). The Pearson correlation was used to determine any relationship between the SELP and the MCT assessments.

The results of the analysis of the data answered each question in the study with a statistical summary of results in tables, figures, and narrative summation. The quantitative process precisely described the procedures throughout the study.

The advantages of non-experimental research are the following (Mosby, 2006):

- Important to developing a knowledge base about phenomenon of interest
- Important when randomization, control, and manipulation are not appropriate or possible
- Useful in testing how variables work together in a group in a particular situation
- Useful in forecasting predictions

Despite its limitations for studying cause and effect, non-experimental research is very important in education (Johnson, 2001). The researcher revealed ELL progress in English language acquisition and academic progress based on the overall summative

scores of the participants in the study. This research design spanned a period of 3 consecutive school years.

This study addresses the following questions:

1. What was the English language acquisition progress, as measured by the SELP, of ELLs in grades 2–8 during the 2002–2005 school years in the suburban public school district in Mississippi?
2. What was the academic progress, as measured by the MCT, of ELLs in grades 2–8 during the 2002–2005 school years in the suburban public school district in Mississippi?
3. What demographic variables, if any, affect ELLs' language progress and academic progress in grades 2–8 during the 2002–2005 school years in the suburban public school district in Mississippi?
4. What is the relationship, if any, between the ELLs' progress and academic progress in grades 2–8 over a during the 2002–2005 school years in the suburban public school district in Mississippi?

The dependent variables studied are the scores on the SELP and the MCT. The independent variables include grade, gender, first language, and the length of time an ELL has been in school in the United States. Significance of the independent variables on the effect of the ELLs' SELP progress on the MCT achievement has been analyzed. The predicted result is that the longer an ELL has been in school in the United States, the better the ELL would score on the MCT.

The intent of this study, then, was to determine the relationship, if any, of the ELL's progress on the SELP and the ELL's academic progress on the MCT.

## Population

This study was confined to a suburban Mississippi public school district that encompasses approximately 800 square miles and includes 25 schools in eight attendance zones. The school board has established attendance zones consisting of neighborhood schools that include students in grades K–12. There are 14 elementary schools, 4 middle schools, and 7 high schools (District Pamphlet, 2006).

This school district, comprised of 17,000 students, is the third largest district in the state of Mississippi, with a teacher-to-student ratio of 1 to 16. In 2003, the county population was 121,758, a 5.6% increase from the year 2000. It is estimated that the population will be 132,365, a 14.8% increase, by the year 2008 (Rankin County School District, 2005).

The district's ethnic diversity reports indicate the following breakdown: White-12,150; Black-1,717; Hispanic-199; Asian-189; and Native American-13 students. Of the 343 limited English proficient students enrolled in this district, 13 are receiving special education service, and 32 are receiving services in the gifted and talented programs (MSIS, 2005).

This study included 64 ELLs who attended schools throughout the school district in grades 2–8 and who were enrolled in this school district for the 3 consecutive school years (Mississippi Student Information System, 2005). The participants were selected based on the accessible ELL population at the time of this study. The selection process for individuals in this study was a convenience sample in which the participants were chosen based on their convenience and availability. Because this study was a

convenience sample, the results of this study may not have population generalizability. Of the 64 students in the study, Figure 5 presents the ELL ethnic representation.

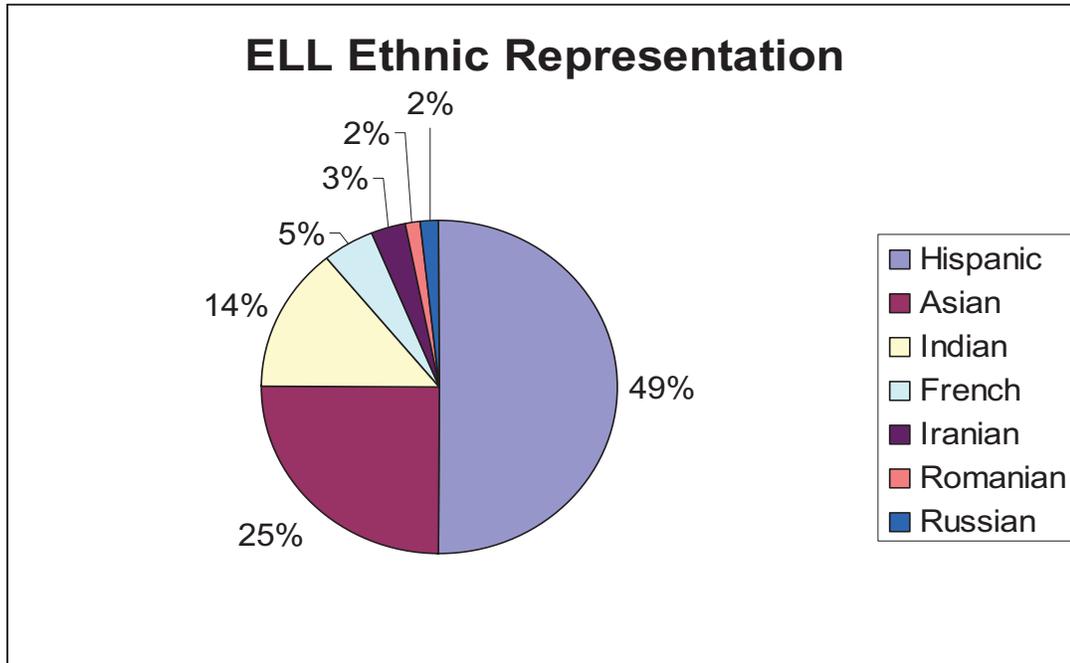


Figure 5 Ethnic Representation of ELL students

In this study there were 28 female ELL students and 36 male ELL students. Of these, there were 21 in the fourth grade, 22 in the fifth grade, 15 in the sixth grade, 4 in the seventh grade, and 2 in the eighth grade. These students of different ethnic backgrounds bring with them different languages. There were no students in grades 2 and 3 meeting the criteria for this study. Twenty-six languages are represented in this school district, with the following languages represented in this study: French, Spanish, Vietnamese, Portuguese, Korean, Bangla, Hindi, Gujarati, Chinese, Iraqi Arabic, and Russian (MSIS, 2005). The time frame of this study is from August 2002 through May 2005.

## Instrumentation

The test scores were collected from the SELP and the MCT from the district of this study. The quantitative data collections were based on predetermined instrument-based questions and performance data.

Statistical tests chosen to analyze the data in order to answer the research questions included the *t*-test, the ANOVA (analysis of variance), and the Pearson correlation. The *t*-test was used to assess the mean scores of the ELL on the MCT and SELP and answer questions 1 and 2. The ANOVA was used to analyze the data to determine if there were significant differences between the means, if any, of the independent variables on the MCT and SELP (e.g., grade and MCT, language and MCT, grade and SELP, etc.) to answer question 3. The Pearson correlation was used to determine any relationship between the MCT and the SELP assessments to answer question 4.

### **SELP – Measure of English Language Acquisition**

The SELP was administered to the subjects in this study. The SELP was selected and mandated by the MDE for grades K–12 to assess the progress and the English language proficiency of students whose first language is not English. Harcourt Assessment, Inc. publishes this test. This test (Forms A, B, C) is divided by grades as follows: Primary (K, 1, 2); Elementary (3, 4, 5); Middle Grades (6, 7, 8); and High School (9, 10, 11, 12). Five subtests are included in the SELP (Harcourt Assessment Inc., p. 5, 2005). Each subtest contains multiple-choice items and is structured so that the first items of the test begin with the lowest ability, assessing words and phrases, and as the test

proceeds continues through more difficult items (Harcourt Assessment Inc., p. 6, 2005b).

Each subtest is described as follows:

- Listening – This subtest features idiomatic spoken English and is intended to assess student comprehension of authentic spoken English. The listening subtest begins at a sentence level and continues to more involved conversation.
- Writing Conventions – This subtest measures recognizing correctly spelled words, punctuation and capitalization, and grammatical structures.
- Reading – This area includes sight-word vocabulary and comprehension, beginning at the lowest level of proficiency. Within each level the difficulty graduates to an on-grade text for native speakers. The reading subtest includes fiction and nonfiction and informational and functional materials.
- Writing – This area includes students’ writing that measures appropriateness of accuracy of word choice, sentence structure, paragraph organization, and degree of fluency.
- Speaking – The goal of this area is to determine whether the student can communicate at a level to participate in regular classes. Included in this area are read/repeat aloud, sentence completion, storytelling, and social interaction (Harcourt Assessment, Inc., p. 16, 2005b).

## Validity

Harcourt bases its definition of validity on the current edition of the Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing: “Validity refers to the degree to which evidence and theory support the interpretations of test scores entailed in the use of tests...[and] is, therefore, the most fundamental consideration in developing and evaluating tests” (AERA, p. 23, 1999).

The SELP exhibits validity based on the test content, because it represents an appropriate sampling of skills, knowledge, and understanding in the domain tested. Evidence of validity has also been established based on relationships to other variables, such as native English speakers and other reading tests (Harcourt Assessment, Inc., 2005b). The validity of the SELP was supported based on relationships to three other variables (Harcourt Assessment, Inc., 2005b).

1. Performance differences between non-native and native English-speaking students taking the SELP
2. Relationship between the SELP and the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test (SDRT)
3. Relationship between the SELP and the Stanford Achievement Test

The results of the tests indicate the findings listed below:

1. There were significant differences in scores between non-native and native English-speaking students. The ANOVA supported the predicted results that the native speakers scored higher than the non-native speakers.
2. There was a strong correlation between scores on the SELP and the SDRT. The Pearson Product-Moment correlation coefficients ranged from

0.76 to 0.80. These scores supported the hypothesis that students who scored high on the SELP also scored high on the SDRT and students who scored low on the SELP also scored low on the SDRT.

3. There was a low positive correlation between the scores of the SELP and the Stanford.

The Pearson Product-Moment correlation coefficient ranged from 0.33 to 0.53. This showed that the high scores on the SELP corresponded with the high scores on the Stanford 9 and students who scored low on the SELP also scored low on the Stanford 9 (Harcourt Assessment, Inc., 2005b).

### Reliability

The reliability of the SELP is evidenced in its test accuracy, precision, and consistency. During the field-testing of the SELP, indices of internal consistency and alternate-forms reliability, as well as standard errors of measurement values, were calculated for the SELP (AERA, p. 29, 1999). The results indicated an Alpha ranging from 0.93 to 0.96 on the three forms of the SELP. These results support the consistency of the scores from form to form and indicate no significant difference. Thus, the reliability of the findings supports the validity of the SELP (Harcourt Assessment, Inc., p. 29, 2005b).

Items for this assessment were derived from an item writer team. This team was trained in the principles of item development and item review. The writers included ESL practicing teachers with a solid base of knowledge and expertise in the field of ESL. All items were peer reviewed, edited, and reviewed again. A bias and sensitivity review of

items was also conducted to ensure no offense or advantage was evident toward or among any one culture (Harcourt Assessment, Inc., p. 10, 2005b).

The SELP may be hand scored or electronically scored. Due to the cost and personnel to electronically score the test, the district of this study chose to hand-score the test. The writing and speaking portion of the test is scored using a rubric. The listening and reading test is scored and then all subtests are totaled (raw score). After the raw score is calculated, the student's performance level is determined from a table provided by Harcourt (Harcourt Assessment, Inc., p. 9, 2005b).

### **MCT – Measure of Academic Achievement**

The MCT was also administered to the subjects in this study as mandated by the MDE. This test is administered in May of each school year to all students, including ELLs. The test is designed to assess the students' progress and achievement in math, language arts, and reading at their current grade level. The MCT Reading and Language Arts Tests are aligned with the Mississippi Language Arts Framework, and the Mathematics test is aligned with the Mississippi Mathematics Framework 2000 and the Mathematics Instructional Intervention Supplements 2000.

### Validity

In September 2001, the MDE and CTB/McGraw-Hill organized and conducted a standard setting meeting in order to establish proficiency standard levels for the MCT for each content area—reading, math, and language—in grades 2–8. The committees comprised approximately 210 Mississippi teachers and were divided into nine subcommittees in order to cover the testing areas and grades. Committee members

defined the four proficiency levels for the tests (Advanced, Proficient, Basic, and Minimal) by choosing cut scores that set boundaries for these levels. Fifty multiple-choice items and five open-ended items for each content area were developed. Item validation and pilot was conducted in fall of 2000.

### Reliability

A team of Mississippi teachers comprised the test development teams that delineated the curriculum to be assessed at each grade level and developed the items for the test. Some items were from other tests, e.g., the California Achievement Test (CAT-6), and some were created by CTB/McGraw-Hill, a publisher of standardized achievement tests, for the MCT. Following the item tryouts, another team of Mississippi teachers reviewed item statistics and potential bias. The test is not timed and includes 50 multiple-choice questions in each content area (MDE, 2003). Each student receives a scale score and proficiency level indicating how well the student performed in each content area tested (MDE, 2007).

The MCT provides a proficiency level for each student tested, i.e., advanced, proficient, basic, or minimal—a scaled score—and indicates whether the student met the benchmarks in that content area. Each reporting category is broken down into curriculum objectives with number of points correct out of possible points allowed indicated (MDE, 2007).

Following administration of the MCT, the test is packaged and sent to CTB/McGraw-Hill to be scored electronically (MDE, 2007).

## Procedures

Data were collected from test results from spring 2003 through spring 2005. The participants were administered the SELP in February of each year of this study. The ELL instructor administered the SELP in the classroom of each student's English language instruction. The test was not timed and was hand-scored by the ELL instructor. The participants were also administered the MCT in May of each year of this study. The ELL student was administered the MCT in the regular classroom by his or her regular education teacher. The data from both of these assessments were analyzed for the purpose of measuring participants' progress and the relationship of the English language acquisition and academic achievement of the participants in this 3-year study.

A letter requesting permission to obtain student data for this study was sent to the superintendent of the school district (Appendix C). Permission to conduct this research was obtained from the Office of Regulatory Compliance of Mississippi State University (Appendix D). Scores were collected from the SELP and MCT for a 3-year period from the district if this study.

## Limitations of the Procedures

The limitations of the procedures included the inability to compare the results of analysis of the data because the MCT is criterion-referenced and the SELP is norm-referenced. Relationships and conclusions may be inferred from the data processed. Population generalizability is limited due to the sample size of the study. The results of this study apply only to this group of students. Other pertinent information on the participants was also withheld in order to be in compliance with the Mississippi State

University Review Board stipulations. The statistical methods used were intended to fill in the gaps of previous research in relation to the assessment of ELL students in United States schools.

### Data Analysis

This study focused on ELL student progress in the areas of English language acquisition and academics. It was a non-experimental study that required data collection and data analysis. According to Fraenkel and Wallen (p. G – 2, 2003), “data analysis is the process of simplifying data in order to make it comprehensible.” Thus, analysis of the data actually began the study with a descriptive account of background knowledge of English language learners.

Data collection included test results of the 64 subjects from both the SELP and the MCT over 3 consecutive years. Descriptive statistics, such as tables and figures, were used to organize, simplify, and present the data of student performance and progress. This method enabled the researcher to meaningfully describe the data analysis results with numerical indices or in graphic form.

The *t*-test was used to assess the mean scores of the ELL students on the MCT and SELP. The *t*-test was chosen because it is a parametric test of significance that is applicable to this data. It was used to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference between the means of the two independent samples: the MCT and SELP. The researcher utilized the one-way ANOVA (analysis of variance) to determine the statistical significance of progress on the SELP and the MCT. The ANOVA was used to compare the amount of between-groups variance with the amount of within-groups

variance. The level of significance was set at 0.05. The ANOVA was applied to ascertain the effect of the independent variables by testing the mean differences between two or more groups (e.g., grade, gender, number of years in the ELL program, and first language) on the SELP and the MCT. The results of the *t*-test and the one-way ANOVA provided the effects of the independent variables on the dependent variables, the SELP and the MCT, and answered research questions 1 and 2. The Pearson Correlation test was conducted to measure the relationship of the student's scores on the SELP with the scores on the MCT assessment. This test was chosen because it is an index of correlation appropriate to represent the data. It takes into account each pair of scores and produces a coefficient between 0.00 and either 1.00.

This study was designed to determine ELLs' progress on the SELP and their academic progress on the MCT, identifying any relationship between the two assessments. The limitations included (1) lack of parent understanding in being able to assist in students' learning English, (2) the level of understanding of parents to assist students in their education endeavors (e.g., homework, field trips, and studying for tests), and (3) the size of the sample. The findings and analysis of this study are reported in Chapter 4.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

This study examined the progress and achievement of 64 English language learners, grades 2–8, on the SELP and the MCT, as well as any relationship, if any, between the two assessments in a suburban school district in Mississippi. The data collected for this study revealed 64 students in grades 2–8 who had been in the school district and ELL program for 3 consecutive years. Presented in this chapter are the results of the ELL English language acquisition progress and academic progress and the relationship, if any that exists between the two assessments.

Research Question #1: *What was the English language acquisition progress, as measured by the SELP, of ELLs in grades 2–8 during the 2002–2005 school years in the suburban public school district in Mississippi?*

The *t*-test was used to assess the mean scores of the ELL students on the SELP. The SELP was administered to 64 English language learners in 2003, 2004, and 2005 in the district of this study. The *t*-test was conducted to determine if the means of the students' scores from each test year were different, indicating student progress of a total possible score of 850. The total average score for all ELL participants on the 2003 SELP was 648.1. One year later, in 2004, the total average score for the same participants on the SELP increased to 682.4. As measured by the *t*-test, this improvement in average test score was statistically significant at the 0.05 level,  $p = 0.001$ . All students demonstrated

significant improvement in English language acquisition as measured by the SELP from 2003–2004. Table 2 indicates the findings.

Table 2  
Pair SELP 2003–SELP 2004 (N = 64)

Paired Differences		95% Confidence Interval of Difference			<i>T</i>	<i>df</i>	Sig.
Mean	SD	SE Mean	Upper	Lower			
32.37	73.61	9.20	-14	-50.8	3.52	63	0.001

Of a total possible score of 849, the total average score for all ELL participants on the 2004 SELP was 682.4. One year later, the total average score for the same participants on the SELP in 2005 increased to 686.66. As measured by the *t*-test, this improvement in average test score was statistically significant at the 0.05 level,  $p = 0.017$ . All students demonstrated significant improvement in English language acquisition as measured by the SELP from 2004–2005. Table 3 shows the findings.

Table 3  
Pair SELP 2004–SELP 2005 (N = 64)

Paired Differences		95% Confidence Interval of Difference			<i>T</i>	<i>df</i>	Sig.
Mean	SD	SE Mean	Upper	Lower			
-4.2	20.10	2.57	0.94	-9.33	1.64	60	0.017

Research Question #2: *What was the academic progress, as measured by the MCT, of ELLs in grades 2–8 during the 2002–2005 school years in the suburban public school district in Mississippi?*

The *t*-test was used to assess the mean scores of the ELL students on the MCT. The MCT was administered to 64 English language learners in 2003, 2004, and 2005 in the district of this study. The *t*-test was conducted to determine if the means of the two years were different, indicating student progress. The total average score for all ELL participants on the 2003 MCT was 1612.466, out of a possible total score of 2353.6. One year later, the total average score for the same participants on the MCT in 2004 increased to 1669.365. As measured by the *t*-test, this improvement in average test score was statistically significant at the 0.05 level,  $p = 0.011$ . All students demonstrated significant improvement in academic achievement as measured by the MCT from 2003–2004. Table 4 indicates the findings.

Table 4  
Pair MCT 2003–MCT 2004(N = 64)

Paired Differences		95% Confidence Interval of Difference			<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	Sig.
Mean	SD	SE Mean	Upper	Lower			
-66.45	72.51	9.52	-47.38	-85.51	6.98	57	0.011

The *t*-test was again conducted to determine if the scores of the 2004–2005 test years were different, indicating student progress. The total average score for all ELL participants on the 2004 MCT was 1599.4. One year later, the total average score for the same participants on the MCT in 2005 increased to 1669.365. As measured by the *t*-test, this improvement in average test score was statistically significant at the 0.05 level,  $p = 0.013$ . All students demonstrated significant improvement in academic achievement as measured by the MCT from 2004–2005. Table 5 reflects the results.

Table 5

Pair MCT 2004–MCT 2005(N = 64)

Paired Differences		95% Confidence Interval of Difference			<i>T</i>	<i>df</i>	Sig.
Mean	SD	SE Mean	Upper	Lower			
-69.962	73.766	10.23	-49.425	-90.498	6.84	51	0.013

**Research Question #3:** *What demographic variables, if any, affected ELLs' language progress and academic progress in grades 2–8 during the 2002–2005 school years in the suburban public school district in Mississippi?*

#### Demographics of Population

Demographic information was obtained in order to analyze the effect of the demographic variables on the progress and achievement of the ELL students on the SELP and MCT assessments. Table 6 summarizes the demographic information collected.

Table 6  
Demographics of Population (N = 64)

Demographic	Percentage
<i>Gender</i>	
Female	43.7
Male	56.3
<i>Grade</i>	
Second	0.00
Third	0.00
Fourth	32.8
Fifth	34.3
Sixth	23.5
Seventh	06.3
Eighth	03.1
<i>First Language</i>	
Spanish	49.0
Eastern Asian Languages (Vietnamese, Chinese, Korean)	25.0
Middle Asian Languages (Bangla, Hindi, Gujarat)	17.2
Other (Russian, Romanian, French, Swahili, Iraqi Arabic, Portuguese)	08.8
<i>Number of Years in ELL Program</i>	
Three Years	26.6
Four Years	50.0
Five Years	12.5
Six Years	10.9

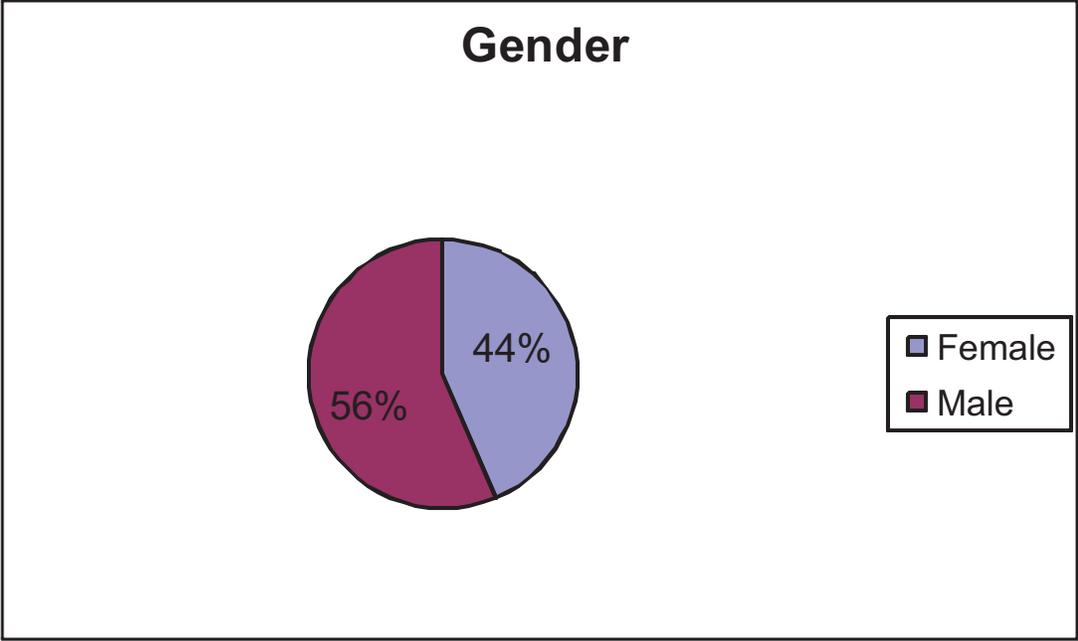


Figure 6 District ELL distributions by gender

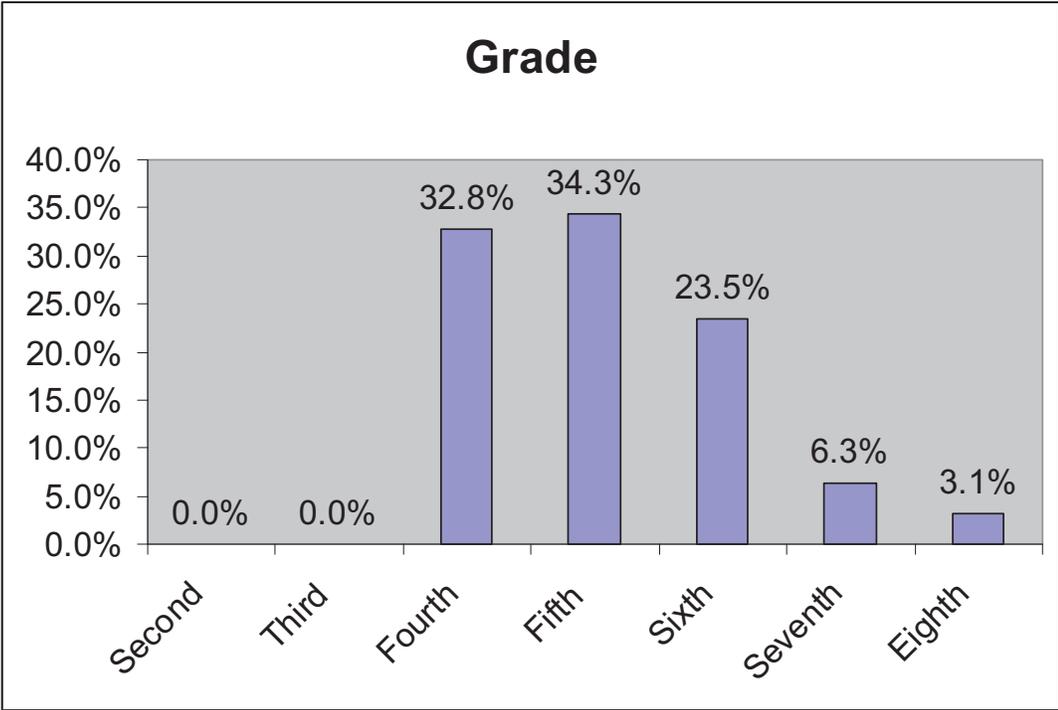


Figure 7 District ELL distributions by grade

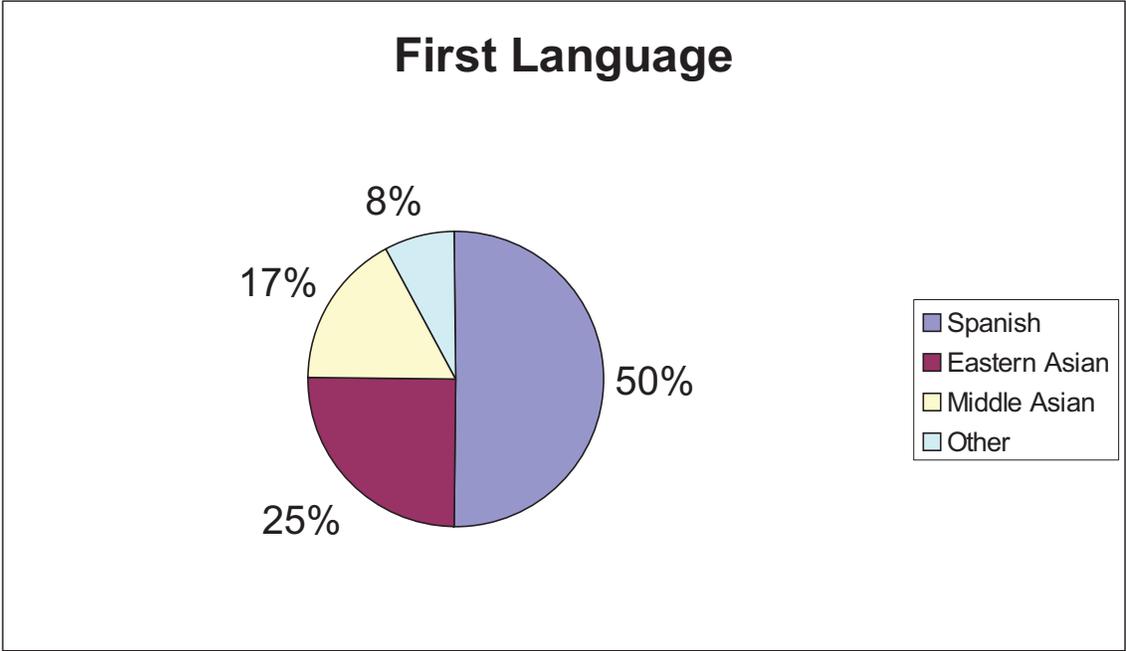


Figure 8 District ELL distributions by first language

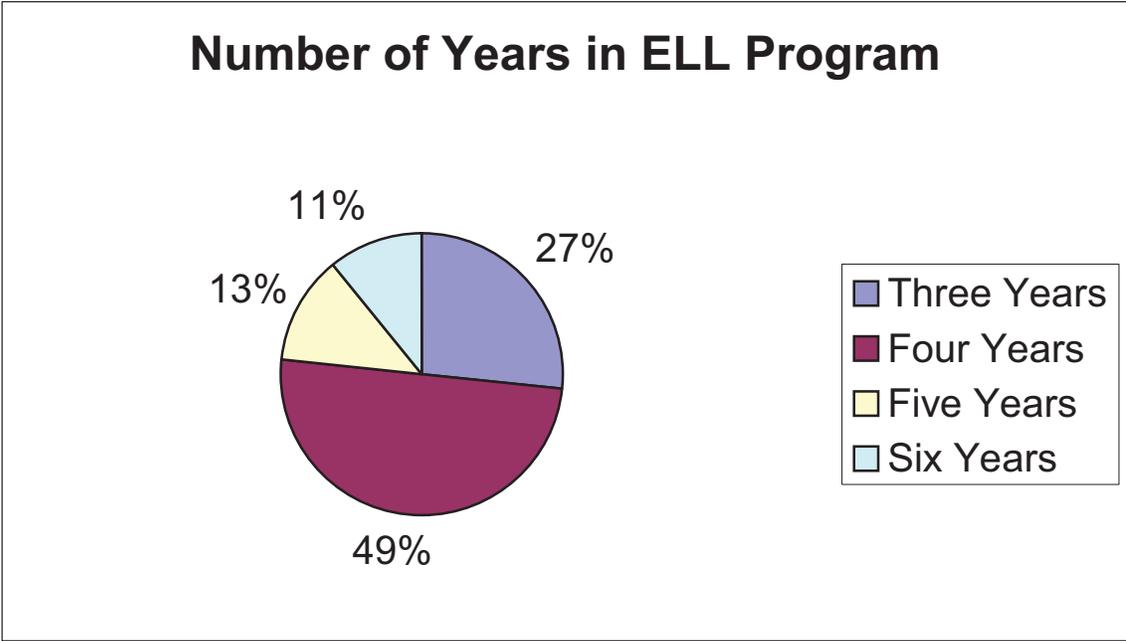


Figure 9 District ELL distributions by number of years in ELL program

### Effect of Demographic Variables on SELP Scores

Data were analyzed using the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) to determine the effect of the independent variables (gender, grade, first language, and number of years in the ELL program) for the group of participants on the dependent variable, the SELP assessment. The effect of each individual variable on the SELP found no significant differences in relation to number of years in the program, gender, and first language to the SELP for the 2003, 2004, and 2005 assessments. The results did indicate that there was a positive significance between grade and the ELL program to the 2004 SELP assessment. The results found significant positive differences as a result of the grade level of the ELL students, not to be confused with letter grades, on the SELP, 2004,  $F(2, 64) = 7.73$ , at the 0.05 level,  $p = 0.004$ . Thus, students in higher grades were more likely than students in lower grades to score higher on the SELP. Table 7 reflects the findings.

Table 7

Analysis of Variance for Grade and SELP 2004 (N = 64)

	Sum of Squares	<i>df</i>	Mean Square	<i>F</i>	Sig
Between Groups	12699.14	4	3174.78	7.73	0.004
Within Groups	24222.72	59	0410.56		
Total	36921.86	63			

Table 8  
Descriptive Statistics for Grade and SELP 2004

	<i>N</i>	Mean	SD	<i>SE</i>
SELP 2004	64	680.45	24.21	3.03

Significant positive differences were also noted between the grade level of the ELL students on the SELP, 2005,  $F(2, 64) = 3.80$ , at the 0.05 level,  $p = 0.008$ . Again, the results showed that students in higher grades were more likely than students in lower grades to score higher on the SELP. Table 9 indicates the results.

Table 9  
Analysis of Variance for Grade and SELP 2005

	Sum of Squares	<i>df</i>	Mean Square	<i>F</i>	Sig
Between Groups	7236.014	4	1809/004	3.796	0.008
Within Groups	26687.035	56	476.554		
Total	33923.049	60			

Table 10  
Descriptive Statistics for Grade and SELP 2005

	<i>N</i>	Mean	SD	<i>SE</i>
SELP 2005	61	686.56	23.78	3.04

### Effect of Demographic Variables on MCT Scores

Data were analyzed using the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) to determine the effect of the independent variables (gender, grade, first language, and number of years in the ELL program) for the group of participants on the dependent variable, the MCT assessment score. The effect of each individual variable on the MCT found no significant differences in relation to number of years in the program, gender, and first language to the MCT for the 2003, 2004, and 2005 assessments. The 2003 results found significant positive differences as a result of the grade level of the ELL students on the MCT,  $F(2, 63) = 6.01$ , at the 0.05 level,  $p = 0.003$ . Thus, students in higher grades were more likely than students in lower grades to score higher on the SELP. Table 11 reflects the findings.

Table 11

Analysis of Variance for Grade and MCT 2003

	Sum of Squares	<i>df</i>	Mean Square	<i>F</i>	Sig
Between Groups	630159.0	4	157539.7	6.01	0.003
Within Groups	154156.4	59	26128.21		
Total	2171723	63			

Table 12

Descriptive Statistics for Grade and MCT 2003

	<i>N</i>	Mean	SD	<i>SE</i>
GRADE	63	1563.21	186.97	23.56

The 2004 results from the ANOVA found significant positive differences as a result of the grade level of the ELL students on the MCT,  $F(2, 64) = 3.47$ , at the 0.05 level,  $p = 0.014$ . That is, the higher the grade level of the students, not the letter grades of the students, the more likely they were to score higher on the MCT. Table 13 shows the findings.

Table 13

Analysis of Variance for Grade and MCT 2004

	Sum of Squares	<i>df</i>	Mean Square	<i>F</i>	Sig
Between Groups	352489.50	4	88122.38	3.47	0.014
Within Groups	1346629.0	53	25408.09		
Total	1699118.0	57			

Table 14

Descriptive Statistics for Grade and MCT 2004

	<i>N</i>	Mean	SD	<i>SE</i>
GRADE	58	1612.47	172.65	22.67

The 2005 results from the ANOVA also found a significant positive difference as a result of the grade of the ELL students on the MCT,  $F(2,64) = 2.1$ , at the 0.05 level,  $p = 0.029$ . That is, the higher the grade level of the students, the more likely they were to score higher on the MCT. These results are noted in Table 15.

Table 15

Analysis of Variance for Grade and MCT 2005

	Sum of Squares	<i>df</i>	Mean Square	<i>F</i>	Sig
Between Groups	213769.31	4	53442.31	2.1	0.029
Within Groups	086429.86	48	18006.1		
Total	1078061.20	52			

Table 16

Descriptive Statistics for Grade and MCT 2005

	<i>N</i>	Mean	SD	<i>SE</i>
GRADE	53	1670.70	143.99	19.78

The data indicated that there was a significant impact of grade level on ELL students' English language acquisition and academic progress on both the SELP and MCT assessments, respectively. Thus, the implication is that as the ELL student proceeds from one grade to a higher grade, his or her progress increases on the SELP and MCT.

Research Question #4: *What is the relationship, if any, between the ELLs' progress and academic progress in grades 2–8 during the 2002–2005 school years in the suburban public school district in Mississippi?*

In order to answer this question, the Pearson Correlation test was conducted for the MCT and SELP dependent variables. A significant positive correlation was shown for each year of data between the MCT and SELP administered in 2002–2005.

The 2003 results indicated that there was a positive relationship ( $r = 1$ ), at the 0.05 level, (2-tailed),  $p = 0.042$ ,  $N = 63$ , between the MCT and the SELP test results. Thus, a student who scored higher on the SELP was more likely to also score higher on the MCT. These results are shown in Table 17.

Table 17  
Pearson Correlation of MCT and SELP 2003 (N = 63)

	<i>MCT</i>	<i>SELP</i>
<i>MCT</i>		
Pearson Correlation	1.000	0.257*
Sig (2-tailed)		0.042
<i>N</i>	63	63
<i>SELP</i>		
Pearson Correlation	0.257*	1.000
Sig (2-tailed)	0.042	
<i>N</i>	63	63

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Figure 10 is a pictorial representation of the relationship of the ELL students' scores between the 2003 MCT and 2003 SELP. The majority of the dots are all closely aligned and moving in the same direction, indicating that there is a positive relationship between the scores of the students on the 2003 MCT and the 2003 SELP. However, note the outliers in the figure. The one in the lower right corner indicates a high score on the MCT but a low score on the SELP. Similarly, in the upper left-hand corner, this outlier

indicates a high score on the SELP and a lower score on the MCT. These scores are of interest to the teacher and researcher as to why these students scored well in one area and not the other and also why they did not follow the pattern of the other students.

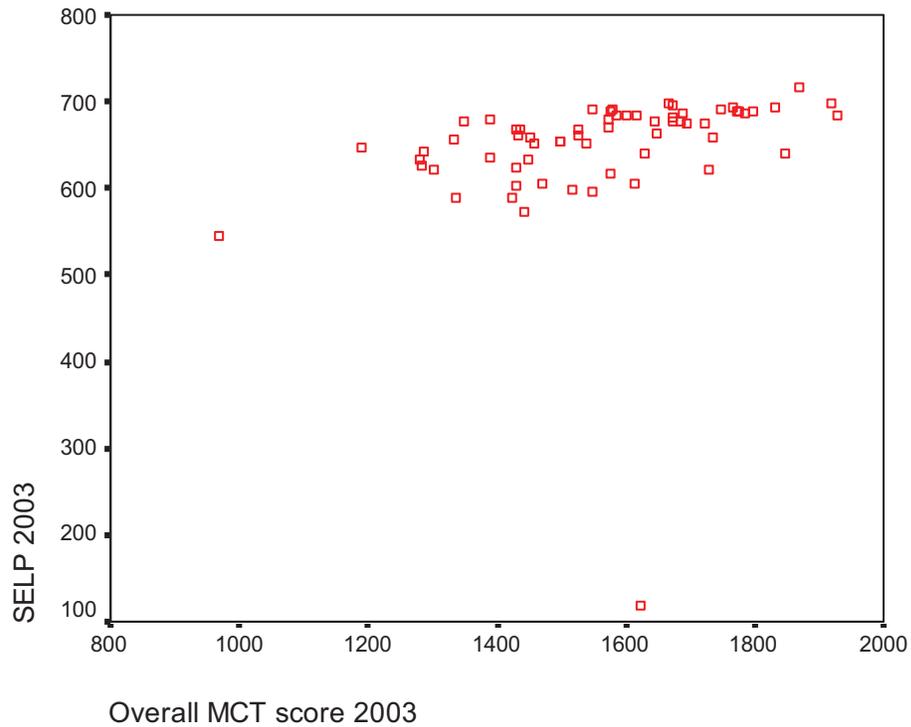


Figure 10 Scatter plot for 2003 MCT and SELP

The Pearson correlation test of 2004 yielded results that indicate a significant positive relationship ( $r = 0.919$ ), at the 0.05 level, (2-tailed),  $p = 0.019$ ,  $N = 63$ , between the MCT and the SELP test results. Thus, a student who scored higher on the SELP was more likely to also score higher on the MCT. These results are shown in Table 18.

Table 18

Pearson Correlation of MCT and SELP 2004 (N = 57)

	<i>MCT</i>	<i>SELP</i>
<i>MCT</i>		
Pearson Correlation	0.919**	0.738**
Sig (2-tailed)		0.019
<i>N</i>	57	63
<i>SELP</i>		
Pearson Correlation	0.738**	0.919**
Sig (2-tailed)	0.019	
<i>N</i>	63	57

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Figure 11 is a pictorial representation of the relationship of the ELL students' scores between the 2004 MCT and the 2004 SELP. The majority of the dots are all closely aligned and moving in the same direction, indicating that there was a positive relationship between the scores of the students on the 2004 MCT and the 2004 SELP. However, note the outlier in the figure. The one in the lower left corner indicates a low score on the MCT as well as a low score on the SELP. These scores are of interest to the teacher and researcher as to why these students scored low on both tests and also why they did not follow the pattern of the other students.

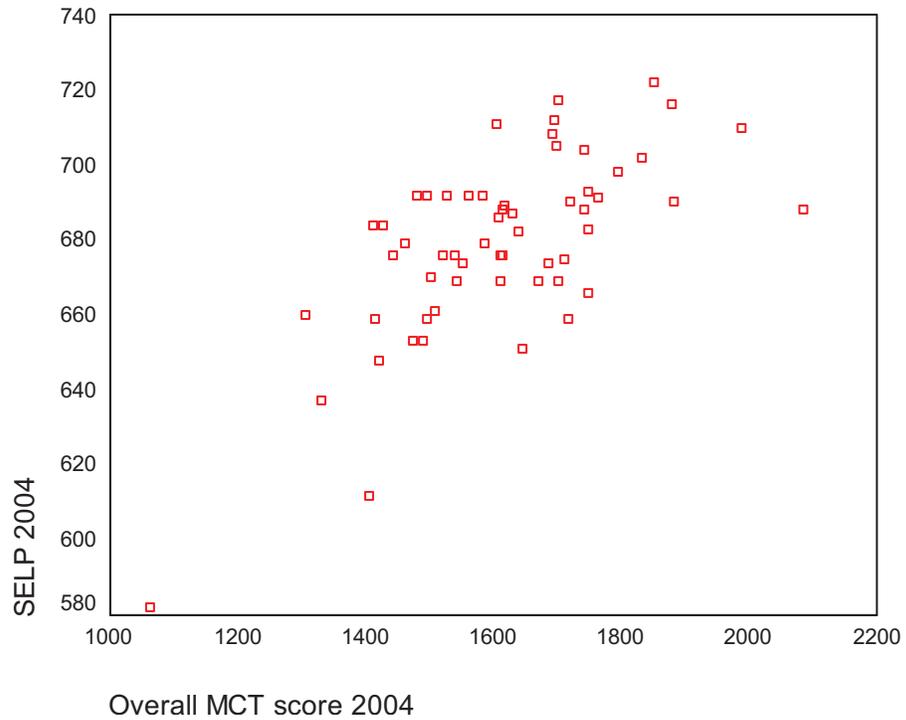


Figure 11 Scatter plot for the 2004 MCT and SELP

The 2005 results of the Pearson correlation test indicate a significant positive relationship ( $r = 0.396$ ), at the 0.05 level, (2-tailed),  $p = 0.039$ ,  $N = 63$ , between the MCT and the SELP test results. Thus, a student who scored higher on the SELP was more likely to also score higher on the MCT. These results are shown in Table 19.

Table 19  
Pearson Correlation of MCT and SELP 2005

	<i>MCT</i>	<i>SELP</i>
<i>MCT</i>		
Pearson Correlation	<i>0.856**</i>	<i>0.396**</i>
Sig (2-tailed)		<i>0.039</i>
<i>N</i>	<i>52</i>	<i>63</i>
<i>SELP</i>		
Pearson Correlation	<i>0.396**</i>	<i>0.856**</i>
Sig (2-tailed)	<i>0.039</i>	
<i>N</i>	<i>63</i>	<i>52</i>

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Figure 12 is a pictorial representation of the relationship of the ELL students' scores between the 2005 MCT and 2005 SELP. The majority of the dots are all closely aligned and moving in the same direction, indicating that there was a positive relationship between the scores of the students on the 2005 MCT and the 2005 SELP. Note the outliers in the figure. The one in the lower left corner indicates a low score on the MCT. The outlier on the upper mid-right top of the figure indicates a high score on the SELP. These scores are of interest to the teacher and researcher as to why these students scored low on the MCT, but high on the SELP, and also why they did not follow the pattern of the other students.

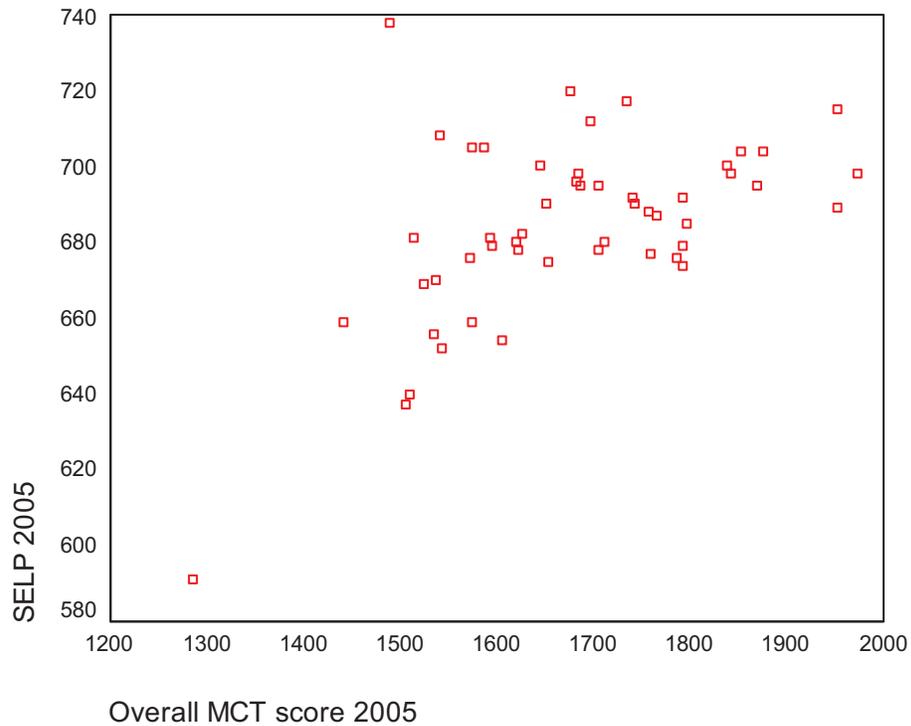


Figure 12 Scatter plot for the 2005 MCT and SELP

### Summary of Results

The results of the data yield the following conclusions:

1. The results of the English language acquisition of the ELL students in this study showed that the ELL students demonstrated significant progress in English language acquisition as measured by the SELP during the 2003–2005 school years in this public school district in the state of Mississippi.
2. The results of the academic achievement of the ELL students in this study showed that the ELL students demonstrated significant academic progress during the 2003–2005 school years in this public school district in the state of Mississippi.

3. Grade level of the ELL students, and not letter grades, had the single most positive affect on the ELL students' English language and academic progress during the 2003–2005 school years in this public school district in the state of Mississippi.
4. The results of the Pearson correlation test showed a significant positive relationship between the ELL students' language acquisition, as measured by the SELP, and academic progress, as measured by the MCT, during the 2003–2005 school years in this public school district in the state of Mississippi. ELL students demonstrated progress on both the SELP and MCT consistently during the years of the study.

CHAPTER V  
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the progress and achievement of ELLs over a 3-year period in a suburban school district in Mississippi. Thus, the study, based on the mandates of NCLB and guidance by the MDE, attempted to determine the effects of grade, age, gender, and length of time in an ELL program, of ELL student achievement on the SELP test and the MCT. From this data, an attempt was made to note any correlation or relationship between the two assessment scores.

In recent years, there have been an increasing number of ELLs enrolling in the district of this study, paralleling the trend across our nation. NCLB mandates that English language learners receive an equitable education (NCLB, Part A, Sec. 3102), in order to perform at their potential in the classroom and on all types of assessments, including state-mandated assessments. NCLB also mandates that ELLs be assessed yearly on their English language proficiency.

There is great emphasis on student achievement in schools across the nation, where schools, administrators, and teachers are held accountable and evaluated based on their students' achievement on standardized tests. These results affected the AYP and ranking of schools. Furthermore, other concerns such as NCLB mandates, schools' lacking effective ELL programs, schools' having high numbers of ELLs, the validity of

testing for ELLs, and the alignment of English language and academic assessments have also been reviewed in this study.

## Conclusions

Research Question #1: *What is the English language acquisition progress, as measured by the SELP, of ELLs in grades 2–8 during the 2002–2005 school years in the suburban public school district in Mississippi?*

The results of this study demonstrated that there was significant positive progress made by the ELL on the SELP between the years 2003 and 2004 and also between 2004 and 2005. In other words, the higher the grade level of the ELL student, the greater the likelihood of language progress. Factors supporting language progress and supported in the literature review might have been student–teacher relationships, and a teacher–parent bilingual support system. By 2004, the district of this study had an ELL director on staff, ongoing professional development for classroom teachers and ELL instructors, an ELL curriculum, and adequate materials that could have also impacted the positive results.

Significant positive progress was also made by the ELL students on the SELP between the years 2004 and 2005 in this study. There was also a significant positive difference noted for the 2005 SELP based on the impact of grade level of the ELL student. A student in a higher grade was more likely to have made greater progress than a student in a lower grade. With continued support of an ELL director, on-going professional development for administrators, classroom teachers and ELL instructors, an ELL curriculum, adequate materials, and diminished test anxiety could have contributed to these results. Furthermore, by this time in the study, additional bilingual teachers and a

parent program were added in the district of this study that also might have impacted the results of the study. The results to this question show that this district was in compliance with the mandates of NCLB, [Part A, Subpart 1, Sec. 1111(7)], which require that each state shall provide for an annual assessment of English proficiency of all ELL students in each public school district.

*Research Question #2: What is the academic progress, as measured by the MCT, of ELLs in grades 2-8 during the 2002-2005 school years in the suburban public school district in Mississippi?*

The results of this study demonstrated that there was significant positive progress made by the ELL on the MCT between the years 2003 and 2004 and also between 2004 and 2005. The literature review supports the positive results based on a supportive ELL tutorial program, on-going professional development, classroom teacher training, and implementation of ELL modifications and accommodations in the classroom and for testing administration. Accountability has been placed on teachers and administrators for ELL students to be afforded an equitable education and demonstrate progress on tests results. The findings here support why the district of this study met AYP in the subgroup of ELL for the 2003, 2004, and 2005 school years. The results to this question show that this district was in compliance with the mandate of NCLB, [Part A, Sec. 1111, (3) (III)(6)], which states that “academic assessments shall include limited English proficient students, who shall be assessed in a valid and reliable manner with reasonable accommodations”. It is further noted in NCLB, [Part a, Sec. 1111 (2) (B) (dd)], that AYP shall include achievement scores of students with limited English proficiency.

Research Question #3: *What demographic variable, if any, affected the ELLs' language progress and academic progress in grades 2–8 during the 2002–2005 school years in the suburban public school district in Mississippi?*

The results of this study showed that there was no significant relationship of the variables of gender, first language, or number of years in an ELL program on the ELL English language progress or academic progress. However, the study did find that grade level was a significant positive demographic variable on the SELP. That is, the higher the grade level of the ELL, the more likely he or she was to score higher on the SELP assessment. The results of the ANOVA also indicated a relationship between grade level and academic progress on the MCT test results. ELLs in higher grades were more likely than English language learners in lower grades to score higher on the MCT.

Research Questions #4: *What is the relationship, if any, between the ELLs' progress and academic progress in grades 2–8 during the 2002–2005 school years in the suburban public school district in Mississippi?*

The findings indicate that there is a significant positive correlation between the scores on the MCT and the SELP administered in 2002–2005. Based on the findings, this group of English language learners made significant positive progress on both the SELP and MCT over the 3-year period of this study. It must also be noted that the results showed that the grade level of the ELL impacted the results of the SELP and MCT for each year of the study. Thus, the results to this question indicate that this district, during the time period between 2002 and 2005, was in compliance with the mandates set forth in NCLB in relation to English language learners' progress in language acquisition and

academic progress. Furthermore, the results would be an indicator that the SELP and MCT are aligned with each other and were supported by the literature review.

At the beginning of the study, the researcher hypothesized that the longer an ELL has been in a school in the United States, the greater the English language acquisition and ability, resulting in the ELL at grade level on the MCT. The results of the data have shown that it is not the number of years an ELL has been in school but the grade level of the ELL that has had the most impact on the progress and achievement of the ELL in the district of this study. To clarify, all ELLs must be placed age-grade appropriate when entering a United States public school (*Plyler v. Doe* [457 U.S. 202 (1982)]). Therefore, many times there are no records of previous school attendance or the student entering a school in the United States for the first time has not been in school at all in the country he or she has left. Thus, the ELL may be enrolled in third grade because of his or her birthday but without any previous education or very little formal education and with little or no English language. The data indicated that as an ELL proceeded from grade level to grade level his or her SELP and MCT scores showed progress in language acquisition and academic progress with each higher grade level attained.

### Recommendations

The review of the research has suggested that the district of this study was in compliance with the guidance of the MDE and was in compliance with the mandates of NCLB, which require school districts to assess ELLs annually on English language acquisition and on state-mandated academic achievement assessments. The results of this study ELLs in their English acquisition and the progress in their academics will help not

only the individual test scores but also the test scores of the schools and district as a whole. This progress and achievement also enable the ELLs to become successful learners and future employees of the state and nation.

As the ELL population continues to grow in this district and across the nation, there is a continued need to evaluate ELLs' English acquisition as well as their academic achievement. Suggestions for future research based on the findings of this research include but are not limited to the following:

1. This study should be replicated using 2005–2008 school year data to determine if the same group of students' language acquisition and academic achievement yields similar or different results.
2. Research should be conducted to determine the relationship, if any, of disaggregated data of individual scores in reading, language, and math between the SELP and the MCT in order to determine areas of individual strengths and/or weaknesses of ELL students that may affect their overall SELP and MCT scores, thus providing areas to be addressed in instruction.
3. Research should be conducted to determine the relationship, if any, of the SELP and high school PSAT, SAT, and ACT assessments to provide data that would indicate whether the PSAT, SAT, and ACT are aligned with the English language assessment and whether any language bias exists on the content assessments.

4. Further research should possibly include a larger sample to support generalizability, e.g., a larger school district's ELL population or the ELL population in Mississippi.
5. Additional research might include a survey of students' views of their instruction, learning, test taking and performance on the SELP and the MCT that would provide teachers, administrators, and other stakeholders a cultural perspective of ELL learning and assessment as well as whether the assessments are measuring the ELLs' true knowledge base.
6. Further research should include a parent survey of the parental role on a child's English acquisition and academic achievement and if any information has been shared with the parents about the student's education in a comprehensible format in order to determine if parents have received information about the child's total education in a language the parents understand.
7. Further research should include the variables of teacher and student self-efficacy and their impact on the progress and achievement of ELLs. This information would contribute to the continued development of appropriate professional development for teachers of ELLs and provision of appropriate materials for ELL students and parents.
8. Research should be conducted to investigate the effectiveness of ELL programs to provide valid research for ELL districts across the state of Mississippi.

9. Research should be conducted to determine the level of understanding of administrators, school boards, and superintendents of ELL instruction in order to benefit the growth and development of programs that impact test scores and student progress.
10. Research should follow the group of students in this study to ascertain the number of high school graduates versus the number of dropouts in this ELL group, determining what impacted the end result.

According to Fraenkel (p. G – 7, 2003), research is the formal, systematic application of scholarship, disciplined inquiry, and most often the scientific method to the study of problems. Therefore, continuation of this study is needed to develop stronger professional development for teachers and administrators of ELLs; provide high-quality instruction and materials for ELLs; provide an awareness and deeper understanding of cultural diversity; bridge the gap between the school, the ELL parents, and home; comply with the mandates of NCLB; and foremost provide an equitable education for all children.

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APPENDIX A  
MISSISSIPPI CURRICULUM TEST PROFICIENCY LEVELS

## Mississippi Curriculum Test PROFICIENCY LEVELS

The Student Score Report for the Mississippi Curriculum Test provides information regarding how well a student has demonstrated mastery of the skills and content outlined in the Mississippi Curriculum Frameworks. In addition to numerical scores for Reading, Language, and Mathematics, the report will specify the proficiency (achievement) level that the student's score falls within.

The following chart describes the four proficiency levels for the Mississippi Curriculum Test.

Proficiency Level	General Descriptor
Advanced	Students at the Advanced level consistently perform in a manner clearly beyond that required to be successful at the next grade.
Proficient	Students at the Proficient level demonstrate solid academic performance and mastery of the content area knowledge and skills required for success at the next grade.  Students who perform at this level are well prepared to begin work on even more challenging material that is required at the next grade.
Basic	Students at the Basic level demonstrate partial mastery of the content area knowledge and skills required for success at the next grade. Remediation may be necessary for these students.
Minimal	Students at the Minimal level are below Basic and do not demonstrate mastery of the content area knowledge and skills required for success at the next grade.  These students require additional instruction and remediation in the basic skills that are necessary for success at the grade tested.

*The goal is for all students in Mississippi to perform at the proficient level or above (MDE, 2005).*

APPENDIX B  
ACCOMMODATIONS FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNER STUDENTS

## ACCOMMODATIONS FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNER STUDENTS

### SETTING CONDITIONS

#### **Allowable Accommodations**

- 01 At the front of the room
- 02 Facing the test administrator while directions are given
- 03 In a small group
- 05 In a familiar room
- 06 With a familiar teacher
- 08 In a study carrel
- 18 Other allowable setting accommodation

(The number, i.e., 01 and 08, listed before the accommodation is a code for the accommodation that is indicated on standardized test forms.)

### TIMING/SCHEDULING CONDITIONS

#### **Allowable Accommodations**

- 20 Additional time to complete test (within a reasonable time, not to exceed one school day)
- 21 With scheduled rest breaks
- 23 Until, in the test administrator's judgment, the pupil can no longer continue the activity

**NOTE: Accommodations 24 and 25 are related to administering the test over several sessions and/or days. Any extension in a planned test administration should be pre-arranged, and the procedure should be documented and in the student's file. If the student is testing over several days, he or she is not allowed to change responses to questions from the previous administration(s) or preview questions that will be administered in a future session.**

- 24 Administer the test in several sessions, specifying the duration of each session
- 25 Administer the test over several days, specifying the duration of each day's session
- 38 Other allowable timing/scheduling accommodation

## PRESENTATION CONDITIONS

### Allowable Accommodations

44 Transparent color overlays

**NOTE: Accommodation 47 is related to cueing. Cueing is assisting the student in focusing his or her attention. Cueing strategies include but are not limited to arrows, lines, space, contrasting colors, position or focal point, underlining, labeling, size, and shading. Cues provided on answer forms and/or second-/third-grade test booklets must be erased before answer forms and/or second-/third-grade test booklets are returned for scoring. Cues provided for all other test books do not have to be erased because all other test books are non-scorable documents.**

47 Provide cues (e.g., arrows and stop signs) on answer form in pencil - must be erased before answer document is returned for scoring

**NOTE: Accommodation 48 relates to the use of memory aids. A memory aid, fact chart, and/or resource sheet is something that helps a student remember how to find the answer; it should not give him or her the answer. This accommodation cannot interfere with what the test purports to measure. For example, if the test measures computation skills, a multiplication fact chart is a nonallowable accommodation because it gives the answer or a portion of the answer to the item assessing multiplication skills. PRIOR APPROVAL BY MDE IS REQUIRED FOR USE OF ALL MEMORY AIDS, FACT CHARTS, AND/OR RESOURCE SHEETS.**

48 Use of memory aids, fact charts, and/or resource sheets

49 Cue student to stay on task

50 Highlight key words or phrases in directions (e.g., complete sentences, show your work)

**NOTE: Accommodations 51–56 are related to the presentation of test directions and test items (questions and answer choices) to students. Test items CANNOT be read to students on the Reading section of the Mississippi Curriculum Test (MCT), the Reading for Information section of the Mississippi Career Planning and Assessment System (MS-CPAS), the Reading Comprehension section of the English II Multiple-Choice Test, or the Reading section of the Functional Literacy Exam (FLE). Therefore, accommodations 54, 55, and 56 are NOT ALLOWED on the above-mentioned reading subtests.**

51 Read the test directions (but not the test items) to individual students or the group - without repeating or paraphrasing.

52 Read the test directions (but not the test items) to individual students or the group - repeating the directions if needed, but not paraphrasing.

53 Read the test directions (but not the test items) to individual students or the group -

repeating and/or paraphrasing the directions if needed. Bridging technique is one example.

54 Read the test directions and test items to individual students or the groups - without repeating or paraphrasing.

55 Read the test directions and test items to individual students or the group - repeating the directions/items if needed, but not paraphrasing.

56 Read the test directions and test items to individual students or the group - repeating and/or paraphrasing the directions/items if needed. Bridging technique is one example.

68 Other allowable presentation accommodation

## RESPONSE CONDITIONS

### Allowable Accommodations

70 Dictation of answers to test administrator/proctor (scribe) (in English only)

72 Allow marking of answers in booklet

**NOTE: ELL students may use translating WORD-TO-WORD dictionaries. The use of a translating word-to-word dictionary (without definitions in either language) includes the use of electronic word-to-word dictionaries with audio/speaker function turned off. The use of picture word-to-word dictionaries is also permitted.**

81 Native language dictionaries for ELL students (i.e., dictionaries that translate English words into the native language - no definitions are given in either language)

98 Other allowable response accommodation

## PETITION FOR SPECIAL CONSIDERATION

In rare instances, students may require special consideration for an exemption or an accommodation not provided for in these guidelines. In such cases, the local school district superintendent or district test coordinator may make a petition for special consideration to the Office of Student Assessment. Such a petition must clearly state the reason that special consideration is necessary. In addition, the request must include adequate supporting information and documentation. This type of request must be submitted to the Office of Student Assessment no later than fifteen (15) working days in advance of testing to allow for appropriate review and response to the school district (MS Guidelines, 2005).

APPENDIX C  
LETTER OF REQUEST TO SUPERINTENDENT

June 16, 2008

Dr. Lynn Weathersby, Superintendent  
Rankin County Public School District  
1220 Apple Park Place  
P.O. Box 1359  
Brandon, MS 39043

Dear Dr. Weathersby:

I am a doctoral student in the Department of Educational Leadership at Mississippi State University. For my dissertation, it is my desire to conduct a critical evaluation of the progress and achievement of English language learners in the Rankin County School District. I am requesting your permission to engage in this research during the 2008 school year. I am requesting permission to examine Stanford English Language Proficiency test and Mississippi Curriculum Test data of the English language learner students in the Rankin County School District. Through data collected, I will document the progress and achievement of the English language learners and its impact on the students, school, and district.

This study may be regarded as “research not involving more than minimal risk” to the participants, according to the standards of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Mississippi State University. In accordance with the IRB, student records may be disclosed in compliance with FERPA code section exception 99.31. Subsections 6i (A) and (C) allow organizations to conduct certain studies for educational agencies and institutions to develop, validate, or administer tests and to improve instruction. The responsibility for all data disclosed lies within the Rankin County School District, not Mississippi State University. All personal and private identifiable information will be held in strict confidence.

It is my hope that an examination of the impact of student English language acquisition and student achievement can provide valuable information and contribute to the future direction of the English Language Learner program in the Rankin County School District. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this proposed research, please contact me at 601-829-2079 or Katherine Crowley, Assistant Compliance Administrator, at 662-325-8543, or e-mail Katherine at [kcrowley@research.msstate.edu](mailto:kcrowley@research.msstate.edu). Thank you for your cooperation in this matter.

Sincerely,

Marlynn K. Martin  
Doctoral Candidate  
Mississippi State University

APPENDIX D

SUPERINTENDENT'S LETTER OF PERMISSION



# Rankin County School District

*Unleashing the Possibilities*

Dr. Lynn Weathersby

Superintendent of Education

POST OFFICE BOX 1359  
BRANDON, MS 39043  
601-825-5590  
FAX 601-825-2618  
www.rcsd.ms

**Brandon**

- Rouse Elementary (K-2)
- Brandon Elementary (3-5)
- Brandon Middle (6-8)
- Brandon High (9-12)
- RCSD Learning Center (K-12)

**Florence**

- Steen's Creek Elementary (K-2)
- Florence Elementary (3-5)
- Florence Middle (6-8)
- Florence High (9-12)

**McLaurin**

- McLaurin Elementary (K-6)
- McLaurin High (7-12)

**Northwest Rankin**

- Flowood Elementary (K-5)
- Highland Bluff Elementary (K-5)
- Northshore Elementary (K-5)
- NWR Elementary (K-5)
- Oakdale Elementary (K-5)
- NWR Middle (6-8)
- NWR High (9-12)

**Pelahatchie**

- Pelahatchie Elementary (K-6)
- Pelahatchie High (7-12)

**Pisgah**

- Pisgah Elementary (K-6)
- Pisgah High (7-12)

**Puckett**

- Puckett (K-12)

**Richland**

- Richland Elementary (K-2)
- Richland Upper Elementary (3-6)
- Richland High (7-12)

August 25, 2008

To Whom It May Concern:

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Mrs. Marlynn Martin on her interest and commitment to improving instruction for students in the Rankin County School District. I would appreciate information that would assist with the future program direction for the English Language Learner (ELL) population, and understand that the information obtained could be used to further develop that program, and enhance student achievement and success.

Please accept this letter as permission for Mrs. Martin to conduct this critical evaluation of the progress and achievement of English Language Learners in the Rankin County School District during the school year 2008. All information and data acquired will be provided through numerical assignment for each student in order to ensure student anonymity.

If my office can be of further service, please do not hesitate to call.

Sincerely,

  
Lynn Weathersby, Ph.D.  
Superintendent

APPENDIX E  
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL



October 3, 2008

Marlynn Kessler  
Martin 102  
Pine Ridge  
Circle  
Brandon, MS  
39047

RE: IRB Study #08-221: An Empirical Evaluation of the Progress and Achievement of English Language Learners in a Suburban School District

Dear Mrs. Martin:

The above referenced project was reviewed and approved via administrative review on 9/18/2008 in accordance with 45 CFR 46.101 (b)(4). Continuing review is not necessary for this project. However, any modification to the project must be reviewed and approved by the IRB prior to implementation. Any failure to adhere to the approved protocol could result in suspension or termination of your project. The IRB reserves the right, at anytime during the project period, to observe you and the additional researchers on this project.

**Please note that the MSU IRS is in the process of seeking accreditation for our human subjects protection program. As a result of these efforts, you will likely notice many changes in the IRS's policies and procedures in the coming months. These changes will be posted online at <http://www.orc.msstate.edu/human/aahrpp.php>. The first of these changes is the implementation of an approval stamp for consent forms. The approval stamp will assist in ensuring the IRS approved version of the consent form is used in the actual conduct of research. You must use copies of the stamped consent form for obtaining consent from participants.**

Please refer to your IRB number (#08-221) when contacting our office regarding this application.

Thank you for your cooperation and good luck to you in conducting this research project. If you have questions or concerns, please contact me at [cwilliams@research.msstate.edu](mailto:cwilliams@research.msstate.edu) or call 662-325-5220.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Christine Williams".

Christine Williams  
IRB Compliance Administrator

cc: Teri Brandenburg (Advisor)

**Office for Regulatory Compliance**

PO. Box 6223 • 8A Morgan Street • Mailstop 9563 • Mississippi State, MS 39762 • (662) 325-3294 • FA.X (662) 325-8776