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Self-reported practices of and attitudes toward reading among elementary-aged English language learners

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Self-Reported Practices of and Attitudes Toward Reading Among Elementary-Aged
English Language Learners

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A thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

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Table of Contents

List of Tables	iii
Abstract	iv
I. Introduction 1	
English Language Learners	2
Reading in ELL students	2
Risks for ELL students	4
Academic Protective Factors	5
Extensive Reading	6
Purpose	7
Hypotheses	7
II. Method	8
Participants.....	8
Instruments	9
Procedure	10
III. Results	11
Hypothesis 1.....	11
Hypothesis 2	13
Hypothesis 3	15
Hypothesis 4	16
Hypothesis 5	17
Hypothesis 6	18
IV. Discussion.....	19
Limitations	21
Future Research	21
Summary of Findings and Recommendations	22
V. Appendices.....	26
Appendix A.....	26
Appendix B.....	28
Appendix C.....	30
Appendix D.....	31
Appendix E.....	32
VI. References.....	33

List of Tables

Table 1	23
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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of self-reported attitudes toward and practices of at-home reading on English reading abilities in English Language Learners in 3rd through 5th grade. Students' English reading abilities were measured in terms of fluency, vocabulary/background knowledge, and comprehension. Scores from the school district's reading benchmarks and English language mastery test were also obtained. Attitudes toward both academic and recreational reading were assessed, and a survey was administered to obtain information regarding students' self-reported at-home practices of reading and access to reading materials. Data was collected in early spring and again in late spring. Data was analyzed using correlation and comparison of means. Although hypotheses were not supported in the current research, additional potentially beneficial observations were made. In particular, these participants had more positive attitudes toward both academic and recreational reading than their same aged peers. Also notable was that participants' academic reading interest was higher than their recreational reading interest. Finally, while many students reported that they enjoy taking reading tests and being asked to answer questions related to their reading by teachers, students overwhelmingly reported that they disliked having to read in front of the class. Lack of supported hypothesis was likely due to several factors including (1) small sample size, (2) lack of between-participant variability, and (3) limited elapsed time between the pre- and post-measures. Future research should expand upon the limitations of the current study.

Introduction

Students who do not speak English as their native language and are termed “English Language Learners” (ELLs) are entering the public schools in the United States at increasing rates. With 45% of teachers having at least one ELL in their class (Gyovai, Cartledge, Kourea, Yurick, & Gibson, 2009), the risks and difficulties these ELLs encounter may be felt throughout an entire school district. For example, ELL students are at a greater risk than native English speaking children for academic difficulties, including grade retention, school attrition, and underachievement (Lovett, et al., 2008). We do know, however, that engaging in extensive reading can significantly increase students’ reading abilities (Yamashita, 2008). Research also indicates that having a positive attitude toward reading may serve as a protective factor for children and place them at a decreased risk for developing future academic difficulties. Being knowledgeable about how to best address the needs of the ELL population is particularly important for school psychologists, as they may be one of the first school personnel from whom teachers seek assistance when an ELL student is struggling in the classroom. School psychologists are also involved in the referral and evaluation process for special education services, for which a disproportionate amount of ELLs are referred (Linn and Hemmer, 2011). By being knowledgeable of factors that influence ELL students’ attitudes and practices towards reading, school psychologist may be of significant value in improving the academic outcome of this population. School psychologists may also play a vital role in adjusting the percentage of ELL students referred for and found eligible for special education services to more closely match that of the school-aged population as a whole.

English Language Learners

English language learners (ELLs) are defined as those individuals whose primary language is one other than English, who are currently learning English, and who may be identified as having limited English proficiency in regards to speaking, writing, reading, or listening skills (United States Department of Education, 2013).

According to research conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (Aud, et al., 2011), ELL children accounted for 21% of the United States population ages five to 17 in 2009. This is a dramatic increase from the 13% of the school-aged population that ELL children comprised in 1990. Among children who spoke a language other than English at home, 24% spoke English with difficulty in 2009, resulting in 5% of five to 17 year old children in the United States speaking both English with difficulty and a language other than English at home. Not only has the percentage of school-aged children in the United States increased in recent years, but the percentage of these children enrolled in schools has also increased to 93% in 2009. This overall pattern indicates that an increasing percentage of students in U.S. schools may not be proficient in English or may lack the support at home to develop English skills.

Reading in ELL Students

Reading is a complex process that requires the proper development and coordinated use of many separate cognitive skills. Even before a child learns to actually read, he or she must develop a number of early literacy predictors or “pre-reading” skills that are composed of several components, including phonemic awareness. (Ford, Cabell, Konold, Invernizzi, & Gartland, 2012). Research indicates that ELL students develop

these basic English literacy skills in a similar manner as native English speaking students, albeit at a significantly slower rate. ELL students do seem to be aided, however, by their knowledge of the alphabet, which then assists in their development of phonemic awareness and later reading skills (Chiappe, Siegel, & Wade-Woolley, 2002). It should be noted, however, that for students whose native alphabet differs from the English alphabet, no advantage may be experienced simply by knowing another alphabet system.

Research conducted by Ford, et. al (2012) demonstrated that Latino students receiving ESL services at the beginning of kindergarten are a heterogeneous group in terms of their foundational literacy skills, contradictory to what many may believe. In fact, findings indicated that these children typically fit one of several profiles based on their patterns of strengths and weaknesses at the start of kindergarten that were associated with their later literacy development. In particular, children who had the highest orthographic skills of alphabet knowledge and phonemic spelling at the beginning of kindergarten were most successful in their later literacy development than those children with lower orthographic skills. These researchers also determined that while phonological awareness may be an essential precursor to reading, phonological awareness without the presence of orthographic skills may be inadequate.

In total, research points to five main components that an individual must master in order to become an efficient reader (National Reading Panel, 2000). These components are: phonics, phonemic awareness, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Phonics and phonemic awareness related to how individuals understand and process the linguistic sound units associated with letters and how those sound units, or phonemes, look in letter form. Fluency involves how quickly, accurately, and with proper expression and

intonation an individual reads. A measure of reading fluency would also, by the nature of what is assessed as part of fluency, also measure phonics and phonemic awareness.

Vocabulary involves an individual's familiarity with the meaning of words used in written work. In order to understand the overall meaning of a passage, individuals must understand the meaning of individual words that are used first. As such, vocabulary also involves an individual's level of cultural and background knowledge. Finally, comprehension involves an individual's understanding of the overall passage. It includes understanding both what is directly stated in a passage (literal comprehension) and what is indirectly stated (inferential comprehension), as well. Reading comprehension is perhaps the most demanding aspect of reading and the area that relies the most on the other aspects of reading in order to occur. As a result, a focus on reading comprehension tends to be underemphasized in the beginning stages of students' instruction, and emphasized later only when children have a firm grasp on the more foundation aspects of the reading process.

Risks for ELL Students

ELL students are at a greater risk than native English speaking children for academic difficulties, including grade retention, school attrition, and underachievement. Ford, Cabell, Konold, Invernizzi, and Gartland (2012) reported that, in particular, Latino ELL students as a group continuously score lower than native English speaking students on national measures of achievement and that they also drop out of school at a higher rate than any other group across the country. These academic difficulties lead to issues such as substance abuse, which affect an entire community (Lovett, et al., 2008).

ELL students are also at increased risk for being both under-identified and over-identified to receive special education services, depending on the school (Zehler, Fleischman, Hopstock, & Stephenson, 2003). In the first scenario, ELL students' academic difficulties are being overly attributed to their level of English fluency and comprehension, whereas factors such as legitimate learning disabilities are ignored. In the latter situation, students are labeled as having cognitive deficits simply because they have not yet mastered the demands of a new language. All of these risk factors are significant for ELL students, and all of them can negatively impact not only a student's academic growth, but also their overall interest in education.

Academic Protective Factors

Ford et. al's (2012) findings indicated that ELL children with higher rates of preschool attendance were those with the highest levels of literacy development in kindergarten, leading the researchers to believe that earlier exposure to and development of orthographic skills is what set these children apart from their peers who attended preschool at lower rates. Research has demonstrated that those children with the lowest levels of orthographic skills at the start of kindergarten then go on to be poor spellers in first grade (Ford, et. al, 2012). This finding suggests that students, particularly those with underdeveloped orthographic skills may benefit from early and more intensive written word knowledge instruction and assessment to help them catch up to their peers versus continuing to widen the gap between them.

The impact of an individual's attitude toward reading has been widely demonstrated (Day & Bamford, 2002; Sani & Zain, 2011). Simply having a positive

attitude toward reading, viewing it as a leisure activity, and having positive beliefs about one's personal ability to read are predictors of an individual's actually reading ability.

This information seems to hold particularly true for ELL students. Also, for students who experience very little demand to use or read in English outside of school, their attitudes toward reading play a much more important role in predicting their literacy abilities than do the attitudes of those children who experience "English-supportive" environments.

Extensive Reading

Extensive reading has been defined as being an approach towards reading that emphasizes the quantity of material read in order to obtain a general understanding of the presented information (Richards, Platt, Platt, & Candlin, 2002). The intended purpose of extended reading is to develop positive reading habits, increase vocabulary knowledge and familiarity with literary structure, and to promote positive attitudes toward reading. Day and Bamford (2002) posed 10 principles that are essential to extensive reading. They posited that reading material should be well below the student's actual reading level, and that as a result, extensive reading should be conducted quickly and be done with less labor than typical academic reading. The authors also suggested that there be a wide selection of topics available to the student and that each student selects what he or she wishes to read. In this way, reading may be viewed as a hobby to enjoy rather than an academic task that must be completed. Along these lines, the authors emphasized that reading be done for pleasure as well as to obtain general understanding of the material. They did, however, warn that the purpose of extensive reading is not to obtain complete comprehension, which they contrasted to the underlying purpose of reading in traditional academic setting. They indicated that extensive reading should also be done silently and

independently, but that it requires orientation and guidance from teachers first, and that teachers must be reading role models. Finally, the authors suggested that students read as much as possible and that reading must be intrinsically rewarding. Recent research has expanded upon previous studies by demonstrating generalized effects of extensive reading to ELL students.

Purpose

The purpose of this research was to examine the relationship between ELL 3rd-5th grade students' attitudes and self-reported practices of reading to the growth of their English reading skills. Based on the above review of the current literature, there are six hypotheses for the current research.

Hypotheses

1. Students with higher recreational reading attitudes will experience greater growth in reading abilities.
2. Students with higher academic reading attitudes will experience greater growth in reading abilities.
3. Students who report having more access to reading material outside school (e.g. owned books, library books, etc.) will experience greater growth in their reading abilities than children who report having less access.
4. Students who report reading outside school for longer amounts of time will experience greater growth in reading skills than those who spend less time.

5. Students who report that their parents read to them outside of school will experience greater growth in their reading skills than those who report that their parents do not read to them outside of school.
6. Students who experience a positive growth in their reading attitude from the initial to secondary session will experience greater growth in their reading skills compared to students whose reading attitude score either stays the same or decreases.

Method

Participants

The targeted population for this study consisted of 3rd through 5th grade elementary school students attending school in one particular school in a northwestern Connecticut school district. As of the 2012-2013 academic year, 473 students were enrolled at the elementary school examined. Demographics were as follows: 55.4% White, 32.8% Hispanic/ Latino(a), 4.7% Two or More Races, 4.4% Black/African American, 3.2% Asian, and 0.2% Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander. Of those students, 77.2% receive free or reduced lunch, 19.0% are considered limited English proficiency, and 16.1% receive special education services.

All students at this school who were in 3rd through 5th grade, enrolled in the ESL program, and whose native language was Spanish were asked to participate in this study. This consisted of 26 students. Letters detailing the study, along with consent and assent forms, were sent home with each of the students in English and in Spanish. Forms were translated to Spanish by the school's translator. Eleven students returned both assent and consent forms, resulting in a 42% response rate. Of the 11 participants, six were 3rd graders, three were 4th graders, and two were 5th graders. Five students were male and

six were female. Participation was voluntary and anonymous for all students, and perceived risk of harm as a result of participating in the study was believed to be minimal.

Instruments

For this study, the *Qualitative Reading Inventory, Fourth Edition (QRI-4*; Leslie and Caldwell, 2006) was used to assess students' current reading levels. The *QRI-4* is an informal reading inventory that is used to assess word identification, reading fluency, prior knowledge, recall, and comprehension from pre-primer to high school reading levels. Word lists and both fiction and expository passages are provided at each grade level assessed in this study. Readers' performance on each area categorized into one of three levels: independent, instructional, and frustration. The independent level refers to the level at which the student is able to read and comprehend without assistance from others. The instructional level refers to the level at which the student is able to read with some assistance from an adult, such as a teacher. The frustration level refers to the level at which a student is unable to read successfully due to inadequate word identification, fluency, and comprehension.

Additionally, students' records were examined to obtain their scores on the 2013 and 2014 *Language Assessment System Links (LAS Links)* test. The *LAS Links* is an English proficiency test that was used in the examined school district to obtain a yearly measurement of ESL program students': speaking, listening, reading, writing, communication, and oral skills in English. Scores in each area are categorized into one of four levels: beginning (Level 1), early intermediate (Level 2), intermediate (Level 3),

advanced (Level 4), and fluent English proficient (Level 5). Only students' *LAS Links* reading scores were examined as part of this study.

McKenna and Kear's *Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (ERAS; 1990)* was also administered to each participant. This survey has been demonstrated to be a reliable and valid measure of elementary students' attitudes towards reading by presenting answer choices in pictorial form to help younger children better differentiate among options. There are 20 items on this survey, 10 of which pertain to recreational reading, and 10 of which address attitudes toward academic reading. Each item is presented as a statement, and students are asked to respond by selecting the answer choice that best describes how the item describes them. Questions targeting participants' reported practice of at-home reading and access to reading materials were also asked in a structured interview format (see *Appendix E*).

Procedure

Students meeting the previously described selection criteria were identified and letters of assent and consent were sent home in Spanish and English in March 2013. After consent and assent forms were returned, students were assessed during the school day at a time agreed upon by the teacher to be least disruptive. Students were not taken from specials, recess, or lunch, and student approval regarding the selected time was obtained prior to being assessed. For this study, each student worked with the examiner individually. Data was collected in either the school psychologist's office or conference room, free from distraction. The purpose of the student was verbally explained to each child. From there, students were asked to complete the *ERAS (1990)*, which was read out loud to each student to ensure that reading skills were not a confounding variable. Next,

survey questions were read out loud to and answer by each participant, which served as another measure of fluency – particularly for fluency when context is a factor. Finally, the student was administered select portions of the *QRI-4* (Leslie and Caldwell, 2006), which included: chronological graded word list (to assess fluency) and narrative passage (to assess vocabulary and comprehension). Selected passages were also based on chronological grade. The same passage was used for students within each grade (i.e. one passage for 3rd graders, one for 4th, and one for 5th). For each passage, participants were first asked the corresponding prior knowledge questions, which served as a partial measure of vocabulary. Participants then continued to read the select passage orally. Immediately afterward, participants were asked to retell the story with as much detail as they could remember, which served as a partial measure of comprehension. Finally, students were asked the corresponding comprehension questions, which targeted both explicit and implicit comprehension. The same procedures were followed for the second measure later in the spring, although a different narrative passage was selected.

Results

Hypothesis 1- Students with higher recreational reading scores on the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey will experience greater growth in reading abilities, as evidenced by QRI-4 scores, as well as LAS Links scores.

For the initial measurement session, there were non-significant correlations between recreational reading attitude and: word list fluency ($r=.10, p>.05$), story fluency ($r=-.09, p>.05$), background knowledge ($r=.40, p>.05$), immediate story recall ($r=-.36, p>.05$), and reading comprehension ($r=-.23, p>.05$) on the *QRI-4*. Additionally, there were non-significant correlations between either recreational reading attitude and word

list fluency level (frustrational, instructional, or independent; $r = -.17, p > .05$), story fluency level ($r = -.28, p > .05$), or comprehension level ($r = -.27, p > .05$).

For the second measurement session, there were non-significant correlations between recreational reading attitude and: word list fluency ($r = .16, p > .05$), story fluency ($r = .18, p > .05$), background knowledge ($r = -.28, p > .05$), immediate story recall ($r = -.01, p > .05$), and reading comprehension ($r = .14, p > .05$) on the *QRI-4*. Additionally, there were non-significant correlations between recreational reading attitude and either word list fluency level ($r = .23, p > .05$), story fluency level ($r = -.46, p > .05$), or comprehension level ($r = .06, p > .05$).

There was a non-significant correlation between change in recreational reading attitude over the year and change in: word list fluency ($r = .27, p > .05$), story fluency ($r = -.07, p > .05$), background knowledge ($r = .17, p > .05$), immediate story recall ($r = .58, p > .05$), and comprehension ($r = .18, p > .05$). There was a non-significant correlation between recreational reading attitude at the end of the year and change in: word list fluency ($r = -.38, p > .05$), story fluency ($r = .35, p > .05$), background knowledge ($r = -.08, p > .05$), immediate story recall ($r = .05, p > .05$), and comprehension ($r = .05, p > .05$).

Looking at students' growth in *LAS Links* reading scores from 2013 to 2014 and each student's recreational reading attitude percentile, as of the first interview (which took place at approximately the same time as the 2014 *LAS Links* was administered), those who experienced a growth of one English reading level ($N=2$) had a mean recreational reading attitude that fell within the 74th percentile of their peers. Those who experienced no change in their *LAS Links* reading score from 2013 to 2014 ($N=5$) had a

mean recreational reading attitude that fell within the 67th percentile of their peers. Those who experienced a loss of one English reading level (N=1) had a recreational reading attitude that fell within the 67th percentile of their peers, while those (N=1) who experienced a loss of two levels had a recreational reading attitude that fell within the 35th percentile of their peers. The correlation between *LAS Links* reading score change from 2013 to 2014 and students' recreational reading attitudes was not significant, ($r=.58$, $p>.05$).

Hypothesis 2- Students with higher academic reading scores on the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey will experience greater growth in reading abilities, as evidenced by QRI-4 scores, as well as LAS Links scores.

For the initial measurement session, there were non-significant correlations between academic reading attitude and: word list fluency ($r=.36$, $p>.05$), story fluency ($r=.23$, $p>.05$), background knowledge ($r= -.04$, $p>.05$), immediate story recall ($r=-.07$, $p>.05$), and reading comprehension ($r=.11$, $p>.05$) on the *QRI-4*. Additionally, there were non-significant correlations between either academic reading attitude and: word list fluency level ($r= -.14$, $p>.05$), story fluency level ($r= -.32$, $p>.05$), or comprehension level ($r= .53$, $p>.05$).

For the second measurement session, there were non-significant correlations between academic reading attitude and: word list fluency ($r=.09$, $p>.05$), story fluency ($r= .08$, $p>.05$), background knowledge ($r= -.01$, $p>.05$), immediate story recall ($r= -.12$, $p>.05$), and reading comprehension ($r= -.09$, $p>.05$) on the *QRI-4*. Additionally, there were non-significant correlations between recreational reading attitude and either word

list fluency level ($r=.06, p>.05$), story fluency level ($r= -.18, p>.05$), or comprehension level ($r= -.34, p>.05$).

There was a significant negative correlation between change in academic reading attitude over the year and change in story fluency ($r= -.70, p=.02$). There was a non-significant correlation between change in academic reading attitude over the year and change in: word list fluency ($r=.28, p>.05$), background knowledge ($r=.19, p>.05$), immediate story recall ($r=.26, p>.05$), and comprehension ($r= -.27, p>.05$). There was a non-significant correlation between academic reading attitude at the end of the year and change in: word list fluency ($r= -.30, p>.05$), story fluency ($r=.15, p>.05$), background knowledge ($r= .27, p>.05$), immediate story recall ($r= -.18, p>.05$), and comprehension ($r= -.17, p>.05$).

Looking at students' growth in *LAS Links* reading scores from 2013 to 2014 and each student's academic reading attitude percentile, as of the first interview, those who experienced a growth of one English reading level ($N=2$) had a mean academic reading attitude that fell within the 67th percentile of their peers. Those who experienced no change in their *LAS Links* reading score from 2013 to 2014 ($N=5$) had a mean academic reading attitude that fell within the 87th percentile of their peers. Those who experienced a loss of one English reading level ($N=1$) had an academic reading attitude that fell within the 47th percentile of their peers, while those ($N=1$) who experienced a loss of two levels had an academic reading attitude that fell within the 70th percentile of their peers. The correlation between *LAS Links* reading score change from 2013 to 2014 and students' academic reading attitudes was not significant, ($r=.35, p>.05$).

Hypothesis 3- Students who report having more access to reading material outside school (e.g. owned books, library books, etc.) will experience greater growth in their reading abilities than children who report having less access.

Looking at students' growth in *LAS Links* reading scores from 2013 to 2014 and the number of books each child reported having at home at the time of the second interview, there was a non-significant correlation ($r=.08, p>.05$). Those who experienced a growth of one English reading level ($N=2$) on the *LAS Links* reported having a mean of 15.5 books at home. Those who experienced no change in their *LAS Links* reading score from 2013 to 2014 ($N=5$) reported having a mean of 52.4 books at home. Those who experienced a loss of one English reading level ($N=1$) reported having 39 books at home, while those ($N=1$) who experienced a loss of two levels reported having five books at home.

For scores obtained from the *QRI-4*, there were non-significant correlations between number of reported books at home and: word list fluency ($r= -.183, p>.05$), story fluency ($r=.16, p>.05$), background knowledge ($r= -.56, p>.05$), immediate story recall ($r= -.53, p>.05$), and reading comprehension ($r= -.39, p>.05$).

Looking at students' growth in *LAS Links* reading scores from 2013 to 2014 and the number of monthly visits each child reported making to places to obtain books (i.e. school and public libraries, bookstores, etc.) at the time of the second interview, there was a non-significant correlation ($r= -.33, p>.05$). Those who experienced a growth of one English reading level ($N=2$) on the *LAS Links* reported making a mean of one monthly visit. Those who experienced no change in their *LAS Links* reading score from

2013 to 2014 (N=5) reported making a mean of five monthly visits. Those who experienced a loss of one English reading level (N=1) reported making three monthly visits, while those (N=1) who experienced a loss of two levels reported making four monthly visits.

For scores obtained from the *QRI-4*, there were non-significant correlations between number of monthly visits made to places to obtain books and: word list fluency ($r = -.50, p > .05$), story fluency ($r = .40, p > .05$), background knowledge ($r = -.10, p > .05$), immediate story recall ($r = .08, p > .05$), and reading comprehension ($r = -.03, p > .05$).

Hypothesis 4- Students who report reading outside school for longer amounts of time will experience greater growth in reading skills than those who spend less time.

Looking at students' *LAS Links* reading scores from 2013 to 2014 and the amount of time students reported reading at home as of the first interview, those who reported reading less than an hour (N = 6) had a mean change score of (-0.3 standard scores) while those who read 1-3 hours (N = 2) had a change score of (+0.5 standard scores), and the student (N=1) who reported not reading at home experienced no change in reading (0.0 standard scores).

There were non-significant correlations between amount of time spent reading at home as of the second interview and change in: word list fluency ($r = -.19, p > .05$), story fluency ($r = .04, p > .05$), background knowledge ($r = .08, p > .05$), immediate story recall ($r = .13, p > .05$), and reading comprehension ($r = .13, p > .05$) on the *QRI-4*.

Hypothesis 5- Students who report that their parents read to them outside of school will experience greater growth in their reading skills than those who report that their parents do not read to them outside of school.

Those who reported that their parents do read to them at home (N=7) experienced a mean of 0.0 standard score growth in their *LAS Links* reading score from 2013 to 2014. Those who reported that their parents do not read to them at home (N=2) experienced a mean of a 0.17 standard point decline in their *LAS Links* reading scores from 2013 to 2014.

When looking at *QRI-4* scores, those who reported their parents read to them at home (N=7) experienced a mean growth of 3.75 percentile points in their word list fluency, while those whose parents do not read to them at home (N=4) experienced only a 1.43 percentile point increase in their word list fluency. Those who reported their parents read to them at home (N=7) experienced a mean decline of 18.75 percentile points in their measured background knowledge, while those whose parents do not read to them at home (N=4) experienced a 6.0 percentile point decrease in their measured background knowledge. Those who reported their parents read to them at home (N=7) experienced a mean decline of 3.0 percentile points in their measured story fluency, while those whose parents do not read to them at home (N=4) experienced a 1.57 percentile point decrease in their measured story fluency. Those who reported their parents read to them at home (N=7) experienced a mean decline of 11.0 percentile points in their measured immediate story recall, while those whose parents do not read to them at home (N=4) experienced a 6.3 percentile point decrease in their measured immediate story recall. Those who reported their parents read to them at home (N=7) experienced a mean decline of 34.5

percentile points in their measured reading comprehension, while those whose parents do not read to them at home (N=4) experienced a 7.4 percentile point decrease in their measured reading comprehension.

Hypothesis 6- Students who experience growth on the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey over the year will experience greater growth in their reading skills than students whose reading attitude score either stays the same or decreases.

Of the students who experienced growth on the *ERAS* (N=5), there was a mean growth in attitude of 14 percentile points. Of the students who experienced a decline in their reading attitudes, based on the *ERAS* (N=6), there was a mean decline of 8.8 percentile points. Of those who experienced growth on the *ERAS* (N=5), there was a mean decline of 0.4 standard points on their *LAS Links* reading score from 2013 to 2014. Of those who experienced a decline in their reading attitudes (N=4), there was a mean increase on their *LAS Links* reading scores of 0.25 standard points.

Using the *QRI-4*, of the students who experienced growth on the *ERAS* (N=5), there was a mean growth of 6 percentile points on their word list fluency. Of those who experienced a decline in their reading attitudes (N=6), there was a mean decrease on their word list fluency of 0.83 percentile points. Of the students who experienced growth on the *ERAS* (N=5), there was a mean decline of 5 percentile points on their background knowledge score. Of those who experienced a decline in their reading attitudes (N=6), there was a mean decrease in their background knowledge score of 15.3 percentile points. Of the students who experienced growth on the *ERAS* (N=5), there was a mean decline of 2.8 percentile points on their story fluency score. Of those who experienced a decline in

their reading attitudes (N=6), there was a mean decrease in their story fluency score of 1.5 percentile points. Of the students who experienced growth on the *ERAS* (N=5), there was a mean decline of 2.4 percentile points on their story recall score. Of those who experienced a decline in their reading attitudes (N=6), there was a mean decrease in their story recall score of 12.7 percentile points. Of the students who experienced growth on the *ERAS* (N=5), there was a mean growth of 4.8 percentile points on their story comprehension score. Of those who experienced a decline in their reading attitudes (N=6), there was a mean decrease in their story comprehension score of 18.7 percentile points.

Discussion

All but one of the obtained correlations was found to be statistically non-significant. This is consistent with the fact that there was not much change over time across variables. This was likely due to two main factors: (1) the small sample size and (2) the general lack of variability in participant grade-appropriate abilities. Although one correlation was found to be statistically significant, due to the small sample size, this should perhaps be interpreted with caution. The statistically significant correlation was also negative, whereas it was expected to be positive. The lack of statistically supported findings could also be due to fact that change over time was the main area of interest. Once children get to a certain level of literacy (for example on the *LAS Links*), there is not much room for growth. In addition, once children have acquired a certain level of English fluency, additional gains may be made more slowly.

Although the proposed hypotheses were not supported by research, overall findings from this study were largely positive. For instance, the average (n=11) recreational reading attitude fell between the 63rd and 64th percentiles for pre- and post-tests, respectively. The average (n=11) academic reading attitude was even higher, falling between the 73rd and 75th percentile for pre- and post-tests, respectively. Several of the children reported individual reading attitudes (both recreational and academic) that resulted in even higher percentiles. This is a strength for these students and serves as a protective factor (Day & Bamford, 2002; Sani & Zain, 2011). Although the reason is unknown, it may be that these students feel that they have more support in academic reading (in a school setting) than they do at home with recreational reading. Of particular note related to this, 36% of the students (n=11) reported that their parents read to them at home, with the remaining 64% indicating that their parents do not read to them at home. Anecdotally, students reported various situations including: parents reading to students in Spanish only, students reading to parents in English and/or Spanish, and parents not knowing how to read. Although many students reported visiting the library as a means of accessing written material, surprisingly few students reported that their visits were to the on-site school library. Instead, most students who reported going to the library indicated that they visited the neighboring town site.

Many students also reported enjoying being called on to answer questions in class related to their reading as well as finding enjoyment in taking reading tests. These may serve as opportunities for these students to demonstrate their increasing English mastery and to receive corrective feedback from teachers. Students overwhelmingly reported that they disliked having to read in front of the class.

Limitations

Perhaps the primary limitation of this study was the small sample size. Although 19% of the school's students were in the ESL program (approximately 90 students), only 26 met criteria for grade level, and of those, only 11 participated. Due to the sample size, statistical significance could not be obtained for any of the tests that were run. An additional limitation was the timeframe within which this study was completed. Only between five to six weeks had passed between the first and second measure, due to various constraints. In particular, new state and district-level tests were conducted this school year, resulting in additional time being allotted to those processes compared with previous years. This made it difficult to work around participants' schedules in the spring months. As a result, not much time had elapsed in order to expect any significant change. A final limitation was that, for the purposes of this study and due to time constraints, participants were only assessed at their chronological grade level using the *QRI-4*, and information was not obtained regarding each student's independent, instructional, and frustration reading levels.

Future Research

If this study were to be conducted again, it would ideally be conducted on a larger scale, perhaps across multiple schools and/or districts. It would be helpful to have enough participants in order to break the data down by chronological grade level and to control for such factors as number of years speaking English and current English language proficiency. In addition, ideally an initial measure would be obtained in the first few weeks of school, again immediately after winter break, and again at the end of the school year. This would both provide more data points for comparison and allow for enough

time to elapse between measures to better track growth. Finally, future research should examine the grade at which each participant reads independently, instructionally, and with frustration. This may provide more information regarding both the trajectory at which these students progress with their English reading skills as well as how their current skills compare with what is being taught in the classroom and at what level. Future research should adjust the questions that are asked. In particular, students seemed to have a difficult time estimating the number of books they had at home, which likely led to non-meaningful data. As opposed to gathering information regarding the *types* of material that children read, future research should, instead focus on obtaining logs of amount of time and titles of books read at home. This would hopefully provide more accurate data regarding time spent reading at home. Also, by obtaining titles of materials read at home, researchers could compare the level of what is being read at home to each student's independent, instructional, and frustration reading levels. This may be particularly useful if research the influence of extensive reading and the difficulty of material read at home.

Summary of Findings and Recommendations

1. Children in the study had more positive attitudes toward reading than did their same-aged peers from across the country. This was particularly true of their academic reading attitudes, which were also higher than their recreational reading attitudes (*See Table 1*). High reading attitudes may serve as a protective factor for these students and should continue to be supported by approaches described in items below. In particular, we also see that the child with the greatest loss in LAS Link reading score from 2013 to 2014 also had the lowest recreational reading attitude and the fewest number of reported books at

home. We can also see that the vast majority of children who took the LAS Links in both 2013 and 2014 obtained either the same or higher reading score the next year (n=9), with the exception of two students who experienced a decrease in their LAS Links reading scores.

Table 1

<i>LAS Links Change from 2013-2014</i>	<i>Rec Att. %ile Avg.</i>	<i>Ac Att. %ile Avg.</i>	<i># of Books at Home</i>	<i># of Monthly Visits to Get Books</i>
+1	74	67	15.5	1
0	67	87	52.4	5
-1	67	47	39	3
-2	35	70	5	4

2. The reasons underlying the overall positive attitudes toward reading from this sample are unknown. It could be due to a number of factors including: proximity to public library, familial attitudes and factors, and perhaps, the largest common denominator: the learning environment of the school, teachers, and fellow peers. The school participated in various community reading events throughout the school year as well as hosted a book fair onsite, which all may have contributed as well.

3. Thirty-six percent of students reported that their parents read to them at home. The remaining 64% of students reported that their parents do not read to them at home. Anecdotal situations related to this, as shared by students, included the presence of both language and literacy barriers. To potentially increase this number, the school system

and/or community may wish to sponsor both adult literacy and/or adult ESL classes, or perhaps even host parent/student classes. This would provide both parents and students with more individual opportunities, as well as more opportunities to engage in the reading process together.

4. In order to support students' already high recreational reading attitude by providing increased access to reading material, the following may be considered by the school and/or community:

- Introduction of a book bank with donations made by community members. It could potentially be a mobile bank that visited individual schools on a rotating basis.
- Invite volunteers from the community and/or school system/neighboring universities to read to students either before or after school on a rotating basis. Students could take turns reading and being read to.
- Due to the small number of students in the study who reported accessing the school library, it may be beneficial to incorporate visits to the school library into the ESL program. If students have limited opportunities to read with a more advanced reader at home, they may benefit from selecting books that are accompanied by an audio companion with which to follow along.

5. Students overwhelmingly reported that they disliked having to read in front of the class. This may serve as an area of emphasis in the ESL program in order to bolster students' confidence with this aspect of regular classroom participation that will continue to be an increasingly significant part of their schooling.

6. Although only anecdotally reported, many students also reported enjoying being called on to answer questions in class related to their reading as well as finding enjoyment in

taking reading tests. These may serve as opportunities for these students to demonstrate their increasing English mastery and to receive corrective feedback from teachers.

Appendix A

Parent/Guardian Informed Consent Form

Identification of Investigators & Purpose of Study

Your child is being asked to participate in a research study conducted by Sarah Akers from James Madison University. The purpose of this study is to determine how reading practice and attitudes toward reading impacts the English reading skills of students who are English Language Learners. This study will help with the researcher's completion of her Educational Specialist's thesis.

Research Procedures

If you decide to allow your child to take part in this study, you will be asked to sign this consent form once all your questions have been fully answered. You may also schedule an individual meeting with the researcher to talk about your child's performance. Your child will be asked to complete an individual informal reading inventory (*The Qualitative Reading Inventory*); a reading interest survey; and a short interview about reading habits twice during the school year, once during winter and again during spring. The researcher will make her best effort to avoid working with your child during teaching times. Your child's *Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA-2)* and *LAS-Links scores* will also be reviewed as part of this study. The *DRA-2* is a test that is given to all students in your child's school to measure their learning. The *LAS-Links* is a test that was given to your child to place them in the English as a Second Language (ESL) program.

Time Required

Participation in this study will require about 1 hour of your child's time twice during the school year.

Risks

The investigator does not perceive more than minimal risks from your child's involvement in this study (that is, no risks beyond the risks associated with everyday life).

Benefits

Potential benefits of this research include finding additional ways for schools to help students learning English as a second language.

Confidentiality

The results of this research will be shared at a graduate student presentation. The results of this project will be coded in such a way that the respondent's identity will not be attached to the final form of this study. The researcher retains the right to use and publish non-identifiable data. While individual responses are confidential, aggregate data will be presented representing averages or generalizations about the responses as a whole. All data will be stored in a secure location accessible only to the researcher. Upon

completion of the study, all information that matches up individual respondents with their answers will be destroyed.

Participation & Withdrawal

Your child's participation is entirely voluntary. He/she is free to choose not to participate. Should you and your child choose to participate, he/she can withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind.

Questions about the Study

If you have questions or concerns during the time of your child's participation in this study, or after its completion or you would like to receive a copy of your child's results from the study, please contact:

Sarah Akers
Graduate School Psychology
James Madison University
maybersr@jmu.edu
sakers@torrington.org

Dr. Patricia Warner
Graduate School Psychology
James Madison University
(540) 568 – 3358
warnerpj@jmu.edu

Questions about Your Rights as a Research Subject

Dr. David Cockley
Chair, Institutional Review Board
James Madison University
(540) 568-2834
cocklede@jmu.edu

Giving of Consent

I have read this consent form and I understand what is being requested of my child as a participant in this study. I freely consent for my child to participate. I have been given satisfactory answers to my questions. The investigator provided me with a copy of this form. I certify that I am at least 18 years of age.

Name of Child (Printed)

Name of Parent/Guardian (Printed)

Name of Parent/Guardian (Signed)

Date

Name of Researcher (Signed)

Date

Appendix B

Consentimiento del Padre/Tutor

Identificación de Investigadores y Propósito del Estudio

A su hijo/a, se le solicito participar en un estudio de investigación realizado por Sarah Akers de la Universidad James Madison. El propósito de este estudio es determinar cómo leer las actitudes hacia la lectura y como la práctica repercute en las estrategias de lectura de los estudiantes que están aprendiendo el idioma inglés. Este estudio ayudará con la terminación de la investigadora de la tesis de la especialista educacional

Procedimientos de la Investigación

Si usted decide permitir que su niña/o, participe en este estudio, se le pedirá firmar este formulario de consentimiento una vez que todas sus preguntas hayan sido contestadas completamente. Usted también puede programar una reunión individual con el investigador para hablar sobre el desempeño de su hijo/a. Se le pedirá a su hijo/a, completar un inventario de lectura informal (inventario de lectura cualitativo); una encuesta de lectura de interés; y una breve entrevista sobre hábitos de lectura dos veces durante el año escolar, una vez durante el invierno y otra vez durante la primavera. El investigador hará su mejor esfuerzo para evitar trabajar con su niño/a, durante tiempos de enseñanza. La evaluación del desarrollo de la lectura (*DRA-2*) y las puntuaciones de *LAS-Links* de su hijo/a, también se examinarán como parte de este estudio. El *DRA-2* es un examen que se administra a todos los estudiantes en la escuela de su hijo/a, para medir su aprendizaje. Los enlaces de *LAS* es un examen que se le da a su hijo/a, para colocarlos en el inglés como un segundo idioma (ESL).

Tiempo Requerido

La participación en este estudio requerirá alrededor de 1 hora de tiempo de su hijo/a, dos veces durante el año escolar.

Riesgos

El investigador no percibe más que los riesgos mínimos de participación de su hijo/a, en este estudio (es decir, no hay riesgos más allá de los riesgos asociados con la vida cotidiana).

Beneficios

Los beneficios potenciales de esta investigación incluyen encontrar maneras adicionales para las escuelas y así poder ayudar a los estudiantes que aprenden inglés como segunda lengua.

Confidencialidad

Los resultados de esta investigación serán compartidos en la presentación del estudiante a graduarse. Los resultados de este proyecto van a ser codificados de tal manera que la identidad de los encuestados no se unirá a la forma final de este estudio. El investigador reserva el derecho a utilizar y publicar información no identificable. Mientras que las respuestas individuales son confidenciales, los datos agregados se presentarán representando los promedios o generalizaciones acerca de las respuestas en su conjunto.

Todos los datos se almacenarán en un lugar seguro y accesible sólo para el investigador. Al finalizar el estudio, se destruirá toda la información que coincida con los encuestados y con sus respuestas.

Participación y Retiro

La participación de su hijo es totalmente voluntaria. Es libre de elegir no participar. Deben usted y su hijo/a, decidir el participar, pueden retirarse en cualquier momento sin consecuencias de ningún tipo.

Preguntas acerca del Estudio

Si usted tiene preguntas o preocupaciones durante la época de la participación de su hijo/a, en este estudio, o después de su terminación o le gustaría recibir una copia de los resultados del estudio de su hijo/a, por favor contacte:

Sarah Akers
Graduate School Psychology
James Madison University
maybersr@jmu.edu
sakers@torrington.org

Dr. Patricia Warner
Graduate School Psychology
James Madison University
(540) 568 – 3358
warnerpj@jmu.edu

Preguntas acerca de sus derechos como tema de investigación

Dr. David Cockley
Chair, Institutional Review Board
James Madison University
(540) 568-2834
cocklede@jmu.edu

Autorización

He leído este formulario de consentimiento y entiendo lo que se le está siendo solicitado de mi hijo/a, como un participante en este estudio. Doy mi consentimiento libremente para que mi hijo/a, participe. Me han dado respuestas satisfactorias a mis preguntas. El investigador me proporcionó una copia de este formulario. Y Certifico que tengo por lo menos 18 años de edad.

Nombre del Padre/Representante (Imprenta)

Nombre del Niño/a (Imprenta)

Nombre del Padre/Representante (Firma)

Fecha

Nombre del Investigador (Firma)

Fecha

Appendix C
Child Assent Form

We would like to invite you to take part in this study. We are asking you because you are in the English as a Second Language program at your school.

In this study we will try to learn about the reading habits of students in the ESL program and how they feel about reading. We want to know if reading habits and feelings make a difference in students' English reading skills. To do the study we will ask you to do some activities. The activities include taking a reading test and answering questions about your reading habits and your feelings about reading. We will also be looking at your *DRA-2* and *LAS-Links* scores across the year to see if there is any change. We will do these activities twice during this school year.

Being part of this study will not hurt you in any way. Your answers on the reading test are not part of your grade. Your answers will only be used for the researcher to see what your reading abilities are. The reason we are doing this study is to find ways to help students in the English as a Second Language program learn English even faster.

Your parents have been asked to give their permission for you to take part in this study. Please talk this over with your parents before you decide whether or not to be a part of this study.

You do not have to be in this study if you do not want to. If you decide to participate in the study, you can stop taking the test and answering the questions at any time. If you have any questions at any time, please ask one of the researchers.

IF YOU PRINT YOUR NAME ON THIS FORM IT MEANS THAT YOU HAVE DECIDED TO PARTICIPATE AND HAVE READ EVERYTHING THAT IS ON THIS FORM. YOU AND YOUR PARENTS WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS FORM TO KEEP.

 Name of Child (printed)

 Date

 Signature of Investigator

 Date

Contact Information:

Mrs. Sarah Akers maybersr@jmu.edu

(860) 489-2327 x1615

sakers@torrington.org

Appendix D
Forma de Evaluacion del Nino/a

Nos gustaría invitarle a participar en este estudio. Le estamos pidiendo esto porque usted está en el programa de inglés como una segunda lengua en la escuela.

En este estudio trataremos de aprender acerca de los hábitos de lectura de los estudiantes en el programa de ESL y cómo se sienten acerca de la lectura. Queremos saber si los hábitos de lectura y los sentimientos hacen una diferencia en las habilidades de lectura de los estudiantes. Le pediremos hacer algunas actividades para hacer el estudio. Las actividades incluyen un examen de lectura y respondiendo a preguntas sobre sus hábitos de lectura y sus sentimientos acerca de la lectura. Nosotros también miraremos sus *DRA-2* y las puntuaciones de *LAS*, durante todo el año vamos ver si hay algún cambio. Haremos estas actividades dos veces durante este año escolar.

Ser parte de este estudio no le hará daño de ninguna manera. Sus respuestas en la prueba de lectura no son parte de su calificación. Sus respuestas sólo se utilizarán para el investigador ver cuáles son sus habilidades en la lectura. La razón por la que estamos haciendo este estudio es para encontrar maneras de ayudar a los estudiantes en el inglés como un segundo idioma y así aprender el inglés más rápido

Hemos pedido permiso a tus padres para que puedan participar en este estudio. Por favor hablar con tus padres antes de decidir si desean o no ser parte de este estudio.

No tienes que participar en este estudio, si no quieres. Si decides participar en el estudio, puedes dejar de tomar la prueba y de responder a las preguntas en cualquier momento. Si tienen cualquier pregunta, por favor preguntar a uno de los investigadores.

SI IMPRIMEN SU NOMBRE EN ESTA FORMA SIGNIFICA QUE SE HAN DECIDIDO A PARTICIPAR Y HABER LEÍDO TODO LO QUE ESTÁ EN ESTA FORMA. SE LES DARA UNA COPIA DE ESTE FORMULARIO A USTEDES Y A SUS PADRES.

 Nombre del Nino/a (impresión)

 Fecha

 Firma del Investigador

 Fecha

Información de Contacto:

Sra. Sarah Akers
 sakers@torrington.org
 maybersr@jmu.edu
 (860) 489-2327 x1615

Appendix E
Student Interview

1. Do your parents read to you at home?
2. What do you read at home?
__Picture Books __Chapter Books
__Comics __Magazines
__Websites __ Other _____
3. How much time do you spend reading at home each week?
 - I don't read at home
 - I read at home, but less than an hour
 - Between one hour and three hours
 - More than three hours, but less than five hours
 - Five hours or more (If more than five hours, how many?)
4. How many books do you have at home?
5. How many times each month do you visit the following?
 - library _____
 - bookstore _____
 - other places you get things to read _____

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