Emergent Bilingual Students and Their Academic Performance

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A Collection of Archival Data Analyses

Edited by

John R. Slate and Clare A. Resilla

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This book is dedicated to the faculty members who have helped maintain my morale for the past half-decade: Drs. Janene W. Hemmen, John Newbold, and Ronnie Daigle. Their professionalism is without compare. They care deeply about the work that they do; about the students whom they are preparing for future careers; and about their colleagues. Each is a consummate professional. In my soon-to-be four decades of being a university faculty member, I have not come across many faculty members such as these three. These three faculty members are the epitome of my university's motto, The measure of a life is its service. I am proud to be able to call them my friends.

—John R. Slate

This book is dedicated to my husband, Glenn Resilla, and our two boys, Chant and Chael.

As first-generation Filipino immigrants in the United States, I cannot help but think about the barriers we had to overcome to live the American dream. The road to having a seat at the table may be difficult and, at times, discouraging, but your presence in my life reminded me of "my why." As I continue to use my voice to advocate for those who cannot, I am reminded that words have power. Each published piece is a step closer to fully understanding the plight of immigrants, Emergent Bilinguals, dreamers, and hopefuls like us. Lastly, I dedicate this book to our Lord Jesus Christ, who has continued to strengthen me, Philippians 4:13.

—Clare A. Resilla

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INTRODUCTION

We had several purposes in writing this book. First, we wanted to provide empirical studies about the academic performance of Emergent Bilingual students. A difference exists between knowing that they tend to underperform traditional students and knowing specifically the magnitude of the various achievement gaps that are present. Second, we wanted to provide exemplars of secondary data analyses for this particular group of students. Far too much educational data are collected and under-analyzed. They simply are collected and infrequently used. Although all of the data analyzed in the chapters in this book are Texas-based, other states also collect extensive amounts of educational data on their students. A third reason in writing this book was to make available a collection of empirical studies about Emergent Bilingual students in three areas: writing; ethnicity/race; economic status; and gender. Demographic characteristics such as the ones mentioned of students matter. We need to examine the intersection of these demographic characteristics. Such nuanced analyses should provide us with a better ability to provide differentiated instruction.

—John R. Slate

Equitable education for all students cannot be achieved without carefully examining the current educational realities. Often, we hear educational leaders say, "Data drives instruction." However, finding the right data to propel legislative and educational programming changes that directly affect student outcomes needs to be examined. As a former school principal and district multilingual program coordinator, I can attest to the complexity of addressing the needs of all students. However, as we think about the plight of our Emergent Bilingual students, this book allows us to examine granularly the different variables that affect their performance. The perspectives in this book urge readers to reflect on how to serve Emergent Bilingual students better in three components that address their needs: cognitive, linguistic, and affective. In each chapter, a multitude of research backgrounds to understand the historical underpinnings of the current studies and new-found perspectives on implications to practice are uncovered. Although the academic performance of Emergent Bilingual students in the State of Texas are addressed in the chapters in this book, the

work can be replicated in other states and countries. With careful examination of data, school leaders, district administrators, state agencies, and government legislators can create local and state laws that will truly advocate for equitable education for all students, especially those in special populations such as Emergent Bilingual students.

—Clare A. Resilla

SLATE PERSPECTIVE OF MARTIN AND SLATE

This chapter was written as one of three articles in Dr. Martin's journal-ready dissertation at Sam Houston State University. In this chapter, Texas statewide data on the state-mandated writing assessment were requested from the Texas Education Agency through a Public Information Request form. Data were analyzed on all Grade 4 Texas students who had taken the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness Writing assessment in three consecutive school years.

The population of Grade 4 students whose writing performance was analyzed were Emergent Bilingual students. This title is regarded as a much more positive affirmation than previous titles used in Texas of Limited English Proficient, English Language Learner, and English Learner. In Texas, the Emergent Bilingual student population is rapidly increasing and placing pressure on school leaders to meet their needs.

In this multiyear, statewide investigation, the writing performance of Grade 4 Emergent Bilingual students was compared to the writing performance of Grade 4 non-Emergent Bilingual students on three measures: Approaches Grade Level, Meets Grade Level, and Masters Grade Level. Either students met a specific grade level standard or they did not meet the standard as the rating was a Met or Not Met for each grade level standard. Separate analyses were conducted for each grade level standard and for each of the three school years.

Pointed out in the chapter was the use of archival data prior to the Covid pandemic. In Texas, and in most other states as well, schools were closed for a period of time; then held online via Zoom or WebCT or the like. When schools begin meeting face-to-face, school schedules in Texas were such that some students were in class and others were there in a virtual capacity. As such, Martin and Slate contended that post-pandemic data should be examined in the future, but would not constitute part of their analyses. Their findings should serve as a baseline for pre-pandemic writing differences between Emergent Bilingual students and non-Emergent Bilingual students.

From the results of this chapter, readers are provided with several recommendations for future research. Given that they focused only on Texas data, other states with a sufficient number of Emergent Bilingual students should have their achievement data analyzed. Also, only writing performance data were examined. Other academic areas such as reading and

mathematics, should also be addressed to determine the effects of student language status. Data on only Grade 4 students were analyzed in their chapter. Texas begins requiring statewide assessments in Grade 3 and continue them through five high school End-of-Course exams. Researchers are encouraged to extend analyses from lower elementary school through high school.

A Perspective on Emergent Bilingual Students

Clare A. Resilla

The underperformance of Emergent Bilingual students in comparison to native English-speaking students is a reality that stems from a historical underpinning of the educational response of the United States in serving students whose first language is not English. There has been a long-standing history of serving Emergent Bilingual individuals in the United States (Bybee et al., 2014); a past marred by periods of oppression and triumphs. The "sink or swim" or English immersion era from 1920 to 1960s was highlighted by an oppressive practice where English was the dominant language of instruction for all students, even those who identified as Emergent Bilingual. Castillo (2003) stressed that little to no remediation was provided for Emergent Bilingual students and that these students remained in the same grade level until they had mastered enough English proficiency to advance to subsequent course works. The passage of the Bilingual Education Act in 1968 was the pivotal moment when the federal government finally recognized the unique needs of Emergent Bilingual students and the need for federal funding for programs that addressed these needs. The disservices and inequalities experienced by Emergent Bilingual students were further highlighted with the landmark U.S. Supreme Court ruling of the case Lau vs. Nichols, a class-action suit against the San Francisco School District with the allegation that equal education was denied to 1,800 Chinese students because of their limited English abilities (Stewner-Manzanres, 1988).

To place into context the findings from Martin and Slate's research investigation regarding the underperformance of Emergent Bilingual students compared to their non-Emergent Bilingual peers in Texas, readers need to understand how the state has historically addressed this group of students. Texas also has a history of negligence and advocacy on the educational plight of Emergent Bilingual students. Until the 1960s, "English only" was Texas' approach to teaching Emergent Bilingual. Texas

divided stand on its commitment to providing equal education to Emergent Bilingual is evident in its history, as explained by Bybee et al. (2014):

> The Independent School District v. Salvatierra (1930, 1931) case brought by parents in Del Rio, Texas was the first to determine that segregating Mexican American students on the basis of race was illegal. However, de-facto segregation continued on the basis of a later appellate court ruling that school districts could segregate according to special language needs. Linguistic segregation continued in Texas until Delgado et al. v. Bastrop Independent School District of Bastrop County et al. (1948) found that segregating Spanish-speaking students was contrary to the Texas Constitution and the fourteenth amendment. (p. 139)

However, a few Texans can also be credited as critical reformists of Bilingual Education. In 1967, Texas Senator Ralph Yarborough was responsible for introducing a bill to aid school districts as they implemented educational programs for Emergent Bilingual students. The key recommendations of this bill were "teaching of Spanish as a native language, the teaching of English as a second language, and programs designed to give Spanish-speaking students an appreciation of ancestral language and culture" (Stewner-Manzanres, 1988, p.1). Through this bill, 37 other legislative bills comprised the creation of Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) or the Bilingual Education Act of 1968. Title VII asserts equal educational opportunities for Emergent Bilingual students must be federally funded (Stewner-Manzanres, 1988). President Lyndon B. Johnson, another Texan, was a forerunner in the passage of the e Bilingual Education Act (BEA), Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, in 1968. As a young teacher in Cotulla, Texas, he incorporated Spanish in his English class in what was then coined a "Mexican school" (Blanton, 2005).

Bybee and Hinojosa (2014) cited two other Texas cases that supported bilingual education: United States v. Texas (1971 and 1981) and San Antonio Independent School District v. Rodriguez (1973). The United States v. Texas (1971, 1981) decision mandated school districts to (a) develop and implement language programs that would support Mexican Americans in the acquisition of the English language, (b) acclimate Mexican Americans to the American culture, and (c) aid White students in learning the Spanish language (Bybee & Hinojosa, 2014). In the San Antonio Independent School District v. Rodriguez (1973), a complaint was filed on the basis that predominantly White schools had more funding than predominantly minority schools. Although the case was argued under the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment, the U.S. Supreme Court

ruled that education is not a constitutionally protected right; therefore, its powers are still reserved to the states under the Tenth Amendment.

How Texas responds to current educational practices is critical as it affects the state and the nation. Evan (2018) argued that "America has a habit of following trends that occur in one of its states: Texas" (para. 1). With this statement comes a massive responsibility for Texas to close the achievement gap between Emergent Bilingual students and their peers. The state currently enrolls 5.4 million students, and 21% of them are identified as being Emergent Bilingual. Therefore, "One out of five students in Texas is an Emergent Bilingual Student" (Guerra, 2023, para. 1). Yet, findings from the research studies compiled in this book are indicative of the low performance of Emergent Bilingual students.

Guerra (2023) further stipulated that new legislative bills that will "improve outreach about bilingual education programs, improve administrative processes to produce more bilingual educators, and expand learning opportunities for bilingual students" (para 10). These bills propose the following: (a) award students achieving biliteracy, (b) provide an additional system to monitor bilingual programs, (c) prepare high school students to become bilingual educators, (d) address inconsistency in bilingual education allotment, (e) train school administrators to understand bilingual education programs, (f) develop Spanish assessment for Grade 6 to Grade 12, (g) redesign certification pathway for Grade 7 to Grade 12 teachers to obtain bilingual supplemental certificates, and (h) increase funding for one-way bilingual education programs. These legislative bills look promising. However, until data on Emergent Bilingual students' academic performance show otherwise as evidence in measures of progress and graduation rate, a continued publication of research on Emergent Bilingual students' academic performance is a must.

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A Perspective on Emergent Bilingual Students

Tershundrea Branch

The United States education system has a long history of academic and behaviorally disproportionate data when comparing students of color to their White peers. Today, the United States is still in pursuit of equality, justice, and equity in education. In response to the well-documented ethnic/racial academic and discipline disparities, in 2015, under the administration of then-President Barack Obama, The No Child Left Behind Act was replaced with the Every Student Succeeds Act in an effort to address the need for the United States education system to acknowledge the historically evident issue of the ethnic/racial academic and discipline disparities documented in the Civil Right Data Collection (Bianco et al., 2016).

According to the Martin and Slate, academic gaps between Emergent Bilingual students and non-Emergent Bilingual students still exist. As indicated in their empirical investigation, the language acquisition status of Emergent Bilingual students was negatively related to their writing performance. Several researchers (e.g., Li, 2012; Pariseau, 2019; Schleeter et al., 2020) have documented the presence of language gaps within reading achievement. As a practicing school counselor for over 13 years in a highly mobile and diverse student body in Texas, I can validate the importance of the school counselor's role in the academic success of their students. The American School Counselor Association National Model (2019) highlighted the need for school counselor competency in the areas of leadership, advocacy, collaboration, and systemic change. Hines et al. (2020) described the school counselor as a vital part of improving student outcomes.

Schools with a history of low-performing academic achievement can benefit from a school counselor who can affect systematic change by progressing from the traditional model of school counseling to a school counseling model that includes proactive activities that involve leadership, advocacy and systematic change, teaming and collaboration, counseling and

coordination, and assessment data (Chen-Hayes et al., 2014; Martin, 2015). Transformational school counselors work to go beyond the traditional school counseling program and focus attention on students with the most needs (e.g., low-income and students of color), concentrate on issues, strategies, and interventions that will help close achievement gaps between students and their peers, and demonstrate to other individuals how their activities contribute to the success of all students (Education Trust National Center for Transforming School Counseling, 2009). School counselors are ethically responsible for supporting the underserved and at-risk populations (American School Counselor Association, 2022).

In the school setting, counselors can have the ability to transform schools if they are aware of the systematic inequalities that exist inside and outside of the school. They are committed to positively influencing the effect these inequalities have on their students (Holcomb-McCoy, 2007). Social justice considerations require school counselors to focus on students who are underserved and underprivileged (Holcomb-McCoy, 2007). In addition, school counselors who are committed to social justice stand against biases that perpetuate the disparities that exist in schools (Holcomb-McCoy, 2007). The ability of school counselors to meet the needs of underprivileged students can affect student preparedness for postsecondary opportunities (Hines et al., 2020). When school counselors take a social justice approach, the counselor can address systemic problems through leadership, advocacy, data-based decision making, and collaborations with key personnel (Hines et al., 2020).

Although the implications for policy and practice in the article highlight the administrative approaches that can be used to combat the negative findings, one can also draft a plan to help prepare school counselors for their role in closing the gap between emergent bilingual and non-emergent bilingual students. Top to bottom reflection and collaboration can be used to ensure the needs of all students are met.

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DIFFERENCES IN THE WRITING PERFORMANCE OF TEXAS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS AS A FUNCTION OF THEIR LANGUAGE STATUS: A MULTIYEAR STATEWIDE INVESTIGATION

ALLIE MARTIN AND JOHN R. SLATE

Abstract

In this investigation, the extent to which writing performance differed as a function of student language status (i.e., Emergent Bilingual, non-Emergent Bilingual) was examined. Data were obtained from the Texas Education Agency Public Education Information Management System for all Grade 4 students in Texas who took the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness Writing assessment for the 2016-2017, 2017-2018, and 2018-2019 school years. In all three school years examined, statistically significant differences were present in the writing categories and the performance standards. Students who were non-Emergent Bilingual scored higher on all of the Writing measures than students who were Emergent Bilingual. Suggestions for future research and implications for policy and practice were made.

Emergent Bilingual students, formerly referred to as Limited English Proficient, English Language Learners, or English Learners, represent a considerable percentage of students enrolled in public schools across the United States (National Center for Education Statistics, 2021). Students identified as Emergent Bilingual demonstrate limited proficiency in English and speak a language other than English as their primary language (English Learner Portal, 2021, p. 1). In 2010, approximately 9.2% of students in public schools were Emergent Bilingual. Since then, these numbers have increased by nearly half a million students. In 2018, 10.2% of students in public schools were Emergent Bilingual. Interestingly, Texas has the second highest percentage of Emergent Bilingual students compared to

other states, with approximately 8% higher than the national average (National Center for Education Statistics, 2021).

With regard to Texas, 5,431,910 students were enrolled in public schools in the 2018-2019 school year. Of that number, 1,055,172 were identified as Emergent Bilingual. Similar to national trends, the number of Texas public school students identified as Emergent Bilingual has increased from 16.9% in the 2008-2009 school year to 19.4% in the 2018-2019 school year. Of the students identified as Emergent Bilingual, 88.5% are Hispanic and 5.9% are Asian (Texas Education Agency, 2019).

The federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 established parameters for states to monitor the academic achievement of students who demonstrate Limited English Proficiency (Li et al., 2018). States are required to assess English language proficiency while ensuring that Emergent Bilingual students attain rigorous levels of academic performance, similar to their native English-speaking classmates (Flores et al., 2012). The Every Student Succeeds Act, signed by then-President Obama in 2015, removed some guidelines set forth by the No Child Left Behind Act, now requiring states to establish assessment standards that consider multiple data points when examining student growth and achievement (Fránquiz & Ortiz, 2016). Although the intent of federal assessment guidelines was to aid in closing academic achievement gaps for students, researchers (i.e., Flores et al., 2012; Pariseau, 2019; Schleeter et al., 2020) contend that the gaps still exist.

The opportunity gap between students who are Emergent Bilingual and students who are non-Emergent Bilingual is reflected in national and state reading achievement data. The National Assessment of Educational Progress, frequently referred to as "The Nation's Report Card," represents the reading academic achievement of students across the United States for selected grade levels (i.e., Grades 4, 8, and 12). Student performance is measured by four achievement levels (i.e., below basic, basic, proficient, advanced). Longitudinal data for Grade 8 students from 1998 through 2005 represent consistent opportunity gaps between Emergent Bilingual students and non-Emergent Bilingual students. Of the Grade 8 students who participated in the National Assessment of Educational Progress in 2005, approximately 71% of Emergent Bilingual students scored below basic in reading achievement (Batalova et al., 2007).

With respect to the population of interest in this investigation, Flores et al. (2012) analyzed the reading achievement trajectories of Emergent Bilingual students in Texas. They examined data from participants who were Grade 1 students in 1995 and graduated on time in 2006. Throughout their entire academic career of standardized assessments in reading, students who were Emergent Bilingual performed lower than students who

were non-Emergent Bilingual. The greatest disparity in reading achievement occurred in Grade 3 with a 20% difference between Emergent Bilingual students and non-Emergent Bilingual students (Flores et al., 2012).

In a recent Texas investigation, Schleeter et al. (2020) explored the reading achievement of Grade 3 Emergent Bilingual students on the State of Texas Academic Assessment of Readiness (STAAR) as a function of their economic status. Data were examined across three school years (i.e., 2012-2013, 2013-2013, 2014-2015). With respect to all three school years, Emergent Bilingual students who were Not Poor outperformed Emergent Bilingual students who were Very Poor (i.e., qualified for the free lunch program) by at least 12% on the Final Satisfactory Performance standard. The greatest gap occurred in the 2013-2014 school year where 13.4% of students who were Not Poor performed higher than students who were Very Poor (Schleeter et al., 2020).

Another researcher (Pariseau, 2019) investigated the reading achievement of Grade 4 Emergent Bilingual boys and girls in special education on the STAAR exam. Statistically significant results were yielded in all four school years (i.e., 2014-2015, 2015-2016, 2016-2017, 2017-2018). When examining the reading performance of Emergent Bilingual boys in special education, their Phase-in 1 Standard, Phase-in 2 Standard, and the Phase-in 3 Standard performance was statistically significantly poorer than the reading performance of non-Emergent Bilingual boys. With respect to Emergent Bilingual girls in special education, the same results were present. Emergent Bilingual girls had statistically significantly lower Phase-in 2 Standard and the Phase-in 3 Standard performance than non-Emergent Bilingual girls.

Researchers (Ardasheva et al., 2012; Villalobos, 2021) have expanded their examination of Emergent Bilingual students to include middle school and high school students. Ardasheva et al. (2012) investigated the academic achievement of middle school students who were formerly identified as Emergent Bilingual, current classified as Emergent Bilingual, and students who were non-Emergent Bilingual. Interestingly, students who were former Emergent Bilingual students outperformed students who were native English speakers and current Emergent Bilingual students on reading achievement. Additionally, former Emergent Bilingual students in higher poverty schools achieved slightly higher levels of reading achievement than former Emergent Bilingual students who were enrolled in a lower poverty school (Ardasheva et al., 2012).

In a recent study, Villalobos (2021) examined the English I End-of-Course Exam Performance Standard of Emergent Bilingual boys and girls. With respect to all three school years (i.e., 2016-2017, 2017-2018, 2018-

2019), Emergent Bilingual girls performed higher in the Approaches Grade Level Performance than Emergent Bilingual boys. Though Emergent Bilingual girls outperformed Emergent Bilingual boys, of note is that nearly 70% of Emergent Bilingual students did not achieve the Approaches Grade Level Standard on the English I End-of-Course assessment. Across all three school years of data analyzed, approximately 90% of Emergent Bilingual students did not achieve the Meets Level Performance Standard. Of concern is that less than 1% of Emergent Bilingual students achieved the Masters Level Performance on the English I End-of-Course exam across all three school years (Villalobos, 2021).

Resilla (2017) extended the research literature regarding Emergent Bilingual students to include an examination of reading college readiness by race/ethnicity (i.e., Asian, Black, Hispanic, White) across seven school years. Black Emergent Bilingual students demonstrated less than 6% of reading college readiness in five out of the seven school years of data analyzed. Less than 6% of Hispanic Emergent Bilingual students demonstrated college readiness in reading for four out of the seven years. Interestingly, in five out of the seven years examined, no White Emergent Bilingual students met the criteria for reading college readiness. Throughout all seven school years and across all four ethnic/racial student groups (i.e., Asian, Black, Hispanic, White) examined, Emergent Bilingual students had a higher percentage of students who did not demonstrate college readiness compared to students who were considered non-Emergent Bilingual.

The interconnectedness of reading and writing is still being explored by researchers. Li (2012) investigated the literacy development of Emergent Bilingual students through a case study on a student who moved to the United States when she was 9 years old. Through the integration of a strong community of support, the student was able to progress from struggling with literacy to demonstrating strengths in reading and writing. Li (2012) contended that the presence of relationships and authentic social experiences generated language opportunities that then transferred to literacy.

With regard to this investigation, no published articles could be located on student language status and the Grade 4 STAAR Writing assessment. The Every Student Succeeds Act sets forth assessment guidelines for states to monitor the reading and mathematics achievement of students in Grades 3 through 8 (Fránquiz & Ortiz, 2016). Although writing is not included as one of the requirements, the Texas Education Agency chooses to require all Texas Grade 4 students to take an additional STAAR exam. The Grade 4 STAAR Writing exam is comprised of three Reporting Categories: (a) Composition, (b) Revision, and (c) Editing. In addition to multiple-choice

questions, students must compose a response to an expository prompt (Texas Education Agency, 2016).

Statement of the Problem

One out of every nine students in Texas public schools is faced with the challenge of learning English (Flores et al., 2012). Of note to this study are several researchers (Li, 2012; Pariseau, 2019; Schleeter et al., 2020) who have documented the presence of language gaps within reading achievement. Although language status and reading inequalities are established, a gap remains in the literature that needs to be addressed with regard to language status and writing performance.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the degree to which differences were present on the Grade 4 STAAR Writing exam by student language status. In this study, the first purpose was to determine the effect of language status on writing performance in three areas (i.e., Reporting Category 1: Composition, Reporting Category 2: Revision, and Reporting Category 3: Editing). A second purpose of this study was to determine the effect of language status on writing by performance standard (i.e., Approaches Grade Level standard, Meets Grade Level standard, and Masters Grade Level standard). The third purpose of this study was to ascertain the degree to which trends might be present across three years of Grade 4 STAAR Writing academic achievement data (i.e., 2016-2017, 2017-2018, and 2018-2019).

Significance of the Study

Researchers (e.g., Pariseau, 2019; Schleeter et al., 2020) have extensively examined the relationship between language status and reading achievement. However, published research investigations on language status and writing are sparse. Although writing is recognized as an important part of literacy, additional efforts in research investigations about writing are needed (Miller & McCardle, 2011). At the time of this study, no published articles could be located on the relationship between student language status and writing academic achievement as measured by the Texas state-mandated STAAR Writing assessment.

Previously, Texas Grade 4 students were assessed on the STAAR Reading and the STAAR Writing exams. However, the STAAR assessment

is undergoing a redesign process. Beginning 2022-2023, the Grade 4 STAAR Reading test and the Grade 4 STAAR Writing test will be combined into one assessment (Texas Education Agency, 2021). Therefore, results from this investigation will provide a baseline study on the Grade 4 STAAR Writing assessment. Additionally, results from this study may expand the body of research surrounding reading academic achievement to include writing academic achievement. By analyzing the writing performance by student language status, the relationship between student who are Emergent Bilingual and students who are non- Emergent Bilingual and writing achievement can be discovered. Findings in this study may have practical applications for Texas elementary school educators regarding literacy instruction. Additionally, results from this investigation may be utilized to help drive policy decisions pertaining to state-mandated high-stakes assessments.

Research Questions

The following overarching research question was addressed in this investigation: What is the difference in the writing performance of Grade 4 Texas students as a function of their language status (i.e., Emergent Bilingual, non-Emergent Bilingual)? Specific subquestions under this overarching research question were: (a) What is the difference in the composition category performance of Grade 4 Texas students as a function of their language status?; (b) What is the difference in the revision category performance of Grade 4 Texas students as a function of their language status?; (c) What is the difference in the editing category performance of Grade 4 Texas students as a function of their language status?; (d) What is the difference between student who are Emergent Bilingual and students who are non-Emergent Bilingual in their Approaches Grade Level standard performance?; (e) What is the difference between students who are Emergent Bilingual and students who are non-Emergent Bilingual in their Meets Grade Level standard performance?; (f) What is the difference between students who are Emergent Bilingual and students who are non-Emergent Bilingual in their Masters Grade Level standard performance? (g) What trend is present in the Writing Reporting categories by student language status across three school years?; and (h) What trend is present in grade level standard performance by student language status across three school years? The first six research questions were repeated for the 2016-2017, 2017-2018, and 2018-2019 school years whereas the last two research questions involved all three school years.

Method

Research Design

For this empirical investigation, the research design was causal-comparative, non-experimental research design (Johnson & Christensen, 2020). Causal-comparative research is used to discover relationships between independent and dependent variables. In this study, actions occurred in the past, thus eliminating the ability to manipulate the independent variables (Johnson & Christensen, 2020). An archival dataset of the Grade 4 STAAR Writing test was examined to determine the relationship between student language status and student achievement in writing. The independent variable in this research study was language status (i.e., Emergent Bilingual, non-Emergent Bilingual) and the dependent variables were the three STAAR Writing Reporting Categories (i.e., Reporting Category 1: Composition, Reporting Category 2: Revision, and Reporting Category 3: Editing) and the three writing performance standards (i.e., Approaches Grade Level standard, Meets Grade Level standard, and Masters Grade Level standard).

Participants and Instrumentation

Data for this study were previously obtained from the Texas Education Agency Public Education Information Management System for the 2016-2017, 2017-2018, and 2018-2019 school years. More recent data could not be used due to high-stakes test interruptions from the COVID-19 pandemic. To obtain these data (i.e., 2016-2017, 2017-2018, 2018-2019), a Public Information Request was submitted to and fulfilled by the Texas Education Agency. Data that were previously obtained were analyzed to determine the degree to which student language status (i.e., Emergent Bilingual, non-Emergent Bilingual) was related to student writing performance in each of the three school years. Students who are Emergent Bilingual demonstrate limited English proficiency and speak a primary language other than English (English Learner Portal, 2021, p. 1).

The Grade 4 STAAR Writing exam assesses student achievement across three Reporting Categories. Students compose an expository response based upon a provided prompt as required by the STAAR Writing Reporting Category 1. Multiple-choice questions comprise STAAR Writing Reporting Categories 2 and 3 where revision and editing are assessed (Texas Education Agency, 2016). In addition to the three STAAR Writing Reporting Categories, writing performance on the STAAR performance

standards (i.e., Did Not Meet Grade Level Performance, Approaches Grade Level Performance, Meets Grade Level Performance, and Masters Grade Level Performance) was examined. Performance in the Did Not Meet Grade Level Performance indicates that students are unlikely to demonstrate success in the next grade level without significant and continuing intervention. Performance in the Approaches Grade Level Performance indicates students require focused academic intervention to demonstrate success in the next grade. Performance in the Meets Grade Level Performance indicates students may require some short-term academic intervention but demonstrate a high prospect of success at the next grade level. Performance in the Masters Grade Level Performance Standard indicates students require little or no academic intervention to be successful at the next grade level (Texas Education Agency, 2017).

Results

To determine the extent to which differences were present in the writing performance of students as a function of their language status (i.e., Emergent Bilingual, non-Emergent Bilingual), statistical analyses for the 2016-2017, 2017-2018, and 2018-2019 school years were conducted. Prior to conducting inferential statistical procedures, the underlying assumptions of the Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) procedures were checked. Specifically examined were data normality, Box's Test of Quality of Covariance, and the Levene's Test of Quality of Error Variances (Slate, 2023a). Although the majority of these assumptions were not met, the robustness of a MANOVA procedure made it appropriate to use in this investigation (Field, 2018). Results of statistical analyses for Grade 4 STAAR Writing performance by student language status will be described first by Writing Reporting Categories and then by performance standards. Results in this study will be discussed in chronological order for the 2016-2017, 2017-2018, and 2018-2019 school years.

Overall Results for the Three School Years

Concerning the 2016-2017 school year, the MANOVA revealed a statistically significant difference, Wilks' $\Lambda = .94$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .06$, in the number of test items answered correctly as a function of language status. The effect size for this statistically significant difference was moderate (Cohen, 1998). With respect to the 2017-2018 school year, the MANOVA revealed a statistically significant difference, Wilks' $\Lambda = .97$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .03$, in the number of test items answered correctly as a

function of language status. Using Cohen's (1988) criteria, the effect size was small. Regarding the 2018-2019 school year, the MANOVA revealed a statistically significant difference, Wilks' $\Lambda = .96$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .04$, small effect size, in the number of test items answered correctly as a function of language status. In the 2016-2017 school year, the effect size was moderate. In the 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 school years, effect sizes were small.

Writing Reporting Category 1 Results Across all Three School Years

Following the overall results of the MANOVA, univariate follow-up Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) procedures were conducted for each of the three STAAR Writing Reporting Categories. For the 2016-2017 school year, a statistically significant difference in the Writing Reporting Category 1 by student language status was yielded, $F(1,196945) = 910.09$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .01$, small effect size. Concerning the 2017-2018 school year, a statistically significant difference was revealed on the STAAR Writing Reporting Category 1 by student language status, $F(1,163245) = 1588.50$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .01$, small effect size. With respect to the 2018-2019 school year, a statistically significant difference was again yielded on the STAAR Writing Reporting Category 1 by student language status, $F(1,164495) = 2667.91$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .02$, small effect size. Effects sizes were small for all three school years.

Students who were Emergent Bilingual answered statistically significantly fewer items correctly on Writing Reporting Category 1 than students who were non-Emergent Bilingual in all three of the school years examined. Students who were Emergent Bilingual answered 0.23, 0.36, and 0.46 fewer items correctly, respectively than did students who were non-Emergent Bilingual. Table 1 contains the descriptive statistics for this analysis.