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Language Status and English II End-of-Course Exam Performance of Girls: A Texas Multiyear Analysis

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Abstract

In this article, we compared the reading college readiness of Emergent Bilingual girls to the reading college readiness of non-Emergent Bilingual girls. To do so, we analyzed two years (i.e., 2017-2018, 2018-2019) of Texas statewide data on the state-mandated English II End-of-Course exam. On the three measures of reading college readiness (i.e., Approaches Grade Level, Meets Grade Level, and Masters Grade Level), statistically significantly lower percentages of Emergent Bilingual girls met the passing standards on these measures than did non-Emergent Bilingual girls. Of note were the extremely low percentages of Emergent Bilingual girls who passed the standard for the Meets Grade Level and the Masters Grade Level measures. Such low performance would preclude success at the postsecondary level.

Keywords: emergent bilingual, English II End-of-Course exam, STAAR assessment, Texas, girls

1. Introduction

The United States has a long-standing history of serving Emergent Bilingual students (Bybee et al., 2014). This history, however, is marred by both 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 for those individuals who identified as Emergent Bilingual. Castillo (2003) noted that little to no remediation efforts were provided to 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 that programs that addressed these needs should be federally funded.

Despite enacting the No Child Left Behind Act and the Every Student Succeeds Act to guarantee the achievement of this particular student population, however, Emergent Bilingual students continue to underperform in comparison with their peers. In examining existing literature on the academic performance of Emergent Bilingual students in Texas, the focus of this study, Resilla and Slate (2022), in a multiyear analysis of statewide data, documented the underperformance of Emergent Bilingual girls on the Texas state-mandated English I End-of-Course exam in comparison with their English-speaking counterparts. In their study, only one fourth of Emergent Bilingual girls met the Approaches Grade Level Standard, a standard that indicates that students are more likely to be successful in the next grade level with intervention, compared to two-thirds of non-Emergent Bilingual girls who met this standard. At the Meets Grade Level Standard, a standard that indicates that students are more than likely to succeed the next grade level but with targeted intervention, less than a tenth of Emergent Bilingual girls met the standard compared to more than half of non-Emergent Bilingual girls who met this standard. With respect to the Masters Grade Level standard, a standard that indicates students are expected to succeed in the next grade level without intervention, less than 1% of Emergent Bilingual girls met this standard, compared to 20% of non-Emergent Bilingual girls who met this grade level standard. The

English I End-of-Course exam is relevant to this article for two reasons: (a) this exam is reflective of reading college readiness, or lack thereof, and (b) because students who are not successful at this level are unlikely to be successful in the English II End-of-Course exam.

The results from Resilla and Slate's (2022) study were consistent with existing literature (Ardasheva et al., 2012; Fry & Pew, 2008; Intercultural Development Research, 2015; Koyama & Menken, 2013; National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, 2005; Rodriguez & Slate, 2015) that Emergent Bilingual students do not have the same reading skills as their English-speaking peers. The assertion of researchers (e.g., Amrein & Berliner, 2002; Back, 2020; Menken, 2008; Valenzuela, 2005; Valencia, 2011; Zacher Pandya, 2011) on the failure of public schools in serving Emergent Bilingual students was once again affirmed by Resilla and Slate (2022).

In another Texas investigation, Sugarman and Geary (2018) documented the presence of low academic achievement of Emergent Bilingual students in the 2016-2017 school year in all grade levels on the Texas state-mandated assessments. Of most concern are the low percentages of Emergent Bilingual students who met grade level standards on the English I End-of-Course exam and on the English II End-of-Course exam. Only 29% of Emergent Bilingual students met the Approaches Grade Level Standard on the English I End-of-Course exam, and only 28% met this standard on the English II End-of-Course exam. Readers should note that 64% of all students met the Approaches Grade Level Standard on the English I End-of-Course exam, and 66% met the Approaches Grade Level Standard on the English II End-of-Course exam.

In an extensive literature review, we could only locate one similar study, Resilla and Slate (2022), that we discussed previously about the performance of Emergent Bilingual girls on the English I End-of-Course exam. We were not able to locate any published articles about the performance of Emergent Bilingual girls on the English II End-of-Course exam. Given the importance of reading college-readiness and the documented underperformance of Emergent Bilingual students, findings from this multiyear analysis can add to the extant body of knowledge regarding Emergent Bilingual girls and their performance on a measure of reading college readiness.

1.1 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this article was to ascertain the degree to which the language status of high school girls was related to their performance on the Texas state-mandated English II End-of-Course exam. We were specifically interested in knowing whether Emergent Bilingual girls differed on three grade level performance measures (i.e., Approaches Grade Level standard, Meets Grade Level standard, and Masters Grade Level standard) from non-Emergent Bilingual girls. These three English measures were analyzed for the two school years (i.e., 2017-2018 and 2018-2019) prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

1.2 Significance of the Study

Results from this statewide multiyear analysis will fill the void in the extant research literature concerning the English II performance of Emergent Bilingual girls compared to non-Emergent Bilingual girls. Given the importance of reading college-readiness, should Emergent Bilingual girls perform poorly on the English II End-of-Course exam, then cause for concern would exist regarding their college readiness, or lack thereof. As of the writing of this study, we could not locate any published articles in which the performance of Emergent Bilingual girls was contrasted to the performance of non-Emergent Bilingual girls on this state-mandated assessment. We were able, however, to locate four articles (Resilla & Slate, 2022; Resilla & Slate, 2023a, 2023b, 2023c) regarding the performance of Emergent Bilingual students on the English I End-of-Course exam. These articles were previously discussed in the literature review.

1.3 Research Questions

The following overarching research question was addressed in this investigation: What is the difference in the English II End-of-Course exam between Emergent Bilingual girls and non-Emergent girls? Subquestions under this overarching research question were: (a) What is the difference between Emergent Bilingual girls and non-Emergent girls in their performance on the Approaches Grade Level standard?; (b) What is the difference between Emergent Bilingual girls and non-Emergent Bilingual girls in their performance on the Meets Grade Level Standard?; (c) What is the difference between Emergent Bilingual girls and non-Emergent Bilingual girls in their performance on the Masters Grade Level Standard?; and (d) What consistencies exist in the performance of Emergent Bilingual girls and non-Emergent Bilingual girls on the three Grade Level standards across two school years of data analyzed? The first three research questions were answered separately for the 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 school years, whereas the third research question involved comparisons across the two school years.

2. Method

2.1 Research Design

Archival data, obtained from the Texas Education Agency Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS Data Standards, 2018) were analyzed in this multiyear statewide investigation. The use of such data constitutes a causal-comparative research design (Johnson & Christensen, 2020). The independent variable in this article was the language status of high school girls: Emergent Bilingual or non-Emergent Bilingual. The three dependent variables present were student performance on the English II End-of-Course exam (a) Approaches Grade Level standard, (b) Meets Grade Level standard, and (c) Masters Grade Level standard for the 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 school years. Because the data we analyzed in this article were archival in nature, we could not control nor manipulate any of the variables. Accordingly, we are limited in the extent to which cause-and-effect relationships can be made (Johnson & Christensen, 2020).

2.2 Participants and Instrumentation

Our participants were Emergent Bilingual girls and non-Emergent Bilingual girls in Texas who had taken the English II End-of-Course exam in the 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 school years. As revealed in Table 1, the sample size of Emergent Bilingual girls was about 25,000 and for non-Emergent Bilingual girls was about 145,000. Emergent Bilingual students are defined in the Texas Education Code (TEC) 29.052 as "students who are in the process of acquiring English and have a primary language other than English" (Texas Education Agency, 2022).

The data analyzed herein were previously obtained from the Texas Education Agency Public Education Information Management System database for the English II End-of-Course exam that was administered in the 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 school years. A Public Information Request was previously submitted to and was fulfilled by the Texas Education Agency to obtain the data. Datasets requested and obtained were for: (a) English II End-of-Course Grade Level Standards, (c) language status, and (d) gender. The data, once received, were converted into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences software program (SPSS-Version 27) for analysis.

Performance on the STAAR grade level standards were examined by student language status. Measured by the English II End-of-Course exam are three categories for performance. Meeting the Approaches Grade Level Category indicates that students are likely to succeed in the next grade or course with targeted intervention (Texas Education Agency, 2017). Concerning the Meets Grade Level Category, performance in this category means that students have a high probability of academic success in the next grade or course (Texas Education Agency, 2017). Students may still need some type of short-term and targeted academic intervention. Meeting the Masters Grade Level Category is interpreted to mean that students are expected to succeed in the next grade or course. Students who perform within this category need very little to no academic intervention (Texas Education Agency, 2017). Students in this category demonstrate the ability to think critically and apply the assessed knowledge and skills in varied contexts, both familiar and unfamiliar (Texas Education Agency, 2017).

3. Results

To determine whether Emergent Bilingual girls differed from non-Emergent Bilingual girls on the Texas state-mandated English II assessment, we conducted Pearson chi-square statistical procedures. This inferential statistical method was appropriate to use because of the nature of the three grade level standards of Approaches Grade Level, Meets Grade Level, and Masters Grade Level. Each of these grade level standards is nominal in nature (i.e., Met the Standard, Did Not Meet the Standard) and the independent variable of language status is also nominal (i.e., Emergent Bilingual girls or non-Emergent Bilingual girls). As we used a Texas statewide sample, the required minimal sample size was more than met (Slate & Rojas-LeBouef, 2011).

3.1 Approaches Grade Level Standard Results

With respect to the first research question regarding the 2017-2018 school year for the English II End-of-Course Approaches Grade Level standard, a statistically significant result was revealed, $\chi^2(1) = 28511.42$, $p < .001$. The effect size for this finding, Cramer's V, was moderate, .40 (Cohen, 1988). A statistically significantly lower percentage of Emergent Bilingual girls, almost four times lower, met this Approaches Grade Level standard in the 2018-2019 school year than non-Emergent Bilingual girls. Three-fourths of the non-Emergent Bilingual girls met this grade level standard, compared to only about one-fifth of Emergent Bilingual girls. Revealed in Table 1 are the descriptive statistics for this analysis.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for the English II End-of-Course Approaches Grade Level Standard by the Language Status of High School Girls for Both School Years

School Year and Language Status	Did Not Meet	Met
	n and %age of Total	*n* and %age of Total

2017-2018		
Emergent Bilingual	(n = 18,821) 80.4%	(n = 4,574) 19.6%
Non-Emergent Bilingual	(n = 38,634) 25.0%	(n = 115,677) 75.0%
2018-2019		
Emergent Bilingual	(n = 19,112) 77.3%	(n = 5,601) 22.7%
Non-Emergent Bilingual	(n = 32,513) 22.9%	(n = 109,427) 77.1%

Concerning the English II End-of-Course Approaches Grade Level standard for the 2018-2019 school year, a statistically significant difference was yielded, $\chi^2(1) = 29164.26$, $p < .001$. The effect size for this finding, Cramer's V, was moderate, .42 (Cohen, 1988). As delineated in Table 1, a statistically significantly lower percentage of Emergent Bilingual girls, almost four times lower, met this Approaches Grade Level standard in the 2018-2019 school year than non-Emergent Bilingual girls. More than three-fourths of the non-Emergent Bilingual girls met this standard, compared to slightly more than one-fifth of Emergent Bilingual girls who met this grade level standard. Depicted in Figure 1 are the average percentages of Emergent Bilingual girls and non-Emergent Bilingual girls who met the Approaches Grade Level standard in both school years.

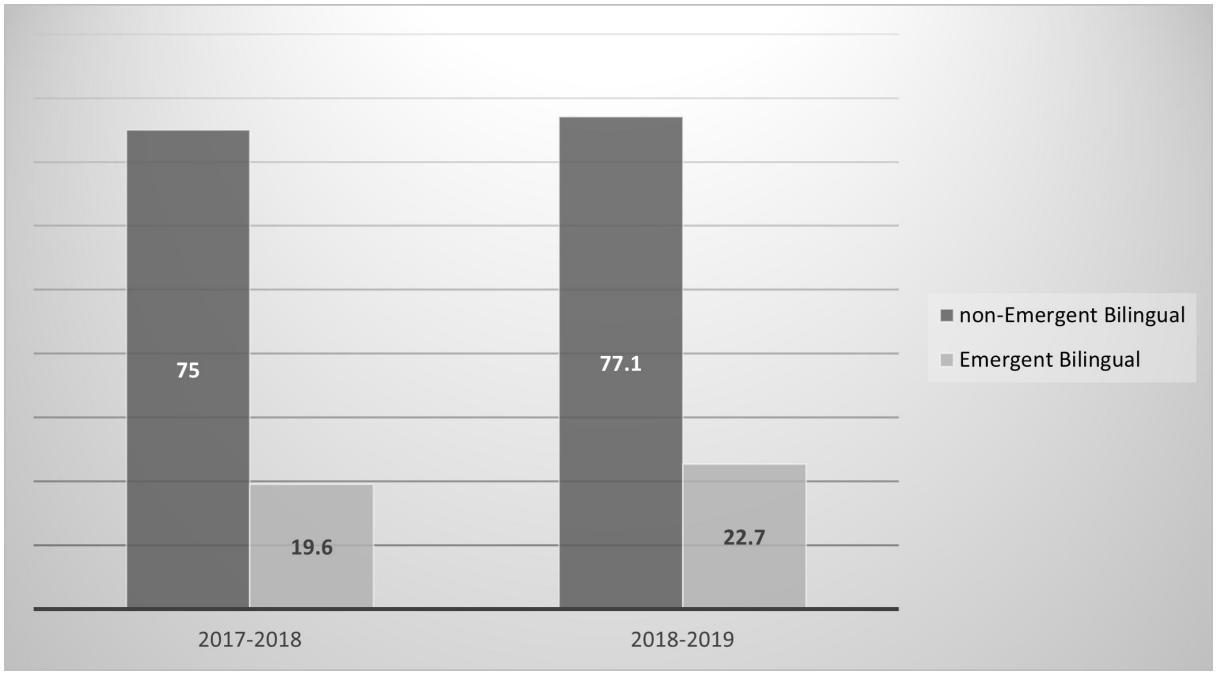

Figure 1. Average percent who met the English II Approaches Grade Level standard by language status in the 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 school years

3.2 Meets Grade Level Standard Results

Regarding the second research question about the English II End-of-Course Meets Grade Level standard for the 2017-2018 school year, a statistically significant result was present, $\chi^2(1) = 24493.06$, $p < .001$. The effect size for this finding, Cramer's V, was moderate, .37 (Cohen, 1988). A statistically significantly lower percentage of Emergent Bilingual girls, almost eight times lower, met this Meets Grade Level standard in the 2017-2018 school year than non-Emergent Bilingual girls. Almost two-thirds of the non-Emergent Bilingual girls met this grade level standard, compared to less than a tenth of the Emergent Bilingual girls who met this grade level standard. Delineated in Table 2 are the descriptive statistics for this analysis.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics for the English II End-of-Course Meets Grade Level Standard by the Language Status of High School Girls for Both School Years

School Year and Language Status	Did Not Meet	Met

	n and %age of Total	*n* and %age of Total
2017-2018		
Emergent Bilingual	(*n* = 21,817) 93.3%	(*n* = 1,578) 6.7%
Non-Emergent Bilingual	(*n* = 59,490) 38.6%	(*n* = 94,821) 61.4%
2018-2019		
Emergent Bilingual	(*n* = 22,501) 91.0%	(*n* = 2,212) 9.3%
Non-Emergent Bilingual	(*n* = 51,235) 36.1%	(*n* = 90,705) 63.9%

With respect to the English II End-of-Course Meets Grade Level standard for the 2018-2019 school year, a statistically significant difference was yielded, $\chi^2(1) = 25766.27$, $p < .001$. The effect size for this finding, Cramer's V, was moderate, .39 (Cohen, 1988). As presented in Table 2, a statistically significantly lower percentage of Emergent Bilingual girls, almost six times lower, met this Meets Grade Level standard in the 2018-2019 school year than non-Emergent Bilingual girls. Almost two-thirds of the non-Emergent Bilingual girls met this grade level standard, compared to less than a tenth of Emergent Bilingual girls who met this grade level standard. Shown in Figure 2 are the average percentages of Emergent Bilingual girls and non-Emergent Bilingual girls who met the Meets Grade Level standard in both school years.

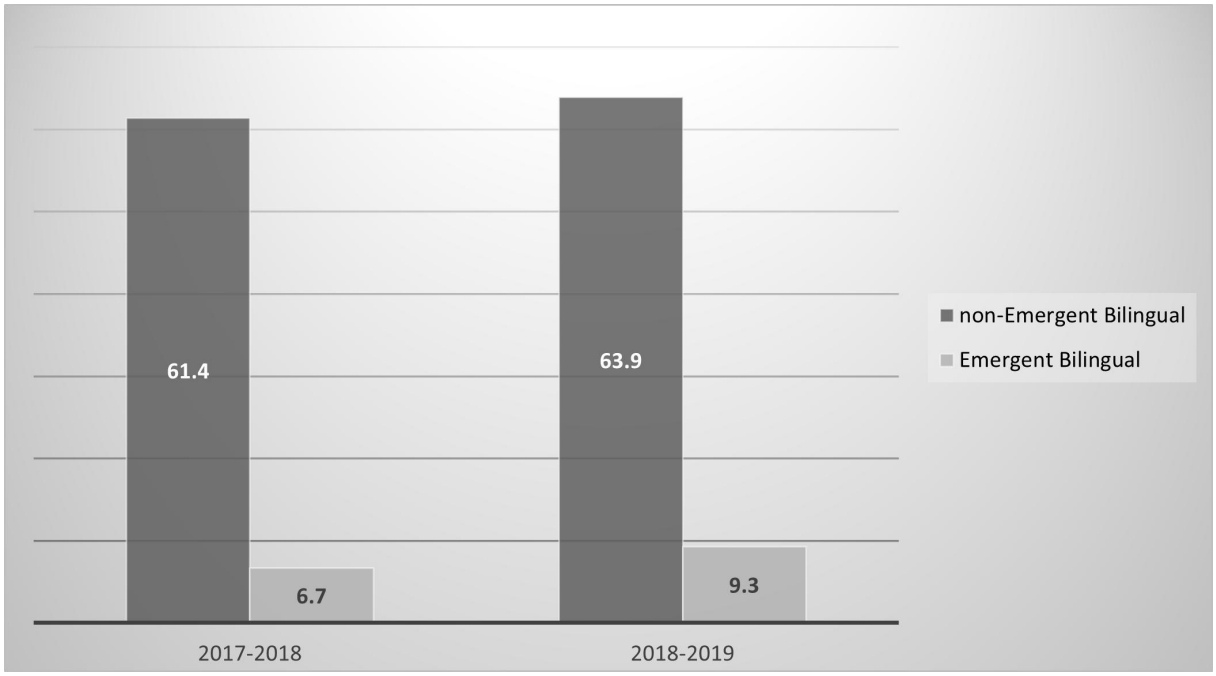

Figure 2. Average percent who met the English II Meets Grade Level standard by language status in the 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 school years

3.3 Masters Grade Level Standard Results

Concerning the English II End-of-Course Masters Grade Level standard for the 2017-2018 school year, the Pearson chi-square yielded a statistically significant result, $\chi^2(1) = 3344.11$, $p < .001$. The effect size for this finding, Cramer's V, was small, .14 (Cohen, 1988). A statistically significantly low percentage of Emergent Bilingual girls, 0.1%, met this Masters Grade Level standard in the 2017-2018 school year compared to 13.0% of non-Emergent Bilingual girls. Readers should note that only 30 Emergent Bilingual girls met this grade level standard. Revealed in Table 3 are the descriptive statistics for this school year.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics for the English II End-of-Course Masters Grade Level Standard by the Language Status of High School Girls for Both School Years

School Year and Language Status	Did Not Meet	Met

	n and %age of Total	*n* and %age of Total
2017-2018		
Emergent Bilingual	(*n* = 23,365) 99.9%	(*n* = 30) 0.1%
Non-Emergent Bilingual	(*n* = 134,316) 87.0%	(*n* = 19,995) 13.0%
2018-2019		
Emergent Bilingual	(*n* = 24,676) 99.9%	(*n* = 37) 0.1%
Non-Emergent Bilingual	(*n* = 122,865) 86.6%	(*n* = 19,075) 13.4%

Regarding the English II End-of-Course Masters Grade Level standard for the 2018-2019 school year, the result was statistically significant, $\chi^2(1) = 3661.11$, $p < .001$. The effect size for this finding, Cramer's V, was small, .15 (Cohen, 1988). A statistically significantly low percentage of Emergent Bilingual girls, 0.1%, met this Masters Grade Level standard in the 2018-2019 school year compared to 13.4% of non-Emergent Bilingual girls who met this grade level standard. Readers should note that only 37 Emergent Bilingual girls met this grade level standard. Illustrated in Figure 3 are the average percentages of Emergent Bilingual girls and non-Emergent Bilingual girls who met the Masters Grade Level standard in both school years.

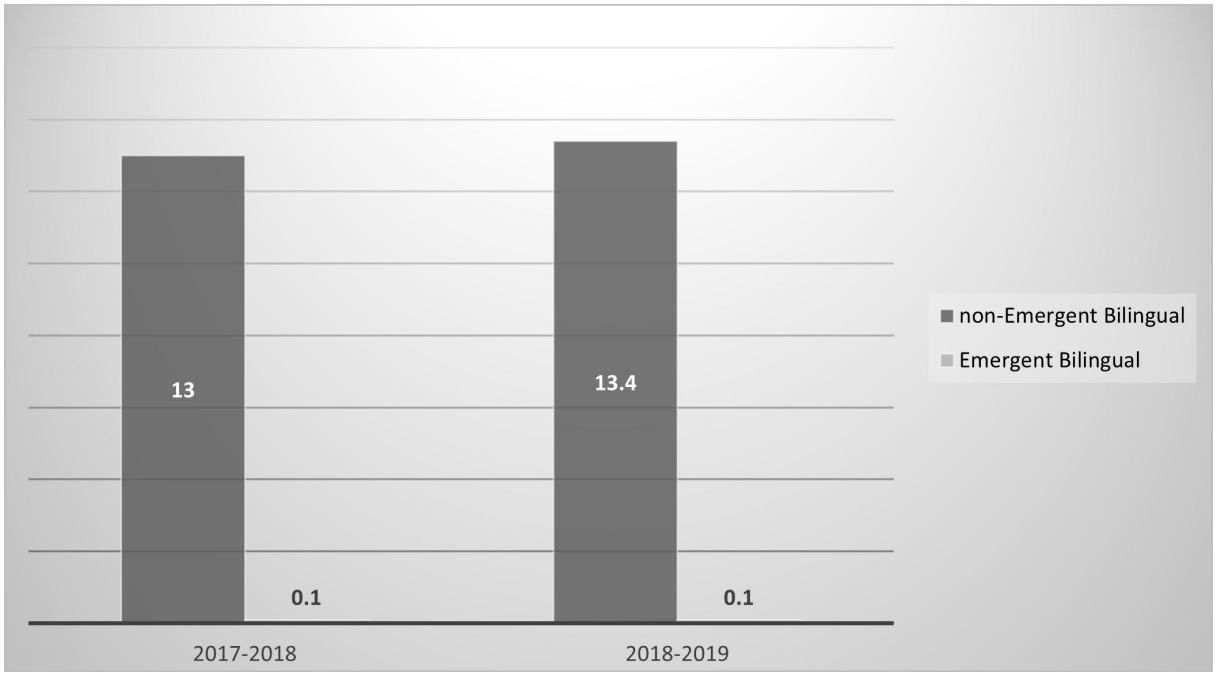

Figure 3. Average percent who met the English II Masters Grade Level standard by language status in the 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 school years

4. Discussion

Of note in our findings is the consistency with which our sample performed on the English II End-of-Course exam in both school years. The effect size values for the Approaches Grade Level standard were .40 and .42 (i.e., moderate effect sizes) in both school years. These moderate effect sizes are indicative that language status had a substantial and an important influence on whether or not these high school girls met this Texas state-mandated assessment. With respect to the Meets Grade Level standard, the effect size values were also moderate, .37 and .39, respectively, for the two school years. These effect sizes are congruent with the effect size values for the Approaches Grade Level standard, that language status has a substantial and important influence on meeting or not meeting this Texas state-mandated assessment.

The effect size values for the Masters Grade Level standard were .14 and .15, respectively, for the two school years. These effect sizes were small in nature, primarily because so very few girls actually met this grade level standard. Less than 1% of Emergent Bilingual girls met this grade level standard and less than 15% of non-Emergent Bilingual girls met this grade level standard.

4.1 Connections with the Existing Literature

The results in this study are commensurate with the results of other researchers (e.g., Martin, 2022; Resilla & Slate, 2022; Sugarman & Geary, 2018, Villalobos, 2021) who have documented the low academic performance of Emergent Bilingual students compared to their non-Emergent Bilingual student counterparts. Of note in our empirical findings was the remarkable degree of similarity between the achievement gaps in our English II End-of-Course exam performance between Emergent Bilingual girls and non-Emergent bilingual girls and the achievement gaps established by Resilla and Slate (2022) on the English I End-of-Course exam performance. Results were incredibly comparable regarding the low performance on each grade level standard and the disparities in the percentages meeting and not meeting each grade level standard. The academic performance of Emergent Bilingual students continues to be lower than that of their peers (Ardasheva et al., 2012; Fry & Pew, 2008; Intercultural Development Research, 2015; Koyama & Menken, 2013; National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, 2005; Rodriguez & Slate, 2015). As such, public schools continue to fail in providing an equitable education to Emergent Bilingual students (Amrein & Berliner, 2002; Back, 2020; Menken, 2008; Valenzuela, 2005; Valencia, 2011; Zacher Pandya, 2011).

4.2 Implications for Policy and for Practice

Part of the State of Texas high school graduation requirements is meeting the Approaches Grade Level in all End-of-Course exams (i.e., Algebra I, English I, English II, Biology, and U.S. History). However, a special provision exempts Emergent Bilingual students enrolled in a United States school for three years or less to exempt End-of-Course English I as part of their graduation requirement under 19 TAC §101.1007. However, this provision does not apply to the English I End-of-Course exam and other courses.

Hope is present in these seemingly glim educational realities of Emergent Bilingual students. In an investigation conducted by Ardasheva et al. (2012), they established that former Emergent Bilingual students in middle school outperformed their native English speaking counterparts in reading achievement. Therefore, a need exists to ensure Emergent Bilingual students become English proficient by middle schools, so they will have more favorable odds of meeting the academic performance standards for state-mandated exams in high school. The question now lies in how much schools and school districts prepare Emergent Bilingual students to take the Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System to ensure each year they make a year's growth in their English language proficiency. Much like the State of Texas Assessment for Academic Readiness, the Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System is a state-mandated assessment that Emergent Bilingual students must take every year until they reach qualifications to be reclassified as former Emergent Bilingual students.

Therefore, it is imperative that for Emergent Bilingual students, schools and school districts prioritize the Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System in examining their academic data. This assessment should not be regarded as a secondary priority. It must be placed of equal importance as the State of Texas Assessment for Academic Readiness, especially in elementary and middle schools.

4.3 Recommendations for Future Research

Several recommendations for future studies can be made based on this research investigation. First, it is recommended that the same study be conducted with Emergent Bilingual boys because the degree to which findings from this article are generalizable to boys is unknown. Secondly, the data analyzed in this study only pertains to the English II End-of-Course exam. Accordingly, researchers are encouraged to examine other End-of-Course assessments (i.e., Algebra I, Biology, and U.S. History). A third recommendation would be replicating this study using data from the school years after the Covid pandemic. Finally, researchers are urged to analyze data on Emergent Bilingual students' performance on the State of Texas Assessment for Academic Readiness and the Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System.

5. Conclusion

Addressed in this research investigation was the performance of Emergent Bilingual girls and non-Emergent Bilingual girls on the English II End-of-Course exams on three grade level standards for the 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 school years in Texas. In both school years, Emergent Bilingual girls performed statistically significantly lower than non-Emergent Bilingual girls in all three grade levels. These results are congruent with the existing literature (Ardasheva et al., 2012; Fry & Pew, 2008; Intercultural Development Research, 2015; Koyama & Menken, 2013; Martin, 2022; National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, 2005; Resilla & Slate, 2022; Rodriguez & Slate, 2015; Sugarman & Geary, 2018; Villalobos, 2021) that Emergent Bilingual students have significantly lower reading college readiness than do non-Emergent Bilingual students. The results of this study pose a considerable concern for Emergent Bilingual students in the State of Texas.

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Appendix A

Table 4. Summary of Effect Sizes for the Three Grade Level Standards for Both School Years

Grade Level Standard and School Year	Cramer's V value	Effect Size Range	Lowest Performing Group
Approaches Grade Level			
2017-2018	.40	Moderate	Emergent Bilingual
2018-2019	.42	Moderate	Emergent Bilingual
Meets Grade Level			
2017-2018	.37	Moderate	Emergent Bilingual
2018-2019	.39	Moderate	Emergent Bilingual
Masters Grade Level			
2017-2018	.14	Small	Emergent Bilingual
2018-2019	.15	Small	Emergent Bilingual