

Strengthening Assessment for English Learner Success: How Can We Realize the Promise of Common Core Standards & Innovative Assessments?

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The Road Ahead for State Assessments
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If an English learner performs poorly on academic content assessment...

is it due to...

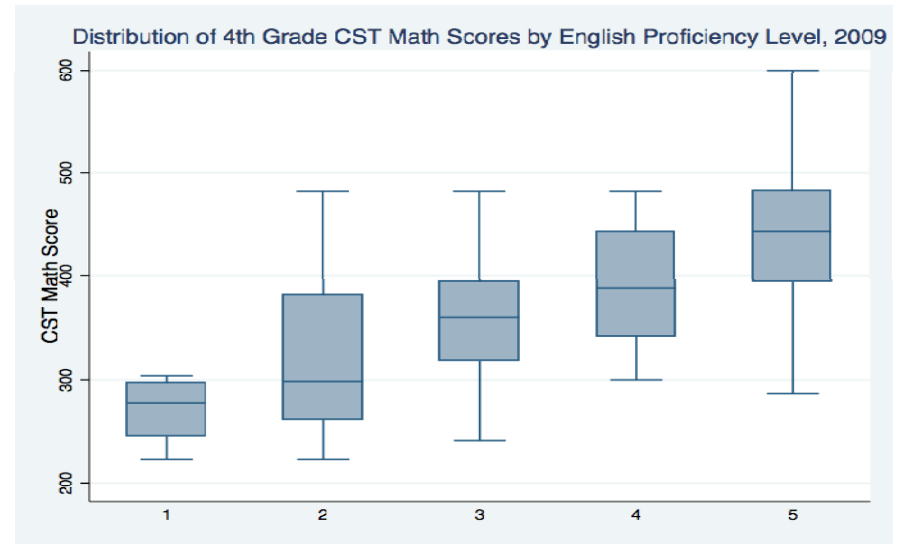
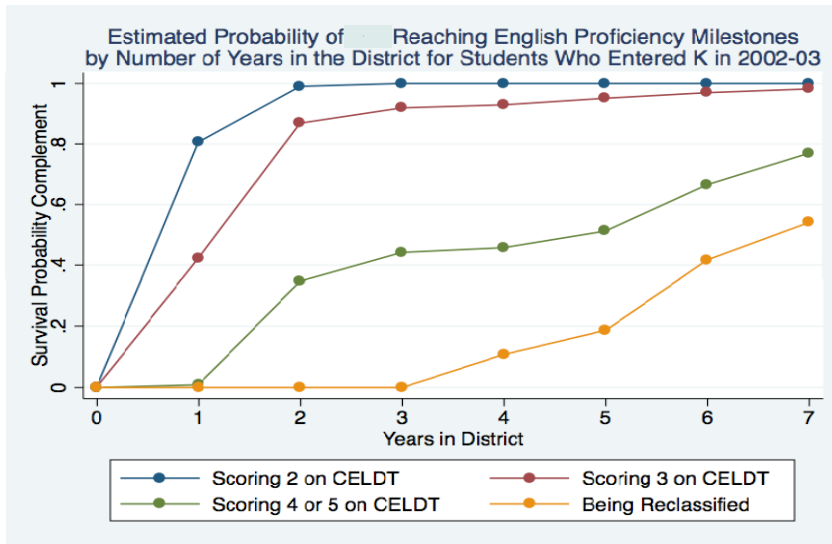
- Insufficient language proficiency to demonstrate content knowledge?
- Lack of content knowledge? (*opportunity to learn* content?)
- Construct-irrelevant interference? (Unnecessarily complex language)
- Other sources of bias or error? (Cultural distance, dialectical variation, rater misinterpretation)

1. Defining & monitoring EL population is critical (and currently poorly done)

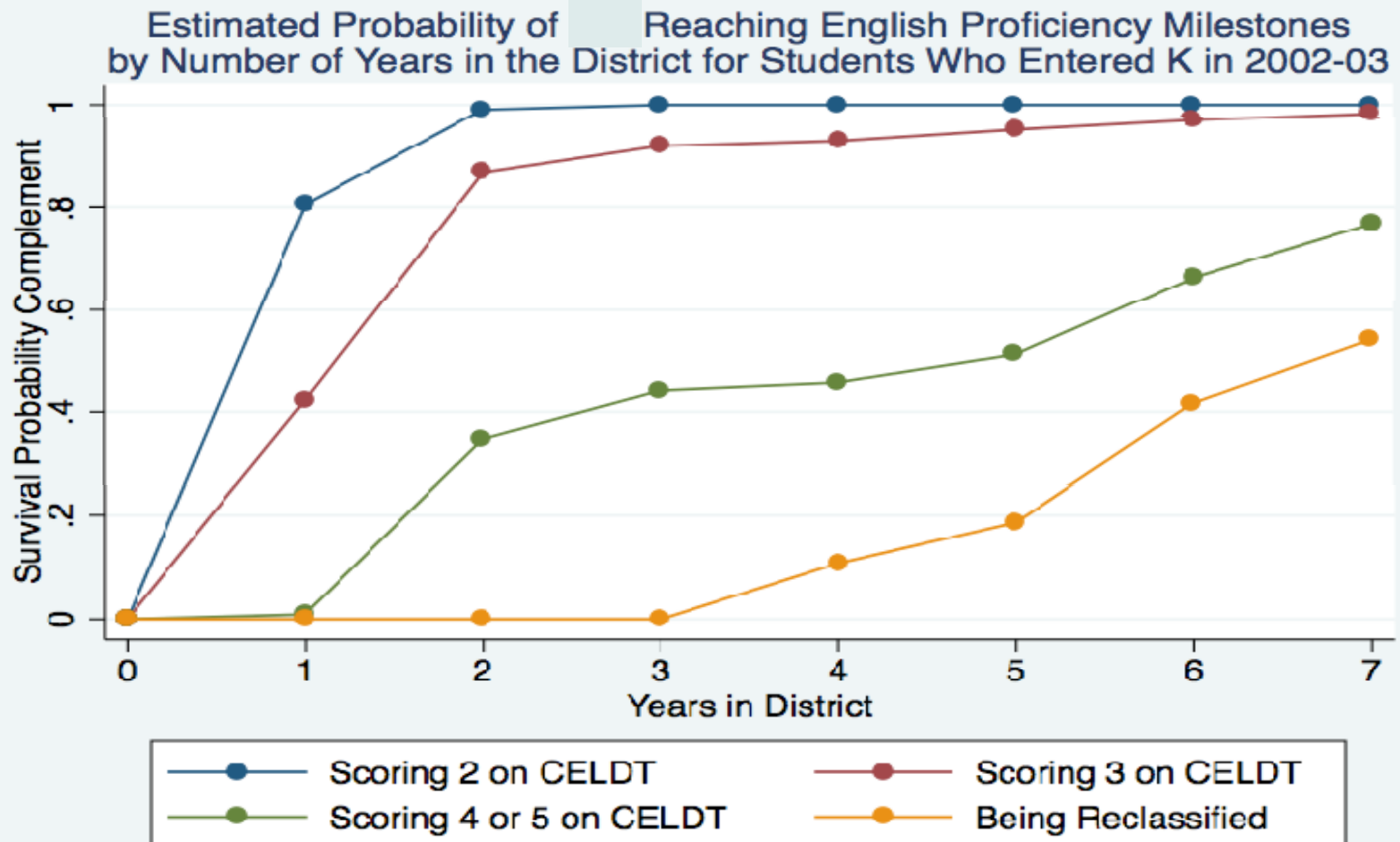


- ELs very diverse, yet seen monolithically
- EL status is temporary, instructionally dependent
- Successful ELs exit EL cohort, leaving lower-performing and newly arrived
- Better performing *by definition*, exited ELs may still have linguistic, academic needs
- Monitor progress in ELP by time, in academics by ELP and time

2. English-language proficiency is fundamental to academic achievement: Must measure and monitor both



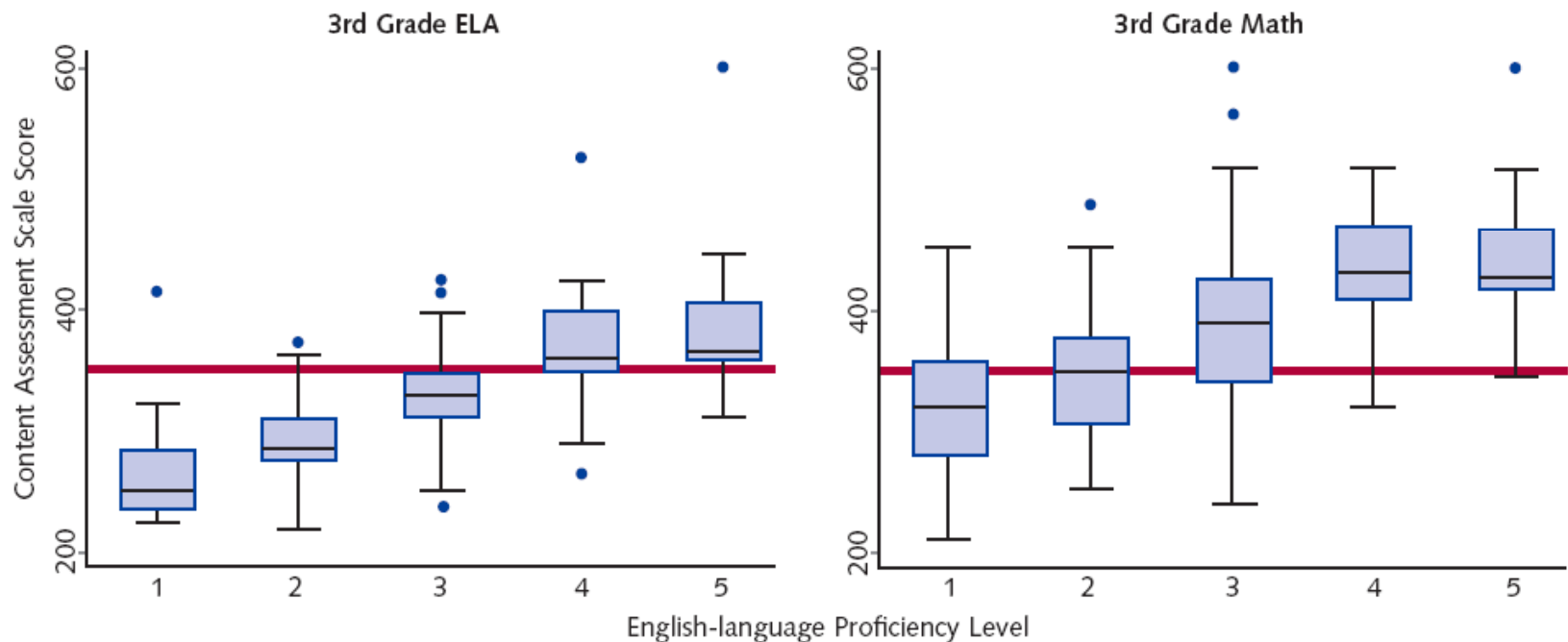
It Takes ELs Time to Learn Academic English



Hakuta & Thompson, forthcoming

ELs' English Language Proficiency Level Affects their Academic Performance

Figure 1. Distribution of EL student performance on academic assessments in English-language arts and math by English proficiency level, third grade.



3. Common core standards change the game for ELs and their teachers



- Specify academic language skills needed to master subject matter
- All teachers must teach language of their disciplines (major PD challenge)
- Map out key academic language competencies and target language uses
- Define language learning progressions in ELP standards & assessment specs

4. *Comprehensive* assessment systems can better respond to EL strengths, needs

- **Formative** assessment critical for ELs as most instructionally relevant
- **Interim/thru-course** assessments must match the intended uses with OTL
- **Summative** assessment must strengthen the signal & manage expectations
 - EL-responsive access and accommodations
 - Incremental validity gains help

5. Accommodations can improve access & validity *when configured correctly*

Accommodations research findings mixed

- 20-25% gap reduction using English dictionaries/glossaries
- Plain language approaches vary in impact

Hard to disentangle reasons for this

- Necessary language complexity of learning strand?
- Aggregate findings mask which work for which ELs?

Promising: Assign configurations of accommodations by student profile/need

- Emerging evidence of increased effectiveness

EL-responsive accommodations

English-language supports:

- English dictionary/glossary with extra time
- Plain English (vary)

Primary-language supports:

- Primary-language versions (at Low ELP levels or receiving L1 instruction)
- Dual language (parallel bilingual) with extra time

6. EL-responsive assessment innovations hold promise and risk: Pursue mindfully

Multi-semiotic approaches:

- Target ELs at lowest ELP levels in math and science
- “Language minimizing” must be seen as temporary

Computer adaptive assessment:

- Should differentiate language load of construct-equivalent items
- Automated scoring routines should recognize inter-language features

7. ELP consortia & academic assessment consortia have to collaborate or ELs pay

SBAC & PARCC:

- \$180 M each
- Comprehensive assessment system
- Use Common Core state standards
- Common definition of EL across member states

~ Two ELP consortia:

- \$5 M each
- Diagnostic/placement & summative only
- Align to CCSS (but no funds for ELP standards)
- Common definition of EL across member states