A READING COMPONENTS ASSESSMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LITERACY LEARNERS IN U.S. PRISONS

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1   Introduction

The United States is the world leader in incarceration. In 2004, over seven million adults were involved in the criminal justice system (BJS, 2006). A growing proportion of the U.S. prisoner population is comprised of non-citizens. In the Federal Prison System (FPS), 25 percent of adults entering the system are non-citizens (U.S. Sentencing Commission, 2000), most of whom are English language learners. Despite the high level of print literacy needs among this population, few studies have examined their literacy learning needs within an English-based adult basic education context.

This paper reports findings from a study of federal prisoners that included both native English speakers and English language learners who were enrolled in English-based literacy programs (Muth, 2004). Reading component skills of both groups of learners were assessed. This paper examines and compares the reading patterns that emerged and discusses implications for assessment protocols in prison classrooms. The aim of the study is to advance our understanding of reading assessment as it relates to the instructional needs of English language learners.

2   Some Context: Non-citizens in U.S. prisons

Although the focus of this paper is on *English language literacy learners (ELLLs)*—i.e., learners whose first language is not English, enrolled in literacy programs—data about English language learners in federal prisons were limited. Thus data about *non-citizens*—i.e., citizens of countries other than the U.S.—were sometimes used as proxy, as the great majority of these non-citizens were also English language learners (U.S. Bureau of Prisons, 2004). The author realizes that the match between non-citizens and English language learners is not exact. Readers should consider this when thinking about the contextual information in this section.

2.1   *Rates of incarceration among Latino/a populations*. As of June 30, 2006, state and federal prisons in the U.S. held 88,776 non-citizens, a 1 percent increase from the 87,917 held a year earlier. Sixty-two percent were held in state prisons and 38 percent in federal institutions (BJS, 2006). Latinos/as make up the largest group of incarcerated non-citizens. In nine states, 4-8 percent of adult Latino men are incarcerated. Further, in ten states, Latino men are incarcerated at rates between five and nine times greater than those of white men; in eight states, Latina women are incarcerated rates that are between four and seven times greater than those of white women.

2.2   *Sentence lengths and educational levels of incarcerated non-citizens*. In a three year study that controlled for crime, sex, race, SES and citizenship, Mustard (2001) found

that, as a group, citizens received shorter federal sentence than non-citizens. He speculates that this may be due, at least in part, to citizens' greater knowledge of the U.S. criminal justice and legal support systems. In addition to these 'social capital' factors, (Rose & Clear, 2002), lower literacy levels may also contribute to lengthier sentences among non-citizens. Clark and Anderson (2000) noted that sentenced illegal aliens (a term used to describe deportable non-citizens) tended to be poorer, less educated, younger, more likely to be Hispanic, more likely to be male, and less likely to have dependents. As a group, non-citizens entering the FPS appeared to be considerably less educated than citizens. In 2000, over 18,000 citizens entered the FPS; approximately 68 percent had a High School Diploma or a General Equivalency Diploma (GED), the credential that is widely accepted in the U.S. as its equivalent. By comparison, approximately 4,500 non-citizens entered the FPS that year, and only 28 percent had completed a secondary education (U.S. Sentencing Commission, 2000).

2.3   *FPS education programs.* The Federal Prison System offers a Spanish-based GED program, and in 2004 12 percent of all GED awarded to federal prisoners were in Spanish (752 Spanish GEDs v. 5,372 English GEDs). But most ELLLs are enrolled in English-based programs—often after completing, or concurrently enrolling in, an English as a Second Language (ESL) program. At any given point in 2004, over 25,000 incarcerated learners were enrolled in FPS English-based literacy programs. Approximately 17 percent (over 4,500) of these learners were non-citizens, and most of them were English-language learners (U.S. Bureau of Prisons, 2004).

Despite this large presence of ELLLs, very little is known about how this group of low-literacy learners processes English text, or how their instructional needs differ from low-literacy learners whose first language was English. In an effort to better understand these needs, an assessment protocol—modeled after Strucker and Davidson's (2003) Adult Reading Components Study—was adapted for use with federal prisoners.

3   *Adult Reading Components Study*

In an attempt to get below the surface of over-simplified reading assessments (such as the wide-spread use of silent reading comprehension tests to diagnose and place adult literacy learners with diverse life and learning experiences), Strucker and Davidson (2003) administered a battery of reading component tests to 955 randomly selected learners (676 ABE and 279 ESOL) from community-based learning centers in Texas, Tennessee, New York, Rhode Island, Connecticut, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire.

3.1   *Reading components.* Although reading comprehension is widely considered to be the outcome of reading instruction, Strucker (1997) argued that effective reading instruction must be based on an understanding of the component skills that culminate in comprehension. These components can be organized into two primary groups—print and meaning—and fluency (Table 1). *Print skills* include such skills as phonemic awareness (proficiency in hearing small units of sound) and word recognition (including sight word recognition and decoding). *Meaning*

skills include oral vocabulary (receptive and expressive), background knowledge (prior learning), and reading comprehension[1]. *Fluency* goes beyond the automatic recognition of words in print to include the use of intonation, inflection, rhythm, and other prosodic features of speech. In the ARCS study (as in the current study), a simple measure of reading rate (words per minute) was used.

Strucker and Davidson's (2003) work in reading components is an extension of the work of Bruck (1990, 1992); Chall (1991), Curtis (1980, 1987); Read (1987), Read and Ruyter (1985) and others. Based on her work at the Harvard Adult Literacy Initiative Laboratory, Chall (1991) hypothesized that most adult literacy learners would not possess equal abilities across reading component tests, but rather achieve one of two uneven patterns (or profiles): (a) a pattern of stronger meaning scores (e.g., vocabulary) and weaker print scores (e.g., word recognition) like some children and adolescents that were diagnosed with learning disabilities; or (b) a pattern of strong print skills relative to meaning, similar to the pattern often achieved by second language learners in ESL programs that were schooled in their first language.

To a large degree, Strucker and Davidson's (2003) Adult Reading Components Study (ARCS) confirmed Chall's hypothesis, at least for those learners who participated in community-based programs. They carefully documented both even and uneven profiles among the learners in their study. (A free, interactive, on-line course describes their findings. It is available at: http://www.nifl.gov/readingprofiles/

Table 1:   Reading Components Organized by Print/Meaning.

Category	Component
Print	
	Phonemic Awareness
	Word Recognition
	Sight Words
	Decoding (Word Analysis)
	Spelling
Meaning	
	Word Meaning (Oral Vocabulary)
	Background Knowledge
	Reading Comprehension Skills and Strategies
Fluency	
	Reading Rate

[1] The term reading comprehension sometimes refers to broad reading outcomes, like the outcomes that silent reading comprehension tests purport to measure. In this use, reading comprehension may be seen as the culmination of print and meaning skills (Hoover & Gough, 1990). But the term also refers to a specific *meaning component* of reading—i.e, the comprehension strategies and skills (e.g., predicting, scanning for information, text look-backs) that one uses to set purposes for reading, monitor understanding, and reflect critically.

3.2 *Instructional importance of component-level assessment.* Strucker (1997) noted that many adult literacy programs use a single silent reading comprehension score from a group administered test to assess reading and place adult learners. Although these silent tests provide one way to measure reading outcomes, they fail to provide the diagnostic information needed to inform instruction. He warned that the high prevalence of uneven reading component profiles among adult learners makes this over-simplistic approach ineffective, and could lead to inappropriate (and sometimes even harmful) instructional approaches.

For example, researchers have argued that explicit phonics programs are both over-used (Moll, 1998) and under-used (Adams, 1990). The key to appropriate reading instruction appears to begin with adequate assessment at the component level. Literacy instruction needs to emphasize print skills and meaning skills in differing proportions depending on the levels and profiles of the learners (McShane, 2005; Curtis & Longo, 1999).

Efforts to translate reading component assessment models to instructional models have increased in the past five years (Kruidenier, 2002; McShane, 2005). But the application of reading component assessment to adult ELLLs— particularly those who are incarcerated—remains almost non-existent at this time (National Center for ESL Literacy Education, 2003; Strucker, 2002). The current study of federal prisoners aims to address this gap. An overview of its methods follows.

4   *Method*

One hundred and twenty literacy learners from seven federal prisons in the U.S. participated in the study. Prisoners from one minimum-security female prison and two low, medium, and high security male facilities were administered an educational history questionnaire and a battery of 10 reading components tests. Cluster analyses were used to determine reading patterns and the extent to which these patterns conformed to earlier predictions (Chall, 1991) and studies of community-based adult literacy learners (Strucker & Davidson, 2003).

4.1 *Sample.* Detailed descriptions of assessment tools, sampling strategy, and validity controls are explained in detail elsewhere (Muth, 2004). Latino/a inmates— many of whom were enrolled in Spanish literacy programs at the time of this study—were under-represented. However, 29 percent of the participants (n = 35) were ELLLs, a sufficient number to observe some limited patterns among the group. (This number includes nine inmates from Jamaica and Guyana who identified Patois or Creole as their first language and English as their second language.) Table 2 provides demographic data about the sample.

Table 2. Selected Demographics of 120 Inmate Sample.

Demographic		Number	Percent
Sex			
	Male	105	87.5

	Female	15	12.5
Security Level			
	Minimum (female)	15	12.5
	Low	30	25
	Medium	40	33.3
	High	35	29.2
Race/Ethnicity			
	African American	85	70.8
	Caucasian (non-Hispanic)	20	16.7
	Hispanic/Latino/a	9	7.5
	Asian/Pacific Islander	4	3.3
	Native American	1	.8
	Mixed Race	1	.8
Native Language			
	English	85	70.8
	Patois/Creole (Jamaica, Guyana)	9	7.5
	Spanish	6	5
	Creole (Haiti, Bahamas)	6	5
	Arabic	5	4.2
	Other (Chinese, Swahili, Albanian, Mandingo, Vietnamese, Pushtu)	9	7.5

4.2 *Instruments.* The following tests were used to derive eleven measures used in the cluster analysis: *The Diagnostic Assessment of Reading* (DAR) (Roswell & Chall, 1992) was used to obtain four measures used in the cluster analysis: word recognition, oral reading, and word meaning. The DAR Word Recognition Test consists of graded lists of phonetically regular and irregular words. The DAR Oral Reading Test assesses word recognition (in context) and fluency, but not comprehension. The DAR Word Meaning Test measures oral, expressive vocabulary. To obtain a measure of reading rate, the participants were asked to reread one of the two highest passages from the DAR Oral Reading Test for which mastery was obtained. The *Rosner Test of Auditory Analysis Skills* (Rosner, 1975) is print-free. It was used to provide a measure of phonemic awareness; i.e., how well one can discern and manipulate sounds at increasingly subtle levels. The tasks progress in difficulty from the deletion of whole words (e.g., "say the word /cowboy/ without the /boy/") to blended phoneme-level deletions of a single consonant (e.g., "say /play/ without the /p/"). The *Woodcock-Johnson Psycho-Educational Battery of Achievement Tests-III, Word Attack Test,* (Woodcock, McGrew, & Mather, 2001) was used to measure decoding. This test requires participants to read a list of increasingly difficult, phonetically regular pseudowords. *Rapid automatized naming* (RAN) test for letters, adapted from Denckla and Ruddel (1974), was used to measure naming speed—an indicator of general processing speed that is associated with reading rate. Participants were asked to continuously read, as quickly and accurately as possible, a page containing 50 items from an array of letters or numbers. *The Peabody Picture*

Vocabulary Test (PPVT) (Dunn & Dunn, 1997) was used to measure receptive vocabulary. The test required the participants to listen to a verbal cue ("which picture tells best about ___") and then point to one of four pictures that best illustrated the word's meaning. The *Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scales (WAIS): Digit Span* (Wechsler, 1997) was used to measure how well subjects remembered a series of digits presented orally. WAIS Digits Forward, a measure of short-term memory, required participants to repeat digits in the same order as presented. WAIS Digits Backward, a measure of short term and working memory required learners to repeat digits in reverse order. *The Adult Basic Learning Examination* (ABLE), Reading Comprehension, a group-administered test, required participants to silently read passages of increasing difficulty and answer multiple-choice comprehension questions about the passages. (Karlsen & Gardner, 1986)

An *educational history questionnaire*, adapted from Strucker and Davidson's (2003) instrument, was also administered. It had 64 items that addressed six general areas: general information (e.g., age, need for glasses, native language); employment/vocational history (e.g., most recent job before incarceration, how long on that job); family history (e.g., marital status, language spoken in home); school history (e.g., highest grade completed, need for special help with reading); current reading and writing practices (e.g., educational goals, reading interests); and medical and health history (e.g., medical conditions effecting ability to learn, history of drug abuse prior to incarceration).

4.3 *Factor analysis.* Factor analysis can be used to determine how individual tests are related. In this study, the factor analysis aligned the test measures with one of four broad areas: *print skills*—phonemic awareness, word attack, word recognition and oral reading; *meaning skills*—oral expressive and receptive vocabulary; *reading rate*—rapid automatized naming and reading rate; and *memory*—verbal short-term and working memory. The four factors provided a helpful framework for organizing and describing reading patterns and clusters (see below and Figure 1).

4.4 *Cluster analysis.* Cluster analysis is used to examine patterns in data sets when multiple variables are studied simultaneously (Lorr, 1983). This study employed iterative statistical processes that resulted in the hierarchical building of clusters[2]. At the beginning, each of the 120 participants (or cases) was viewed as a separate cluster. Using a hierarchical algorithm, Wards Method, each case was combined with its closest neighbor—the case with the most closely matched reading pattern. At each iteration, mathematical measures of homogeneity were calculated. As each new member was added to a cluster, its diversity expanded and, conversely, its homogeneity lessened.

Two types of data were used to monitor the cluster-building process. The first was the statistical data noted above. The second was the educational history questionnaire data. At each iteration, new clusters were evaluated mathematically (in terms of homogeneity) and qualitatively (in terms of face value based on questionnaire data such as native language, highest grade completed, and history

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[2] All calculations were done with SPSS (2000) software.

of special education). The analysis determined that eight clusters was optimal. Solutions with fewer clusters created groups that lacked homogeneity and face validity. Solutions with greater numbers of clusters created smaller and more homogenous groups, but some clusters were almost indistinguishable from others and created unnecessary redundancies. For an extensive description of the procedures and validity controls used in this study, see Muth (2004).

The eight profiles (Figure 1) are primarily distinguished by their aggregate *print* and *meaning* factor scores, but performances in areas of *reading rate* and *memory* also influenced the way the way participants were assigned to clusters. These findings, and their significance, are explained next.

5   *Findings*

The cluster analysis assigned 120 literacy learners to eight clusters (Figure 1). In addition to the relationship between print and meaning factors, which is the prevailing characteristic used to label the clusters, the other two factors—reading rate and memory—had secondary importance in defining clusters. In Figure 1, the four factors represented along the X-axis are, from left to right: Print, Meaning, Reading Rate, and Memory. The Y-axis represents the clusters' aggregate Z-score values—i.e., the distance from the mean, in terms of standard deviations, for the entire 120 prisoner sample.
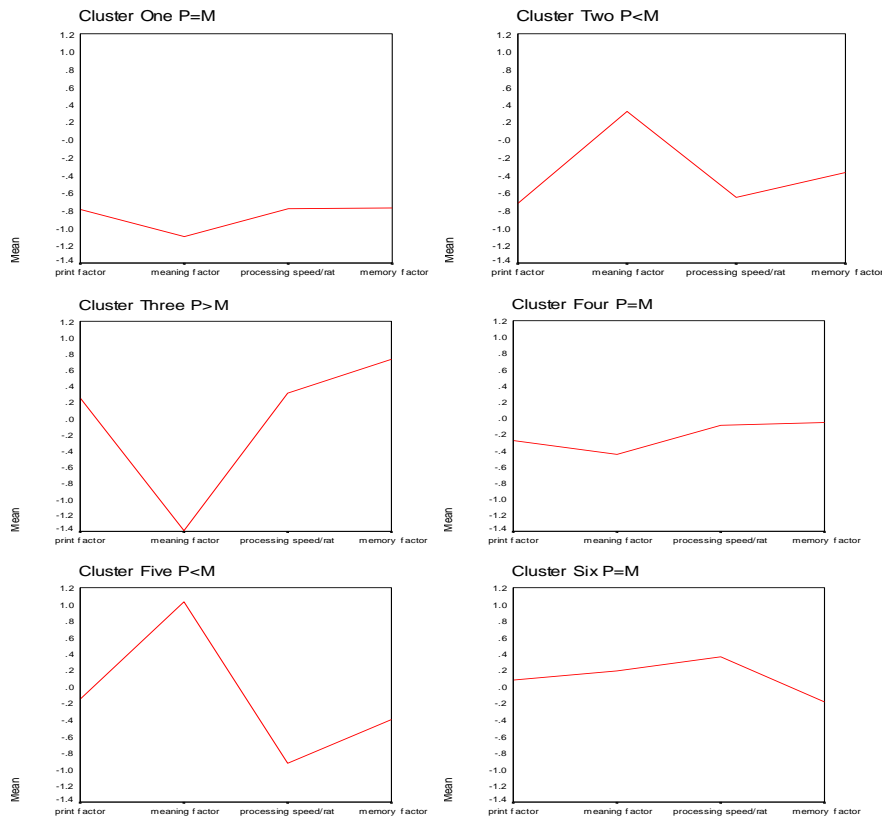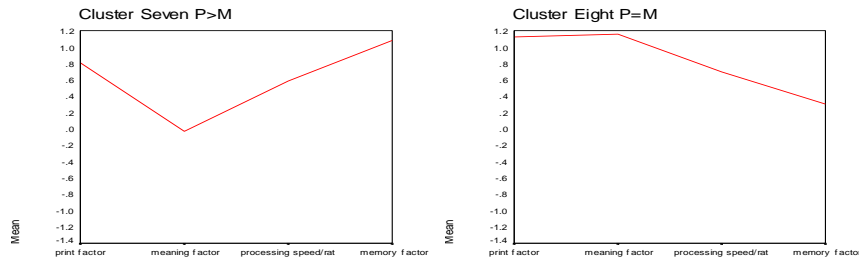
Figure 1. Profiles of Eight Clusters.

5.1 *Print-versus-meaning profiles.* A close look at the eight profiles in Figure 1 reveals three patterns based on the clusters' aggregate print and meaning scores. For example, cluster 1 participants tended to have equally low scores across tests of print and meaning, and therefore represents a Print=Meaning (P=M) profile. Clusters 4, 6, and 8 also present P=M profiles at increasingly higher levels of proficiency. For example, clusters 4 and 6 are both relatively flat, but, with the exception of the memory factor score, cluster 6 members, on average, achieved Z-scores as much as .5 standard deviations higher than cluster 4 members.

By way of contrast, the remaining clusters all represent literacy learners that have not developed reading proficiencies evenly across the component areas. Clusters 2 and 5 have pronounced Print<Meaning (P<M) profiles while clusters 3 and 7 demonstrate the opposite Print>Meaning (P>M) pattern.

5.2 *Confirming Chall's hypothesis.* As noted above, Chall (1991) predicted two types of uneven profiles among adult literacy learners, based on the high prevalence of ELLLs and adults with reading disabilities that participated in the Harvard Adult Literacy Initiative. The P>M profile suggested an ELLL—particularly one that was literate in L_1, and particularly when that L_1 employed a writing system with a phonologically-based alphabet. Conversely, the P<M profile suggested an adult with a reading disability (dyslexia)—particularly when that adult struggled with print skills despite five or more years of formal education.

To some degree the Federal Prison Study confirmed Chall's hypothesis, in that numerous uneven profiles were found (Figure 1). As a group, ELLs achieved lower scores on all reading component tests. And, as Chall predicted, ELLs tended to perform better on print tests (especially word recognition and oral reading) than on meaning tests (word meaning) (see Figure 2).
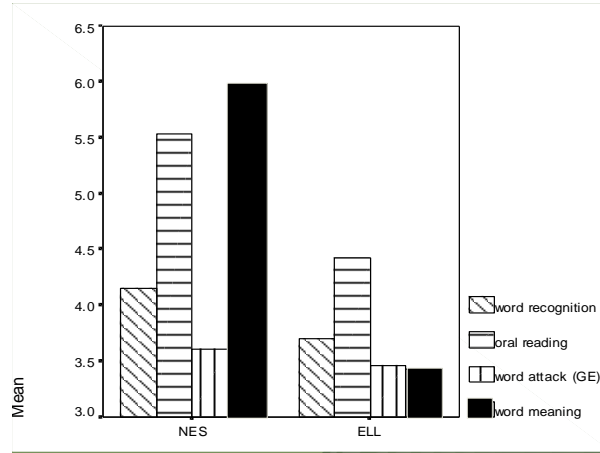
Figure 2. Reading Patterns of Native English Speakers and English Language Literacy Learners Based on Aggregate Grade Equivalent Scores.

Further, many ELLs did cluster together in P>M groups. For example, cluster 3 was comprised of six learners. Five of the six were ELLs. These ELLs may have been similar to the ELLs that Chall worked with at Harvard (J. Strucker, personal communication, October 30, 2006). They all received eight or more years of formal education in L_1, and did not begin speaking English until age 12 or later. (Table 3.)

Table 3. Members of Cluster Three—A Print > Meaning Cluster.

Case ID	Native Language	Age Speak English	High Grade Completed	Word Recog GE	Oral Reading GE	Word Meaning GE
7	Chinese	28	12	2.0	1.5	.0
76	Arabic	12	14	4.0	4.0	2.0
77	Arabic	20	8	4.0	5.0	1.0
81	Pushtu	51	10	4.0	5.0	4.0
82	Chinese	16	8	3.0	5.0	2.0
118	English	-	6	5.0	5.0	4.0
Mean		25.4	9.6	3.6	4.3	2.2

Notes. Word Recognition and Oral Reading = print skills.
    Word Meaning = meaning skill.
    GE = grade equivalent.

5.3 *Qualifying Chall's hypothesis.* Despite this aggregate conformity to Chall's hypothesis, many individual ELLs did not achieve P>M profiles. In fact, only 18 of 35 ELLs were assigned to P>M clusters. A closer examination of those ELLs that were and were not assigned to P>M clusters revealed the following. (a) Those ELLs that conformed to Chall's hypothesis (assigned to P>M clusters) tended to have more formal education in L_1 (eight or more years); they also tended to be more literate in L_1 than in English and preferred speaking in L_1. Interestingly, these ELLs also reported having fewer serious head injuries, drug

addictions, and other health problems[3]. (b) Conversely, those ELLs that were not placed in P>M groups typically learned to speak English at a younger age (eleven or earlier) and preferred speaking in English rather than in L1. (See Table 4.)

Table 4. ELLs Who Were and Were Not Placed in P>M Groups.

Learning and Health Issue	Placed In P>M Groups n=18	Not Placed in P>M Groups n=17
Average age learned English	21 yrs	11 yrs
Highest grade completed	8th	5th
Writes in L1	83 %	37 %
L1 is stronger than English	76 %	31 %
Had trouble with reading in school	25 %	54 %
Had serious head injury in past	22 %	35 %
Had past problem with substance abuse	6 %	59 %

In the next section, the implications of these findings for instruction and for the design of assessment protocols for ELLLs are discussed.

6 Implications

As noted in section 3.2 above, component-level assessments are needed to guide literacy instruction. When silent reading comprehension test scores alone are used, certain reading components—in print or meaning areas—may be unwittingly overemphasized while areas of critical need are overlooked (Strucker, 1997). Components assessments help create instructionally-relevant frameworks among highly diverse populations of literacy learners. Such diversity is found in most prison classrooms where ELLLs and native English speakers sit side-by-side and where many learners report extensive heath problems. Although, as a group, ELLLs in the study reported fewer health and learning problems than their native English-speaking counterparts, health problems among ELLLs were nevertheless reported with considerable regularity. In fact, of those ELLLs that were not assigned to P>M groups, 59 percent had histories of substance abuse, 35 percent had experienced severe head injuries, and 54 percent reported struggling academically as children (Table 4).

Results from this study suggest that we cannot assume ELLLs in prison-based literacy programs have stronger print skills than vocabulary skills, or that they lack reading disabilities or health problems that impede their ability to master print skills. In short, their cognitive, social and linguistic needs are complex.

6.1 Toward a components-level assessment protocol for adult ELLLs in prison.
Since Fitzgerald's (1995) call for component-level assessments for ELLLs, some

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[3] Especially health problems associated with learning difficulties and reading disabilities, such as head trauma, lead poising, depression, substance abuse, and attention deficit disorders (Muth, 2004).

progress has been made. Strucker (2002) provided an analysis of ARCS data for ELLLs in community-based adult literacy programs. The Center for Applied Linguistics (2007) is currently developing an assessment battery for elementary-age ELLLs that includes measures of print, meaning and fluency. But very little is known about the utility of reading component assessments for incarcerated adults with low proficiency in literacy and English language.

Correctional educators, like their adult literacy counterparts in the community, struggle continuously with instructional decisions: Would this student benefit from an intensive phonics program? How much time should I spend teaching vocabulary? When is the best time to address fluency? What role should L_1 play in literacy learning? If Strucker's (1997) assertion is true—that instructional decisions must be based on more than silent reading comprehension scores alone—then the need to design and study a protocol for assessing adult ELLLs is great.

The findings presented in this paper are limited by, among other things, the small sample size. Nevertheless, these preliminary findings do seem to corroborate the assessment protocol developed for the ARCS study (Strucker & Davidson, 2003), although modifications for use among incarcerated learners will be warranted. Here are some considerations for those interested in adapting the ARCS protocol for prison-based use.

6.1.1   *Reading component assessments.* Prison educators can be doubly challenged with limited resources and cultures that create borders between teachers and students (Wight, 2006). Formal individualized assessments are often beyond the reach of even the most determined teacher, so that even modest assessment strategies must be introduced carefully. Given these practicalities, a comprehensive assessment of all component areas is not warranted. (Davidson and Bruce, 2003, have identified an assessment protocol using only five assessments.) Any reading components assessment model would be incomplete, however, if it did not provide a comparison of print and meaning skill proficiency. Thus, a common metric (e.g., grade equivalence) is needed to compare scores across the print and meaning-related tests. Davidson and Bruce have created a reference tool for locating component level tests. It can be found at http://www.nifl.gov/readingprofiles/MC_Test_Bank.htm.

6.1.2   *Educational histories.* Knowledge of incarcerated learners' educational histories is also an essential part of the assessment protocol. Without this knowledge, the usefulness of the reading component assessment data will be limited. The author (Muth, 2004) developed an educational history questionnaire for use with incarcerated ELLLs based on one used in ARCS. The prison-based questionnaire included additional questions that were health and release-related, but less extensive surveys may be more practical for day-to-day prison use. An effective educational history questionnaire should, at the very least, provide information about the learner's (a) first language (is its written form based on a phonological alphabetic?); (b) highest grade completed (did the learner struggle in school? if so, which subjects? what language[s] were spoken in school?); (c) age when (s)he first began learning English; (d) language taught

at school (if not L_1); and (e) preferred language for speaking, reading, writing. Reading assessments in L_1 are invaluable resources, though rarely available to prison educators.

The learners' histories are used, in part, to corroborate or challenge reading components test data. For example, we would not be surprised to find that an ELLL with a strong P>M profile enjoyed school as a child, studied successfully in Mexico until completing an secondary education, and learned English later in life. We might hypothesize that this learner could draw on a rich range of academic background knowledge to build knowledge of English vocabulary; we might also expect this ELLL to have a strong set of print skills in L_1 upon which to build knowledge of English orthography.

However, if that learner reported *struggling* through 10 years of schooling and achieved lower scores on print tests relative to meaning (P<M profile), we might form a different set of questions: When did (s)he begin to learn English? Does this ELLL have a reading and/or language disability? Are there any health issues that might bear on learning and retention? How can we help this learner take advantage of English vocabulary strengths while supporting the need to improve decoding and sight word recognition?

Educational history data is needed to help explain, challenge and extend reading components test data. Additional assessment strategies—such as access to reading records in L_1, expressive language assessments and qualitative interviews—are also warranted, but go beyond the scope of this paper.

7   *Conclusion*

This study presented findings about the reading patterns of ELLLs in prison-based literacy programs. Based on both conforming and non-conforming patterns among the ELLL group, consideration was given to creating a viable assessment protocol for correctional educators. Characteristics of this assessment protocol are presented tentatively, for a number of reasons. First, reading components tests are static measures of performance. Other, more dynamic measures based on alternative assessment strategies (e.g., miscue analysis) and approaches (e.g., portfolios) should be considered as well. Second, as mentioned earlier, the small sample size is insufficient to make generalizations to other incarcerated learners. Third, the study of component-level performance among adult literacy learners (and the instructional implications of this often *uneven* performance) is in its infancy. More research is needed before we can extend this new knowledge to proven instructional methods for adult literacy learners—both incarcerated and free.

Reading components profiles help practitioners and learners see reading as non-linear. By doing so, it makes it harder to place all literacy learners on one continuum based on silent reading comprehension test scores. And it helps learners—even at the lowest literacy levels—articulate their strengths and not merely their needs. Most importantly, reading components-based assessments may help practitioners and learners plan instruction more purposefully.

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