Although writing plays a critical role in students academic success, the National Assessment of Education Progress’s results reveal a paradox: even though those with limited English proficiency write at or above basic level whereas about 90% of native English speakers (NES) write at or above this level, the academic world sees the two groups of students differently: one is seen as very advanced (those with greater mastery of English, or English proficiency FLIP) and the other as having limited English proficiency (LEP). Thus, the purpose of this study is to examine whether students’ varying English proficiency has an impact on their writing outcomes.

### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How does the quality of texts written by 5th and 6th grade NES, FEP, and LEP students differ from one another in terms of their word use?
2. How does the quality of texts written by 5th and 6th grade NES, FEP, and LEP students differ as a function of their language designation?

### METHODS

- 73 students from 7 schools that were among the lowest performing in an urban school district participated in this study. The dominant language spoken by language minority students was Spanish (ranging from 82% to 98% of the schools’ language minority populations). Other home languages included Mandarin, Farsi, Vietnamese, Punjabi, Marshallese, French and Arabic.

#### Data Collection

- **Narrative Writing**: Students wrote two essays during the school year, each about one week after each other. The essays were written by NES students, and the extent of how much they differed was a function of English language proficiency.

#### Analysis

- **Profesional raters**: Two professional raters rated all essays for the study. Each essay was rated 5 times, each by a different rater.

#### Instruments

- **CoNLL**: The CoNLL data was used to assess word level complexity and word type level complexity.

#### Qualitative Measures

- **Recall sentence**: Students were given a prompt and a sentence to complete it. The recall sentence was used to assess students ability to recall a sentence.

#### Quantitative Measures

- **Prose quality**: Students were asked to write an essay about a given prompt. The essay was then rated for prose quality.

#### Analysis

- **Coh-Metrix**: The Coh-Metrix data was used to assess the overall quality of essays. The essays were then rated for word type level complexity and word level complexity.

### RESULTS

#### RQ 1: Essays written by FEP and LEP students were shorter with less diverse word use than those written by NES students. Compared to the NES students, LEP students wrote simpler texts with fewer academic words.

- **Grade Level**: The essays written by NES students were longer and more diverse than those written by FEP and LEP students.

- **Language Level**: The essays written by NES students were more complex and included more academic words than those written by FEP and LEP students.

### CONCLUSION & DISCUSSION

- Our results show that there are significant differences among texts written by NES, FEP, and LEP students.
- Texts written by LEP students significantly differed from those written by NES counterparts. Their essays were shorter with fewer types of words and academic words than those written by NES students. This implies that language minority students have limited vocabulary knowledge in English, which is reflected in their writing.
- LEP students showed weaker performance not just in writing descriptive texts but also in addressing the prompt. Their essays were not as richly descriptive or detailed, and the overall quality of their prose was lower. These results suggest that FEP students still have difficulty producing high-quality essays.

### REFERENCES

- Farkas, D., & Lesaux, N. K. (2008). Initial English proficiency, concentrated poverty, and English language learners’ academic progress in the United States, 2000: Implications for reading outcomes, future studies should consider time of redesignation (either as covariate or as separate groups of early vs.

### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS