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Educational Testing Service

GOAL

- To examine performance characteristics of young language learners' narrative writing.
- To explore longitudinal development of writing skills among young language learners.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What are the performance characteristics of written responses produced by grades 5 to 8 students at different essay score levels?
- How do the students' written performances develop over one school year?

METHOD

Participating students

| | Denmark | Finland | The Netherlands | Total |
|--------------|-----------|-----------|-----------------|------------|
| Grade 5 | 19 | 14 | 11 | 44 |
| Grade 6 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 36 |
| Grade 7 | 38 | 12 | 76 | 126 |
| Grade 8 | 0 | 19 | 32 | 51 |
| TOTAL | 68 | 57 | 132 | 257 |

Data collection

- A narrative writing task with different topics was administered to participating students by classroom teachers in Fall 2021 and Spring 2022.
- Students had 15 minutes to plan and write on the computer.

Fall 2021 writing task

In this task, you will write a short paragraph about an experience playing with your friends. Think of these questions when you write:

- Who do you play with?
- Where do you play?
- What do you do together?

You have about **15 minutes** to plan and write. Write as much as you can.



Spring 2022 writing task

In this task, you will write a short paragraph about a special place you want to visit. Think of these questions when you write:

- What is one place you want to visit someday?
- What do you want to see there?
- What do you want to do there?

You have about **15 minutes** to plan and write. Write as much as you can.



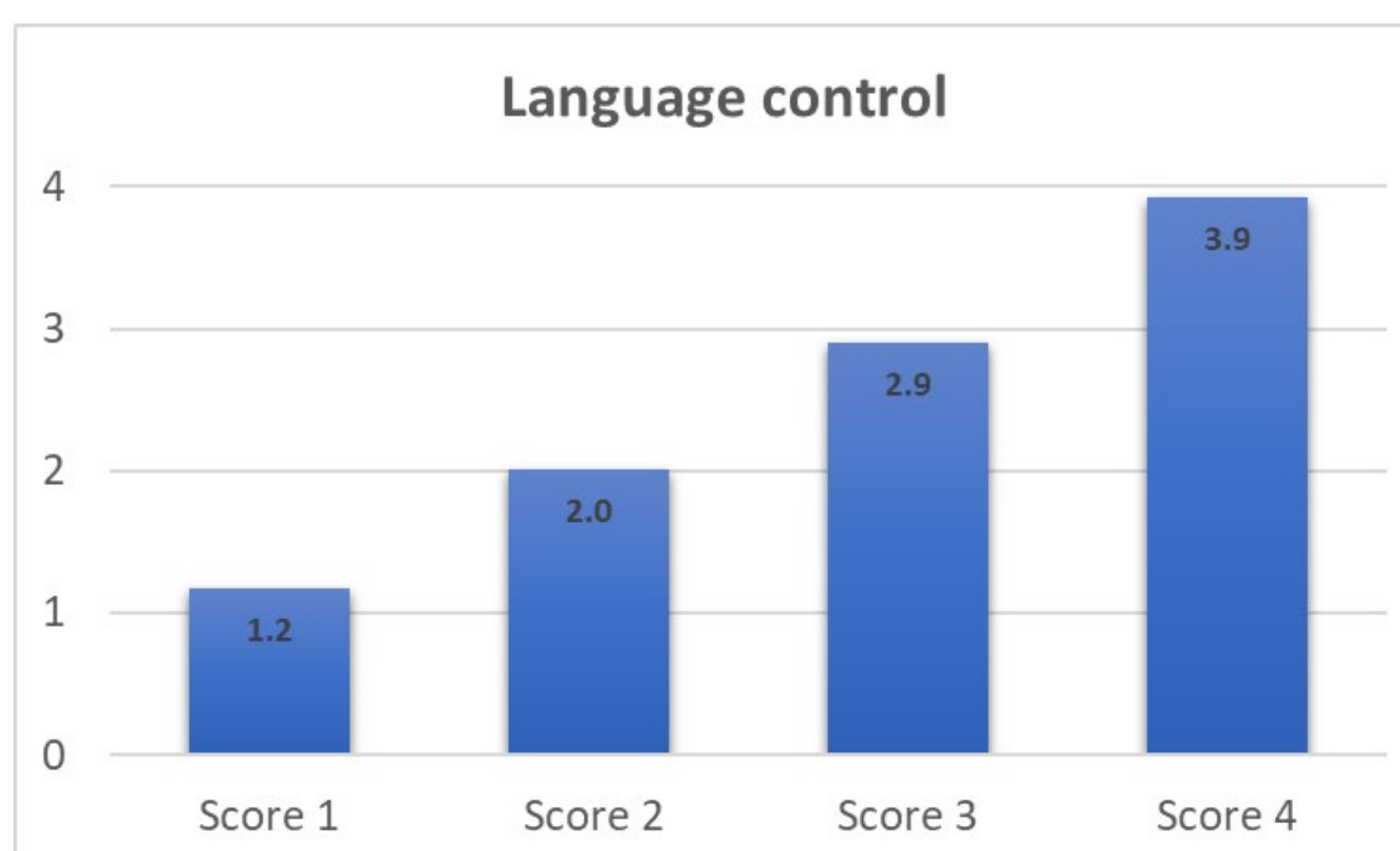
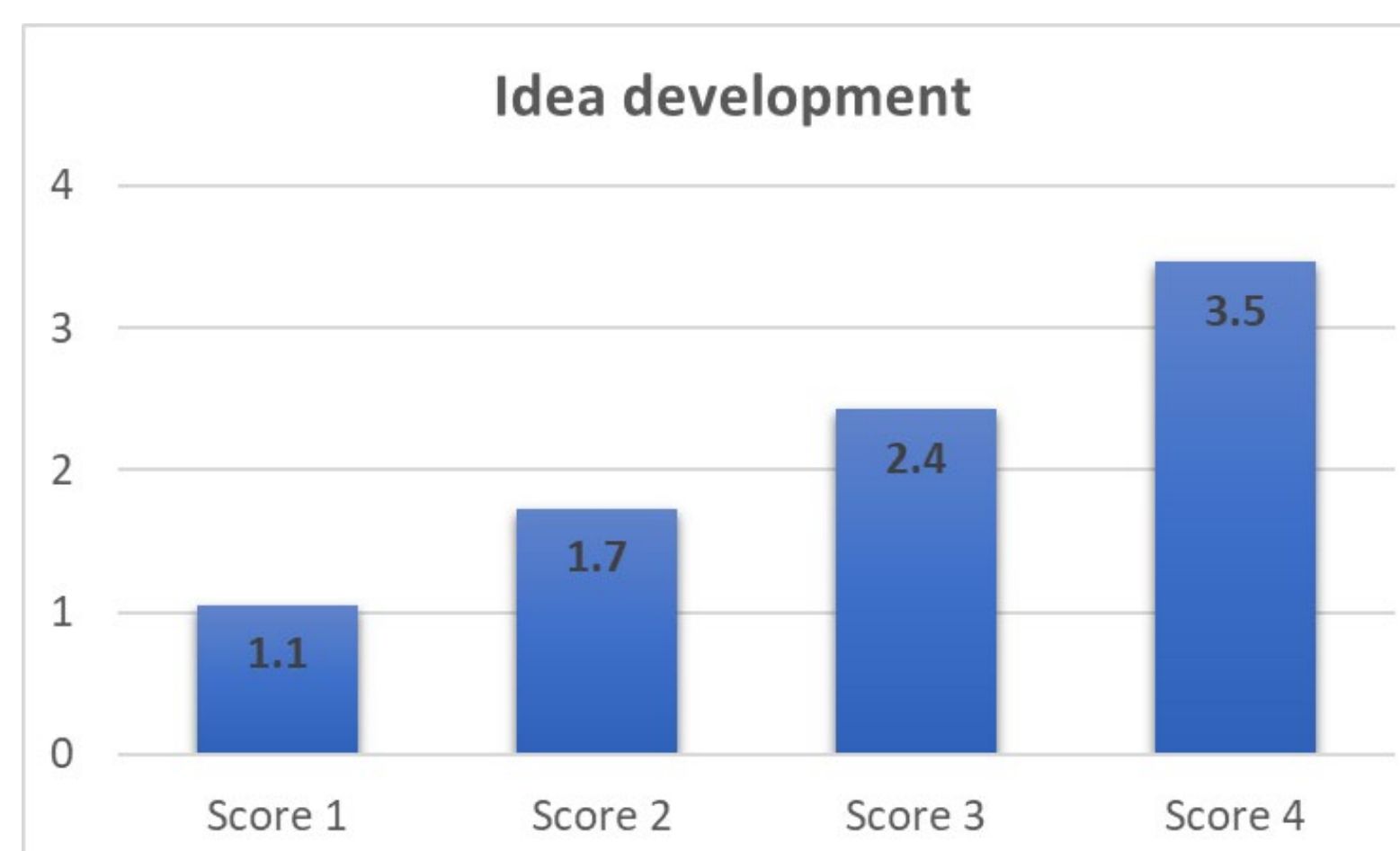
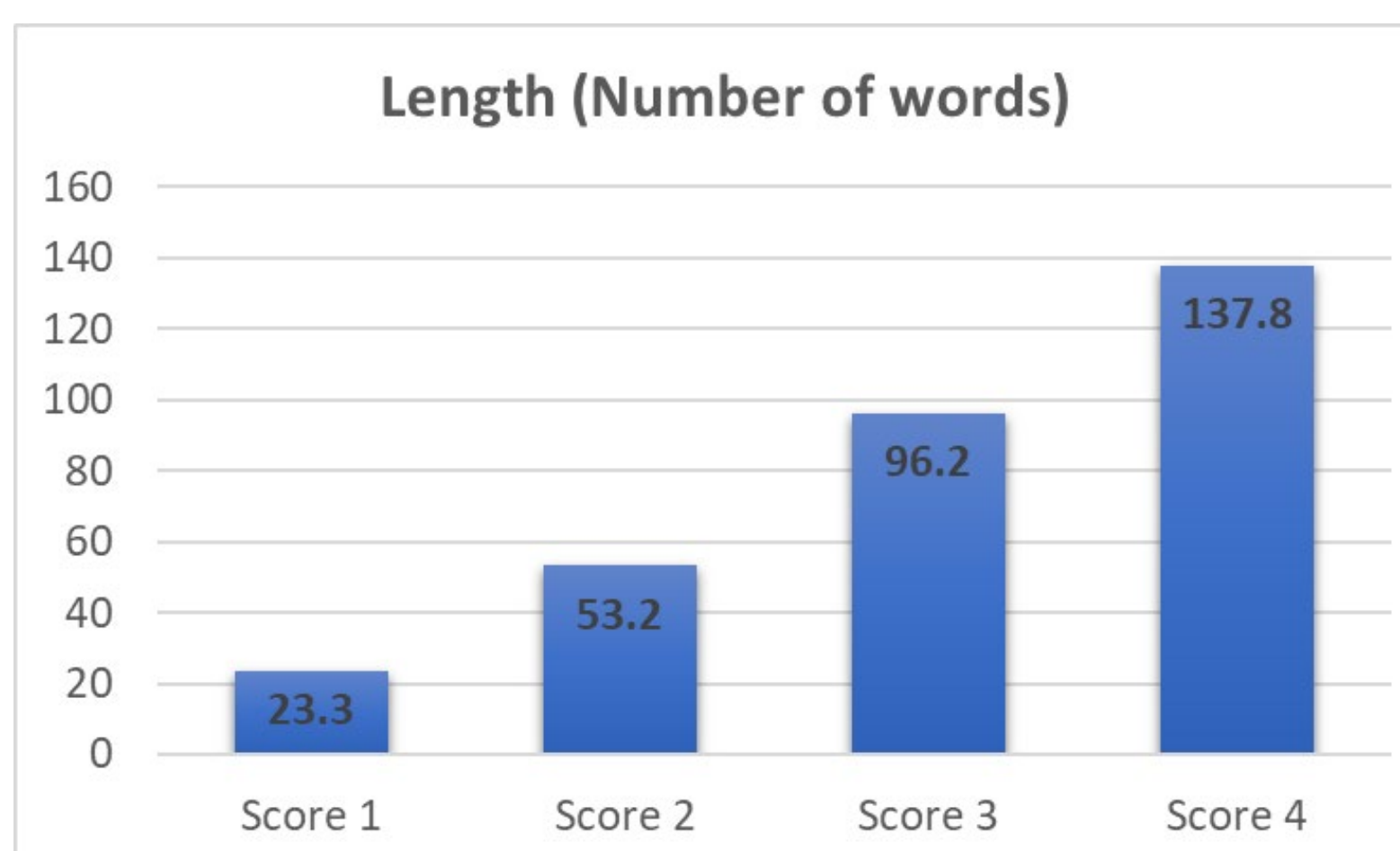
Data analysis

| Measure | Evaluation method |
|--|---|
| Overall quality of written performance | Holistic evaluation of the essay (1-4 point scale) |
| Length | Total number of words produced |
| Idea development | Description of events and supporting details (1-4 point scale) |
| Language control | Accuracy and diversity of vocabulary and grammar used (1-4 point scale) |

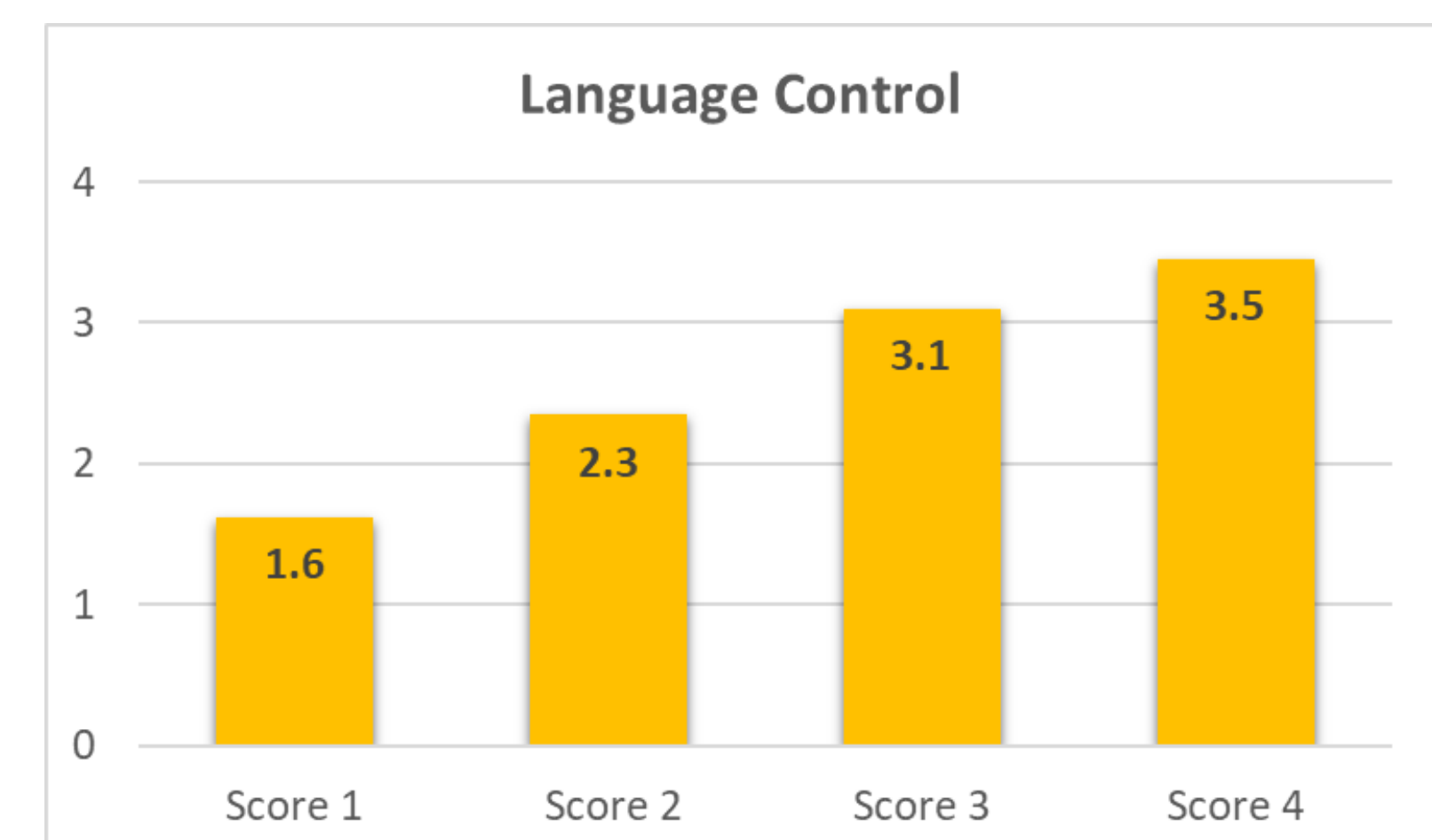
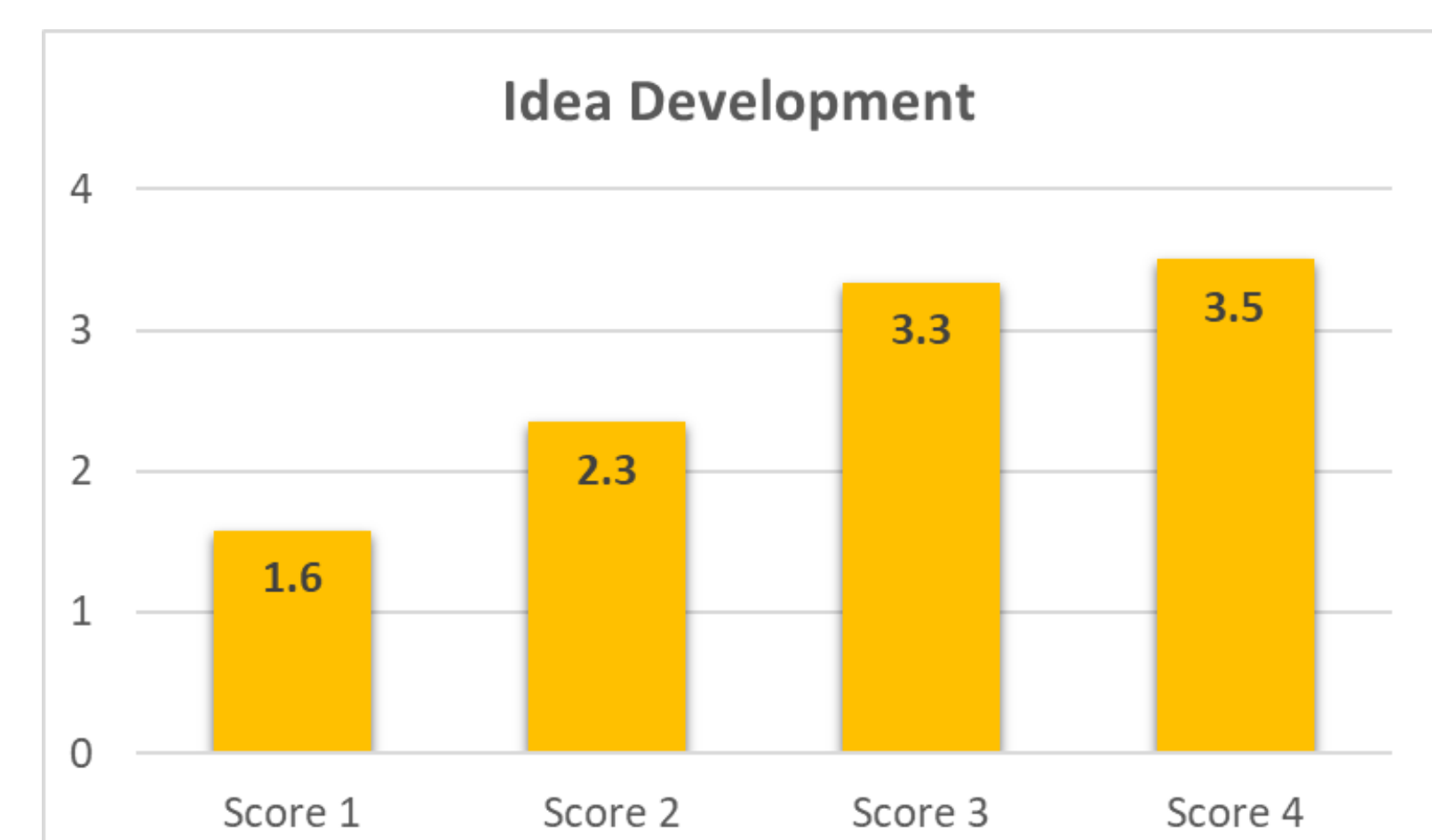
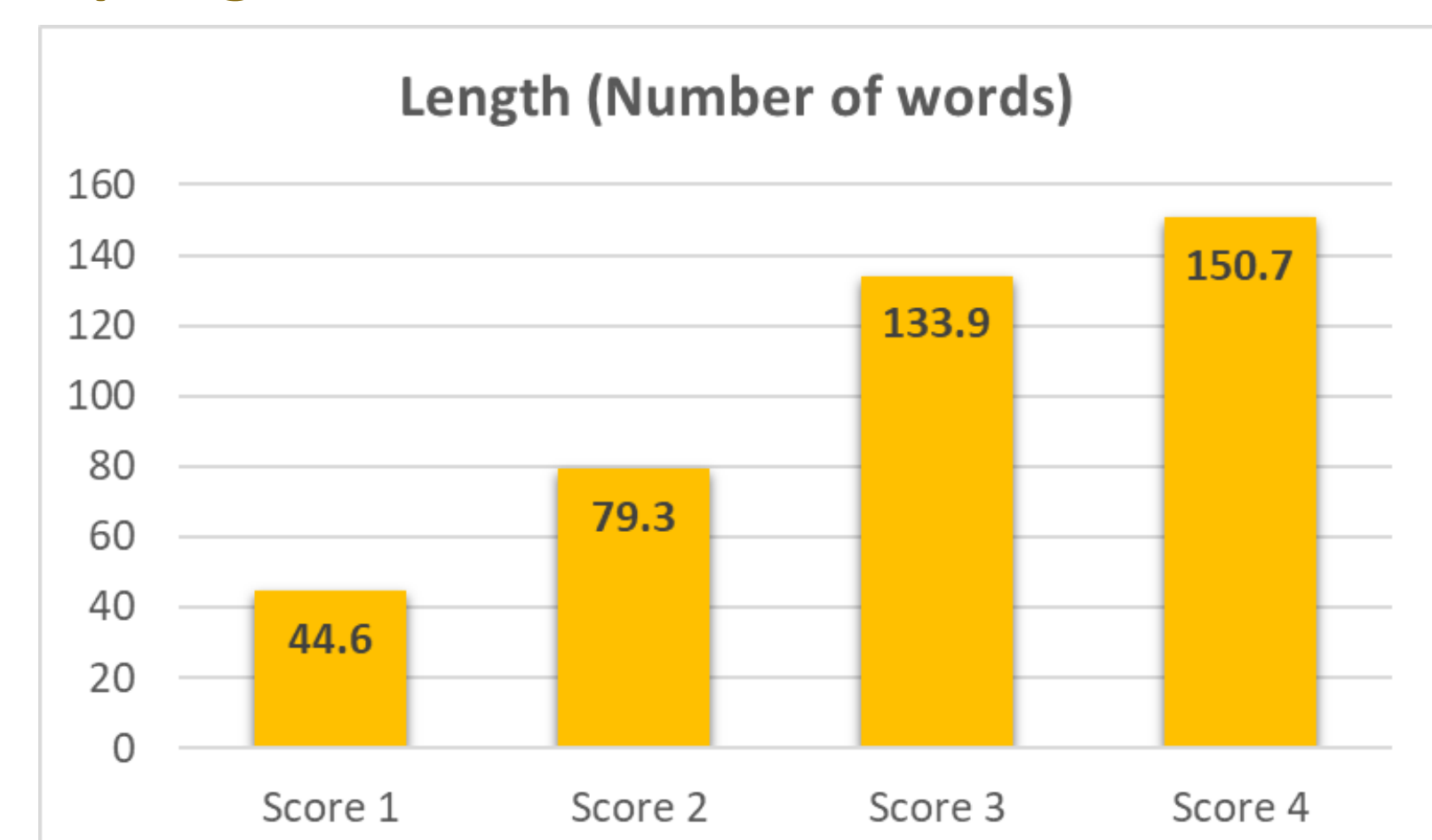
FINDINGS

RQ1: Performance characteristics at different score levels

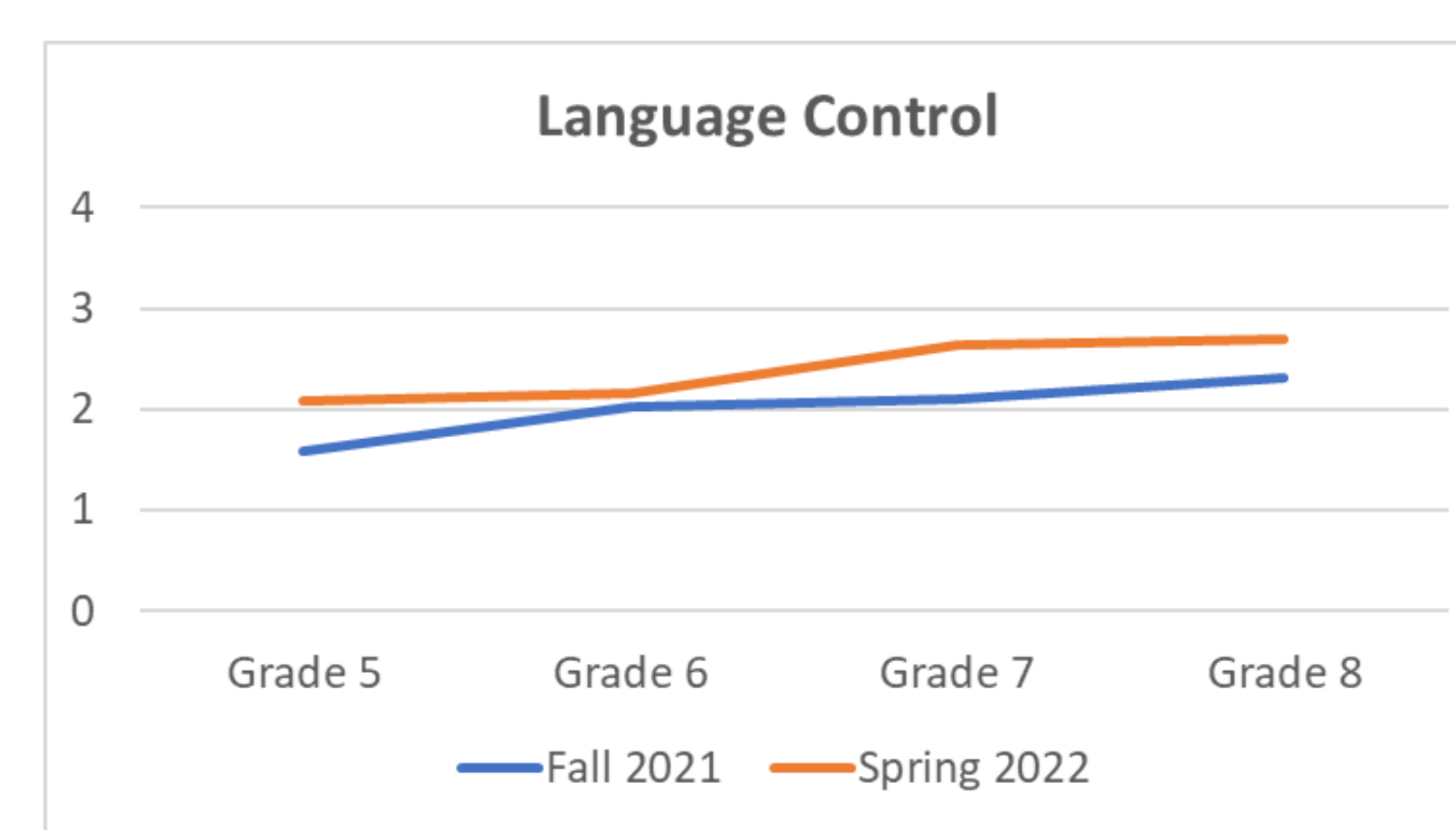
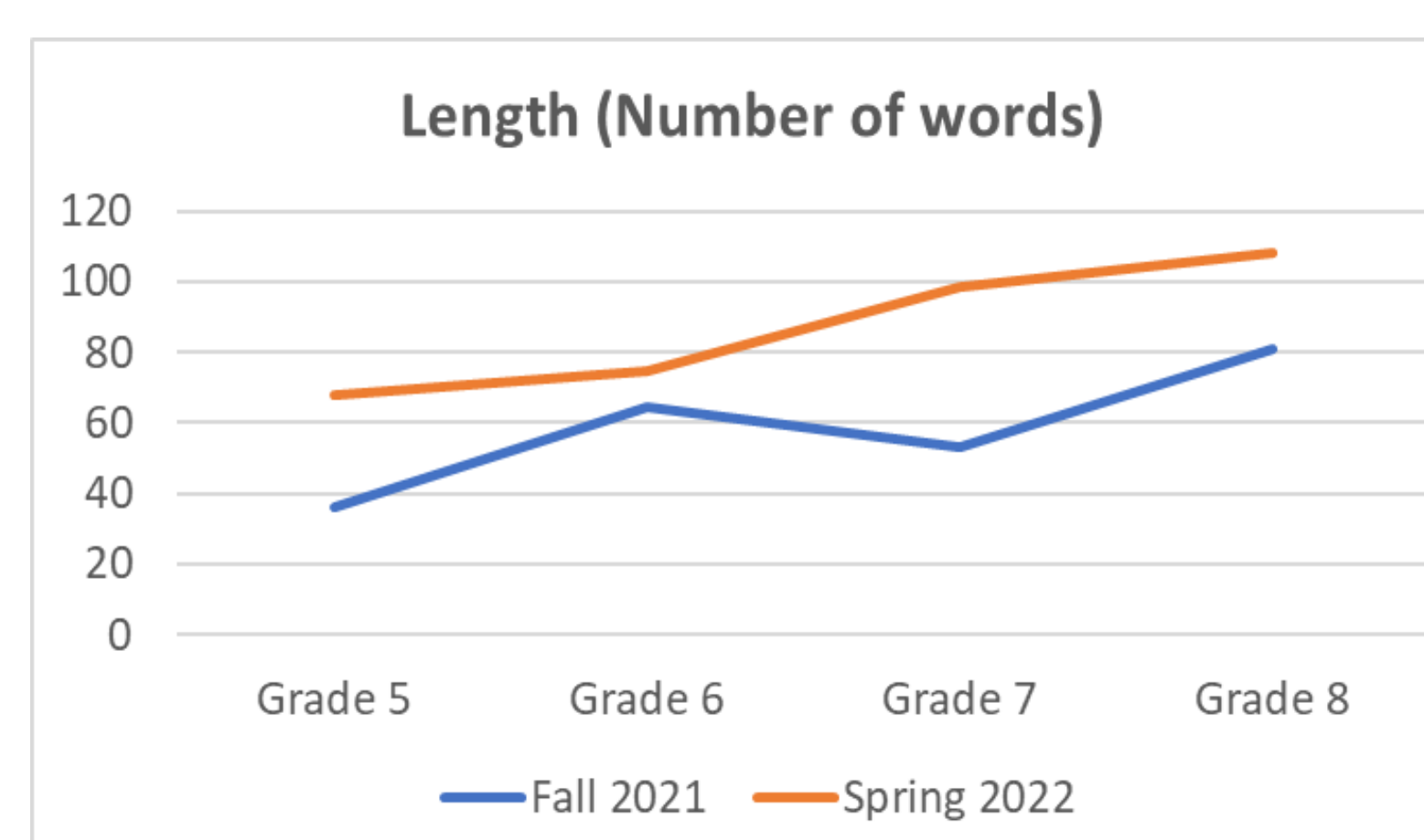
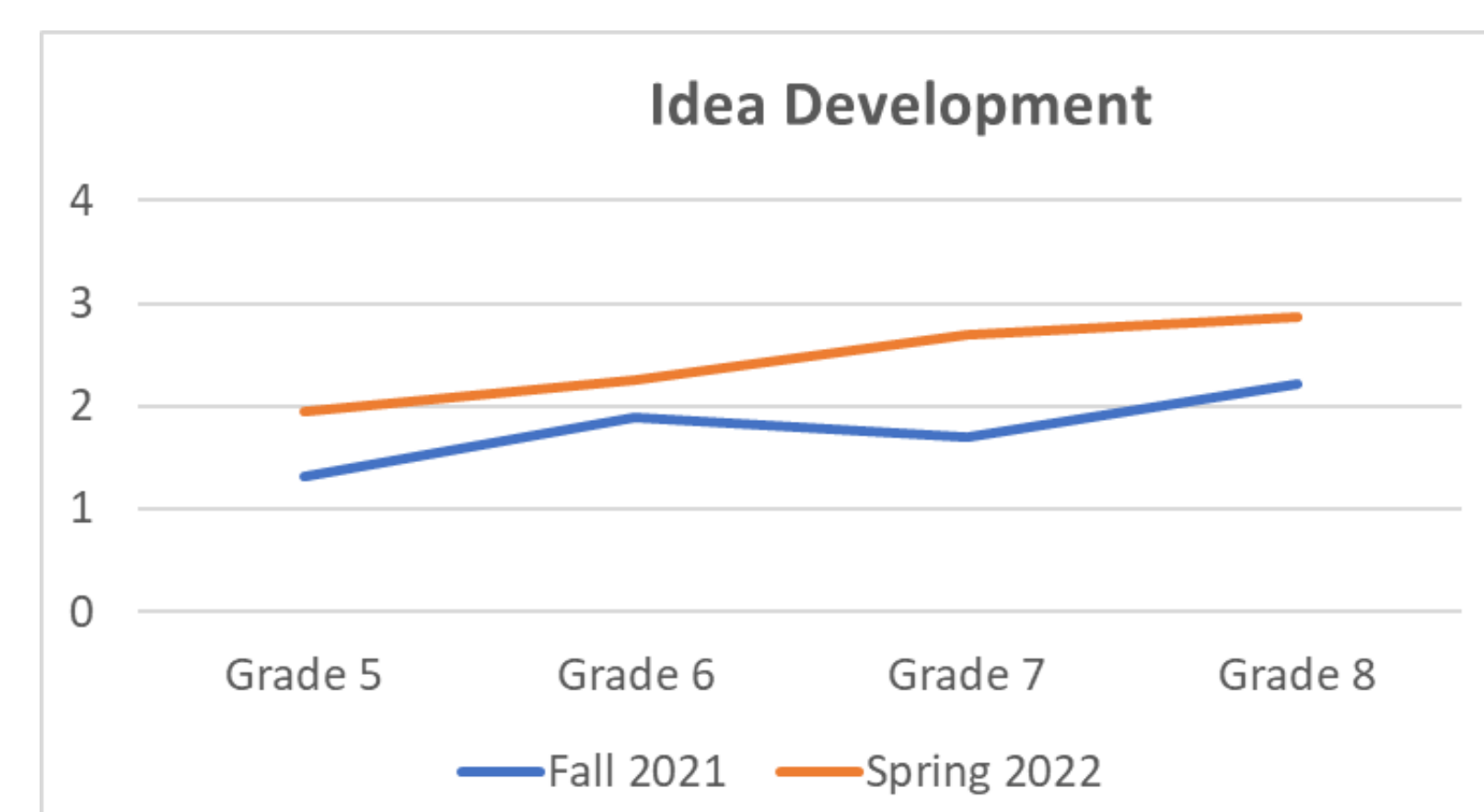
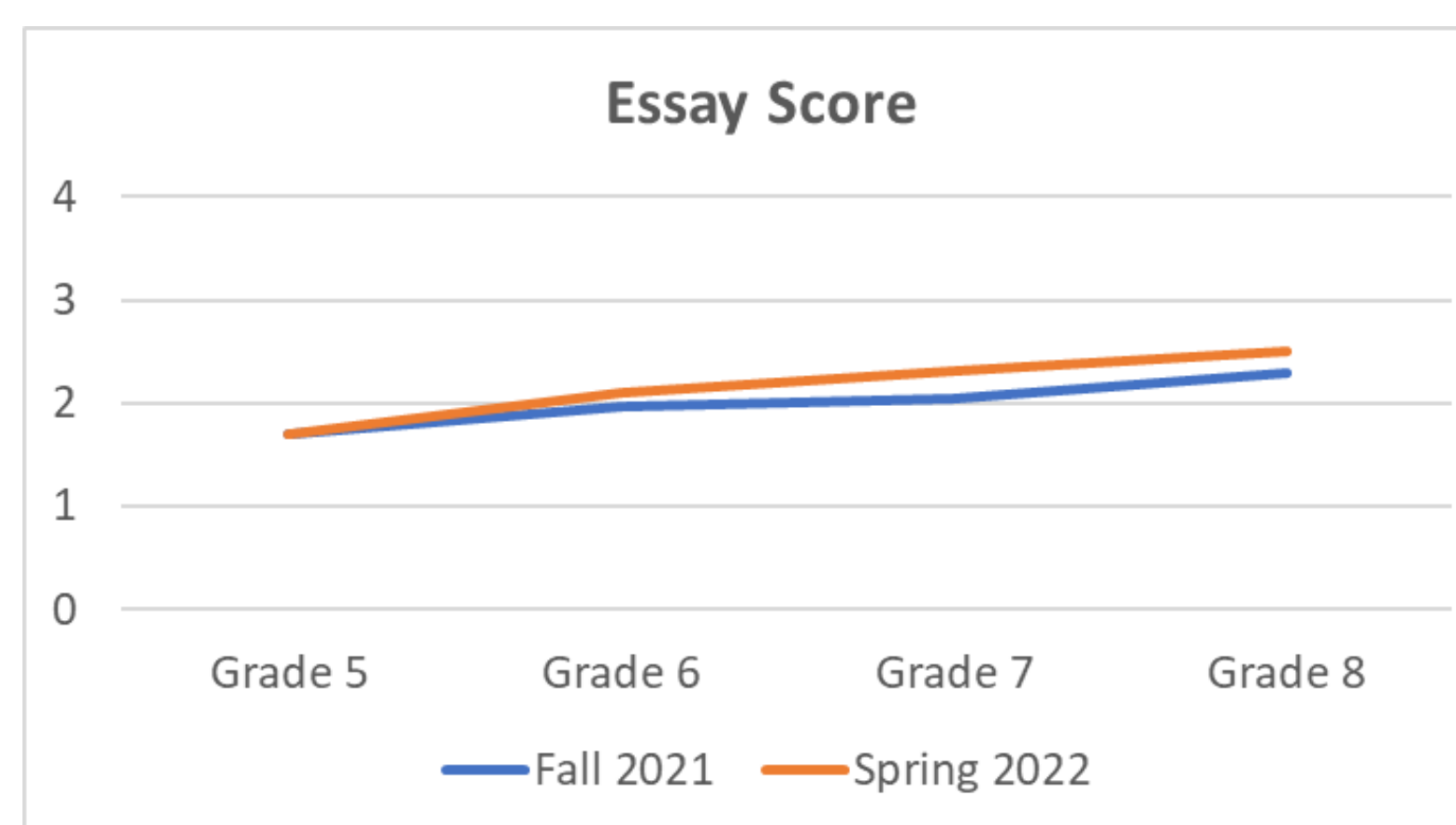
Fall 2021



Spring 2022



RQ2: Development of writing skills over one school year



SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

- Essays scored higher were longer, included more elaborate descriptions of events and supporting details, and used more accurate and diverse vocabulary and grammar.
- Regardless of grade level, students' written performances, in terms of overall quality, essay length, idea development, and language control, improved over one school year.
- We recommend that classroom teachers provide young language students with ample opportunities to write short essays while providing linguistic support to help develop students' writing proficiency, confidence, and motivation.