Oral Defense Announcement
University of Missouri – St. Louis Graduate School

An oral examination in defense of the dissertation for the degree
Doctor of Education with an emphasis in Educational Practice

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Evaluating Middle School English Language Learners’ Science and Literacy Proficiency

Date: June 22, 2023
Time: 1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.
Place: TLC, Bayer Room

Abstract
The academic success and English proficiency of ELL students are receiving more attention as a result of the growing number of ELL students and the demand for accountability and assessment in education. It is widely accepted that ELL students struggle on state standardized tests because they lack the cognitive academic language abilities needed to succeed on extensive subject evaluations (Darshan, 2013). According to Abedi and Dietel, ELLs’ academic performance lags behind that of other groupings, and the attainment gap reduces only slightly over time (2004).

This study investigated the question of whether or not middle school ELL students’ academic achievement (1) improved in integrated science during one year of instruction while becoming more English language proficient, and (2) improved in integrated science significantly more than the native speakers’ achievement in science after both groups completed a year of science instruction. For the investigation, the NWEA archival data of 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students who attended a Midwest area middle school in 2018-2019 educational year was used. The data were used to analyze trends over time and variation in changes over time among groups of individuals in terms of English language and science achievements. Paired t-test and analysis of variances were used to determine if there was a relationship between science achievement and English language proficiency.

The results indicated that (1) there was a significant improvement in academic achievement of ELL students in science during one year of instruction while they were becoming more English language proficient, and (2) ELL students’ academic achievement in science did not improve significantly more than the native speakers’ achievement after both groups completed a year of science instruction.

Findings of this study may be used to develop strategies to improve English language skills of ELL students of the targeted school settings. Improvement in English language skills may allow them to succeed in all subject areas.

Defense of Dissertation Committee
Committee Chairperson, Dr. Helene Sherman
Committee Faculty Member, Dr. Charles Granger
Committee Faculty Member, Dr. Keith Miller