



Doctor of Education: Higher Education

Teacher Efficacy and Instructional Practices for English Language Learners in General
Education Content Classrooms in Rural Areas

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Introduction: The purpose of this case study was to evaluate to what extent individual teachers in a small, rural high school have the capacity and pedagogical skills to teach non-English speaking individuals within a sociocultural theoretical framework. This case study investigated whether mainstream teachers were fully equipped to meet the needs of their ELL students.

Problem of Practice: English language learners are not making academic progress and are dropping out at rates higher than their English-speaking peers. The achievement gap for ELLs across all academic areas is not being met and continues to widen.

Research Method: Using a mixed methods approach, this case study measured teacher efficacy and their use of best practices for English language learners using an adapted teacher efficacy scale (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001), Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (Echevarria, Vogt & Short, 2000; 2004; 2008; 2013; 2017), achievement data, and a semi-structured interview. Participants for the study included a convenience sample comprised of all grade 9-12 teachers who are general education teachers of core content areas (i.e., Math, English, Social Studies, Science) at a small rural high school in Massachusetts.

Summary of Findings: This study confirmed the need for teacher professional development that focuses on best practices for working with ELLs to support and positively expand the attitudes and beliefs on the part of educators. Also, that there is a potential for this to become a framework for evaluating the efficacy of an ELL program when ELLs are receiving instruction in mainstream classrooms.

Limitation(s) of Study: This study had between 46 and 43 survey respondents, 19 and 16 were eligible to be study participants. General education teachers of elective areas involved with ELLs were not considered for this study. Even though the participant sample size was appropriate for this study, it is not large enough to generalize this study to the general population. Apart from this, the participants for each phase of this study were drawn from a small rural high school while in the midst of a pandemic.

Implications/Significance of Study: This study has several implications including the adoption of best practices for culturally responsive teaching, the effects of teacher efficacy on student achievement, and overcoming barriers to providing professional development to bring about change that will close the achievement gap.