

Thank You Teachers, Students, and Administrators!

We are grateful for all the students, teachers, and administrators who participated in the Middle School English Learner Project. Without these partnerships this study would not have been possible.

Results Summary

Teaching is a rewarding career with many challenges. Teachers who work with students with limited exposure to the English language have the added instructional challenge of not having a common language for teaching and learning. We were interested in discovering a curricular tool that could assist English Language Development (ELD) teachers. Specifically, we wanted to know how the use of *Direct Instruction Spoken English (DISE)* affected teaching practices as well as whether students who received *DISE* instruction made greater gains in English oral language than those who received typical instruction. For this study, we asked these research questions that we examined after one year and two years of instruction:

- For middle school students identified as English Learners does the *DISE* curriculum lead to significantly greater gains in English oral language proficiency and basic academic outcomes than English language development instruction in wait-list classrooms (business as usual instruction)?
- Do the effects of *DISE* versus business as usual instruction depend on aspects of instruction like the rates of teacher demonstrations and the opportunities for student independent practice, and do other aspects of instruction predict student outcomes?

Middle School English Learner Project by the Numbers

Summary of teacher sample:

- 37 total ELD teachers participated—18 who taught *DISE* and 19 in the wait-list group
- All teachers were certified to teach English to nonnative English speakers (e.g., ESL, TESOL)
- Teachers had an average of 11.8 years of teaching ELD

Summary of student sample:

		Wait-list	DISE
Total Sample <i>N</i>		412	334
Ethnicity <i>N</i> (%), 132 missing information	Hispanic	290 (83%)	221 (84%)
	Hispanic White	193 (55%)	127 (48%)
	Hispanic AIAN	67 (19%)	81 (31%)
	Non-Hispanic White	14 (4%)	19 (7%)
	Non-Hispanic Asian	25 (7%)	7 (3%)
Special education <i>N</i> (%), 114 missing information		9 (2%)	4 (1%)
Grade point average <i>M</i>	Year 1	2.9	2.8
	Year 2	2.5	2.5
Days* in school <i>M</i>	Year 1	150	143
	*Average of 175 total days in school year Year 2	160	159

***DISE* lessons taught per week:** 0.7–1.5 lessons per week in Year 1 and 0.4–2.0 per week in Year 2

Percent of class time spent on instruction during observations: average of 83% in wait-list classrooms and 94% in *DISE* classrooms

Amount of Instruction

We asked *DISE* teachers to teach 45-55 minutes of *DISE* daily, a rate at which they would complete approximately half of a lesson per day. Because of competing demands on their time, teachers could not always meet these levels of instruction. As shown above, the average number of lessons taught indicates that students received less instruction than the daily 45-55 minutes of oral English language instruction.

Do Aspects of *DISE* Instruction Predict Student Gains in English Language Development?

The rate (frequency) of teacher demonstrations correlated with gains across the school year. This positive correlation means that classrooms with higher rates (more frequent) teacher demonstrations also had higher student gains on outcome measures of language across one school year.

The number of *DISE* lessons taught per week and time spent on teaching vocabulary both predicted gains on the IDEA Proficiency Test (IPT) across two school years. This is a positive relation where the greater the number of minutes spent teaching vocabulary, the greater the gain students made across the two years. Similarly, the greater the number of lessons taught per week, the greater the student outcomes.

Remember that positive correlations do not explain why an increase in gains occurred, but only that two outcomes (i.e. more time spent teaching vocabulary and greater gains in IPT scores) occurred together. The positive correlations are consistent with the findings reported next.

Did Students who Received *DISE* Make Greater Gains Than Those who did not?

In this study, we randomly assigned schools within each district, so teachers either taught *DISE* or their usual English language development curricula. Random assignment ensures that teachers aren't biased. For example, if we only selected teachers who wanted to use *DISE* that might influence the results. Random assignment also helped balance schools on factors of school and student characteristics (e.g., rates of free and reduced price lunch and academic achievement). We then gathered the data on English oral language development from students and compared the average gains over time between schools using *DISE* and those teaching their usual curricula. That is, we compared the type of instruction and how much the students' oral language scores grew over the two years of their participation.

We characterized the difference between schools teaching with *DISE* versus typical instruction with an *effect size*, which expresses the magnitude of the difference between the two groups. A value of zero means there was no difference between the groups, while an effect size of 0.8 means there was a large difference between the groups. For comparison, students in early elementary school make gains in reading and math of 0.6 to 1.5 effect size units per year, but once students reach middle school, these gains drop to about 0.20 to 0.35 (these are smaller in part because the learning curve is not as steep in middle school since the students have already learned how to read and how to do basic math).

In this study, we found that students taught with *DISE* grew more in their oral English language skills than students who received typical English language instruction. The effect size was about 0.14 per year or about 0.28 for two years. Students who received *DISE* made these gains over and above those students who received typical instruction in English oral language. Students who started the school year with lower English language skills also made greater gains than students who began the year with higher English language skills.

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