



**University
of Victoria**

Graduate Studies

Notice of the Final Oral Examination
for the Degree of Master of Arts

of

CHRISTINA PERKINS

BSc (University of British Columbia, 2015)

**“Contributions of Oral Language and Word-Level Literacy Skills to
Elementary Writing in First and Second Language Learners”**

Department of Education Psychology & Leadership Studies

Monday, April 1, 2019

10:00am

Clearihue Building

Room D130

Supervisory Committee:

Dr. Gina Harrison, Department of Education Psychology & Leadership Studies,
University of Victoria (Supervisor)

Dr. John Walsh, Department of Education Psychology & Leadership Studies,
UVic (Member)

Dr. Todd Milford, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, UVic (Outside Member)

External Examiner:

Dr. James Nahachewsky, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, UVic

Chair of Oral Examination:

Dr. Stephen Tax, Department of Business, UVic

Abstract

Second language (L2) learners are a growing population in Canadian school systems, and acquisition of literacy skills is critical to their success in Canadian society. While much research has been devoted to writing development in first language (L1) learners, text-level writing remains relatively underexplored in L2 populations. The present study sought to address this gap by considering the relative contributions of component oral language and word-level literacy skills to writing in elementary students speaking English as a first (EL1) and second (EL2) language. A sample of 124 kindergarten students (56 EL1, 68 EL2) and 112 grade three students (51 EL1, 61 EL2) completed a battery of standardized measures assessing oral language, word-level literacy, and writing skills. An ordinary least squares (OLS) regression-based mediation path analysis was used to test associations among oral language, word-level skills and writing skills in each group. Results indicated that word-level literacy skills had a significant direct effect on writing in all groups, but that oral language had no significant direct effect on writing in any groups. Instead, the effect of oral language on writing was significantly mediated by word-level skills in the kindergarten EL1 and EL2 groups, and the grade three EL1 group. The indirect effect of oral language on writing through word-level skills was not significant in the grade three EL2 group. Despite this, no significant differences in variable associations were found between EL1 and EL2 groups in either grade. Oral language skills were additionally found to have a significant effect on word-level literacy skills in the kindergarten EL1 and EL2 groups and the grade three EL1 group; the significance of this effect in the grade three EL2 group was unclear. Results of this study are discussed in relation to existing literature, and existing theories of L1 and L2 writing.