

Chapter 20

Using SIOP Model to Engage Students and Promote Academic Knowledge of English Learners (ELs)

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ABSTRACT

The increased number of English learners (EL) in mainstream classrooms in the United States necessitates the use of effective strategies to support ELs' learning. Previous studies have shown that the sheltered instruction observation protocol (SIOP) model is effective in teaching content subjects to EL students. In this chapter, the SIOP model has been incorporated to teach a science unit to students of level-3 English proficiency. This chapter includes an introduction, literature review, unit about plants, and conclusion. The unit has 10 lessons with several features of the SIOP model to serve as an example for mainstream classroom teachers. Features used in this unit include visuals, graphic organizers, vocabulary previews, hands-on activities, video clips, charts, rubrics, and different forms of assessment. If implemented, the SIOP model can be a tool for classroom teachers in making content knowledge accessible to EL students and help them succeed in their learning.

INTRODUCTION

The English learner (EL) population in U.S. schools has increased rapidly during the last decade. The number of students who spoke a language other than English at home was estimated about 4.4 million in the year 2011–12 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2014). With The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) policy, all states are required to identify English learners, and assess their English proficiency and academic skills through state testing programs. EL students should also be included in regular state assessments in academic content with their native speaker peers in grades 3-8 and when they are in high school (Echevarria, Vogt, Short, 2010). “With increasingly diverse classrooms and a simultaneous rise

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in the influence of federal and state accountability measures, explicit integration of academic content and English proficiency has become a necessity for effective classroom practices and educational policies” (Lee & Buxton, 2013, p.41). ‘Therefore, the responsibility of EL students’ learning does not rest on the EL teachers alone. Most teachers will encounter EL students in their classrooms and they have to provide high-quality instruction that is suitable for all learners.

I teach EL students in an elementary school in Grand Forks, North Dakota, where more than one third of the students are ELs. They come from many different countries with various linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Their English language proficiency ranges between level one and level five in WIDA (World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment) consortium. There is a growing need for lessons and materials that are appropriate for these EL students.

The main classroom teachers often come to me seeking advice on how to best teach other EL students and how to accommodate their linguistic needs. Although my school has been designated as an EL magnet school for many years, and the presence of EL students is common to the main classroom teachers, special curriculum that is appropriate for EL students’ needs is still warranted. This project is intended to demonstrate to the main classroom teachers how to plan and implement a unit that accommodates the EL students’ needs. My plan is to create a science unit that is accessible to EL students through the integration of the SIOP (Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol Model) strategies. While this science unit is designed for EL students, mainstream students can benefit greatly from the strategies that have been incorporated. I created this unit following the SIOP method that focuses on engaging students and promoting their four language domains of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The unit includes ten 45-minute lessons, and each lesson has its own content and language objectives. These lessons focus on key vocabulary that promotes students’ comprehension of the lesson’s concepts.

Students are expected to access the lesson’s content and language objectives through the learning strategies that I incorporate from the SIOP model. These strategies include engaging students by providing opportunities for interaction and discussion of ideas, promoting participation through small group and whole class interaction, and using comprehensible input including visuals, demonstrations, graphic organizers, and vocabulary previews. The strategies I used also feature cooperative learning, using hands-on activities and realia, watching short video clips, and listening to stories that target the lesson’s concepts. The use of simplified language, charts, drawing, pictures, rubrics, and different forms of assessment to measure students’ accomplishment has been utilized in the unit as well.

From my experience, EL students’ learning requires more time than native speaking students. As teachers, we have to avoid falling into the temptation of rushing through the material of the lessons. EL students need to have sufficient time to process the information presented to them. Due to unforeseen circumstances, the unit time may need to be extended for proper implementation.

I created these lessons using ideas, images, songs, and video clips from online sources that support the learning process of EL students. The unit is designed for level 3 (developing) EL students based on the WIDA Consortium. This project includes an introduction, a literature review about the SIOP model, and a unit of ten science lessons about plants that incorporates many of the SIOP strategies. The project ends with a conclusion and a list of references.

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