

The Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP®)

Sheltered Instruction is an approach to teaching that integrates *language* and *content objectives* while infusing *sociocultural awareness* into the classroom activities. Teachers use the *target language* (in this case English) while *scaffolding* instruction to aid student comprehension of content topics and objectives. The ultimate goal of Sheltered Instruction is *accessibility* for ELLs to *grade-level content standards* and concepts while they continue to improve their English language proficiency. Sheltered instruction makes subject matter concepts understandable while promoting English language development.

The SIOP® is a 30-item instrument developed by Echevarria, et al. (2004) to measure teacher classroom performance of the eight elements they found to be essential to high quality Sheltered Instruction for English language learners. Each item is scored using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 0 to 4. Scores may be documented over time to show growth. This instrument has been used in a wide variety of U.S. school settings and has been determined by the developers to have a high degree of interrater reliability and validity. In this study, we will use the SIOP as an independent measure of teacher classroom performance.

Eight Elements of the SIOP

1. Lesson Preparation

Content Objectives (What students will learn)

Effective SI lessons are based on concrete grade-level content area standards. The content objectives should state simply what students should know and be able to do. These objectives should be made explicit to students, orally and in writing.

Language Objectives (How students will use the target language to demonstrate what they learn)

Effective SI lessons also include objectives that support students' language development. The language objectives should be stated explicitly to students, orally and in writing.

Content Concepts

The content area concepts presented in the lesson must be aligned with the grade-level standards. Adaptations should ensure that concepts are accessible to language learners, but that the content itself is not diminished. (Using lower level materials that are not aligned with the grade level standards is not an appropriate adaptation. However, providing more visual support and teacher produced summaries of key concepts are appropriate adaptations.)

Supplementary Materials

Effective SI teachers use supplementary materials to support the content area objectives and provide contextualization for key concepts. Using a variety of supplementary materials supports different learning styles.

Adaptation of Content

Examples of ways teachers may adapt lesson content include the use of:

- Graphic organizers
- Outlines
- Leveled study guides
- Highlighted text
- Taped text
- Adapted text
- Jigsaw text reading
- Margin notes
- Native language texts

Meaningful Activities

Lesson activities should be “authentic” in ways that integrate content concepts with language practice opportunities to promote language development and mastery of content standards. Students are more successful when they are able to make connections between what they know and what they are learning by relating classroom experiences to their own lives.

2. Building Background

Language learners may struggle to comprehend a text or concept presented in class because their schemata do not match those of the culture for which the text was written. Schemata consist of the student’s concepts, beliefs, expectations, processes and experiences - all of which are used to make sense of a situation, action or new information. Teachers of English learners need to be aware that what may appear to be poor comprehension and memory skills, may in fact be the result of a mismatch of schemata.

By activating students’ background knowledge and providing linkages from student experiences to the academic concepts or text, teachers provide an important point of entry for language learners.

3. Comprehensible Input

Comprehensible input (Krashen, 1985) involves making adjustments to speech so that the message is understandable to students. This may be done by adjusting 1) the rate and enunciation of speech, and 2) the complexity of speech. These modifications are necessary for student comprehension in the beginning stages of second language acquisition.

ELLs often report that teachers talk too fast and do not explain things well. Effective SI teachers constantly modulate and adjust their speech to ensure that the content is

comprehensible. Concepts are taught using a variety of techniques (including modeling, gestures, hands-on activities, and demonstrations) so that students can understand the content material. Effective SI teachers provide explanations of academic tasks in ways that make clear what students are expected to accomplish and that promote student success.

4. Strategies

Learning strategies

Cognitive processes individuals use to help them comprehend, learn or remember new information (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990).

There are three main types of learning strategies: *Cognitive Strategies*, *Metacognitive Strategies* and *Social/Affective Strategies*.

Scaffolding techniques

Teachers scaffold instruction when they provide substantial amounts of support and assistance that enables students to accomplish more than they would be able to on their own. By the same token, it is important that teachers reduce the amount of support as learners acquire experience and familiarity with tasks through multiple opportunities for practice. (Think of a temporary scaffold that is used during constructing a building - - when the building is complete, the scaffold comes down.

5. Interaction

English learners benefit from structured opportunities to use the target language (English) in multiple situations and for a variety of purposes. When classroom interaction is dominated by 'teacher talk', students are deprived of these opportunities. Teachers must instead create ample opportunities for students to actively use academic language in ways that are meaningful to students. It is not just the quantity of exposures to English that affects learning, but the quality as well.

Grouping configurations determine the amount of interaction. These configurations may vary to be homogeneous or heterogeneous by gender, language proficiency, language background and/or ability depending on the lesson's activity and objective. It is recommended that at least two different grouping structures be used, but the grouping configuration should always support the content and language objectives for the lesson.

6. Practice/Application

Effective teachers of English learners provide their students with well-structured activities that provide opportunities to practice new knowledge and to apply that knowledge in new ways. Students are more likely to master content concepts and skills when they are given multiple opportunities to practice in relevant and meaningful ways.

Hands-on Materials/Manipulatives

Hands-on materials or manipulatives provide students with opportunities to organize, create, count, classify, experiment with, observe, rearrange or dismantle content materials. Manipulating learning materials is especially important for ELs because it helps them connect abstract concepts with concrete experiences.

Application of Content and Language Knowledge

For students acquiring a new language, the need to apply new information is critically important because discussing and 'doing' make abstract concepts concrete. However, activities must constitute relevant and meaningful application of what is being learned.

For English learners, application must include opportunities to practice language knowledge. Opportunities for social interaction in the classroom promote language development.

Integration of Language Skills

The language processes – reading, writing, listening and speaking – are mutually supportive. They should not be taught in isolation from one another, but should instead developed in a holistic manner. While practice in any one process promotes development in the others, effective teachers of English learners understand the need to create many opportunities to practice all four language processes in an integrated manner.

7. Lesson Delivery

Lesson delivery includes:

- How well the content and language objectives are supported by the teacher
- To what extent the students are engaged in the lesson
- How appropriate the pace of the lesson is to the students' ability levels

The content and language objectives should be clear to students. The teacher can do this by stating the objectives orally and in writing. The lesson sequence and activities included in the lesson should directly support these objectives.

8. Review/Assessment

There are a variety of ways that effective teachers incorporate review and assessment into their lessons. These elements do not have to take place at the end of the lesson, though they often do. Assessment may be informal and formative, and need not involve formal quizzes or tests.