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PREPARING TEACHERS TO USE THE SHELTERED INSTRUCTION OBSERVATION PROTOCOL MODEL

Abstract. Today’s educational landscape reflects a remarkable transformation characterized by the increasing linguistic and cultural diversity within classrooms. This transformation is a global phenomenon, driven by migration, globalization, and the interconnectedness of our world. Classrooms, formerly largely homogeneous in terms of language and culture, now host a rich diversity.

This linguistic diversity is a characteristic of multicultural classrooms, challenging educators to address the linguistic needs of students whose first
language is not the medium of instruction. Cultural diversity enriches the educational experience, as students bring with them a wide array of customs, traditions, and worldviews. However, it also requires the formation of cultural competence among educators to ensure that all students feel valued and included. Students from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds may have distinct learning styles, which educators must consider in their teaching methods. Language barriers can be a significant obstacle to accessing academic content for English Language Learners (ELLs), who may struggle to understand subject matter when they are still in the process of gaining English proficiency. Many educational systems have legal directives to ensure that ELLs receive the support they need to access the curriculum. These legal requirements underscore the importance of addressing the needs of diverse learners. At the same time, effective education must be inclusive and equitable, ensuring that all students, regardless of their linguistic and cultural backgrounds, have access to high-quality learning experiences.

In response to these challenges, educational models such as the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) have gained recognition and adoption. SIOP provides a structured and research-based approach to address the needs of ELLs, emphasizing both language development and content-area learning. By preparing future teachers to implement the SIOP model effectively, we can better address the educational needs of ELLs and create classrooms that are not only diverse but also inclusive and beneficial for all students.

**Keywords:** Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP), English Language Learners (ELLs), second language, teacher training, language acquisition.

**Problem statement.** In the contemporary educational landscape, the classroom reflects our global society. As the world becomes increasingly interconnected, linguistic and cultural diversity within classrooms has been growing. One of the profound outcomes of this diversity is the increasing number of English Language Learners (ELLs), students whose mother tongue is not English and who are in the process of acquiring this global lingua franca.

For educational community, this linguistic diversity makes both a challenge and an opportunity. It challenges us to reconsider our pedagogical approaches to ensure equitable access to education for all students, regardless of their language backgrounds. However, it simultaneously provides us with the opportunity to improve our teaching methods, with the purpose to create an inclusive, culturally rich learning environment that prepares students to successful life and career.

One of the most critical issue in addressing this challenge and using the opportunity is effective language instruction for ELLs. The ability to overcome language barriers, foster linguistic proficiency, and support content learning is essential for these students’ academic success. It is within this context that the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) model turns to be a key to pedagogical innovation and inclusivity.
The SIOP model, developed in the United States in the 1990s, represents an evidence-based approach that provides teachers with a structured and supportive learning environment for ELLs. It is built upon a foundational principle: the simultaneous teaching of content and language, recognizing that language proficiency and content mastery are intrinsically intertwined. This model is flexible, adaptable, and capable of tailoring itself to meet the diverse needs of different classrooms and students.

The importance of preparing future teachers to use the SIOP model cannot be overestimated. It extends far beyond the boundaries of the classroom, touching upon broader educational equity, student outcomes, cultural competence, and the cultivation of a linguistically and culturally responsive teaching community.

**Analysis of the latest research and publications.** The Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) model has gained substantial attention in the field of education due to its effectiveness in enhancing language instruction for ELLs and improving their academic outcomes.

Numerous studies have highlighted the SIOP model’s positive impact on language development among ELLs. Research by Echevarria, Short, and Powers (2006) and more recent studies such as those by Lopez and Soltero-González (2019) have consistently demonstrated that the SIOP model effectively facilitates language acquisition by immersing students in language-rich content instruction. Through strategies like comprehensible input, scaffolded instruction, and interaction, the SIOP model helps ELLs enhance their language proficiency while engaging with grade-level content.

The SIOP model’s significance extends to academic achievement. Research by Short and Fitzsimmons (2007) and a meta-analysis conducted by Vogt and Echevarria (2008) have indicated that the implementation of SIOP strategies correlates with higher academic performance among ELLs. This positive impact spans various content areas, including mathematics, science, social studies, and foreign languages.

Apart from linguistic proficiency, the SIOP model emphasizes the importance of cultural responsiveness in education. Educators implementing SIOP strategies create inclusive and culturally rich learning environments. These environments foster positive relationships between students from diverse backgrounds and promote cross-cultural understanding (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2017).

Educational contexts often entail compliance with legal instructions for the equitable education of ELLs. The SIOP model not only aligns with these recommendations but also offers a structured framework for meeting them effectively. Legal imperatives in the United States emphasize the need for targeted support for ELLs, and the SIOP model provides a systematic approach to meeting these requirements (Wright, 2018).
The SIOP model not only addresses the needs of ELLs but also contributes to the development of global competence. In our interconnected world, linguistic and cultural competence are valuable assets. Educators well-versed in SIOP are better prepared to educate students who may need English proficiency for future academic and professional activities, contributing to the development of global citizens (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2017).

Furthermore, studies have indicated the positive impact of the SIOP model on language development and academic achievement. In the analysis by Saunders, Goldenberg, and Marcelletti (2019), the authors examined a range of studies and found compelling evidence that the SIOP model significantly enhances language proficiency and content knowledge among ELLs. This empirical support underscores the model’s effectiveness in addressing the diverse needs of ELLs.

Beyond academic outcomes, the SIOP model has also demonstrated its value in promoting equitable access to education. Research by Thomas and Collier (2002) indicates that the model is particularly effective in helping ELLs access grade-level content. Their longitudinal study demonstrates that ELLs educated within the framework of the SIOP model consistently outperform their peers in traditional English-only programs in both language proficiency and academic achievement.

While the SIOP model has gained recognition for its effectiveness, researchers have also highlighted the need for ongoing professional development and support for educators in implementing the model (Echevarria, Short, & Vogt, 2017; Saunders, Goldenberg, & Marcelletti, 2019). Continuous training ensures that teachers can maximize the potential of the SIOP model in enhancing language instruction for ELLs.

The purpose of this article is to provide a comprehensive exploration of the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) model, with a specific focus on the key steps necessary for its implementation in teaching foreign languages to ELLs. The article aims to reveal the significance of preparing future teachers to use the SIOP model and equip educators with the knowledge and tools needed to create inclusive and transformative educational environments for ELLs.

Presentation of the main material. The demographics of classrooms worldwide have undergone a remarkable transformation in recent decades, reflecting the profound effects of globalization, migration, and increased cultural exchange. This transformation is particularly evident in Western countries but it is increasingly affecting educational institutions worldwide.

In the United States, for example, the number of ELLs has increased significantly. According to the U.S. Department of Education’s National Center for Education Statistics, during the 2018-2019 academic year, approximately 9.4% of public school students in the United States were classified as ELLs, marking a notable rise in the ELL population over the past decade (National Center for Education Statistics, 2021). Similarly, the European Union has witnessed an inflow
of migrants and refugees from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, leading to increased language diversity in European classrooms. The European Commission’s “Education and Training Monitor 2022” highlights the need to address linguistic diversity effectively in European education systems (European Commission, 2022). This demographic shift in educational institutions is not narrowed to specific regions. The impact of increased linguistic and cultural diversity extends globally, affecting classrooms in diverse cultural and linguistic contexts.

This diversity creates an opportunity for educators to create culturally inclusive learning environments that not only acknowledge the richness of various cultural heritages but also prepare students to be prosperous in an interconnected, intercultural world. The capacity to navigate cultural nuances and communicate effectively in diverse contexts has become a valuable skill.

As linguistic and cultural diversity continues to grow, language becomes the bridge to master educational content and to participate fully in the learning process. Therefore, the significance of implementing effective language instruction models, such as the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP), becomes increasingly evident.

In light of these developments, educators and teacher training programs must adapt and respond to the changing educational landscape, ensuring that they are equipped to address the needs of diverse learners effectively.

The SIOP model draws its theoretical foundation from several educational theories and pedagogical principles. At its core, SIOP aligns with a constructivist and socio-cultural perspective, emphasizing interactive, experiential learning. The model integrates these theories to provide a structured and supportive learning environment for ELLs.

SIOP draws from sociocultural theory, which emphasizes the role of social interactions and cultural context in learning. The model supports collaborative learning and interaction among students, fostering a sociocultural approach that values the contributions of diverse cultural backgrounds. SIOP’s emphasis on scaffolding and guided instruction resonates with Vygotsky’s concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). The model encourages teachers to provide support and instruction that is within students’ ZPD, promoting optimal language and content learning (Vygotsky, 1978).

SIOP incorporates key principles from language acquisition theories, recognizing that language development is a dynamic process. It acknowledges the importance of comprehensible input, which aligns with Stephen Krashen’s Input Hypothesis, suggesting that language learners make progress when they receive input slightly above their current level of proficiency (Krashen, 1985).

SIOP’s adaptability to diverse student needs aligns with the principles of differentiated instruction. Teachers employing the SIOP model are encouraged to
adapt instruction to meet individual language proficiency levels and academic needs (Tomlinson, 2001).

The SIOP model aligns with *the principles of constructivist theory*, which suggests that learners actively construct knowledge through their experiences and interactions. By encouraging student interaction, the SIOP model allows ELLs to construct language and content knowledge through meaningful engagement (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2017).

By integrating these theoretical perspectives, the SIOP model provides educators with a framework that facilitates the simultaneous development of language proficiency and content mastery among ELLs. The theoretical foundations emphasize the importance of interactive, culturally responsive, and differentiated instruction, ensuring that ELLs have equitable access to quality education.

The implementation of the SIOP model involves a systematic approach that comprises eight key components. These components serve as a comprehensive guide for educators to create a structured and supportive learning environment for ELLs that facilitates language and content acquisition. Each component is rooted in pedagogical best practices and draws upon research in language acquisition and effective instruction.

*Component 1: Lesson Preparation*

The foundation of effective SIOP implementation lies in thorough lesson preparation. Teachers begin by selecting the content and language objectives for each lesson, ensuring they are clear, specific, and aligned with curriculum standards. These objectives guide the lesson design, helping to establish the learning goals for both language and content. Additionally, teachers plan activities, resources, and materials that support the objectives and engage ELLs.

*Component 2: Building Background*

Building background knowledge is vital for ensuring that ELLs can access and understand the content being taught. In this step, teachers provide students with the necessary background information and vocabulary that will be used during the lesson. Visual aids, graphic organizers, and real-life objects (realia) are employed to make the content more comprehensible and relatable to students.

*Component 3: Comprehensible Input*

Comprehensible input is at the heart of the SIOP model. Teachers present new information in a way that is understandable to students at their language proficiency levels. They use techniques such as visuals, gestures, and demonstrations to clarify and simplify complex concepts. This step ensures that ELLs can engage with the content effectively.

*Component 4: Strategies*

The strategies step focuses on teaching ELLs how to learn. Teachers employ various strategies such as summarization, paraphrasing, and questioning to help
students understand, process, and retain information. This step develops metacognitive skills in ELLs, allowing them to become more independent learners.

Component 5: Interaction

Interaction is a core element of language acquisition, and the SIOP model recognizes its importance. Teachers provide opportunities for students to interact with one another and with the teacher. Collaborative discussions, peer interactions, and questioning techniques are used to encourage ELLs to practice language in meaningful contexts.

Component 6: Practice/Application

In the practice/application step, teachers design activities that allow ELLs to practice and apply their new language and content knowledge. These activities are meaningful and relevant to the lesson, reinforcing the material while further developing language skills. Practice might involve tasks like writing essays, conducting experiments, presenting projects, etc.

Component 7: Lesson Delivery

Lesson delivery is where teachers implement the lesson plans, utilizing a variety of teaching methods and strategies to support student understanding. Teachers maintain a dynamic and engaging classroom atmosphere, using language support techniques to ensure comprehension (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2017).

Component 8: Review & Assessment

Review and assessment serve as the feedback loop in the SIOP model. Teachers regularly review and assess students’ understanding of new language and content. This information is used to make adjustments to their instruction as needed. Formative assessments, student feedback, and teacher observations help measure progress and make real-time improvements (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2017).

By thoroughly following these eight key steps, educators can provide English Language Learners with a structured and supportive learning environment that helps them acquire both language and content knowledge effectively.

The successful implementation of the SIOP model is crucial for the preparation of future teachers who are not only well-versed in the model’s principles but also equipped with the practical skills to apply them effectively in diverse classroom settings. Several strategies and methods are essential for preparing future teachers to use the SIOP model.

Integrating language acquisition courses within teacher education programs is critical. These courses offer future teachers a deeper understanding of the language development process in ELLs and how the SIOP model aligns with language acquisition theories (Krashen, 1985).

Integrating SIOP into teacher education programs is a fundamental strategy. Teacher candidates should be exposed to SIOP principles early in their training. This exposure may include SIOP-focused coursework, workshops, or field experiences that allow future teachers to observe SIOP in action. Pairing novice teachers with
experienced SIOP practitioners through mentorship or co-teaching arrangements can be highly effective. Novices can benefit from the guidance of mentors who have successfully implemented SIOP in their classrooms. This hands-on experience provides a practical understanding of how to apply SIOP strategies. Ongoing professional development opportunities, both during teacher preparation programs and in-service, are essential. These workshops can delve into SIOP principles, instructional techniques, and strategies that cater to the needs of ELLs. Such training ensures that future teachers are continually refining their SIOP skills. Practical classroom experience during teacher preparation programs is invaluable. Placing teacher candidates in classrooms with diverse ELL populations under the guidance of experienced SIOP instructors enables them to apply SIOP principles, gain hands-on experience, and witness the impact of SIOP on student learning (Saunders, Goldenberg, & Marcelletti, 2019).

Incorporating classroom observations and feedback mechanisms is crucial for future teachers to grasp SIOP in action. Observation of SIOP-experienced instructors allows them to witness best practices. Constructive feedback helps them understand how to improve their own implementation. Future teachers should be encouraged to engage in continuous self-reflection. Reflective practice allows educators to assess their SIOP implementation, identify areas for improvement, and adjust their teaching strategies accordingly. Implementing SIOP-based assessments and certification can ensure that future teachers have demonstrated competency in SIOP implementation before entering the classroom. Certification can serve as a marker of readiness to effectively support ELLs (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2017).

By employing these strategies and methods, teacher preparation programs and professional development initiatives can equip future teachers with the knowledge, skills, and practical experience necessary for successful SIOP implementation in their teaching careers.

While SIOP has gained recognition for its effectiveness, its application in foreign language instruction remains an area of concern. As educators, researchers, and policymakers advocate for the incorporation of SIOP in foreign language teaching, it is appropriate to critically examine potential gaps and unexplored dimensions. By addressing the following issues, we contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the model’s role in foreign language education for ELLs.

Much of the existing research on the SIOP model has focused on English language instruction. There is a gap in the literature regarding the application and effectiveness of the SIOP model in teaching other foreign languages. In the same way, the majority of studies on SIOP have been conducted in the United States. There is a need for an in-depth research that investigates the implementation of the SIOP model in foreign language classrooms in different global contexts, considering cultural and linguistic variations. Consequently, comparative studies that assess the
effectiveness of the SIOP model in foreign language teaching in relation to other language instruction models are limited. These studies could help educators and policymakers make informed decisions about which approach best meets the needs of their students.

While there is evidence to suggest that the SIOP model has a positive impact on short-term language and content learning, there is a gap in longitudinal studies that assess the long-term academic and linguistic outcomes of ELLs who have been taught using the SIOP model. The literature provides a general understanding of how the SIOP model can be adapted for various language proficiency levels. However, there is a lack of comprehensive studies that delve into specific strategies and adaptations for different levels, such as beginner, intermediate, and advanced ELLs.

Whereas the importance of teacher training is recognized, there is a need for more research on the specific elements of professional development that are most effective in preparing teachers to implement the SIOP model successfully. Identifying best practices in this regard can help bridge this gap.

The recent shift towards virtual and blended learning due to the global pandemic has created new challenges and opportunities in language instruction. Research on how the SIOP model can be adapted and optimized for online and blended learning environments is relatively scarce.

Addressing these gaps would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the SIOP model’s applicability in foreign language teaching and help educators make informed decisions about its implementation in diverse language contexts and settings.

**Conclusion.** The SIOP model, founded on the simultaneous integration of language and content, represents a powerful tool for fostering pedagogical innovation and inclusivity, particularly in catering to the diverse needs of ELLs. However, our inquiry revealed critical gaps in our understanding of SIOP implementation. While the model’s effectiveness in English language instruction is well-documented, there is a lack of research regarding its application in teaching other foreign languages and in diverse global contexts. Additionally, specific strategies for different proficiency levels of ELLs and the most effective elements of professional development require further investigation, as does the adaptation of SIOP for online and blended learning environments. To bridge these gaps and expand our knowledge, future research should focus on the applicability of the SIOP model in diverse language contexts, varying global settings, and across linguistic and cultural diversities. Investigating its adaptation and effectiveness in foreign language classrooms, conducting comparative studies, and examining long-term outcomes will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of SIOP’s role in diverse educational contexts.

Ultimately, the importance of preparing future teachers to implement the SIOP model remains clear. Beyond enhancing individual classrooms, SIOP has the
potential to transform educational equity, student outcomes, cultural competence, and the development of a linguistically and culturally responsive teaching community. It equips teachers to navigate the complexities of linguistic and cultural diversity, fostering inclusivity, enriching the educational experience, and preparing students to succeed in our globally interconnected world.

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