
99 Ideas and Activities for Teaching English Learners with the SIOP[®] Model

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● preface and acknowledgements

Over the past decade, we have worked with thousands of teachers and administrators throughout the United States and several other countries as they have implemented the SIOP[®] Model. The term SIOP[®] (pronounced *sigh-op*), the acronym for the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol, has become widely known as an empirically validated approach for implementing effective sheltered content instruction for students who are acquiring English as a second (or multiple) language. The SIOP[®] Model, derived from the SIOP[®] observation protocol, includes eight instructional components and thirty features that, when used in combination consistently and systematically, have been found to improve English learners' academic achievement (Echevarria, Short, & Powers, 2006; Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2008).

This book responds to frequent requests from elementary and secondary teachers for additional teaching ideas, activities, and approaches that can be used to effectively implement the SIOP[®] Model. The ideas and activities, as well as other information within this book, are grouped within each of the eight SIOP[®] components.

Criteria for Selecting the Ideas and Activities

As you look through this book, you will undoubtedly recognize some familiar ideas and activities; we hope you will also find new approaches and support for making the content you teach more comprehensible for English learners (and other students). These ideas and activities were selected according to the following criteria:

- They focus on providing English learners with practice and application of key content and language concepts;
- They promote students' interactions with each other and with the teacher;
- They provide opportunities for students to use English while reading, writing, listening, and speaking;
- They can be implemented with ease for nearly any subject area or grade level;
- They provide information for the teacher to use for review and assessment of content and language objectives.

The SIOP[®] Model serves as an instructional framework for sheltered instruction that values effective, research-based, and time-honored teaching practices. Many of the cooperative learning and other techniques you already use are appropriate to include in SIOP[®] lessons. These new ideas and activities have been recommended by experienced SIOP[®] teachers and will add to your repertoire, further enhancing your instruction and your students' learning.

About This Book

If you are currently teaching or working with teachers, it is important to remember that *activities are not the end*; they are the means to the end. The end, of course, is mastery by all students of content objectives, language objectives, and district/state content standards. Although some teachers just want “use-tomorrow” activities for activities’ sake, as fellow teachers, coaches, and supervisors, we all have a responsibility to help these teachers learn to use a variety of instructional techniques in a purposeful, thoughtful, and careful manner to maximize student achievement.

Content and Language Objectives

It is our expectation that anyone who is reading this book has already read the core text, *Making Content Comprehensible for English Learners: The SIOP® Model (3rd Ed., Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2008)*. This book is essential for a thorough understanding of the SIOP® Model, which includes the need for explicit content and language objectives for each and every sheltered content lesson. If you have participated in SIOP® training, you know the critical importance of including content and language objectives that are explicitly stated, shared in writing, and presented orally to students.

Our research confirms that content and language objectives must guide the selection of appropriate and meaningful activities; activities that provide English learners with varied opportunities to practice and apply content knowledge at the same time ELs are developing English proficiency. The lesson-level content and language objectives must be observable (the teacher or observer should be able to see students actively working to meet an objective), and measurable (the teacher or observer should be able to determine whether students are making progress toward or have met each objective).

Learning behaviors, therefore, must be stated very specifically, such as: “Students will be able to identify three reasons why. . .”; “Students will be able to compare and contrast two perspectives related to. . .”; “Students will be able to classify into three groups the following. . .” These objectives could also be stated as “I can. . .” statements to better facilitate student understandings: “I can identify three reasons why. . .”; “I can compare and contrast two perspectives related to. . .”; or “I can classify into three groups the following. . .”

Note that on these somewhat generic objectives, we left off a specific subject area or topic. For a given lesson, the topic must be included: “The student will be able to (or “I can”) compare and contrast the perspectives of Civil War Generals Ulysses S. Grant and Robert E. Lee regarding strategies for winning the war in 1863.” Or: “I can compare and contrast a square and a rectangle.” Note that these sample objectives are observable and measurable by the teacher.

Content and language objectives are included as examples for nearly all of the ideas and activities in this book. Many are stated somewhat generically with the expectation that you will insert the topic/subject area you are teaching just as we did above. On these objectives you will see the parenthetical words, “a topic.” For example, with the Anticipation/Reaction Guide (p. 82) in the Strategies section, you find the following content objective: “Students will be able to agree or disagree about Anticipation statements written about (a topic).” If the subject you are teaching is social studies/current events, and the topic is capital punishment, your content objective for the students might read: “I can agree or disagree with Anticipation statements about capital punishment.” A language objective might be: “I can orally or in writing justify my reasoning for agreeing or disagreeing with Anticipation statements about capital punishment.”

For example, when teaching second graders a unit on Our Community in social studies, write five Anticipation statements about what children can do to make their communities a better place. A content objective might be: Students will be able to agree or disagree with statements about their roles in their community and give reasons for their positions.

A language objective might be: Students will be able to complete sentences about their community and share them orally with their partner using one of the following sentence stems:

“I agree with this statement because. . .”

“I disagree with this statement because. . .”

- For younger children (K-2), the stems might be:

“I say yes because. . .”

“I say no because. . .”

Our purpose in providing generic objectives is to help you learn how to frame objectives for your English learners. Remember that all lesson objectives, both content and language, must be generated from actual content; your district and/or state standards will most likely serve as your guide. Never introduce generic objectives to students such as, “The students will use a Venn diagram,” or “The students will complete a graphic organizer.” The objectives do not spring from the activity; they are generated by the key content and language concepts being taught. State specifically the learning behaviors you plan to elicit (e.g., explain, diagram, discuss, predict, summarize, draw, list, etc.). Include the specific content and language concepts you are teaching and reinforcing.

Lesson Plans

At the end of each chapter for six of the SIOP[®] components (Building Background, Comprehensible Input, Strategies, Interaction, Practice/Application, Review/Assessment) you will find two comprehensive lesson plans, one written at the elementary and one at the secondary level. These are complete lessons that illustrate how you might use an idea or activity in the respective component to implement the features of the SIOP[®] Model. Despite the fact that we have included instructional ideas and activities here component by component, in reality the SIOP[®] Model integrates the components (and thus the features) throughout a lesson. Accomplished SIOP[®] teachers don’t plan a lesson one component at a time; their lessons demonstrate the overlap, interrelatedness, and integration among the SIOP[®] components.

For example, an activity such as The Insert Method (p. 33) might activate prior knowledge and build students’ backgrounds, but it can also make content comprehensible by teaching learning strategies (such as monitoring comprehension), promoting interaction between partners, and providing for practice and application of the key content and language concepts. During a lesson with The Insert Method, teachers continually review and assess students’ understanding. Although an idea or activity “resides” within one or two components in this book, in reality these activities support and reinforce student learning of key content and language concepts across the components and features of the SIOP[®] Model, from lesson to lesson. This important point is illustrated by each of the lesson plans at the end of the chapters.

Note how the lesson plans are derived from the content and lesson objectives. Within each lesson plan, the content and language objectives are numbered (such as 1, 2, etc.). Follow across the page (left to right) and you will find meaningful activities that are also numbered (1.1, 2.1). The activities were specifically selected so that students can practice and apply the key content and language concepts described in the objectives. You will also see that the teachers assessment of student learning corresponds to the numbers of the lesson's content and language objectives. The lesson plans all incorporate ideas and activities from this book, and they were created to illustrate how to promote student attainment of the respective content and language objectives.

Finally, the lesson plans span a variety of grade levels to encourage the use of these ideas and activities across the pre-K-12 continuum. Most of the activities can be used at any grade level, but several are most effective in the lower or upper grades and these have been identified accordingly.

Acknowledgements

We have made every attempt to identify the originators of the ideas and activities that are included in this publication; we thank them for their creative, effective approaches to teaching and learning. If you know of anyone that we did not include, please let us know.

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Finally, we express our thanks to our SIOP® colleague and friend, Deborah Short, and to our families who lovingly (and with great patience) support our work.

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a guide to using this book

The name of the activity

Which of the eight components the activity supports

How the activity supports the SIOP® Model

A detailed description of the activity

Specific content and language objectives for each activity

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Value Line

SHeltered INstruction
SIOP®
OBSERVATION PROTOCOL

COMPONENT: Strategies (and Interaction)
(Temple, 1998; Vogt, 2000)

Grade Levels: All
Subject Areas: All
Grouping Configuration: Small groups, whole class
Approximate Time Involved: 15 minutes
Materials: None

Description:

A Value Line requires that students apply knowledge they have just learned, draw on past learning and experiences, and take a position (i.e., state their values) about difficult topics. High school students might study a piece of pending legislation intended to establish a parent's right to know over a teenager's right to privacy. After reading and discussing the legislation, two students "in character" serve as advocates for each position, urging class members to take one of the advocated positions (parents' rights/students' rights). The mock debate (ends of the Value Line) incorporates clear arguments and specific support for the respective viewpoints.

When the advocates finish arguing their position, the other students take a position on the spectrum; one end of the Value Line represents the parents' right to know and the other represents the students' privacy rights. Before they assume their place on the spectrum (an imaginary line that bisects the classroom), students negotiate with those around them to determine where they belong on the line. While doing this, the students also attempt to persuade their class members to move toward one position or the other. At the end of the exercise class members articulate why they chose a particular spot and what perspectives on the topic people standing to their left or the right held.

Value Line can be modified by having students assume an identify other than their own; historical figures or literary characters they then take a stand on the line about a topic or event relevant to them. All students assume a character's identity as they take a stand, defend their positions, and try to persuade other characters to move toward one end or the other. For example, in the classic story "The Lottery" by Shirley Jackson (1982), the ends of the line would represent "yes" or "no" positions in answer to the question: "Should the town's annual lottery continue?" Students assume the role of the townspeople arguing for one position or the other until everyone has taken a stand.

Younger students can be involved in this same activity using stories, and the decisions and choices characters must make. Questions such as, "What do you think you would do?" or "What do you think Ramona should do?" can be used to coach students. They can then begin to see how their own choices might be similar to or different from those of their favorite characters in picture books.

Some teachers believe that English learners cannot participate in an activity such as Value Line. While ELs may need scaffolding to understand the content concepts, as good thinkers they can certainly "take their stand" along the line and with a partner, to explain why they have assumed their stance.

chapter 5 / Strategies

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SIOP® Connection

Content Objective:
Students will be able to (SWBAT) ...

- Demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of (topic) by assuming a place along a continuum of perspectives (the Value Line).

Language Objectives:
Students will be able to (SWBAT) ...

- Orally explain to students around them why they have assumed the position they have on the Value Line, using the following sentence frame:
"I am standing here on the Value Line because _____."
- Attempt to convince other students to change their position by using the following sentence frame:
"I think you should move over here because _____."

Ideas and Activities for Teaching Strategies

Building Background

Overview of the Building Background Component

Cognitive psychologists have described how learners develop understandings through connections they make among those things they know and have experienced, and those things they are learning. Research supports teachers' explicit activation of students' prior knowledge, and the building of background for those students who may lack prior knowledge of a particular content topic. These linkages of "schemata" help us all learn new information by helping us connect what we know and experience to what we are learning.

All English learners come to school with varied experiences, but not all of their background knowledge matches what they need to know to be successful in U.S. schools. This



mismatch in schemata, in what students have learned and/or experienced, may prevent them from making necessary connections between past and present learning.

It is important therefore, that teachers not only activate students' prior knowledge, but also build background for those who have these gaps in their understandings and background knowledge. This requires teachers to make very explicit connections between what has been taught in the past ("past learning"). Teachers also must include the explicit and purposeful development of vocabulary to foster comprehension.

To enable students to meet grade level content standards, some SIOP[®] teachers find it beneficial to offer a mini-lesson, or "jump start," to help fill in gaps. It is critical that teachers systematically and purposefully activate students' prior knowledge (determining what they already know and can do related to the topic), and systematically and purposefully develop background information when there is a mismatch or gap.

The Building Background component includes these features:

7. Concepts explicitly linked to students' background experiences.
8. Links explicitly made between past learning and new concepts.
9. Key vocabulary emphasized (e.g., introduced, written, repeated, and highlighted for students to see).



The Insert Method



COMPONENT: Building Background

(RWCT Project of the International Reading Association)

Grade Levels: 3–12

Subject Levels: All

Grouping Configuration: Partners, Small Groups, Whole Class, Individual

Materials: Informational or expository text duplicated on paper students can write on

Description:

In partners, students read a nonfiction article using the following coding system, inserting the codes directly into the text they are reading:

- A check (✓) mark indicates a concept or fact that is already known by the students.
- A question (?) mark indicates a concept or fact that is confusing or not understood.
- An exclamation mark (!) indicates something that is new, unusual or surprising.
- A (+) indicates an idea or concept that is new to the reader.

When the partners have concluded reading and marking the text, they share their markings with another set of partners. As misconceptions or misunderstandings are cleared up, the question mark is replaced with an asterisk (*). Following this small group work, the text is discussed with the teacher and the whole class.



SIOP® Connection

Content Objectives:

Students will be able to (SWBAT) . . .

- Use a coding system while reading a nonfiction text to identify concepts or facts that are familiar, those that are confusing, and those that are new, unusual, or surprising.
- Clarify misconceptions and misunderstandings about a text while working with group members.

Language Objectives:

Students will be able to (SWBAT) . . .

- Ask questions about concepts and facts that are confusing.
- Read and discuss with group members a piece of nonfiction text.

Strategies

Overview of the Strategies Component

English learners in the past were often misplaced in remedial and/or special education classes because their lack of English proficiency prevented them from demonstrating content knowledge and literacy skills. At this time, the prevailing thought was also that academic instruction was not possible until ELs had reached at least an intermediate level of fluency in English.

Today we know that we cannot wait until students develop English proficiency to teach them grade-level content information. They can and will learn, given appropriate instruction, support and assistance. We need to recognize that as students learn English, they must also develop strategies to critically analyze and effectively learn.



The Strategies component focuses on the cognitive and metacognitive strategies that learners use to make sense of new information and concepts. Examples of learning strategies include rereading, note-taking, organizing information, predicting, self-questioning, evaluating, monitoring, clarifying, and summarizing. Studies have shown that explicit teaching and modeling of these (and other) strategies helps students become more strategic in their thinking and learning. Teachers can further develop students' strategic thinking by planning and asking higher-order questions and requiring tasks that promote critical thinking. It is no longer acceptable to ask English learners a preponderance of low-level questions.

There are many ways teachers can provide scaffolding support that is gradually released as students begin to independently apply their new knowledge. Examples of instructional scaffolding include the appropriate use of graphic organizers, partner- and small-group instruction and practice, adapted texts, partially completed outlines, and texts with key concepts and vocabulary marked with a highlighter. Verbal scaffolding includes techniques such as think-alouds, paraphrasing, repetition, careful enunciation, and frequent review of contextualized vocabulary. We have often heard from teachers that the entire SIOP[®] Model is about scaffolding instruction for English learners; we agree.

The Strategies component includes the following features:

13. Ample opportunities provided for students to use learning strategies.
14. Scaffolding techniques consistently used, assisting and supporting student understanding (e.g., think-alouds).
15. A variety of questions or tasks that promote higher-order thinking skills (e.g., literal, analytical, and interpretive questions).



Canned Questions



COMPONENT: Strategies

(Adapted from Karen Mettler, Prescott Senior Elementary School, Modesto, CA)

Grade Levels: 2–12

Subject Areas: All

Grouping Configuration: Whole class

Approximate Time Involved: 20 minutes

Materials: Coffee can with hole cut in lid; question strips

Description:

Write (on strips of paper) a variety of questions related to the particular topic being studied. The questions should range from lower to higher levels of thinking. Ask students to demonstrate (according to Bloom's Taxonomy):

- Knowledge by defining, locating, underlining, labeling or identifying.
- Comprehension by describing, summarizing, explaining, or paraphrasing.
- Application by computing, building, or giving an example.
- Analysis by categorizing, classifying, comparing and contrasting.
- Synthesis by combining, creating, designing, or predicting.
- Evaluation by concluding, defining, justifying and prioritizing.

Place the question strips in a can. Group students as partners or in small groups (to lower anxiety and to scaffold). The teacher draws out the questions, one by one, and students work together to answer them. Occasionally the teacher may pull a question and based on its difficulty (i.e. the English proficiency required for response), select individual students to answer. When this is done, all students gain exposure to questions of varied cognitive levels, even though they are only responsible for answering the questions that are appropriate for their level of English proficiency.

Students may also (individually or in groups) submit questions to the Question Can. These can be drawn for other students to answer. Teachers can teach students how to ask higher order questions using QAR's: Question-Answer-Relationships (p. 79).



SIOP® Connection

Content Objective:

Students will be able to (SWBAT) . . .

- Respond to questions written at various cognitive levels on (a topic).

(continued)

**SIOP® Connection** *(continued)***Language Objectives:**

Students will be able to (SWBAT) . . .

- Display their knowledge of (topic) by using complete sentences when answering a question.
- Answer questions on increasingly sophisticated levels of cognition using the following prompts:

Knowledge: The definition of (topic) is _____.

Comprehension: (Topic) can be explained as _____.

Application: An example of (topic) is _____.

Analysis: (Topic) can be compared to _____.

Synthesis: If I create a diagram of (topic) I would include _____ in my diagram.

Evaluation: We can conclude that (topic) _____.

Interaction

Overview of the Interaction Component

One thing we know for certain about English learners is that they will not become proficient speakers of the language unless they have frequent opportunities to use it. While this seems obvious, it's surprising how few chances there are each day for ELs to speak English. English learners are likely to speak their native language before and after school, during breaks, recess, and lunch, if they have peers who speak their same native language. Teachers who monopolize the vast majority of classroom talk, as is common practice, compound the problem and ELs have even fewer opportunities to speak English.

Effective SIOP[®] teachers incorporate into their lesson plans multiple opportunities for their students to use English, in writing, in reading, and in interaction with the teacher



and other students. SIOP[®] teachers also provide time for students to process in English what they are hearing prior to answering questions or participating in discussion. Students occasionally work independently during SIOP[®] lessons, but more often they learn with partners and in small groups. The teacher purposely decreases the amount of teacher-talk by planning few lectures (and “mini” ones at that), and by turning the talk over to students with probes such as, “Tell me more about this;” “Why do you think so?” “Where did you get that idea?” “Will you explain your thinking to your partner?” When an English learner has difficulty understanding a direction or concept in English, the teacher encourages clarification in the student’s language, if possible, by another student, an instructional assistant, or by the teacher. These deliberate teaching practices maximize classroom and student exposure to and practice with English.

The Interaction component includes the following features:

16. Frequent opportunities for interaction and discussion between teacher and student and among students, which encourage elaborated responses about lesson concepts.
17. Grouping configurations support language and content objectives of the lesson.
18. Sufficient wait time for student responses consistently provided.
19. Ample opportunities for students to clarify key concepts in L1 as needed with aide, peer, or L1 text.



You Are There



COMPONENT: Interaction (and Practice/Application)

(Vogt, 2000)

Grade Levels: 4–12

Subject Levels: Social Studies, Math, Language Arts, Science

Grouping Configurations: Small groups, whole class

Materials: Resources (books, articles, websites) for research

Description:

This activity is based upon the classic television program *You Are There*, hosted by Edward R. Murrow, in which characters involved in actual historical events were interviewed about their involvement and participation in the event. The re-creations were historically accurate, and the historical figures came alive for viewers.

In preparation for *You Are There* in the classroom, groups of students conduct research on the event they will be portraying. Having completed their research, the students select a character that played a crucial role in the event and write interview questions and responses that an interviewer will use during the dramatic re-enactment. Students could interview Sacajawea, the Shoshone guide and interpreter who accompanied Lewis and Clark on their expedition, or interview the Wright brothers upon their arrival at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina. Both the interviewer and the interviewee are apprised of all questions and responses prior to the performance.

Another dimension can be added to this activity, especially if you are working with older high school students: audience members direct unrehearsed questions to the central character. Obviously, all students, including the interviewee, must have a thorough knowledge of the event for this to be a successful activity.



SIOP® Connection

Content Objectives:

Students will be able to (SWBAT) . . .

- Demonstrate their understanding of a person or historical event by creating interview questions and responses.
- Convey the essence of the person or historical event through an interview that is performed for peers.

Language Objectives:

Students will be able to (SWBAT) . . .

- Write interview questions.
- Create appropriate responses to the interview questions.

About the Authors



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Jana Echevarria is a Professor of Education at California State University, Long Beach. She has taught in elementary, middle and high schools in general education, special education, ESL and bilingual programs. She has lived in Taiwan, Spain and Mexico. Her UCLA doctorate earned her an award from the National Association for Bilingual Education's Outstanding Dissertations Competition. Her research and publications focus on effective instruction for English learners, including those with learning disabilities. Currently, she is Co-Principal Investigator with the Center for Research on the Educational Achievement and Teaching of English Language Learners (CREATE) funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences (IES). In 2005, Dr. Echevarria was selected as Outstanding Professor at CSULB.