

Book Review: 99 Ideas and Activities for Teaching English Learners with the SIOP Model

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Abstract

The number of students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds is rising sharply in the United States school settings. The culturally and linguistically diverse students challenge educators in delivering suitable instructions. This signals educators to employ effective teaching strategies to help language minority students achieve academic success and improve immigrant students' English as Second Language (ESL) acquisition. How can current teaching strategies serve these students' learning needs in language and content knowledge becomes an issue. Moreover, the SIOP Model has been shown to be a reliable and valid measure of effective instruction and research has shown that English Language Learners (ELLs) improved their academic skills when educators implement the SIOP Model. This paper recommends a practical and flexible teaching methods book *99 Ideas and Activities for Teaching English Learners with THE SIOP MODEL* to elementary classroom educators, secondary subject-area educators, ESL educators, Two-Way Immersion educators, bilingual educators, teacher candidates, and school and district administrators etc. to use throughout the school year. After introducing the book *99 Ideas and Activities* from the following aspects: authors, the SIOP Model, the content of this book, and chapter overview, a conclusion is got: this book is highly recommended to various educators who work with ELLs; and this book also can be a must-have textbook for teacher education program in university and college.

Keywords

Teaching Strategies, Language Learning, Content Knowledge, English Language Learners, SIOP Model

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1. Introduction

1.1. Statement of the Problem

“The population of students whose primary language is not English is significantly increasing each year in the United States. Considering the growing population, it is imperative to introduce valuable teaching resources to diverse classrooms” [1]. In addition, linguistically diverse students have consistently lagged behind their English speaking peers academically. Educators need instructional strategies that can reduce the achievement gap between ELLs and native English-speaking students.

1.2. The Background Situation

“The number of students who come from other countries is dramatically growing in the United States” [2]. Educators always work hard on finding significant teaching strategies for these students. Coming into the up-to-date response to educators' need, the book *99 Ideas and Activities for Teaching English Learners with THE SIOP MODEL* was designed for providing elementary and secondary educators with a variety of teaching ideas, activities, and approaches

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that can be effectively used to teach language learners in foreign language, second language, and heritage language classrooms. It is also an effective teaching tool for classroom educators to develop content knowledge.

1.3. The Aim of the Study

This paper recommends a practical and flexible teaching methods book *99 Ideas and Activities for Teaching English Learners with THE SIOP MODEL* to elementary classroom educators, secondary subject-area educators, ESL educators, Two-Way Immersion educators, bilingual educators, teacher candidates, and school and district administrators etc. to use throughout the school year. It is hoped that ELLs improve English proficiency and master content knowledge through the SIOP Model.

2. Authors of This Book

The 99 Ideas and Activities for Teaching English Learners with THE SIOP MODEL is the result of the combined work from two professors in California State University: Dr. Jana Echevarria and Dr. MaryEllen Vogt.

Dr. Jana Echevarria taught ESL and second language acquisition classes at a university and did research on instructional programs for immigrant students in Spain. She is known world-wide for her expertise in second language learners. Her research and publications are on effective instructions for English learners and those with learning disabilities. Along with being a Fulbright Specialist, she is the 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. In 2005, Dr. Echevarria was chosen as Outstanding Professor at CSULB. Her publications include such books as *Making Content Comprehensible for English Learners: The SIOP Model 3th* (co-author), *Making Content Comprehensible for Elementary English Learners: The SIOP Model* (co-author), *Sheltered Content Instruction 4th*, *Response to Intervention (RTI) and English Learners: Making it Happen* (co-author), *Making Content Comprehensible for Elementary English Learners: The SIOP Model 2nd* (co-author), and *Developing academic language with the SIOP Model* (co-author).

Dr. Vogt has rich experience in teaching regular class and she also has been a special education specialist, district reading resource teacher, and a university professor. Dr. Vogt has provided professional development throughout the entire United States and in eight other countries. She also served as President of the International Reading Association (IRA) in 2004-2005. Dr. Vogt is the co-author of several books on education, including the SIOP series.

3. SIOP Model

SIOP stands for “Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol”, which is a popular research-based model for making content comprehensible for ELLs and promoting ELLs’ English proficiency in foreign language, second language, and heritage language education in America public schools. The SIOP consists of thirty features grouped into eight components, which are preparation, building background, comprehensible input, strategies, interaction, practice/application, effectiveness of lesson delivery, and review/assessment. As it is a set of guidelines for planning and measuring the implementation of a teaching approach, this model is also known as “Sheltered Instruction”. “Sheltered Instruction” includes strategies such as cooperative learning, explicit, targeted vocabulary development, slower speech with clear enunciation and fewer idiomatic expressions, visuals, demonstrations and hands-on learning, text adaptations, homework adaptations, and supplementary materials.

This model aims at assisting ELLs in improving their English language skills and making grade-level academic content (e.g., science, social studies, math) more accessible at the same time. Besides incorporating effective teaching strategies (e.g., cooperative learning, reading comprehension strategies, differentiated instruction, and the integration of the four language modalities), this model contains features for improving academic performance of ELLs (e.g., language objectives in content lessons, the development and application of background knowledge, and the use of techniques to enhance comprehension) [3]. The SIOP was designed as an instrument for educators to use in a number of ways: planning and implementing lessons, teacher self-reflection tool, an classroom observing tool by administrators, educators, researchers (after each observation, a SIOP was completed and scored for the teacher), supervision and observation tool of student teachers, and program of professional development. Dr. Jana Echevarria and Dr. MaryEllen Vogt shared these analyses with educators on an ongoing basis (as a means of facilitating teacher growth and validating the research interpretations) and student educators (a way to provide clear, concrete feedback to the educators they observe).

SIOP Model is widely used by Elementary classroom educators, Secondary subject-area educators, ESL educators, Two-Way Immersion educators, bilingual educators, school and district administrators, etc. This model is currently used in most of the 50 states and in hundreds of schools across the U.S. as well as in several other countries. Researches have demonstrated that ELLs’ academic performance is improved through the implementation of SIOP Model. After several

years of field-testing, SIOP Model is proved to be a highly reliable and valid measure of sheltered instruction [4]. Educators trained in sheltered instruction through SIOP Model provide effective and successful instructions for ELLs [5].

4. Overview of This Book

The 99 ideas and activities in this publication not only contain a few well-informed techniques that have been demonstrated to be particularly effectual for ELLs but also include many new teaching ideas for educators. These ideas and activities are selected to offer ELLs with practice and application of key content and language concepts. They also provide many opportunities to communicate with other students and the teacher. These ideas and activities give many chances for ELLs to use all language skills----listening, speaking, reading, and writing and can be utilized by almost all subject areas and grade levels [6]. Relevant, clear, and professional-looking illustrations (such as graphic organizers, posters, and pictures) are included in this book to make content comprehensible.

Some educators are not trained to teach initial literacy or content-area literacy to ELLs. Incorporating both language and content objectives into ESL and content-area classes could promote academic literacy. In this book, language and content objectives are particularly described for each idea and activity. Content objectives tell students what the content of the lesson will be and what students should know and be able to do in particular content areas. For example, the content objectives of a content area lesson are: “(Student will be able to) Demonstrate their understanding of a person or historical event by creating interview questions and responses” and “(Student will be able to) Convey the essence of the person or historical event through an interview that is performed for peers” [7]. Language objectives focus on developing students’ language abilities and therefore allow students to master the content. It should reflect the full range of language that teacher wants students to use in the classroom. For instance, the language objectives of a content area lesson are: “(Student will be able to) Ask questions about concepts and facts that are confusing” and “(Student will be able to) Read and discuss with group members a piece of nonfiction text” [7].

5. Chpater Overview

The 99 ideas and activities in this publication are grouped by eight components of SIOP Model. This book has nine chapters. The first chapter is a brief overview of the SIOP Model. The following eight chapters introduce teaching ideas

and activities of each SIOP Model component. Each chapter begins with the background knowledge and the features of each SIOP Model component. Then the authors provide detail information about each idea and activity, including grade levels, subject levels/areas, grouping configuration, approximate time involved, materials, step-by-step activity descriptions, and examples of content and language objectives (are available in almost all ideas and activities). At the end of most chapters, two sample lesson plans are supplied, one is for elementary level and the other is for secondary level.

The second chapter is “Preparation”. Whatever you are a novice, proficient, and expert teacher, preparation plays the most important role in teaching and it is the first step of teaching procedure [8]. Additionally, lesson preparation greatly influences the teaching outcome and students’ learning. This chapter helps educators plan a lesson by suggesting educators how to clearly define language and content objects for students, delivering content concepts that suitable for ELL’s age and educational background, providing additional materials that can make the lesson in a high degree clear and meaningful method (e.g. graphs, models, visuals), meeting all levels of ELL’s learning needs, and conducting meaningful activities that integrate lesson concepts (e.g. surveys, letter writing, simulations, constructing models) with language practice opportunities for reading, writing, listening, and/or speaking). To adapt of content to all levels of student proficiency, educators must provide graphic organizers, outlines (culture-sensitive for linearly and circularly processing students), leveled study guides, highlighted texts, taped texts, adapted texts, jigsaw text reading, marginal notes, and texts in ELL’s first language. Seven teaching ideas and activities in this chapter will help educators prepare for lessons quickly, easily, and effectively.

The third chapter addresses “Building Background”. Comprehension will not happen until emphasizing key vocabularies (e.g. preselect key vocabulary, word sorts with and without pictures for content vocabulary, word walls with content vocabulary and images, and highlight word patterns and their meanings) and building explicit connections between students’ prior knowledge and new concepts. Building students’ background knowledge before teaching a new topic is extremely important and easily overlooked by educators. Two ways could make explicitly link between concepts and students’ background knowledge, which are providing background and discussing orally (video, read aloud) and partner reading that includes checking off a list to indicate what you know and do not know or what is confusing. Twelve teaching ideas and activities in this chapter offer educators an easy way to build a bridge

between the things students already know and new concepts.

“Comprehensible Input” is described in the fourth chapter. Learning is built on comprehensible instruction. Many educators find out that it is hard to make content comprehensible for both ELLs and English-speaking students. This chapter presents how to input comprehensible knowledge through activities. The authors suggest educators using appropriate speech for students’ proficiency level (e.g. slower rate and enunciation, and simplified sentences for beginners), explaining academic tasks clearly, and employing a variety of techniques to make content concepts clear (e.g. modeling, visuals, hands-on activities, demonstrations, gestures, body languages, graphic organizers, multimedia, and audiotapes). Eight teaching ideas and activities are selected for this chapter.

The fifth chapter focuses on “Strategies”. There is a persistent gap between native English-speaking students and students from diverse linguistic groups in academic success. Educators need to employ effective instructional strategies to fill the achievement gap between ELLs and native English-speaking students. “In order to be able to support a whole class with calibrated and adaptive support, we contend that teachers need a range of strategies, which they can use consistently and flexibly [9]” in their ESL teaching. “In the current legislative climate, the academic success of ELLs depends more than ever on innovative and creative ways to teach [10]”. Furthermore, learning happens when students learn in different ways and supplied with diverse teaching strategies (the strategies known as cognitive, metacognitive, social/affective strategies). For instance, mnemonic devices, acronyms for test taking, study and writing tasks, graphic organizers, Directed- Reading Thinking activities (DRTA), listening and reading comprehension strategies, and rehearsal strategies, and ample opportunities. Educators are recommended to consistently use scaffolding techniques (e.g. paraphrasing, think-alouds, reinforce contextual definitions, provide correct pronunciation by repeating student responses, and slow down speech, increase pauses, speak in phrases) throughout lessons to assist and support students understanding a variety of questions, including those that promote higher-order thinking skills throughout lessons (e.g. literal, analytical, interpretive questions). This chapter helps educators find cognitive and metacognitive teaching strategies for ELLs by thirteen teaching ideas and activities.

“Interaction” is talked about in the sixth chapter. Creating frequent interaction and discussion opportunities between educators and students and among students (small group and whole group discussion) can encourage elaborated responses about lesson concepts. ELLs’ English language proficiency will be accelerated when offered frequent interaction

opportunities because it increases motivation and attention, allows more processing time, offers opportunity for students to clarify key concepts, and increases vocabulary and language proficiency. These opportunities allow ELLs to expose and use the target language as much as they can. Interaction encourages students to give more responses rather than accepting yes/no and one word answers. Interaction requires educators to consistently give ample wait time for response from students and sufficient opportunities for students to clarify key concepts in their first language. “In effective SIOP lessons, there is a high level of student engagement and interaction with the teacher, with other students, and with texts, which leads to elaborated discourse and critical thinking [5]”. Fourteen ideas and activities are included in this chapter to ensure ELLs’ linguistic needs are met.

The seventh chapter is “Practice and Application”. The authors explain the ways to practice and apply the new content knowledge. They recommend that educators provide hands-on materials and activities to help ELLs fully practice new content and language knowledge with four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) in the classroom. Twelve ideas and activities in this chapter provide many practice opportunities for ELLs’ to apply the new content and language knowledge.

Chapter eight discusses “Lesson Delivery”. When delivering lessons, it is better to clearly state content and language objectives. It is also better to have students almost completely (90% to 100%) participate in learning of the period, so that educators can adjust teaching strategies. Ten ideas and activities are grouped in this chapter to ensure the content and language objectives are covered and successfully support ELLs.

The last chapter deals with “Review/Assessment”. Assessment is “a feedback to inform teachers to know their students’ learning” and “an authentic data to support researchers’ programs” [11]. We will never know if students learned what they supposed to learn until assessments are conducted. To effectively assess students’ academic performance and dramatically improve their learning, educators need to conduct comprehensive review of key vocabularies and content concepts, give regularly feedbacks to students on their output (e.g. language, content, work), as well as conduct assessments of student comprehension and learning of all lesson objectives (e.g. spot checking, group response) throughout the lesson. Ten ideas and activities that are assembled in this chapter to provide a variety of options for ELLs show their proficiency of knowledge and language skills.

6. Conclusion

The 99 Ideas and Activities for Teaching English Learners with THE SIOP MODEL is edited in a consistent, systematic, and understandable manner. This publication did a good job in supplying effective teaching techniques for English language teaching and content knowledge development. Although the authors present 99 teaching ideas and activities in this book, it does not mean this book only has 99 teaching ideas and activities. It includes more than 99 teaching ideas and activities because some ideas and activities can apply in any grade level. As its substantial content, this book is highly recommended to bilingual educators, Elementary/Secondary classroom educators, ESL educators, and teacher candidates etc to use throughout the school year. This book also can be a must-have textbook for teacher education program in university and college.

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