

The SIOP Model *for* English Language Learners



Deborah J. Short, Ph.D.
Center for Applied Linguistics
Washington, D.C.

More and more English language learners are entering U.S. schools with limited proficiency in English and gaps in their educational backgrounds. Yet most of our curricula and instruction build from the belief that students already know some English when they start their schooling, at least in terms of oral language skills. Without oral and written English language skills, however, English learners are hard pressed to learn or demonstrate their academic knowledge. The SIOP Model is a proven approach for sheltered instruction that helps English language learners develop oral language proficiency while building academic English literacy skills and subject area knowledge.

The History of SIOP

The SIOP Model is the product of six years of research sponsored by the National Center for Research on Education, Diversity & Excellence and funded by the Institute for Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Originally a research instrument, the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) was modified into a lesson planning and instructional system by practicing teachers and researchers.

In the SIOP Model, language and content objectives are systematically woven into the grade-level curriculum that teachers present to students through modified instruction in English. Teachers systematically develop students' academic language proficiency as part of their lessons, paying careful attention to the English learners' second language development needs. The model is composed of 30 items grouped into eight components essential for making content comprehensible for English language learners: *Preparation, Building Background, Comprehensible Input, Strategies, Interaction, Practice/Application, Lesson Delivery, and Review/Assessment.*

Training and Materials

Through special training, teachers can learn how to plan lessons using the SIOP Model as well as practice techniques that they can later apply in their classrooms. This type of professional development can be helpful, but effective sheltered instruction also requires high quality instructional materials for teachers and students to work with in class. *Avenues* and *High Point* have been designed for this purpose. The materials, student activities, and teacher lesson plans are aligned to the SIOP Model to support high quality sheltered instruction in English language arts and reading. The programs introduce students to major topics, vocabulary, and subject-specific activities in other content areas. The following discussion gives an overview of the eight components of the SIOP Model.

Preparation

SIOP lessons have language and content objectives linked to standards. In this way, students gain important experience with key grade-level content and skills as they progress

toward proficiency in academic English. The SIOP Model encourages teachers to share learning objectives with students so that students know what they are expected to learn each day and can take an active part in assessing their own progress. Well prepared SIOP lessons include activities that spark purposeful communication and integrate academic concepts with oral and written language practice.

Avenues and *High Point* use standards-based instruction as the medium for teaching English. The programs are aligned to national and state curriculum standards and address students' language development needs by providing:

- daily oral language activities
- comprehensive grammar instruction
- visuals that boost vocabulary
- reading selections with built-in support
- writing tools and resources

Avenues and *High Point* prepare English learners for mainstream and content area classes by giving them practice with the academic language, tasks, and topics they will encounter in those classes. For example, students have opportunities to read different types of fiction and nonfiction texts, use graphic organizers to analyze story grammar and text structure, and complete a variety of writing assignments.

Building Background

Effective SIOP lessons connect new concepts with the students' personal experiences and past learning. The SIOP Model also incorporates findings from research on vocabulary development that underscore the critical importance of a broad vocabulary base in order for students to be effective readers. In the SIOP Model, teachers directly teach key vocabulary and provide opportunities for students to use this vocabulary orally and in writing.

Throughout *Avenues* and *High Point* there are

suggestions for relating themes to students' own experiences, cultures, and personal lives. Within a unit, each new lesson builds on prior lessons to reinforce and extend information students are learning and language skills they are acquiring. Vocabulary development is particularly rich. For younger children, key vocabulary is taught through songs, games, role-play, and colorful visuals. Older children learn key vocabulary through graphics, word webbing, and other research-based vocabulary strategies. To deepen word knowledge, key vocabulary is reinforced throughout the unit activities. Selections in the Student Books include on-page glossaries that rephrase less essential vocabulary. This enables students to quickly access the meaning of unfamiliar words and phrases and continue with their reading.

Comprehensible Input

Accomplished SIOP teachers use sheltered techniques to make content comprehensible. These techniques include:

- demonstrations and modeling
- gestures, pantomime, and role-play
- pictures, real objects, and graphic organizers
- restating, repeating, and speaking slowly

SIOP teachers explain academic tasks clearly, both orally and in writing, providing models and examples of good work so students know the steps they should take and can envision the desired result.

All of the lessons in *Avenues* and *High Point* include suggestions for making content comprehensible. *Avenues* introduces young learners to each selection with a picture walk and previews of the language, genre, and key events or main ideas. In *High Point*, reading passages are supported with photos, diagrams, and summary statements; academic writing tasks are supported with models of real student work.

Strategies

To equip students for learning outside of the ESL classroom, the SIOP Model provides explicit instruction and practice in learning strategies. SIOP teachers scaffold instruction as well, beginning at a level that encourages student success and providing support to move students to a higher level of understanding and accomplishment. Teachers model important learning strategies and ask critical thinking questions that require students to apply their language skills while developing a deeper understanding of the subject.

Avenues and *High Point* teach children a repertoire of learning strategies. The **Teacher's Editions** provide a range of question types to check student comprehension and generate critical, reflective thinking. For example, questions prompt students to form opinions, analyze information, and make connections across texts. The Multi-Level Strategy features scaffold instruction for students with diverse proficiency levels.

Interaction

Children learn through interaction with one another and with their teachers. High quality SIOP lessons provide frequent opportunities for interaction so that English learners can practice these important skills:

- elaborating
- negotiating meaning and clarifying information
- persuading and evaluating

It is also important for students to interact with text in substantive ways, not just reading through a selection once and moving on. *Avenues* and *High Point* are designed for intensive interaction among students to practice oral language skills and construct joint understandings of content material. The passages help students understand text structures like problem-and-solution. Interactive journals and logs help students make sense of what they read and inspire students to see themselves as writers.

Practice/Application

Practice and application of new material is important for all learners. The SIOP Model research found that lessons with hands-on, visual, and other kinesthetic tasks benefit English learners because students practice the language and content knowledge through multiple modalities. Effective SIOP lessons, therefore, include a variety of activities that encourage students to practice and apply the content they are learning, AND practice and apply their language skills, too.

Avenues and *High Point* support students in practicing all their language skills. In addition to high quality reading selections, each unit includes academic writing projects. Guidance for setting up learning centers is provided so teachers can help students explore related thematic information across multiple content areas. All of the readings are supported with extension activities that can be organized according to the students' individual language and literacy levels.

Lesson Delivery

Successful delivery of a SIOP lesson means that the content and language objectives were met, the pacing was appropriate, and the students had a high level of engagement. The art of teaching and classroom management skills play a role in effective lesson delivery.

Avenues and *High Point* offer clear directions for each activity to support the lesson objectives, and the meaningful activities keep student interest high. The **Teacher's Editions** have pacing guides to keep teachers and students on track during lessons and during learning center time.

Review/Assessment

Each SIOP lesson wraps up with time for review and assessment. English learners need to review key vocabulary and concepts, and teachers need to use frequent comprehension checks and other informal assessments to

measure how well students retain the information.

Accomplished SIOP teachers also offer multiple pathways for students to demonstrate their understanding of the content.

Avenues and *High Point* include an array of assessment tools that make student progress visible. Each lesson ends with a “progress check” or “close and assess” section. Scoring rubrics for speaking activities help teachers monitor students’ oral language development and their progress through the stages of language proficiency. The programs include formative and summative assessments as well as test-taking skills practice.

Using multi-level assessments, teachers measure mastery of vocabulary, grammar, and comprehension skills at each student’s level. Tests have been adapted to Beginning, Intermediate, and Advanced proficiency levels by means of the item formats, language level, text density, and amount of teacher support during administration.

Conclusion

The SIOP Model is a proven, research-based approach for teaching content standards and promoting language development in English learners. The lessons in *Avenues* and *High Point* incorporate all the key features of the SIOP Model. The **Teacher’s Editions** provide the professional plan for delivering each lesson and the Student Books, supplementary readers, and practice books provide all the materials needed to engage students in standards-based, active learning. ■

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Deborah J. Short, Ph.D.

Dr. Short is an author of Hampton-Brown’s language and literacy programs Avenues and High Point. She is a division director at the Center for Applied Linguistics in Washington, D.C. and has worked as a teacher, trainer, researcher, and curriculum materials developer. Through several national projects, Dr. Short has conducted research and provided professional development and technical assistance to local and state education agencies across the United States. She directed the ESL Standards and Assessment Project for TESOL and co-developed the SIOP Model for sheltered instruction.



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