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SIOP Journal

There seems to be an abundant amount of SIOP strategies used within my classroom. First, the teacher that I am observing tends to start the day and then each subject with both language and content objectives on the board, many times having the students read them before they begin the assignment. This helps to prep the assignment and make it meaningful and understandable. She also focuses strongly on word usage. She does this by having students define words based on their suffixes, prefixes, and roots. This seems to greatly help because it means that students can define far more than just that word. She also reviews vocabulary by pointing it out when it comes up in class. When the students are reading or writing and vocabulary comes up, this extra step seems to help students remember it for the future. Another way that she helps with word usage is by many times giving students sentence starters so they can easily form word choices that parallel the question. So in this case, students become accustomed to simply repeating the question as part of their answer. For example, she might ask, “Where do you see symbolism in this story?” The student would then say, “I see symbolism in this story through \_\_\_\_\_\_.” These sentence starters are a part of SIOP and dramatically help struggling learners, especially English Language Learners.

Secondly, my teacher also does a tremendous amount of scaffolding. Many times, she links stories to students’ schema and understanding of the world. For example, when they recently started reading a story about a tsunami, she tied it in with the current events occurring in Japan. She then asked students to pay attention to what was going on. This helped her students to be able to really understand both their story and the world around them. Another way in which she accomplishes this scaffolding is through her use of pictures to illustrate stories. This SIOP strategy is especially helpful for her visual students and for her English Language Learners. One example of when she used this was when she brought pictures to deal with the Holocaust story within their reader. This seemed to greatly affect the understanding her students had because they had little to no prior knowledge about the Holocaust.

Another way in which she uses the idea of SIOP is in grading according to ability and having clear objectives. She tends to grade with each student’s capability in mind, taking off points when necessary and when the students would actually understand. Many times she also adapts her lesson plans to help her struggling readers and English Language Learners. She does this by asking a student with more understanding harder questions, while providing easier questions and sentence structures for those that might be struggling. She also relies frequently on building language skills through frequent pair-share techniques. This also helps to be able to pair students according to ability and overall help them to improve because they have to discuss their ideas out loud. Many times, she also checks for visual understanding by having students do non-verbal signals, such as thumbs up, thumbs down. Also, she employs leading questions and wait time carefully asking questions like, “Is \_\_\_\_\_ the only student who knows?” This time and format of questions tend to help students to progress more and answer frequently.

These are just some of the many ways in which my teacher employs SIOP techniques. They seem perfectly suited to her classroom because it contains many non-native speakers. She frequently adapts and predicts problems within her classroom based upon many of the same guidelines as the SIOP model. These techniques seem to have become second nature to her. It’s been incredibly helpful then to have her review with me why she uses specific techniques. Many of the techniques are as versatile as SIOP and I believe they could really be used in just about any classroom. I know that many of the techniques I will take and use in my future classroom.