

The beginning of my teaching career focused on delivery of content and objectives through direct instruction, with the use of different modalities (audio, movement, hand movements/gestures, images/illustrations, and oral presentation) and very teacher-centered. Looking back, I was aware that I had students that were English learners but I did not have a clear understanding of what that meant in practice. The resources provided to me to assist my students were not used at their full capacity because I lacked awareness and understanding as a new teacher. As Herrera et. al state (2019): “...*what we as educators do to bridge the learner to new norms during the acculturation process is critical to teaching and learning.*” (p. 79). I have since reflected on how students showing regression or difficulties in content areas are easily passed on to be “deficient” or “at fault”, with these attitudes being passed on to their families while not being mindful of the possible stressors present in their lives, another reason to advocate for student and their families rather than pass them on as complicated or troubled.

As I reach the end of my courses, I would like to share the experience I had developing a lesson around Student Centered and Academically Related points of Discourse. In this particular ELA mini lesson of *The Ant & the Grasshopper*, the students are exposed to illustrations and text, both supplying information that paints the ant as “hardworking” and the grasshopper as being “lazy”. Students must understand that they can use the text and the illustrations to gather information about the fable and its characters. In *Practice and Application: Using Leveled questions to reach all learners* (Echevarría et al., 2017, p.191), Chapter 7 provides useful ideas to use in the classroom to support various areas of need and implementation during a SIOP designed lesson. For this lesson, I want to focus on assessing if students can describe characters using adjectives and make comparisons to connect to the fable’s lesson. For example: *The ant worked hard, so it had food for the winter, or the grasshopper was lazy and needed help from the*

*ant*. In the Read Aloud portion, I would start by asking and tracking in the moment responses and discourse, while using low level text based questions (Remembering) such as “*what did the ant say?*” Which prompts the students to use the text and the illustration/panel in order to respond. Seeing the responses to a low level question allows me to gauge which students may need help making connections between the illustrations and descriptive words. Students needing support answering or responding to the question can work in pairs and focus on perhaps pointing and describing the characters. Students who are able to respond to a more moderate question (Understanding) would show that they are able to characterize, such as “*was the ant lazy? Why did the ant work? Why did the ant have enough food?*” These students can be assessed differently, perhaps by pairing up to practice looking at the illustrations and using a sentence to describe the character(s). As the students practice they become ready to respond to a higher level of questioning (Applying). One that would require students to examine the character(s), and be able to respond to a question such as “*why did the ant work so hard?*”. For assessment and evidence, students can then elaborate on 1-2 things they learned from the illustrations and text. Based on such observations, assessments and student evidence can be tailored according to their language proficiency, ensuring that they have had access to the content and are able to work collaboratively with peers and progress in their level of understanding.

One thing to keep in mind is the level of proficiency from their ACCESS may not always reflect a student's current abilities, therefore its necessary to have scaffolds for various levels of language proficiency and be able to meet those needs through differentiation of methods or content, but maintaining the same high expectations for all students without modifying the end goal. For my first SIOP lesson plan, I found it necessary to be able to track student responses and group accordingly so the students can work with peers. Students can work collaboratively to

provide evidence based on their level of understanding and proficiency. Which leads me to the concept of intentional groupings- based on various factors. Such groupings would likely be implemented within the Oral and Language building activity of my Lesson plan, which occurs after the Read Aloud and Background Knowledge sections. This intentional grouping is described as mixing and rotating of students *“so the more proficient students produce work or perform first and thus act as peer models for others”* (p. 190). This idea would help plan on how to mix students up so they can have those conversations, produce a group activity, and present to the other groups. According to Gibbons (2002), *“Developing students' ability to use the interpersonal function of language appropriately is important for successful collaborative work and should be included as part of any language teaching program”* (p. 77). This is important due to the impact that collaborative work has on the learner’s experience.

The SIOP lesson plan was also constructed in a way that allows the review of key words in the beginning and end of the lesson as a means to build knowledge about the vocabulary that is used throughout the lesson and to allow students the time to process the new content, as it is explained in Chapter 9 of Making Content Comprehensible for English Learners (See SIOP Feature 27, Comprehensive Review of Key Vocabulary). According to Echavaria (2018), *“students, especially those at the early stages of English acquisition devote considerable energy to figuring out at basic level what the teacher is saying or the text is telling them...they are less able to evaluate which pieces of information and which vocabulary terms are important to remember, given all the input they receive”* (p. 229). It would not suffice to simply hear and discuss new terms, and displaying the needed vocabulary through different modalities at various times greatly impacts the input students receive.

References

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