

A REVIEW OF RECENT TEXTBOOKS FOR TEACHERS WITH ELLS IN THEIR CLASSES

Reviewed by
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Are the teachers in your school finally ready to form a study group on how to teach the English language learners in their classes? What textbook would you recommend? Have you been asked to teach a course for mainstream teachers about sheltered instruction? What textbook will you use?

After years with very few options, we are currently enjoying an explosion of textbooks for teachers on how to work with English language learners (ELLs) in the mainstream class. These textbooks are not designed for the language teaching expert, but rather the mainstream teachers with whom ELLs spend most of their school day. Although the principles offered in these texts for mainstream teachers could be applied to any educational setting, historically, the examples tended to be geared to elementary teachers. An exception is the online text, *Helpkit for Secondary Teachers* (2007), which has specific chapters on teaching the major content areas, as well as tips for working with teenage learners and their particular needs. Also, Echevarria, Vogt & Short will have a secondary version of their popular SIOP (Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol) model series with a 2010 publishing date.

These texts for mainstream teachers are providing support that is badly needed in our schools. The extremely popular SIOP series of texts by Echevarria, Vogt and Short (2008), for example, offers a comprehensive model and assessment of instruction for English language learners in mainstream classes. The authors have operationalized years of work in sheltered instruction (by Deborah Short and others) in a manner that makes sense to teachers, and allows them to plan for and carry out a high level of instruction to all of the children in their classes. Their sections on building background, comprehensible input and interaction are invaluable.

The SIOP texts are improved with each new edition, but they do not yet completely address the language learning needs of ELLs. They do not yet provide a clear explanation of what language objectives are and how they support academic discourse. Examples given as language objectives often name activities (such as "write five sentences" or "read and take notes from primary and secondary sources") rather than addressing the language structures needed for academic language functions (such as compare and contrast or synthesize). Teachers who work solely with a SIOP text do not walk away with a foundation in the systems of language, academic language functions, grammar, discourse or sociolinguistic competence. They also do not have a strong understanding of how to differentiate instruction and assessment to accommodate different levels of English language proficiency.

To get a foundation in understanding language and how it works, teachers can turn to Elizabeth Coelho's 2007 text, *Adding English: A Guide to Teaching in Multilingual Classrooms*. Coelho's text is also designed for mainstream teachers, but she includes sections on phonology, grammar, and semantics, as well as discourse and sociolinguistic competence. And, she presents all of these topics in a manner that is accessible to the nonspecialist by providing practical applications.

Another text that that teachers will find useful is *Classroom Instruction that Works with English Language Learners* by Jane D. Hill and Kathleen M. Flynn (2006). Based on Marzano, Pickering and Pollock's research-based *Classroom Instruction That Works* (2001), the authors provide a series of strategies that have been shown to lead to student achievement. The strategies include:

- Setting objectives and providing feedback
- Nonlinguistic representations
- Cues, questions and advanced organizers
- Cooperative learning
- Summarizing and note taking
- Homework and practice
- Reinforcing effort and providing recognition
- Generating and testing hypotheses
- Identifying similarities and differences

What Hill and Flynn add to Marzano et al's research-based strategies is an English language learning lens. After explaining and describing the stages of second language acquisition (preproduction, early production, speech emergence, intermediate fluency and advanced fluency), Hill and Flynn show how teachers can adapt the strategies to a particular English language learner's proficiency. The goal is to find ways for English language learners, regardless of proficiency level, to engage in the same rigorous curriculum as all other students.

While Echevarria et al. provide a model of instruction that can work well, Coelho and Hill & Flynn add important information about language and how to address different levels of language proficiency. I would recommend all three books for the teachers' study group.

Reviewer

Ann Mabbott, Ph.D., is a faculty member in the Hamline University School of Education. Her work specializes in language proficiency assessment, ELL program assessment, and mainstream teachers education in the area of ESL. She has been a proponent of online options in ESL teacher education to reach those who do not have access to traditional professional development.

References

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Echevarria, J., Vogt, M., & Short, D. (2010). *Making content instruction comprehensible for secondary English learners: The SIOP model, Second Edition*. Boston: Pearson Allyn and Bacon. Manuscript submitted for publication.

Helpkit for Secondary Teachers (2007). Retrieved 17 December 17, 2008 from <http://escort.org>

Marzano, R. J., Pickering, D.J., & Pollock, J.E. (2001). *Classroom instruction that works*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Books Reviewed

Coelho, E. (2007). *Adding English: A guide to teaching in multilingual classrooms*. Toronto: Pippin Publishing. List price: \$44.00

Echevarria, J., Vogt, M., & Short, D. (2008). *Making content instruction comprehensible for English learners: The SIOP model*. Boston: Pearson Allyn and Bacon. List price: \$50.00

Hill, J.D. & Flynn, K. M. (2006). *Classroom instruction that works with English language learners*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. List price: \$26.95