

"To Teach Me Is To Know Me"

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Conclusions:

- ❖ Students' interactions with their teacher can be either disabling or empowering and the quality of teacher-student interaction has a significant impact on academic performance and classroom behavior (Kea & Utely, 1998).
- ❖ Teachers need training in understanding the interaction between learning and context, avoiding the deficit model which views academic and behavior problems as a within-child problem (Echevarria & Graves, 2003).
- ❖ Effective teachers reflect on their practice and are mindful of the interaction between the learner and the instructional setting, materials, and teaching methods, and make adjustments as needed to facilitate learning (Echevarria & Graves, 2003).
- ❖ Preparing general education and special education personnel to work effectively with English learners begins at the pre-service level (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2004).
- ❖ General and special education teacher preparation programs that address issues of diversity, second language acquisition, culturally relevant instruction methods, and empirically supported interventions contribute to a teaching force that implements meaningful and appropriate instruction for students with differing abilities (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2004).
- ❖ For students who are so far behind to succeed, there must be an alignment: a determined principal, a systematic approach, help at home, and well-trained teachers who expect the students to succeed (*Tale of Two Schools*, 2003)

Concerns:

- ❖ In too many instances, when students experience difficulties, school personnel begin by viewing the difficulty as residing within the student (Kukic, 2002).
- ❖ Referral to special education is often the first option when teachers feel unprepared to work with students who struggle academically or who exhibit inappropriate classroom behaviors.
- ❖ A mismatch between a minority-learner's characteristics and the materials and teaching methods presented in school contributes to underachievement among this group of students (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2004).

- ❖ Overrepresentation in special education appears to be associated with the size of the English language learner (ELL) population in school districts and the availability of language support programs (Artiles & Ortiz, 2002).
- ❖ Disproportionate representation of minority students in special education is most pronounced among the mild and moderate disability categories, such as specific learning disabilities (SLD) and speech and language disorders (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2004).
- ❖ Placement rates in a 5-year period (1993/94 to 1998/99) for Latino English language learners increased 345% even though their overall representation in the district increased by only 12% within the same time period (Artiles & Ortiz, 2002).

Misconceptions:

- ❖ **Misconception #1:** If English language learners are failing in general education classes, there is no harm in placing them in special education classes, where they can receive individualized instruction from teachers trained to remediate learning problems. **Evidence to the contrary:** After 3 years of special education intervention, Spanish-speaking students classified as SLD actually lost ground. Their verbal and full-scale IQ scores were lower than at initial placement and their achievement scores were at essentially the same level as at initial placement. Neither general education nor special education programs adequately served the needs of ELL students (Artiles & Ortiz, 2002).
- ❖ **Misconception #2:** If English language learners are not successful in the general education classroom, schools are justified in retention. **Evidence to the contrary:** General education teachers must use ESL strategies so that instruction is understandable to English language learners. All teachers, including special educators, must be able to adapt instruction for struggling learners in order to reduce grade retention rates and inappropriate referrals to special education (Artiles & Ortiz, 2002).
- ❖ **Misconception #3:** When referred for special education, norm-referenced tests and the estimator discrepancy report are adequate in determining eligibility for SLD. **Evidence to the contrary:** To ensure accurate diagnosis for SLD for English language learners, the multi-disciplinary team cannot rely solely on standardized tests norm-referenced on monolingual, middle-class white students or even tests norm-referenced on bilingual populations (Artiles & Ortiz, 2002). The IQ-achievement discrepancy is not valid for English language learners (Herbert, 2000).
- ❖ **Misconception #4:** A pullout program best serves English language learners and students with specific learning disabilities. **Evidence to the contrary:** If pulling students out is part of the "rhythm of the school day" for all students in a school, then it can certainly be part of the rhythm of the day for students with disabilities (*A Rising Tide*, 1999). English as a Second Language (ESL) pullout, the most common program in the U.S. for English language learners, is the least effective (Thomas & Collins, 2001).

Premise:

- ❖ Whether you are a general educator, special educator, or an English as a second language teacher, your students don't enter the classroom at the same level of preparation to learn. These students are on various points of the spectrum when it comes to their language acquisition and culture (family, country, and school culture).
- ❖ Similarly, these students will have access to teachers who vary in instructional practice and the level of incorporating content standards. Therefore, there is a greater likelihood of mismatches in: (a) understanding students' English language acquisition needs, (b) teacher expectations of students' abilities, (c) teacher expectations of parental involvement, and (d) understanding students' familiarity of classroom tasks they are expected to perform, resulting in incomplete work and gaps in their learning.
- ❖ All teachers, just not special education, must have the skills to implement programs that simultaneously address students' language and disability-related needs (Artiles & Ortiz, 2002).

Implications:

- ❖ Teachers need to address content in strategic ways that make the concepts comprehensible while promoting the students' academic English language development.
- ❖ Research indicates that there are two factors that influence referral: (1) teacher tolerance and (2) the interaction of perceived student ability or behavior with the teacher's own expectations and approach to instruction and classroom management (Podell & Soodak, 1993).
- ❖ If teachers appreciate cultural and linguistic differences and the modifications those differences require, intervention in the general education classroom is more likely (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2004).

A Tool for Aligning Teacher Expectation and Student Performance

- ❖ SIOP teachers use the regular core curriculum and modify their teaching to make the content understandable for their students while promoting these students' academic English language growth (Short & Echevarria, 2004).
- ❖ The SIOP model offers a framework for organizing instruction, with key features that promote the academic success of all students. For example, the inclusion of language objectives in every content lesson, the development of students' background knowledge, and the emphasis on academic literacy practice.
- ❖ We do not expect content teachers to become linguistic experts, but they can talk explicitly with students about word choice, ways to compare information, and techniques for explaining solutions (Short & Echevarria, 2004).

SIOP focuses on Skills and Attitudes That Promote Learning in Students with Language Acquisition Needs

- ❖ Ability to either activate what prior knowledge exists in their students and apply it to lessons or explicitly build background knowledge for these students (Short & Echevarria, 2004).
- ❖ Ability to implement practices of classroom organization and management—such as varied instructional grouping strategies (Short & Echevarria, 2004).
- ❖ Viewing English language learners as a resource in the classroom. These students can offer information about other countries and cultures; new perspectives about the world, different societies, and belief systems; and opportunities for exposing native English speakers to other languages (Zehler, 1994).
- ❖ Encourage students to join in academic talk during class. Teachers talking less and engaging students in extended discussions; thus students give more than one-word responses (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2004).
- ❖ Schedule time for review at the end of each lesson, pointing out the key concepts and associated academic vocabulary and making connections to the lesson objectives and state standards (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2004).
- ❖ Use scaffolding strategies to help students organize their thoughts in English, develop study skills, and follow classroom procedures. To provide meaning, scaffolding uses contextual supports—simplified language, teacher modeling, visuals and graphics, and cooperative and hands-on learning (Gray & Fleischman, 2004).

SIOP Promotes the 3 – Tier Model for Instruction

- ❖ Adopt an "All, Some, Few" model of instructional services, rather than viewing the difficulty as residing within the student (Kukic, 2002).
- ❖ Tier 1: All students should receive high quality, appropriate instruction. For English learners, that would be the type of instructional practices featured in the SIOP.
- ❖ Tier 2: A subset of students will require more intensive interventions to meet their learning needs (specific interventions).
- ❖ Tier 3: If the student is receiving effective instruction and repeated interventions fail to produce the desired results, special education may be considered by the team (specialized services).
- ❖ The benefits of focusing on the student's responsiveness to interventions rather than disability are twofold:
 - (1) More students' needs are met in the least restrictive environment; and
 - (2) Useful information is gathered for designing individualized programs for the student.