

HOW SIOP COMPONENTS RELATE TO ESP PRINCIPLES

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Abstract: This paper discusses how the SIOP (Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol) model can be aligned in ESP courses, including its components and features. Its objectives are oriented towards discipline-specific learning, resembling a content-oriented teaching methodology to increase students' active, motivated performance while learning a foreign language, with a focus on specific terminology. We have tried to research how it can be smoothly implemented while considering the requirements of careful adaptation to disciplinary, cultural, and institutional contexts when operationalising the integration.

Keywords: ESP, The SIOP model, building background, interaction, assessment.

Introduction

This article describes how the SIOP model and English for Specific Purposes can be implemented to enhance specific vocabulary learning. The SIOP (Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol) model has been an effective way to achieve active academic performance in USA schools serving diverse learners who have difficulty following instructions in specific classes. SIOP Instructors use various techniques to achieve a high level of content comprehension of a particular subject. The SIOP Model has been widely applied in American schools across scientific subject areas, and extensive research has demonstrated its effectiveness in many countries. Thus, we sought to discuss and connect ESP and SIOP model features to content-based instruction at the university level to address issues in ESP teaching.

At the conceptual core of both the SIOP model and English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is a shared commitment to discipline-specific, purposeful language instruction. According to Amiri et al, specific content and language objectives that are characteristic of SIOP echo well with ESP principles of field-specific communicative orientation, thus making instruction coherent and relevant [Amiri et al,2014]. Caringal-Go et al directly remark that helping educational content align with the reality of occupational needs is not only conducive to short-term learning but also to long-term career sustainability and well-being [Caringal-Go et al,2024]. However, Andresen et al warn that the effective adaptation of structured instructional frameworks, such as SIOP, in higher education, especially when applied to self-initiated learners or transnational student groups, must be calibrated precisely to local environments and learner autonomy [Andresen et al,2023]. These insights together point to the conclusion that SIOP and ESP are conceptually aligned but require careful adaptation to disciplinary, cultural, and institutional contexts when operationalising the integration. For ESP educators, SIOP provides a methodologically rigorous structure for embedding functional language within domain-specific instruction. Beyond overarching pedagogical goals, the SIOP model's eight components demonstrate a deep compatibility with the methodological principles of ESP instruction.

The SIOP Model's 8 components and 30 features provide the framework for planning integrated language and content lessons, and the model can be used as a valid observation instrument as well (Echevarría, Vogt, & Short, 2008, 2010; Guarino et al., 2001). The eight components are:

1. Lesson Preparation

2. Building Background
3. Comprehensible Input
4. Strategies
5. Interaction
6. Practice & Application
7. Lesson Delivery
8. Review & Assessment

According to Al Fadda , the element of building background in SIOP compares to the ESP approach of activating prior knowledge within a discipline to expose learners to discipline-specific discourse as well as specialised terminology [Al Fadda,2020]. This is particularly true in more professional contexts, such as law or IT, where scaffolding around concepts is critical to learning. Similarly, Aldakhil and Alfadda observe that the SIOP element of comprehensible input, in the form of visual support, paraphrasing, and guided dialogue, is reminiscent of EPS graded input strategies, which attempt to reduce cognitive load without compromising linguistic and conceptual complexity [Aldakhil et al,2021]. Nevertheless, Alakrash and Abdul Razak agree that digital scaffolds and multimodal delivery are critical in language learning, particularly in technologically mediated environments [Alakrash et al,2021]. Together, these insights underscore that SIOP not only aligns structurally with ESP principles but also enhances learners' professional communicative competence through its explicit attention to strategic, contextualised, and multimodal language practices.

The component of “interaction” in the SIOP model resonates strongly with core tenets of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), where communication is fostered through authentic, goal-oriented collaboration. According to Basher et al, the interactions in communicative language teaching should be purposive, contextualised, and related to future professional activities of learners, which is also consistent with SIOP in the form of structured peer interaction and integration of content/language [Basher et al,2025]. Likewise, Bälter et al find that interactive formats in English-medium instruction have a positive effect on learners' academic performance in that they are not only improving comprehension but also engaging more directly and actively in disciplinary thinking [Bälter et al,2024]. Beaulieu and Jimenez-Gomez warn, however, that interactive approaches without cultural responsiveness may exclude or marginalise learners with sociolinguistic frames that do not align with dominant norms [Gomez,2022]. Therefore, while the SIOP model provides a robust scaffold for integrating interaction and content mastery, its deployment in ESP contexts must be sensitive to learners' cultural identities and disciplinary literacy needs to fully realise its pedagogical promise.

Assessment, a critical axis in both the SIOP model and English for Specific Purposes (ESP), reflects a shared commitment to purposeful, outcomes-driven instruction. According to Piazza et al. (2020), the review and assessment aspect in SIOP allows the teacher to monitor the content mastery and language development through formative assessment to make responsive adjustments in instruction [Piazza et al,2020]. Similarly, Homayouni demonstrates that peer evaluation in group-based classrooms supports the vocabulary and speaking proficiency among the learners through the procedures that integrate evaluation into a collaborative task, thus in line with the postulates of ESP, which considers the communicative performance in authentic speaking as an evaluation measure [Homayouni,2022]. Liu caution, however, that in practice, assessment in ESP, particularly in online or hybrid learning, is not always consistent in aligning assessment to

motivation orientations and communicative real-life needs [Liu, 2024]. Therefore, despite the fact that both models prioritize the concept of formative and context-oriented assessment, the application of both models pragmatically systematized needs to be properly designed. Embedding SIOP's assessment protocols into ESP contexts can enhance diagnostic clarity while advancing learner autonomy in monitoring their linguistic and disciplinary growth.

Conclusion

The philosophical foundation of the SIOP model demonstrates strong convergence with the instructional ethos of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), particularly in viewing language as a functional instrument for professional engagement rather than an abstract academic subject. Bilytska et al argue that multimodal interaction in higher education helps students to contextualise language through professional and cultural prisms, which is consistent with the focus on real-world communicative competence in SIOP [Bilytska et al,2022]. Similarly, Booth Olson et al observe that instruction in cognitive strategy among English learners, such as planning, checking, and revision, is procedural in building the quality of academic writing, which is in line with the SIOP model of scaffolding and strategic learning [Booth Olson et al,2023]. Boughoulid, however, cautions that SIOP may also result in over-standardisation and in too inflexible a system to incorporate local lines of pedagogy or to cater to the variety among students [Boughoulid,2022]. In such post-Soviet countries as Uzbekistan, where the methodological transparency remains low, the principle of moderation in SIOP has great potential. Integrating its principles can transform ESP classrooms into linguistically responsive spaces that prepare learners for meaningful disciplinary participation and global employability.

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