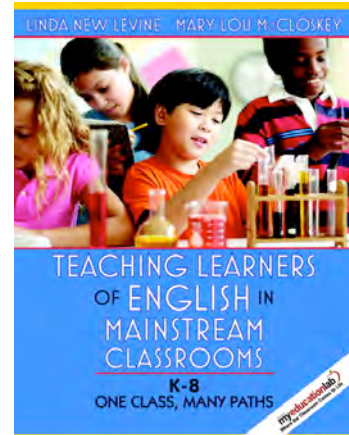


Teaching Learners of English in Mainstream Classrooms (K-8): One Class, Many Paths		
Author:	Linda New Levine & Mary Lou McCloskey (2008)	
Publisher:	Boston: Pearson, Allyn & Bacon	
Pages	ISBN	Price
ISBN 0-205-41059-6	Pp. xvi + 368	\$63.20 U.S.



Teaching Learners of English in Mainstream Classrooms is a new resource for in-service professional development for elementary educators who are the teachers of record for English language learners (ELLs) in regular U.S. classrooms. To my mind, the volume’s best use is for ongoing staff development in the form of study groups or a series of workshops. Levine and McCloskey provide a comprehensive introduction to working with ELLs, based on both their extensive experience as professional development consultants and their up-to-date familiarity with best practices in TESOL. Teachers will delight in at least three very helpful aspects of the book: the teacher dispositions the authors advocate, the useful compilation of teaching strategies and learning activities that accompany the discussions throughout, and the vignettes and frequent extended examples that enliven the recommendations for classroom practice.

The book covers the key knowledge base elementary-level teachers of English language learners are expected to have:

- A conceptual introduction to first and second language acquisition (Chapter 1)
- Principles for instructed language learning (Chapter 2)
- Ways to connect to students’ home cultures (Chapter 3)
- Classroom management for integrating content and language learning (Chapter 4)
- Strategies for the development of oral language, reading, and writing (Chapters 5-8)

- Lesson and unit planning (Chapters 9, 11)
- Assessment (Chapter 10)

The above elements are linked by a method the authors label *activity-based communicative language teaching and learning* or *ABC Model*, characterized by nine features: [1] active engagement, [2] cultural relevance, [3] collaboration, [4] explicit learning strategy instruction, [5] comprehensible input with scaffolding, [6] activation of prior knowledge, [7] integration of content and language skills instruction, [8] differentiation, and [9] appropriate feedback to learners.

Given that the ABC Model’s principles substantively overlap with the features of the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP), educators will want to know how Levine and McCloskey’s approach differs from the widely implemented SIOP model and to what extent their method is research-based. From the description, the ABC model appears to be highly compatible with the SIOP model, if not nearly identical to it. There are slight shifts of priorities and emphases, regrouping of elements, and attempts at simplification; however, in practice it would be difficult to tell apart a SIOP user from a teacher well trained in the ABC Model. Both would prepare challenging standards-based lesson plans with observable objectives and both would engage learners in motivating, experiential activities using flexible, mixed-ability grouping. Both teachers would pay close attention to comprehensible input and carefully scaffold learning by engaging students in dialogue and by introducing supplementary materials that aid comprehension. They would lead students in plentiful practice of language skills and conduct ongoing formative assessment with individual learners. Both teachers could draw on the same compilation of teaching activities. The only noticeable difference between an effective SIOP teacher and a well-honed ABC-model teacher would be that next to the content and language objectives the former would list the key vocabulary of the lesson while the latter would include a third objective, a learning strategy. This difference is insubstantial, as the SIOP teacher would also plan for the explicit teaching of learning strategies and the ABC- model teacher would specifically focus on a handful of key vocabulary during lesson delivery.

The following table provides a point-by-point comparison of the two models.

Table 1. Comparison of the Two Models

	SIOP	ABC
Method features		
Content and language integrated	X	X
Task-based	X	X
Differentiated instruction	X	X
Comprehensible input	X	X
Scaffolding	X	X
Interaction	X	X

	SIOP	ABC
Feedback on output	X	X
Flexible, mixed-ability grouping	X	X
Peer teaching	X	X
Lesson planning		
Standards-based	X	X
Thematic	X	X
Content objectives	X	X
Language objectives	X	X
Key vocabulary	X	X
Learning strategies	X	X
Activation of background knowledge	X	X
Experiential, collaborative activities	X	X
Practice	X	X
Review	X	X
Formative assessment	X	X
Materials		
Content texts	X	X
Graphic organizers	X	X
Personal word lists/dictionaries	X	X
Word walls	X	X
Pictures, charts, diagrams	X	X
Created posters	X	X
Sentence strips	X	X
Manipulatives	X	X
Slates	X	X
Realia	X	X
Trade books	X	X
Learning logs	X	X
Interactive journals	X	X
Research base		
Integrated content and language instruction	X	X
Published peer-reviewed studies on the model itself	X	-
On-going research investigation of the model	X	-
Practitioner training		
Regular training workshops and institutes	X	-
Additional published materials	X	-
Evaluation protocol	X	-

The apparent fact that the ABC and the SIOP models are not substantively different in their principles, strategies, and activities does not mean that the two models are equally effective or equally “research-based.” In broad terms, both models build on the research base of integrated content and language instruction, which has developed over three decades (for a brief review,

see Sherris, 2008). Specifically, the SIOP Model was introduced in 2000 (Echevarría, Vogt, and Short, 2000); it has been undergoing continuous development (Echevarría, Vogt, and Short, 2008, 2009) and has a well-planned teacher-training infrastructure. It can also claim the results of promising longitudinal studies (Echevarría, Short, and Powers, 2006; Short, Echevarría, and Richards, 2007), although they are far from definitive given the many variables and the elusive construct of language proficiency. In contrast, the ABC Model in its current form is a proposal supported by inference from relevant indirect evidence and the authors' personal experiences as teacher trainers. Unlike SIOP, ABC has yet to be tested through experimental research.

In this first edition, the reader will encounter editorial shortcomings that, unfortunately, diminish the coherence of the content. Readers will find the shifting between various versions of TESOL standards and English language proficiency levels across the chapters highly confusing. Several discussions of lesser quality or outdated content in the later chapters could have been easily avoided, as well as the fragmentation of the text caused by the excessive number of expansive tables. Finally, with a more distilled and clear process for both lesson and unit planning, the book would appeal to a wider audience, such as pre-service teachers. As is, both lesson and unit planning come across as overwhelming, at least for the novice educator.

Teaching Learners of English in Mainstream Classrooms, despite the limitations of its first edition, has the potential to evolve into a classic soup-to-nuts introduction for content teachers, both pre-service and in-service, who hope to find guidance for teaching effectively the rapidly growing population of language-minority students in their classes. This first edition already offers very attractive qualities classroom teachers value: an uncomplicated account of theory, a clear set of guiding principles, richly-illustrated points of discussion, practical advice for cross-cultural communication and classroom management, and lively portraits of their professional peers in action. Most importantly, the authors provide strategies and activities ready to implement in the classroom and primed to produce tangible results for both their learners and themselves as professionals.

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