

CATESOL POSITION PAPER

SPECIALLY DESIGNED ACADEMIC INSTRUCTION IN ENGLISH

(Sheltered Instruction)

Almost half of California's K-12 students have a primary language other than English. These learners need to acquire English and content knowledge simultaneously. Three nonmutually exclusive approaches for teaching English language learners both language and content are:

- content-based ESL, an approach used to develop English language proficiencies through the use of concepts and themes from various subject areas. This approach emphasizes English language development;
- primary language instruction, an approach to provide access to the whole curriculum and to develop proficiencies in the students' own language;
- specially designed academic instruction in English, (sheltered instruction), an approach used to make content comprehensible to English language learners with intermediate fluency. This approach emphasizes the development of grade-level academic competencies

The purpose of this position paper is to describe the knowledge and understanding content area teachers need to successfully implement specially designed academic instruction in English. Content area teachers already have mastery of their own subject area. The additional knowledge they need falls into three categories: teacher perception of students, classroom preparation, and classroom interactions.

TEACHER PERCEPTION OF STUDENTS

To instruct English language learners effectively, teachers must create a learner-centered environment, recognizing that student diversity is a source and an asset in the classroom.

Teachers need to:

- know general aspects and values of students' cultures, including schooling
- be sensitive to the cultures represented in their classrooms
- be aware of the personal backgrounds of their students
- understand the general principles of how languages are structured
- be aware of the cognitive, linguistic, and social development of individual students

CLASSROOM PREPARATION

Appropriate grade-level course objectives are those established in the district's curriculum for all students. To make these course objectives comprehensible when planning their lessons, teachers need to:

- Identify key concepts and the language which encodes those concepts.
- select a beginning point based on student's prior knowledge, experience, and needs
- select an appropriate sequence of activities which matches the students developing linguistic abilities and leads to the attainment of the course objectives
- design activities which allow students to build a repertoire of learning strategies and experience a variety of social roles
- use a variety of materials which contextualize the concepts and enhance comprehension
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- Use a variety of assessments which enable students to demonstrate their accomplishment of course objectives

CLASSROOM INTERACTION

English language learners acquire both language and content more effectively when instruction facilitates student interaction.

Teachers to Student Interaction

Teachers need to:

- Establish a positive affective environment by acknowledging and respecting cultural and linguistic diversity
- Communicate content objectives clearly
- Activate and use students' background knowledge
- Use visuals, realia, manipulatives, graphic organizers, media and other sources to explain the concepts
- Modify speech (through slower speech, controlled use of slang, idioms, and sentence length, paraphrasing, etc.)
- Use gestures, body language, mime, and acting to enhance meaning
- Negotiate and clarify meaning throughout each lesson
- Question appropriately (using referential questions, wait time, comprehension checks)

Student to Teacher Interaction

Since students progress at different rates in listening, speaking, reading, and writing, teachers need to accept that they may:

- Revisit earlier levels of proficiency as new concepts are introduced
- Use their primary language to participate in class
- Demonstrate knowledge in a variety of ways
- Need the opportunity to initiate interaction
- Continue to exhibit nonnative errors in language

Student to Student Interaction

Students should:

- Be grouped flexibly (e.g., in pairs, collaboratively or cooperatively, heterogeneously or homogeneously)
- Have continuous and varied opportunities to use the target language to interact with each other and the content
- Be permitted to use their primary language

The best way to ensure that students receive appropriate specially designed instruction in English is that teachers develop the competencies described in this document through Cross—cultural, Language, and Academic Development certification.