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How Sheltered Instruction Affects the Academic Achievement of Low Income,  
Special Education, English Language Learners at the Secondary Level

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This research paper is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master in Education

The Evergreen State College

March 12, 2011

SHELTERED INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES IMPROVE THE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF ELLS

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### Abstract

This action research paper examines the question: can the language proficiency and literacy levels of low income, special education English language learners (ELLs) be increased through the use of sheltered instruction? The secondary students in my classroom come from different countries, diverse cultures and have limited prior schooling. Their parents are surviving poverty and the lack of educational opportunities, as the students themselves work to support the family unit. Given these difficult contexts, what instructional strategies can best support these learners? Through the use of sheltered instruction, a teaching methodology which makes academic content more comprehensible to ELLs, the findings reported here establish that this specialized pedagogy is needed to help increase these students' English language and literacy development.

*Keywords:* English language learners, special education, low social economic, sheltered instruction, student engagement.

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### Acknowledgments

First and foremost I thank God who gives me the power and the strength to seek and achieve my goals. I also want to thank my daughters Taleisha, Samaria, Cierra, Tiara and Judaea who always support me and encourage me after the passing of my wife in 2008. Last but certainly not least I would like to thank Dr. Grace Huerta, Dr. Sherry Walton. Dr. Terry Ford. Dr. Sunshine Campbell who taught a non-writer to learn how to write and do research and also helped me become a better student, a better teacher, and a better person.

## **Chapter I**

### **Introduction and Literature Review**

The basic steps to support English language learners' (ELLs) academic and English language acquisition are clearly laid out in sheltered instruction methodology. For ELLs, sheltered instruction is a form of language instruction that also focuses on content area teaching and learning. Sheltered instruction is particularly helpful to practitioners who work with a multitude of language backgrounds and proficiency levels, and must also provide content area instruction. This approach is particularly important when also considering the interventions for ELL students when they are identified as having special needs. Therefore, this action research project asks the following question: in what ways can sheltered instructional strategies effect the academic achievement of low income, special education, English language learners (ELLs) at the secondary level?

The intent of my research stems from the low test scores and the lack of motivation that is consistent with English language learners, low social economic, and special education students (Jensen, 2010). I want to discover how to engage, support, and motivate this demographic of students to allow them to experience success in the classroom and in life.

In the following literature review, the reader will be introduced to a general discussion of sheltered instruction, social and economic needs and the emerging discipline of ESL for students with special needs. A discussion of sheltered instructional methods for special needs students and English language learners comprises the middle section of this chapter.

**National Context**

Sheltered instruction was first introduced by Stephen Krashen in the 1980s (Echevarria & Short, 1998). Descriptions of the components of sheltered instruction and a typical lesson provide useful information for the content area teacher struggling to teach language and content simultaneously. My research study focused on these teaching methods. I interviewed and observed students in a class whose teacher used sheltered instruction. By collecting qualitative data in this way, helped me understand how to better engage ESL, special education, and low social economic students in the classroom.

**Development of Research**

The purpose of my research question derived from the underdevelopment of curriculum, misplacements of special education students, and the inappropriate assessment of English Language Learners. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) requires that all children, including English language learners, reach high standards by demonstrating proficiency in English, language arts and mathematics by 2014. Schools and districts must help ELL students, among other subgroups, show continuous progress toward this goal, as measured by performance on state test, or risk serious consequences. My research also examined literature that developed a framework for what constitutes quality sheltered instruction at the secondary level. I gathered information derived from the Sheltered Instruction Observational Protocol (SIOP) to monitor and realign my instruction to assist my struggling ELL/ESL students in reading and English classes (Echevarria, 2008). This research-based approach strives to increase student engagement and achievement.

### **Educational Context**

States have been required to develop an accountability system that includes a single definition of “adequate yearly progress.” This definition includes annual targets for academic achievement, participation in assessments, graduation rates for high schools, and at least one academic indicator for elementary and middle schools. The targets must be applied to the major racial and ethnic groups, the economically disadvantaged, special education students, and students with limited English proficiency. The expressed long-term goal of NCLB is proficiency in reading and math for all students by the 2013-2014 school years. The law identifies specific steps that the states, school districts, and schools must take to reach that goal. Each state has been required to develop and administer annual assessments in grades 3-8 in reading and math, and once in grades 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup>. *As a result, my research allowed me to demonstrate that there are significant social economic realities and existing public policies that severely curtail the power of education to function as a route out of poverty for people of low social economic backgrounds.* One goal of schooling is upward mobility, and validates any premise that better scores on achievement tests and increased education, will help secure for low-income families the jobs and income they need. In other words, when teachers provide instruction, they are not just teaching to the test, but help students meet their everyday life needs. This is why sheltered instruction models, such as SIOP, are very instrumental in schools that serves ELLs.

### **Issues Impacting Academic Achievement**

The research literature includes discussion of a wide range of important issues that support student engagement. Building students’ self-esteem has to be standard practice for ELL/ESL teachers; this may also have positive results for special education students



SHELTERED INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES IMPROVE THE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF ELLS (Clewell, et al., 2006). In this research project, I argue that students with special needs should be enriched in a culturally relevant curriculum that is delivered using sheltered instructional strategies (Ladsen-Billing, 1995).

Of equal importance is the research relevant to special education, ELLs and low income students in regards to teaching and learning strategies and curriculum adaptations. I reviewed specific teaching strategies in order to decide which learning strategies are appropriate, how to select the best strategy for the content, and how to put to use these strategies in a lesson. Since explicitly teaching metacognitive strategies is essential to optimize learning in both second language and special education, this is a particularly important section (Brocton Public Schools, 2010)

Also, useful are guidelines offered in the literature to help teachers recognize, analyze and adapt material so that students learn academic language as well as content (Mitchell & Florence, 2004).

### **Understanding of Sheltered Instruction**

The Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol Model was developed to provide teachers with a well-designed and practical model of sheltered instruction. This model is a result of the work of Jana Echevarria, Mary Ellen Vogt and Deborah J. Short (Echevarria, 2008). The SIOP Model is currently used in thousands of schools across the United States, as well as in several other countries (Echevarria, 2008).

The SIOP Model includes teacher preparation and instructional indicators, such as comprehensible input and building of background knowledge. It is comprised of strategies for classroom organization and delivery of instruction (Haynes, 2008). The intent of the model is to facilitate high quality instruction for ELLs in content area teaching. The SIOP

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model is not another “add on” program, but rather it is a total framework that can bring together a school’s instructional program by organizing methods and techniques, and ensure that effective practices are implemented and assessed.

The strategies and benefits of SIOP are described in the Principals’ Partnership Research Brief, “Inclusion for ELL Students.” In this 2004 study, researchers concluded that there is a positive impact on the non-ELL, special education teachers (Principals’ Partnership Research Brief, 2004). For teachers of English-only students, the SIOP facilitates reflection and self- evaluation about teaching. Some of the areas the teachers have self-identified as needing improvement are language and content objectives, grouping, vocabulary development, comprehension strategies, and pacing.

#### **The Effects of Sheltered Instruction on the Achievement of ELLs**

Researchers work with middle and high school teachers to identify key practices for sheltered instruction and to develop a professional development model that enables more teachers to use sheltered instruction effectively in their classrooms. Sheltered instruction, where teachers use specific strategies to teach a specific content area (e.g., social studies or math) in ways comprehensible to the students while promoting their English language development, has become a common instructional approach for language minority students at the secondary level, particularly as schools prepare students to achieve high standards (Ballantyne, 2008).

This explains the purpose for my research, where I sought to help my students recognize how sheltered instruction can both support their language acquisition and content area knowledge

## **Student Engagement**

My view of student engagement is in accordance mostly with Fonderville (2009) who explained that student engagement occurs when students make a psychological investment in learning and they take pride in understanding the material and incorporating it in their lives. Engagement is increasingly seen as an indicator of successful classroom instruction, and as a valued outcome of school reform. Students are engaged when they are involved in their work, persist despite challenges and obstacles, and take visible delight in accomplishing their work. Student engagement also refers to a student's willingness, need, desire and compulsion to participate in, and be successful in, the learning process promoting higher level thinking for enduring understanding (Fonderville, 2009). Student engagement is also a useful term that can be used to identify the level and complexity of student involvement in learning beyond the fragmented domains of behavior and emotion. Engagement is an important predictor of academic achievement among students in the classroom.

## **Review of Literature**

### **ELL and Special Education Student Needs**

English language learners and special education students make up a large segment of the population at my current teaching assignments. In order for content language arts teachers to effectively meet the common needs of these specific learners, a needs assessment is necessary. These learners have specific needs; however, they have much strength for teachers to continue to build to push them toward academic language fluency. In order not to confuse ELLs' cognitive abilities with their current English proficiency, it is important for teachers to understand the stages of language learning, the differences between first and second language learners, how the learners progress in

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acquisition, and ELL students' specific needs.

### **Language Learning Stages**

Teachers must understand the content area skills and language acquisition process of ELLS to effectively teach students and understand their specific needs in the classroom. "Both first and second languages develop in predictable stages" (Richard-Amato, 1996, p.23). There are four generally-accepted stages of English language acquisition: preproduction, early production, speech emergence, and intermediate fluency (Franco, 2005; see Appendix A). In each stage, the learners exhibit typical characteristics related to reading, writing, speaking, and listening. During the preproduction stage of acquisition, for example, the learner has a small vocabulary, speaks very little, comprehends key words only (e.g. key concepts and overarching ideas), and depends heavily on context. The teacher can help pre-production ELLs by focusing instruction on oral development, phonemic awareness, concepts of print, letter name/sound correspondence, and vocabulary development (Franco, 2005). In this early stage, "the learner will depend heavily on first-language knowledge to communicate in the target language, but once the students is able to form hypotheses about the new language, he or she will begin to work within the framework of the language" (Richard-Amato, 1996, p. 23). The students' language will develop on a trial and error basis as they move out of this stage.

There are many indicators a teacher can observe as the student progresses through this first stage. In my class, I notice that the learner typically will rely on a dictionary and they use very simple social conversations, and are eager to learn. However, student confidence levels may vary, and he/she is usually less confident in their speaking ability.

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They need much direct instruction and one -on-one work. The student is less likely to venture out of the ELA program socially or academically. The teacher should see great gains in reading, writing, and speaking and less use of translators by the end of stage one (Levos, 2010).

In the next stage, early production, the learner's characteristics change slightly. The learners have a larger vocabulary of approximately 1000 words, one or two word responses, continued limited comprehension, and errors in pronunciation of words. The teacher continues to help the students by continuing the focus of instruction on oral development, phonemic awareness, and concepts of print, letter name/sound correspondence, and vocabulary development to continue increasing vocabulary and comprehension (Franco, 2005,). It is important that school staff understand that ELL students in Level 2 begins to understand learning targets, expands his social conversations, relies on dictionaries and peers to clarify learning in native language, has increased confidence, and works in groups and independently. The student in this stage still needs direct instruction and guided practice.

The students should show gains in reading, writing, and speaking and can make the transition to the regular curriculum in math and history (Levos, 2010). In stage three, speech emergence, the learner has a vocabulary up to 3000 words, can construct simple sentence, has fairly good comprehension with a rich context, hears smaller elements of speech, functions independently at a social level, and makes basic grammatical errors. The teacher can continue to help develop "students' comprehension by focusing on word recognition, vocabulary development, fluency, and providing a continued focus on pre-reading activities" (Franco, 2005, p. 1-2). Teachers look for new characteristics of growth

SHELTERED INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES IMPROVE THE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF ELLS in the third stage of language acquisition. Students make great academic gains in the classroom. They begin to understand learning targets and rubrics, become more concerned and aware of their grades, their learning style and strengths are defined, can self-select how they demonstrate their learning, rely less on dictionaries and direct translation, and participate in purposeful group work. Students still need some guided practice before working independently, become involved in school activities, and social conversation comes easily. Gains in reading, writing, and speaking are evident and the student is ready for the curriculum in math, history, science, and elective classes (Levos, 2010).

In the final stage, intermediate fluency, students are beyond a 3000 word vocabulary, can construct simple and complex sentences, and have an increased comprehension. At this stage, teachers focus instruction on word recognitions, cueing systems, comprehension of syntax, vocabulary development, fluency, and continue to work on pre-reading skills (Franco, 2005). In this stage of development, students understand learning targets and rubrics, can self-evaluate their progress, begin to analyze the grades earned, and show concern about credits earned and graduation, become involved in school activities and have friends outside of the special education program, rely less on dictionaries for direct translation, engage easily in social conversation, and converse in more in-depth conversations about classroom content. Students again show gains in reading, writing, and speaking and ready for full immersion in regular classes.

### **Progression**

Student movement through the stages of acquisition is generally forward. It is important to realize that this progressing is not linear. “Students move forward and back,

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and forward and back again, all while increasingly more advanced levels (Richard-Amato, 1996, p. 28).” The errors that take place during this back and forth appearance of success, does not mean the students are losing the skills acquired previously. It can show the student trying to transfer a new skill into practice. For example, a student may have mastered the plural forms of adding an -s or -es to words, but then makes the error of added an -s to ‘mouse’ to make it plural instead of using its plural ‘mice.’ The student must then transfer the plural for of ‘mouse’ to ‘house.’ Thus, making the plural of ‘house,’ ‘hice’ instead of ‘houses.’ The errors occur because of over-generalizations of the new acquired structures (Richard-Amato, 1996,).

These errors can also be dependent on the students’ proficiency in their primary language. Students who do not have a full grasp of the patterns in their first language will struggle when trying to make the connections in their second language. Even though older students may have a fear of making errors in the new language; they have many advantages to learning English. They have a greater knowledge of the world, they have more control over the information they receive, they are able to learn and apply rules to the acquisition process, and they have another language they can use to transfer strategies and linguistic knowledge (Richard-Amato, 1996). Playing on these advantages that students have in their favor, teachers can tap into the strengths of the students to develop motivation and interest in learning the new language. “Although important differences must be taken into account, there are a sufficient number of similarities between first- and second-language acquisitions to support a common theory (Richard-Amato, 1996, p. 34).” Many researchers agree that ELL will be successful when instruction is explicit, prior knowledge is activated, vocabulary is pre taught, and they can interact with the content in meaningful ways (Echevarria, Vogt,

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& Short, 2004; Franco, 2005; Richard-Amato, 1996). These techniques are beneficial to all learners in an English classroom.

### **Other ELL Students Needs**

English language learners and special need students at all levels perform better in academic situations when the teacher provides direct instruction for assignments and activities (Echevarria et al., 2004,). Direct instruction, as used here, is specific and clear instruction that guides students through a process. When students are moved from direct instruction to guided practice and then to independent use, teachers are giving students the skill they need to be independent learner. During this movement, students understand the criteria for an assignment, and they are more likely to reach the expectations of it. In this sense, direction instruction is a scaffold for learners. It is critical for ELLs to have instructions and strategies presented in a step-by-step manner, modeled, and scaffolded to know what is expected (Echevarria et al., 2004; Franco, 2005) Modeling is encouraged throughout all contents. Student can see and achieve desired results.

One strategy a teacher can implement for direct instructions in the classroom is to have visible targets for the content and language objectives for each lesson. Content objectives are what the students are expected to know by the end of the lesson where, language objectives are how (using particular language functions) students show they know the content (Echevarria et al., 2004). These targets need to be communicated to students both in writing and orally. Content targets are important to ELLs because before the lesson they can know the information they will be focusing on and, therefore, eliminate any confusion. Language targets are important because the students know how they are going to



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show what they learned. Content targets should not be altered for ELLs; however, language targets can be differentiated for students' readiness, interest, and learning profile.

For example, in the sophomore language arts classroom, students are beginning to read the novel, *Lay that Trumpet in Our Hands* by Susan McCarthy. After the teacher has carefully examined what the students will need to know, she thinks about how the students can show their mastery. For one day's lesson, the content target is to summarize the first quarter of the book, including all main events. The language target helps students know how they are going to summarize, so the students are instructed to summarize by telling the story to a partner. The integration of language and content objectives allow students access to what they are learning and how they will show they learned it. Students construct meaning from prior conceptual knowledge (Echevarria et al., 2004; Richard-Amato, 1996). It is good teaching practice to activate prior knowledge in all classrooms, so students can make the connections to the reading. In order to do this, teachers can explicitly tie new information to students' own background experiences (Echevarria et al., 2004, p. 48).

When students have a meaningful connection they will retain the information better. Not only will students retain the information, but this practice also shows students that a teacher cares about their backgrounds. Teachers build relationships and show respect for students' culture when they take into consideration who they are and where they come from. Students may struggle making connections because of their lack of background knowledge on some topics that seem foreign to them. English language learners need to have prior knowledge activated to fully comprehend a text. It is imperative that teachers reflect on the amount of background knowledge that is required for a learner to fully comprehend the reading material, like native-English speakers

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Due to gaps in education, prior knowledge, and experiences, new learners of English may need extra vocabulary development (Echevarria et al., 2004; Richard-Amato, 1996). Vocabulary development is critical for ELLs because it is well known that there is a direct connection between vocabulary knowledge and academic achievement (Echevarria et al., 2004). Teachers need to continually engage students in vocabulary development. They can do so by allowing students to become active in developing their understanding of words and ways to learn them, they can personalize word learning, allow students to be immersed in words, and build on multiple sources of information to learn words through repeated interaction with them (Echevarria et al., 2004). Vocabulary practice helps students have a full understanding of the concepts of a lesson or unit. Students can move from understanding, to examining and analyzing concepts when they understand the vocabulary.

Engagement and making meaning of content is required for ELLs to learn content in the classroom. Teachers have knowledge to share and discuss with students, but learning is most effective when students are fully engaged in participation in a lesson (Calderon, 2007; Echevarria et al., 2004). Instead of teachers talking and students listening, indicative the IRE (initiation-response-evaluation) interaction model, the classroom should be structured so that students are interacting with the content. Part of the interaction should include time for students to engage in conversation in both L1 to comprehend text and L2 to learn English. Engagement allows students to process information. Not only must they be engaged in the participation of the lesson, but the language must be meaningful. “It is not only the amount of exposure to English that affects learning, but the quality as well (Echevarria et al., 2004, p. 45).” If a student is learning material that he can use in life, he will want to acquire the knowledge, so he can use it later.

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Meaningful experiences are vital to ELLs acquisition of English. Teachers can incorporate interaction by grouping students in partners to practice two-way communication in the classroom. Research agrees that meaningful interaction allows students to practice speaking and making themselves understood. Students can answer questions, negotiate meaning, clarify ideas, and give and justify opinions (Echevarria et al., 2004; Richard-Amato, 1996). In this cooperative environment, the teacher can become aware of students' emerging skills and abilities. Cooperative learning with ELLs does not always need to be oral. Students can interact through writing and hands-on projects. Students can work together to show meaning in many ways. Students may have difficulty comprehending text because it is at a challenging level. Teachers can support ELLs by providing supplemental materials. "Watering down" the curriculum is often a concern. However, when curriculum is "watered down," content concepts can be lost. Teachers must find ways to make the text and other resource material accessible for all students, adapting them so that the content concepts are left intact (Echevarria et al., 2004; Wormeli, 2007). Teachers who provide supplementary materials help students find meaning in the reading. The materials are strategies to help make the text comprehensible. The materials, not only, are a way to help students with comprehension, but also a way to reach the many learning styles in the classroom. Students need this support to become active members of the classroom.

**Conclusion**

When teachers understand the stages of language development, student progression, and the specific needs of ELLs and SPED students, they are better equipped to craft an effective lesson, where these ideals are addressed. When language is a barrier, teachers can take steps to help students make meaning out of texts and provide strategies the students can

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use across the curriculum. The practice of differentiation can help teachers reach ELLs, as well as special education students and students from low social economic background.

## **Chapter II Methods and Analysis**

To answer my research question, I used qualitative data collection methods, such as surveys, interviews, and self-assessments. In addition, I observed students as they were taught in a sheltered instruction classroom in an ELL, special education class and with lower SES students. For this analysis, I used a rubric and peer/self assessment strategies to help the students recognize their strengths and improve their proficiency in reading and writing while in sheltered instruction. Before lessons began, I also needed to explain to my students about the definition, purpose and benefits of them participating in a sheltered instructional classroom.. I described to the students that to have a successful sheltered instructional classroom that we will have better preparation by building background knowledge which will lead to more comprehensible input (i.e. the students will have a better understanding of each lesson). I used a variety of strategies to assess student comprehension, such as peer reviews of writing using rubrics.

### **Participant Selection**

I implemented SIOP strategies with my entire Reading and English, special education classes. For the purpose of this study, I identified four low-income secondary ELL students. Three of the students were boys and one student was a girl. One student was a Pacific Islander and three were Latino/a bilingual (who were formerly or currently in an ELL/ESL program). Each student was assessed at level one on their ESL language assessments. I identified students from that group, as well as students who were previously in an ESL program, and students whose native language is not English. My study was based

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on improving the academic language of students who have a different first language through sheltered instruction, so I needed to go through these steps to identify them.

### **Project Timeline**

I identified and selected participants within the first two weeks of school in the fall of 2010 and obtained the Human Subject Approval through The Evergreen State College. In the first month of school, I fielded the initial survey to all of my special education and English language learning students. The survey was used as a measuring tool for me to see which sheltered instruction method would best help my students. Students were assessed for special education by their grade level reading, writing and math test and scores. English language learners were assessed based on their home language survey, and reading and writing English assessments. I explicitly taught students about the format and purpose of sheltered instructions and the benefits of learning in this format. That served as motivation for the different levels of the learning. The students' motivation occurred when they experienced success because of their engagement, as reported on their self and peer reviews. The students were asked to self-evaluate their improvement of completed work by the end of the first month. Students were given more feedback on their scores and evaluations. At the end of the third month, students were given a writing final. I interviewed and evaluated them to get an overall assessment of their progress using academic language in their written and oral self-evaluations while being exposed to sheltered instructional strategies.

### **Research Methods**

In my research, I conducted student interviews, collected open ended survey responses, and collected observation field notes. These qualitative data collection methods

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helped me gain insight into student's attitudes, behaviors, value systems, concerns, motivations, aspirations, culture or lifestyles.

To learn about students' level of progress while implementing sheltered instruction, I conducted a self-assessment of sheltered instruction success survey at the beginning of the year (see Appendix A). Six student interviews were also conducted, using structured questions with the participants to further explore their ability to self-assess and their progress while in sheltered instruction. Interviews were written to help lower students' affective filter. I showed them the interview questions in advance in order to give them time to think about their responses before the interview. I conducted my 10-minute interviews on the first four days of school in my classroom while other students were in silent reading. I used both written response and oral response as data because my goal was to affect academic language development through comprehensible output using oral self-assessment and written self-assessment.

I then implemented a series of lessons and activities out of curriculum programs entitle "Language!" and "Read 180" to deliberately teach students about sheltered instruction. "Read180" and "Language!" are comprehensive reading intervention programs designed to meet the needs of students in elementary through high school whose reading achievement is below the proficient level. Three stages of instruction include stage A targeting elementary students, stage B targeting middle school students, and stage C targeting high school students. "Read 180" and "Language!" curricula were developed to provide teachers with a well articulated, practical model of sheltered instruction. The intent of the model was to facilitate high quality instruction for English language learners.

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There are certain elements that must be considered when conducting sheltered instruction, they are:

- Be thoughtful and purposeful in the use of academic/school related language such as direction giving and content specific vocabulary.
- Be mindful of slang or colloquialisms in teacher and classmates' speech.
- Use concrete objects, models and demonstrations to support instruction.
- Provide visual cues to support understanding.
- Build in movement, rhythm and repetition to support retention.
- Analyze and evaluate instructional methods considering readability, content, length, format, cultural orientation, and illustrations/visuals.
- Use the integrate writing, guided writing and short independent writing sessions in the early years of developing English language skills.

I used explicit teaching about participation and the criterion, peer-assessment with discussions, and encouraged self assessment with teacher conferences to develop students' academic language. I kept students' self-assessments as we went through the quarter and completed final surveys and interviews before winter break. In sheltered instruction, teaching and assessment were integrated into an ongoing process that provides feedback to students and informs future instruction. Within each sheltered lesson, I sought to ensure that students have sufficient background knowledge to tackle new curriculum material. I modified my speech and, when necessary and feasible, content text so that ELLs could grasp important content concepts, facts, and questions. I explicitly taught learning strategies – from teacher-centered to peer-supported to student centered – so that students developed a



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toolkit for accomplishing difficult learning tasks. I provided ample opportunities for students to interact in the target language around purposeful tasks that were meaningful to them.

I also maintained the students initial learning plans and updated any alterations to the learning plan that would help each student meet their goals. I maintained a journal where I compiled memos I while observed and analyzed student work.

### **Analysis**

Using triangulation, I examined all of the data and compared my results. By doing this comparative approach, I looked for patterns or codes within my data. The patterns I looked for are as followed; what is the relationship between the following indicators:

- Specific sheltered teaching strategies,
- Student engagement and work quality
- Student level of engagement while in sheltered instruction
- Student engagement and completion of student tasks

To compare students' ability to progress in sheltered instruction, I used data from another instructor in a class that did not offer sheltered instruction. I analyzed their feedback in sheltered and non-sheltered classes' reflective statements both on their surveys and in their interviews for understanding of the criterion and accuracy of assessment. To identify students' growth in academic language, I analyzed their written and oral responses for the use of academic language. I expected to see them using the language from the reading and writing books and citing examples from their work. I wanted to see the language used

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correctly and appropriately in context. The language I analyzed for was based on the rubric we were using for that particular writing assignment.

### **What This Project Demonstrated**

This action research project proves that effective strategies work together. Students who discuss relative matters with teachers and peers, are challenged to work at high levels, and they receive constant feedback on their performance typically get better grades, are more satisfied with school, and are more likely to continue their education at the post-secondary level (Clewell, et al., 2006). While these and other educational methods have great purpose and are positively linked to desired outcomes for all types of students, historically underserved students and those who are less well prepared *such as, English Language Learners, minority students, and students from low social economic backgrounds tend to benefit even more* (Cruce et al. 2006; Kuh et al. 2006).

However, for many reasons, large numbers of ELL students do not demonstrate enough engagement, because of a lack of confidence in their English language proficiency, though they are capable of doing so (Factors Affecting ELL Students Education, 2010). As a result, many drop out of secondary school and never return to try again. To increase the odds that students can survive and be successful in school, we need to know more about the high school experiences and characteristics of students who are less likely to engage and convince those students to participate in effective programs and practices.

### **Limits to Conclusions**

In this study I attempted to show that, through the explicit teaching of sheltered instruction including rubrics and self-assessment strategies, students showed growth in their reading and writing and academic language proficiency. However, the expected outcome

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could be influenced by the fact that they will be hearing and seeing the academic vocabulary quite a bit in the classroom, and thus it becomes part of their personal vocabulary. Cognitive academic language proficiency could also be influenced by the students' other classes as schools are moving towards standards-based grading. Students are exposed to academic language relating to the target skills/standards. The results of this study were specific to my classroom and this group of students, because of the small number of participants and the climate and contributions are specific to my school..

### **Chapter III**

#### **Research Findings**

##### **Study Context**

The study took place in a suburban school of 678 students which had integrated a high population of students from surrounding urban neighborhoods. This school has an 80% free and reduced lunch. The learning community consisted of two Pacific Islanders and four Latinos/s. Each of these high school students has reading levels between third and fifth grade which is at least four years below grade level. An important factor regarding this research was to note is that each student comes from homes of low social economic status and each of these students receive free or reduced lunch and the few who are reduced lunch sometimes still don't have enough money (50 cents to each lunch). I included this fact because it has to be noted how hunger affects student engagement.

I decided to select four students who I knew were very talkative and active with their friends during lunch time, before and after school, but who were more introverted and subdued while they were in a classroom setting. I invited this particular type of student because I wanted to observe the growth of engagement. In addition, I wanted to see when I could recognize when they were feeling more comfortable in the classroom because they experience success and ownership to the class. I wanted to see if they would participate and communicated as if they were with their friends in a relaxed social setting . When students feel comfortable they can relax and if they are relaxed then learning will be more fun and when there is fun there will be a greater willingness to participate and engagement. These students all come from single or blended family (step parent) homes where parents do not

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speak English as their primary language. The students, along with their siblings, became language brokers for their parents and do the translations when their parents come to school conferences and other school events where parent and staff need to communicate.

### **Description of the Instructional Context of the Study**

Northwest High School is a unique secondary institution. It is located in the suburban neighborhood but has student from single parent families, families of low social economic, gang members, and family that live in section 8 housing (subsidized government housing). This school is in a neighborhood surrounded by poverty and all the challenges that poverty can lead to which is a primary factor of why this school has poor academic achievement as noted in the study, “Charting Correlation Between Poverty, ELL, and the States’ Report Cards” (Libby, 2009). This study connects ELL students who live in poverty and low academic achievement. Unfortunately, the neighborhood area of this school is also reflected by the negative aspects that come with living in poverty, such as gangs, drug sales, drug use, welfare, and domestic violence. School data of the standardize state tests clearly show that more ELL and lower social economic are moving into the NWHS district with 80% free and reduced lunch. Northwest High school is a high school that is rich in ESL diversity with student whose first language Cambodian, Vietnamese, Spanish, Samoan, and Korean. I teach a total of 50 special education and ELL students. I communicated with the general education teachers to learn specific academic words or language that I could implement to my students when they are in the sheltered instruction classroom.

### **Qualitative Data Collected in Classroom**

For the qualitative data I collected, I used the observational techniques. Using this method, I gathered firsthand data using sheltered instruction, I also took in account student

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behavior. This provided me with an opportunity to collect data on a wide range of behaviors and to capture a great variety of interactions, and to openly explore the evaluation of sheltered instruction. By directly observing operations and activities of sheltered instruction I knew I could develop a holistic perspective, i.e., an understanding of the context within which Sheltered instruction operates. This was especially important to understand the elevation and the success of student engagement. The observational approach also allowed me to learn about things the student and I may be unaware of or those they are unwilling or unable to discuss in an interview or focus group. I used observations during both the formative and summative phases of evaluation. For example, during the formative phase observation was useful in determining whether or not the student engagement was being delivered and operated as planned. In this action research I project, observations were also used to describe the student development stages. This formative observation could also provide valuable insights into my teaching style and how I covered the material.

#### **Review of the Research Question**

Throughout my project, I implemented the eight domains of sheltered instruction - preparation, building background, comprehensible input, strategies, interaction, practice/application effective lesson delivery, and lesson review/assessment (Bikle & Winter, 2007). In addition to sheltered instructional strategies, I intentionally chose reciprocal teaching because it is a form of instructional conversation that is structured around four higher order thinking skills: question generation, summarization, clarification, and prediction. These skills support comprehension--these techniques are constantly model and practiced in small group discussions to help students become more effective readers

(Palincsar, et al., 1984). I continuously used the four critical thinking skills throughout the school day.

The students were also beginning their academic engagement process by the use of a word wall consisting of academic vocabulary and cognitive academic language proficiency skills (CALP). This is a language-related term which refers to formal [academic](#) learning, as opposed to basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS). In schools today, the terms BICS and CALP are most frequently used to discuss the language proficiency levels of students who are in the process of acquiring a new language. These students typically develop proficiency in BICS well before they acquire a strong grasp of CALP or academic language. As a result, students may initially appear fully proficient and fluent, while still struggling with significant language gaps (Cummins, 1994). When we had group reading, I also introduced to the students the framework of the Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach-CALLA, and explored challenging concepts through guided questions that focused on higher level of learning thinking skills (Chamot &, O'Malley, 1994). The students read tales and poetry from Edgar Allen Poe including; *The [Tell-Tale Heart](#), [The Raven](#), [The Pit and the Pendulum](#), [A Dream Within a Dream](#), and [The Black Cat](#)*. These works were excellent for allowing students to expound on a higher level of thinking.

On Wednesdays, we had what I called a “Book Café,” where students gathered in a circle and they had three to five minutes to explain the pages or chapters that read. This process allowed each student to display their comprehension of the literature while demonstrating academic language with their peers. Students would then self correct and self evaluate their peers on the academic language posted on the wall (word wall) and from the

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ELMO (over head projector that can be connected to a computer for better versatility). This concept was done all under the sheltered instruction format. I gathered background knowledge, and the students were well prepared as they built background knowledge about Edgar Allen Poe.

I also used the Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach which integrates academic language development, content area instruction and explicit instruction in learning strategies for both content and language acquisition. This approach fit well with sheltered instruction and was another systematic approach to support ELL, low economic, and special education student comprehension. It allowed me to have a higher order of thinking instructional conversations with the students (Chamot, & O'Malley, 1994). It was during the instructional conversations that open-ended questions helped to bring out remarks from the students about their own funds of knowledge. This process helped the lesson because it made stories and conversations relevant to the students and it demonstrated specific characteristics of each student who were part of this action research project.

### **Student #1-Jorge**

The participants of my research were selected because I was familiar with these students and their study habits and because I had taught them in non-sheltered classes during the previous year (2009-2010). I wanted to see if there was increased level of learning when these students had a higher level of engagement when participating in sheltered instruction. I sought to prove my hypothesis that by presenting relevant curricula through sheltered instruction that student engagement improved. Below is a more detailed discussion of these action research student participants.



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Jorge was a 17-year-old Latino boy from Mexico who was in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade. Jorge was both an ELL/ESL and special education student. Jorge's parent (his mom) speaks very limited English and during conference Jorge acts as the family translator. Last school year, Jorge was very prideful and didn't ask for or accept help when he needed it. He would make excuses or not show up for class. Jorge reads at a 4<sup>th</sup> grade level and at a 4<sup>th</sup> grade level in English. Because of his embarrassment Jorge would not engage when we had classroom participation. With the implementation of SIOP this year, Jorge was more involved because he can now participate without being the primary reader or writer. This was shown by his willingness to listen while others in his group read without looking distracted and read on cue when it was his turn. Jorge now feels like he was part of the team and was willing to come to the white board or read a few sentences.

Since I began teaching SIOP strategies, Jorge became more vocal because he realized he wouldn't lose grades because he said the wrong answer during group participation. Now he was willing to say an answer and be corrected if needed. He felt more like a leader since he had an opportunity to be involved with group corrections and peer reviews. Jorge wanted to become an auto mechanic. As part of my culturally relevant approach to instruction and Jorge's funds of knowledge, I had to incorporate terms, academic language, and words that were relevant to what Jorge would like to become. Also as part of silent reading, I allowed Jorge to bring books that had to do with mechanics and cars. I did this to insure that he would continue to read at a 'learning pace' in which his comprehension can be measured and he would be consistently engaged. Jorge was on reduced lunch but sometimes didn't have the money to buy breakfast or lunch; at that point I offered him food that I had in my class. Since September, Jorge's reading level had increased 35

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points which was almost a half of grade level because of his increased engagement. Jorge had shown growth and enthusiasm in all of classes because he had learned to engage. Because of sheltered instruction Jorge was developing into a more involved and motivated student.

**Student #2- Sasa**

Sasa was a very social 17-year-old female Samoan student. Sasa communicated very well everywhere outside of an academic environment. Sasa also was both an ELL/ESL and Special Education student. Sasa's mom speaks broken, very limited English. During conferences, Sasa acts as the language broker for her mom. Last school year, Sasa was trying real hard to get "acquainted" with her boy friend and didn't want him to know she was struggling so she didn't ask for help as needed. Sasa would also skip class and go to the neighboring high school because there was a greater Pacific Islander population.

Sasa reads at a 5<sup>th</sup> grade level and is at a 3<sup>rd</sup> grade level in English according to the AIMSWEB assessment. Because of her embarrassment, Sasa would not engage when we had classroom participation. With the implementation of SIOP this year, Sasa felt more responsible for her involvement because she could participate without expectations being too high. Sasa then felt like she was part of the team and was willing to come to the white board or read a few sentences. Since I began SIOP, Sasa had become much more vocal because she realized she wouldn't lose grades because she said the wrong answer during group participation. She was willing to say an answer and be corrected if needed. She felt more like a leader now that she had an opportunity to be involved with group corrections and peer reviews. Sasa was very committed her culture and traditions and wants to become a leader within the Samoan neighborhood. I incorporated terms and words that were relevant

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to Sasa. Also, as part of silent reading, I allowed Sasa to bring books that have to do with the history of Samoa and the Pacific Islander culture. I did this to ensure that she would continue to read at a pace in which her comprehension could be measured and she was consistently engaged. Sasa received free lunch and this seemed to be the time of day when she got the most enjoyment. Because of her increased engagement, Sasa's reading Lexel level had increased 79 points which is three-fourth of grade level. Sasa had shown growth, engagement and enthusiasm in all of her classes. Because of sheltered instruction, Sasa developed into a more involved and motivated student.

**Student #3--Gustavo**

Gustavo was a 16-year-old Latino boy from Monterey, Mexico who was in the tenth grade. Gustavo is an ELL/ESL and Special Education student. Gustavo lives with his mom and his cousins (who also has children) and he spoke very limited English. Gustavo was also on free lunch. His mom did not come to school conferences because she did not understand English very well. Last school year, Gustavo missed a lot of school traveling back and forth to Mexico. Gustavo was very shy in the classroom but more outgoing when he was with other Latino students. Therefore, he did not ask for or accept help when he needed it. Gustavo read at a 6th grade level and was at a 6<sup>th</sup> grade level in English according to classroom assessments (AIMSWEB). Because of his shyness, Gustavo would not eagerly engage when we had classroom participation. With the implementation of sheltered instruction, Gustavo was more involved because he could now participate without being too embarrassed (i.e. affective filter). Gustavo felt like he was part of the team and was willing to come to the white board or read a few sentences. Since I began sheltered instruction, Gustavo became much more vocal because he realized he would not lose grades if he said

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the wrong answer during group participation. He was willing to state an answer and be corrected if needed. He felt more like a leader since he had an opportunity to be involved with group corrections and peer reviews.

Gustavo was unsure of what he wants to be in the future. I incorporated terms and words that were relevant to help Gustavo chose a career path, words such as interview, resume, classified, career and college choice. Also, as part of silent reading, I encouraged Gustavo to bring books that have to do with careers and culture. I did this to ensure that he would continue to read at an “aggressive learning pace” in which his comprehension was measured and he would be consistently engaged. Since September, because of his increased engagement, Gustavo’s reading Lexel level increased 165 points, which was up a grade and a half above his current level. Gustavo showed growth and enthusiasm in all of classes because he learned to engage. Because of sheltered instruction, Gustavo was developing into a more involved and motivated student.

**Student #4—Robert**

Robert was a 16-year-old Latino boy from Tacoma, Washington who was in the 10th grade. Robert was also both an ELL/ESL and special education student. Robert lived with his mom and he speaks broken and limited English. Robert did not have a great pride in his heritage and culture. Robert’s mom did not come to school conferences but because of her English language proficiency. Robert became his mother’s language broker. Last year, Robert missed 17 days of school because of illness or appointments. Robert he did not ask for or accept help when he needed it. Robert also read at a 4th grade level and was at a 6<sup>th</sup> grade level in English according to classroom assessments (AIMSWEB). Because of his shyness, Robert did not eagerly engage when we had cooperative group activities..

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With the implementation of sheltered instruction this year, Robert was more involved because he can now participate without being the too extroverted. Robert felt like he was part of the team and was willing to come to the white board or read a few sentences. Since I began sheltered instruction, Robert was more vocal because he realized he had an opportunity to be involved with group and peer reviews. Robert was still deciding of what he wants to be in life. As part of silent reading, I encouraged Robert to bring books that had to do with careers and culture. I did this to ensure that he would continue to read at pace in which his comprehension could be measured and he would be consistently engaged. Since September, because of his increased engagement, Robert's reading Lexel level increased 115 points, which was up one grade above his current level. Robert showed growth and enthusiasm in all of classes as his engagement increased. Because of sheltered instruction, Robert developed into a more involved and motivated student.

### **Analysis--Impact on Students Who Participated in Sheltered Instruction**

Jorge, was active and eagerly engaged by sheltered instructional strategies. As mentioned in this chapter, he had a tremendous growth in reading from Lexile 115 to Lexile 150. He participates in all three learning station in Read 180 which are computer, small group, and silent reading and consistently volunteers to use academic words from the word wall. Through the practice of sheltered instruction, I have observed Jorge's engagement in math and science increase. I observed a level of confidence and determination to complete assignments. Jorge was not too prideful when reading out loud. He was willing to except correction and demonstrate when he recognizes his reading errors.

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Sasa showed consistent attendance, since I began observing her engagement in sheltered instruction. Sheltered instruction teaching methods helped her increase her reading Lexile level from 128 to a level of 207. I saw her confidence grow.. Sasa ,who is rich in her Pacific Island culture, demonstrated a public willingness to read when with her PIC (Pacific Islander Club). This also established that reading became a strength instead of a weakness. Sasa asked me if she could read books that are at a more difficult reading level. She also showed a new level of academic accountability and better behavior due to having a constant level of engagement and very little down time.

Gustavo showed amazing growth with his social interaction and his reading after being introduced to sheltered instruction. He led students in small reading groups and in all three reading stations. Gustavo began with a reading Lexile level at 736 and after only two months of consistent engagement in sheltered instruction his reading level increased to 901. He used all the academic words from the word wall with correct enunciation and pronunciation. Gustavo was more willing to self correct and spoke for himself now that he recognized that he could pronounce words properly and use them in the correct context. Gustavo's engagement when in a sheltered instruction class increased amazingly. I was just as impressed with his acceptance to his culture, as I was with his academic progress.

Since we began sheltered instruction, he was able to interact with other students from the Latino culture who were born in Mexico. He demonstrated a rise in curiosity and pride and started to befriend other Latinos and asked question regarding his heritage. Gustavo enjoyed the framework of sheltered instruction. He said, "Everything was in place and set up for my learning." He was now reading at a Lexile level of 835 improving 115

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Lexile points in two months of structured sheltered instruction. Gustavo increased his willingness to read in all other subject area classes is now more outgoing. He is using the academic words from the word wall and now can comprehend when these words are being used in other classes. Robert's engagement when in sheltered instruction was an amazing feat. I was just as impressed with his academic progress as when he began to engage in leadership activities within the classroom. Since we began sheltered instruction, student 4 was willing to show up to class first, pass out books and interact with other students from all cultures who were. This has caused student 4 to have a risen level of pride in his academics in English and Reading and he has ask more questions about a higher level of reading materials. Robert enjoys sheltered instruction because he said, "this way has helped me learned faster." He was now reading at a lexile level of 1105 improving 426 lexile points in two months of structured sheltered instruction. He has begun to read more in all other subject area classes recognizing that more understanding of content means knowledge which brings forth better test scores. He also is using the academic words from the word wall and now can comprehend when these words are being used in other classes.

Besides using SIOP, I used context and visual cues and by asking students for clarification for comprehensible input and output. For the context clues, I used a word or words that were new to the students. When giving this to the students, I had to often include other words or phrases to help with the understanding of the new word (from the word wall). These words were built into the sentences around more difficult vocabulary. I believe if the students are more aware of the words around the difficult vocabulary they encounter in their reading that they can use this context to comprehensibility. Visual cues were used because many students begin to comprehend text through the support of the

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pictures they see in books. By seeing pictures, many students begin to understand that the illustrations in a book are representations of actual experiences they have had. I continued to build on that foundation with my students during the shared reading strategy. During shared reading, I encouraged my emergent readers to discuss what they saw in a book before we began to read the text. I asked questions such as the following:

- \* When you look at the cover of the book, what do you predict the story is about?;
- \* What do you think the character will do in the story?
- \* Do you think the character is happy, sad, scared?
- \* Based on the illustrations, what do you predict will happen next?

Students were also evaluated during the 'Reading Café' in which a summative assessment of each student's comprehension of student-selected readings was completed. Prior to reading to the students, I chose key vocabulary from their selected book. Each student gave a summary of what they read using these key words in the proper context according to their stories. Because of their engagement in sheltered instruction, each participant went from one-minute retellings to five minutes summaries of their reading selections.



## **Chapter IV**

### **Implications and Recommendations**

#### **Connections between Research and Findings**

By embarking on this action research paper, I investigated the process of how sheltered instruction increased the level of student engagement for English language learners, special education students and students who live in low social economic households. I began this research by studying (through class and professional development) and incorporating all information and strategies of sheltered instruction specifically, the (SIOP) Sheltered Instructional Observational Protocol and student engagement. I also used instructional methods' developed by the Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA). This organization focuses on how to increase participation and engagement for students of different cultures. Through these resources, I learned and used several teaching strategies that I will continue to use during my teaching career. By using sheltered instruction, I made sure that my teaching techniques would include cooperative learning for student engagement, integrated academic vocabulary (for example, word walls) while building content area literacy, and integrated technology.

The implementation of my research was done with my reading class in which I taught the curriculum entitled, "Read 180." This program generally needs 90 minutes for best practice, but at my school we only had 55 minutes per class session. To have continual and consistent engagement, students were organized into three groups of six students. The groups worked on computers for 20 minutes, conducted silent reading

SHELTERED INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES IMPROVE THE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF ELLS for 10 minutes, and worked in small groups for 20 minutes. The use of computer technology helped increase student engagement by providing them opportunities to practice their comprehensible output (i.e. writing) and supporting their reading comprehension. This curriculum (“Read 180”) corrects all student work and relays it to my computer. I then could see the increase or decline in my students’ reading, writing accuracy and comprehension.

Small cooperative groups was another teaching strategy I employed. This strategy helped me listen to students read out loud and answer questions about what they have read, and write a summary about what they have read. This enabled me to observe my students’ comprehensible output, pronunciation and enunciation of new words and allowed me to teach them new words as well as words they struggle with as they appear in the “Read 180” books. Academic vocabulary and common words that the students struggled with were then placed on the word wall, which is a common sheltered instruction strategy.

For the word wall, I used words that were new or hard to read for the students. When giving this vocabulary to the students I often had to include other words or phrases to help with the understanding of new words (from the word wall). These words were introduced through sentence context. I believe if the students became more aware of the vocabulary around the difficult words they encountered in their reading, they would develop comprehension from context.

Visual cues were also used because many students began to comprehend text through the support of the pictures they saw in books. By seeing pictures, many students began to understand that the illustrations in a book are representations of actual lived

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experiences. I continued to build on that foundation with my students during the shared reading. During shared reading, I wanted my emergent readers to predict and discuss what they saw in a book before we read the text. I asked questions to check for comprehension.

Another strategy used with this class was the “Reading Café.” I borrowed this idea from the poetry cafes because it was a way to differentiate instruction and allowed the students to be engaged and have fun while comprehending the books they read. There was a very significant and encouraging student response with the implementation of SIOP and IDRA as an everyday student classroom practice. I interviewed each of the four students participants so that I could get an understanding of what or if they were gaining or becoming more engaged in learning from the sheltered instruction approach.

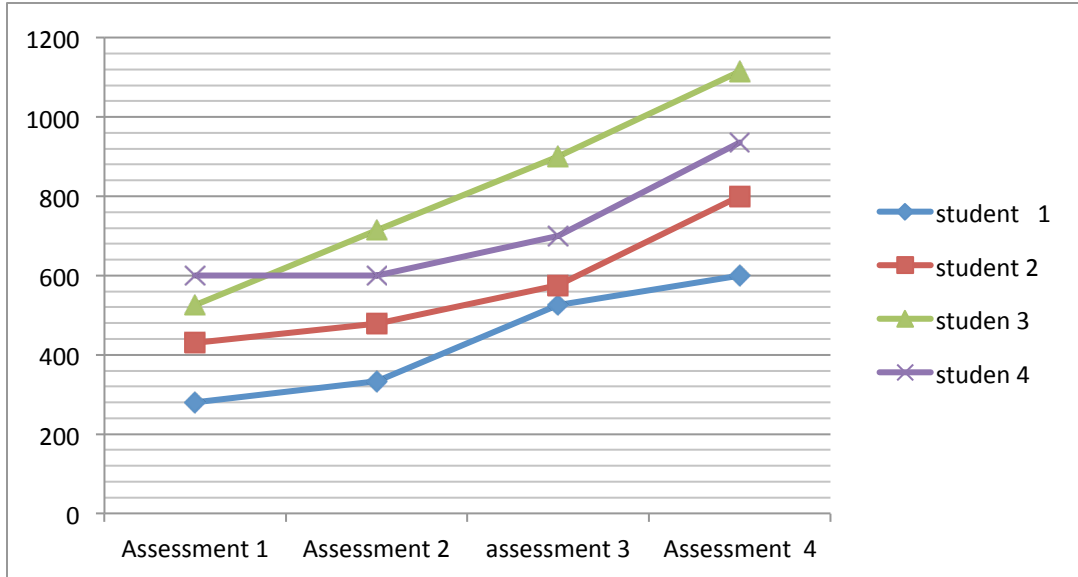
When I interviewed Jorge, he said, “I told my mom that if I would have been taught this way where the teacher kept me busy all class I would have got more A’s.” When I asked Sasa how she felt about the new method of teaching he said, “This way I learned more faster and I learned more words that I can use with my family.” With Gustavo, I wanted to know how learning how to be more engaged in his lessons had helped in him in his other classes and in aspects of school. I sat down and spoke to Gustavo, as he explained how he felt comfortable doing his work in every class. He took part of the class conversations and in group participation which helped his understanding of the lessons and boosted his grades. This student also indicated that by learning how to engage in the classroom helped him become more comfortable in social settings on the school’s campus. In the beginning I noticed that Robert said;” Why do we need to know this?” By being engaged in sheltered instruction, he learned how to read and write at a faster pace and greater comprehension. Since then he has been totally involved in the process. After four months, I asked him how

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he felt about his progress. In return, he said that he was happy that he could tell his mom more words and that he was not afraid to read in the other classes.

After sitting down with these students, I looked at their assessments from June of 2010 to January 2011 to see if the impact of sheltered instruction is reflected by their performance.. Figure 4.1 demonstrates the progress of the students that participated in this action research project. This chart shows that each student produced gains as they continued to engage in the SIOP process.

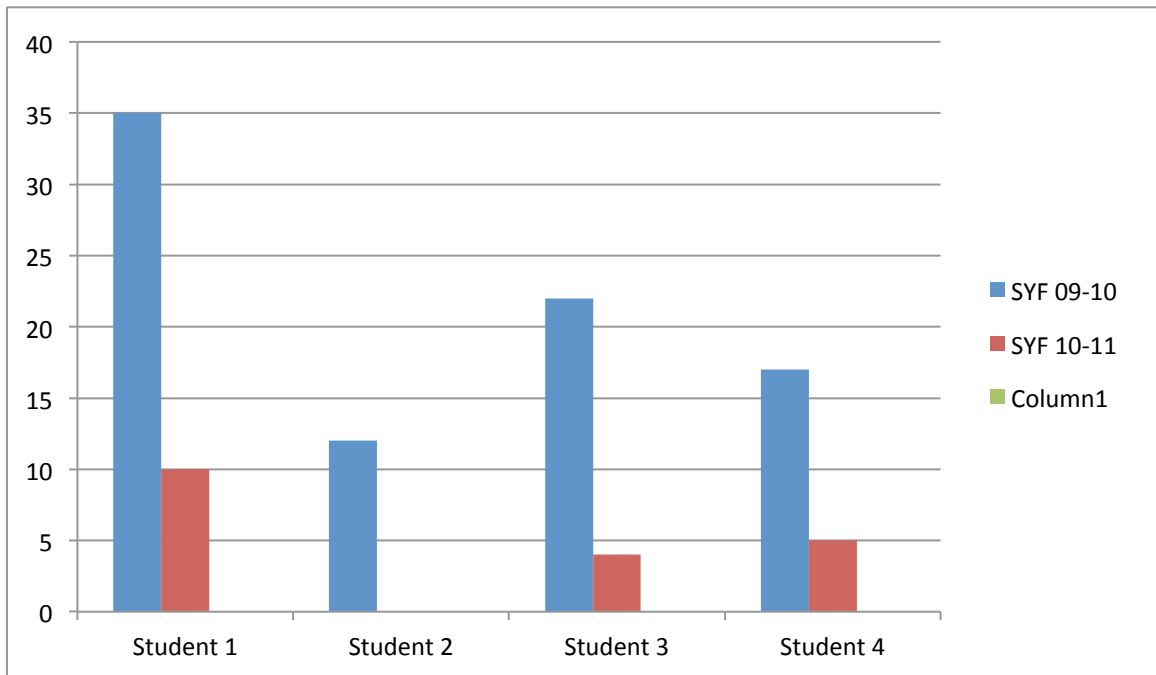
Figure 4.1- Student Reading Growth for Sheltered Instruction.



We can see in Figure 4.2 that not only has progress been made in reading, spelling and writing, one can notice that each student involved in this research had a decrease in absences. This evidence demonstrate that attendance is imperative to having success in sheltered instruction. This chart shows that student # 1 missed 35 days in the fall of 2009-2010 and only missed 10 days in the school year 2010-2011. Student #2 went from 12 days to perfect attendance, student #3 from 22 days to 4 days and student #4 from 17 days to 5 days.

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Figure 4.2 Student absentee reduction during Sheltered



I would like to reiterate that both Figures 4.1 and 4.2 emphasize and show the growth and success of my students as took part in the sheltered instruction classroom culture. This is important because SIOP is not used in every class, so each student has to refocus to the SIOP strategies when they come to class.

By success, I mean not only the academic success, but the enthusiasm and engagement of the students. I truly believe that sheltered instruction should be implemented in every school and in every content area class (English, Reading, Math, and Science). I feel that by using the same academic language in every class and on the word walls, students' burdens and affective filter will decrease and allow them to experience quicker success. They felt a sense of accomplishment which encouraged

SHELTERED INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES IMPROVE THE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF ELLS them to come to school more often and engage more readily. This, I believe, will enable teachers to have a better classroom community.

### **Overall Recommendations**

My goal for this action research project was to answer the question, how can sheltered instruction effect the academic achievement of English language learners, low income, special education students (fortunately I teach all three in the same class)? Based on my research (I would like to continue this wonderful research), I came to the realization that sheltered instruction (kept all students engaged, kept them working at a rapid pace, and allowed them to have ownership of their lessons. This is a remarkable finding because my students struggle with self esteem and academic learning and academic pacing issues. Therefore, sheltered instruction allowed them to work at “normal” flow of learning. They were not ashamed when working with general education students or when other teachers visited my class. Student academic scores increased and attendance improved because of their engagement in shelter instruction.

I specifically teach and recommend two learning methods. I recommend SIOP (Echevarria, 2007) and CALLA (Chamot, 1994) because these two teaching and learning approaches will help not only the English language learners but also special education students and students from low social economic families. I believe the reason these learning approaches help all students is because they allow students to engage in learning at a faster, yet more comprehensible, pace. Students are a consistent part of a learning team which builds up their self esteem because they accept ownership of their lessons.

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In order for any program to be successful, there has to be cooperation among all staff and parents. I believe that educators have to continually attend professional development so that we can learn and remain on the same page, but I also recommend that we go the extra mile to meet with parents and allow them to be informed of the SIOP process. I believe this will allow the students to work at home and help parents understand the new concepts introduced in school.

### **What Other Research is Needed?**

Effective research studies raise questions for further study. Further study is needed for: a) the connection between diagnostic teachings, standard-based teaching, and the SIOP, and; b) the impact of the SIOP on the other areas of the student achievement. Studies continue to focus on the SIOP itself and on the impact on ELL students. (Echevarria, 2007). I believe more research is needed in how to combine Sheltered Instructional Observational Protocol (SIOP), The Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA), and Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) into every school. This could be done by encouraging teachers to pursue ELL graduate studies, or support K-12 faculty to attend ELL professional development institutes in order to train other staff. This will allow every school to building to develop a sheltered instruction culture and program model.

### **Recommendations and Conclusions Anchored in Research**

I believe that the sheltered instruction is a critical advancement in education not only for English language learners, but for such populations as special education students, and students from low social economic backgrounds. Sheltered instruction will not only improve classroom instruction, but can enhance all students' higher



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order of thinking. I also believe shelter instruction can help students build self-esteem and expect higher academic success. In my research, I discovered that one flaw was the “down time” that students have between June and September. These are critical times when students are least likely to read or write. Because of this, I believe there must be a way, a program, a concept, a procedure that will allow or permit students to continue sheltered instruction during the summer months. This would close the gap that students and teachers confront in the fall. I also discovered that a major reason why students want a significant education is because they want to help improve their families’ quality of life and literacy. Because of this dynamic, I feel teachers should aggressively try to involve family and help them establish learning stations based on their funds of knowledge in the homes (it may consist of a readings, specialized skills, native language development, social networking, etc). If students can come to school in September and, after a quick review, go right into SIOP model, all levels of learning would increase.

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