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Sheltered English Instruction. ERIC Digest.

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The number of limited-English-proficient (LEP) students in U.S. schools has increased dramatically in recent years. Waggoner (1984) estimates that by the year 2000, 3.4

million students in this country will speak a language other than English as their mother tongue. School districts are faced with the task of preparing these LEP students to keep up academically with their native-English-speaking peers. One way to help LEP students succeed academically is to recognize the need to develop their cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP)--the kind of proficiency required to make sense of academic language in context-reduced situations (Cummins, 1979, 1981). CALP can take up to seven years to acquire; even "advantaged" non-English-speakers require 5-8 years to score as well as native speakers on standardized tests (Collier, 1987). Accordingly, if teachers of English as a second language (ESL) focus solely on developing students' linguistic competence, the students may fall too far behind in academic subjects to ever catch up.

One type of instruction that offers promise in helping LEP students develop academic competence while also developing English proficiency is sheltered English.

WHAT IS SHELTERED ENGLISH?

Sheltered English is an instructional approach used to make academic instruction in English understandable to LEP students. Students in these classes are "sheltered" in that they do not compete academically with native English speakers since the class includes only LEP students. In the regular classroom, English fluency is assumed. In contrast, in the sheltered English classroom, teachers use physical activities, visual aids, and the environment to teach important new words for concept development in mathematics, science, history, home economics, and other subjects (National Clearinghouse on Bilingual Education, 1987).
The methods that teachers employ in sheltered classes include the following:

- Extralinguistic cues such as visuals, props, and body language (Parker, 1985);

- Linguistic modifications such as repetition and pauses during speech (Parker, 1985);

- Interactive lectures with frequent comprehension checks;

- Cooperative learning strategies (Kagan 1985);

- Focus on central concepts rather than on details by using a thematic approach;

- Development of reading strategies such as mapping and writing to develop thinking (Langer & Applebee, 1985).

ARE THERE DIFFERENT TYPES OF SHELTERED ENGLISH PROGRAMS?

Sheltered English programs may be either bilingual or monolingual, but English instruction is the key element in both. One model described by Weinhouse (1986) defines sheltered English as "a program of instruction for language minority students consisting of three components: sheltered English instruction, primary language instruction, and mainstream English instruction" (p.4).
Krashen (1985) presents a detailed model for this type of sheltered English illustrated below.

Beginning: (1) Mainstream (Art, Music, PE); (2) Sheltered (ESL); (3) First Language (All Core Subjects).

Intermediate: (1) Mainstream (Art, Music, PE): (2) Sheltered (ESL, Math, Science); (3) First Language (Language Arts, Social Studies).

Advanced: (1) Mainstream (Art, Music, PE, Science, Math); (2) Sheltered (Language Arts, Social Studies); (3) First Language (Enrichment Program).

Mainstream: (1) Mainstream (All Subjects); (2) Sheltered (Blank); (3) First Language (Enrichment Program). In this model, students are mainstreamed initially in music, art, and physical education (PE)--the subjects least linguistically demanding. Students study English in a sheltered class and all core subjects in their first language. At the intermediate stage, math and science as well as English are taught in sheltered classes, while social studies and language arts are taught in the student's first language. At the advanced level, language arts and social studies are sheltered, and the student is mainstreamed for all other classes.

The goal of the program is to mainstream the student gradually, but since some instruction occurs in the primary language, bilingualism is also possible. However, in some school situations, especially at the secondary level, the primary instruction component is infeasible (unless the instructor has the benefit of native-speaking aides to assist LEP students with individual instruction) because either a variety of native languages are spoken by the students or the number of speakers of any given language is small.

Schifini (1985) acknowledges the desirability of programs with first language instruction and asks: "How does the American history teacher who has students who speak eleven different primary languages in his or her classroom make the class understandable at all?" (p.2). Schifini proposes a sheltered English program for students with intermediate English proficiency. At the first level of this two-level program, students study ESL and take sheltered math and science classes. At the second level, sheltered classes in social studies are added as students continue with ESL instruction.

WHO ARE THE INSTRUCTORS?

Typically, sheltered English classes are taught by regular classroom teachers who receive in-service instruction on ways to make subject-area content comprehensible for LEP students. However, ESL teachers may assume part of the responsibility for the curriculum and teach a class such as an ESL/social studies (or sheltered social studies) class.

HOW IS SHELTERED ENGLISH DIFFERENT FROM OTHER APPROACHES TO TEACHING

LEP STUDENTS?As Weinhouse (1986) suggests, sheltered English programs can contain key elements of three other approaches to teaching limited-English-proficient students: bilingual education, immersion, and content-based instruction.

- Bilingual Education. Bilingual programs have been effective in developing both English proficiency and academic competence by instruction in the primary language as well as in English. Where appropriate and feasible, sheltered English programs also include first language instruction.

- Immersion Education. Immersion programs teach a second language by providing sheltered instruction in content areas to students with limited language proficiency. In foreign language immersion programs, English-speaking students receive sheltered instruction in languages such as French, Spanish, or German. (In sheltered English programs, the sheltered instruction is in English.)

- Content-based Instruction. A number of programs, including sheltered English, have been designed with the aim of teaching English through the content areas.

CONCLUSION

Sheltered English instruction includes a variety of techniques to help regular classroom teachers make content-area material comprehensible for ESL students who already have some English proficiency. The programs may include a primary language instruction component. Sheltered English programs have proven successful in the development of academic competence in LEP students because such programs concentrate on the simultaneous development of content-area and ESL proficiency.

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