

# Sheltered Instruction

Since the early 1980's content-area teachers have looked to sheltered English instruction as a way to make content comprehensible for the English language learners (ELLs) in their classrooms. In the days when the term was first used in connection with ELLs, students were considered "sheltered" because they studied in classes separate from "the mainstream" and did not compete academically with native English speaking students (Freeman & Freeman, 1988). Today, the majority of ELLs study alongside their English-speaking peers, are held accountable to the same curriculum standards, and take the same high-stakes tests. Sheltered English instruction has come to mean a set of practices valuable to all teachers in helping ELLs learn English and, at the same time, learn content material in English.

## 1. What is sheltered English instruction?

Sheltered English instruction is an instructional approach that engages ELLs above the beginner level in developing grade-level content-area knowledge, academic skills, and increased English proficiency. In sheltered English classes, teachers use clear, direct, simple English and a wide range of scaffolding strategies to communicate meaningful input in the content area to students. Learning activities that connect new content to students' prior knowledge, that require collaboration among students, and that spiral through curriculum material, offer ELLs the grade-level content instruction of their English-speaking peers, while adapting lesson delivery to suit their English proficiency level.

## 2. Where is sheltered instruction used and by whom?

Sheltered English instruction is used in English as a second language (ESL) programs with sheltered content courses (e.g., sheltered chemistry, sheltered U. S. history), newcomer programs, transitional bilingual education, developmental bilingual education, dual-language programs, and two-way immersion programs. Sheltered instruction appears in classes that consist of only English language learners and in classes of both ELLs and native English speaking students. The sheltered approach is also used in many foreign language classes in the United States.

## 3. What other audiences might benefit from sheltered instruction?

Some aspects of sheltered instruction can be useful to individuals with any of these traits:

- Hearing impairments.
- Sensitivity to auditory input.
- Brain injuries that impair language proficiency.
- Strong preference for visual or kinesthetic learning rather than auditory.
- Limited language skills, such as very young children or students/adults with low language proficiency.

#### 4. What are some teaching strategies used in sheltered instruction?

- Speak clearly and slowly. For example, introduce your name with a pause between your first and last names, or between your title and last name.
- Employ pauses, short sentences, simple syntax, few pronouns, and idioms.
- Use visuals, hands-on activities, and items that they can manipulate or hold.
- Require physical response to check comprehension, such as asking students to show, point, or draw their response.
- Model, or act out, the activities for students.
- Use modified speech, gestures, body language, facial expressions.
- Use other (bilingual) students as peer helpers. This also works with family members.
- Encourage responses in student's first language.
- Simplify the language, not the content.
- Ask students questions that require one/two word responses: who?, what?, which one?, how many?
- Focus on expanding students' vocabulary by using words with Greek and Latin roots. These are sometimes related to similar words in other languages. For example, instead of saying *watch*, you could say *observe*. It corresponds to the Spanish verb *observar* and the French verb *observer*.
- Show them how some words are related, such as turn and tour.
- List and review instructions step by step, checking comprehension after each one.
- Paraphrase using synonyms, antonyms, and cognates.

Much of this information was excerpted from the website for **Teaching Diverse Learners**:  
<http://www.alliance.brown.edu/tdl/tl-strategies/mc-principles.shtml>

See also:

- Sheltered English
- S.D.A.I.E. (Specially Designed Academic Instruction In English)
- <http://wildlife.state.co.us/SiteCollectionDocuments/DOW/Education/TeacherResources/ProjectWILD/ShelteredWILDPLTBooklet.pdf>
- Cal-Wood Education Center, 303.449.0603, 303. 449.0576, [www.calwood.org](http://www.calwood.org)

Presented by Renee Guerrero, Education Director for WOW! Children's Museum, at the NISE Network *Bilingual Audiences Workshop* on June 7, 2013. This summary can be downloaded after the workshop from the NISE Net website.