

FIGURE 2.4 Sample Verbs for Writing Content and Language Objectives

Verbs for Content Objectives	Verbs for Language Objectives
Identify	Listen for
Solve	Retell
Investigate	Define
Distinguish	Find the main idea
Hypothesize	Compare
Create	Summarize
Select	Rehearse
Draw conclusions about	Persuade
Determine	Write
Find	Draft
Calculate	Defend a position on
Observe	Describe

As you write your objectives, keep the verbs in Figure 2.4 in mind. Although the verbs are not exclusive to one type or another, they are more common to the category presented. Over time, add to this list to further distinguish between the content and language goals of your lesson. Also be sure to use active verbs; stay away from *learn*, *know*, and *understand*.

Note that even if you have students with mixed levels of English proficiency in class, we do not suggest you write different language objectives per proficiency level. Instead, write an objective that all students should attain based on the content concepts in the lesson, but adjust the intended outcomes to match the students' ability levels. Some students may master the objective by the end of the lesson; others will be at some point on a path toward mastery.

After you have written your content and language objectives, we suggest you refer to this checklist to evaluate them:

- _____ The objectives are aligned to state or district standards.
- _____ The objectives are observable.
- _____ The objectives are written and will be stated simply, in language the students can understand.
- _____ The objectives are written in terms of student learning.
- _____ The content objective is related to the key concept of the lesson.
- _____ The language objective promotes student academic language growth (i.e., it is not something most students already do well).
- _____ The language objective connects clearly with the lesson topic or lesson activities.
- _____ The objectives are measurable. I have a plan for assessing student progress on meeting these objectives during the lesson.



SIOP® FEATURE 3:

Content Concepts Appropriate for Age and Educational Background Level of Students

SIOP teachers must carefully consider the content concepts they wish to teach and use district curriculum guidelines and grade-level content standards as guides. In SIOP classrooms, this entails ensuring that although materials may be adapted to meet the needs of English learners, the content is not diminished. When planning lessons around content concepts, consider the following:

- the students' first language literacy,
- their English language proficiency,
- their schooling backgrounds and academic preparation for grade-level work,
- their background knowledge of the topic,
- the cultural and age appropriateness of instructional materials, and
- the difficulty level of any text or other material to be read.

Our goal as SIOP teachers is to provide the grade-level curriculum to our English learners. By employing the type of techniques we propose in the SIOP Model, teachers skillfully make that content comprehensible to students. Sometimes we adapt the materials being read or the materials used to accomplish a task. The following considerations are worth keeping in mind.

- In general, it is inappropriate to use the curriculum materials and books from much earlier grades. Students in high school who are developing literacy for the first time should not be reading about “doggies and birdies,” for example. Other materials should be found, and if necessary, the teacher should provide the scaffolding needed to understand the content concepts.
- In some cases, students with major gaps in their educational backgrounds may be placed in newcomer programs or specialized classes that pull objectives and content concepts from earlier grades in order to provide the foundational knowledge the students need to perform grade-level work successfully and catch up to their classmates (Short & Boyson, 2004, 2012). Ideally, specialized courses would be developed to accelerate the learning of students with limited formal schooling, such as FAST Math developed by Fairfax County (VA) Public Schools (Helman & Buchanan, 1993), which can help students gain several years' worth of mathematics instruction in one subject area in six months or one year.
- We should also be mindful of concepts our upper elementary and secondary English learners may have already learned through their life experiences or prior schooling. Sometimes, an illustration or demonstration can help students recall a concept and then the teacher can help them learn new English words to describe the concept and add to their understanding of it. As Torgesen and colleagues (2007) point out, “ELLs who already know and understand a

concept in their first language have a far simpler task to develop language for the concept in English than do students who lack knowledge of the concept in either language” (p. 92).

- To help students make connections to the content topics, reflect on the amount of background knowledge needed to learn and apply the concepts, and plan ways to build or activate students’ prior knowledge related to them. For example, fourth-grade students typically learn about magnetism, yet some adolescent English learners may not have studied this concept. Rather than diminish the content, use what prior knowledge students do have, perhaps about attraction, and then explicitly build background on magnetism as a foundation for the lesson.
- Another way to build background for a small group of learners so they are ready for the content concepts is through a small group minilesson that precedes the regular whole class lesson (Rance-Roney, 2010; Vogt, 2000). This minilesson provides a “jump start” by reviewing key background concepts, introducing vocabulary, leading a picture or text “walk” through the reading material, engaging in simulations or role-plays, or participating in hands-on experiential activities. The jump-start minilesson develops context and gives access to children who may lack appropriate background knowledge or experience with the grade-level content concepts. In heterogeneous classes in which English learners study with native English speakers, peer tutors can be used to teach some of the requisite background information as well. Another option, where available, is to provide the minilesson in the students’ native language.
- In schools where an ESL teacher and a content/classroom teacher work collaboratively with the same group of students, the ESL teacher can offer lessons that build background and vocabulary before the English learners study the topic in their regular or sheltered content class.



SIOP® FEATURE 4:

Supplementary Materials Used to a High Degree, Making the Lesson Clear and Meaningful

Information that is embedded in context allows English learners to understand and complete more cognitively demanding tasks. Effective SIOP instruction involves the use of many supplementary materials that support the core curriculum and contextualize learning. This is especially important for students who do not have grade-level academic backgrounds and/or who have language and learning difficulties.

Because lectures and pencil-and-paper activities centered on a text are often difficult for these students, remember to plan for supplementary materials that will enhance meaning and clarify confusing concepts, making lessons more relevant.

A variety of supplementary materials also supports different learning styles and multiple intelligences because information and concepts are presented in a multifaceted manner. Students can see, hear, feel, perform, create, and participate in order to make connections and construct personal, relevant meanings. The use of technology (e.g., interactive whiteboards) and multimedia can enhance student understanding

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Click on Videos, then search for “Supplementary Materials” to see an example of the effective use of supplementary materials.

and engagement with the content topics and related language practice opportunities. Supplementary materials provide a real-life context and enable students to bridge prior experiences with new learning. Where possible, choose materials that are culturally responsive to student backgrounds.

Examples of supplementary materials and resources that can be used to create context and support content concepts include the following:

- ◉ **Hands-on Manipulatives:** These can include anything from Cuisinaire rods and tangrams for math to microscopes for science to interactive maps for social studies. Manipulating objects physically can reduce the language load of an activity; beginning students in particular can still participate and demonstrate their understanding.
- ◉ **Realia:** These are real-life objects that enable students to make connections to their own lives. Examples include play money (coins and bills) for a unit on money, historical realia such as photos, recordings, and clothing from the 1920's Jazz Age, or nutrition labels on food products for a health unit.
- ◉ **Pictures and Visuals:** Photographs and illustrations are available that depict nearly any object, process, or setting. Web sites, magazines, commercial photos, and hand drawings can provide visual support for a wide variety of content and vocabulary concepts and can build background knowledge. Models, graphs, charts, timelines, maps, props, and bulletin board displays also convey information. Many teachers now have electronic document viewers that they use to display book pages, photos, and more to the class. Many teachers also use PowerPoint slides. Students with diverse abilities often have difficulty processing an inordinate amount of auditory information and so instruction that is supported with visual clues is more beneficial to them.
- ◉ **Multimedia:** A wide variety of multimedia materials are available to enhance teaching and learning. These range from simple tape recordings to videos, DVDs, interactive CD-ROMs, and an increasing number of resources available on the Internet. Brief video clips at www.discoveryeducation.com, www.pbs.com, and www.nationalgeographic.com are effective tools. For some students and tasks, media in the students' native language may be a valuable source of information. It is important to preview Web sites for appropriateness and readability, especially when using them with beginning and intermediate-level students.
- ◉ **Demonstrations:** Demonstrations provide visual support and modeling for English learners. If you have a lesson task that includes supplementary materials, then you can scaffold information by carefully planning demonstrations that model how to use the materials and follow directions. Students can then practice these steps in groups or alone, with you or other experienced individuals nearby to assist as needed.
- ◉ **Related Literature:** A wide variety of fiction and nonfiction texts can be included to support content teaching. Many content teachers create class libraries with trade books on key topics. Some teachers ask librarians to set aside books on related topics as well. Students can read these as supplements to the textbook. They offer a more relaxing way to look at a topic in more depth. Class libraries

can promote more independent reading among students, which is valuable for vocabulary development and reading comprehension practice.

- **Hi-lo Readers and Thematic Sets:** Some publishers offer classic literature as well as fiction and nonfiction selections in a hi-lo format. The stories are of high interest but lower readability levels and tend to include many visuals and a glossary. Some books are grouped into thematic sets (e.g., *Civil Rights Leaders Around the World*) and can accompany different content area courses. The books in each set are written at different reading levels (e.g., one below-level book, two on-level books, one above-level book). They are useful for classes that have students with multiple proficiency levels in English.
- **Chapter Summaries:** Some textbook publishers provided one-page summaries of each chapter. These overviews present the key ideas. The summaries are often available in Spanish and sometimes in other languages as well. They can be used to preview the topic or to review it afterwards.
- **Adapted Text:** A type of supplementary reading material that can be very effective for English learners, as well as struggling readers, is adapted text. Without significantly diminishing the content concepts, a piece of text (usually from a grade-level textbook) is adapted to reduce the reading level demands. Complicated, lengthy sentences with specialized terminology are rewritten in smaller chunks. Definitions are given for difficult vocabulary in context. Please note that we are not advocating “dumbing down” the textbook, an approach that in the past yielded easy-to-read materials with virtually no content concepts left intact. Rather, we suggest that the major concepts be retained but the reading level demands of the text be reduced.



SIOP® FEATURE 5:

Adaptation of Content to All Levels of Student Proficiency

In many schools, teachers are required to use textbooks that are too difficult for English learners to read. We have previously mentioned the problem of “watering down” text to the point where all students can read it; content concepts are frequently lost when the text is adapted in this way. We also know English learners cannot be expected to learn all content information by listening to lectures.

Therefore, we must find ways to make the text and other resource materials accessible for all students, adapting them so that the content concepts are left intact. Several ways of doing this have been recommended for students who have reading difficulties (Readance, Bean, & Baldwin, 2001; Ruddell, 2007; Vacca & Vacca, 2010), and they work equally well for English learners. These approaches can be used throughout a lesson, as a prereading instructional strategy, as an aid during reading, and as a postreading method for organizing newly learned information.

Native language supports can help with adapting the content too. If some students are literate in their native language, texts written in that language may be used

to supplement a textbook or clarify key concepts. Students may conduct research using native language materials and share the information with classmates in English. Increasingly, the Internet offers native language Web sites, especially for the more commonly taught languages, and authentic materials such as newspapers can be found online. For students who are not literate in their native language but have oral skills, native language broadcasts, podcasts, audio books, and access to knowledgeable adults who speak their language may be additional sources of information.

Suggestions for adapting text to make it more accessible include the following:

- ◉ **Summarizing the text to focus on the key points of information:** This approach can help focus the learning on key historical events, steps for solving a math problem, or understanding the plot in a story. The new text might be written as an outline, a list of bulleted points, or a graphic organizer like a flow chart.
- ◉ **Elaborating the text to add information:** This approach may make a text longer, but the adapter can embed definitions of difficult words or provide more background information.

Although time consuming, rewriting text is an effective modification of curricular materials because information is organized in small sequential steps, or logical chunks of information. Short, simpler sentences are rewritten from long, complex, dense ones. An example of a complex sentence from a science text follows: “Electrons have negative electric charges and orbit around the core, nucleus, of an atom.” A simple adaptation of this sentence is, “Electrons have negative charges. They orbit around the core of the atom. The core is called the nucleus.”

Ideally, rewritten paragraphs should include a topic sentence with several sentences providing supporting details. Maintaining a consistent format promotes easier reading for information-seeking purposes. All sentences included in the rewritten text should be direct and relevant to the subject. In the following example, a paragraph of original text is taken from an anthology theme in a reading series (Cooper et al., 2003). This passage was excerpted from a piece of nonfiction literature, *Into the Mummy’s Tomb*, written by Nicholas Reeves.

Original text: “Tutankhamen’s mummy bore a magnificent mask of burnished gold, which covered its face and shoulders. Its headcloth was inlaid with blue glass. The vulture and cobra on its forehead, ready to spit fire at the pharaoh’s enemies, were of solid gold” (p. 237).

We have rewritten the original text as follows:

Adapted text: “King Tutankhamen’s mummy wore a magnificent mask, made of very shiny gold. It covered the face and shoulders of the body. The part of the mask over the forehead looked like a gold headcloth. Blue glass was sewed into the headcloth. Shapes of a vulture (a type of bird) and a cobra (a type of snake) were above the eyes on the mask. They were made of solid gold. They looked like they could attack King Tut’s enemies.”

As you compare the texts, you see some thought was involved in the rewrite. Some words, like “magnificent,” are Latin cognates and should be kept if you have