

**SIOP IN THE KOREAN CLASSROOM: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF ITS APPLICATION
IN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT****DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.15287343****Rosette A. Ando**

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Abstract

This study presents the development and implementation of an instructional framework integrating the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) model with a backward teaching and learning cycle, designed to support the professional growth of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers in South Korea. The framework was applied across five instructional cycles (the four-step backward teaching and learning cycle, and the use of the coaching cycle) through a pilot case study involving two experienced high school English teachers. Data collected through surveys, observations, lesson plans, and coaching sessions indicate significant improvement in the teachers' instructional strategies and reflective thinking, with key aspects showing statistical significance. Even with the presence of its constraints and limitations, this study underscores the value of combining structured instructional models with reflective coaching to foster sustainable teacher development and improve classroom practice, particularly in EFL contexts. This highlights the potential of integrating SIOP and reflective coaching to improve EFL teaching practices and suggests future research and teacher training directions.

Keywords: *Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP), Backward teaching and learning cycle, Reflective coaching cycle, English as a Foreign Language (EFL), and Professional development (PD)*

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Kim Hyunsook Song, a bilingual English and Korean speaker and the PI for the 2011 QTEL grant, is an Associate Professor and Associate Chair in the Department of Educator Preparation. Her expertise lies in TESOL and bilingual education, and she has developed a TESOL program, a Seminars in Bilingual Education course, and an online graduate TESOL certification program. Song's significant impact on the field is demonstrated through a book and over 25 peer-reviewed publications, the result of over 25 years of teaching and research. This extensive work includes linguistically and culturally responsive pedagogy for ELLs and nonnative English speakers, the development of online TESOL practicums with coaching, and recent explorations into teacher attitudes toward ELLs and their linguistic and cultural intelligence. Her future research aims to link language education with dual language learning, and she is a founding member of the Missouri Dual Language Immersion Network (MODLAN).

Introduction

Song's (2016) study presents an instructional framework that integrates the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) model with a backward teaching cycle to enhance professional development (PD) for South Korean EFL teachers. The study evaluates the framework's effectiveness through a pilot program involving five lesson

implementations, using pre- and post-surveys, reflective coaching sessions, and lesson plan analyses as data collection tools. The findings indicate improvements in 26 of the 30 SIOP features, with statistically significant gains in scaffolding instruction and student interaction. By combining SIOP's structured approach to language and content integration with backward design principles, which emphasize alignment between objectives, assessments, and instruction, the study offers a novel approach to addressing the challenges faced by EFL teachers in Korea's exam-oriented educational system. However, while the framework shows promise in fostering reflective teaching practices, questions remain about its scalability and adaptability to other contexts.

The relevance and significance of this study lie in its attempt to address a critical gap in EFL teacher education within contexts where English is not used as a daily communicative tool. By adapting SIOP—a model originally developed for English language learners (ELLs) in English-dominant settings—to South Korea's unique educational environment, the study expands the applicability of SIOP beyond its traditional scope. This is particularly significant given Korea's longstanding challenges in developing students' communicative competence despite substantial investments in English education. The integration of backward design principles further strengthens the framework by encouraging teachers to align their instructional objectives, assessments, and activities systematically. This structured approach could inform similar PD initiatives in other EFL contexts, such as Japan or China, where teacher-centered methods often dominate classrooms. However, the study's focus on improving instructional strategies does not fully account for systemic barriers such as large class sizes and rigid curricula, which continue to undermine communicative language teaching (CLT). While reflective coaching is a commendable feature of the framework, its applicability to under-resourced or rural settings remains untested, limiting its broader relevance.

The primary objective of this study is twofold: to develop an instructional framework that integrates SIOP with backward design principles tailored for EFL contexts and to evaluate its effectiveness through a pilot PD program. The framework is structured around a four-step teaching cycle—pre-instructional exploration, assessment development, instructional presentation, and reflective expansion—that aims to enhance teachers' ability to design content-aligned, communicative lessons. By grounding professional development in localized reflective practices, the study seeks to empower teachers to bridge the gap between theoretical frameworks and classroom realities. Additionally, the research evaluates whether teachers' self-reported competencies improve after participating in the PD program and whether their reflective thinking skills advance through engagement with the framework. This dual focus on measurable outcomes and teacher self-efficacy aligns with broader efforts to address the "implementation gap" often observed in EFL reforms.

Summary of the Research Paper

This research aimed at two major goals which are to develop an EFL instructional framework strategy that integrates the SIOP (Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol), the Backward Four-Step Teaching and Learning Cycle, and the use of coaching cycles. This study examines the effectiveness of the created framework tool in Korean English classrooms by conducting a pilot case study with two Korean teachers teaching the nonnative Korean students over five lessons in a row to assess the effectiveness of the tool, which is manifested through the improvement of teachers' instructional strategies and reflective thinking skills. Korean EFL students display insufficient communicative capability, very distant from that of a native speaker, despite the amount of money, time, and effort invested in English education (Choi, 2008). This phenomenon is partly attributed to both teachers' lack of mastery in English and communicative teaching strategies, enormous classroom sizes, and the shortage of content resources relevant to the Korean students (Dash, 2003; Li, 1998; Butler, 2004; Park, 2007).

The creation of the SIOP-based instructional framework involved the review of the two tools, which are the backward four-step teaching and learning cycle and the sheltered instruction observation, with the guided coaching cycles that aimed to facilitate and support the participants' reflective teaching practices. The four-step teaching and learning framework is used holistically in order to implement the SIOP Model. One-on-one coaching is utilized in the implementation of the SIOP Model. Teachers' lessons were recorded as the coaches rated their performance using the 30-item SIOP instruments to assess the participating teachers' development of their instructional strategies and reflective thinking with the use of the pre- and post-evaluation SIOP survey results. Using the data collected, each participant created their lesson plans with the reframed problems and added new solutions and class activities. The study used the participants' instructional plans, observation field notes, and the pre- and post-conference reflection answers. These were used to find the participants' performance advancement using the SIOP coaching and the reflective thinking process.

The study used the pilot case study as the research design to test the effectiveness of the EFL SIOP-Based Instruction Framework in English classrooms in the Korean context. Two English teacher participants from high school in Seoul, Korea, were selected by the Seoul Ministry Office of Education to improve their English fluency and teaching strategies. It focused on two research question guides: whether teacher scores get higher on the SIOP post-survey evaluation, and if the teachers' reflective thinking shows improvement. After the utilization of the SIOP-based framework. The use of the Korean language to assist students' understanding is one of the modifications made to the SIOP Model.

The study's results highlighted the increase in students' understanding of the language objectives, and by implementing the various hands-on activities in the Korean classrooms, it suggested the framework's initial positive influence. However, the results showed that there were areas, such as content objective and key vocabulary review that showed less improvement. In terms of reflective thinking, both teacher participants demonstrated improvement and effectiveness over their five lessons conducted in classrooms.

The study concludes that the integration of the SIOP model, the backward teaching cycle, and the SIOP reflective coaching holds the potential for improvements in the instructional strategies of the Korean English Foreign Language non-native English-speaking educators, particularly in students' assessment and hands-on activities, as indicated in the study's results. Overall, the effectiveness of the SIOP-based instructional framework suggests a more valuable and practical approach to empowering the Korean EFL teachers with effective instructional strategies and cultivating profound reflective practices, aiming to enhance the communicative competence of their students.

Critical Analysis

Song's (2016) study offers a timely and innovative instructional framework for Korean EFL teachers by integrating the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) model with backward design and reflective coaching cycles. The methodology of this study utilizes the application of triangulation through the integration of qualitative and quantitative survey, lesson plan, and reflective coaching session data. Such strong methodology provides an overall picture of the effect of the framework on teaching practices, especially scaffolding and engaging students. Nevertheless, the findings of the study are moderated by some limitations. The small number of teachers, just two, necessarily limits the generalizability of the findings to the larger population of Korean EFL teachers. In addition, the lack of longitudinal data questions the sustainability of the types of improvements observed and the long-term effectiveness of the instructional model. Most critically, the absence of outcome data on students precludes establishing conclusively a direct causal relationship between the improved instructional methods and measurable gains in student achievement.

Conducted within the broader academic context, Song's findings, while capable, stand in contrast to larger and more representative participant sample studies as employed by the researcher's previous study at the University of Missouri-St. Louis. Such large-scale studies are more likely to provide results indicative of higher reliability and generalizability. By taking a cue from Creswell (2018), the need for follow-up studies to use larger, more representative samples becomes evident in order to confirm and extend Song's preliminary findings. Through the application of backward design principles places Song's study within contemporary pedagogical discourses on effective instruction. Its implications for the professional development of EFL teachers through a tailored SIOP-based reflective model are significant which offers practicality providing potential valuable lessons for similar contexts, like in the Philippine context. While the use of SIOP for a specific context is promising, careful consideration and adaptation will be needed to overcome the particular challenges of teachers in different and larger settings. Furthermore, the adapted use of Korean to facilitate greater understanding, while helpful in the short term, calls for a careful approach to maximize optimal English language exposure and practice. Overall, while its methodological strengths and pedagogical implications, Song's study has limitations in sample size, longitudinal outcome, and the absence of data on student perspectives which demands for further research to determine its applicability and effectiveness within the EFL context.

Evaluation

This study is primarily based on the internal documentation as the basis for empirical data, it is organized-strategy reflective which analysis seems structured. Due to the lack of some basic empirical investigation, such as surveys or interviews with relevant external participants, the internal validity is at best moderate. Provided that this research is restricted only to SIOP policies and internal processes, there is little or no external application of any conclusions that may be drawn from it about other involvements or even at a wider range of research levels, globally or internationally. It's hard to generalize the conclusions to other professional groups or across contexts. The paper applies qualitative content analysis but does not employ clearly definable procedural steps that could aid other researchers in achieving uniform outcomes— coding schemes and interrater reliability. Having said that, the thematic analysis appears to be logically formulated which, at the very least, guarantees some level of reliability.

One major concern is that researchers seem closely tied to SIOP or are at least strong advocates for the organization. As a result, the paper tends to emphasize achievements and progress while minimizing or overlooking critical shortcomings. Most of the data come from SIOP's own publications and internal assessments, which are naturally inclined to present the organization in a positive light. A more objective approach would have included data from external evaluations, member surveys (with raw data), or feedback from those outside the SIOP organization (e.g., organizational clients, policymakers, academics from other disciplines). The tone is largely affirmative, using

language that reinforces SIOP's successes. While constructive, this tone can undermine a balanced critique, as it may gloss over areas where deeper reform or critique is warranted.

The study is very specific to SIOP, its structure and context. Many of the findings such as the way it interacts with U.S. policy or its role in the U.S.-based organizational psychology which do not easily translate to international or smaller-scale organizations. There is minimal discussion of how well SIOP serves underrepresented groups or how generalizable its practices are across different cultural or organizational settings. The conclusions may still offer insights to similar organizations but need to be adapted with caution.

The research is relatively unique in turning the lens inward—critiquing and reflecting on the effectiveness of a professional organization from within. This introspective analysis isn't common in academic publishing, especially among disciplinary associations, making it a fresh and important perspective. It's valuable in helping SIOP—and potentially other professional organizations—understand their impact and areas for growth. The analysis helps identify strategic gaps (like science-practice integration) and calls for innovation in outreach and communication. If acted upon, the recommendations could lead to substantial improvements in how the field of industrial-organizational psychology is perceived and applied in real-world settings.

Conclusions

This study aimed to create and assess a model of professional development tailored to Korean EFL teachers through the integration of the SIOP model, backward design principles, and reflective coaching. The study reported strengths in this integrated model, most notably lifted by documented pedagogical strategy improvement, most significantly scaffolding and student interaction, as evidenced by positive shifts in 26 of the 30 SIOP components. One of the highlights is the utilization and combination of reflective coaching that enabled the Korean teachers to coordinate and assess individual classroom environment that helped to refine teaching instruction and approaches. The SIOP adaptation to fit the Korean school is critical in training English teachers where English is a secondary language. However, the research showed some limitations such as small sample size of the pilot study that limits the generalizability of the positive outcomes to the broader population of Korean teachers. Due to the absence of control group, it is a challenge to determine whether the positive result were really due to the new teaching method or just normal professional development. Remarkably, the absence of student outcome data leaves a huge void in determining if the quality of teaching methodologies enhanced resulted in quantifiable gains in students' language proficiency or level of participation.

Lastly, the research alludes to the fragile balance of language use, necessitating the implementation of strategies with a focus on English interaction but using Korean minimally for clarifying purposes when needed. The research indicates towards possible application of this model to other EFL contexts that suffer from similar challenges in the development of communicative competence, like in Japan and China. The research also justifiably, however, draws attention to the fact that success of such implementations may be dictated by local cultural conditions and resources available and hence necessitates scrupulous adaptation and consideration of particular regional or institutional issues. Future studies aim to get results that can be used for more teachers by including a larger number of them. They also want to see studies that last longer to test if the improvement in teaching and student learning continue over time. Another goal is to find the best way to mix new teaching ideas with the current school system and local customs. To really know if the new teaching method is effective, future research will use different types of information like outside evaluations and student English skills tests.

The study shows that the integration between SIOP model, 4-step background teaching, and coaching impacted the professional development of the Korean teachers in their teaching strategies. However, due to the limited number of teachers involved in the study and didn't check how students performed, it is such a challenge to be completely sure it will work in all situations. More thorough research with more teachers is needed to confirm this. To improve English teacher training and student English speaking skills, it is necessary to continue studying and adapting these methods, always considering their impact on students and their suitability for different teaching environments.

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Appendices

Appendix A. Reference Research Study

You can view the research titled "**Applying an SIOP-Based Instructional Framework for Professional Development in Korea**" by **Kim Hyunsook Song**, which serves as the foundation for this research paper review.

Research Link

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1PZOBGZuVRsOXW8p2ZMEuM4e-VAXunsgn/view?usp=sharing>