



The Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) Model and Oral Communication Outcomes in English as a Foreign Language: A Scoping Review

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Abstract

Speaking is commonly regarded as the most challenging skill for EFL learners, yet pedagogical frameworks supporting its development in EFL classrooms remain inconsistently addressed. The Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) Model was initially developed to help English learners cope with content subjects and simultaneously develop their language in North American classrooms. Although this model has been implemented in various international learning contexts, its impact on improving oral communication skills specifically has not been sufficiently documented. Guided by established scoping review methodology, this review examined empirical research featuring the SIOP Model in relation to its effect on oral communication or speaking proficiency among EFL learners. Records were retrieved from four databases, namely Web of Science, ERIC, Scopus, and Google Scholar, covering 2004 to 2025. Of 14,591 records identified, only two studies satisfied all eligibility conditions: an action research project conducted in Colombia and a mixed methods thesis conducted in Mexico. Neither study assessed oral proficiency using a structured measuring instrument, and both relied mainly on qualitative or self-reported data. These findings reveal a significant gap in the literature and suggest that assumptions about the effectiveness of SIOP in promoting oral proficiency among EFL learners still need further empirical investigation.

1. Introduction

Of the four language skills traditionally recognized in foreign and second language teaching pedagogy, speaking is often perceived as the most challenging skill for learners to master and for teachers to teach (Coskun, 2016; Al Sobhi & Preece, 2018).

In contrast to the other skills, oral communication requires students to produce language instantly, relying on their knowledge of different linguistic resources (pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary) and pragmatic competence, judging the appropriateness of what they say in a certain context. All of this happens simultaneously and often under conditions of pressure and higher anxiety or insufficient immersion in the target language beyond classroom instruction (Horwitz et al., 1986; Amoah & Yeboah, 2021). Alongside limited exposure and limited daily practice, EFL language teaching is also challenged by limited class time, overcrowded classrooms, and excessive use of learners' mother tongue in classroom instruction (Rativa Murillo, 2013). Due to this ongoing concern about fostering oral proficiency in EFL learning

environments, the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol has received more attention over the last two decades.

Based on well-grounded long-term classroom research across different districts in the United States, the SIOP Model was developed by Jana Echevarria, Deborah Short, and MaryEllen Vogt. Their main purpose was to help teachers make the content of different subjects more comprehensible for their EFL learners while also helping them improve their English language proficiency (Echevarria et al., 2008; Kareva & Echevarria, 2013). The framework is theoretically centred around eight major interconnected components: (1) lesson preparation, (2) building background, (3) comprehensible input, (4) strategies, (5) interaction, (6) practice and application, (7) lesson planning, and (8) classroom practice. Each component includes a set of features that teachers rely on to prepare their lesson plans and guide their classroom activities. Even though the SIOP Model was specifically developed for content teaching to English learners across various American states, many of its core principles, namely comprehensible input, scaffolding, and setting clear language objectives, were proven useful in several EFL teaching contexts (Kareva & Echevarria, 2013).

In the last sixteen years, scholars have examined the applicability of the SIOP Model across various EFL environments, in different parts of the globe. Many studies showed that SIOP has been implemented in South Korea (Kang, 2005; Song, 2016), Turkey (İnceli, 2015), Indonesia (Suweken et al., 2017), Japan (Nakagawa, 2017), Egypt (Ebedy, 2019; Abdelwahab, 2021), Pakistan (Ali et al., 2021), Ukraine (Solodka et al., 2021), and Morocco (Boughoulid, 2022), and in additional countries. Overall, these studies collectively suggest that the framework has moved beyond its original context and is now treated in the literature as a broadly applicable model to promote EFL teaching globally. What has been left unexplored in this vast literature, however, is how the SIOP Model directly influences English learners' oral production. A deeper investigation of the reported findings shows that focus has been put on a limited number of aspects related to oral communication, giving no clear account of speaking outcomes. For example, these studies focus mainly on teachers' perceptions about the model, competence, and self-efficacy, i.e., their ability to successfully apply the strategies of SIOP and achieve the expected outcomes, rather than concentrating on students' speaking performance (İnceli, 2015; Song, 2016; Koura & Zahran, 2017; Nakagawa, 2017). Additional studies center on different outcomes, namely reading comprehension (Ebedy, 2019), general academic achievement assessed via written tests (Ali et al., 2021), or understanding of content subjects that are taught in English (Bueno Hernández, 2012; Suweken et al., 2017). Even though some studies addressed learners' interaction, such as Kang (2005), who investigated SIOP in relation to teacher-student interaction and student-student interaction in Korean universities, the primary focus was on comprehension, not specifically measuring the speaking competence of the learners.

This gap is widely acknowledged in the literature, yet it has not been addressed through a systematic review. If SIOP is certainly useful for promoting communicative competence in EFL settings, as it is usually perceived, we would predict an abundance of empirical studies focusing on its concrete impact on speaking skills. Individual studies alone cannot tell us much about this plausible correlation. For instance, a review of EFL studies carried out in Colombia found that out of more than 100 articles, only 2 studies used the SIOP model (Kaya et al., 2025), which shows the inadequacy of the evidence. Accordingly, only a more holistic review across different databases and educational contexts can determine whether this pattern is prevailing internationally or otherwise.

Conducting a scoping review to address this gap is the most appropriate approach. In contrast to a systematic review that often combines results and predicts effects, scoping reviews serve to map the existing research about the topic, synthesize the methods employed, and identify the gap needing to be addressed. This approach helps to clarify basic concepts before conducting more focused research (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005; Munn et al., 2018). Due to the

breadth of topics that SIOP research covers and the scarcity of studies that particularly focus on speaking proficiency, a scoping review is well suited to providing a comprehensive overview of the field, without prior assumption that there are sufficient similar studies to compare.

With all that said, a pertinent guiding question that the present review raises is: what do the empirical studies conducted during the last two decades indicate about the correlation between the development of oral communication among EFL learners and the implementation of the SIOP Model? To answer this question, the present review has three essential objectives. To start with, it aims to identify the studies that satisfy these criteria. Secondly, it explores how speaking proficiency has been conceptualized and measured in these studies. Finally, it sums up what the results show for further research in the future, particularly in relation to classroom practices in EFL instructional contexts.

2. Materials and Methods

Methodologically speaking, the present scoping review follows a framework that was originally developed by Arksey and O'Malley (2005), which was subsequently improved by Levac, Colquhoun, and O'Brien (2010) and the Joanna Briggs Institute (Peters et al., 2020). The review was also guided by the PRISMA-ScR (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses extension for Scoping Reviews) guidelines (Tricco et al., 2018).

We selected a scoping review design, rather than a systematic review, because preliminary literature reviews showed significant variation in how researchers have reported and measured the effects of SIOP. Therefore, this approach seemed more suitable for exploring the field before identifying the effects.

Eligibility Criteria

Eligibility criteria were defined following the three-dimensional framework, Population, Concept, and Context (PCC), conventionally recognized for scoping reviews (Peters et al., 2020). The targeted population consisted of learners of English as a Foreign Language across different educational levels, from primary school to higher education settings. Also, in such contexts, learners do not use English as a means of their daily communication outside the classroom. Oral communication and related aspects, mainly speaking, oral production, oral proficiency, and oral participation, served as the concept of interest of this review. These outputs could be measured using structured instruments, observation, or experiences as reported by learners themselves. The context of interest was the application of the SIOP Model, partially or entirely.

For studies to be included, they had to be empirical, containing original data obtained from EFL learners or from practices observed in their classrooms. In the same vein, studies focused on at least one aspect of oral communication, as defined earlier, and included the SIOP Model as the teaching approach. Additionally, these studies should be published from 2004 onward. This year was purposefully chosen because it marks the point at which SIOP moved beyond its original function as a practitioner-oriented instructional guide and became a subject of empirical study in the broader international research literature. Two developments that year support this choice: the foundational SIOP text appeared in an expanded second edition (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2004), and SIOP appeared in a peer-reviewed academic volume on classroom observational research (Echevarria & Short, 2004). Together, These developments make 2004 a solid starting point for the search. As for research design, the review was not confined to a single design: it included qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods studies, all of which were eligible for inclusion. Conversely, studies were eliminated from reviewing if they focused solely on teachers, such as their attitudes, professional competence, or self-efficacy, with no special focus on student outcomes. Similarly excluded were studies that featured aspects not directly connected to oral communication, such as reading comprehension, achievement assessed through writing, or understanding of content in general.

The exclusion extended to studies dealing with contexts where English functions as a second rather than a foreign language, and to non-empirical, descriptive, theoretical, and conceptual studies that do not present authentic empirical data. Finally, the review did not take into account studies that do not provide full texts, either through the databases searched or through institutional access.

Information Sources and Search Strategy

The sources searched were four commonly used databases in academic research: Web of Science, ERIC, Scopus, and Google Scholar. The latter served as a supplementary source to retrieve the maximum number of studies despite its less curated coverage. Retrieved records include studies published between 2004 and 2025. Two search strategies conforming to the eligibility conditions stated earlier were employed systematically across the four databases. The first search strategy used the search terms "SIOP" and "foreign language" and "oral proficiency". The second used the terms "SIOP" and "speaking" and "EFL" and "university". Boolean operators and quotation marks were modified by databases to fit their syntax whenever necessary, but the same underlying term combinations were used. Records were retrieved separately within each of the four databases rather than using a combined reference-management export. This meant that duplicate studies had to be identified and accordingly excluded throughout the screening process instead of removing duplicated studies automatically by software. Since the searched databases, Scopus, Web of Science, and ERIC, have a significant overlap rate in studies related to education, the duplication rate reached 76%, which was confirmed during the screening process. This estimation aligns with overlap rates commonly documented for educational research across multiple databases.

Table 1 presents the number of records retrieved by each search strategy in each database.

Table 1. Number of records retrieved by search strategy and database.

Database	Search 1 ("SIOP" AND "foreign language" AND "oral proficiency")	Search 2 ("SIOP" AND "speaking" AND "EFL" AND "university")	Subtotal
Web of Science	902	1,223	2,125
ERIC	975	1,325	2,300
Scopus	4,216	4,038	8,254
Google Scholar (supplementary)	1,073	839	1,912
Total	7,166	7,425	14,591

The search strategies generated a total of 14,591 records, of which 3,389 remained after duplicate records were identified and removed using Zotero. These records then underwent title screening against the eligibility criteria stated earlier, of which 400 records were judged adequately eligible for subsequent abstract screening. After the review of abstracts, only twenty-six records were qualified for full-text reviewing, which in turn yielded the elimination of twenty-four studies. The reasons for exclusion are presented in Table 3 in the Results and Discussion section. Finally, two studies were included in the final stage of review.

The complete selection process is presented in Figure 1.

A citation-chasing exercise was also conducted after the databases had reached obvious saturation, where no new eligible records were generated after consecutive searches. Two types of checking were conducted, backward citation checking and forward citation checking. The former involved tracking the reference lists of included and closely relevant studies, and the latter involved the examination of more recently published work that cited works related to the SIOP Model.

This **supplementary search** did not retrieve any additional records that fit the eligibility criteria., yet it identified a limited number of closely relevant studies. These were eventually excluded and are discussed alongside the main categories of exclusion below.

Figure 1. PRISMA-ScR flow diagram of the study selection process.



Data Charting Process

The data that were extracted for each included study involved the following elements: author and year of publication, country and educational context, characteristics of the participants and sample size, the SIOP component or constituents implemented, the research design and data collection instruments utilized, the measurement of the oral communication outcome, the principal finding relevant to that outcome, as well as any methodological constraints declared by the authors or recognized through the charting process. These data were later charted into a purpose-built table. The process of data charting was carried out through close reading of the full text of each included study instead of only reading the abstracts. This approach was suitable because abstracts in this literature do not always clearly state whether oral communication is the primary focus of the study or merely an incidental component.

Critical Appraisal

In line with guidelines governing scoping reviews, no formal risk-of-bias assessment was reported, since the primary concern of scoping reviews is to identify the scope and nature of currently existing research rather than assess the strength of that evidence to support a specific practice or method (Peters et al., 2020). Consistent with this, methodological characteristics of the included studies that can impact the interpretation of findings were reported and described in the Results and Discussion sections. These characteristics include the number of participants, whether a comparison group was included, and how oral communication was assessed, directly or through self-reported information.

3. Results and Discussion

Out of the 26 full-text studies that were assessed for eligibility, only two studies satisfied the inclusion criteria: the first was an action research project carried out in a public school in Bogotá, Colombia (Rativa Murillo, 2013), and the second was a mixed-methods master's thesis conducted at a language centre attached to a public school in northern Mexico (Luna Vallejo, 2023). Both studies were situated in Latin American EFL contexts; both were produced as part of a degree requirement rather than as standalone journal research, and both employed qualitative or predominantly qualitative designs without a comparison group. Table 2 summarises the main characteristics of these included studies.

Table 2. Characteristics of included studies.

Study	Country / Setting	Participants	SIOP Component(s)	Design and Instruments	Oral Outcome Measure	Key Finding
Rativa Murillo (2013)	Colombia, public secondary school, sixth grade	41 students (low-intermediate English); 6 teachers surveyed	Lesson Delivery (one component)	Qualitative action research; observation checklists, field notes, surveys, portfolios	Reduction in teacher first-language use; anecdotal student utterances (no standardised instrument)	Spanish use decreased in most tracked categories; qualitative reports of increased English engagement
Luna Vallejo (2023)	Mexico, public high school language centre	17 students, phase 1; 13 students, phase 2 (A2 level)	Full 8-component model, lesson planning template, combined with ClassDojo gamification	Mixed-methods action research; Likert scale, interviews, teacher questionnaire, researcher-rated participation scale, self-assessment	Researcher-rated participation scale and learner self-assessment (no standardised instrument)	Voluntary participation and classroom habits improved between two workshop applications; 84% self-reported progress

Rativa Murillo (2013): Lesson Delivery and the Reduction of First Language Use

Rativa Murillo's (2013) study investigated how lesson delivery, one of the eight components of the SIOP Model, could be adapted in EFL lessons following the English Immersion Method. The intervention targeted forty-one sixth-grade students at Miravalle School, a public school situated in Bogotá, Colombia. Over a period of six weeks, the researcher, who was simultaneously the teacher of that class, integrated the core features of lesson delivery as structured in SIOP, including clearly stated content and language objectives, strategies to **promote** higher student engagement, and appropriate pacing in activities. **In addition**, the teacher used supplementary vocabulary activities, such as word walls and personal dictionaries, to support his lesson. Data were collected using observation checklists, field notes, surveys that students and the teacher completed, and student portfolios.

The key finding concerned the teacher's use of Spanish during lesson delivery. This use decreased considerably in most of the features tracked by the observation checklist after the teacher implemented the lesson delivery component and supplementary vocabulary activities. Nevertheless, the teacher continued to use Spanish for building rapport, managing student behavior, and administrative announcements. The author interprets this decrease in the use of L1 as evidence that the SIOP adaptation helped to create more opportunities for using English in the classroom. However, treating this evidence as directly relevant to oral communication outcomes requires caution. The study did not involve either a well-structured measure of speaking proficiency or a pre-test post-test comparison of learners' oral production before and after the intervention. Rather, it simply provides a cluster of qualitative markers, namely some

changes in classroom behavior as reported by the teacher, and a limited number of transcribed utterances produced by students. Some of these utterances are specifically communicative. For instance, students stated that speaking more English in class would result in better learning, though they expressed their preference for combining English and Spanish to **explain** some parts of the lessons. These utterances show that learners are actively engaged in the learning process, but they do not present a direct indicator of improvement in oral proficiency, fluency, or communicative competence.

This distinction matters for interpreting the study in the context of the broader literature. Rativa Murillo's (2013) study shows that careful implementation of a SIOP component can influence language production in EFL settings outside the original context of SIOP. The study does not provide strong evidence of learners' oral communication development. The decreased use of L1 **primarily** shows that learners had more opportunities to use English, but it does not directly show the quality of their communication in English as a result.

Luna Vallejo (2023): Gamified SIOP Instruction and Self-Reported Oral Participation

Luna Vallejo's (2023) master's thesis explored oral participation, considering it as the main construct of the study, which makes it distinct from Rativa Murillo's study explained above, which treated oral communication more incidentally. Luna Vallejo conducted a two-phased study. In the first phase, she asked a group of seventeen A2-level EFL students at a northern Mexican language center to report their perceptions about the factors that impede their oral communication development by responding to semi-structured interviews and completing a three-point Likert scale. In addition, the researcher administered an open-ended questionnaire to gather their attitudes regarding the same issue.

The findings from this initial stage indicated that anxiety was the most frequently reported hindrance to oral communication. Every participant reported some degree of fear of making errors when they interacted with their classmates or their teacher. A substantial portion of the same participants stated that their willingness to take part was blocked by the fear of being mocked by their classmates or being generally anxious when expressing their thoughts in English. Limited time, lack of practice opportunities, and restricted classroom materials were also among the barriers.

In the second phase of this study, the researcher applied a didactic proposal that combined three lesson plans based on the SIOP with ClassDojo, a gamified application used to support classroom management. The participant group consisted of thirteen students who took part in a three-session workshop. The workshop was delivered in an initial session and then in a subsequent session so that the researcher could compare and identify changes in student participation across both sessions. During each session, the researcher observed the students and tracked their participation rates using a checklist. The observed behaviours specifically included questions the students asked voluntarily, active listening, and readiness of students as evidenced by their arrival with the necessary materials for the class. Each of these behaviours was rated against a five-point scale ranging from "poor" to "very good."

The findings indicated improvement across multiple participation indicators between the first and second workshop sessions. For example, more students were rated as 'very good' for voluntary participation in the second session, increasing from 0% to 65%. At the same time, fewer students were rated as 'poor.' At the end of the workshop, students reported on their own progress through a self-assessment. Approximately 84 percent stated that their oral participation improved, though this figure mirrors students' perceptions rather than a verified change. However, some challenges were still reported. For example, a small **proportion** of participants stated that they still found some difficulty in pronunciation and fluency when speaking. Also, nearly one-third of the group found it hard to take turns in discussions, even

though half of the group regarded this skill as very easy. This distinction in perceptions indicates that learners had different experiences in relation to spoken interaction within the same class.

Compared with Rativa Murillo's study, the main strength of Luna Vallejo's study lies in its clear focus on oral participation as the principal component of interest, **supported by** numerous sources of data gathered prior to and after the intervention. Nevertheless, the study is subject to several methodological limitations that can affect the interpretation of the findings. The study did not utilise a standardised instrument, an independently rated speaking task, or a comparison group for measuring oral proficiency. **Moreover**, the number of participants was very small, decreasing from seventeen to only thirteen between the two phases. This limits the generalizability of the reported improvements to other learners or contexts.

What Counted as an Oral Communication Outcome?

When considered together, the two included studies, Rativa Murillo (2013) and Luna Vallejo (2023), present similar methodological limitations. Neither study measured the oral communication outcome using an instrument specifically designed for this purpose. Rativa Murillo (2013) interpreted the decrease in use of the first language, Spanish, by the teacher as evidence of greater opportunities for English practice, supported by a few student quotations. In contrast, Luna Vallejo (2023) focused more directly on oral participation. Despite this, her evidence was largely based on behavioral ratings extracted from the researcher and learners' perceptions of their own progress. Overall, these findings show that even the limited number of studies that examined the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol in relation to the development of EFL learners' oral proficiency and spoken engagement should be taken with caution. These studies have not yet employed standardized and independently rated measures of oral proficiency, which makes it hard to compare findings across different studies or draw general conclusions about the effectiveness of the SIOP Model in promoting EFL speaking skills.

This conclusion should be considered alongside the pattern observed through the other twenty-four studies that were excluded at the stage of full-text review, as Table 3 shows. The largest exclusion set involved six out of the twenty-four studies which investigated SIOP uniquely in relation to teachers, especially their perceptions towards the model, their competence, and their self-efficacy, yet did not make reference to learners' speaking skills (Ínceli, 2015; Song, 2016; Solodka et al., 2021; Abdelwahab, 2021; Al Refaey, 2024; Nakagawa, 2017). Another category of six studies explored learner outcomes, but these were not related to oral communication. They focused particularly on reading comprehension, general academic achievement assessed using written tests, and academic content comprehension (Kang, 2005; Bueno Hernández, 2012; Suweken et al., 2017; Ramírez Ortiz & Artunduaga Cuéllar, 2018; Ebedy, 2019; Ali et al., 2021). Three more studies were excluded since they merely provided theoretical assumptions or proposal documents rather than original empirical results. These included one unpublished undergraduate research proposal that presented a study without providing any results at all (Getial Tez & Lasso Sarmiento, 2018), and two other conceptual or theoretical papers that lacked empirical data on EFL learners (Boughoulid, 2022; Prabjandee, 2016). A further four studies consisted of foundational or conceptual SIOP literature that was not empirical and not situated in an EFL context (Ingram, 2018; Short & Echevarria, 1999; Echevarria, Short & Powers, 2006; Echevarria & Short, 2004). A separate category of three studies was excluded for targeting the wrong population or context, namely non-EFL target languages, ESL rather than EFL settings, or teacher trainees rather than learners (Chen, 2013; Hayden, 2019; Koura & Zahran, 2017). Finally, two studies were excluded because their full text was inaccessible (Nitiprateep, 2015; Bárcena Toyos, 2023).

A single study that needs special consideration, and which seems closer than any other record identified in this review, is Chen's (2013) study. This study presents an instructional pedagogy called Sheltered Initiation Language Learning, which was designed for Chinese as a Foreign Language classrooms in the United States, but was hugely influenced by the teaching principles conventionally associated with SIOP. Unlike most of the other studies retrieved in this review, this teaching pedagogy was specifically applied to improve learners' oral language skills through authentic and spontaneous speech. The initial evaluation of this study showed promising results in this area. Despite this, the study was not included because of two eligibility constraints. First, the focus was on Chinese rather than English, and second, the pedagogy presented a related but distinct adaptation of the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol itself. Nonetheless, its appearance during the search is informative because it is the closest study to the interest of this review. It paves the way for further research into the extent to which pedagogies inspired by sheltered instruction can also promote learners' oral communication skills. This review could not confirm whether comparable research exists on SIOP in English-language EFL contexts or whether such research remains to be conducted.

Table 3. Reasons for exclusion at the full-text stage (n = 24).

Exclusion Category	n	Example Studies
Wrong outcome, teacher focused (perceptions, competence, self-efficacy, professional development)	6	İnceli (2015); Song (2016); Solodka et al. (2021); Abdelwahab (2021); Al Refaey (2024); Nakagawa (2017)
Wrong outcome, non-oral learner outcome (reading, achievement, content comprehension)	6	Ebedy (2019); Ali et al. (2021); Suweken et al. (2017); Bueno Hernández (2012); Kang (2005); Ramírez Ortiz & Artunduaga Cuéllar (2018)
Wrong population or context (non-EFL target language, ESL rather than EFL, or teacher trainees rather than learners)	3	Chen (2013); Hayden (2019); Koura & Zahran (2017)
Not empirical or no outcome data reported	3	Boughoulid (2022); Prabjandee (2016); Getial Tez & Lasso Sarmiento (2018)
Foundational or conceptual SIOP literature (non-empirical, non-EFL source)	4	Ingram (2018); Short & Echevarria (1999); Echevarria, Short & Powers (2006); Echevarria & Short (2004)
Full text inaccessible	2	Nitiprateep (2015); Bárcena Toyos (2023)

This pattern of exclusion is consistent with the findings of other studies, namely that of Kaya et al. (2025). These authors conducted a systematic review of studies focusing on EFL pedagogy in Colombia and found that only two studies used the SIOP Model out of more than one hundred articles reviewed. The present review, by contrast, covered numerous countries and EFL settings and found an equally limited number of studies relevant to its focus after excluding those that focused on other outcomes rather than oral communication. This confirms that the finding reached by Kaya et al. (2025) is not specific to Colombia but reflects a general pattern in the international literature.

Why the Gap Might Exist

This recurring pattern, in which excluded studies emphasize outcomes other than learner oral proficiency, can be explained in several ways, although this review cannot determine which explanation is correct. One possible reason is that the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol was originally associated with teaching content-area subjects for learners in the United States. This plausibly affects the way the model is adapted to EFL contexts. Accordingly, researchers may tend to focus on areas such as content comprehension, general academic achievement, and teachers' fidelity in implementing the model. These outcomes, though they might have been key concerns of the original research program of the model, may not reflect

the main concerns of foreign language instruction, which often emphasises oral communication over content. Another more practical explanation is the challenge of measuring oral proficiency directly. This requires substantially more time and more structured instruments than administering self-reported surveys or written tests. Gaining a reliable assessment of spoken performance generally requires specific qualifications, materials (audio-video recordings, scoring rubrics), as well as trained raters. Neither of the included studies used these elements. A third possibility concerns the nature of research related to SIOP in EFL contexts. Several studies focus essentially on professional development and teacher training at the expense of learner oral output. In other words, in such studies the researchers' primary concern is teachers' competence, confidence, or ability to successfully incorporate the core features of SIOP into their lesson plans and daily classroom practice. Whichever explanation, or combination of explanations, is correct, the practical implication remains the same. Claims that the SIOP Model promotes oral communication skills among EFL learners are not backed by sufficient empirical evidence. Most of the available research lacks strong methodological grounds, which calls for considerable caution in any conclusions drawn. However, this should not be taken as an indication of the ineffectiveness of the SIOP Model to improve speaking proficiency. Rather, the available literature remains insufficient to prove this effectiveness.

4. Limitations

This scoping review has several limitations that should be acknowledged. The search was based solely on four electronic databases using two search strategies. Even though the search was exhaustive rather than sampled, other combinations of search terms using other languages or databases might have generated additional studies that could be eligible for inclusion. The search was also restricted to studies published from 2004 onward, since this year marks the entry of SIOP into the broader research literature rather than the original 2000 publication of the model. Early adaptations of the model in EFL contexts published between 2000 and 2004 may therefore have been missed. The citation-chasing exercise went beyond the keyword search, since it followed citation links rather than search terms. It found three additional studies through this method: Ramírez Ortiz and Artunduaga Cuéllar (2018), Bueno Hernández (2012), and Kang (2005). Each was excluded for the same reasons as the database results, namely that the intervention was not SIOP, or that no oral outcome was measured. Because two different search methods led to the same result, the identified gap is unlikely to be caused by a weakness in the search strategy itself. Separately, supplementary research on this topic may be available but published in other languages and in some regional or national journals which are not internationally indexed. In addition, screening and data charting were also conducted by a single reviewer, without a second independent screener, which is a further limitation. Finally, because only two studies met the inclusion criteria, the patterns observed in this review should be viewed as an initial overview of a research area that needs further exploration rather than as a complete description of the field.

5. Conclusion

The present scoping review set out to examine the empirical evidence concerning the relationship between the SIOP Model and oral communication outcomes in EFL learners. Despite a comprehensive search of four major databases covering a period of more than two decades of publication (2004-2025), only two studies were found to meet all eligibility criteria, and both relied on qualitative, researcher-rated, or self-reported evidence rather than standardised measures of oral proficiency. The great majority of SIOP-related research mapped during screening addressed outcomes other than oral communication, specifically teachers'

perceptions or competence, or learners' reading and general achievement. This pattern reflects a similar finding reported specifically for the Colombian literature by Kaya et al. (2025).

Three implications can be drawn from this finding. First, researchers and practitioners who cite the SIOP Model as a means of developing EFL learners' speaking skills should do so with considerable caution, since this specific claim is not, at present, well supported by solid and reliable empirical evidence that would justify strong recommendations for practice. Second, this gap should be addressed through further research. This calls for subsequent studies that combine SIOP implementation with an independently rated or adequately structured measure of oral proficiency, collected before and after the intervention and, preferably, in comparison with a control group of students taught through conventional instruction. Furthermore, the fact that the two studies which satisfied the inclusion criteria were carried out as undergraduate or postgraduate degree requirements (action research project and master's thesis), rather than as part of a funded research program, is worth noting. It indicates that the research question addressed in this review, whether the SIOP Model promotes oral communication in EFL settings, has not received sufficient investigation.

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