

V. PART ONE: BASIC ISSUES AND CONCEPTS

A. Opening Activity

Self-Assessment Form - As the teachers are getting settled, give them the self-assessment form to fill out (Handout 1 in the Appendix).

B. Scenario 1

Ms. Lee's seventh-grade social studies class had 26 students, including Alejandra, a girl from Mexico who arrived in mid-October. Alejandra's language test scores showed that she knew some English from previously attending school in the U.S., and so she was scheduled in science, social studies, math, and physical education classes in addition to ESL. The teacher, Ms. Lee, gave Alejandra a copy of the textbook, *Understanding Our Society*, and assigned her to a seat near the back of the room.

For the first few days, Alejandra was a very quiet but attentive student. She seemed to listen carefully to Ms. Lee's lectures and watched her fellow students participating in discussions. In group work, she sat quietly, observing the other students. Ms. Lee thought this was fine; Alejandra needed time to adjust to the classroom. But after several weeks, it was clear that Alejandra didn't understand the textbook, the lectures, and most of the conversations in the classroom. She began to seem less attentive, isolated, and somewhat depressed. Her homework assignments were either incomplete or seemed to have been completed by someone else.

"What can I do?" thought Ms. Lee as she looked at Alejandra's score -- a 42 -- on her first test, after she had been in class for three weeks. "I thought I could treat her just like any other student." It was obvious to the teacher that Alejandra would need some additional help if she were to survive in social studies.

VI. PART TWO: METHODS FOR COMMUNICATING WITH ELLs

A. Scenario 1 - Teacher-Student Communication

Below is a brief transcript of communication between a teacher and an ELL student.

Transcript 1

A fourth grade classroom in a social studies unit.

Teacher: Okay, now let's move on to Exercise 4 in the textbook...
Let's see... Min, what was your answer to the first question?

Min: [silence - 3 seconds]

Teacher: Min, do you see Question 1? [Pause] What's your answer to that question?

Min: She ... She work in Springfield.

Teacher: Who is "she"?

Min: Gov-na?

Teacher: You mean the Governor? Who is the Governor? Is the Governor a "she"?

Min: [pause - 3 seconds] I think-

Teacher: Connor, I see your hand. What was your answer to Question 1?

Now, with Transcript 1 in mind, go on to read Transcript 2, which is set in a science class.

Questions:

1. Analyze the communication in this short transcript. What might have caused the student to respond the way she did? What do you think of the teacher's interaction pattern with this student?
 2. What suggestions would you make to the teacher?
-

Transcript 2

Ninth grade student in physical science class working on individual project

- Teacher: What do you have here?
- Jorge: [5 second pause] Rock...
- Teacher: Okay, rocks. This is a model of several layers. Which kind of rock is this?
- Jorge: Uh [3 second pause] Granita.
- Teacher: Granite. Good! That's granite. And what is this, above the granite? [points]
- Jorge: This, uh [pause]... is shell.
- Teacher: Shells? You mean fossils? Like this? [points to poster of fossils]
- Jorge: No, not fossils, I mean, rock shale. Shale.
- Teacher: Oh, shale! Yes, shale is a sedimentary rock. Very good, Jorge.
- Jorge: Thank you.
- Teacher: Now, why don't you label each layer of rock? Here, let me make a label. [writes "granite" on a small slip of paper] Can you add labels to your geological column?
- Jorge: Okay.

Questions:

1. Analyze the teacher-student interaction in this short transcript. How is it different from the interaction in the first transcript?
 2. What is the teacher in the second transcript doing to facilitate communication? What is he doing to facilitate language learning? What is the emotional impact of this interaction?
-

B. Scaffolding Communication and Instruction

Teachers who are sensitive to the language needs of ELLs can apply the concept of "scaffolding" to their communication. Scaffolding is a metaphor for the structures that teachers build to provide extra support in communication and in various kinds of activities. Just as a scaffold creates a temporary structure around a building during the process of construction, the use of scaffolding by a teacher temporarily makes the