

World Generation Vignette B

As you read the following vignette, please consider the following questions:

- What are the benefits and drawbacks for students in the instructional setting described? What changes could be made to help improve support for these diverse students and others like them?
- Who might be best positioned to impact the changes you suggest?
- What other issues does this vignette present?

In the World Generation study, researchers modified four middle school social studies unit plans to incorporate these key practices to support adolescent Emergent Bilingual students:

1. Provide daily opportunities for purposeful language use.
2. Deliberately link historical content to students' lived experiences.
3. Utilize team-based learning to provide structured interactions.
4. Structure lessons' architecture so principles of teaching and understanding language are embedded throughout the unit.
5. Scaffold to provide access to appropriately challenging texts and tasks.

Teachers were provided with one day of professional development on the World Generation practices and the four units of study, including the state standards for content knowledge related to the unit topics and the disciplinary skills of perspective taking, identifying and stating claims, arguments, and counter arguments, and using text evidence to support an argument or claim. Participating teachers used the World Generation materials with randomly selected classes, and their regular school or district curricula with their other classes.

Ms. Cordelia Jessup is a 7th grade teacher who participated in the World Generation study. One of her classes is designated for emergent bilingual students. In this class, she provided some additional scaffolding and time for students to work on the learning tasks.

Rahim is a recent arrival student in Ms. Jessup's class. His native language is Arabic, and his English is at the beginner level. He struggles with the texts in the curriculum, but benefits from working with his partner, Amal, who also speaks Arabic and has advanced fluency in English. Rahim doesn't understand the videos, though, and tried to get an idea of what they were about

from the way other students answer the teacher's questions. He always makes sure to copy down what the teacher or his partner writes in the graphic organizers or class notebook. Ms. Jessup has pointed out some phrases that they can use for discussion and Rahim is relieved when he sees that he can use them again. He and a classmate Rubén even used them jokingly, in an exaggerated way, when working together in Science class. He described an example like this:

"In my opinion, the circulatory system is the most important for our body. What is your perspective?"

"From my point of view, I respectfully disagree."

"I respect your ideas, but can you give me evidence to support your opinion?"

Rahim says the Science teacher was very surprised! Even though the texts and debate are a little bit hard for him as a beginner, he thinks they are interesting and is glad that he gets to participate. He told the translator, "In my other classes the teachers don't really ask me anything so it feels good to be a part of the class and see that I can do it, too."

Amal, also a native Arabic speaker, has been at her school since 3rd grade and is classified as Advanced level in English; she would need to be Advanced High in order to not be assigned to the emergent bilingual classroom. She had always gotten good grades and was usually described as quiet and shy. Ms. Jessup said she actively participated in the World Generation curriculum, becoming one of the most vocal students in the class. She looked up extra information for her team to use in the debate and did an exemplary job on her final essay. When asked about her experience, Amal said, "I really like this way of learning because it lets us kids do more of the talking and think about what is important not just what happened." Later she added, "I like working in pairs and teams, and it's okay to help my classmates. But I get tired of being the one to always translate and teach the other kids when they don't understand. I wish I could be in the regular classes where I can just learn for myself sometimes. I want to take honors classes in high school, but I don't know if they take kids from EB classes. Maybe I would pass my test faster being with the English-only kids."

Yvette is a native Spanish speaker with intermediate English proficiency. She tends to do better with reading assignments and is less comfortable with speaking in front of the class. Ms. Jessup praised her work with her team, as Yvette consistently prompted them to make sure they used text evidence to back up their statements and worked with her partner Rubén to put their arguments into English. During the debate, she got nervous, but she read her statements that they had prepared in the team. During the team strategy sessions, she shared ideas in Spanish about how to counter the other team's arguments and with Rubén and their other teammates quickly wrote their counter arguments and final statements.

Yvette shared her thoughts about the World Generation units (translated): “I don’t really like to talk to the whole class — it’s better for me in just the groups. But at least in this class, we get to prepare what to say and have the words, not just be put on the spot. The essay is better because I can look up how to say all the things I think and write them with time and not get nervous. But I did okay, I am getting better.”

Rubén is a heritage speaker of Spanish and is only lacking the Advanced High rating in Reading or Writing to be reclassified out of emergent bilingual status. He eagerly participated in the pair and group tasks in the World Generation curriculum, often asking follow up questions to Ms. Jessup and coming by at lunch when she would help him look up videos about related history topics that interested him. Rubén said he felt awkward at first using the formal debate language, but that when everyone had a chance to practice it and then they used the same kinds of phrases in the next units, he felt more comfortable. “It was like learning even one more language,” he said. “But I got good at it!”

In the past, Rubén has struggled with social studies texts but found the vocabulary and the scaffolding that Ms. Jessup provided helped him to have greater success. “Some of the readings are hard and there is a lot of information. But it helps when I know what information I need to look for, like something more than just answering questions at the end.” Rubén says it bothers him that his cousins are in “regular” classes and tease him about being in this class with the newcomers, but “sometimes I think it is better here because I get to be the one who is helping my group, like I am smart or something. And here we learn *how* to do things like debate and write your argument, not just read and learn it on your own.”