

Problem #2

ASSESSING STUDENT ORAL ENGLISH PROFICIENCY THROUGH INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS AND OBSERVATIONS

OBJECTIVE: Assess the oral English proficiency of a focal English language learner, using the Student Oral Language Observation Matrix (SOLOM)

MATERIALS:

- [SOLOM](#)
- [handouts on levels of English language development \(cartoons with dialogue\)](#)
- [Questioning Techniques](#)
- [CELDT Proficiency Level Descriptions](#)
- an English language learner
- paper/pen to record student responses and your observations
- (optional: tape recorder and blank tape or disc)

Part I. Interview a focal EL student to investigate background and attitudes related to her/his language and literacy development. This interview will also serve as a baseline oral language observation of the student. You will ask the student questions that will give you insight into his/her language, literacy, and academic history.

Tailor your questions to the student's English proficiency. See handouts on levels of English language development ("Preproduction", "Early Production", "Speech Emergence," and "Intermediate Fluency") and Questioning Techniques. See also "CELDT Proficiency Level Descriptions," esp. for descriptions of language proficiency levels past "Intermediate" (Early Advanced and Advanced). Refer also to the SOLOM since you will be using this scoring matrix to determine student language proficiency based on your observations.

You can ask questions such as the following: however, if the student is very limited in her/his English proficiency many of these will not be appropriate or will have to be modified:

(Begin by asking the student's name, if you don't know it, and age.)

- * Where were you born?
- * How long have you been in this country;
- * What language (or languages) do you speak at home? with your parents? with your friends? with your brothers and sisters;
- * Do you like speaking? reading? writing? in English? What about in your (native language)? (this will get at language attitudes);
- * Did you go to school in (country of origin) (ask other questions about her/his academic history in their country of origin and her);
- * What is hard (or difficult--note that for Spanish speakers difficult is a cognate for 'difícil' so it might be easier to understand--check it out) for you when you speak, write, read in English? When you have to understand others speaking in English. What is easy for you?
- * How are you doing in school? What do you like? What do you not like

* Do you speak English outside of school? with whom? How much (you might have to offer choices, eg, a lot/every day, a little/once or twice a week)

You should spend at least fifteen minutes interviewing your student. Prepare your questions ahead of time and write down your student's responses. You may also tape record your interview if you prefer and if your student consents to it.

Part 1 of this assignment is to use the SOLOM to make an *initial estimate* of the student's language proficiency level. Make a best guess for the student's SOLOM score and his/her ELD level and likely CELDT level. Here is a guide:

SOLOM SCORE	ENGLISH LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT (ELD) LEVEL	ESTIMATED CELDT LEVEL (ORAL PROFICIENCY ONLY)
1-5	Preproduction/Early production	Beginning
12-16	Speech Emergence	Early Intermediate
17-20	Intermediate fluency	Intermediate
21-25	Advanced fluency	Advanced

Part 2 Over the next 2 weeks you will observe and interact with this student to deepen your understanding of his/her oral English language skills and likely proficiency level. There is no set requirement for how much you need to observe and interact with the student, but the more you do the better will be your understanding of the student's language skills. You should try to observe the student in different types of situations, as suggested in the SOLOM handout: e.g., class discussions, playground interactions, encounters between classes. If you think that the student's shyness interfered with his/her ability to display language skills fully, try to observe him or her unobtrusively in or out of class, or in social situations with other students when the student will not be made to feel on the spot.

The assignment for Part 2 is to write a 2-page synthesis of what you have learned about your EL student through the interview and observation process described above. Specifically, you are to:

1. Determine a SOLOM score, based on scores for each of the 5 categories (comprehension, fluency, vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar)
2. Convert that score to ELD level and estimated CELDT level (using guide above)
3. Write a paragraph on each of the 5 categories where you justify the score you gave for that category. Give specific examples of what you saw or heard the student do, then map that to the SOLOM scoring matrix. Use the category as the heading for each paragraph so it's clear to which category you are referring.