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Module 25, Unit 2, Activity 1 - Linguistically Diverse Learner Profiles

Linguistically Diverse Learner Profile - Laura

Learner Background

Laura, a 12 year-old girl holding both Taiwanese and British citizenship, lives in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. She's enrolled in Year 6 at a British international school following the IB Curriculum (International Baccalaureate).

She lives with her parents and her younger sister, Rosa, who is four years old. Both parents are educators with strong academic backgrounds. Despite their busy schedules, they dedicate ample time to their two children.

The family is diverse. Laura's father has English, French, and Spanish roots and holds dual citizenship. Her mother is Taiwanese and proficient in Mandarin and Taiwanese dialects. Currently, the family resides in Vietnam due to work commitments.

Learner Characteristics

Laura is fluent in both English and Chinese. It is hard to say which one is her first language. At home, Laura's mother primarily communicates with her in Chinese (Mandarin). However, as Laura's school operates in English and her father isn't fluent in Chinese, English has become the primary language in their household. So, Laura often responds in English even when her mother speaks to her in Chinese. Additionally, she tends to blend English grammar into their Chinese conversations.

Culturally, Laura's mother actively nurtures the girls' connection to Taiwanese culture by participating in cultural celebrations like Chinese New Year and preparing traditional dishes. These efforts instill in Laura and her sister a strong sense of identity and belonging to their heritage. Additionally, she's exploring Taiwanese with her mother and Taiwanese grandparents through video phone.

As well, Laura has shown a great interest in French. She has French lessons 2 times per week in school and communicates with her French grandmother through online platforms once per week.

Learner Interests and Goals

Laura has an extroverted personality, showing enthusiasm in assisting others, a lively and cheerful demeanor, and strong oral expression skills. She is willing to learn from her mistakes throughout her learning journey.

Her motivation often comes from her peers and teachers, and she enjoys taking on leadership roles in the classroom. Moreover, she confidently represented her class by delivering a speech in front of teachers and fellow students. However, she is currently learning to manage her emotions better, aiming to refrain from shouting during disagreements with her sister and avoiding being overly bossy with other students.

In addition to her outgoing personality, Laura is awesome at swimming, cycling, and making things. Her drawings are super detailed—compared to peers of the same age.

The Interplay of Multiculturalism

Laura lives in Vietnam, she is learning some Vietnamese vocabulary thanks to the exposure to the vocabulary she has when she goes to stores with her family or any place in the city. Furthermore, at school, during recess and lunch the diverse students that are in the same grade level as Laura use English, Mandarin, French, or Vietnamese to communicate and play. Even though she feels more comfortable speaking in English or Mandarin she is trying to speak proper Vietnamese with her best friend Bian in the Art class, the teacher of this subject normally does not allow students to speak other language than English in her class, but she notice the commitment of both girls in her class, so she is allowing this to happen.

Laura helps her mom run errands, for example, they go together to the supermarket and Laura is in charge of asking the workers about any item they need and the prices of each, even though she can understand some Vietnamese, she does not know how to read it, but she has moderate listening and speaking skills in Vietnamese.

Every Friday night her family has the tradition of playing games. Lately, her parents have been trying to stimulate their daughters' desire to learn new games on the family game night, these games were played by Laura's parents in their childhood back in their home countries. Laura and her little sister Rosa enjoy them. Sometimes the games can be played in Mandarin, French, or English, this allows the girls to get familiar with new vocabulary.

The Learner and Language Aptitude

Aptitude Assessment Criteria for Laura is based upon the MYP (Middle Years Program) in International Baccalaureate (IB) schools is seen in the table below (Source: Wake County Public School System).

*Aptitude Assessment Criteria for MYP (Middle Years Program) in International
Baccalaureate (IB) Schools*

Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 4	Phase 5	Phase 6
In a limited range of everyday situations	In a limited range of familiar situations	In familiar and some unfamiliar situations	In familiar and unfamiliar situations	In social situations and some academic situations	In social and academic situations
Some aspects of register	Some aspects of register	Appropriate register	Appropriate register	Appropriate register	Appropriate register
A very limited range of interpersonal and cultural contexts	A limited range of interpersonal and cultural contexts	A limited range of interpersonal and cultural contexts	A range of interpersonal and cultural contexts	A range of interpersonal and cultural contexts	A wide range of interpersonal and cultural contexts
Use basic vocabulary	Use basic vocabulary	Use language accurately	Use language accurately	Use language accurately and effectively	Use oratory technique
Simple short texts	Simple texts	A limited range of texts	A range of texts	A range of texts	A wide range of texts
Interact in simple and rehearsed exchanges	Interact in basic rehearsed and some unrehearsed exchanges	Interact in rehearsed and unrehearsed exchanges	Engage actively	Engage actively	Engage actively
Understand and respond	Understand and respond	Understand and respond	Interpret and respond	Analyse and respond	Evaluate and respond

Identify and recognize	Recognize and understand	Understand	Construct meaning/ interpret	Construct meaning/ analyse	Evaluate
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Specifically for Laura, as English is the medium language of instruction at school, Laura's level of proficiency has been assessed. Her other languages have not been officially assessed. In English, her language levels differ greatly in different facets of English language use and she works with EAL (English Additional Language) teachers at school despite English seemingly being her first language.

Listening, she has no problems, she is able to comprehend all necessary information and her level is at that of her peers. As well, **Orally** she has no problems communicating with her classmates and fellow teachers, and everyone understands her clearly without a problem. However, when it comes to reading and writing, she does have some issues. Her **reading** level is below her class average. She is a Phase 3 reader (Phase 1-6 needs support from EAL teachers). She struggles with vocabulary development. In **writing**, she is a Phase 4 writer (Phase 1-6 needs support from EAL teachers). She struggles with spelling, tenses, and sentence structures.

EAL teachers have preloaded class information with her, trying to help her understand the vocabulary more clearly, especially when it comes to reading. They have also worked with her on writing, reviewing spelling, and how to properly use tenses. Finally, they are helping her to create more complex ideas when it comes to writing, especially as the class is beginning to work on short essays.

As far as specific strategies these have been used to promote Laura's learning:

1. When it comes to vocabulary, spelling, tenses, and sentence structure her teachers have used working memory strategies to help her improve. These strategies including some transcribing and then recreating sentences based television and movie clips of her favorite movies. These types of working memory strategies were adapted from the study "Building a language learner's Profile: Characteristics which inform training and pedagogy" by Medha Tare, PhD, Carrie Bonilla, PhD, Karen Vatz, PhD, Martyn Clark, PhD, Jared Linck, PhD, Catherine J.Doughty, PhD.
2. Most of the teachers incorporate diversity in their lesson plans, for example, the history teacher includes the History of Vietnam in his lessons and contrasts and compares this with England's history and culture. The middle school division invites diverse speakers of the community to open a window of discussions of the problems Vietnamese deal with and possible solutions. Moreover, the EAL teacher works along with the Art and Music teacher to prepare the students for the International Day Event, where students present

and share their culture with classmates and the school community. In the current school year students like Laura are encouraged to do more than one presentation to celebrate their roots.

3. Every year the school promotes cultural exchange through simple activities like cultural food swaps, storytelling (folktales), and cultural dresses. On these days students have the opportunity to talk about their favorite food (including food preparation and festivities where they eat it). Parents or speakers of the community are invited to school to share famous folktales, and students are encouraged to draw moral lessons from each one of them. For cultural dresses, students can wear their favorite traditional attire and share when this is worn and the details of it.

Questions for consideration to help further increase Laura's learning language aptitude:

- How can we encourage her to use Chinese more in social situations?
- How can Laura be guided towards higher English language proficiency for school work all while still maintaining cultural awareness?
- What assignments can we make that connect to her culture and let Laura demonstrate what she knows in both Chinese and English?
- How can we help her use Chinese more at home in everyday activities?
- How can educators motivate Laura to include her family roots in her projects?
- Is Laura allowed to write stories in her preferred language, and translate them into English or Chinese (Mandarin)?
- Do teachers inspire her and her classmates to learn a new language and be respectful of everybody's background in the class, by trying to learn some words in every language their students speak?
- Are Laura's parents involved in some school activities and events to help her commit to it?

References

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