Sarah Jenness

11-2-11

Visit #5

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| **Observations:**  Today I got to go with the ELL students to another class the ESL teacher, Mrs. F. They were about 6 or 7 students and they sat at a circular table.  The teacher tells them to take out their small books and their big books. I notice the big books are the same reading book they use in the other class. The small books say something about being for English Language Learners.  The story is called “The Babe and I”, which is the same story the non-ELL students read last week.  Students look at labeled pictures of objects that will be included in the story. The objects include a baby carriage, a baseball, apples, a briefcase, coins, and newspapers. Mrs. F asks if the students know what a briefcase is. She asks if students use a briefcase or a school bag and who is someone who uses a briefcase. One student says dads use briefcases. The teacher asks if moms can have briefcases too and the student, smiling, says “only pink ones”.  The students are asked to think about/make predictions about what the story could be based off the objects. Students are also asked about who or what “The Babe” in the title of the story is. Students guess “the Babe” might be the baseball or a game. She reads out loud to the students a part in the small book that talks about Babe Ruth being a famous baseball player and after a minute or two they realize the title is referring to Babe Ruth.  The students then go over vocabulary words. A few of the words were “initiate, elevate, shabby, midst”.  The asked the students to make predictions about the words. The students tried to predict meanings, usually by using a similar sounding word, but often (and understandably) they didn’t know, but when it came to “elevate” one girl said it sounded like elevator. The teacher asked what an elevator did and a student explained it took you up.  After talking about story, students move on to different activities. The students each have stations. One station is at the computers, another station is independent reading, and the last station is reading together with the teacher.  One girl, A, who talks to me a fair amount in Ms. B’s class, asks me to help her with independent reading.  After stations switch and A is no longer doing independent reading I turn my attention to L, who has been somewhat disruptive throughout class. I ask him what he’s reading for independent reading and he says “nothing”. He tries to go back on the computer, but I know his station is supposed to be independent reading, so I walk him over to the appropriate station and he walks away again. I follow where he goes and he tells me to go away. I tell him I need to stay with him to make sure he is doing his independent reading. He opens his book and quickly flips through the pages.  After the students have rotated the stations, it is time to go back to their regular class. The students are told to line up quietly. There appears to be come commotion and A tells Mrs. F that L said a bad word in Spanish. Mrs. F tells him inappropriate language is not acceptable in school. He says he didn’t say it in English. She says it’s not okay in any language.  After the students leave, I talk to Mrs. F for a little. I learn she doesn’t speak Spanish, but has picked up a lot from working with the kids. She is also trained as a reading specialist, which she says helps a lot. She says this group of kids has been working together with her since kindergarten. She says they’re oral skills are fairly well developed, but they lag in reading skills. She says they speak Spanish at home, and they don’t read at home with their families. A few of them had trouble doing book reports because that was an assignment that involved parental help, but their parents don’t all speak English. | **Assumptions/Connections/Questions:**  There are a few elements that provide sense of community. The round table, the fact that all these students are ELL, and the small group size.  I realize this class reads the same stories as the other class, and their small book, which contains vocab and guiding questions, is a supplement to help the students.  It’s great, but also surprising to me that they are only one week behind the regular class.  Such interesting issues about gender are raised! I think the book was joking when we said women can only have pink briefcases, but it is still interesting that briefcases are associated with men and that pink is associated with women.  This is such a hard question! I would have no idea what story would include newspapers, apples, briefcases, coins, a baseball, and a baby carriage. I don’t think the teacher was looking for specific answers, though, more just trying to remind them that making predictions is important. Also, it’s interesting to note that I automatically know “the Babe” is referring to Babe Ruth the famous baseball player because that is part of my cultural capital.  Though the children are often wrong about predicting words’ meanings, I am impressed by their efforts. I notice these students definitely talk more when they are just in the small ELL group as opposed to being in their regular class with 25 people. I am also impressed by the students’ oral a skills in general. They’re speaking skills seem to be very similar to the English speakers, but their reading skills appear to be at a lower level.  I think it’s interesting that the students don’t actually read the story, but it might have been for the best. The students, especially the boys, were fidgeting and the next activities gave them a little time to move. The computer station appeared to be most desirable.  I sit down with this girl and help, though I feel a little hesitant, because it is called “independent” reading. The teacher didn’t seem to mind, and it was really useful to actually hear her reading a story out loud because thus far in my praxis it has been very hard to get an idea of the students reading levels.  I feel so uncomfortable/uncertain of what to do when students don’t behave and I try to get them to do work, but it doesn’t work on the first few tries. I never know if it’s appropriate for me to keep pushing them. I know I am the “adult” in the situation, but I can’t force a student to read and I really don’t feel I have much authority in the class, but also I don’t particularly want to have authority. It’s not that I want all the kids to like me, it’s that I am not sure of what discipline is appropriate. Each school/class has a particular environment, and its hard to define that if I only go once a week for a couple hours.  I thought it was interesting that L thought it might be okay to say a bad word as long as it wasn’t in English. Maybe he knew it was wrong still, but was trying to justify it.  It’s interesting how Mrs. F dual training as a reading specialist has helped her teach the class. I feel like having additional training to the requirements is always helpful. I also wonder how the impact of working for so long together has bonded the ELL students. They seem more comfortable in the ELL class than they do in the regular class. It is strange to me that the school assigned a book report and expected parents to help when such a large population of the students are ELL and many parents don’t speak English. |

What:

I noticed the students participate a lot more when they were in the pull out ELL classroom than they do in the regular class.

So What:

This, once again, makes me feel confused about inclusion. I do think overall inclusion is better, but I also think having a time where you are in a smaller group with students struggling with the same things you are struggling with is beneficial. It’s a safe space, where everyone is learning together. I also wonder if there are other variables. Are they participating more simply because they are more comfortable? Do they like the ELL teacher more? Do they feel more focused because there are fewer children and fewer distractions in the ELL class?

Now What:

I am interested to hear what the ELL teacher thinks the reason is for higher participation levels and if she is aware of reasons why.