

## Individual Differences in Second Language Acquisition Activity

### Directions

Describe each of the following students, in terms of the individual differences affecting second language development including both underlying factors and social and cognitive strategies they use.

### **Mateusz**

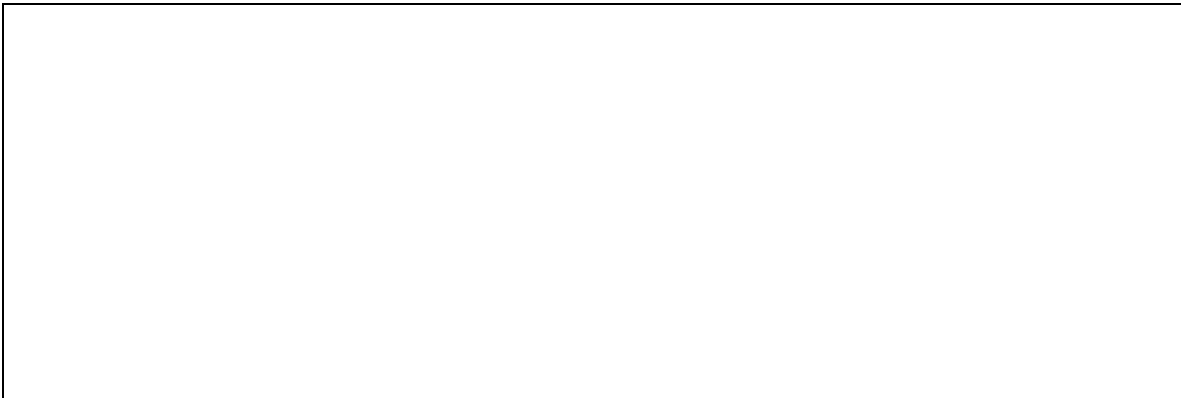
Mateusz is a 5-year-old monolingual Polish speaker who has recently moved to Chicago from Poland with his family. His mother told the classroom teacher that they are here to work for a few years, but plan on going back to Poland before Mateusz enters high school. He lives with his mother, father, two uncles, and three younger siblings. Polish is the only language spoken in the home, but his parents are able to communicate with the teacher in broken English.

In the six weeks he has been in the classroom, Mateusz has not yet voluntarily spoken to the teacher or any of his peers. He is very shy, and has a hard time making friends. The teacher noticed that he sits by himself at lunch, and barely acknowledges the other children when they try to speak to him. When the students are on the rug in the classroom, Mateusz always positions himself in the back. He watches quietly, but never raises his hand, smiles, or joins in the songs the class has been singing since the beginning of the year. His mother told the teacher that Mateusz's former preschool teacher in Poland always commented that he was a wonderful artist, but he refuses to draw anything when the classroom teacher asks him to. He is the only Polish-speaking child in the classroom.

## Diana

Diana is a 4-year-old preschool student in a monolingual English classroom. Diana's family moved here from Mexico last winter. She lives with her mother, father, and 2-year-old sister in the basement of her aunt and uncle's home. Her cousins also attend the school and range in age from 3 to 11 years old. This is her first year in preschool. Her parents have already said that they plan to refuse bilingual services for Kindergarten, and will insist she be placed in an all-English classroom. In her current preschool classroom, approximately half of the students in the class speak Spanish, all with varied levels of proficiency in both English and Spanish.

Diana quickly made friends with two other monolingual Spanish girls in the class at the beginning of the year. She is very social, and is often whispering and giggling with them on the rug during story time. Diana easily learned the daily routine, and is able to follow along fairly well in classroom activities. She watches other students when she's not sure what to do, and loves to help her two friends when they seem confused. She is able to say many phrases to the teacher and the English-speaking students, such as asking to go to the bathroom, asking for a drink, telling the child in front of her that she can't see, and threatening the other kids that she'll tell the teacher when she doesn't get what she wants. She does not participate in classroom discussions, and other than her two special friends, Diana speaks very little to the other students. When the teacher asks her a question in English, Diana smiles and usually either says, "I don't know", "I forgot", or shrugs.



## Jennifer

Jennifer is 7 year-old first grade student in a bilingual classroom. She attended bilingual PreK for one year and was in a ½ day bilingual Kindergarten room last year. She is the oldest of 3 children, and her family has lived in Chicago for about 10 years. There is an extensive family network in the community, with many older and younger cousins attending the school as well.

Jennifer loves to read in Spanish, and can write very well using developmental spelling. She is also beginning to read in English. She is very bright, inquisitive, and funny, and has lots of friends in the classroom who she can rely on for help when necessary. When classroom instruction is in English she is able to participate at a proficient level, using both formulaic expressions and her own creative constructions. She communicates well in casual conversations, though she tends to make errors in syntax. She is very good at using her engaging personality to maintain the interaction even when she has difficulty expressing herself.

