



Classroom Interaction and Transitions – Five Scenarios

Use the Assignment Template to complete the following three tasks:

1. Read the five scenarios in this document. Note the teacher practices that you feel are good, strong practices and those which could be improved. In Section A of the template, list at least four positive OR negative teaching behaviors you see in each scenario. Be sure to list whether the behaviors are positive or negative.
NOTE: Don't look at the handouts describing positive teaching behaviors in different contexts until you have analyzed and marked the positive and negative teaching behaviors.
2. Read Handouts 1-5. In Section B of the template, identify which of the five handouts each scenario represents.
3. In Section C of the template, list at least three practices you learned from this activity that you can use to improve your teaching skills.

SCENARIO PHILIPPINES

In a reading lesson, after skimming and scanning a short fable and answering some comprehension questions, the teacher has given students 15 minutes to discuss the meaning of the fable. 13 minutes later she notices that a couple of groups seem to be very engaged in their discussion so she doesn't want to interrupt them. She watches them trying to decide when to stop them—noticing that other groups are either quietly waiting or talking off task—but she only sits and watches—and makes no effort to engage the students who are not obviously working. Consequently, the students to end their discussion after 23 minutes have passed. Then, not wanting to cut off productive discussion abruptly she says to the group, "okay, you are working well, please take 30 seconds to finish your thought and then get ready to present your ideas to the class." When a minute has passed she says, "If you can hear me clap once, if you can hear me clap twice, etc." When she finished she has the attention of all the students.

She then asks for a volunteer to tell her what the groups are going to report on (the meaning of the fable), and how (a representative from each group will speak). As each group reporter speaks the teacher is careful to value their contributions and asks some students how the fable could apply to their lives. She continues in this way, going from group to group in a regular sequence from right to left around the room until each and every group has reported out. A result is that the last two groups have to complete their report out after the end-of-class bell has rung.

SCENARIO BELIZE

In a grammar lesson the teacher is reviewing the meaning and use of prepositions. She starts off with some easy prepositions like “off,” “into,” “under,” “over,” “around,” and “near.” Many of the students seem ready to answer but the students that like the class best are very eager to respond and the teacher primarily calls on them. She is good about repeating student answers to make sure all the class can hear. Sometimes the students’ pronunciation is very difficult to understand, but if the teacher can puzzle out the response, she rarely provides feedback. As the questions get harder, fewer students seem eager to respond, so the “good students” keep the class going by providing the answers—with the teacher occasionally stopping to expand or comment on some aspect of a student’s answer. One time Pablo, who hasn’t spoken yet, puts his hand halfway up and catches the teacher’s eye. She calls on him. He is surprised and so he hesitates a second or two. In the meantime one of the vocal students is calling “teacher, teacher, me, me!” so the teacher forgets about Pablo and calls yet again on a student who has answered several times before. At another moment she realizes that Alicia has been quietly looking down at her desk avoiding eye contact. The teacher calls on her. Alicia looks stricken. She has obviously been caught off guard and is not prepared to respond. The teacher moves on to another student and Alicia is not called on again.

At one point in the lesson the teacher is reviewing the difference between “on” and “in” in vehicles (e.g., in the car, on the bus, and get into the (small) helicopter, but get on the train). The students seem to be doing well with this, so she asks them if someone can think of a rule between how to decide whether to use “on” or “in” depending on the type of vehicle, but then she realizes that the English needed to describe the idea is too difficult for her students, so she apologizes and instead gives them some more examples to help them guess the pattern.

Towards the end of the class, a student looking at his worksheet asks, “Teacher, what is answer to number 12?” The teacher says, “Hector, we just reviewed that. What do you think the answer is?” Hector hesitates but then responds and the teacher replies, “No, that’s wrong. It’s (and she gives the correct answer).”

The teacher ends the class by thanking the students for their hard work and reminds them of the test the next day, its structure, and what they should study that evening to be prepared.

SCENARIO MALAWI

The class has been going over a dialogue together reviewing vocabulary, grammar structures, pronunciation and idioms. The teacher has noted that some of the weaker students are struggling a bit more than usual so she tells herself that she will try to pair some of the weaker students with stronger ones on today's practice activity to help them keep up.

When she finishes summarizing their dialogue review she claps her hands abruptly and then says okay, get in pairs, "Count off, 1, 2, 1, 2." The students begin counting off but in one corner of the room there is some confusion and in spite of the teacher's asking for those students to start over again there is still some confusion about who is a 1 and who is a 2. Then the teacher remembers her intention to pair some of the weaker students with strong ones so she identifies six students (three strong and three weak) and assigns each of them as pairs (regardless of whether they were 1s or 2s). The teacher says, "Okay, now I want you to practice the dialogue we've been studying. Take turns, so that each of you has a chance to be (the characters in the dialogue) Leoni and Nyambose, okay? Be careful to think about pronunciation because I will call some pairs to come up and present their dialogue after practice. Okay? Do you understand? Okay, get with your partner."

The transition takes a long time and some students are very confused, the teacher has to work with them individually to form pairs. Even when the students are finally in pairs, few are working. Some are off task and speaking in their own language, some are trying to work but arguing about what they are supposed to do, others finally ask, "Teacher, what do you want us to do." The teacher repeats the instructions carefully, writing key words of the steps on the board and numbering them. When she is finished she asks a student what they are supposed to do. The student gets some steps right but stumbles. The teacher calls on another student who manages to state the additional steps. The teacher then asks the whole group to state each of the steps. When she decides they are clear on what they are supposed to do, she sets them to work. The task is effective on the whole.

As the teacher is moving around the class listening to each pair and providing perhaps one brief, helpful comment to each pair, she notices that the girls participate as well as the boys in pair work whereas in whole class work the girls are often silent, even when specifically called on. She wonders if there is anything to do about that, but by this time she notices this, the classroom noise level is increasing suggesting that most pairs have already finished their practice. Consequently, she returns to the front of the class to complete the next lesson segment.

SCENARIO CAMBODIA

The teacher has been teaching for some time. He feels confident in his teaching. He usually goes to class without much advance preparation and his lesson plans are typically more like sketches than well-structured lesson plans. If you ask him, he'll tell you he tends to work out what he teaches as he goes along. There is some advantage to this as it can be claimed that this "on-the-fly" adaptation allows learning to develop more organically; it is in tune with learner needs and the context of the particular classroom situation. On other hand, any teacher that won't admit that it's easy to digress without an explicit lesson plan to follow is likely not being self-aware.

So while a student question can send the teacher off on a 10 minute detour (which students may enjoy, especially because they have to produce less), he also has a good sense of activity structure. When he notices the class tempo starting to slow he is very good about giving short, clear directions, making sure that students understand them and carry them out, and sets a sense of urgency about the activity.

He helps maintain student focus by monitoring both student attention and "up-take" (are they demonstrating the learning they should be experiencing?) If uptake is good, he ends the "report out" activity and moves on. Also, while perhaps he needs a little more discipline, he realizes that giving students more time than is absolutely required to complete an activity can actually detract from learning rather than fostering it, so he is good about giving students no more time that was planned and explicitly stating the time remaining to complete the activity ("you have 10 minutes left... you have five minutes left... you have one minute left").

SCENARIO MONGOLIA

The teacher finishes giving instructions. The students are waiting in expectation. Silently, she surveys the room making eye contact with each student. When she is assured that she has the attention of every student she says, "Okay, you know what to do. Let's go. First group to be seated and ready to work gets a sticker." She then taps her palm on the desk, pad, pad, pad, pad; pad, pad, pad, as the students move purposefully into groups.

The teacher compliments the students on their good transition. She tells the last of the students groups to seat themselves that for being last they have to come by and clean off the chalk board after school, but also tells them that could have done worse and how she is sure they will do better next time.

The teacher tells them they have 10 minutes to complete their activity and is about to ask them to begin when she realizes she forgot to have them carry out a comprehension check. She asks Jargal what they are supposed to do in their groups. Jargal has been in the teacher's class long enough to know that everyone needs to be ready at any time to tell the teacher what they are supposed to do in their groups so she provides a reasonable answer very quickly. Then the teacher sets the students to work.

The teacher circulates through the class. She is good at periodically telling students how much time they have left, but sometimes she gets too caught up in talking to a group and starts doing their work for them (without noticing). Finally, even though her pacing was crisp, the school bell rings while the students are still working. Thinking to the class she has to teach in 10 minutes she tells her current students, "We don't have any more time today. Turn in what you have done," forgetting to remind students to put their names on their papers or to tell them the process for turning in their papers. Therefore, it takes almost as much time to get the students out of class as if she had stopped, given precise instructions, and made sure students understood them.