



**FIGURE 6.1** Perspectives on learning environments. SOURCE: Bransford et al. (1998).

have been called “culturally responsive,” “culturally appropriate,” “culturally compatible,” and “culturally relevant” (Ladson-Billings, 1995). The term also fits the concept of “diagnostic teaching” (Bell et al., 1980): attempting to discover what students think in relation to the problems on hand, discussing their misconceptions sensitively, and giving them situations to go on thinking about which will enable them to readjust their ideas (Bell, 1982a:7). Teachers who are learner centered recognize the importance of building on the conceptual and cultural knowledge that students bring with them to the classroom (see Chapters 3 and 4).

Diagnostic teaching provides an example of starting from the structure of a child’s knowledge. The information on which to base a diagnosis may be acquired through observation, questioning and conversation, and reflection on the products of student activity. A key strategy is to prompt children to explain and develop their knowledge structures by asking them to make predictions about various situations and explain the reasons for their predictions. By selecting critical tasks that embody known misconceptions, teachers can help students test their thinking and see how and why various ideas might need to change (Bell, 1982a, b, 1985; Bell et al., 1986; Bell and Purdy, 1985). The model is one of engaging students in cognitive conflict and then having discussions about conflicting viewpoints (see Piaget, 1973; Festinger, 1957). “To promote learning, it is important to focus on controlled changes