

Oral Language Development: From Theory to Teaching Practices in Reading Recovery Lessons

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Session Description

Oral language, reading, and writing are interconnected processes. All Reading Recovery teaching and learning is grounded in this integrated approach that supports accelerated literacy learning. Ways to scaffold oral language development in Reading Recovery lessons are examined.

In *Change Over Time*, page 95, Marie Clay said:

If we harness the established power of children's oral language to literacy learning from the beginning, so that **literacy knowledge and oral language processing power** move forward together, linked and patterned from the start, that will surely be more powerful.

Outcomes

Increase awareness of the importance of oral language development.

Explore instructional practices for oral language development in all aspects of the Reading Recovery™ lesson.

How does oral language support literacy learning?

Research

*The Instructional Importance of
Oral Language Development*

The Compelling Why

If children have been slow to acquire speech or have been offered fewer opportunities to hold conversations (for many reasons) **there can be limitations in the grammar they control**, which might mean that they have **difficulties with comprehending oral and written language**. Such children **may not have control of some of the most common sentence structures used in story book English** and therefore are **unable to anticipate** what may happen next in the sentences of their reading texts.

Clay, M. (1991). *BL*, p.38

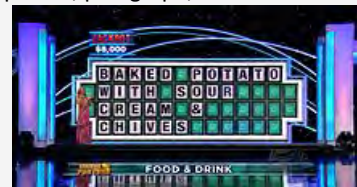
What a beginning reader has to do is to **discover that he can also anticipate what may occur** among the visual patterns in written language...The anticipation of what may follow creates a pleasing tension—a puzzle to be solved. It is related to a skills that will be needed in reading as **the child anticipates the structures of the sentence and the next step in the story**.

Clay, M. (1991). *BL*, P.94

From oral language, children learn to anticipate...

- words
- phrases
- sentences
- paragraphs
- story structure

The importance of **anticipating structures** at the word, phrase, paragraph, sentence and story level...



“children are **unable to anticipate** what may happen next in the sentences of their reading texts.”

Clay, M. (1991). *BL*. p.38

For example, what does anticipation mean at the sentence level?

Ben's Treasure Hunt

Beverley Randell, Rigby PM

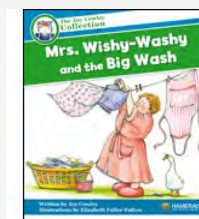
Mom said,
“Ben, come here.
Here is a clue for you.”

page 2

“I love you, Mom,” said Ben.

page 16

For example, what does anticipation mean at the story level?



Following Vygotsky. . .

I would emphasize the value of children's talk about events and ideas for their understanding of the world, and for their growing ability to articulate that understanding orally and in writing. **Creating links between words and the world, and between words and other words, is the heart of the educational process.** Children's expression of ideas in the classroom are thus not just product in which they display the process by which much of that learning takes place. Teacher's "talk more" invitations can stimulate and encourage this important process...

Clay, *Change Over Time*, p. 31

Early Literacy Skills Linked to Reading Skills

Scientifically-Based Reading Research

- Oral Language
- Vocabulary Development
 - ➡ ▪ Reading Vocabulary
 - Reading Comprehension
- Phonological Awareness
- Alphabet/Print Knowledge
 - ➡ ▪ Decoding of Words
 - Fluency and Spelling

"Language has always been in someone else's mouth before it can come out of ours."

Peter Johnston, author of *Opening Minds/Choice Words*

What does this quote from Johnston mean in your teaching situation?

"Language is a child's most powerful learning tool. Within all of the instructional contexts that are part of a comprehensive language and literacy curriculum, **learning is mediated by oral language."**

Fountas & Pinnell (2011)



What are these neural connections based on in the young child's life?

What is average or typical oral language development by age 5? The child can:

- understand opposites
- use sentences of about 6 words with correct grammar
- talk about events in the present, past and future
- explain the function of objects
- follow three oral directions
- tell their own feelings and ideas
- speak clearly enough to be understood

www.speechpathologyaustralia.org.au in Dixon, JRR, Spring, 2014

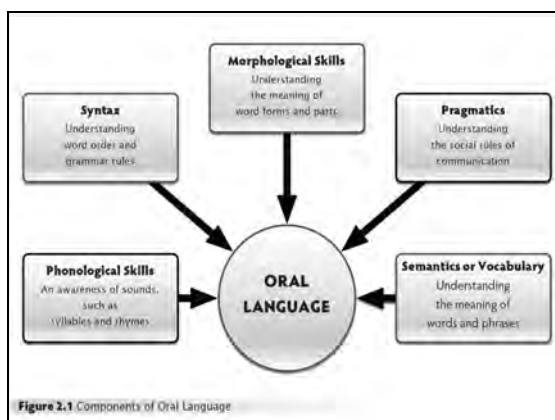
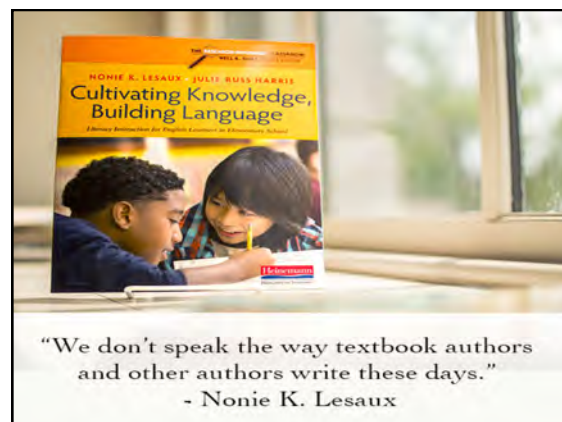
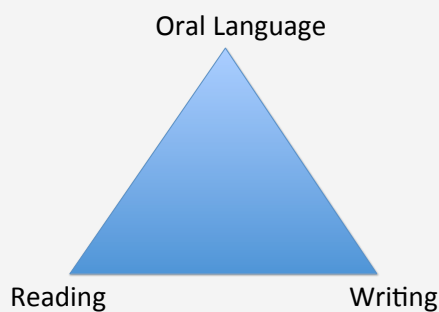
The child who does not like to talk with the teacher or who has some difficulty in understanding what the teacher is saying may be a child at risk.

Clay, M. (1991) BL, p. 73

Oral language as the first self-extending system a child develops.

Clay, M. (2001), COT

The Triangulation of Processing Systems



Oral Language Research

*The Early Catastrophe:
The 30 Million Word Gap by Age 3*

- Observed 42 diverse families over 2 years
- Divided families into 3 socio-economic classes
- Analyzed child's rate of language acquisition and parent's communication style

Hart & Risley. (2003). *American Educator*
(Revisiting study from 1983)

Oral Language Research

"All the families **nurtured** their children and played and talked with them. They all disciplined their children and taught them good manners and how to dress and toilet themselves. They provided their children with much the same toys and **talked to them** about much the same things. Though different in personality and skill levels, the children all learned to talk and to be **socially appropriate** members of the family with all the basic skills needed for preschool entry." (p.3)

Hart & Risley, (2003). *American Educator*

Children's vocabulary development is dependent on the diversity and quantity and complexity of the caregiver's vocabulary

Caregiver language was found to be even more important than SES

Kids take on the structures they hear

Frequency of specific syntactic structures by caregivers was a strong predictor of the order of acquisition of those structures in children's speech

Huttenlocher et al. (2010)

Studies point to **very limited time for student talk** in classrooms.

(Arreaga-Mayer & Perdomo-Rivera, 1996; Long & Porter, 1985)

...So what does that mean in Reading Recovery for ELs?

Low Language students?

Struggling readers?

Oral Language Development

"I am encouraging teachers to understand that **learning in one language area** enriches the potential for learning in the other areas. Therefore, if we plan instruction **that links oral language and literacy learning** (writing and reading) **from the start**--so that writing and reading and oral language processing move forward together, linked and patterned, from the start--that **instruction will be more powerful.**"

Clay, *Becoming Literate*, 1991

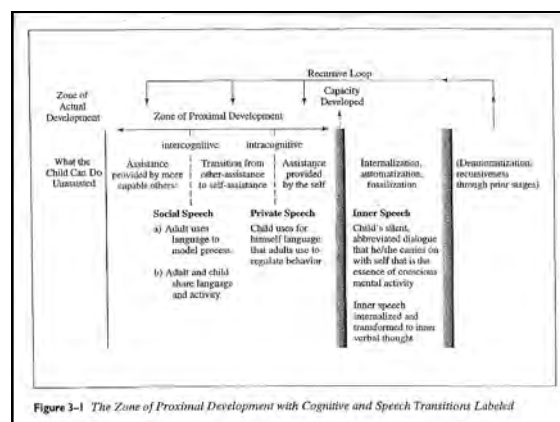
Vygotsky's Theory How does it apply to OLD?

Zone of Proximal Development

Zone of Actual Development

Cognitive and Speech Support

Lyons, *Supporting Struggling Readers*, p. 35



Language and Thinking

According to Vygotsky: Speech does not merely accompany the child's activity, it serves **mental orientation, conscious understanding**; it helps in overcoming difficulties; it is speech for oneself, intimately and usefully connected with the children's thinking. To understand another's words, we must also understand his thought.

Vygotsky,, *Mind and Society*, 1978

**You are helping children
create a mental model
through oral language.**

Klein (2013)

**"If there is one instructional strategy
that teachers can implement to
support academic success of
children, especially those in low
socioeconomic communities, it is to
let them talk."**

Mason and Gallaway, *Reading Today*, IRA (Feb/Mar 2012)

[Glossary of Grammatical and Rhetorical Terms](#),
two definitions of [grammar](#):

The systematic study and description of a
[language](#).

A set of rules and examples dealing with the
[syntax](#) and word structures of a language,
usually intended as an aid to the learning of
that language.

<http://grammar.about.com>
or their newer URL:
grammarly.com

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Clay (1991) *Becoming Literate*
similar to quote in COT (2001), page 95

Assessment

*Observing changes over time in
Oral Language Development to Make Instructional
Decisions to Support ELs and LLs*

A conversation between a mom and her two year old daughter. . .

Child (at airport): Whee!
A blue plane.

Mom: Whee! I see two
blue planes.

Discuss what the Mom was doing in terms of scaffolding developing language. How can this apply to RAK and across the lesson series?



Assessing Oral Language

An analysis of the responses a child gives to a set of sentences carefully ordered for difficulty yields a detailed description of his control over oral language. When a child fails, he usually repeats the difficult sentence in a way which indicates **the structures over which he has control.**

Clay, M. (2007). *Record of Oral Language*, pg.11

Scaffolding Oral Language with ELs

Syntax is fundamental to the development of meaning...

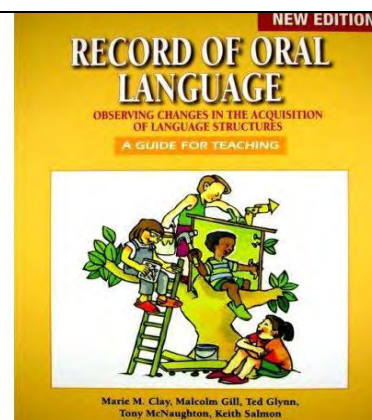
Much like mathematics, children develop language through patterns, categorizing and classifying through manipulation and play.

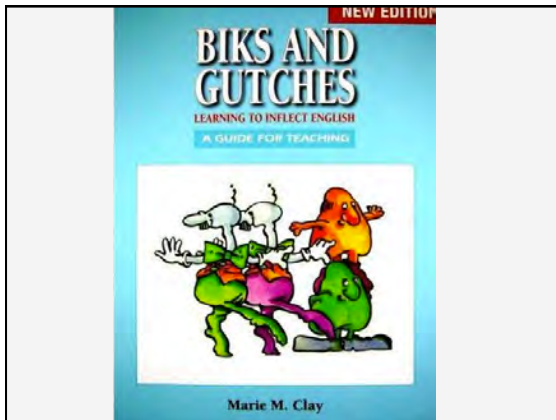
Language Play is Language Work

Klein (2012)

Understanding Language Structures to Foster Oral Language Development

Based on and adapted from Clay (1976, 2007) and Gentile (2003)





Record of Oral Language

USE: The Record of Oral Language is appropriate for children 4 to 7 years of age with English as a primary language — **as well as for 5 years after children begin to learn English as an additional language.**

PURPOSE: Teachers need to know something about the structure of the language as well as how structure is acquired by young children to help children improve their skills in using the language. **This is important for teachers of children whose mother tongue is other than English.**

Clay's Research

- The ROL allows teachers to examine a child's expanding control over the structures within the English language by using a repeated sentence task that shows what a child can do and changes over time. From Clay's research, we know also that **oral language proficiency contributes immensely to learning in both reading and writing.**

Reading, Writing and Oral Language

Since reading and writing are language activities, it is **vital for teachers to have a clear understanding of how language develops** and to know the **most common structures** of English and how these structures are acquired by children who are learning to read and write.

Clay, M. (1991). BL, pages 108-118

Assessing Oral Language

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Clay, M. (2007). *Record of Oral Language*, pg.11

Sentences are grouped in **three levels** of difficulty; each level has two sentences of each type for the **seven types** used in the ROL. (See pages 39-41)

The basic structures used in the Levels Sentences are summarised in the following table.

Type A	Nbe+	Bill	was	asleep.
Type B	NVN	Bill	saw	John.
Type C	NV+	Bill	went	to town.
Type D	NVNN	Bill	sent	John/a book.
Type E	NVN clause	Bill	knows	what he wants.
Type F	Here/There	Here	are	some more fish.
Type G	NVN+	Bill	sent	John to town.

Let's look at a video of an ELL first grader who has difficulty retelling a book he could read.

What are the issues you notice/ hear in his language use?

How could you scaffold retelling?

Children's control of language when talking, writing, or reading **expands outwards in flexible ways from the current structures** they already control. Specifically,

- they use their range of language options for talking, writing, or reading;
- they need to explore how to vary language, notice how authors and speakers use language, and develop an ear for a new turn of phrase; and
- they need to increase their speed of making decisions when composing language.

Control over new language structures is acquired throughout schooling.

Clay, M. (2004) Talking, Reading, and Writing, JRR, p. 14



New from
RRCNA and
NATG

Clay's Research

- Clay's studies of oral language revealed that control of sentence structure is very important in early stages of learning to read. When teachers of early readers choose texts that are close to a child's oral language, the child can anticipate and self-monitor using what he or she knows about language.

Opportunities to Scaffold Oral Language in Reading Recovery

**Familiar Reading/Rereading
Teaching After the Running Record
Writing
Cut-up Story
New Book
Everywhere...**

Teachers should not avoid authors whose texts are hard to read. Rather, they should find ways to work with new, unexpected, and unusual structures. Teachers should read aloud to students the language that is new to them. Get the new phrase or sentence

- to the ear (listening)
- to the mouth (saying)
- to the eye (reading)
- to the written product (creating text)

Clay, M. (2004), JRR, page 9

In our earlier discussion of anticipation, we talked about Clay's theory regarding what children learn to anticipate from oral language...

- words
- phrases
- sentences
- paragraphs
- story structure

Syntactical Development

based on Clay's Theory of Literacy Development

*Change in grammar takes time, and I doubt if we know why. **The child reads easy grammars well, reads more, and has more exposure to alternative ways of varying the construction of sentences.** Talking and writing alone may not introduce enough exposure to literary variations of language use.*

Clay, M. (2004). Talking, Reading and Writing, *JRR*, Spring, p. 13

Oral Language Development based on Clay's Theory of Literacy Development

1. Create a rich context for language learning.
2. Increase language learning opportunities.
3. Understand that children learn language easily through conversation.

4. Consider what things make a child reluctant to speak.

5. Recognize the importance of reading aloud to children.

6. Create the need to produce language.

7. Arrange for sources of new language.

8. Realize that repeating language has severe limitations

9. Think about which language structures are easier to learn.

10. Understand how children discover new rules and find when to use them.

11. Understand how children learn the order of words and structures in English.

12. Appreciate how children learn to say the same thing in different ways.

13. Encourage the use of alternative constructions: expanding the phrase, moving things around, transforming simple statements.

14. Consider the impact of overloading the child's grammar.

M.M. Clay. Talking, Reading and Writing. *The Journal of Reading Recovery*. RRCNA. Spring, 2004.

Syntax Development based on Clay's
Theory of Literacy Development

Encourage the use of alternative constructions: expanding the phrase, moving things around, transforming simple statements.

(Point 13)

Clay, M. (2004) Talking, Reading and Writing, *JRR*, Spring

Discovering how to vary language, how to rearrange the bits, how to capture a new phrase and use it to the point of tedium are all part of language learning from the preschool years throughout life.

Clay, M. (2004), *JRR*, page 7

Such flexibility is learned from family talk, teacher talk, peer talk, stories told and stories read, messages written, and stories composed. Children steadily increase the flexibility with which they explore all these kinds of alternatives. **Teachers must find ways to help this.**

Clay, M. (2004) Talking, Reading and Writing, *JRR*, Spring, p. 13

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