

Supporting and Strengthening the Use of Structure

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“I regard the meaning as the ‘given’ in all reading—the source of anticipation, the guide to being on track, and the outcome and reward of the effort.”

---Marie Clay

Fountas & Pinnell. (2001). *Guiding Readers and Writers Grades 3-6*. Heinemann: Portsmouth, NH.
pg. 302

The Role of Oral Language

- **Oral language is a coded activity learned by toddlers and preschoolers**
- **Reading and writing is a second coded activity acquired by children who already control the easy-to-learn parts of language**

The Role of Oral Language (2)

- As literacy is learned it is a great advantage to be able to monitor what you think you see in print through a set of oral language competencies
- Reading and writing will enrich a child's understanding of what one can do with language

On page 81 of *Becoming Literate* Marie Clay tells us...

The child's everyday speech is linked to the fluency with which he will read.

Expanding Our Thinking: What we know

- **Reading involves the integrated use of 3 major cueing sources**
 - **Meaning**
 - **Structure**
 - **Visual Information**
- **Reading requires a working, flexible vocabulary**
- **Children who can speak a language use grammatical constraints to make meaning**

Expanding Our Thinking:

What we know (2)

- Language makes sense if it is grouped together in meaningful phrases (Parsing)
- Reading involves bringing what we know about language into a relationship with symbols that represent utterances
 - Pronunciation
 - Pitch
 - Juncture
 - Stress
- Punctuation plays a role

Expanding Our Thinking:

What we will explore

The use of appropriate structure is dependent on:

- Ability to decode
 - Efficiently
 - Rapidly → Automatically
- A working vocabulary in the contextual setting
- Understanding the grammatical constraints of the language being used
- Knowing how to put words together meaningfully

*In **Becoming Literate: The Construction of Inner Control***

Marie says...

“If the child’s language development seems lagging it is misplaced sympathy to do his talking for him. Instead, put your ear closer, concentrate more sharply, smile more rewardingly, and spend more time in genuine conversation, difficult though it is. To foster children’s language development, create opportunities for them to talk, and then talk with them (not at them).” (BL p. 69)

What do the children control?

- Don't guess, assess
- Know and understand the learners
- Talk to them and learn their language challenges
- Use what they do well as a way to what is harder
- Try to be sensitive to and minimize the number of new things they are having to attend to
- Monitor their progress over time

Assessments

- **Observation Survey**
- **Running Records**
- **Record of Oral Language**
- **Biks and Gutches**
- **Writing Samples**
- **Error Analysis**
- **Informal Assessments**

Implications

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.

Clay, MM. (2001). *Change Over Time in Children's Literacy Development*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann. p.95

Parsing

Marie Clay in *Change Over Time in Children's Literacy Development* (2001) quotes Pinker (1994) to describe parsing as follows:

“As speakers we monitor our own speaking and sometimes go back to select a different word or touch up the grammar of an utterance. A listener tries to follow a speaker and *parse* the sentence so far to make sure that he or she is receiving a “possible” message. This *parsing* involves correctly relating particular sounds and words to the spoken words that surround them....”

Parsing (2)

And continues...

“Like speakers, readers parse as they go, and from time to time they discover a need to revise the reading just as they would do when speaking....We pull words together for **literacy acts constrained by invisible relationships** and roles which words have within a simple sentence....Probably the re-running of a piece of reading text, which young children do without prompting had its origins in the young speaker’s experience with parsing spoken language.”

Parsing (3)

- **Fat people eat accumulates.**
- **The cotton clothing is usually made of grows in Mississippi.**
- **The horse raced past the barn fell.**

Parsing (4)

- **Fat** people eat accumulates.
- **The cotton** clothing is usually made of grows in Mississippi.
- **The horse** raced past **the barn** fell.

Which of these sounds better to you?

**one / very / large, / newly painted, / red /
Ford / truck**

or

**one / Ford, / red, / newly painted / very
large / truck**

Record of Oral Language

Helpful in:

- Understanding what language structures a child controls
- Determining what a child can repeat of what is said to him
 - Memory
 - Pronunciation
 - Phrasing

ROL Activity

- Listen to tape recording of a child being administered the ROL
- As you listen, look over the scored document
- Jot down any notes as you can
- Study the/your findings

Things to consider

What is the child's ability in:

- **Using the working vocabulary in the contextual setting**
- **Understanding the grammatical constraints of the language being used**
- **Putting words together meaningfully**

Marie Clay suggests that 'expansion' is helpful...

“Adults have been shown to be effective models in this role. Other young children do not provide such satisfactory models....The adult echoes the child. But children’s sentences often leave out important words or inflections and parents, in their imitations, replace the missing parts and give a completely grammatical version of what the child wanted to say. Adults do this to check their understanding of what the child said. This process has been called ‘expansion’.” (BL p. 70)

Marie Clay further cautions that...

“A correcting or tutoring approach to language development is fraught with **dangers**. If a child’s language gets attention only when it is in error, will he understand that all the other things he says are approved of? Or will he come to feel that his speech is defective?” (BL p. 71)

Text Selection and Introduction

- **Keep the concepts and story ideas simple**
- **Think carefully about vocabulary challenges**
- **Consider grammatical structures of the texts**
- **Use, repeat, and have the children use and repeat new or challenging words or structures**
- **Consider visual aids or demonstrations to support understanding**

How Does This Work for Book Introductions?

According to Marie Clay in *Different Paths to Common Outcomes* (1998), teachers should...

“Try to **anticipate** when some language, or an unusual name, or some bookish syntactical sequence will not link easily to the children’s own language, and use the novel language structures when talking about the story, and enunciating them very deliberately. The teacher may intentionally use one particular sentence pattern two or three times, or to get the children to repeat a phrase or sentence, running the difficult language or pronunciation across their tongues.”

Taken from “Introducing Storybooks to Young Children” p. 174

How Does This Work for Book Introductions? (2)

According to Marie Clay in *Different Paths to Common Outcomes* (1998), teachers should...

“...allow(s) the children to have a model of the language in their heads to support their reading of the text. It is **not memorizing** the lines of the book, but rather readying the mind and ear to grapple with novelty.”

What Implications Does This Have for You?

“An **end-goal** for the acquisition phase of literacy learning is for children to become efficient readers of texts. After about **three years** in school they read long texts at speed with few errors, dealing with different kinds of information in print **silently** and apparently **simultaneously**. By that time the language activities of their classrooms will place heavy demands on knowledge of sentence structure and shades of meaning.”

Activity

- Choose a partner and look at the text provided
- Together, consider the language used in the text that could be problematic
- Decide how you would address the problem in the introduction
- Determine how you will support the child if the reading is still too challenging

Please fill out your evaluation forms.

Presenter: Starnes

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Thank you!