



# When conversations go well:

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Oral language development in  
Reading Recovery™



# Thinking about Jake

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Can we observe how language develops within the context of teacher and child conversational interactions?



# Thinking about Jake

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- Feeding in new language
- Expanding on the child's language
- What was the response?



# The social context of language development

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One makes a self through the words one has learned, fashions one's own voice and inner speech by the selective appropriation of the voices of others

Emmerson (1996) p. 133



# Thinking about language acquisition from a developmental perspective

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What occurred as a result of the teacher's attempt to feed language into the conversation?

- When the conversation does not go well
- When the conversation goes well



# Thinking about language acquisition from a developmental perspective

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- When conversations go well we observe the formation of new language by the child...
- ...and not the transferal of language from teacher to child



# The quality of the social interaction

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- Properly pitched instruction will result in development
- Know the level at which the child uses language independently and the level at which new learning can occur



# The quality of social interaction

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Teaching can be said to occur when assisted performance is offered at points in the zone of proximal development at which performance requires assistance.

Vygotsky (1956) p. 278




# Responsive assistance

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Just right assistance that results in the active transformation of knowledge

The teacher guides the path without determining it such that the outcome is “jointly produced and individually appropriated”. (Rogoff, 1990, p.196)




# The nature of teacher and child interaction and language development

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In taking a developmental perspective, the focus is on how children learn rather than how teachers should teach

(Clay, 2004; Wood, 1998)



# The nature of teacher and child interaction and language development

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Cazden (2001) explored:

- How teachers talk with children in ways that support the appropriation of new language
- Looked for “just-in-time” kinds of help

# Discourse behaviours

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## Personalization

- The ability of the teacher to personalize conversations affects what occurs as learning

(Clay, 1998)

- The teacher looks for shared territory

(Lindfors, 1999)



# Discourse behaviours

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## Reformulation

When appropriation is reciprocal, the teacher listens, appropriates child's utterance, and revoices into more culturally mature formulations  
(Cazden, 2001, p. 76)



# Discourse behaviours

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Clay, 1991, p. 70

What is it in the adult's behaviour that fosters increased maturity in the child's language?

- Expansion
- Reformulation: an immediate feedback of correct information



# Thinking about language development in Reading Recovery™

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Teachers need to think about the structures of language that children use as they talk, read, and write. In the early years children build a common syntactic base that serves all three activities, and this means that language use may be expanded as children read and as they write, as well as when they talk.

(Clay, 2004, p. 1)



# Thinking about language development in Reading Recovery™

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- Language development occurs through teacher and child interaction
- The teacher adjusts his or her language in the same sense that complexity of the text in reading and writing is adjusted to the level where learning can occur



# The research questions

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Can appropriation of language be observed to occur in teacher and child dialogue in the Reading Recovery™ lesson?

Are personalization of the conversation and reformulation of a child's utterance forms of just-in-time scaffolding that support the appropriation of language?

# Findings

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**Table One**  
**Number of Times Personalization,  
Reformulation, and Appropriation  
Where Observed in Nine Teacher-Child  
Conversations**

	<u>Teacher A</u>	<u>Teacher B</u>
Personalization	8	7
Reformulation	18	12
Appropriation	9	7



## Conversations are personalized when

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- The teacher is able to talk about the child's own experiences with the topic
- The teacher accepts the child's view on the subject
- The child is able to talk about what he or she is interested in



# Reformulation was used to

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- Summarize a long episodic conversation
- Rephrase what the child had said in previous utterances using standard grammar
- Put an idea into the child's head
- Take the child's meaning but say it in a different way
- Help the child pull together more than one idea

# What was appropriated?

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- Verbs, for example *climbs* in place of *trying to go up*
- Verb phrase, such as *make it scary*
- Nouns, for example *lost its flower* becomes *lost its petals*

# What was appropriated?

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- A variation on a word, such as using the word *trick* as a verb as well as a noun
- A more mature utterance, for example *everybody* in place of *room eight and room four and room nine*
- More fitting language in expressing the child's idea, such as *the other dinosaur* becoming *the gentle dinosaur*



# Selective appropriation

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- Language put out there by the teacher was selective appropriated
- What was appropriated was determined by psychological factors rather than logical factors

(Clay, 1993, p. 47)