

Language, Literacy, and the Child

Second Edition

LEE GALDA • BERNICE E. CULLINAN • DOROTHY S. STRICKLAND



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PREFACE

This book focuses on the use of children's literature to support the teaching and learning of the English language arts in kindergarten through eighth-grade classrooms. Language is the foundation of all that we do. We spend our days speaking, listening, reading, and writing—in many places, with many people, and for many purposes. As a teacher of the English language arts, you are responsible for helping children learn both through language and about language as they increase their strategies, repertoire, and skill as language users.

This book is organized to help develop general knowledge of learning and language and to guide in the close examination of effective ways to help children develop their language abilities. In Chapter 1, "Teaching and Learning the English Language Arts," we discuss basic assumptions and principles about language learning and teaching that are the foundation for all of the ideas that follow.

In Chapter 2, "The Development of Oral Language," we discuss the history and structure of the English language. We present an account of how children begin to develop language before reaching school age and then consider how language learners continue to develop oral language once they enter school. We review ways that teachers can facilitate this continued development—through meaningful discussions, drama, and other oral language activities. A discussion of bilingual (able to use two languages) and bidialectal (able to use two dialects) speakers and the role of register in language choices is included. Issues of linguistic diversity that are first addressed in this chapter are considered throughout the book. A discussion of listening concludes this chapter.

Literacy—reading and writing—and its development are discussed in Chapter 3, "The Emergence of Literacy." We look closely at what young children learn about written language, how they learn it, and how preschool and early-grade teachers can support this learning through classroom practice, as well as curricular and policy decisions. While the current focus has shifted from oral language to reading and writing, the interconnectedness of reading, writing, speaking, and listening is stressed throughout the remainder of the book.

Using children's literature as a foundation for teaching reading is the focus of Chapter 4, "Literature: Reading, Responding, Becoming a Reader." This chapter describes the nature of children's responses to literature and the social nature of school reading. We present a rationale for literature-based instruction and discuss ways of organizing and implementing such instruction. Although the focus is on literature and reading, we also consider how literature enhances language development and how oral and written activities enhance literature study.

"Helping Children Become Writers," Chapter 5, focuses on writing. We describe the classroom atmosphere that encourages writing and present the phases of the writing cycle. We consider how children move through this cycle and learn to write by having regular opportunities to write and revise in the company of their peers. Again, there is an emphasis on how oral language and children's literature enhance students' development as writers. Handwriting, mechanics, grammar, and spelling instruction are considered within the context of writing.

“Talking With Children,” Chapter 6, focuses on classroom talk that supports reading and writing. After discussing different perspectives on talk. We present guidelines for using discussion as a means of promoting oral language development and content learning. We review practices that contribute to successful conferences with children and discuss ways to encourage children to talk about reading and writing with their peers. A discussion of sharing time highlights the value of talk in the classroom.

Because language use is not confined to just reading or writing time, the focus of Chapter 7 is “Language Across the Curriculum.” Here we consider how oral language, reading, and writing are essential to learning in various content areas such as science, social science, mathematics, literature, art, and music. We present strategies for helping children use language to learn while they are simultaneously learning about language.

Chapter 8, “Linking Instruction and Assessment: Observing Language Learners in the Classroom,” offers a discussion of the evolving role of assessment in today’s classrooms. We describe how to observe language learners in a careful, systematic manner, presenting ways of observing children as they read, write, and use oral language. We then consider how this information informs instructional decisions.

Chapter 9, “Portfolios: Performance Assessment,” reflects the evolution of alternative assessment practices in our public schools. A discussion concerning the usefulness of portfolios is followed by guidelines for implementing portfolio assessment and using portfolio data to assess learning.

Chapters 10, 11, and 12 contain extended descriptions of actual teachers and students as they practice the kind of teaching and learning presented in the first nine chapters. Each of these three chapters provides glimpses of theory in practice—how language teaching and learning look in the classroom.

All of the chapters in this book begin with a brief glimpse of people—adults and children—working together in some linguistic event, and each contains classroom descriptions and examples of classroom talk that illustrate the kind of teaching discussed. The idea of change also permeates the chapters; many of the teachers described are teachers whose theory and practice changed as they have learned from their students. It is this dynamic nature of teaching that we hope to capture in words.

Each chapter also contains various Teaching Ideas, or suggestions for successful teaching, that have proven effective in classrooms. These ideas are clearly marked to enable you to find them easily. We have also included several appendixes that you will find useful as you work with children in your classroom. These can be found at the end of the book and are perforated so that you can easily remove and copy them for your use.

As you work with and learn from students in your classroom, you will have new questions that need to be answered. Because of this, we end each chapter with some suggestions for further reading. We hope that this book is just the beginning of what will be a lifelong interest in learning about children, language, and the art of teaching.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

When we wrote the first edition of this book, we were humbled by the number of people to whom we owed a debt of gratitude. That feeling has not changed, and the list of those from whom we have learned has grown longer. The university students, classroom teachers, children, and colleagues with whom we work are a daily source of inspiration, ideas, and understanding. We gratefully acknowledge university colleagues such as Tony Pellegrini,

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The many classroom teachers with whom we work continue to renew our enthusiasm for and commitment to the exciting new possibilities in language education. Hester Meyers, Betty Shockley Bisplinghoff, Rosemary Belger, Karen Hankins, Karen Bliss, Terry Nestor, Judy Payne, Susan Rodrigue, and Patsy Lentz, Athens, GA; Sara Angeletti, Atlanta, GA; Joanne Lionetti, Lynbrook, NY; Ed Conti, Mimi Olsen, Laurie Thomas, Lesley Yeary, Port Washington, NY; Marilyn Scala and Ginnie Schroder, Manhasset, NY; Martha Haley, Diane McIntire, and Deanna Nisenson, Kearny, NJ; Diana Cohn, Dawn Harris-Martine, Kathy Harwood, Barbara James, Jim Occhini, and Bonnie Roberts, New York, NY; Deborah Wooten, Glen Cove, NY; Veronica McDermott, Patchogue-Medford, NY; Jan Arstark and Joanne Sangirardi-Gray, Sea Cliff, NY; Susan Alford and Joann Pearlman, Short Hills, NJ; Marianne Marino, Glen Rock, NJ; Ann Morrison and Mrs. Maurice Williams, New Brunswick, NJ; Carol Messersmith, East Windsor, NJ; all of the teachers at the Elliott Street School in Newark, NJ; and Lisa Johnson, San Jose, CA, and the children in their busy, happy classrooms have helped us “see” how exciting life is when children are happily engaged in language learning.

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To our mothers—our first language teachers

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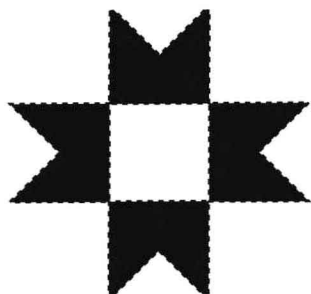
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CHAPTER

1

Teaching and Learning the English Language Arts

CHAPTER OUTLINE

A Changing View of Teaching and Learning

An Active Process

A Social Process

Supportive Environment

An Emotional Process

Purposeful Activity

Integrated Context

A Cognitive Process

Linking and Organizing Information

Strategic Teaching and Learning

Transfer

Instructional Strategies

Explicit Instruction

Demonstrations

Scaffolded Instruction

Cooperative Small-Group Work

Involving Families and Communities

Summary

Activities for You

Further Reading for Better Understanding

It's a rainy Friday, October 13th, and Terry Nestor's class at Whit Davis Elementary School has been making monsters. You can see them lining the walls of the hall just outside her door. The 26 second-grade children in her class are a bit crowded, facing each other in two large desk clusters, but they are learning to manage their limited space. Just inside the front door are the students' mailboxes and a listening station. Posters on the walls proclaim "This class loves to read," "Readers write and writers read, that's the way we all succeed," and other sayings related to books. Green plants and a collection of pigs line the two windowsills. Under the windows along the left-hand wall and across the back wall are shelves overflowing with books and magazines

for independent reading. Three chess sets, Parcheesi, and other games and manipulatives are on the shelves, too, readily available for rainy days and indoor recess. Terry's desk, completely surrounded by bookshelves, is hardly visible. Back in the far right-hand corner near the sink, the two gerbils, Calvin and Hobbes, sleep peacefully.

A green bathtub full of pillows holds one child reading alone. Three of the children are at the library just down the hall. Adam's in the middle of a story about World War II, and he needs some more information. Bryce wants to know whether the United States are bigger than Europe and is looking for a map. Eureka is looking at picture books. Other children in the classroom are at their desks, working on letters to their pen pals, education students at the local university.

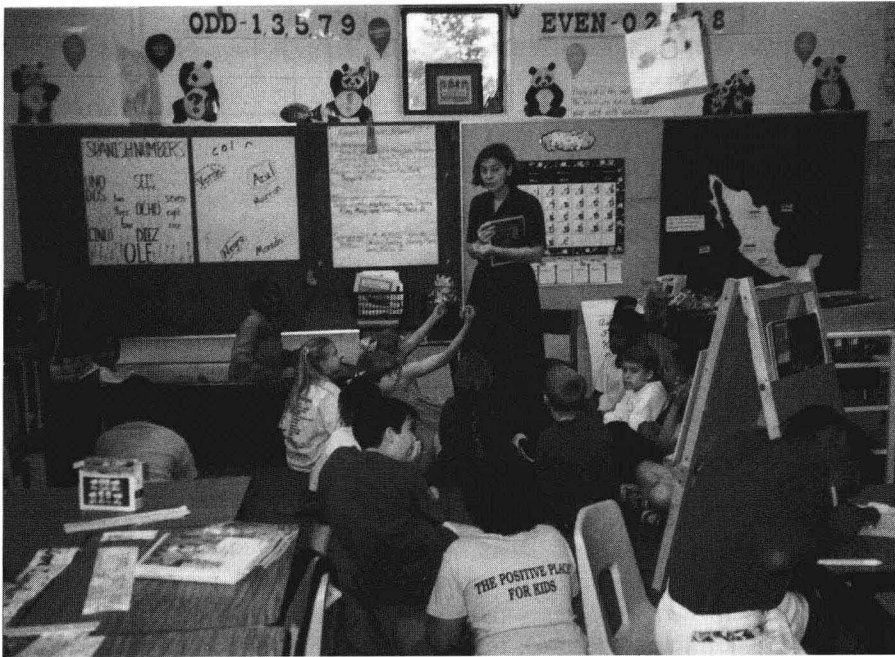
Just a little while after school begins two volunteer mothers are outside in the hall, reading with children who have selected from a choice of books that reflect the current theme in the classroom. Today there is a table full of monster books, and the growls and grunts of monsters can be heard in the hall. At the front of the classroom, near the chalkboard, a support teacher helps a small group of children complete their math. In the back, along the wall, Terry is sitting with another group of children reading aloud.

This is just the first of several read alouds that occur throughout the day; Terry reads in the morning, after lunch, at the end of the day, and any other time she can squeeze it in. This is also the beginning of the varied group configurations that occur during the day as the children work in whole-class, small-group, partner, and individual groupings depending on the task at hand and their individual preferences. Reading and writing bracket the day, with time for reading-writing workshops scheduled in both morning and afternoon.

It's now lunchtime and still raining. Terry's students are in the lunchroom, sitting at four octagonal tables, waiting for their dismissal. They are not fidgeting, though, because they've brought books with them from the classroom collection. Kathleen is reading Halloween Surprises by Ann Schweninger, Kelly has Maryann MacDonald's Secondhand Star, and Adam is reading a Berenstain Bears book while Derunta and Byron look over his shoulder.

Back in the classroom after lunch the students come in quietly and sit, waiting to hear the last chapters of Bruce Coville's Jennifer Murdley's Toad, the third chapter book that Terry has read aloud since school began on September 5. When Terry reads, the children are riveted by her expressive voice and gestures. She quits reading just before the climax, and the children return to their desks to work on their pen pal letters, write their predictions for the story's ending, or work on something they've already begun in their writing notebooks. She promises to finish the book at the end of the day.

In Terry's classroom you see children and their teacher busily engaged in a variety of activities, pursuing their interests within the framework of school. You hear a great deal of talk in this classroom, and only some of it is the teacher's. You see lots of reading and writing going on as children are engaged in learning all sorts of things together. Why does Terry structure her



Talking together in a language-rich classroom.

class in this way? She bases her decision on what she knows about teaching children to become literate. How does she do it? She surrounds her students with opportunities for meaningful use of language, demonstrates and instructs them in literate behaviors and effective strategies, supports their learning, allows them choice in what they do, helps them learn from each other, and believes that all of her students can become fluent and flexible users of the English language.

This book is about teaching and learning the English language, and how to use children's literature to frame that teaching and learning. As human beings we all begin learning language, learning about language, and learning through language (Halliday, 1982) from the moment we are born and first hear the sounds in our environment. We all continue to learn language, learn about language, and learn through language as we live our lives. You are doing this as you read this text; you'll learn new vocabulary and information about how our language system works through language—reading and talking, listening and writing—as you are simultaneously learning about how to teach English language arts. Language is essential to our lives as functioning human beings, and because of this, language teaching and learning is the vital center of all that you will do in the classroom.

Teaching and learning are inextricably related (Vygotsky, 1978) and involve a complex interaction of students and teachers, materials, tasks, and contexts. To talk of teaching is to talk of learning, as teaching does not happen unless learning takes place. Also, teachers always learn from those they teach. Effective teachers watch, listen, and consider what is happening in their classroom, learning from what they observe. Many teachers find that this new knowledge results in change and growth—they adjust their plans, alter curricula, explore new teaching styles, and pursue new ideas.

Effective teaching is based on a knowledge of how children learn, an understanding of students as developing individuals, and a firm knowledge of the content being taught. As a teacher of English language arts, you will be responsible for helping children develop as fluent and flexible listeners, speakers, readers, and writers. You will be helping children develop their understanding about how language works, their control over their own language, their repertoire of strategies for language use, and their vision of

Language is essential to our lives as functioning human beings, and because of this, language teaching and learning is the vital center of all that you will do in the classroom.

themselves as language users. Like Terry Nestor, you will have a wonderful opportunity to help children use language that shapes their world.

A CHANGING VIEW OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

On any day that you might visit Terry's classroom you would see children actively using language. They talk, read, and write together as they engage in the joyful pursuit of literacy. **These children do not need to be rewarded with candy, stickers, or pizza when they read or write.** They are eager to share what they know as they work together. Terry's classroom is a happy, busy, welcoming place because she likes her students, knows them well, values the knowledge they bring with them to school, and understands how children develop and learn.

Terry's classroom is today's classroom; it looks and feels different from the classrooms that many adults remember from their elementary and middle school years. It is different because educators know more about teaching and learning than in the past, the population of our elementary schools is changing, and society's expectations of schools and teachers are changing as well. A popular, old metaphor for teachers was that of the full pitcher, ready to pour knowledge into the empty heads of students. The later, romantic metaphor of teacher as gardener characterizes the teacher's role as that of providing sun, water, and fertilizer (in the form of materials, time, and supportive context) and then stepping back and letting the students flower. Neither of these metaphors captures the active, challenging, intellectual exercise that is teaching today.

We prefer the metaphor of the teacher as craftsperson and the student as apprentice that Graves (1983) has put forth. Teachers, as masters of the art of language (reading, writing, speaking, and listening), provide their students with examples of effective language use, demonstrations of effective practice, explanations of complex concepts, and the time, materials, and supportive context for students to explore language.

This new vision of teaching has touched the lives of teachers and students in many places and many ways. Countless professional books and journals are filled with teachers' stories of how they have changed as teachers, moving, for example, from a basal curriculum to a literature-based curriculum, from a traditional three reading group structure to a flexible structure, or from a segmented schedule in which subjects are isolated to an integrated curriculum with large blocks of time to teach and learn. The teachers who are described in this book have all changed and continue to change as they explore new options in teaching and learning.

This kind of interactive, **responsive teaching** allows you to know your students as individual learners and to appreciate their individual strengths. It allows you to plan instruction that meets the children's needs, whether they be mainstream, successful learners; bilingual or bidialectal learners; especially gifted learners; or slower learners. The kind of language arts instruction described in the remainder of this text is the kind of instruction that has been found effective with all children, including "at-risk" children (Martinez, Cheyney, McBroom, Hemmeter, & Teale, 1989), bidialectal children (Farr & Daniels, 1986), and bilingual children (Edelsky, 1986; Hayes, Bahruth, & Kessler, 1991; Rigg & Allen, 1989).

Terry Nestor, with experience in both regular and special education in the primary grades, says she couldn't go back to "traditional" teaching after developing a literature-based curriculum. Rather, she found ways to incorporate literature and meaningful language activities into the prescribed curriculum and then moved more completely into a literature-based, writing process approach to teaching when curriculum restrictions changed. Judy

Teachers, as masters of the art of language (reading, writing, speaking, and listening), provide their students with examples of effective language use, demonstrations of effective practice, explanations of complex concepts, and the time, materials, and supportive context for students to explore language.

Responsive teaching is teaching to the needs and abilities of students rather than to a predetermined curriculum. A responsive teacher observes students and plans instruction accordingly. Responsive teachers are willing to alter plans to capitalize on a teachable moment.



Learning through active involvement.

Payne, an intermediate-grade teacher, has gradually incorporated more literature into her curriculum and is constantly looking for ways to increase the blocks of instructional time that she has. As a fifth-grade teacher, she's integrated her reading-language arts and social studies curricula so that her students have time to read, write, talk, and think about the American history that they have to learn. At the same time, they are learning about the language arts.

Why are teachers and schools changing? Allington (1994) argues that society's view of the task of teachers has changed, and we now expect that all students will attain high levels of literacy. This change in goals, coupled with increased knowledge about teaching and learning, means that fundamental changes in the way educators think about children, teachers, and curriculum must occur. Rather than considering some children slow, teachers now understand that it's a matter of different kinds of experience. Rather than lowering expectations and slowing down the curriculum, teachers devise ways of exposing students to an intensive dose of literacy materials. They provide quality children's literature and time to read and write instead of giving students more skills practice. Rather than merely assigning work to be done, teachers instruct and demonstrate how to do it and why it is important (Allington, 1994). Finally, teachers no longer view themselves as the only expert in the classroom, but help their students learn from each other.

Society's conception of teachers and schools is changing.

Terry Nestor, the other teachers described in this book, and thousands of teachers like them all over the world, view language learning as an active, social process, one that has both cognitive and emotional components, in which children learn and use strategies and knowledge to pursue meaningful, interesting ideas. They also know that children learn best in an environment that integrates learning across domains, is supportive, and encourages students to take risks and extend their abilities by trying new things.

An Active Process

Betty Shockley, a first-grade teacher, also creates an environment that encourages active learners who work together in a secure, supportive environment as they develop their literacy abilities. In Betty's classroom children have a lot of choice about how they learn.

Children move into reading time gradually. Ivy points as she reads.

Adrienne sits next to her, reading the pictures and telling the story from