

**Talking to Learn,
Learning to Talk:
Jumpstarting English Language
Learning in Literacy**

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Conversations with children are at the heart of language development. English language learners (ELL's) need more talk than children who control English well. Explore how to use their strengths by engaging them in meaningful talk around writing and reading in the Reading Recovery lesson.

- **Children learn language through listening and speaking.**
- **Oral language, reading and writing are reciprocal and inform each other.**
- **Children who are learning a second language have already learned a great deal about how language works from their first language.**

Acquisition of literacy for [English language learners] takes

- **Time**
- **Good instruction**
- **Access to interesting books in a variety of levels and genres**
- **Opportunities for practice**

“...But they will succeed.”

--Pat Johnson, 2006, p. 128.

English language learners need many opportunities daily to:

- **Talk**
- **Be listened to**
- **Listen**
- **Respond**
- **Be responded to**

Conversation shapes the environment.



Interrogation:

- **Initiate**
- **Respond**
- **Evaluate**

Inquiry:

- **Invite**
- **Take turns**
- **Co-construct**

Common Features of Conversation and Teaching Interactions

Both speaker and listener:

- **Cooperate.**
- **Check for understanding.**
- **Reformulate the message if necessary.**
- **Are active and co-construct meaning.**

--Marie Clay, 1998, p 14.

Teacher / Child co-construct:

- Takes on child's interests and language.
- Reformulates.
- Expands.
- Adjusts language to child's understanding.
- Appropriates language.
- Constructs new utterances.
- Makes new connections.

Total Physical Response

- **Listen.**
- **Imitate.**
- **Innovate.**
- **Invent.**

--Dr. James Asher

Start up a conversation...

Guided by all you know about this child...

- **From a classroom theme or event,**
- **From something that captures his attention,**
- **From something you have brought along to spark his interest,**
- **From a discussion of one of his books,**
- **Or from some other source.**

--Clay, 2005, p. 55.

- **If the child's language development seems to be 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.**

--Clay, 1991, p. 69.

Conversational Roles

- **Listen actively.**
- **Respond to the intended message.**
- **Reformulate.**
- **Extend.**
- **Negotiate meanings.**
- **Uncover confusions.**
- **Support.**

--Clay, from talk, 2002.

- **Book introductions are an authentic social interaction about the new book; but when they provide an orientation to novel features of stories and of texts, they are also a kind of teaching.**

--Clay, 1998, p. 175.

“...a social interaction”

- **Title**
- **Brief summary**
- **Conversation**

- The teacher has selected the new book to challenge the pupil in various ways. She has previewed the story and its challenges. **She sets the topic, title and characters with minimal interaction; too much talk confuses...**
- ...Discussion may relate to the conceptual context of the new story or to a related book the child has read.

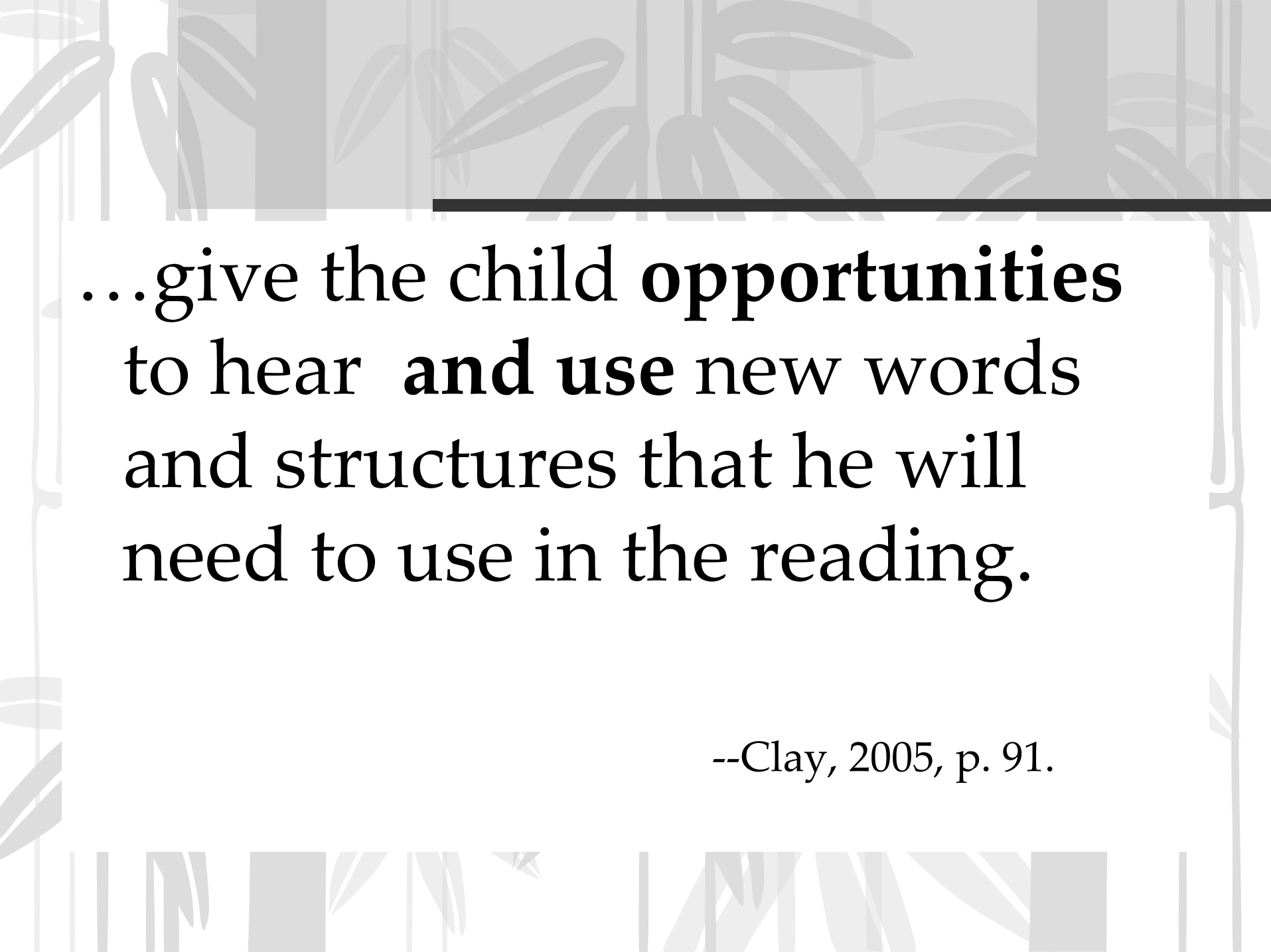
The introduction to the new book is particularly important for the child who does not have a good control of language (**for whatever reason**). This is the activity in which the **observant** teacher can introduce into her **talk** any concept, or word, or phrase structure that she has not heard this child use.

...The teacher must **plan**
for the child to have **in his**
head the ideas and
language he needs to
complete the reading...

--Clay, 2005, p. 91.

“...a kind of teaching...”

- **Intentional choices**
 - Vocabulary
 - Language structures
- **Listening to gather information**
 - Known information?
 - Known vocabulary?
 - Experiences?
 - Clarification or elaboration of terms or ideas?



...give the child **opportunities**
to hear **and use** new words
and structures that he will
need to use in the reading.

--Clay, 2005, p. 91.

Look for:

Awkward language structures

- **Home we go.**
- **Away went the cow.**
- **Off they went to the beach.**

Suggested practices:

- **Use the language structure during the conversation.**
- **Say, “It’s a different way to say it.”**
- **Have children practice saying it several times.**
- **Give two examples:**
 - **In the story**
 - **In the children’s lives**

--Clay, 2005. p. 91.

--Johnson, 2006, p. 131+.

Demonstration...

Is worth a thousand words!

- **Come in.**
- **Come on.**
- **Come up.**
- **Come on up here.**

Look for:

Complex phrases

- **On his way home with the wood, Baby Bear met Father Bear coming home from the store. Father Bear had a box under one arm.**

Suggested practices:

- Hear and use.
- Clarify **phrase by phrase**.
- Provide examples.
- **Demonstrate if necessary.**

Clay, 2005, p. 91.

Best, ex. 2004.

Knowing concepts but not labels

- **Link new to known.**

Jogged = ran slowly

Peering = looking

- **Address and use word often as part of book introduction.**

--Clay, 2005.

--Johnson, 2006.

- **Link new word to other known concepts.**

Rescue / helping / saving /
like when there's a fire

- **During or after reading:**
 - Use context cues.
 - Expand the meaning.
 - Give a way to figure out the word.

- **Sticky notes**

--Clay, 2005.

--Johnson, 2006, p138-9.

Unknown words/unknown concepts

- **Hippopotamus**
- **Country fair**
- **Dry cleaning**

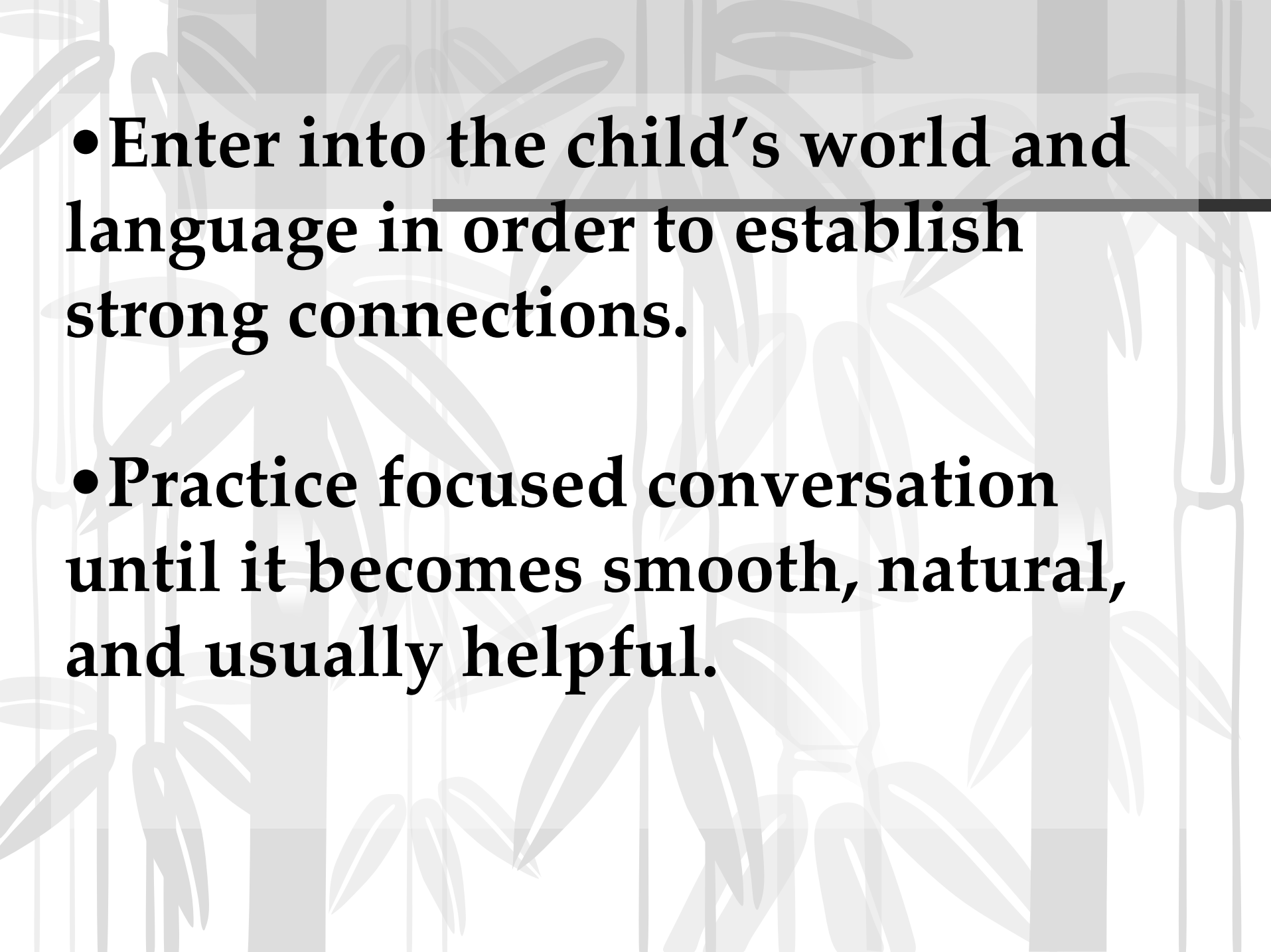
Suggested practices:

- Use context.
- Expand meaning.
- Give a way to figure out.
- **Use drawings, pictures, acting out, or hand gestures to elaborate.**

--Johnson, 2006, p. 140.

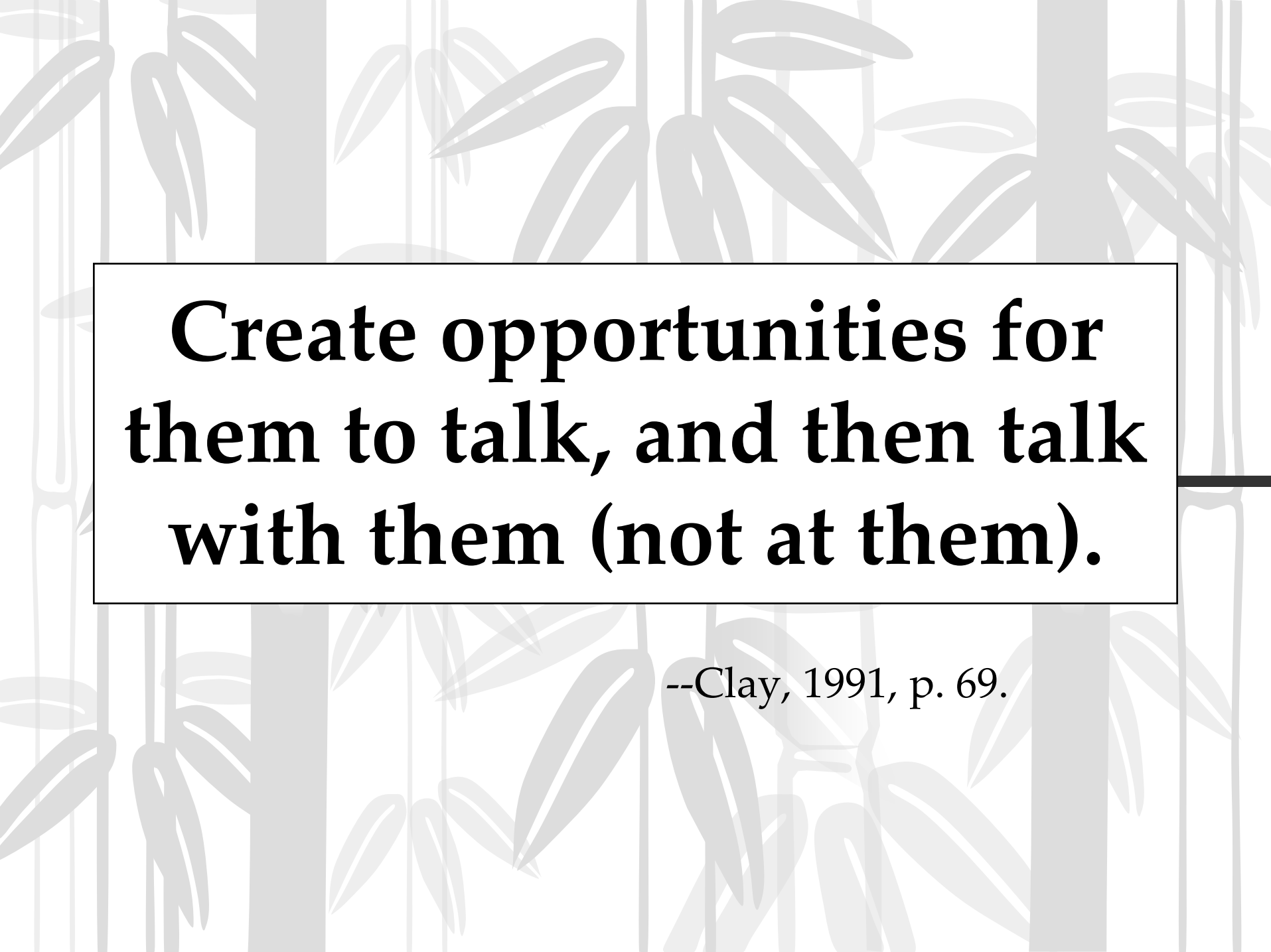
Attend to the elements of good conversation to create a powerful learning environment:

- Wait time**
- Joint focus**
- Negotiate meanings, uncover confusions together.**
- Personalize the conversation.**
- Ground the talk in experience but extend the learner.**



• Enter into the child's world and language in order to establish strong connections.

• Practice focused conversation until it becomes smooth, natural, and usually helpful.



**Create opportunities for
them to talk, and then talk
with them (not at them).**

--Clay, 1991, p. 69.

Children build their grammar in oral language learning during thousands of conversational exchanges with expert speakers who fail to understand them when they get too far away from standard forms of English. There is no finer tutorial for learning oral language than not being understood. The shaping is done in every interchange, in every attempt that the child makes to convey a message. The feedback is a naturally-occurring event that is highly tutorial.

--Clay, 2001, p. 33.

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