



# Powerful Teaching for Language and Literacy Development in Reading Recovery Lessons

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"At the conclusion of the lesson series the child is still in need of rich opportunities for further development in the language of instruction. . .However, [she] then has three complementary routes to that further language learning, via oral language, writing and reading."

--Clay, Literacy lessons designed for individuals, part two, p. 183



# *Common Misconceptions about English Learners*

Ω Slower progress

Ω Lower achievement for time in lessons

Ω Waiting is beneficial for language to  
develop

Ω A specified level of competence is  
appropriate for selection

"What the child can produce he can also  
anticipate. . ."

Clay, Becoming literate: The construction of inner control,  
p. 89

"It has been one of the surprises of Reading Recovery  
that all kinds of children . . . can be included, can  
learn, and can reach average-band performance. . . .

Exceptions are not made for children of lower  
intelligence, for second-language children, for  
children with low language skills, for children with  
poor motor coordination, for children who seem  
immature, for children who score poorly on readiness  
measures, or for children who have already been  
categorized by someone else as learning disabled."

Clay, Bridges to literacy, p. 61



## *Selected Reading Recovery Research on English Learners*

Kelly, Gomez-Bellenge, Chen, & Schulz  
U.S. National RR Data for 2003-04 (ELL N=17,792  
(See upcoming summary in *JRR*)

Ashdown & Simic, 2000 -- New York  
6 years of data/N=25,601 with 3 subgroups  
(N=15,673; N=6,388; N=3,540)

Neal & Kelly, 1999 – California  
3 years of data/N=2,366

Hobsbaum, 1995 – United Kingdom  
N=1,466

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### *What have we learned from the success of English learners in RR?*

- *Instruction can start immediately (both low and high fall English oral proficiency students equally successful)*
- *Length of program for lessons to be discontinued is comparable*
  - *Equal gains can be achieved*
- *Language and literacy can develop simultaneously*
  - *Rich language interactions matter*



## *Scaffolding RR Lessons for EL Students*

### **FOR LANGUAGE**

✎ Use Record of Oral Language (Clay, et al., 1983) as an additional assessment procedure for EL students selected

✎ Throughout the lesson: Create opportunities for language production

### **FOR READING**

✎ Book selection: • Watch for unfamiliar concepts/unknown words • Consider type of language structures

✎ Book introductions: • Address meaning *completely*  
• Generously provide structures to be read • Include realia and/or demonstration of concepts

✎ Book reading: • Use prompts wisely • Do a second reading as appropriate

*“While the child is trying to work out what reading is, and how he should work at it, natural language texts draw on his oral language competencies and allow him to build bridges across more literary texts.” (Clay, 1991, p.191)*



## *Scaffolding RR Lessons for EL Students (cont'd)*

### **FOR WRITING**

- ✎ Develop genuine conversation around topics of high importance
  
- ✎ Shape or provide a model for story composition as appropriate
  
- ✎ Give special attention to developing English phonemes (e.g., full Elkonin procedures)
  
- ✎ Maintain a focus on what's important: Language use (over accuracy)

### **GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS**

- ✎ Welcome approximations
- ✎ Appreciate that developing language takes time
- ✎ Keep it easy to learn

**“Teachers ask, ‘What are quick ways to extend a child’s control of oral language during Reading Recovery lessons?’ *There are no quick ways to extend language* but the best available opportunity of the Reading Recovery teacher lies in the conversations she has with the child in and around his lessons.” (Clay, 2005, p.51)**



## **Addendum: Issues to Consider When Teaching English Learners—Two Examples**

### **I. Spanish-Speaking Children** (Not all Spanish speakers are alike!)

#### **A. Pronunciation**

- > Pronunciations of English words may reflect Spanish pronunciations
- > Consonant sounds that overlap between English and Spanish: *c, l, m, n, s*
- > Some distinctive letter-sounds between English & Spanish: *d, h, j, r, v, a, sh*
- > Sounds that may cause difficulties include: */th/; /r/ girl;*  
*/y/ you/chu; por; /j/ = /h/; /v/ soft b*
- > Each Spanish vowel represents one consistent sound
- > Names and sounds of Spanish vowels differ from their English names:
  - English *a* is *e* in Spanish
  - English *e* is *i*
  - English *i* would be represented with *ai* in Spanish
  - English *o* and *u* are closer in sound to Spanish counterparts, but not identical
  - Short vowels in English can be quite difficult for Spanish speakers to discriminate because most of the sounds do not exist in Spanish
  - The short *o* sound would be spelled with the Spanish *a* (Helman, 2005)

#### **B. Structure**

- > Past tense and Irregular verbs
- > Interrogative word order is hard: “Did you go?”
- > To Be is sometimes To Have in Spanish: I am hungry/I have hunger

### **II. Vietnamese Children** (Contrastive Features of Vietnamese and English)

#### **A. Sound system**

- > Very unlike English: Tonal language: each tone represents different meaning
- > Most words are monosyllabic
- > Fewer consonants
- > No consonant clusters: Vietnamese speakers drop consonant clusters in plural forms

#### **B. Other Features**

- > English grammar – far more complex
- > Verb tenses pose major problems for Vietnamese learners



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## *Additional Notes*