

# Getting the child to say, ‘this is like that.’

“Children show that they understand that ‘letters make words’ when they have worked in both reading and writing and begin to make analogies, saying ‘this is like that.’ *p.32*

Clay, M. (2005). *Literacy Lessons Designed for Individuals. Part Two*

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February 2008  
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# **Burst of babble is built on ‘ma-ma’**

**Explains what causes the ‘word spurt’, that magical time when a toddler’s vocabulary explodes, almost overnight.**

**Babies start jabbering after they’ve mastered enough easy words to tackle more of the harder ones. It’s essentially a snowball effect.**

*McMurray (2007) Science*

- **Far simpler than scientists’ assumptions that some special brain mechanism must click to trigger the word boom.**
- **A lot of under-the-radar work**
- **Parallel learning**
- **Simply talking and reading to a child a lot is the key.**
- **Exposure to allow the baby to link to concrete objects using elimination**

# **This talk is about...**

- **Specific language used in teaching for analogous thinking**
- *Building private interests in a child*
- **Transfer from one context to another**
- *Opportunities for linking within, beyond and about the text*

**Clay (p.100) speaks to connections in the brain.**

*By the start of this century scientists who were studying vision were telling us that it was not a one-way street from the eye's retina to the brain. Information comes into the brain through the senses, and the brain rapidly activates what it believes is relevant knowledge stored from prior experiences.*

**Then quoting from Greenfield (2000) *Brain Story***

*For each connection that carries information from the eyes (to the brain) there are at least 10 connections coming in the opposite direction from the brain to the eyes. It seems that the information leaving our retina is not complete enough to create a full and rich interpretation of the world. Our imagination then allows us to fill the gaps and convert the distorted image from the eyes into the complete and vibrant world we see.*

*pp.72-73*

Read Kurson, Robert (2007) *Crashing Through: A True Story of Risk, Adventure, and the Man who Dared to See*. Author of *Shadow Divers*.

# The Language of Influence in Teaching

Some of us have to think more carefully about the language we use to offer our students the best learning environment we can. *p.1*

As teachers we have to decide *what* to be explicit about for *which* students, and *when* to be explicit about it. *p.8*

*Johnston devotes the book to productive phrases he noticed in effective teachers.*

**Johnston, P. (2004) *Choice Words: How our Language Affects Children's Learning***

# Clay talks about *literacy processing* in Literacy Lessons: Part One

*As children get better at finding the links they look for more opportunities to engage in these activities... We can assume that we create networks in the brain linking things we see (print on page) and things we hear (the language we speak). Messages flow in and out of those networks. In the context of reading and writing this is often called literacy processing. Processing activities may involve only one network or many networks 'talking' to each other!* p.1

# **The Habit of Linking Starts Early On**

*Any new letter or high-frequency word or a spelling pattern attended to in isolation is also use in the same lesson in text reading and text writing, and the learner interacts with the teacher about the relationship of new details to old continuous text which he remembers.*

*LL:pt.1 p.22*

*One of the problems often encountered is a child not seeing any relationship between letters he recognizes in isolation (perhaps in one particular teaching situation) and what he is looking at in continuous text in a reading book. He has yet to learn how to use one source of knowledge in another context.*

*LL:pt.1 p.25*

**Clay states** (p.27): **One thing is particularly important. Children must learn to hear the sounds in words they want to write and find appropriate ways to write these sounds down. The writing knowledge serves as a resource of information that can help the reader. However, this reciprocity does not occur spontaneously. The teacher must remember to direct the child to use what he knows in reading when he is writing and vice versa.**

*LL: pt.1*

*Here are some examples of what I did not do enough of linking with and for the child.*

## **Scenario: Writing Vocabulary does not transfer to Reading Vocabulary**

- *How was the word driven to fluency?*

**Try:**

- **Layering echoes throughout the text selection in familiar reading and new text. Requires nimbleness.**
- **While reading text, ask the child to write the word.**
- **Use magnetic letters for child to note sequence of letters. Then take the word immediately to writing on the whiteboard.**
- **Take the word to fluency again from text to writing.**
- **Ask for the known word location in text after writing.**
- **Ask to child to record *his word* on the WV/RV charts.**

**Scenario: The child has read the word ‘*big*’ several times in a few books but when he tries to write it; he cannot write the word correctly.**

**Clay suggests (p.54)**

**During the writing slot of the lesson teachers can prompt the child to search his reading knowledge by saying ‘*I think you could write that word. You read it yesterday,*’ showing the child his earlier work if necessary. Or she might say ‘*You wrote it in this other story,*’ taking him back to a text he wrote and having him read it. Children have to know that reading and writing can contribute to each other during early literacy.**

***LL:pt.2***

**Scenario:** The child wants to write the word ‘skate.’

**Clay states:** *(p.60) Sometimes it is helpful to ask the child to try to construct a new word because it is like another word he knows. Invite him to bring something he knows to the construction of the new work. He may*

- See the relationship of a word he wants to write with something he has already written. For example, the child may have written the word ‘ate’ in another story.
- Suggest a word like the one he wants to write (even if the teacher has to gently edit any ‘wrong’ association for him.
- Initiate the use of several things he knows about letters and words to ‘solve’ the new word. e.g. Skandalaris

Note that he has to know the ‘known’ word very very well to be able to use it to get to another word. (sister, Kate) *LL: pt.2*

**Scenario: The child does not transfer learning. “*He does it for you but not for me syndrome.*”**

**She states: (p.61)**

**These would be helpful questions to use as the child prepares to write a new word:**

- *What could you try?*
- *How do you think it would start?*
- *What do you know that might help?*
- *Do you know another word that sounds like that?*
- *Do you know a word that starts like that?*

*LL: pt. 2*

**Clay (p.65) suggests that prompts must be used thoughtfully... (Notice the use of the words *like that*)**

**If you want the child to search his reading knowledge your prompts would stress ‘seeing’ and ‘looking’.**

- *You can read a word that looks like that. Or: Can you...*
- *You can read a word that starts like that.*
- *You can read a word that is like that.*

**In writing select from prompts such as**

- *Say the word aloud. Say it slowly. Is that like a word you know?*
- *You can say another word like that.*
- *Have you heard another word that starts that way?*
- *Have you heard another word that sounds like that?*

*LL: pt.2*

**In Section 7 (p.75) of Hearing and recording sounds in words, Clay describes one of the activities describing input of the teacher in the intermediate steps.**

- **Give helpful links to what he knows somewhere else---in his alphabet book, or his name, or a word he can already write, or a word in his reading.**

*LL: pt.2*

- **After quickly identifying known letters, ask child to find one that is in their name or to tell a word that begins like that letter.**

*Are we using this linking language enough? I didn't!*

*Read the italics on page 81 about the "secret of successful instruction."*

**Scenario: The child has read the pattern in *Alien at the Zoo* (level 7) or *Greedy Cat is Hungry* (level 8) once or twice in the first attempt. But you get the sense that each time the same pattern is read, it is processed as if it is new each time without anticipation of the pattern.**

**Clay suggests (p.117) that some of the psychological processes that are used in reading and writing include:**

- *using expectations about what can happen*
- *deciding what is the same, similar or different*

**Before turning the page ask the child, “*What do you expect to see and hear on the next page?*”**

**Share explicitly the way the book works with the child.**

**Scenario: The child can write *at, cat, rat*, when prompted but in reading the child does not transfer this knowledge during reading.**

**Clay states (pp.121-122)**

**That party trick is not something you need to do often in real life. What the child needs to do is to say:**

*If I know 'hat' I might be able to get to 'sat'.  
Is that how it goes? 'Fat' is like 'hat' too.*

**The second option is more useful for solving new words in reading and writing...The child needs to know how to cut and paste to solve new words or write new words.**

*LL:pt.2*

*Check as to how often you use the opportunity to help the child 'cut and paste' to solve new words during reading. Lots of paper needed.*

**Scenario: Mandy made no connections across books or with personal experience. Peter Johnston addresses this problem throughout his book, Choice Words (2004).**

**Clay addresses this situation briefly signaling the importance of conversation.**

*Good questions give the message that the whole story was the point of the reading activity and lets the teacher know what the child has attended to and understood. (Brief review of the story after the first reading...p.97)*

*Strengthen the child's processing on new texts, and briefly question and discuss what he has read to you. (Some organizational points...p.99)*

**Watch out for too much retelling the story.**

**Peter Johnston is most helpful in specificity of the problem with strong suggestions in Choice Words (2004)**

*Children often know things from their writing that they fail to use when solving problems in reading...These are problems of transfer-the failure to generalize learning from one situation or problem to other...Teachers and other researchers of all stripes have puzzled over this problem for a long time.”* (p.43)

*How do we get a child to apply strategies flexibly and in new situations?”* (p.44)

## *That's like...*

The word like has two primary functions. It draws attention to connections (with other experiences, books, authors, situations, practices, words, and so forth) and it makes metaphors, both of which are fundamental not only to transfer, but also to understanding and reasoning. Connections are at the heart of comprehension or understandings. They provide anchors and retrieval routes. The more connections, the more flexibly something can be accessed.

Increasing transfer primarily involves simply overcoming these apparent dissimilarities and encouraging children to ask what ways one activity, problem or role is like another. This means thinking beyond literal to the metaphorical, and the word like is very good for invoking metaphors. We want children to ask themselves not only “*What do I know about this?*” but “*What do I know like this?*”

Johnston p.46

*“Have we read any other books like this?” Use of “we”*

*“What is a different book on the same topic?”*

**It opens up a conversation about classifying things, including the logic of classification.**

*“Why do you think the author decided to...?”*

*“I wonder ...”*

**“I wonder...” represents a class of linguistic lubricants. It marks the offering of a possible hypothesis, or a tentative idea with an invitation, but not an insistence, to pick it up and improve it or take it further.**

*“What if...?”*

*“Who else would like this book?”*

*Chapters 4-5*

# **I. Connections across texts**

**Build a brief series of books on the same theme.**

*Billy is Hiding, Look for me, Hide and Seek  
Our Dog Sam, Horace, Lucky goes to dog school  
Tom is brave, Brave Father Mouse, My accident  
Hungry Little Kitten, Bread, Grandpa's Cookies*

**How to...**

- **Look at texts in the level box**
- **Think about what is in familiar text box**
- **Have the child read the familiar in same lesson**
- **Share the link with the child**

## **II. Connections to life**

- Think about how the new book is introduced to the child. What does it have to do with life's lessons? Use this as introductory sentence.**

**Example:**

*Try to be a brave girl, Sarah*

### **III. Connections to Personal Experience**

**Consider working with the home on what to share with the child after reading the book.**

**The parents, caretakers are the only ones who truly know the history of this child. Give them the power of connecting book+experience.**

*Mosaic of Thought for further study on connections between text to life, text to text and text to experience.*

## **Johnston explains**

**Children often know things from their writing that they fail to use when solving problems in reading.**

**Some children keep home and school spaces rigidly separate (and classroom), believing they are unrelated. The stories they tell in these different life spaces are different-different genres, settings, characters and goals.**

*p.43*

# **Discussing brain functions, Clay Quotes Dr. Larry Squires**

**Language involves lots of brain parts working together as a symphony and some learning is (about) how to feed new minor parts into the ongoing symphony.**

*(p.102)*



