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Teaching to Learn: Tapping the Rich Language Resources of Three African American Preschool Boys

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Teaching to Learn: Tapping the Rich Language Resources of Three African American
Preschool Boys

by

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Dedication

Beware that you don't look down on a single one of these little ones.

Matthew 10: 42 (The Living Bible)

I dedicate this dissertation to:

My husband, Richard, the initiator and ever-present support system who made this dissertation possible. He was my generous financier, my indefatigable ally in his expectation of my success and, more often than not, my chauffeur on all those long drives to and from classes. I will do my best to express my gratitude for this and a myriad of other kindnesses, great and small—now and always.

My sister, Jean Nash (and her friend, Papa Bear, a devoted fan of Reader's Digest), with her zany humor, her vision of "three stripes and a tam," and her unwavering belief that, one day, I would be "Dr. Miller," was my anchor in times of triumph and disappointment. I once asked for a sister. I owe my Lord, my parents, and Santa Claus my eternal gratitude that they gave me this one in particular.

My advisor, Dr. Diane Stephens, who mentored me with selflessness, gentle patience, and great, good humor. Dr. Stephens was my compass—she guided me through exciting discoveries, surprising personal revelations, and the intimidating shoals and turbulent waters that are frequently a part of this often arduous and mysterious process. Without her, I would have floundered on the rocks long ago. My thanks and gratitude leave too little said.

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I would like to acknowledge and express my gratitude to my advisor, Dr. Diane Stephens, and the members of my dissertation committee, Dr. Diane DeFord, Dr. Pamela Jewett, and Dr. Michelle Bryan.

I am indebted to Dr. Diane Stephens, my advisor, who, over the years, spent countless hours mentoring me, scaffolding my abilities, patiently explaining the many steps necessary to become a PhD (sometimes more than once!), and tenaciously ensuring that I would become all that I could be. The epitome of a constructivist teacher, Dr. Stephens enabled me to become an example of what can happen to a tentative student who has the academic and emotional support of an astute and caring more knowledgeable other (Vyotsky, 1978). Her brilliance will always astound me and my respect for her will forever position her in my mind as expert, while I gladly remain apprentice—a mindset of honor that makes it hard to believe I will ever be able to call her “Diane.”

I am indebted to Dr. Diane DeFord, my fellow “Bronco” (Go, WMU!), who was my instructor in two classes, in an independent study, and during my teaching internship. I was incredibly fortunate to spend so much time under her tutelage. As Dr. DeFord shared her knowledge, she unpacked many of the complex ideas that have shaped the precepts I now believe are critical components of excellent teaching. I will always be in awe of her intellect and envious of her Koi pond!

I am indebted to Dr. Pamela Jewett, for generously spending a great deal of time reading and critiquing the dissertation of a virtual stranger and for her empathy when she

couched her queries and comments so carefully, to spare my dignity and sense of competence.

I am indebted to Dr. Bryan, for agreeing to be a part of this committee when she knew very well that she did not have the time and for her meaningful compliment when she called me a “kindred spirit.”

Further, I would like to acknowledge the herculean efforts of my copy editor and friend, Jen Gadbow, whose compassion and sense of commitment prompted her to work nonstop on this dissertation, with no thought of herself or of compensation. Importantly, she often eased the tension of revisions and deadlines when, to my amazement, she joined me in playful, sometimes hilarious, preschool repartees. She did indeed “have my back” and I am greatly indebted to Jen Tiny Wren. I so hope to meet you in person soon, baboon.

Finally, I wish to thank Cammy Groome, the principal of Newington Elementary School, who honored my commitment to this educational endeavor when she allowed me to conduct my research in her school and laughingly called the 4–K classroom “Virginia’s lab.” She supported my long-distance schedule by allowing me to take 14 consecutive weekly personal days so I could attend an early, required class on campus. To accommodate another class, she excused me from an entire semester of faculty meetings. I love you, Cam.

Abstract

The initial purpose of this study was to better understand the effect of book genre (fiction or informational) and text choice on the spontaneous language production of African American, preschool boys from low SES households. Its methodological approach was action research that consisted of teacher/child book sharing with three participants during one-on-one, 30-minute sessions over a period of 14 weeks. Discussion during these sessions centered on the participants' book choice and were audio recorded. The transcripts of these recordings became case studies that were analyzed for behavioral patterns in both participants and teacher. Discovery of such patterns revealed changes in the participants' language and participatory behaviors and in both the teacher's language use and in her instructional approach. The application of these findings, however, were not congruent with the initial purpose of the study, but rather revealed explicit teacher behaviors that appeared to encourage the participants engagement in dialogue, and their unsolicited, independent effort to bootstrap and expand their own language learning. Other patterns revealed untapped language resources the study participants brought from home that they did not make evident while in their classroom. Recommendations cited (a) the need for a language acquisition course in university teacher education curricula; (b) school district in-service opportunities for early childhood educators and day care personnel that provide the scope and sequence of early language learning and its relationship to literacy learning; (c) additional in-service opportunities that provide explicit strategies for facilitating both language use and expansion, including knowledge

of academic language and novel vocabulary; (d) the use of a whole language teaching approach; (e) minimal use of computer programs created to teach early literacy skills; and (f) advocacy of district, state, and national academic standards that focus on age-appropriate skills for preschool children taught with age-appropriate instructional strategies.

Preface

When I began this study, I intended to explore how the genre choices of four-year-old boys from low socioeconomic status households influenced their spontaneous expressive language. I thought the nature of the study would be “somewhat” quantitative. I indicated, in an early draft of my proposal, that I would use mixed methods. I hinted at causal results—I would offer fiction and non-fiction book choices, which I expected to result in “more,” “less,” or “the same amount of” spontaneous language from the boys. In the end, via a qualitative study, I learned about the language competence of the boys, the conditions under which I was able to access their competencies, and about myself as a teacher.

In 2011 and 2012, I wrote Chapters I, II, and III of this dissertation for my proposal; these chapters reflect my beliefs and the theoretical framework I held at that time. Since then, the only new material I have added to these chapters are some details about data analysis, which appear in Chapter III.

In the Fall of 2012, I began to spend 30 minutes a week in one-on-one sessions with three boys: Terrell, Zion, and Kanai. I wrote Chapters IV, V, and VI in 2013, which was more than a year after my proposal defense. At that time, I held very different beliefs about language competencies than when I wrote my first three chapters. Chapters IV, V, and VI include three data-based portraits, which chronicle the boys’ language and literacy practices and the patterns that emerged over the 14 weeks of the study. In Chapter VII, I describe the boys’ oral and written language competencies and how the

one-on-one interactions with Terrell, Zion, and Kanai transformed me as a teacher and altered my beliefs. My advisor and committee chair, Dr. Diane Stephens, once warned me that something unexpected often happens in the research process. In six years of study with exemplary instructors in an excellent program, an incredible field experience, amazing data analysis, and writing about this whole process, her admonition proved true. As I learned more and more about the boys, I underwent a personal and professional transformation.

Last week, I came across the letter of intent that accompanied my 2007 PhD program application (V. Miller, personal communication, May 4, 2007). The letter began with the first stanza of a poem entitled *Reading Orphans* (Layne, 2003, p. 3):

Reading Orphans
We're out there, you know,
Moved too many times, developmental delays,
Or maybe something just didn't click fast enough for the system.

The poem is about diverse children and the challenges they often face when establishing and maintaining a successful literacy trajectory; re-reading it enabled me to explicitly name and understand some of the changes in my attitude that came about because of the time I spent with Terrell, Zion, and Kanai.

Synonyms for orphan are *foundling* and *stray* (Orphan, n.d.). A foundling child has no family, background, or cultural connections; a stray is a castoff—unwanted, at best—an aimless wanderer. Despite my sincere desire to support diverse children, I wondered if I initially viewed Terrell, Zion, and Kanai like this. Regrettably, because I chose this poem, considered it appropriate to include in my letter of intent, and featured it prominently to explain my academic stance, I believed that, at the time, I did.

In the same letter, I noted, “My premise in pursuing this advanced degree is based on hypotheses supported by current and emerging brain research that will subsequently suggest alternative, age-appropriate learning strategies for this targeted population [diverse children].” In hindsight, I see that this sentence implied that there was something wrong with these children that needed to be fixed.

When I look back, although I did not (and still do not) know what *alternative measures* are, it appears that I believed that they were needed for *this* population of learners. My philosophy then was “different methods for different children.” After all, methodologies that were good for mainstream students were surely inadequate for children who were somehow “broken.”

In my letter, I reported that I was “long concerned about and interested in” what I referred to as “fragile learners.” To me, this term implied that I believed that these children demonstrated a weakness in their ability to learn. I did not expect low SES African American boys to have a command of their home language or to possess an emerging facility in the use of academic language. Nor did I think them capable of understanding any written language conventions.

I now recognize that I held a middle-class, European American preconception of the language of low SES African American boys. This was true in 2007, when I wrote my letter of intent, and it was true in 2011–2012, when I wrote my proposal. I did not expect Terrell, Zion, and Kanai to have language competencies, much less any interest in language. Instead, I saw them as empty vessels.

In my letter of intent, I explained that I believed that academic success enabled diverse children to experience an “infusion of self-esteem and, most importantly, the

resilience they needed to continue the educational process, despite “cultural pressures to the contrary.” I assumed that each of the boys I worked with in this study faced cultural pressures. I knew that Terrell and his family moved frequently (at the end of the study, they moved again); that Zion was previously in a classroom for pervasively developmentally delayed children; and that Kanai’s assessment scores led teachers to believe that “things” probably did not “click fast enough” for him.

Today, the term *cultural pressure* holds a different meaning for me. I now believe that cultural pressures are the expectations that others impose on these learners. I also understand that all of the boys I worked with are competent, if not accomplished, language learners.

Today, I no longer believe that diversity means that a child needs fixing. I now hold that, as well-meaning teachers, we must not assume that diverse children will only acquire the skills they need to succeed academically if they adopt middle-class practices. Instead, we need to celebrate children like Terrell, Zion, and Kanai because they are ensconced in families of their own, who share and use an abundant repository of language and literacy practices.

During my study, I had many such moments of recognition. While reflecting on and then analyzing Terrell’s, Zion’s, and Kanai’s responses to books, I began to notice my own language patterns and the context I created that supported the boys as language learners. Because of what I learned, I decided to change my behaviors as a teacher. Eventually, I stopped being a talker and became a listener. I no longer assumed that Terrell, Zion, and Kanai were language vacuums that I needed to fill with my words. I realized that I needed to give the boys explicit permission to use their own words. I

sanctioned and encouraged their agency and began to acknowledge their competence. As a result, my need to control the boys' behaviors and our learning agenda relaxed. I waited for the boys to open doors that explored their experiences and deliberately closed many that seemed to swing open constantly to reveal mine. I no longer relied on my explanations; instead, I did my best to elicit theirs with questions that served to clarify and expand their responses.

By the end of the 14-week study, the boys and I had grounded ourselves as co-learners who were engaged in a reciprocal relationship that shared common goals. We sought to make meaning about each other, for each other, with each other, and by means of each other. We became joint-meaning makers. The learning theories about language that I had read about for six years suddenly came alive. These theories were personified in three vibrant, accomplished boys and were evident in numerous recordings and transcripts, which served as evidence of the boys' language competence.

I am eager to start exploring better ways of understanding children's language. I am also interested in raising teacher awareness of visual literacy and its importance in reading. As a pilot project within my school district, I would like to establish and sponsor a 4-K classroom based on whole language/constructivist principles. I would also like to develop a 4-K program that would introduce young children to novel science terminology (particularly action verbs) through gesture, movement, and hands-on experiences.

I have no doubt that these three young boys indelibly changed me. In the future, I hope to tell teachers how and why I think this change took place. I would also like to remind teachers of the alternate definition of the verb *to adopt*: "to take or receive any

kind of new relationship” (Adopt, n.d.) and to encourage them to allow children to adopt them, as Terrell, Zion, and Kanai adopted me. If teachers choose to make this decision, I believe they will embody the consummate meaning of what it means to be a teacher.

The poem in my letter of intent concludes with a call for change: “We [reading orphans] look to you, our teachers, our one best hope of change.” In this line, the poet frames teachers as the readers’ “one best hope for change.” The change that I foresee is far more profound. If teachers are willing to enter into a relationship with children—one of equal responsibility for learning—then teachers can be changed by children. I know this is possible. It happened to me.

Table of Contents

Dedication.....	iii
Acknowledgments.....	iv
Abstract.....	vi
Preface.....	viii
List of Figures.....	xv
Chapter I: Rationale.....	1
Chapter II: Theoretical Framework.....	21
Chapter III: Methodology.....	42
Chapter IV: Portrait One—Terrell.....	63
Chapter V: Portrait Two—Zion.....	97
Chapter VI: Portrait Three—Kanai.....	125
Chapter VII: Findings, Conclusions, Recommendations, and Postscript.....	169
References.....	234
Appendix A: Coding Key.....	252
Appendix B: Session Tally Sheet (Behaviors).....	254
Appendix C: Behavior Tally Totals.....	255

List of Figures

<i>Figure 3.1.</i> Excerpt from coding key that tracked child and teacher utterance and behavior.....	52
<i>Figure 3.2.</i> Excerpt from spreadsheet that accompanied each transcript I used after coding to record the number of times a behavior occurred in a session.	53
<i>Figure 3.3.</i> Excerpt from spreadsheet that captured behavior patterns of all boys over 14 weeks of the study.....	53
<i>Figure 3.4.</i> Flowchart that revealed a connection between the children’s behavior and mine.....	54

Chapter I: Rationale

Introduction

I spent 10 years as a Family Literacy parent–educator and early childhood interventionist, working with mothers (and very occasionally, a father or grandmother) and two-, three- and four-year-old children through various interventional home visitation programs. I also provided direct services as an early literacy interventionist to four -year-old children who met the eligibility requirements of a district-sponsored half-day prekindergarten program referred to as 4–K. The majority of the adults and children I worked with were African Americans from low SES homes and most of the children were boys.

During my home visits, I noticed that mother–child discourse was largely directive or disciplinary; mothers rarely used discourse patterns that labeled, explained, or questioned functions that form the verbal patterns typically used in educational settings. Nor did I witness conjugal play or discourse about reading. These observations piqued my interest about the effect of home discourse patterns on language engagement with books and with school discourse expectations, including the response to dialogic reading practices that invariably occurs in preschool settings.

When transitioning from their home language and cultural expectations to those endorsed by mainstream schools, low SES African American children may face a dissonance that is difficult to manage and overcome (Ensminger & Slusacick, 1992). Studies have shown that children may be disadvantaged—intentionally or

unintentionally—based on ethnic background, language, special needs, gender, and/or socioeconomic status (SES, Gillborn, 1997). In addition, teachers' attitudes and perceptions about language skills may generate bias toward students from diverse backgrounds (Strickland, 2002). Lastly, the language of the classroom may be structured according to curricular and pedagogical practices that are geared toward the language experiences of European American, middle-class students (Cole, 1990).

These disadvantages may contribute to the relatively low rate of educational success for low SES African American children (Duncan & Magnuson, 2005; Gregory & Rimm-Kaufman, 2008; McLoyd, 1998). Research shows that they are more likely to fail academically in the early grades (Wasik, Bond, & Hindman, 2006) and that they are often relegated to remedial or special education programs—or both (Kearns, Ford, & Linney, 2005; Obiakor, 1999). In 2009, the United States Commission on Civil Rights (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 2009) estimated that, although the total population of African American students in U.S. schools was 12%, the same group accounted for 28.8% of the students in special education classes. Based on these numbers, African American students are 2.3 times more likely to be in special education classes, compared to children of other races. Orfield and Lee (2005) maintained that this disproportionality segregates African American children from the mainstream student body. They described this segregation as a mechanism that keeps African American students from receiving an education equal to that offered to the general education environment (Kearns, Ford, & Linney, 2005). Proportionately, African American children are also more likely to drop out of school than are children of other races (Battin-Pearson et al., 2000; R. B. Cairns, B. D. Cairns, & Neckerman, 1989).

These patterns are clearly established in the literature, but I only found five studies that explored how teachers can help students maintain their home languages when, as preschoolers, they acquire school discourse patterns. Of the researchers who have addressed this topic, some have focused on language instruction. For example, Justice, Mashburn, Pence, and Wiggins (2008) advocated that preschools adopt a comprehensive language curriculum. The authors warned, however, that this strategy might prove beneficial only when children received “relatively large doses” (p. 983) of content. Penno, Wilkinson, and Moore (2002) reported success with vocabulary acquisition from teachers who explicitly explained novel words that appeared in their preschoolers’ storybooks and then repeated the stories to children several times. And Cabell, Justice, Konold, and McGinty (2011) found that teachers’ conversational responsiveness stimulated the language of preschoolers from low SES backgrounds.

Other researchers focused on increased book reading. Whitehurst et al. (1994) believed that consistent book sharing that included time for child response and conversation was beneficial for building, maintaining, and expanding language. Similarly, Hargrave and Senechal (2000) found that the interactive process of dialogic reading, which encourages children’s participation through open-ended questioning techniques, helps increase vocabulary and expressive language. Lastly, Dickinson (2001) contended that persistent and regular book reading in preschool classrooms strengthened literacy skills; he advocated thoughtful text selections, in particular.

Because the literature I reviewed provided little information about how to help preschool students learn an academic discourse and based on my experience with African American boys, I wondered:

1. Would text-based conversations about the books that low SES African American boys select serve as a teaching tool for the instructional discourse that many early childhood teachers use? Might these conversations also help expand these students' dialogic/narrative skills?
2. During text-based conversations, would spontaneous language production be a result of children's interest and engagement in books? Would it be indicative of accessing young children's prior knowledge?

More broadly, I wanted to know, "What happens when four-year-old African American boys from low SES backgrounds engage in dialogue with a teacher around books of their choosing?"

Review of Literature

To better understand the relationship between home and school discourse and the impact that discussions about non-fiction literature might have on preschoolers, I reviewed the literature in five areas:

1. Home discourse patterns based on ethnicity and social class,
2. School discourse patterns,
3. Access to books and the benefits of shared reading,
4. Decontextualized language, and
5. Dialogue and funds of knowledge.

Home Discourse Patterns

A considerable body of research exists that explores home discourse patterns based on social class and ethnicity. This research suggests that middle-class caregivers often simplify their language and engage their children in labeling and naming objects

during purposefully initiated language encounters (*see* R. Brown, 1973; Hart & Risley, 1995; Snow, 1983; Weizman & Snow, 2001). Through this explicitly instructive discourse, the caregivers use questioning to offer language experiences directly to their children (Wells, 1986). They also expand children's speech by repeating child-uttered statements that they embellish and expand (Bellugi & Brown, 1963). Other research suggests that the caregivers of impoverished children see language development as a natural consequence of growth and development and that these caregivers expect their children to glean language experiences through observations and from eavesdropping on adult conversations (Harris & Graham, 2007).

Hoff-Ginsberg (1990) found that African American caregivers with low SES use language for behavioral directives far more frequently than they use it to engage children in conversation. When the latter exchanges do occur, they lack the depth of vocabulary knowledge displayed in conversations between caretakers with higher SES backgrounds (Hart & Risley, 1995). Similarly, Huttenlocher, Waterfall, Vasilyeva, Vevea, and Hedges (2010) compared middle-class SES and low SES caregivers and found that low SES caregivers conversed less with their children. Low SES caregivers also spent less time pursuing mutual interest activities with their children than middle-class caregivers did with theirs. Likewise, during such activities, the utterances of children with low SES did not increase their caregivers' speech, when compared to middle-class caregivers' responses to their own children. Similarly, Hoff (2006) discovered a correlation between a caregiver's utterance length, number of word types and tokens, and the caregiver's SES; she also observed that these variables were predictive of the vocabulary of the

caregiver's children. Lastly, Pan, Rowe, Spier, and Tamis–Monda (2004) reported a positive relationship between maternal education and child vocabulary.

Several of the studies that address ethnicity-based home discourse focus on the use of African American Vernacular English (AAVE, also known as African American English or AAE). Craig and Washington (2006) stated that AAE is characterized by “an expansive set of morphological, syntactic, semantic, phonological, and discourse features that differ systematically from the ways that the same meaning would be expressed in Standard American English or SAE” (p. 199). Potentially, children who do not speak SAE are at a disadvantage. This is because SAE is the mainstream dialect in the United States and the language used in schools.

Language acquisition and development. There is evidence that prelinguistic features (such as babbling and cooing) and simple sentence construction, such as telegraphic speech (Brown, 1973), appear at the same age in speakers of all languages (Schraeder, Quinn, Stockman, & Miller, 1999). As infants and toddlers, all children, including AAE and SAE speakers, are able to convey socio-emotional information, including interpersonal roles and appropriate behavior (Blake, 1994). This may be a direct result of caregiver discourse and the associated transmission of culturally important information. At age three, a child's dialectic features begin to form (Stockman, 1999) and, at age four or five, when children typically begin to utter more complex and structured sentences, syntactic and semantic differences start to emerge (Stockman, 1999).

When AAE speakers are introduced to SAE upon school entry, they receive a scaffold that allows them closer access to classroom discourse. Although AAE usage at

home increases over time, it tends to diminish at school entry and declines progressively as children advance in grade level (Craig & Washington, 2006). Interestingly, when children start school, boys tend to incorporate more AAE into their speech patterns than girls do. By the later elementary grades, this difference equalizes (Craig & Washington, 2004). It is possible that children's emerging bidialectal skills are responsible for the shift from AAE to SAE. This bidialectal competence is a byproduct of school entry and occurs in the absence of explicit instruction (Craig & Washington, 2006).

Children who develop this bidialectal competence—who are able to dialect/code shift—perform better in reading (Craig & Washington, 2004) than their peers who cannot yet accomplish this shift. Unfortunately, approximately one-third of African American children remain non-shifters, even at later grade levels. The reading performance of these students is poor—their scores align with national data for African American students who are performing in the low normal range on most standardized texts (Donahue, Daane, & Grigg, 2003).

School discourse patterns. Linguists have known for years that all children have impressive language ability. In fact, the vast majority of children enter school with vocabularies fully fit for everyday life—with complex grammar skills and deep understandings of experiences and stories (Gee, 2004, p. 17). However, not all children enter school with the experience needed to understand and use the academic register of school.

Within this register, researchers have identified distinctive patterns of language and questioning techniques. (Mehan, 1979). The patterns often include a teacher-initiated question, a student reply, and a teacher evaluation. Cole (1990) posited that, within the

confines of school-based learning, teachers use a specific linguistic form to present subject matter and emphasize that form to dominate and manage classroom agendas and relationships. For example, during sharing time in preschool, the teacher asks individual children to create a monologue for the class; a turn-taking conversation between student and teacher typically follows. For both the monologue and the subsequent conversations, the teacher—through questions and directives—determines who talks, how long the talk will last, and what the topics will be. Michaels (1981) maintained that through his or her questions, comments, and suggestions, the teacher seeks to expand, clarify, or alter the text. The teacher poses intended expansions, clarifications, and alterations, according to his or her own expectations and limitations about what counts as an appropriate and/or successful text. During this time, teachers are apt to confine children to either (a) talking about just one thing, (b) talking about what the teacher construes as important or about previously established topics, (c) not talking about personal and private family matters, and/or (d) not talking about television or movies (Michaels, 1985).

Research suggests that children of middle-class, highly literate parents are already familiar with these routines and patterns of interaction because they are similar to their home discourse patterns (Ninio & Bruner, 1978). However, these routines and patterns are often alien to children from different racial, ethnic, class, and cultural backgrounds; these children enter the classroom discourse arena with their own, unique styles for organizing narratives (Labov, 1972). Their narrative style usually remains much truer to the students' home environment, where verbal exchanges take place with familiar people on a regular basis (Hicks, 1990). The exchanges may also consist of the “weave and warp” of their communities (Dyson, 2003). Thus, in diverse classrooms, it is likely that

the discourse style most familiar to many of the children is one that relies on shared background knowledge and assumptions, contextual information, nonverbal cues, and prosody for supplying parts of the intended message (Michaels, 1985).

As a result, when children who are not yet familiar with middle-class European American discourse patterns begin school, they must learn a new discourse strategy (Hymes, 1967). They must navigate away from their home-instantiated conversational discourse strategies and conform to the ways with words (Heath, 1983) that teachers implicitly expect.

When teachers do not help students to do this, there may be sociolinguistic interference between teacher and student (Hymes, 1967) and schooling becomes “primarily a linguistic process and language serves as an often unconscious means of evaluating and differentiating students” (Schleppegrell, 2004, p. 2). When teachers cannot hear the structure of the child’s home discourse pattern, and recognize its cohesive nature, they may conclude that the student utterances are unplanned or, at worst, incoherent (Michaels & Collins, 1984). As a result, teachers may treat these children differently and/or misevaluate them as academically inept (Schleppegrell, 2004). Children may find themselves enmeshed in situations and contexts that constrain their ability to function verbally during social interactions (Lagattuta & Wellman, 2002). They may not understand what is required of them and if children do not understand their teachers’ conversational intent, this affects the children’s performance; the two are inextricably linked (Richards, 1986). Strickland (2002) likewise warned that, when a child’s home language differs from that used for instruction, there is an increased

likelihood of reading problems. She stated that this is particularly true when reading instruction begins before children are orally proficient in Standard English.

Teachers can help children learn the discourse of school. Children acquire language competency, particularly speech, through experimentation and practice (Bellugi & Brown, 1973; Wells, 1986). To experiment with, practice, and become proficient in using the school discourses, children must be encouraged to use their expressive language with a more knowledgeable other who can support them in their individual zones of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978). The language children use during such joint productive activity supplies the means necessary to develop new meaning from discourse (receptive language) and also—by its production—provides necessary and critical practice (expressive language). This receptive and expressive language becomes the overarching vehicle for the development of intersubjectivity, the internalization of concepts, and the development of higher cognitive processes (Gallimore & Tharp, 1990). When this happens, children are able to “appropriate adults’ own strong, encouraging words to help them become more secure in their capacity to cope [and] to negotiate their way in a world of complicated voices” (Dyson, 2003, p. 204)

For this process to begin, children must be motivated to engage in carefully constructed conversations that are designed to support them as they acclimate to the language and literacy habits of school. The use of books and interactive reading (Barrentine, 1996; Lonigan & Whitehurst, 1998) would seem a logical choice to initiate such conversations, as this offers the distinct advantage of providing language and literacy experiences simultaneously. However, if children do not have experience

interacting with conversational partners and/or books, they may be intimidated or disinterested in these activities.

Therefore, it is critical to entice diverse children to interact at school with supportive adults, older children, and peers, as this helps them develop discourse knowledge that has a substantial impact on their lives (Duke, 2000). Fluency in school discourse affects the way that others view children's language and cognitive competence (Labov, 1972). In large part, it also contributes significantly to their ability to operate in differing social contexts and to take advantage of the opportunities available to them, not only at school, but also in their communities and, eventually, in the workplace (Bourdieu, 1991). Like any new skill, fluency requires practice—and practice requires children to participate actively in classroom discussions and conversations.

When developing the expertise needed to engage all children effectively in such discussions, teachers need to be aware of and understand the language differences that exist between themselves and the children in their classroom and know the best means of supporting and scaffolding the acquisition of this particular discourse genre. Otherwise, because school discourse is a part of a teacher's subconscious identity kit, s/he might be “unconscious, unreflective, and uncritical” (Gee, 2004, p. 221) of the power of language to exclude and/or devalue some of their students. Under such circumstances, it is possible for teachers to unknowingly inflict great damage on others who are not members of the club (Gee, 1989). To increase their mindfulness, teachers need to literally “watch their language,” while simultaneously providing—within a natural and functional classroom environment—strategic, meaningful opportunities that pragmatically model

the turn-taking interchanges of conversation, demonstrate syntactic structures and, introduce new vocabulary (Delpit, 1995).

Access to Books and the Benefits of Shared Reading

The power of books. Many authors attest to the powerfulness of texts (*see* Lonigan & Whitehurst, 1998; Neuman & Celano, 2001). Butler (1979) chronicled the physical and cognitive development of her granddaughter, Cushla. From birth, Cushla suffered from serious ear and throat infections, kidney malfunction, asthma, and eczema. She had also inherited a chromosomal mutation that caused significant fine and gross motor delays and vision–brain coordination malfunction. Several attending physicians and specialists assumed—and openly stated—that Cushla would be physically and cognitively challenged. Nonetheless, Cushla’s grandmother and parents launched a number of strategies to help Cushla reach her potential. The most prominent of these strategies was to introduce Cushla to many carefully selected children’s books. Butler owned a bookstore and was knowledgeable about the content, structure, and appeal of children’s books. Read-alouds became an integral and nearly constant part of Cushla’s compromised early life. Cushla’s grandmother and parents used books to bridge the distance between Cushla’s limited and bounded world to that of an unchallenged child. Butler noted that familiar themes and/or subject matter were especially important for Cushla. In addition to these themes, the texts that Butler selected were age appropriate and included rhymes and word play that promoted phonemic awareness.

Cushla’s limited visual acuity, precarious motor control, and frequent debilitating illnesses severely narrowed the scope and sequence of the childhood exploration and experimentation needed to facilitate language and concept development. The texts that

Butler used as scaffolds for Cushla contained precise vocabulary, various language resources, skillful scene setting, and fast-paced action. As her conversational skills improved, Cushla increasingly used the exact vocabulary and phrases from her coveted books to correctly express meaning and intent—similar to what Nelson (2009) recognized as children borrowing cultural material from literature to reconceptualize their everyday experiences.

As Cushla matured, standardized assessments measured her language as age appropriate—she was adept at and able to manipulate and use language to convey her meaning and intent. For example, once, when she was three years and eight months old, she sat next to a pile of her books, holding her doll, Looby Lou. She told Butler, “Now I can read to Looby Lou [because] she’s tired and sad and she needs a cuddle and a bottle and a book” (Butler, 1979, p. 102).

When Cushla was six years old and attending school, Butler (1979) concluded her account of her granddaughter’s language and literacy journey. She stated:

Seven years ago, before Cushla was born, I would have laid claim to a deep faith in the power of books to enrich children’s lives. By comparison with my present conviction, this faith was a shallow thing. I know now what print and picture have to offer a child who is cut off from the world, for whatever reason. But I know also that there must be another human being, prepared to intercede, before anything can happen. (p. 107)

Access to books. Most people assume that books and other literacy materials are easily and equally accessible to all children and all families (Neuman & Celano, 2001). However, many young children do not have early access to the world of books. First, they often have limited access to libraries. There may be several reasons for this. They may live in rural areas, with no public libraries within a reasonable driving distance; their parents may lack the transportation necessary to get to a library; there may be no libraries

in the community; or perhaps there are libraries in the community but they are in disrepair, poorly equipped, or otherwise inadequate. Smith, Constantino, and Krashen (1997) documented the significant disparity of library resources in three communities, ranging in income from high to low. They found that the libraries in low income areas housed fewer books and that the books that were available were outdated, of low quality, or in poor condition.

Second, sometimes parents cannot afford to buy books for their children. Neuman and Celano (2001) investigated four neighborhoods in Philadelphia. They found that children in the middle-income neighborhoods had immediate access in their homes to 13 book titles per child; children living in poor communities, however, were limited to one book for every 300 children! The authors concluded that such disparity could easily result in fewer opportunities for specific types of learning and thinking that are essential to literacy development—most notably, a familiarity with book language.

The benefits of reading to children. Advocates have long believed that reading picture books to preschool children is an important step in promoting language and literacy skills during these formative years (*see* Adams, 1990; Bus, van Ijzendoorn, & Pellegrini, 1995; Dunning, Mason, & Stewart, 1994; Lonigan, 1994; Sulzby & Teale, 1987; Teale & Sulzby, 1986; Wells, 1986) and that it positively influences language development during the first three years of life (Snow & Goldfield, 1983). Joint book reading embodies elements such as predictability, structure, and scaffolding opportunities, which act as important precursors and contributors to language development (Clift & Hughes, 1986; *see also* Ninio, 1983; Ninio & Bruner, 1978; Snow & Goldfield, 1983; Sulzby & Teale, 1987). Early book reading also contributes to a

child's knowledge of print concepts, which is tangential to its influence on oral language development (Fletcher & Reese, 2005). The varied kinds of talk that are prevalent during book reading sessions foster the type of language skills necessary for children to excel in school (DeTemple, 2001). When a reader and a child share a book, they focus jointly on a common topic; book reading provides an opportunity to introduce complex, explicit language, such as definitions, descriptions, and explanations, and allows for questions and answers (DeTemple, 2001). This joint focus and opportunity for conversation, word learning, and conceptual elaboration mirrors the literacy exchanges that occur in many early childhood classrooms.

Researchers have noted the importance of frequent and quality book reading sessions on a child's language and literacy trajectory. In one study, Snow (1991) analyzed the frequency of caregivers reading aloud to young children. She and her colleagues demonstrated that the time caregivers spent in book reading correlated significantly with their children's ability to recognize words in school. Similarly, Senechal, Lefevre, Thomas, and Daley (1998) reported that exposure to books and print accounted for significant variance in terms of word knowledge, novel vocabulary acquisition, increased familiarity with the syntax of written language, and heightened awareness of written letters and words.

Read-alouds enable children to recognize patterns in language and story grammar (Tompkins & Webeler, 1983). When children engage in the common habit of asking for repeated readings of the same text, it allows them to memorize story lines. Later, as they retell the story verbatim, they unknowingly practice grammatical patterns, pronunciation, and the increasingly complex language structures that are inherent in text (Snow &

Goldfield, 1983). The familiarity of repeated read-alouds also reduces cognitive load. This release of mental resources gives children the cognitive freedom to think about and relate personal experiences that coincide with the story's content (Whitehurst et al., 1988).

What may be critical in joint book-reading encounters, however, is not only the verbal contribution from Vygotsky's (1978) more knowledgeable other (parent or teacher), but also the child's participation. This is a key issue when teachers use book sharing as an intervention for children with language delays (Van Kleeck, Vander Woude, & Hammett, 2006). Participation is fundamental in fostering a child's language development; if it results in increased verbalization, teachers consider it a success (*see* Crain-Thorenson & Dale, 1999; Dale, Crain-Thorenson, Notari-Syverson, & Cole, 1996; McNeill & Fowler, 1999). DeBaryshe's (1993) research portrayed similar increases in the participation of normally developing children.

Aside from a few studies that examined repeated readings of familiar versus unfamiliar books (Goodsitt, Raitan, & Perlmutter, 1988), the issue of normally developing children's participation during book sharing is virtually absent from current literature (Van Kleeck, 2003). Hart and Risley (1999) found a correlation between the amount of caregiver talk and that of their children. Based on this, it is logical to conclude that adult conversation around book content could act as an effective language-teaching tool—but only if the child, too, takes an active role in the conversation. In terms of further research, Van Kleeck (2008) suggested that, rather than investigating child language and literacy outcomes based on various types of adult book sharing interactions, “it may be illuminating to also measure the child's participation in those interactions to

determine if the level of [their] participation is a factor in language and literacy development” (p. 279).

Decontextualized Language

Wasik, Bond, and Hindman (2006) argued that “children learn to use language by engaging in dialogue; limited opportunities to talk and receive feedback will limit language development” (p. 64). When children are engaged in conversation and discussions, they acquire usable vocabulary and new syntactic knowledge that spurs on their language development as they assume contributory niches in their speaking and listening communities. Over time, children’s language evolves and serves as not only a communication device, but also surreptitiously grooms them to enter and gain stature in their understandings of decontextualized language and in the related literacy domains of reading and writing. Children acquire a great deal of their decontextualized language through interactions with print (Wallach & Butler, 1994) and from conversations and exposure to sermons, speeches, and oral stories that reference past or future events (Curenton & Justice, 2004).

The decontextualized discourse featured in preschool children’s use of literate language is a key index of later literacy skill (Westby, 1999). Children use this decontextualized language to discuss past and future events and to share information about abstract objects, events, and situations that are not part of an immediate context (Curenton & Justice, 2004). For example, a child who describes a television program that s/he watched over the weekend is using decontextualized language. On the other hand, people use contextualized language primarily to monitor immediate social interactions and to share concrete and practical information (Westby, 1999). For

example, a child who states, during recess, that s/he wants to join a game or, during coloring, that s/he needs a green crayon, is using contextualized language.

In decontextualized discourse, literate language functions to clarify meaning and minimize ambiguity; it includes four grammatical elements: noun phrases, adverbs, conjunctions, and mental/linguistic verbs (Greenhalgh & Strong, 2001). Children's use of these grammatical structures is critical for language, literacy, and academic success (Dickinson & Snow, 1987; Heath, 1983; Nippold, 1988; Snow, Burns, & Griffin 1998).

The school environment emphasizes flexibility in decontextualized discourse; children who find literacy language difficult to use or comprehend "are generally viewed as being at risk for problems with literacy and academic achievement" (Curenton & Justice, 2004, p. 241). This early prognosis may be associated with oral language impairment; however, it also manifests when the discourse style of the child's home environment differs substantially from that used in school. Michaels (1981) noted that academic achievement might be unusually challenging for children whose discourse style is "at variance with the teacher's own literate style and expectations" (p. 424).

Many studies indicate that children acquire language skills related to literacy development (such as extended narrative) in early childhood. However, there is limited research on preschool children's use of literate language (Wells, 1986). Pellegrini (1991) found a correlation between literate language features and symbolic play in 20 European American middle-class children. He hypothesized that children use literate language in socio-dramatic play and confirmed that preschool children create decontextualized language and frequently construct these literate features with peers during play.

In later research, Pellegrini and his colleagues (Pellegrini, Galda, Bartini, & Charak, 1998) noted that kindergarteners also use literate language with peers, within the context of friendship. Although Curen-ton and Justice (2004) examined the use of literate language features within the oral narratives of African American and European American preschoolers, there appears to be no study of African American male preschoolers' literate language or overall language responses to differing text genres—specifically, informational.

Funds of Knowledge

Moll, Amanti, Neff, and Gonzalez (1992) defined funds of knowledge as “historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills [that are] essential for household or individual functioning and well-being” (p. 133). The authors maintained that children acquire this knowledge through observations and experiences within their homes and neighborhoods. They described the prior knowledge of low SES children as rich and found that it exemplifies the children’s cultural resources. They suggested that the children’s cultural resources contributed individually to language-learning trajectories and, collectively, to classroom discourse. This finding contrasted sharply with the stereotypical image of the low SES student who enters school with little or no background experience. Pappas and Varelas (2004) posited that children use past experiences to make sense of scientific ideas in non-fiction text. They maintained that this helps children develop their ability to engage in classroom discourse and scientific talk, which is an important component of the literate register. The authors further claimed that children who acquire this talk are likely to gain confidence in themselves and thus be motivated to participate in classroom discussions and

conversations. They stated that, ideally, these experiences would also ignite the children's interest to engage in oral language. The authors believed that the use of informational texts was a valuable means of promoting oral participation and that this genre "captured" (p. 179) funds of knowledge that not only sparked interest, but also provided an appropriate arena to share prior knowledge and experiences (Pappas & Varelas, 2004).

Reflection

Although my review of the literature broadened and deepened my understanding in the field of language and literacy, including home and school discourse patterns, access to books and the benefits of shared reading, decontextualized language, and dialogue and funds of knowledge, I found no studies about the application of this knowledge in the preschool classroom. Specifically, I did not find an answer to my research question, "What happens when four-year-old African American boys from low SES backgrounds engage in dialogue with a teacher around books of their choosing?"

Chapter II: Theoretical Framework

Introduction

As a researcher, the questions I ask, the way I analyze data, and the sense I make of the many converging patterns I see, collectively inform my theoretical lens, which is grounded in multiple frameworks. My beliefs are based in constructivist theories of language acquisition—particularly, constructivism (Bruner, 1983; Lindfors, 1999; Rogoff, 1990; Vygotsky, 1978, 1986), sociocultural theory (Delpit, 1995; Gee, 1989, 2004, 2005; Wertsch, 1998; Vygotsky, 1978, 1986), and schema theory (Anderson & Pearson, 1984; Piaget, 1954). I also believe that children’s interest and engagement in learning and with text is critical to their academic success (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). In this dissertation, I first name my beliefs and then show how these beliefs play out in my daily experiences with young children.

Constructivist Theories of Language Acquisition

Language is a socially constructed phenomenon. It is strongly dependent on and acquisition mediated by language input derived from primary caregivers, who Trevarthen (1988) described as agents of culture who set children’s tentative behaviors within an intimate setting that is deeply informed by the caregivers’ cultural knowledge. Correlatively, children are quintessential cultural apprentices who seek the guided participation of their elders (Rogoff, 1990).

Vygotsky (1962) maintained that language is a psychological tool that plays two critical roles in cognitive development. First, it is the primary means that adults use to transmit information to children. Second, it is a powerful tool of intellectual adaptation.

Vygotsky believed that children take the language they first use socially and subsequently turn it inward, where it becomes inner speech. He further believed that children use such speech to plan activities and direct strategies that contribute to their development. He posited that language is the accelerant that fosters the ability to think and understand or, as Wells (1986) suggested, to make meaning. Indeed, our thinking is commensurate with our speaking—we think like we speak.

Vygotsky (1978) further surmised that this meaning-making process is always situated within a social context and that learning and language learning, in particular, is created through a reciprocal relationship between a child and a more knowledgeable other. He suggested that “every function in the child’s cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level and later, on the individual level” (p. 86). Thus, first conjoined in this relationship, children approach new venues of learning and enter a theoretical cognitive space that Vygotsky (1978) dubbed the *zone of proximal development*. Within this space, children are unable to produce independently the new understanding they seek; however, when coached, prompted, and guided by a more knowledgeable other, they enter the new learning space with this support, in addition to their previous knowledge. This helps children achieve their task goals and perform the tasks independently (Vygotsky, 1978).

Primary caregivers instantiate the role of the more knowledgeable other through affinity and proximity and thus, play a major role in a child’s language development. In

some cultures, more knowledgeable others calibrate their own speech to challenge children to learn from their models; the caretakers, in turn, find they can do so without rendering their speech so sophisticated that the child cannot comprehend it (Bellugi & Brown, 1973). In other cultures, children are expected to learn from the language that surrounds them, without this type of calibration (Heath, 1983). Bruner (1983) believed that the interaction between caregiver and child grows out of a mutual attraction called intersubjectivity (p. 27). Within the context of this shared intersubjectivity, the caregiver acts as the more linguistically experienced speaker and is, therefore, responsible for the majority of expressive language.

From infancy, children can receive and comprehend more language than they are capable of expressing. Bruner (1983) suggested that a *Language Acquisition Support System (LASS)* balances this asymmetrical relationship between experienced speaker (expert caregiver) and child (apprentice). He characterized LASS as “a support system that frames the interaction of human beings in such a way as to aid the aspirant speaker in mastering the uses of language” (p. 120).

Bruner (1983) also contended that LASS supports children in finding or inventing “systematic ways of dealing with social requirements and linguistic forms” (p. 28). LASS’ primary component relies on routinized verbal patterns or *formats*, defined in this particular context as standardized, unchanging interactions between caregiver and child, which assign definitive roles to caregivers and children. Once the communicants learn the format, they may switch roles. These roles are script-like—they connote action and place. Often, they are playful and may include games like *Peek-a-Boo* or *Pat-a-Cake*. In addition, because formats are often conventional and, therefore, culturally recognized and

understood, they act as invitations for others to join as communicants and share in interchanges.

As caregiver and child play out their respective formats and roles, they also organize them into subroutines that are more complex. The communicants then use the subroutines to build more complex social interactions and discourse. Eventually, the child comes to understand what is “canonical, obligatory, and valued among those to whom [the child] says it” (Bruner, 1983, p. 120).

Lindfors (1999) also cited the use of formats as an aspect of caregiver–child interactions. She called these *routines* and suggested that they are founded within the child’s growing experience and that their predictable patterns suggest that they are precursors to the turn-taking that conversations require. Routines are also opportunities to provide instruction in a manner that is appropriate for a child’s cultural community.

Rogoff (1990) expanded these ideas about caregivers to include a community of companions: “Children’s cognitive development is an apprenticeship—it occurs through guided participation in social activity with companions who support and stretch [a] child’s understanding of and skill in using the tools of the culture” (p. vii). Rogoff’s concept of guided participation does not necessarily involve a face-to-face encounter; however, it does include didactic dialogue and tacit, distal, and non-verbal forms of communication. Although Rogoff supported Vygotsky’s theory of the more knowledgeable other as the expert and the child (learner) as the apprentice, she also believed that the two roles in this reciprocal relationship could converge and change at any time during the learning encounter.

Beliefs in practice: Meet Sincere. Sincere and I were in my office to “read books.” He was a bright, demonstrative boy (I never failed to get a hug when he saw me) and appeared to enjoy our one-on-one interactions. On this particular day, Sincere had chosen an informational book about motorcycles with many color photographs. He commented on several pictures and then stopped to ponder a car that had no doors. He continued to study the car and commented, “No doors.” “No, there aren’t,” I responded. “I wonder how the driver gets in and out?” Sincere became very excited and blurted, “I know, I know!” I countered, “OK, how does the driver get in?”

Sincere: Well, he jump in. He jump out, too!

Virginia: Oh, he can get in and out of [the] car. H-m-m-m, I can’t get in and out of my car without using a door. My brain is backwards today. [We both laugh] Can you help me understand how the driver is able to jump in and out?

Sincere: Well, he, he jump in the, in the . . . [Grimacing] you know, he go in the, in the . . . [Sighs and points adamantly at the photograph]

Virginia: [Looking at the photograph] Oh, that’s the windshield!

Sincere: [Grinning broadly] Yah! He can jump in ‘cause there no windshield! He jump out that way, too!

Virginia: Oh, I see! The car doesn’t need doors because the driver can get in and out where the . . . [Sincere interrupts]

Sincere: Windshield!

Virginia: Yes, windshield! [I continue my previous sentence] . . . where the windshield should be. Well, thank you, Sincere! You really helped me understand! W-o-o-o-o! You certainly used your brain today!

Sincere: [Nodding his head and grinning] Yes, Ma’am!

Sociocultural Theory

Closely related to constructivism, conceptual paradigms of sociocultural theory are deeply rooted in the work of Vygotsky (1962, 1978) and later theoreticians, such as Wertsch (1998). As Kublin, Wetherby, Crais, and Prizant (1998) noted, Vygotsky believed that learning was “embedded within social events” and occurred as an individual “interacts with people, objects, and events in the environment” (p. 287).

Higher order cognitive functions, then, develop out of social interaction. Vygotsky offered two supporting arguments for this theory. First, he maintained that a child’s development cannot be understood by studying the child as an isolated entity—rather, one must also examine the child’s external world. Second, he suggested that, by participating in activities that require cognitive and communicative functions, children are drawn in to the use of these functions in ways that nurture and scaffold them.

More recently, these implications were supported by Rogoff, Paradise, Arauz, Correa-Chavez, and Angelillo (2003). They suggested that young children universally learn by means of observing and listening to the activities of adults and more-experienced children. However, they explained that this method was a more commonly expected means of learning in African American communities and other indigenous American populations than in middle class European American homes. Rogoff and her colleagues labeled this type of learning *intent participation* and contrasted it with the learning tradition prevalent in many schools. They called this tradition *assembly-line instruction* and explained that it followed a model of information transmission that proceeded directly from experts (teachers) and occurred “outside the context of productive, purposive activity” (p. 176). They argued that, while important for all children, intent

participation was especially advantageous for culturally diverse children because of its familiarity with their home learning contexts.

Wertsch (1991) supported this argument and maintained that people enmeshed themselves in their own unique cultural history. He argued that the history of the language and various life skill activities of a community reflected this practice. Wertsch further maintained that people and the tools that they used to construct meaning—namely, language—and how they used these tools to learn, were inseparable.

Building on Wertsch's (1991) supposition, Lee and Smagorinsky (2000) explained that, while the capacity to learn is infinite, learning potential depends on (a) what learning has previously taken place within the individual's cultural history, (b) the type of problem to be solved or task to be learned, (c) the activities in which learning takes place, and (d) the availability and quality of the learner's interaction with others. In summary, the authors concluded that "context and capacity are intricately intertwined" (p. 2).

According to Tharp and Gallimore (1988), the sociocultural perspective has implications for teaching, schooling, and education. Based on sociocultural theory:

1. For higher order functions to grow and develop, social interaction with more knowledgeable others is essential.
2. This interaction must involve the use of previously established cognitive and communicative functions.
3. This creates a dissonance in the classroom for children who lack the language experience that teachers, schools, and the American education system demand.

Sociocultural Theory and Discourse

Gee (1989) grounded his work on discourse in sociocultural theory. First, he suggested that we “often run off too quickly with interpretations of what other people mean that are based on our own social and cultural worlds, not theirs. Too often we are wrong in ways that are hurtful” (Gee, 2005, p. xi). In addition to this misinterpretation of expressive language, he argued that a dissonance exists that many low-income and/or under-represented children experience receptively when they begin school. This, he explained, is due to the unfamiliar discourse and language register—in the classroom and in texts—that confronts them (Gee, 1989). Gee defined this Discourse (which he spelled with a capital *D*) as a:

Socially accepted association among ways of using language . . . of thinking, feeling, believing, valuing, and acting . . . that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or “social network,” to signal (that one is playing) a socially meaningful “role.” (p.18)

Such Discourse can give its users a distinct advantage in terms of social status and income potential. In many cases, this discourse also promotes various perspectives that promote the acquisition of specific possessions. In addition, this Discourse assumes an affiliation with certain experiences and/or establishments. These possessions and experiences are beyond the means of many people. Therefore, they are at a social disadvantage (Gee, 1989).

Gee (1989) further maintained that this Discourse affords its users with instructions that he termed an “identity kit” (p. 18). He suggested that this kit informed them of such amenities as “appropriate costume and instructions on how to act, talk, and often write” (p. 18). Further, he speculated that Discourse also influences individuals to embrace “certain ways of using language (oral language and print), certain attitudes and

beliefs, allegiance to certain life styles, and certain ways of interacting with others” (p.19). Participants in Discourse are also subject to “rules” (p.19) that require certain behaviors in order to maintain their relationship with other participants. Finally, Gee posited that Discourse is exclusive and defines individuals with differing discourses.

Delpit (1995) concurred with Gee’s (1989) ideas about the exclusive nature of Discourse. She argued that almost any African American who became successful within the definition of the dominant Discourse community accomplished this feat by acquiring a Discourse other than the one they acquired in their initial home environments. She further stated that almost all of these accomplished African Americans attributed their Discourse acquisition “to the work of one or more committed teachers” (p. 299). However, Delpit (1995) assured teachers that students’ home discourses were vital to their perception of self and sense of community. She recommended that, although teachers need to “acknowledge and validate students’ home language, they must also vigilantly ensure that [doing so] does not limit [the students’] potential” (p. 299).

For these reasons, Delpit (1995) encouraged European American teachers to be unafraid of explicitly teaching and requiring language-diverse children to learn and use the dominant Discourse. Further, she suggested that all teachers be aware of and acknowledge “Discourse-stacking” (p. 301) that often occurs in schools. She endorsed that a working knowledge of school’s dominant Discourse is one key to the academic success of all children.

Delpit (1995) theorized that teachers who explicitly teach low SES children and language-diverse children have the power to resist and ultimately reshape what many believe has become an oppressive system. She attested that when teachers are committed

to teaching all students according to the standards set by the dominant Discourse, the literate register, and the current values of academic excellence within school systems, they might realize that, through their teaching and the strength of their commitment, change can occur.

Beliefs in practice: Visiting Ms. Taylor’s class. Returning from a home visit, I hurried down the hall, hoping to read to some 4–K students. As I entered the room, the whole class was standing in their designated places on the rug, playing a group game. “Oh, boys and girls, please say good afternoon to Mrs. Miller,” said Ms. Taylor. “Good afternoon, Mrs. Miller,” chirped the children obediently. Ms. Taylor asked if I would like to share with the children; I replied that I would love to talk with them for a few minutes.

Virginia: Boys and girls, your greeting was wonderful! Now please be seated.

[Children remain standing]

Virginia: Be seated.

[Children still standing]

Virginia: [Pointing to the floor]

Please sit down!

[All children promptly sit in their personal spaces on the rug and look at me expectantly]

Clearly, my “school talk” was not a part of their lexicon.

Schema Theory

A language input encounter supports and expands a child’s language ability within a socially mediated arena. The speech content of such encounters contributes significantly to children’s ever-widening vocabulary knowledge (Hart & Risley, 1995;

Huttenlocher et al., 1991) and influences language growth. These encounters also serve as a foundation for building the cognitive structures that are responsible for language and literacy comprehension. Piaget (1954) called these cognitive structures *schemata*—a theory that Anderson and Pearson (1984) would later broaden and enrich.

Piaget (1954) developed the idea that children make meaning of the world via schemata, which he defined as cognitive structures that children erect in response to experiences or exposure to ideas. He described the cognitive actions of an individual as s/he attempts to construct meaning and understanding of his or her experiences. New experiences add to, change, or delete existing schemata. Piaget called the addition of new information to existing schemata, *assimilation* and the modification of existing information, *accommodation*. He suggested that accommodation results when children modify their schemata by incorporating new information that corrects misconceptions or enhances those that already exist.

Anderson and Pearson (1984) explained how the knowledge already stored in memory functions in the process of interpreting new information. As the new information enters the knowledge store, it interacts with the old knowledge, which accommodates it. For example: Sally likes fish sticks. Sally knows from experience that she eats fish and are, therefore, a type of food. When Sally sees an aquarium for the first time, she sees that fish can also be pets—she can visually admire and enjoy them. Thus, Sally expands the schema she constructed to bring meaning to her concept of fish (her fish schema). She has now accommodated two functions: (a) fish can be food, and (b) fish can be pets.

Schema also plays an important role in reading comprehension. As Anderson and Pearson (1984) pointed out, relevant schemata—just as they clarify oral narratives—assist understanding by clarifying ambiguous elements in a text. Schemata also provide scaffolding for assimilating oral and text information.

Prior knowledge of a topic is another tool that allows a reader to develop an appropriate plan for searching memory, filling in gaps, and stabilizing inconsistencies in comprehension. A reader, who is familiar with a topic because of schematic referencing, can use this as a tool to appropriate meaning when s/he encounters difficult or unknown words. According to Anderson and Pearson (1984):

To say that one has comprehended a text is to say that she has found a mental “home” for the information in the text, or else that she has modified an existing mental home in order to accommodate that new information. (p. 255)

If a child’s language and literacy experiences and opportunities are limited for any reason, s/he may not have the necessary schema to support comprehension. S/he may have gaps in knowledge or may not have constructed sufficient accommodations among schemata to help him or her understand the relationships that occur among known facts and topics. Anderson and Pearson (1984) hypothesized that the process of becoming a good reader with good comprehension demands:

A curriculum rich with concepts from the *everyday world* [italics added] and learned fields of study. Becoming a good reader requires books that *explain how and why things function as they do* [italics added]. Becoming a good reader depends upon teachers who insist that students think about the interconnections among ideas as they read. (p. 286)

Beliefs in practice: Meet Donte. I wanted Donte, a four-year-old kindergarten student, to engage in an interactive reading experience with me. I gave him a choice of what I thought were interesting picture books. With reluctance, Donte finally chose

Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See? (Martin Jr., 1967). The book did not hold his interest for long. As our session progressed, it turned into a badgering monologue; it reminded me of Wells' (1986) depiction of teachers ignoring children, talking over them, and generally dominating all verbal proceedings in their classrooms. As I was momentarily lost in this thought, Donte spied a book in my bag about insects that was illustrated with large color photographs. He asked to look at it and after several seconds, he was speaking non-stop.

Donte told me that there were many roaches at his house and that bugs were "bad." They scared him and his puppy and his granny had to kill them. Donte didn't miss a conversational beat as he explained that granny said the bugs were "nasty" because they could get into their food. (Curiously, he followed this with a vivid description of all the kinds of food he enjoyed and with many questions directed to me about my food preferences.)

Eventually, I explained to Donte that not all bugs were bad. He was quiet for a few seconds and then asked, "Why aren't they bad?" I smiled, opened the book, and according to our school credo, suggested that we "dive into learning."

Theories of Interest and Engagement

Interest. Interest is an active dynamic that leads to engagement, focus, and learning (Flowerday, Schraw, & Stevens, 2004). It affects specific learning strategies and influences how an individual allocates his or her attention (Hidi, 1990). Indeed, since the late 1800's, theorists have argued that interest is the most important motivating factor in learning and development (Dewey, 1913; James, 1890; Thorndike, 1935).

Tobias (1994) noted that when students' learning behavior is "variable, unstrategic, and ineffective" (p. 39) at school, it is often attributed to ineffective cognitive processing. He then asserted that another reason could be that the tasks that students are called to perform do not engage their interests or other motivational processes.

Topic interest refers to one's preferences for various topics, tasks, or contexts and how those preferences influence learning (Krapp, Hidi, & Renninger, 1992). In his work on intrinsic motivation, Deci (1992) indicated that when people enjoy what they are doing, they participate in activities regardless of any goals or rewards. Similarly, Deci and Ryan (1991) suggested that, "Intrinsically motivated behaviors are those the person undertakes out of interest" (p. 241). Theories of interest have several important implications that are relevant to education. First, if interests are truly long lasting (Hidi, 1990) then the combination of instruction and students' interests may have positive motivational effects for extended periods. Second, Tobias (1994) suggested that it is "difficult to find someone who is not interested in something" (p. 38) and then reflected that it is both a "challenging and potentially rewarding task to tailor instruction to students' interests in order to harness the motivational effects of such adaptations for school learning" (p. 38). Finally, Krapp, Hidi, and Renninger (1992) concluded that students (and people in general) work harder and learn more when engaged in activities that relate to their interests.

There is a strong relationship between interest and reading. As Hoffman, Sailors, and Patterson (2002) stated, "No theory of text, even one focused on the development of decoding abilities, can ignore issues of content and motivation" (p. 5). If a text does not pique a child's interest, s/he will have difficulty engaging in books and reading and this

limits their reading progress. This is problematic for all children, as teachers have commented and researchers have confirmed that many children are not interested in the content of their basal reading program (Allington & Johnson, 2002; Pellegrini, 1991). It is of particular concern for low SES children, who have little exposure to books before school and, therefore, do not yet have the substantial schemata needed to comprehend written narrative (Snow, 1983). Beginning reading texts, then, “constitute a large part of these children’s interaction around text” (Menon & Hiebert, 2000, p. 2). For these children, high interest and engagement in the books they read in school is essential.

Engagement. Cambourne (1988) named eight conditions under which language is learning: immersion, demonstration, expectations, responsibility, employment, approximation, response and engagement. He argued that engagement occurs when learners are convinced that:

(1) they are potential doers or performers of these demonstrations, (2) engaging with those demonstrations will further the purposes of their lives, and (3) they can engage and try to emulate without fear of physical or psychological hurt if their attempts are not correct. (Cambourne, 1995, p. 187)

As a defining construct of literacy, engagement “draw[s] on a conception of reading that emphasizes its psychological and social aspects” (Cambourne, 1988, p. 5). Engagement cannot be forced or extracted. It can, however, be cultivated by giving children access to topics that interest them, individually and collectively, and by providing the social milieu that supports interaction and exploration.

Wigfield and Baker (1999) noted that most uses of the term *engaging* refer to reader interest and attitudes towards reading. They theorized that text features should engage children. They also referred to *text engagingness*, which they defined as the text’s potential for creating engagement. Menon and Hiebert (2000) called text

engagingness “an affordance of the text itself” (p. 3) that creates engagement with the reader and Hoffman, Sailors, and Patterson (2002), summing it all up, defined engaging text and its ensuing engagingness as interesting, relevant, and exciting to the reader.

The two primary and potential venues that engage children in text are design and content (Hoffman, Sailors, & Patterson, 2002). Initially, a text’s pictures and format (design) are likely to engage children. However, if the children do not subsequently find the reading of the text interesting or personally meaningful, they will not engage with its content. Therefore, it is important to consider if the text promises engagement for “at least some of the children within a group for whom the text is being developed or selected” (Hiebert & Martin, 2001, p. 27).

Ideally, all children in a classroom setting are engaged readers. Allowing them to choose their own texts is one way to help them achieve this goal. To explore this idea, Guthrie et al. (1996) developed and implemented a new approach for teaching reading, writing, and science and called it *Concept-Oriented Reading Instruction (CORI)*. In developing the plan, Guthrie et al. defined *literacy engagement* as “the integration of intrinsic motivations, cognitive strategies and conceptual learning from text” (Guthrie et al., 1996, p. 309). Of the several strategies involved, the most important was student selection of informational texts. The researchers launched the approach in two inner-city schools in Syracuse, New York. At the end of the year-long study, they documented significant literacy achievement, engagement, personal growth, and increased self-motivation. They concluded that the use of non-fiction, informational texts played a more important role in early childhood classrooms than was commonly acknowledged.

Similarly, Smolkin, and Donovan (2001) reported that, for some children, storybooks do not hold a “strong pull” (p. 205). They found that informational books, however, have “tremendous power” (p. 115) for many children. Boys, in particular, seem to self-select informational texts for instructional purposes and pleasure reading, and they do so, happily and consistently. Drawing on Pellegrini (1991), whose research revealed that informational texts were more meaningful to distinct ethnic and racial groups than were Euro-centered stories, I made an observation that led me to believe that Pellegrini might be correct.

Beliefs in practice: Meet Nasir and TyShawn. I had just completed my last home visit of the day and was hurrying into the school building. I checked my watch and thought, “Oh good, just enough time to do a little kidwatching in the 4–K classroom!” Still carrying my school bag, filled with all manner of books, puzzles, and a puppet or two, I entered the classroom, caught the eye of the teacher who smiled graciously (as always!) and looked around. It was center time (which meant free choice activities) and I was surprised to see two boys duly ensconced in the book center—one on the floor, the other on a child-sized beach chair. Except for one girl who regularly chose to go to “books” during indoor playtime, the book center was usually empty. As I looked closer, I noticed that TyShawn, the boy in the chair, was idly, but rapidly turning the pages of a book, not stopping until he reached the back cover. When he got there, he flipped the book aside and began to “look” at another in like fashion. Meanwhile, the other boy, Nasir had not left his spot on the floor. I entered the book area with “Hi, Friends!” No response. I tried another tack: “Nasir, you don’t look very happy!” Nasir turned toward me and exploded, “I wanta go to blocks!” “Me, too,” joined TyShawn. “Well, I guess

that center was all filled. Was book center the only one left?" I ventured. "Yah, but I wanted blocks!" Nasir repeated.

"How about if I read to you?" I asked. TyShawn left his chair and began to find a place at my side. "No good books here!" interjected Nasir. I then proceeded to offer several available and well-known children's books that were displayed readily in the classroom book center. "No!" He adamantly replied to each choice I offered. I was about to give up and leave Nasir to what might have been his own rocky fate that day (in his classroom, one consequence of continued, inappropriate behavior was a period in time-out; here, that would mean losing free playtime), when I remembered that I had a new animal book in my bag. It was an informational text with excellent, vivid photographs, compiled and edited by a well-known adult nature and wildlife magazine.

I pulled it out and saw a glimmer of response from Nasir. Choosing not to make an offer of oral reading, I simply stated, "I just got this book and I've been wanting to look at it. Why don't I put it over here on the table [a low coffee table in the middle of the book center] so you and TyShawn can look at it, too. I mean, uh, if you want to!"

Here's what happened:

Nasir: O-o-o-o-o, I see a rainbow, and a chicken, and a monkey, and a squirrel, and uh, uh, uh, fox!

Virginia: [I attempt to dispel his bad mood] O-o-o-o! Ex-cel-lent, Nasir! Your eyes are seeing a lot!

Nasir: There's a sheep and oh, there's a cheetah. Cheetahs eat bears, yeah, cheetahs ate bears.

Virginia: Do they really?

Nasir: Yeah, they run fast to catch them. They run really fast. What are these?

Virginia: Those are called aardvarks.

Nasir: They eat ants? They dig with their claws?

Virginia: They sure do. They dig those ol' ants right out of the ground.

Nasir: What's this?

Virginia: A bird called an albatross. What's it doing?

Nasir: It's feedin' a baby uh, uh, uh . . . Yeah, this a Mommy bird. Is this the Daddy bird?

Nasir: Yes, I think so.

Nasir: What's this?

Virginia: Oh, I think that's a different kind of bird that's also fishing. See the fish in his beak? A bird's mouth is called [a] *beak*. [I point to a different photograph] What do you think this mama is doing with this baby?

Nasir: Uh, givin' he some worms! [I turn the page] There's alligator, crocodile! Crocodile!

I was amazed at Nasir's willingness to talk about the book and even more amazed that even after his "funk," he was engaged strongly enough to ask questions and formulate responses to my own.

As TyShawn continued to watch and listen, I decided that I would leave and observe whether TyShawn would be comfortable enough to communicate verbally with Nasir. I suggested to Nasir that he could talk with TyShawn about the book, as "I had to go to my office." I told him that he and TyShawn could "keep the book during center time." I left both boys pouring over the book. From my vantage point, it appeared that TyShawn had tentatively entered into a dialogue with Nasir, as I could see both of them talking and pointing at various photographs. I could not wait to share these interactions with the boys' teacher after school.

Reflection: Meet Malik

A few days after my encounter with Nasir and TyShawn, I sensed someone standing in the open doorway of my office. I turned from my computer screen to find Malik, a second grader and former 4–K student, grinning. “Hi, Malik! It’s good to see you!” Malik responded in like manner adding that he had just “stopped for a little while.” I noticed he was carrying library books and asked if he had just chosen them or if he was returning them. Both of the books were non-fiction—one was about fresh and saltwater fish and the other, about piranhas. “Good stuff, huh, Malik?” I asked. What followed was my second “book surprise” of the week. Remembering Nasir’s and TyShawn’s reaction to the non-fiction book they shared, I began to question Malik.

Virginia: Malik, I know you can’t stay long, ‘cause we don’t want your teacher to worry, right? But, do you usually choose books about real stuff?

Malik: [Smiling proudly] Yah, it’s non-fiction!

Virginia: Wow! You’ve learned a lot about books since 4–K!

Malik: Uh-huh.

Virginia: Can you tell me what you like about non-fiction books?

Malik: Um . . . uh. . . [Malik stuffs one book under his arm and opens the other]. This! [Malik points to a list of vocabulary words at the beginning of one of the book chapters]

Virginia: Is there a list like that at the beginning of each chapter?

Malik: Uh-huh.

Virginia: H-m-m-m, those are vocabulary words, right? [Malik nods affirmatively]. Why do you like to see vocabulary words before you read the chapter?

Malik: Well, uh, uh, you can see where you’re goin’!

Malik makes a critical point: Children become more competent, facile speakers and readers when their knowledge of language and their natural inclination to search for information lets them “see where they’re goin’.” It appeared that Malik, despite his initial poor literacy acquisition prognosis when he was accepted into the school district’s 4–K program, was now engaged as an active, responsive, and thoughtful reader. Malik’s engagement with expository text and my experience with TyShawn and Nasir made me reflect upon and wonder about the critical factors to consider, were I to formulate a connection between low SES African American boys and their language (home and school), book preferences, and the way we teach them.

Chapter III: Methodology

Introduction

For the past 13 years, I have had the distinct privilege of supporting the language development of two-, three-, and four-year-old children. I see the children and their caregivers twice a week, in 30-minute sessions. To encourage and enhance the children's language development, we engage in play and book sharing. I model language stimulation techniques and dialogic reading for the caregivers and we talk about the role they play in teaching their children. Typically, I serve families for two school years, although there have been families that received needs-based services for an additional year. I provide my services to 12 families per year.

The caregivers in the families I work with all have a low SES; more than 50% of them are African American. Most of the households are single parent and the majority live in subsidized government housing units; a few live in mobile homes. They all want the best for their children. They are all committed to a rigorous visitation schedule and they are all willing to accept my advice about how to best support their children's emerging cognitive and social skills.

My role with the caregivers is that of a parent educator; all of the caregivers, however, invariably label me as their child's teacher. Although I inform them of their power and their potential control to shape the academic destiny of their children, they do not see themselves as the target of the intervention program they are enrolled in. I attempt to persuade the caretakers to foster the language skills, vocabulary, and emerging

literacy awareness—both print and phonological—that will meet the increasingly stringent and accelerated demands of school. Sadly, many of the low SES African American boys in my program do not subsequently fare well in school. To find out why, I conducted this qualitative study.

I chose qualitative research because I wanted to tell the story of what I learned from spending time with and reflecting upon my experiences with three preschool boys. I chose action research because, first, I saw myself as a teacher researcher interested in how I taught and how students learned (Mills, 2003). Second, action research would also allow me to fulfill my goal of “gaining insight, developing reflective practice, effecting positive changes in the school environment [and on educational practices in general], and improving student outcomes and the lives of those involved” (Mills, 2003, p. 5).

Action Research

Lewin (1946) was a psychologist who, like Vygotsky, was interested in the capacity of human beings to support each other’s learning. He conceived the idea of action research and described it as “a spiral of steps, each of which is composed of a circle of planning, action, and fact-finding about the result of the action” (p. 16). He devised a model that reflected a spiral shape that he believed epitomized what might become an ongoing cycle of change and revision that might well occur during action research. Mills (2003) later described this as “planning, execution, and reconnaissance” (p. 15); he agreed with Lewin, that the implementation of an action research plan is a cyclical process.

Corey (1949) was a contemporary of Lewin's and championed the validity of action research. In a comparison with traditional academic research, he made a definitive statement about the often-changing conditions of an action research inquiry:

In a program of action research, it is impossible to know definitely in advance the exact nature of the inquiry that will develop. If initial designs, important as they are for action research, are treated with too much respect, the investigators may not be sufficiently sensitive to their developing irrelevance to the ongoing situation. (p. 519)

In recent years, several authors have added their interpretations and terminologies to Lewin's model (Calhoun, 1994; Creswell, 2002; Sagor, 2000; Stringer, 1996). For example, Wells (1994) called the action research's cycle of inquiry the *Idealized Model of the Action Research Cycle* (p. 27). He labeled the steps as "observing, interpreting, planning change, and acting" (p. 27). As a result of the implementation of these sequential, cyclical steps, "the practitioner's personal theory" (p. 27) informed and was informed by this research process.

Sampling Strategies

Site

I conducted my research in a suburban school in the Low Country of South Carolina. At the time of the study, the school was more than thirty years old and had been recognized for its excellence within its school district and within the state education department. The school qualified for Title I status, as over 53% of the student population was eligible for free or reduced lunch. The population was 67% European American and 27% African American. Six percent of the students self-identified as Latino, Asian, or Other. The percentage of African American students was historically stable.

Students lived in diverse neighborhoods, which consisted of three large subsidized housing units (two were large apartment buildings and one was all duplexes), several apartment complexes of varying sizes, townhouses, two mobile home parks, and two single-dwelling neighborhoods. One of the single-dwelling neighborhoods consisted of small, densely spaced houses. Initially, most of the children who lived in the houses in the first neighborhood were traditional, working-class European Americans. This changed gradually to a racially mixed demographic. This trend continued, as more African Americans took advantage of an increasing number of currently available, affordable rental homes. The second neighborhood was a subdivision with appreciably larger homes and a community swimming pool for its residents. This neighborhood reflected middle-class incomes and was almost exclusively European American. This area was immediately adjacent to the school and had remained demographically stable for the duration of the school's history.

My office was located within the school, where they considered me a faculty member. When I was physically in the community, conducting home visits with children and their caregivers, I reported to and returned to the school daily. I chose to conduct research at this site primarily because it offered accessibility to the preschool children who were the subject of my study.

The school district, site administration, the four-year-old kindergarten (4-K) teacher, and the 4-K mothers served as gatekeepers to accessing these children (Glesne, 2006). Glesne defined gatekeepers as the person or persons who must grant permission for research and with whom the researcher must negotiate its parameters. I anticipated that it would be relatively easy for me to get permission to conduct research at the school,

as I had a professional and personal relationship with the school's 4–K teacher. In addition, both the school district and the school site administration respected my program. In early September, I discussed my study with all the gatekeepers. The classroom teacher and the school principal granted their permission immediately. I sent the required paperwork to school district personnel and, although I had verbal approval, there was a delay with the written consent. Because of this, the study did not begin until the second week of November.

Although I was disappointed by the delay in my schedule, I used this waiting period as an opportunity to observe and to get to know the children in the 4–K classroom. I assumed the role of a participant observer and I was present in the classroom every day when the children arrived. This role gave me time to build and share language experiences with the children, especially with those I anticipated might be participants in my study. By doing this, I became a familiar, friendly, interactional classroom figure that the children came to know well and, in many cases, seek out. Thus, the delay became a means for me to gain insider status within the culture of the classroom.

Participants

Hatch (1995) argued that participant selection can “grow out of different assumptions and serve different ends” (p. 126). I based my selection of study participants on homogeneous sampling of low-income African American preschool boys. Earlier experience shaped my assumption that this specific group often did not readily communicate with teachers in a classroom setting. I hoped that my selection of participants would serve to strengthen or refute some of the ideas I had about these boys and their language use in class.

I selected the boys from my school district's four-year-old kindergarten program, the district had established exclusively for academically and economically challenged children. All children accepted into this program met the criteria on the *Developmental Indicators for the Assessment of Learning, 4th edition*, commonly referred to as the *Dial-4* (Mardell & Goldenberg, 2011) and a formative socioeconomic survey provided by the school district. Because I was in the building each morning, I selected participants exclusively from the morning session. In one instance, I sought permission for study involvement in person as this boy's mother walked him to his classroom each morning. I approached her outside the classroom, explained the study and, subsequently, we walked to my office where she read and signed the permission papers. For the other two boys, I sent an explanatory letter and permission papers home in their daily communication folder; the boys returned the signed letters the next day.

I studied the effect of my intervention on these three boys. We met for 30 minutes each week, which was the maximum that I could accommodate, given my work schedule. I agreed to make up the school time I spent conducting the research by staying late each day the boys and I met. Relative to research protocol, the large number of subjects often seen in quantitative research is an attempt to represent a larger population so that results may be generalized (Bernard, 2000). My study followed the qualitative research tradition. Within this type of research, the perspectives of participants are not meant to generalize to larger populations. Rather, Hatch (1995) explained that,

Contexts are carefully described so that readers can make their own judgments concerning the importance of applying the understandings gained in the study to contexts they know about; [and] there are no extraneous variables—any element that is perceived to be important by participants *is* important. (p. 126)

Data Collection Techniques

Bernard (2000) maintained that [research] participants who are unable or unwilling to act naturally during observational periods do not make good participants. Accordingly, it was important for me to establish an atmosphere of trust and rapport to ensure that the participants and I acted as co-constructors of emerging data (Spradley, 1980). Because my research was delayed, I was able to spend informal time talking with the children during my early morning visits, answering questions and helping with personal needs, such as tying shoes or helping the children manage and put away their book bags.

When I was ready to begin our sessions, I gave each boy a special invitation to come to my office and “look at books.” While they were there, I encouraged conversations concerning any book they chose and I made every attempt to help them understand that their questions and comments were welcome.

Following their introduction to a new learning environment, the boys came to my office for one-on-one 30-minute sessions, for 14 weeks. The sessions took place on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays. Not only did these days fit my schedule, they were also days that often exhibited less absenteeism. I used Mondays and Fridays for make-up sessions.

Initially, I told the boys that they could choose a book from one of two tubs. One of the tubs contained picture books and the other, informational texts. Both tubs contained no fewer than ten books. The books varied week-to-week, which helped me understand the boys’ genre preference and their spontaneous language responses to fiction versus non-fiction. I recorded each of our sessions using a small tape recorder and

transcribed the tapes verbatim. I detail these sessions in chapters IV, V, and VI, using the patterns from the data.

I also took field notes as soon as the boys returned to their classroom. I did this so I would not forget nonverbal communication indicators such as gestures, facial expressions, and book handling behaviors. I expanded these notes at the end of the day, recorded anecdotal information, and made summaries of the session that included any teacher input that I had gathered. I then entered this information at the end of each transcription, along with my journal entries. Finally, as an indicator of book interest, the boys' teacher and teaching assistant kept a record of the boys' free activity choices. This served to record the number of times the boys voluntarily chose the book center during periods of free play that their teacher scheduled daily in their classroom.

Data Analysis

My sessions with the boys ended in April. To capture specifically what we said and did during our sessions, I developed a coding system. To do this, I studied our discourses and our behaviors and I identified nine broad categories:

- A. Child Behavior
- B. Child Discourse
- C. Teacher Discourse
- D. Standard English
- E. Illustration/Photograph Interpretation
- F. Inference
- G. Schema Connection

H. Concepts of Print

I. Alphabetic Principle

I identified subcategories within these nine categories and labeled them numerically. For example, there were 10 subcategories within Child Behavior (Category A):

1. Changes discussion topic to related topic
2. Changes to unrelated topic
3. Asks to repeat previous texts
4. Shows initiative/confidence
5. Verbally indicates he does not know answer
6. Expresses frustration
7. Displays humor
8. Smiles/laughs to express pleasure
9. Changes intonation
10. Disagrees with or corrects teacher

In some cases, I identified what I referred to as variations within subcategories. I labeled these with lower case letters. To illustrate, subcategory number 9 (changes intonation) contained three variations: (a) excitement, (b) confidence, and (c) irritation. When completed, the coding key contained nine categories with their accompanying subcategories and variations:

- A. Child Behavior (9 subcategories, 12 variations)
- B. Child Discourse (13 subcategories, 13 variations)
- C. Teacher Discourse (18 subcategories, 12 variations)

- D. Use of Standard English (8 subcategories)
- E. Illustration and Photograph Interpretation (7 subcategories)
- F. Inferences (4 subcategories)
- G. Schema Connections (5 subcategories, 2 variations)
- H. Concepts of Print/Reading (11 subcategories, 8 variations)
- I. Alphabetic Principle (7 subcategories)

For example, I labeled *Teacher Discourse* with a *C*. I labeled this category's first subcategory, *Repeats child utterance, 1*. This subcategory contained two variations that determined why I repeated the utterance: (a) *as an affirmation*, or (b) *to model academic language*. Implementing these codes, I used the label *C1a* if I repeated a child's utterance to verify his knowledge or to indicate that I understood his or her explanation. At other times, I used the label, *C1b*, to indicate that the repetition served to model or reinforce academic language. I used this procedure to code all child and teacher utterances and behaviors in the transcripts (for excerpt, see Figure 3.1; for complete coding key, see Appendix A).

A: Child Behavior	B: Child Discourse	C: Teacher Discourse
1. Changes discussion topic to related topic	1. Convention of turn-taking	1. Repeats child utterance
2. Changes to unrelated topic	2. Makes eye contact with speaker	a. affirmation
3. Asks to repeat previous texts	3. Verbal responses	b. model Academic language
4. Initiative/Confidence	a. Yes/no	2. Expand child utter.
a. Self-directed page turning	b. Single word	3. Explanations
b. Requests book not in selection offering	c. More than 1 word	a. text
c. Asks/chooses to read book himself	d. Complete sentence	b. illus./Photo
d. Asks question	4. Use of new vocab introduced by teacher	c. other
e. Asks wh question	5. Use of teacher's words/explanation(s)/intona. personal expressions	4. Shares personal experience: relevance
f. Makes request as imperative	6. Use of gesture to replace speech	5. Affirm child's knowledge
g. Shares personal information	a. Affirm with nod	6. Affirm child's experience
5. Indicates he does not know	b. Negate with head shake	7. Asks questions
a. Verbally	c. pointing	a. For information
b. By gesture	d. Iconic replacing language	b. For clarification
6. Expresses frustration	7. Spontaneous speech	c. As affirmation
7. Displays humor		d. To understand speech (artic.)

Figure 3.1. Excerpt from coding key that tracked child and teacher utterance and behavior.

I also devised a data analysis spreadsheet (for excerpt, see Figure 3.2; for complete tally sheet, see Appendix B.). I accompanied each transcript with a copy of this spreadsheet and I used it after coding to record the number of times a behavior occurred in a session. The spreadsheet had cells allocated for all 116 letter/number combinations used in coding. I placed tally marks in the appropriate cells to indicate the number of times the behavior occurred in the transcript.

Session Tally Sheet (Behaviors)

Name: _____										Book: _____									
Date: _____																			
A	A1	A2	A3	A4a	A4b	A4c	A4d	A4e	A4f	A4g	A5a	A5b	A6	A7	A8	A9a	A9b	A10	
B	B1	B2	B3a	B3b	B3c	B3d	B4	B5	B6a	B6b	B6c	B6d	B7a	B7b	B7c	B7d	B8	B9	
B10	B11	B12																	
C	C1a	C1b	C2	C3a	C3b	C3c	C3d	C4	C5	C6	C7	C8	C9	C10a	10b	C11	C12	C13	
C14	C15	C16	C17	C18															

Figure 3.2. Excerpt from spreadsheet that accompanied each transcript I used after coding to record the number of times a behavior occurred in a session.

After seven weeks, I totaled all subcategory entries in each data analysis spreadsheet for each boy. I then combined these totals to create grand totals that reflected the number of times a behavior occurred during the first half of the study (sessions 1-7). I compiled the same information for the second half of the study (sessions 8-14). I compared the totals to determine if behaviors within categories and subcategories increased, decreased, or remained the same over time (for excerpt, see Figure 3.3; for complete Behavior Tally Total sheet, see Appendix C).

Behavior Tally Total																	
Week	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	T	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	T	I/D
A1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	15	8	1	2	0	9	8	43	I
A2	0	0	0	3	0	1	0	4	6	7	0	1	4	27	20	65	I
A3	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	D
A4a	5	5	7	18	9	7	5	56	15	3	1	5	29	3	3	59	n/a

Figure 3.3. Excerpt from spreadsheet that captured behavior patterns of all boys over 14 weeks of the study.

I created color-coded labels that designated an increase (pink), decrease (green), or no change (yellow) in the behavior represented by each subcategory and variant. I then arranged these labels on a large laminated poster board divided into the major behavioral categories that emerged during the study. I applied a flexible adhesive on the back of each of these labels so I could manipulate across what became a flow chart. As I noted increases and decreases in behaviors and those that remained static, the location and directionality (flow) of labels began to reveal connections between the children's behaviors and mine. By noting these connections, I was able to recognize patterns and trends that developed over time (see Figure 3.4).

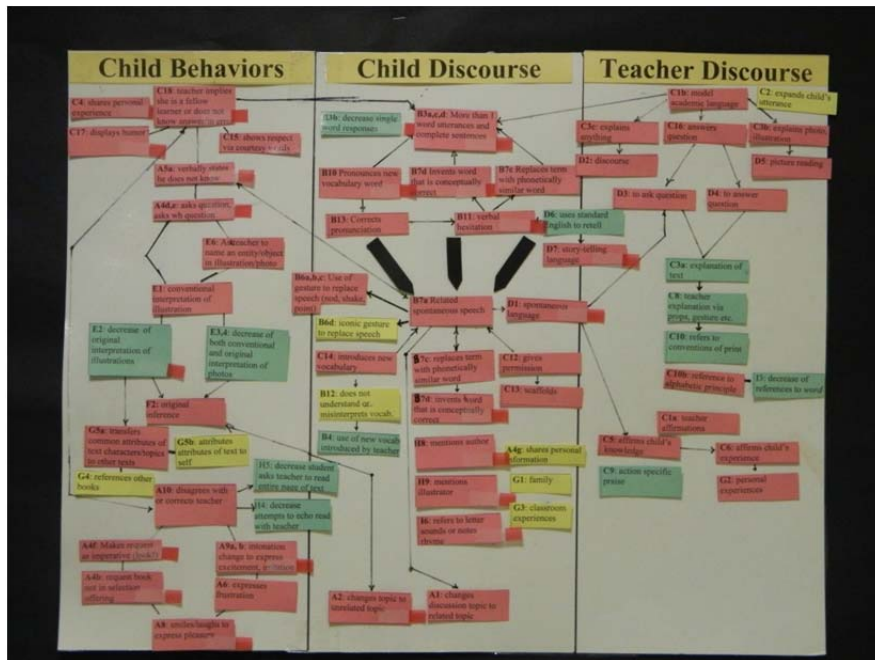


Figure 3.4. Flowchart that revealed a connection between the children's behavior and mine.

The analysis of the patterns involved interpretation and borrowed from a paradigm of the human sciences, *Verstehen*, a German term that means *understanding* (Schwandt, 2007, p. 160). One facet of *Verstehen* presumes that the meaning of human action is inherent in that action and it is the responsibility of the researcher to discover what that meaning

might be. This was one of the reasons that my data categories included many subcategories. These subcategories often represented slight, but potentially important variations in language or behavior. For example, as noted in the coding example, four variants described the purpose of a question: information, clarification, affirmation, and to request the repetition of an utterance.

Through these detailed subcategories and variations, I began to tease out patterns. I approached this task influenced by Wolcott's (1994) idea that meaningful interpretation occurred when the researcher "transcends factual data and cautious analysis and begins to probe into what is to be made of them" (p. 36). The process leading to such understanding included the use of theory as a framework and the use of my own personal experiences as a student, parent, and teacher to connect, compare, and contrast my actions as a teacher with those of the student participants (Wolcott, 1994).

To ensure accurate coding designation, I had my coding key (see Appendix A) present at all times and consulted it frequently to check for accuracy. Its content, as suggested by Ryan and Bernard (2000), included a detailed description of each code and the criteria for both the inclusion and exclusion of data to categories or themes. There were also examples of real text that exemplified each one. For instance, my utterance "It's okay to say 'I don't know.' But it's also okay to take a guess!" exemplified code *C12* (category: *Teacher Discourse*, subcategory: *Gives permission*; see Appendix A).

Further, amid the various rounds of coding, I wrote analytic notes and reflective thoughts, described by Glaser and Strauss (1967) as memos. Glesne (2006) maintained that analytic noting is a type of data analysis that one should conduct throughout the research process. In addition, she suggested that its contributions "range from problem

identification, to question development, to understanding the patterns and themes in your work” (p. 59). As Glesne (2006) suggested, the memos raised questions and noted behaviors that gave rise to what I eventually understood were patterns that developed over the course of the study.

I used negative case analysis to control subjectivity. In forming hypotheses, I held strong feelings about the importance and usefulness of what I construed as reality, in respect to my theoretical orientation and pedagogical practices. Accordingly, I purposefully sought out and reflected upon instances in which information from the data appeared to contradict emerging patterns or explanations. When I used this strategy, I found that existing patterns required revision and additional input. Sometimes, I had to discredit hypotheses.

For example, two of the children in the study began to interpret illustrations originally; this pattern continued. I surmised that this might be due to the widely variable illustrative styles found in picture books, as all of the non-fiction books the children and I used contained color photographs. I surmised that these photographs provided a visual reality that would help children consistently and accurately construct conventional interpretations of their content. I continued to observe one child’s conventional interpretation of photographs and speculated that this was an emerging pattern. Then, in one session, this child and I encountered a photograph of a fruit bat next to a tiny, oblong object that the child stated he thought was a “grape.” When we consulted the text, both of us were surprised to find that the photograph was of a mother bat and her newborn. I initially thought that this occurrence was an outlier, but as the study continued, this child and another classmate made several other original interpretations. When it became

apparent that the children were not consistently interpreting the photographs conventionally, I discredited what initially seemed to be a typical behavioral pattern. When I was confident about the patterns I had identified in the data, I wrote data-based portraits for each of the three boys in the study (see Chapters IV, V, and VI). In the portraits, I used particularly rich descriptions from selected sessions that represented the patterns I had identified in the data I collected about the boys. I next revisited the data and identified patterns across the boys' and my own behavior. Finally, after visiting the boys' classroom and talking with their teachers, I revisited the data a third time to identify characteristics that distinguished the context I created from the context of their classroom (see Chapter VII).

Ethics and Validity

Ethics

Permission and informed consent. As required, I submitted this study for review to the Internal Review Board at the University of South Carolina. I submitted confirmation of approval and a copy of this proposal to my school district, as both of these documents were required to gain permission for research. Upon approval, a telephone call, note, or direct contact informed the participants' caregivers of the study and of my interest in observing, talking with, and recording their children during one-on-one sessions in my office.

All of the contact methods served to explain the scope and sequence of the study. I explained to the caregivers that their consent was voluntary and that they could withdraw their child from the study at any time. If the caregiver gave permission, I obtained informed consent via a letter, which gave full details of the study, including its

purpose/parameters; the letter also reiterated the participants' voluntary status and their right to withdraw. Caregivers were also required to sign a generic consent letter provided by the school district. I did not begin my research until the caregivers signed and returned the letters. When I received the letters, I placed them in a designated folder and kept them in a secure location in my home office. I kept copies in a locked file in my school office. I used pseudonyms for all participants.

Data

I was responsible for transcribing the audio recordings, which I did in my home. Whenever possible, as a preventive measure against loss or mislabeling, I transcribed the data on the same day as I recorded it. I did this to ensure that I recalled and included in the transcript any details, such as gestures, facial expressions, and body posture that could not be captured on a tape recorder. In addition, I wrote memos in bold print at the end of many transcriptions, for easy identification. I used the memos as a visual reminder that the transcription contained a phenomenon or something that I found particularly noteworthy. I kept the transcripts in a personal laptop computer that was password protected and made hard copies of each one and stored them all in three binders, designated by the three participant's pseudonyms. Each binder contained all transcripts and anecdotal records pertaining to both participant and his caregiver. I stored the binders in my home office. I also carried a binder with field notes between school and home, daily.

Benefit/Harm to Participants

I viewed this study as potentially beneficial to its participants. Once weekly, I provided the boys with one-on-one literacy support and instruction. During their sessions, I helped them expand their language. I engaged them in conversations surrounding text content and/or pictures that modeled the school discourse. I encouraged questions that elicited explanations that increased their knowledge and understanding. I helped their pragmatic development by “teaching” conversational turn taking, which is a critical component of communicative interaction. I also addressed social amenities, such as greetings and eye contact. Ideally, these experiences fostered positive perceptions of oral interaction and books.

Although the participants were with me (and, thus, absent from their classrooms) for approximately 30 minutes each week, it is important to note that they were not missing any explicit classroom instruction. The session times corresponded to class time that their teacher dedicated to housekeeping concerns, such as unpacking book bags, taking down chairs, putting folders away, and hanging up outerwear. After these tasks were completed, the children viewed a daily school-produced television program that consisted of announcements and student reminders that were often not applicable to 4–K students. The broadcast concluded with a school-wide recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance.

I went to the classroom to get each child as soon as they completed their housekeeping tasks. I returned them when the television program was ending, before formal instruction resumed. Because of this schedule, they did not miss anything of consequence.

Validity

Maxwell (1992, 2005) argued that validity has long been a key issue in debates over the legitimacy of qualitative research. He warned that “if qualitative studies cannot consistently produce valid results, then policies, programs, or predictions based on these studies cannot be relied on” (p. 279). Influencing both personal and professional domains, the validity of a study has implications and ramifications that have the potential to do good or harm. Because of this, it was important to understand clearly what, according to various disciplinary and professional standards, aspects and characteristics of qualitative investigation signified valid research.

Creswell (2003) suggested that what he termed *validation* consisted of eight strategies, each critical in the evaluation of a research project’s validity. He identified these eight procedures used to verify findings as (a) prolonged engagement with persistent observation; (b) triangulation; (c) peer review or debriefing; (d) negative case analysis; (e) clarifying (critical reflexivity, Creswell, 1998); (f) member checking; (g) rich, thick description; and (h) external audits. Creswell advised that researchers should use at least two of these procedures in any qualitative study.

Of these procedures, rich, thick description, triangulation, peer review/debriefing, negative case analysis, and clarifying served as constructs for the validity of my investigation. First, as an overall application to my study, I used rich, thick description in the form of detailed narrative. I constructed this description to produce images that would make my domain, concerns, successes, and failures plausible and real to my intended audience, which was other educators. Malterud (2001) noted that when this type of in-depth reporting graphically depicts both the participants and context of a study,

readers are able to make connections and applications to their own situations. Thus, if one conducts research with the intent to support colleagues and contribute to the knowledge base of one's discipline, this practice has potentially significant implications.

Second, triangulation offered the opportunity to member check the transfer or generalization of the research phenomenon of interest to differing contexts. On several occasions, I asked the participants' classroom teacher and teaching assistant to describe participants' behavior within their classroom during various activities. The teacher also made me privy to the children's educational history. I relied on her perspective because she was African American and, for this reason, was culturally connected with my participants.

Third, peer review/debriefing offered a reality check for the research data. Merriam (1998) posited that qualitative research assumed that reality "is holistic, multidimensional, and ever-changing; it is not a single, fixed, objective phenomenon waiting to be discovered, observed, and measured as in quantitative research" (p. 202). Further, Lincoln and Guba (1985) defined reality as "a multiple set of mental constructions . . . made by humans" (p. 295). Because each human has the potential to construct reality in differing ways, I thought it was important to share data with other early childhood educators to glean their perspectives, insights, and suggestions. As in the use of triangulation in the study, it was of particular importance to collaborate and share with African American teachers or those who were experienced in teaching African American children. In addition to the participants' classroom teacher, I also consulted another experienced 4-K African American teacher at another school site within the school district.

Fourth, negative case analysis confronts data that differs from a researcher's expectations, assumptions or working theories (Miles & Huberman, 1994). First, it became apparent that contrary to several studies that detailed African American boys' preference for non-fiction texts, two of the three boys in this study consistently chose to interact with fictional picture books. Perhaps more importantly, another expectation in this study assumed that text genre would make a difference in the amount of spontaneous language produced by the participants. The data, however, revealed that text genre did not seem to influence language production as my initial speculation theorized. Rather, patterns emerged that indicated it was teacher behaviors that influenced the increase in the participants' spontaneous language and questions. Finally, despite the negative evidence of poor language skills gleaned from professional assessments, the data provided numerous examples of the study participants' facile and adroit use of both Standard English and novel vocabulary. Agar (1986) referred to such contradictory data as the constant comparison procedure.

Finally, Creswell (2003) explained that from the outset of a study, a researcher's bias is an important disclosure, acting as a foundational support in helping the reader understand her position, bias, or any assumptions that may affect a study. I addressed this idea in the Preface and used a personal communication to illustrate how my beliefs concerning the language competence of the four-year-old children I served had evolved and changed.

Chapter IV: Portrait One—Terrell

Introduction

Terrell was a happy child with a perpetual smile and boundless energy (his teachers and I secretly referred to him as “Little Greased Lightning” because of the rapid-fire way he tackled and completed activities). Terrell was from a nuclear, biracial family—his mother was European American and his father was African American. I had met his father a year earlier when I talked to him about enrolling Terrell in my home visitation program. He agreed at the time, but later called to tell me that Terrell had been accepted into a Head Start program (Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act, 2007).

The first day of school, I stood at the classroom door and helped children find and post their nametags. The teacher had already explained and modeled this practice during mandatory orientation meetings, so the children knew what to expect for the first task of the day. After saying goodbye to his older brother with a hug and a “See ya later!” Terrell entered the classroom. Remembering what he needed to do, he stepped up to the table and began searching for his nametag. The teachers had laid out all 20 nametags on a small table just inside the door of his classroom. Terrell could not seem to find his so I stepped in to help; he accepted my help gladly. I don’t know if he had trouble with his tag because he did not recognize his name in writing or if it was difficult for him to find it among the 19 others that belonged to his classmates. For the first few days of school, I watched for his arrival and helped him with this task. It only took a few days for him to

identify his name easily and even less time before he was telling me about whatever caught his interest. For example, during the second week of school, he came rushing into the room and told me about some “bad boys” who were “wunning” [running] down the hall.” The following Monday, he was eager to relate what he did with his brother over the weekend. He then told me he was very happy because his older brother allowed him to be his partner in a video game. He also related that he “yiked [liked] his b-b-brother.” It was apparent that Terrell made some developmental articulation errors. Some, like his substitution of *w* for *r* and *y* for *l*, were easy to detect, but he had many more letter sound substitutions and deletions that were not. What proved to be a significant, recurrent stutter complicated these errors. This combination made it very hard for me to understand much of Terrell’s oral language.

When I could not understand Terrell, I would just smile and nod my head. At the time, this did not bother him; he appeared satisfied that I was a listener, but not a commentator. He invariably approached me happy, energetic, and talkative. He was also extremely social and sought out classmates to engage in conversation. Unfortunately, the other children were usually unresponsive to Terrell or changed the topic. On one occasion, Terrell approached one of his classmates, Martez, and said, “I-I-I [undecipherable] my [book] bag an—[undecipherable]. For some reason, Martez said, “My daddy bought me a snow cone.” Perhaps, like me, Terrell’s classmates did not understand him or maybe they just didn’t have the language skills necessary to maintain a dialogue.

When all was in place for my study to begin, I sought input from Terrell’s teacher. She commented on what a “cute” child he was, but lamented that she understood

almost nothing he said. She also found him “distractible” and “impulsive.” She said that, although she thought he was “smart,” it would be difficult to predict his progress, as he had a “hard time paying attention.”

Highlights of Session One

During our first session, Terrell was eager to hear himself on tape. He would not open his selected text without permission; he interpreted illustrations originally, and exhibited his understanding of Standard English syntax.

Terrell and I had our first session just a day after the school district gave me permission to begin my research. As we walked down the hall hand-in-hand (Terrell’s idea) on our way to my office where we held our sessions, Terrell chatted about what he saw in the hallways; however, I did not understand most of what he said. To make the situation more difficult, older children were coming from breakfast and morning announcements were being broadcast school-wide, making it even harder to hear Terrell. When we arrived at my office, Terrell stopped talking and gazed at the many games, toys, puppets, books, and supplies on the open shelves that completely covered one of my walls. He did not comment or ask to play with them. After a few moments, I told Terrell that my office was “where I work when I am at school” and that this was where we would read together. I previously prepared Terrell for our “meetings” by explaining that we would look at and read books. Today I added, “You can always choose your own book when you come here.”

I then pointed to two plastic tubs on the floor and explained to Terrell that one tub contained books with pretend stories (fiction) and that the other contained books about real things (non-fiction). I told him that most of the non-fiction books were about

animals. I encouraged Terrell to take some time and look through both tubs. While I positioned myself on the floor in front of a tape recorder, he strode over to the tubs and gave them a cursory glance, then pointed to another bookshelf next to my desk. This shelf held some of my personal books. I had angled them so their front covers were visible and had paired many of them with a stuffed toy or puppet that represented their main character. I said, “Sure, Terrell. Remember, I said you could always choose.” He did not take long to make his selection, which he carefully took from the shelf. The book’s front cover featured a silly-looking fox and a stern-looking mother duck, surrounded by six ducklings.

After Terrell chose his book, I patted the floor next to me, indicating that he should come sit next to me. He promptly sat down criss-cross applesauce (his teacher’s term for sitting cross-legged on the floor and his required position whenever he and his classmates sat on their community rug). I explained that when we were together in my office, I wanted to “catch all his words because they were important” and I wanted to remember them. I showed him the tape recorder and microphone and I told him that if we pressed the green and blue buttons at the same time, the recorder would catch all of our words and let us listen to them. Then I turned on the recorder and said, “Testing, testing, one, two, three. My name is Mrs. Miller” and then replayed it for him to hear. Terrell smiled broadly.

When I asked him if he would like to use the tape recorder, Terrell eagerly took the microphone. Repeating my words, but adding his name, he said, “Testing, testing, one, two, three, my name is Terrell.” When I replayed the tape, his huge eyes got even bigger and his face glowed with a look of wonder. “Wanna do it again?” I asked. He

nodded his head vigorously and grinned, ear-to-ear. After Terrell experimented two more times, I told him that we would do this every time we met. I said that, “We want to make sure the recorder is catching all your words. Words are important!” Eventually, Terrell told me he “could do it.” After that, it became his job to make sure the recorder was “ready to roll!” He knew exactly how to play, record, and stop it. To my great amusement, he also put the microphone in front of him so he could “make sure it hear[s] me.”

After Terrell’s initial introduction to the tape recorder, we were ready to begin. I waited for him to share his chosen book or to ask me to read it to him. He did neither. After several seconds I said, “Okay. Let’s look at the book. You go right ahead!” Terrell’s book choice was *Do Like a Duck Does* (Hindley, 2002). It was about a fox who wanted to eat a smart mama duck’s children. To get to the ducklings, the fox tried to convince Mama that he was also a duck.

The first page of the book that had text showed the fox on a bridge that led to the duck family’s pond. When Terrell saw this illustration, he exclaimed, “Fox!” I answered, “Yes, that is a fox. Can you tell what the fox is walking on?” Terrell’s reply: “Bridge.” He then added “Yah, b-b-but, uh, [undecipherable] anda, anda, uh, s-s-spider bridge.” When Terrell said “Yah, but,” I thought he might be expressing a perspective that differed from the illustration. This was frustrating—how was I to appreciate Terrell’s view of the world if I couldn’t understand what he was trying to communicate? What did he mean by *spider bridge*? To me, the term was unique—I could only guess what it represented in his imagination and what connection it made for him to another book or experience.

Terrell then counted the ducklings that were swimming in the pond with Mama duck. “One, two, three, four, five. Uh, one, two, three, four, five, six!” I was impressed with his correct usage of one-on-one correspondence, as many of his classmates had not yet mastered this skill. When he finished, he looked up at me. Because he was with a teacher, I thought that perhaps he was unsure if he had permission to turn the pages at his discretion; to grant that action, I said, “Whenever you’re ready, turn the page.” Terrell hesitated and again looked at me. To reassure him that he had permission, I added an imperative and said, “Okay? Ready? You turn the page!” He did so immediately and exclaimed, “Fox! At this point, I suggested that we might “read some of the words” to find out what the fox was doing. This is an excerpt from that session (in the story, the fox is speaking and is trying to convince the mother duck that he is a duck and that he belongs with her family).

Virginia: [Reading] That’s just what I am, a big, brown duck!

[Illustration shows the fox winking]

Virginia: [Talking] Oh! Is he a big brown duck? Is he, Terrell?

Terrell: [No response]

Terrell: Take a nap

Virginia: See his eye? He’s not asleep. Sometimes when people try to fool each other, they wink [I demonstrate]. That’s what the fox is doing. He’s winking. Do you think he’s telling the truth?

Terrell: [No response]

Virginia: No! He’s trying to fool Mama, isn’t he?

Terrell: [No response]

Virginia: Isn’t he trying to fool Mama?

Terrell: [No response]

We looked at two or three more pages; neither of us made any more comments. Finally, an illustration showed the fox attempting to prove he was a duck by eating grubs and crayfish, just like the ducklings. This seemed to catch Terrell's interest—he sat up straighter and began talking very quickly. “Yah, I try sausage and fish and everything and if they's nasty, I eat 'em all gone! Nasty, nasty, nasty! An' my brother . . . [undecipherable].” He then began a lengthy narrative:

Terrell: And then I [undecipherable] and I want some candy but got it from my mom. And I got the gum out, and yah, yah, it too hard an', an' and then I got in there and cut it in half and then I cut it, and I cut it, and I eat it and I eat it. I eat five pieces of it. And then my brother got another candy, those circus things, yah, and then he eat it. And then he cut it, he didn't. He didn't. I cut mine.

Virginia: Why did you cut yours?

Terrell: 'Cause it too big, too hard. I [would] break my teeth!

[I looked at my watch and realized that it was time for me to end our first session and walk Terrell back to his classroom.]

Virginia: Good for you, Terrell! I exclaimed. That's being a real leader! [Our school participates in the Steven Covey Leadership program and we are encouraged to use the program language.] Leaders take care of their teeth, don't they? I think we better finish our story next time. We don't want you to miss anything with Miss Taylor, do we? You were so kind to come with me today! Thank you, Terrell! Now let's get crackin'!

As I transcribed Terrell's recording that night, I noted the length of this narrative. I also noted the phrase “cut it in half” and considered it advanced for Terrell's age. His language pattern, which included “I cut it” and “I eat it,” fascinated me. Both of these sentences were syntactically identical. Then he repeated each sentence twice, changing only the verb to denote new action. This reminded me of the many popular children's books that use repetition and parallel sentence construction. In addition, Terrell used several complete sentences and at the end of the narrative when he corrected information

that distinguished his experience from his brother's: "Then he cut it, he didn't. He didn't. I, I cut mine." I realized that only one of his words that day was undecipherable and that he did not stutter during his entire narrative! I ended my day with a laugh, wondering how many times Terrell's mom had warned him that eating something hard might break his teeth.

Highlights of Session Two

In session two, Terrell talked about his visits to the library with his family. He retold a traditional fairy tale accurately and remembered and used the novel word *porridge*. He needed my explicit permission to act independently within the context of what I thought was appropriate during our sessions, and he created original interpretations of illustrations that rendered his picture read significantly different from the text.

After Terrell selected his book and tested the tape recorder, he dropped to his knees beside me and began rocking back and forth. He continued to rock until I requested that he sit flat on his bottom. He quickly complied. "Why did you choose this book (*The Three Bears*, Galdone, 1985)?" I asked. "B-b-because I yika [like] the books I got it at the library," he answered. "Wow, pow, zow [one of my phonemic awareness phrases] Terrell!" I exclaimed, "That's super that you go to the library! Who reads the library books to you?" He replied quickly, "Uh, my mama, uh, my daddy, uh my mama and my daddy!" I was impressed with the way that Terrell purposefully constructed his response.

I was delighted to discover that Terrell frequented the library. For me, this was a rare disclosure from a child because the public library was six or seven miles from

Terrell's school and transportation was a problem for a majority of the 4–K students and their families. I was also excited because of Terrell's familiarity with the story. I thought that this would be an ideal book for him to picture read or retell easily. I leaned a bit closer to Terrell and asked him to tell me a "little bit of what happened" in the book. He gave me this summary:

Uh, uh, uh baby got a little bowl and Goldilocks gotta big bowl. All gone! Yah, a bears come back an' then they saw it all gone. An' then they saw Goldilocks inna bed and then Goldilocks wunned [runned] away and [undecipherable]. Terrell begins to stutter badly]. Uh, uh, uh, [undecipherable] hurt his ears.

I complimented him lavishly and asked him if he would read the whole book to me by himself. He instantly retorted "It too easy to wead [read] that!" Given the stressed look on his face, I guessed that he confused the opposites *easy* and *hard*. I theorized that my use of the word *read* might have intimidated him and quickly said, "Can you tell me? Can you look at the pictures and tell me what's going on?" I nodded my head and smiled, trying to encourage him. Terrell looked unsure, but much to his credit, he opened the book and launched into what was perhaps his first retelling:

Terrell: The bear and uh, Mama bear, and uh, Baby bear. Mama uh-uh-uh, bear uh, uh [undecipherable] the food. And dis mama and his baby bear. Goldilocks. Goldilocks saw [undecipherable] bowls and, uh, uh, the house. Goldilocks. Uh, uh, this bowl too hot! This bowl too spicy! An' this one, uh, uh, put the spoon in. Okay. Dis one went too fastest, this rocking chair went too fast, and this one [undecipherable] an', an' Goldilocks broke this uh [pause] uh, this one! This bed too hard and this bed, uh, too soft. This bed just wight [right]. Then the baby bear, the baby bear one, give that back! And Father bear say uh, uh, uh [four seconds elapse].

Virginia: Who's been eating my . . . [I stopped to let Terrell fill in the blank]

Terrell: [Exclaiming and smiling] Who's been eating my porridge?

Virginia: [Laughing with surprise] Yes! Right! Who's been eating my porridge!

I was incredulous that Terrell remembered and used the novel word *porridge*. This book was a shared reading selection in my home visitation program and the three- and four-year-olds I served invariably replaced the word *porridge* with the more familiar *oatmeal* or *soup*.

Terrell amazed me that day and I told him so. I noted that his stuttering was marked at the beginning of his retelling, but lessened as he progressed. I wondered if he self-evaluated as he retold and came to understand that he could indeed devise meaningful narrative. I asked myself if this realization became a launching pad for increased confidence and, in turn, decreased stuttering. My theory about this persisted; my impression that Terrell's confidence inspired more assertiveness fuelled it further. Terrell's behavior established this impression when he stated at the beginning of our session, "Uh, I can read it? I can read it! Uh, you can listen. Okay." Amused, I noted that there was no question mark following "Okay"! Clearly, Terrell made and carried out the decision to reverse our roles—he became the teacher, reading; and I became the student, listening. For the rest of our time together, Terrell consistently read his picture book and insisted that he wanted to read it "all [by] myself."

Later, I shared my amazement with Terrell's teacher. She lamented that there was not enough instructional time to provide individual retelling or picture reading opportunities for Terrell and his 19 classmates. When I asked about free play period (when children were in the book center) as a chance to engage in these activities, she told me that, unfortunately, children rarely used the book center as a free choice. I then suggested a puppet center where children could reenact stories for each other. She told me that there was once such center in her classroom (indeed, I remembered both the

puppet theater and the puppets). However, Terrell's teacher explained that, because 4–K teaching standards demanded more emphasis on academics, the puppet center was now a writing center. In the writing center, children played with magnetic alphabet letters, accessed some commercial aids that encouraged and strengthened early writing, and practiced writing their names with different media. She said that only a few girls ever made use of the center.

Terrell maintained his role as reader, but sometimes needed reassurance that what he was doing was permissible. I saw evidence of this when, in a subsequent session, he tapped his book and said, "Uh, I can read it! Uh, can I read it?" I did not explicitly grant him permission. Rather, I thought that demonstrating some of the attributes of good listening would indicate that I continued to accept my role as listener. I made a great show of modeling what Terrell now knew made one a good listener: hands quietly folded in my lap, eyes focused on him. He began by reading the title of the book (discussed earlier in this chapter) on the front cover. As I waited for him to open the book and begin, he looked at me in silence. It took me a minute to understand that he was seeking verbal permission; finally, I said, "Uh, I'm not going to stop you. We'll talk about the pictures later." With that, Terrell promptly turned the page and began his narrative.

As Terrell became more proficient in interpreting illustrations, he began to talk about them in ways that made his storyline differ greatly from that of the actual text. However, to my surprise, these original interpretations always made sense, and when I thought about them, they often seemed more logical than what the author did and the illustrator intended to communicate.

For instance, one of his selections was entitled *Hibernation Station* (Meadows, 2010). The main idea of this book was that winter was coming and many hibernating animals needed to go into the forest to find proper accommodations. To accelerate this process, the animals began to spread the word that winter was quickly approaching. When all the animals received this message, they gathered at Hibernation Station and boarded a train made from large, rough-hewn logs with broken limbs still attached. The passenger cars appeared to have no doors, only small windows. Once on board the train, the animals trusted the conductor (a bear) to tell them which stop was the best place for their long winter sleep. In one scene, a lizard and a bird looked into a snake's hole to remind the snake that it was time to get on the train. On the opposite page, the illustration showed that the snake came out of the hole to talk to the bird, and subsequently gave the message to a turtle. After a few moments, Terrell described the scene:

An' then the frog [pause], an' then the frog, [self-corrects his identification of the character] da lizard. In this night da lizard was trying to eat the snake. So then, then the snake [Terrell makes a hissing sound] s-s-s-s an' he tried to eat the hen. An' then, an' then the mother snake, da mother snake was fussin' at the turtle.

It made sense to me that, when an animal looks down a hole occupied by an animal different from itself, it is likely looking for food. It is also a fact that some snakes prey on birds. Further, I noted that the snake was nose-to-nose with the turtle and the snake's elliptical pupils made it look threatening. No wonder Terrell thought that it was "fussin'!" Terrell's interpretation gave me the impression that he had strong inference skills and made use of prior knowledge.

When Terrell saw the train for the first time and noticed its rough exterior and broken limbs, he said, "An' then they broke the train! Oh! An' then the bears, uh,

[pause] uh, he broke the han-, he broke the han-, h-h-handle off it!” I observed that Terrell worked hard to find the right word to express what he wanted to communicate; I also noted that, when he did so, he began to stutter. Further, his intonation suggested that the broken handle was very distressing. Then I remembered the door to Terrell’s classroom. Its knob sometimes stuck and it would not open. Even I sometimes had difficulty with it. I also knew that, due to his bus arrival, Terrell was sometimes late to class. I wondered if there was an occasion when he arrived late, was unable to open the door, and stood alone outside his classroom. If this was Terrell’s experience, he might well find a broken handle upsetting.

A page or two later, an illustration depicted the bear who was conducting the train, serving some of the animals nuts and berries, as a bedtime snack. Outside the train, big, fluffy flakes of snow fell heavily. Terrell described this scene saying, “An’ then he [the conductor bear] got some popcorn! Uh, he got some popcorn, but he didn’t.” I hypothesized that Terrell enjoyed popcorn as a snack, maybe at night before bed, while he was watching TV, and so he related to the animals as they ate their nighttime treat. In addition, as a child living in the South, it was not likely that he had experienced snow. I also noticed the structure of his second sentence, “Uh, he got some popcorn, but he didn’t.” Did Terrell intend to inform his listener that the conductor could potentially get popcorn, but did not avail himself of the opportunity? I did not know.

Highlights of Session Three

By session three, Terrell had independently assumed his role as the exclusive reader during our sessions. In this session, he demonstrated his knowledge of various print conventions, continued to interpret illustrations originally, and appeared to realize

that it was his choice of words that held the key to effectively convey his thoughts and ideas. He also demonstrated, during picture reading, that he understood that language in books sounded differently than spoken language.

The following week, Terrell chose the book *Hibernation Station* (Meadows, 2010) for the second time. I was excited because I hoped that he would once again want to assume his role as reader, as I wanted to see if he changed his interpretation of the illustrations or if he chose to focus on new ones. We began our session when I asked, “Okay, sir, who’s gonna read?” Immediately, Terrell said, “I’m gonna read it.” I continued,

Okay! I’m ready to listen! Now if you get tired or you want me to start reading, then I will. [During our last session, Terrell commented that “This book sure have a lot a pages!”] But as long as you keep goin’, you just keep goin’! [Terrell smiles] And I might ask you some questions if I don’t understand, ok? So, anytime you’re ready! [Pointing at the front cover] Do you remember the title? It has that big word in it, remember, “*Hi - - -*” [Terrell hesitates] “*Hibernation.*” The title is *Hibernation Station*.

Terrell repeated, “*Hibernation Station.*” He then opened the book to the title page. “Oh, title page!” he exclaimed. “Right you are!” I affirmed. With great care, he put his finger under the text and once more repeated “*Hibernation Station.*” He turned the page and found family groups of raccoons, mice, snails, snakes, and squirrels. All of them were wearing pajamas. “One day [pause] one day,” he began, “da two mouse was sleepin’. Then the snakes, they’re comin’ to eat the lizards.” Terrell turned the page. The illustration showed the conductor bear on top of a passenger car. He was prone and curled around the top of the car. This position caused him to appear upside down, as he peered into one of the windows. His head was at an odd angle, flat against the side of the train. We talked about it:

Terrell: He spike [?] the train for the grumbly bear. [Looking at me] Why that bear break his head off? Why he break if off?

Virginia: Oh! Here, let me show you. That bear didn't break his head off. [I assume the bear's position] That bear is down like this. And he's got his chin, uh [I point at the illustration] See right here? [I demonstrate] Like this. So it kind of looks like his head is—but see, [I point to each] here's his body and here's his head. [Terrell appears puzzled]. Let Mrs. Miller show you [I pull up a chair] Let's pretend that this is the log. [I drape my body over the back of the chair] He's going like this. See? So, his head isn't broken off. See, his head isn't up like ours it's [I flatten one hand on top of my other] flat on the train, like my hands.

Despite my struggle to help him understand, I wasn't sure if Terrell had changed his mind about what happened to the bear's head. After he asked about it, however, I discovered that I had no trouble looking at the illustration through his lens and finding that there appeared to be no connection between the bear's head and his body. Curious, I sought out his teacher and several other teachers, including a media specialist. All agreed that one could easily conclude that the bear had severed its head.

Later in my session with Terrell, conductor bear appeared again on top of the train. This time he was sitting down. The illustration depicted his exhaled breath as vapor; it was oval-shaped, multicolored, and appeared almost luminescent. Droplets of water dripped from both sides—it looked very much like a rainbow. As he studied this page, Terrell became animated and exclaimed, “And then there's a splash of rainbow! Yah, the bear, h-h—he splash the rainbow!” This time I did not try to explain, but instead commented that I loved rainbows and that it would be fun to splash one.

Finally, Terrell reached the end of the book. The illustration shows the animals, including conductor bear, huddled together under blankets, with their heads on pillows. In a quiet, soothing voice, Terrell intoned, “And he [conductor bear] wocked [rocked] them to sleep.” On the opposite page, the train is out of sight and only bare, snow-

covered trees are visible. Terrell ended the narrative saying, “And then he [conductor bear] got all his night. The end.” Laughing with delight, I said,

Wow, pow, zow! You read that whole book by yourself! Thank you, Sweetheart! That was a long one, too! I love the way you read books! You like that book a lot, don’t you? [Terrell nods. I pat his hand.] Yes, it’s a very good book!

I remember being very eager that day to ruminate about this particular session. I was excited about Terrell’s interpretations of the illustrations and his characterizations of the smiling animals, all of whom shared a joint purpose: to find a hibernation site. Terrell’s initial depiction, however, seemed to contradict this cheerful picture. His previous narrative described a lizard looking for prey and a snake that ate and “fussed” at fellow travelers. Although his earlier perspective appeared to oppose that of the book, this, apparently, did not create a dissonance for him. For this reason, I theorized that Terrell—because he was able to interpret the illustrations through his knowledge of actual animal behavior—found the snake’s behavior acceptable. Did this, then, indicate that Terrell had funds of knowledge about the animal kingdom? I thought about the fact that Terrell never chose a book from the non-fiction tub, which contained many brand-new books about many different animals, filled with large, colored photographs. Had he already accessed such books at home or in the classroom? Was he now ready to move on to a different genre?

Then I flashed back to Terrell’s question about the bear’s head in *Hibernation Station* (Meadows, 2010). The first thought that came to mind was that Terrell rarely asked questions about the books he chose. Then I thought about the wording of his question when he asked about the bear, “Why he take his head off?” Wouldn’t a child be more likely to say, “Why he *cut* his head off?” Although this puzzled me, the words he

used to construct his question were even more disconcerting. When Terrell asked about the bear, he said, “Why *he* take [the bear’s] head off. I grabbed the recorder and replayed the tape to make sure I was remembering correctly; I was. So—who was “he”? Could the pronoun possibly refer to the illustrator? Terrell used this term a couple of times so I knew he understood its meaning. Was he asking me why the illustrator would take the bear’s head off in such a happy story? If the answer was yes, well—Wow, Pow, Zow!

I stayed at school very late that day. I could not stop wondering about just how much Terrell knew and understood. While transcribing that night, I found that Terrell’s narrative was suggestive of two language-related patterns. The first gave the impression that he was becoming aware of how language might change in different contexts.

Throughout the session, Terrell began almost every page with “And then.” I wondered if he was starting to recognize that the language in books sounded differently than the language he used when he spoke. Further, was he beginning to understand that this language followed a sequence and had a precise beginning and end? This hypothesis grew stronger when, for the first time, Terrell brought closure to his narrative by adding “The end.”

The second pattern suggested that Terrell was coming to understand that language might serve a useful purpose for him. I surmised that this might be why he seemed so intent on finding the correct word when he struggled to retrieve the word *handle*. Did this mean that he was aware that using the right words had the definitive power to convey the meaning he wished to communicate? Was it important because he had a strong desire for his teachers to understand and make sense of his comments and ideas? Was Terrell coming to understand that vocabulary knowledge lessened his frustration when he tried to

share his thoughts and opinions? Finally, was it possible that Terrell was beginning to think that understanding and using words effectively would make him the “big boy” he wanted to be for his mother?

Highlights of Sessions Four Through Eight

Although Terrell’s interpretation of illustrations remained original, over the course of sessions four through eight, they created the impression that they were text-to-self connections. He also demonstrated interest in vocabulary and the correct pronunciation of new words. His stuttering decreased and he invented words that accurately and/or creatively described illustrations. He used language for different purposes and developed an affinity for a stuffed toy that I called *Mr. Frog*, who “loved books and reading.” He also made evident his ability to repeat adult language and expressions verbatim.

Over the next few weeks, Terrell’s interpretations of illustrations remained original, but began to follow a new pattern. All of them created the impression that they were text-to-self connections that stemmed from Terrell’s family experiences. One such interpretation came when Terrell picture read the book, *My Lucky Day* (Kasza, 2005). This was a very humorous story about a savvy pig and a hapless fox (at least adults found it funny; in fact, it was quite popular among the early childhood teachers at my school). The story begins when the pig comes to visit the fox, whose first thought is to eat his guest. The illustration shows the pig in a roasting pan surrounded by vegetables, replete with a stalk of celery in his mouth. Terrell explained: “and then [the fox] try some cookin’. After that, they were best friends back. And the pig, uh, he, uh make the s -s -s - salad!”

Three weeks later, Terrell chose *My Lucky Day* (Kasza, 2005) again. His interpretation had changed, but still held the characteristics of a child's personal experience.

Terrell: He [the fox] cooked some pusghetti [spaghetti] and then he cooked some cookies. An' the pig laughed. Then he uh, the fox, uh, he maked the pig eat broccoli. And the pig don't like broccoli!

Virginia: Do you like broccoli?

Terrell: No!

Later, as I transcribed our session, I thought about Terrell's mention of "best friends" after the fox cooked the pig a meal. Did he equate friendship with cooking and sharing meals? Did his parents prepare such meals and share them with family or friends? Did he understand that making a meal for another person was a kind and generous act? Did his parents teach him that these attributes were an important part of friendship? (I must admit, I could not help but snicker when I imagined Terrell, hapless like the fox, forced to finish a helping of broccoli.)

This pattern emerged again during Terrell's rendition of *The Very Busy Spider* (Carle, 1984). On the last page of the book, there was a fly trapped in a spider's web. The spider was reaching for the fly with its legs extended, just as human arms are, when seeking an embrace. When I asked Terrell why the fly was in the web with the spider, he replied "Maybe 'cause he want to get up there with him. Because he his best friend! Maybe he yike [like] him!" At once, I mentally pictured a scene repeated daily just before Terrell entered his classroom. After dropping him off at the door, his older brother never failed to hug him. I also recalled that at the beginning of the year, Terrell told me that he "yiked [liked his] brother."

In subsequent sessions, Terrell took more interest in vocabulary. The transcripts of our sessions revealed that it was no longer necessary for me to ask Terrell to repeat new vocabulary. He now spontaneously repeated new words after I pronounced them. On one such occasion, I told him that some animals were going to have a party and “Celebrate. Celebrate.” Terrell then echoed, “Cel-e-brate. Celebrate! Let’s clap it!” He was referring to our practice of pronouncing a word very slowly while clapping each syllable. My journal entries indicated that around this time, Terrell’s teacher reported that his articulation was improving and that he was easier to understand. During this same time, I observed that it was unnecessary to replay segments of Terrell’s tapes more than two or three times during transcription (previously, I found myself replaying short segments of his recordings as many as seven times. Of necessity, I made a rule that, after seven attempts, I would consider the word(s) as undecipherable). Terrell’s transcripts also revealed that his stutter had diminished.

Terrell also began to experiment with language. I remembered being very startled when he invented words that explicitly explained or described what he wanted me to understand. For example, on one occasion, he chose a book about five monkeys who got up early to secretly bake a layer cake while their mother slept. His picture read included several illustrations that featured cake pans. Terrell called them *bakers* and told me that the monkeys “put too much stuff [batter] in the bakers.” I theorized that Terrell had never seen a cake pan or heard the term because his family could not afford to bake, did not have the time, or, like me, found it much easier to bake a cake in one large pan.

At the end of the book, the monkeys successfully baked and served a decorated layer cake to their mother. The illustration showed the mother and children enjoying a

piece of the cake. Continuing his narrative, Terrell said, “Then he make the bakery. He tried the bakery and it taste delicious.” This time, I surmised that Terrell was familiar with the bakery section of a food store where the decorated birthday cakes were on display. I was not sure why he did not use the term *birthday cake*, but eventually theorized that he did yet combine nouns and descriptive adjectives. I also surmised that Terrell might think that *bakery* was somehow more like something a “big boy” would say.

In our next session, Terrell selected *Rain* (Stojic, 2009), a book that told the story of African animals who endured a season of drought, followed by a joyous rainy season. The day we read this story, Terrell became enamored of a very large, plush, green toy frog that I kept in the corner of my office. I used this stuffed animal as a book holder because I could easily prop books against it and arrange its front legs around the book. I explained to Terrell that the toy’s name was Mr. Frog and that he liked to show boys and girls good books to read. I also told him that, occasionally, Mr. Frog liked to talk to the boys and girls that came to my office. We then began our session.

Virginia: [Directing Terrell’s attention to the front cover that showed very large, angular baboons and raindrops]. The title of this book is *Rain*.

Terrell: [Terrell’s finger moved from left-to-right under the title] *Monkey Rain*.

Virginia: Monkey Rain! Good! But I don’t think that’s a monkey. It’s called a baboon and they’re bigger than monkeys.

Terrell: Baboons. Uh, Baboon Rain.

Virginia: Thank you for saying a new word! I loved the way you put it in your title. Okay, how are we going to do this today?

Terrell: B-b-by me! Uh, Mr. Frog like me gonna read it!

Virginia: Oh-h-h. Mr. Frog likes you to read it? [Terrell nodded] Okay, that's a great idea, you read it to Mr. Frog and me. Well, any time you're ready!

Terrell: [Reading the title page] *Baboon Rain*. Oh, it's doin' that again! Oh, I think I'm doin' it back!

[Terrell was talking about the dust cover of the book. It was taped upside down on the previous book he selected. He then carefully checked his current selection and found that it was also taped.]

Terrell: Oh, it be tape! Uh, monkey, uh *Baboon Rain*. [The first page of text featured a porcupine.] One day, da baboon, uh, the pickedy baboon stay in his cave so baboon was just makin' some pointies.

In the illustration, the porcupine resembled the baboons; they were also the same color. I theorized that Terrell thought that the porcupine was simply a different kind of baboon, one with quills—a *pickedy* baboon. Further, because the illustration Terrell described did not include a cave, I wondered if this addition to Terrell's storyline was his explanation of why this particular baboon had *pointies* (quills), when the others in his group did not.

The weeks passed quickly; Terrell began to use language for different purposes. I first noticed this when he used language to evoke the mood of an illustration. During his third picture read of *Hibernation Station* (Meadows, 2010), he lingered at one illustration, in particular. It depicted a barren landscape with leafless trees, brown grass, and an ominous gray sky, filled with storm clouds. Terrell hesitated for a moment and then began his interpretation in a quiet, but lyrical, expressive voice: "In the lonesome woods we don't see the bears. Where the bears at? Where are the bears?" He turned the page and saw a bear in the distance. His voice changed and became louder and higher-pitched; he exclaimed, "Oh! Oh, look! I see a furry ear!" I could only marvel at his eloquence.

In another session, Terrell used words to engage me in humor. He struggled to hold and turn the pages of an over-sized book. As it slipped from his small hands, he

grinned at me, grabbed the book, and quipped, “Hey you! Get back here! Get back where you belong, so I can read you!” Much to his delight, I could not stop laughing.

Terrell also began to use language to repeat adult language verbatim. I wondered if he was practicing complete sentences or Standard English, or if he was trying to emulate more sophisticated language. At the beginning of one session, when he had both book and tape recorder ready, I was still standing by my desk and not in my usual place on the floor. Terrell sat down, once again made sure that everything was ready, and said, “Why don’t you come right over here and sit down next to me?” I wondered how many times he had heard me say that! This is an excerpt from that session:

Terrell: [Thumbing through a book] Oh, these lotta pages!

Virginia: Yes, there are a lot of pages in this book.

Terrell: M-m-my back is about to break! My back hurts while I’m reading this book. This a long book!

Virginia: Oh, does your back hurt? I’m sorry!

Terrell: [Terrell was sitting criss-cross applesauce on the floor, but now assumed a different position.] Yah, that hurted my back!

I had a great deal of difficulty keeping my composure as I tried hard not to laugh when Terrell said, “My back is about to break!” I clearly imagined one of Terrell’s parents saying this after a long day’s work. The incident concerned me, though, because my observations revealed that Terrell was required to sit criss-cross applesauce for long periods on the rug in his classroom and not allowed to assume any other position.

Highlights of Sessions Nine Through Fourteen

Over time, Terrell began to say “I don’t know” after I explained the attributes of a learner to him. He started to ask questions and to make conventional interpretations of illustrations that matched the text. He assumed complete responsibility for recording our

sessions and demonstrated that his picture interpretations reflected his funds of knowledge. He also constructed complete sentences during our conversations and displayed an emerging phonemic awareness.

In the classroom, Terrell presented increasing positive engagement in learning. His teachers reported improved classroom behavior and greater attention span with less impulsivity. His stuttering decreased and his teachers came to understand his language.

At the beginning of this series of sessions, Terrell did not often answer my questions. As I read his transcripts, I found long, cohesive narrative, but noticed that I had recorded *no response* many times, which is a term I used whenever a child failed to answer a question. I asked myself if I was asking too many questions, then I thought, How could I scaffold Terrell and help him grow as a learner if I did not know how he thought or what knowledge he possessed?

Nor did Terrell ask me any questions—I did not understand this either. When we walked from his classroom to my office, he commented about everything he saw or heard. Because he showed such an active interest in everything around him, I found it incongruous that he did not want to know more about the things he saw. Even stranger, it appeared that Terrell's language was developing rapidly. Every week, I witnessed his increasing ability to look at illustrations and quickly use language to invent a creative, cohesive story. For these reasons, I thought him entirely capable of constructing meaningful questions. His lack of response, along with the absence of questions, continued to baffle me.

Eventually, as I considered what Terrell did say, I remembered how he told me that he could ride a bike by himself, that he could play video games as well as his older

brother, and that he didn't cry when he got hurt, so his mother would call him a "big boy." I hypothesized that Terrell was a proud child who very much wanted to keep his dignity intact. I guessed that he also wanted to be like his more knowledgeable older brother, who he seemed to idolize. I hypothesized, then, that Terrell was embarrassed to admit that he did not know something. I decided that I explicitly needed to help him understand that learners often did not know the answers but, instead, found them by asking questions.

At the end of our next session, I told Terrell that we were going to talk about learners "for a skinny minute." I told him that there were many things to learn. Terrell slowly nodded. I then told him that everyone was a learner, even teachers. In fact, I continued, "I go to school just like you!" Terrell's eyes widened. "Yes," I continued, "But I go at night and on Saturdays. Let me tell you, there's a lot of stuff I don't know. But you know what? You know what? I am learning a whole lot of new things and I like that. It makes me a better teacher." I ended our discussion by telling him that, because there were so many things to learn, learners often did not know the answer to questions. Terrell did not comment.

In our next session, I asked Terrell if he might like me to "read for a change" and he agreed. Before we began, I asked him if he remembered our talk about learners. He nodded to acknowledge that he did. I introduced the topic again:

Okay, we are both learners, right? [Terrell nodded] Okay. So, I might not know something or you might not know something, right? [Terrell nodded again] Right. So we learn by asking. You know, like I ask you a question! I ask you lots of questions. [To my amusement, Terrell responded with a very exaggerated nod.] Okay. Now, remember, if you want to know about something or don't understand, you stop me and say "What is that?" or "What are they doing" or "I don't understand." It's always, always, always okay to say the words "I don't know!"

In a format similar to a call and response game we played, I shouted, “Got it?” and Terrell yelled back, “Got it!” We both smiled. After this conversation, Terrell began to respond to my questions with “I don’t know.” More importantly, he began to ask questions of his own, particularly about the illustrations.

In our last two sessions, Terrell’s transcripts showed that he was definitely asking more questions. Concurrently, I discovered that his interpretation of illustrations had become more conventional. I hypothesized that this might have happened because the books:

- were previously read to him, so he was familiar with the storyline,
- featured main characters who were children (one was a preschooler, like Terrell),
- activated a personal schema connection because they documented a typical childhood action or event,
- presented a more realistic storyline because they depicted common events that involved children instead of personified animals, and
- included African American characters.

At the first of these two sessions, Terrell chose the book, *Peter’s Chair* (Keats, 1998). The main character in the book, Peter, was an African American preschooler. I was excited about this selection because I wanted to observe Terrell’s reaction to a character that shared two attributes with him. The illustrations communicated that there was a new baby sister in Peter’s family. Peter was jealous as he watched his father paint the last of his old baby furniture pink for the new baby. In reaction, Peter took his dog and some of

his possessions and ran away. He got as far as the sidewalk in front of his family's apartment building.

As was typical, after Terrell chose his book, he neatly restacked the others he had taken out of the tub (he now took several out before he made his selection) and returned them to their proper place. He then scurried around, adjusting the microphone to suit himself and, as always, started the recorder for his test. A few seconds later, when he replayed the tape, he heard an excerpt from a previous session. He turned off the recorder, looked at me, and said, "What's the matter with this thing?" "Well," I replied, "I think maybe you made the tape go back a little too far. That was last week's book." (I used a separate and continuing tape for each child in the study.) Terrell said, "Oh," and pressed the play button. Within a few moments, he was rewarded with the recording of today's test. I was incredulous that, in this circumstance, he knew he did not need to rewind again, but rather, had the wherewithal to let the tape simply move forward.

At last, we were ready to begin. I asked Terrell if he had ever read this particular book before, as I knew that might have implications on the interpretation of my data. "I don't know. I don't remember. Uh, no, no, didn't read it. Nope," he replied. Terrell began by asking, "What the title?" After he got the answer to his question, he duly repeated, "*Peter's Chair*" (Keats, 1998). The next two pages were blank; Terrell looked puzzled and asked "Where the title page?" I told him to turn one more page and I thought he would find it. He turned the page and exclaimed, "Found it!" and put his finger under the title, once again repeating, "*Peter's Chair*."

Terrell began the picture read with interpretations of the illustrations that matched the meaning of the text. For example, in one part of the story, Peter's dog knocked over a

tower of blocks that Peter built. Terrell interpreted this by saying, “Da dog went over the blocks and den maked a mess. It maked a loud noise.” After this, Peter and the dog got bored with the blocks and left to peek into the baby’s room. There they saw Peter’s mother bent over a white, frothy bassinet. Only her head, neck and part of her torso was visible. It was not possible to distinguish if she had her hair pulled back from her face or if she had very short hair. Terrell immediately asked me, “That the mama or the daddy?” After telling him it was the mama, he said, “And then the mama wocked [rocked] baby to sleep. And nen a dog, da dog and the kid sneaked into a baby’s room.” The next illustration showed Peter’s father painting his old baby chair from blue to pink. I did not expect Terrell to infer Peter’s jealousy, but he stated, “And then the boy see his dad and the dad, uh, paint, uh and then the boy said ‘That’s my chair!’ And then the boy wunned [runned] with the dogs and the boy got the chair!” In both instances, the meaning Terrell constructed from the illustrations paralleled that of the text.

As he moved on, Terrell seemed to be confused; he asked, “Did I skip a page?” “No, I don’t think you did,” I answered. He was looking at an illustration that depicted Peter, as he was deciding to run away. In the picture, Peter was standing on the sidewalk in front of his apartment building. Terrell gazed at the illustration for several moments and then asked, “Uh, where’s da mom?” I recalled then that Terrell lived in an apartment complex. His complex was familiar to me as several of my past program participants lived there. Thus, I had been inside the apartments many times; they were very small. I recall marveling at how these families, especially those with more than one child, coped with living in such cramped quarters.

In the next scene, Peter's mother appeared in the window, peering out at her child. When Terrell saw this, he exclaimed, "Oh! There she is!" He almost seemed relieved. I wondered if it was because he wasn't allowed to go outside of his apartment alone (I knew that none of the children in my program were). I understood the parents' caution—I had witnessed suspicious activity myself outside the apartment buildings: young men, some teenagers, loitering about during school hours. Twice, I saw police chasing them through the complex. Another time, I observed a man running from an apartment building with a duffle bag. He jumped into a waiting car that sped off, screeching its tires.

These experiences prompted two questions: Did the size of Terrell's apartment mean that his mother was visible to him most of the time? More likely, I guessed, did this mean that Terrell's parents warned him not to venture out of his apartment unless accompanied by one of them? Given my own experiences, I guessed that the answer to both questions was "yes."

On the same page of the book, we saw that the items Peter took when he ran away included a toy alligator. Terrell asked about this (the alligator) saying, "What's that thing? I found it hard to believe that he could not identify an alligator, as it is an indigenous and common animal in the Low County of South Carolina, where Terrell lived. Plus, reports of alligators are often in the newspaper and mentioned during local TV news broadcasts. Terrell defined the illustrations and completed his picture read:

Terrell: An' affa, affa [after] that then the boy was, the boy saw the chair. And nen, an' nen [and then] da boy starts to sit in it. And then it wasn't fitting him. So he gotta tell the mom and the dad that wasn't his chair. And then, and then the boy hide back of the curtain. He playin' hide and go seek. And then, uh, then, the mama look behind the curtain [pause] and then the mama looked

behind the curtain and then he wasn't there. He [hid] behind the [chest of] drawer[s]. An', then [pause] Wait!

Virginia: Did you skip one [page], you think?

Terrell: No [thumbing through pages and talking to himself]; is this the one I did?

Virginia: What are you looking for, Terrell?

Terrell: Nothin'. And th-th-then the dad h-h-hug the boy! Then the dog make footprints and the boy paint the chair pink. And then he paint on the wall and that was de end! [The end pages of the book appeared to be a wall made of bricks, which varied in color.]

Virginia: [Terrell is speaking very rapidly] That was what? I'm sorry, my ears are on backwards today! [Terrell giggles]

Terrell: [Again very rapidly] De end.

Virginia: Uh . . . [I still cannot understand Terrell]

Terrell: [Speaking very slowly, carefully separating *de* and *end*. He puts great emphasis on the initial letter *d* of *de* and the ending letter *d* of *end*] D-d-de [He is not stuttering, but enunciating] [Pauses to separate words] end-d-d. De end!

Virginia: The end! I'm sorry! Yes, the end! Thank you!

Terrell: *De end* rhymes!

Virginia: [I start to correct Terrell and then suddenly understand that he is trying to communicate his phonemic knowledge, but is using the wrong terminology.] We do hear *d* at the beginning and at the end, don't we?

Terrell: Maybe that why uh, hear *d*, *d* [makes *d* sound two times] and dey paint all the walls. And then he was done! De end!

After transcribing this session, I recorded in my journal: I sat with "my head spinning, unable to believe my ears!" So many things piqued my need to investigate further, to speculate further. For example, Terrell asked many questions during this picture read. In addition, at times, his interpretation of the illustrations literally mirrored that of the text.

Moreover, I wondered, what enabled him to infer so aptly Peter's jealousy concerning the new baby?

When I saw Terrell's words in print, I realized that he used many complete sentences. What did or perhaps did not happen that helped Terrell develop this new language habit? Further, he constructed many of his sentences using Standard English. Similarly, what had occurred or did not occur that was helping Terrell bridge the gap between his home language and that of school and books? Finally, I found his display of phonemic awareness quite remarkable, particularly because I guessed that there were kindergarten children who still had not reached this developmental decoding milestone. All of this prompted me to think, "How much else does he know that you are unaware of?" Was he displaying the same behaviors in his classroom? If so, what were his teacher and I doing that was encouraging his developing competence as a language and literacy learner?

Before long, it was time for my last session with Terrell. My journal reflected my mood: "I feel frustrated and almost panicked. It's like I've just scratched the surface and there's a mother lode of gold just below." Terrell, on the other hand, was in high spirits. Just the day before, his parents told him that they were moving to a new town at the beginning of the following week. His father was starting a new, more lucrative job; naturally, I assumed that Mr. and Mrs. Evans were elated at the prospect of a better life for themselves and their children. I also assumed that their excitement had infiltrated Terrell's mood; he was very energetic and kept up a rapid stream of information about the upcoming move and their new home. For example, Terrell told me that, when looking for their new home, he and his family had lunch at a popular chain restaurant that

advertised a “chocolate fountain” (I imagined it as a giant fondue pot). When I asked him more about it, Terrell assured me that it, indeed, existed: “It so good! An’ marshmallows, too!” He also said that his parents told him it would be very easy for them to visit the beach often, as they would now live very close to the ocean. Terrell was thrilled; he laughingly suggested that he and his brother should plan to “bury Daddy inna sand!” I was happy for them, but I was not happy when Mrs. Evans told me that they could not guarantee Terrell’s school attendance for the remainder of the year. She explained that she had already transferred her older son’s records to his new school, but that she was still waiting to find out about the availability of space in an existing 4–K program. I hoped there was an opening.

Walking to the tub to make his selection, Terrell was quick to see that Mr. Frog was holding the book, *Jump Frog Jump* (Kalan, 1981). Terrell approached the toy and then turned to me: “Uh, uh can I read this one?” “Sure,” I replied, “you know the rule. You always choose the book! And you know what? That’s Mr. Frog’s favorite book! It’s called *Jump Frog Jump*.” Terrell smiled, carefully took the book, and walked over to the tape recorder. Soon, all was ready. He raised his head and asked, “What [pause], wh-what, what that book again?” “I’d be happy to tell what that book is,” I answered. “The name of the book is *Jump Frog Jump*.” “Okay, yah, *Jump Frog Jump*,” began Terrell.

This particular book had a cumulative text. The illustrations suggested this as well. Terrell uttered “Froggy jump. Froggy jump” for both the title page and the first page of text and then adjusted his picture read to follow a cumulative format. Initially, a frog ate a fly but, in turn, the frog became the prey of, first a fish, then a snake, and finally, a turtle. The snake ate the fish, the turtle ate the snake, and both the turtle and the

frog were caught in a net that belonged to three boys who were first seen in a red rowboat. The boys were looking for pond life and when they found it, they tried to trap it in a net. Terrell told the story:

Then the fish was tryin' to eat the frog. And then frog jumped on a log. And then the snake saw the fish tail so it could eat the fish. And then frog jumped in the water so da snake couldn't get da frog and eat the frog. And the turtle was here and, but when da turtle saw da snake tail so he [undecipherable] inna water. Then the frog jumped in the water again! An', an' then the frog, and then da frog jumped out of da net so he can't get caught. He caught on his leg. An' then the animals got caught. An' then the frog jumped on the grass. And then he [one of the boys] saw the frog. The turtle was caught, too! An so da helpers [the other two boys] got the net inside the turtle. [Illustration showed one of the boys catching the frog in a large basket] Caught! He [the boy] helped da frog, so he won't, don't want to let him get caught again! So the frog stay under there to hide. [Illustration showed the boy saying "Sh-h-h!" to the reader, as if he did not want his companions to know he intended to set the frog free] So he say "Sh-h-h." And then the boy maked the frog jump and he pulled the frog out of the basket! The end!

Then, for the first time, Terrell made it clear that he wanted to go back to class. I complimented him on his picture read and said, "You were fast as a frog! My goodness, you read well!" He then gently touched my wrist and said, "Watch." Puzzled, I asked, "My watch? Why are you looking at my watch?" Terrell said, "B-b-because . . . because that almost time to go." I feared that he was bored with the books, his picture reading, and my incessant questions. I wondered if I had harmed more than helped. I only hoped that this quick session indicated that he was excited about his upcoming move (he was leaving the following day). He gently, almost reverently, pushed my long hair back behind one of my ears so that both of my eyes were uncovered. This had become a habit for him and, as usual, I smiled and thanked him for his concern. Then he got up; however, he did not go immediately to the book tub to return his book. I found Terrell to be a creature of habit, so this was not typical. I had forgotten that Mr. Frog was holding

the book when Terrell came in, so he had not taken it from the book tub. Terrell approached the toy and then allayed my fear with a parting gift:

Terrell: Uh, Mr. Frog uh, what's that about my reading? [What do you think about my reading?]

Virginia: [Assuming the character and voice of Mr. Frog] I think you're a fantastic reader, Terrell! Boy, I'm tellin' you, you can read any book you want to!

Terrell: [Lovingly and carefully placing *Jump Frog Jump*, next to the toy] Here! Read this! Read this, Mr. Frog! Read this one, this one so easy for you! You like it! Goodbye, Mr. Frog. I love you!

Did Terrell have the wisdom to understand that the familiarity of a text-to-self connection would render the book easy for Mr. Frog to read? Because I was a learner, I had to say, "I don't know," just as I had instructed Terrell to do. I theorized, however, that in terms of books and reading, Terrell no longer confused *easy* with *hard*.

Much to my dismay, Terrell and his family moved just a few days after our last session together. After our sessions ended, Terrell's teacher had glowing reports about his classroom behavior. Previously considered overactive and impulsive, she stated that he was calmer, confident, and more focused. She also reported that she and her teaching assistant could better understand what Terrell said and that his stuttering had diminished. She was most pleased that he now showed more interest in learning.

Chapter V: Portrait Two—Zion

Introduction

Zion was a quiet, solitary child. He seemed especially somber for a four year old. When I think about our first sessions together, I cannot recall hearing him speak or seeing him smile. When seated in his designated spot on the classroom's community rug, Zion appeared oblivious to even those children nearest to him. I knew that he lived across the street from school in a subsidized housing complex that contained apartments and duplexes. I also knew that his family included his mother, maternal grandmother, and a younger brother. All were African American. Zion's mother worked full time at a local thrift store. During the day, while his mother was at work, his grandmother cared for him, his brother, and one of the neighbor's children.

Because he lived less than a mile from school, Zion was not eligible for bus service. Every day, his mother walked him to school and accompanied him all the way to the classroom door. Their route took them past my office; when I arrived early, I often saw them pass. When this happened, I always made it a point to go to the doorway and say "Good morning" to both of them. Zion did not return my greeting. One morning, after greeting Zion and his mother, I told his mother about my research study and asked if she would permit Zion to participate. She gladly filled out the permission forms and told me that she thought the one-on-one attention "would be good for him."

Most of the time, when Zion and his mother arrived at school, I was already in the 4-K classroom, waiting for Zion and the other children to arrive. On those days, I

noticed that Zion's mother remained outside the classroom door, peeking through the glass window. She appeared to be watching Zion as he performed the initial housekeeping tasks his teacher required. I had seen parents doing this in the past; however, they stopped when they were satisfied that all was well. Zion's mother, on the other hand, was still there after two weeks. Her face registered concern and anxiety. Because Zion entered the classroom willingly and successfully followed classroom procedures, this puzzled me. I decided to focus more of my attention on Zion—I wanted to know why his mother seemed so concerned about him.

When I sought Zion out, he would not meet my eyes and he turned his head in another direction. When I greeted him, he would ignore me and walk away. I did not see him talk to other children, nor did I see him approach his teacher or her teaching assistant. I began to wonder about including him in my study. Would he refuse to talk to me about books? What if he wouldn't come with me to my office?

In the meantime, I asked his teacher, Ms. Taylor, to tell me what she thought about Zion. "How is he doing?" I asked. "Does he ever talk to you or Mrs. Golden [her teaching assistant] during class?" Ms. Taylor told me that Zion did not enter conversations or make comments. In fact, she could not remember him ever saying anything. When I asked about his interaction with peers, she said that, during small group activities, he usually ignored the children at his table. She said that, when given a choice of activities, Zion preferred to play alone, but did sometimes engage in parallel play.

Zion's teacher also disclosed that Zion seemed "out there" and "kind of spacey." She said that, although he did not exhibit behaviors such as flapping or rocking, she

wondered if his lack of communication, coupled with his flat affect, indicated that he was mildly autistic. Her teaching assistant agreed with this opinion.

A few days later, Ms. Taylor told me that she received some paperwork informing her that, the year before, Zion had been in a class for children with pervasive developmental delay (PDD). The information did not include the reason(s) why the school had placed him in special education; his teacher guessed that it was based on Zion's language delay. I told her about his mother and how she watched him through the classroom door's glass pane every day. Zion's teacher and I guessed that Zion's inclusion in special education might be the reason for his mother's concern.

Highlights of Session One

In our first session, Zion showed a strong interest in my greetings to various students on our way to my office. He would not select a book until I encouraged him and gave him explicit permission. He used complete sentences that were grammatically correct and echoed each word I read. He experienced and seemed to understand nuanced language.

In November, when our sessions began, I was still somewhat apprehensive about Zion's participation in my study. Since the beginning of school, I had observed little change in his behavior; his teacher and her teaching assistant agreed. The day before our sessions began, I asked Zion if he was ready to come "read books with me." Zion replied "Yah." The next day, he woodenly followed me down the hall and I found myself walking ahead of him. I stopped and let him catch up. I thought about holding his hand but remembered that he and his mother did not do this when they walked down the hall. I theorized that Zion did not like this practice or was not used to this kind of physical

contact, so I did not attempt to do it. As Zion walked, he did not look to the left or right. However, I saw him look at me with a glimmer of interest when I greeted several children and some parents. “Good morning!” I said with a smile. Usually, the children reciprocated and many of the children hugged me. Zion continued to watch. His expression seemed to change when one child I spoke to did not respond. Because the social act of greeting seemed to attract Zion’s attention, I decided to comment on this child’s behavior. “Oh, my! I guess that little boy doesn’t feel very happy this morning or maybe he doesn’t know how to greet people yet.” I kept talking as we continued to walk. “A greeting is when you say ‘hi’ or ‘hello’ or ‘good morning’ and it is always a polite, uh, a nice and good thing to greet someone back. But I’ll bet you already knew that, didn’t you?” Zion did not respond. Just then, we arrived at my office.

I invited Zion in and watched his eyes as they methodically scanned the perimeter of the room. Then his eyes circled the room again. When he seemed satisfied with his look about, I explained the book tubs on the floor in front of him. I told him that one contained books with pretend stories and the other contained books about “real things and animals.” I assured him that he could choose whatever book he wanted “every single time.” Zion stood very still and looked at the tubs. “You can choose,” I repeated. Zion bent down, grabbed the first book in the non-fiction tub and exclaimed, “I want this one ‘bout porkypines!” I was very surprised that he not only spoke, but also used a complete sentence. I also noticed that he was assertive about his book choice.

The book he chose was large and contained colored photographs. It was about hedgehogs. I was hesitant to correct Zion because I was worried that he might stop talking. I asked, “What do you know about porcupines?” He was quiet for a couple of

seconds and he fixed his eyes on the front cover of the book. It showed a hedgehog with a blade of grass in its mouth. Zion nodded his head and stated, “Porkypines eat grass.” I agreed responding, “Yes, they do. The picture shows one eating grass.”

I continued, “Well, guess what? This is the porcupines’ cousin.” I then pronounced it slowly by syllable, “Hedge—hog. Hedgehog.” Zion immediately put his finger on the front cover under the title, *Hedgehogs* (Dunn, 2011), and cautiously repeated, “Hedgehogs.” I wondered what prompted his talking. My observations and his teacher’s input seemed to contradict Zion’s current behavior. I made a great show of praising both Zion’s knowledge concerning the location of the title and his spontaneous repetition. Then I suggested, “Why don’t we learn some stuff about hedgehogs? Would that be ok?” Zion nodded, but made no move open the book. “Why don’t you go ahead?” I prompted. Zion made no move that signaled he might initiate sharing the book. I tried again: “Why don’t you go ahead, Okay?” “Okay,” answered Zion.

Zion spread the book on his lap. I asked him if we should “see what the words say.” He gave me an affirmative nod. I began to read the text: “At dusk”—that means when it gets dark—“hedgehogs—” Zion interrupted and echoed the word *hedgehog*. When I completed the sentence and read, “leave their nest to find food,” he echoed each individual word. “Good job, you read it, too!” I cried. Zion turned the page and looked at me. I took this as my cue to continue reading:

Virginia: “They [hedgehogs] have thick coats” . . . uh, that doesn’t mean like the coat we wear when it’s cold, it means their fur. But, you know, their fur is really like a coat for them! [Laughing] I never thought about that! See, teachers learn things just like kids! [Zion looks at me and nods] Okay. It says that they can have black or brown spines. Do you have on black today? [Zion is wearing black jeans, black shoes, and a black and white-striped polo shirt] What’s black?

Zion: Yah, what's black?

Virginia: [Thinking Zion did not understand my question] Look at your clothes. [Pointing at his shoes and then his pants] What's black?

Zion: I know that my skin's black!

Virginia: [Looking at Zion's hands] H-m-m-m. Is your skin black or is your skin brown?

Zion: [Putting his hands in front of his face] Um, my skin is brown! [Appearing incredulous]

Virginia: That's really weird, isn't it? You're a Black boy, but your skin is brown. [Touching a white stripe on Zion's shirt] I'm a White woman, but is my skin white like this? [Zion shakes his head] No way, Jose! It's light brown. It's a shade of brown. Some people call it *tan*. That's a good one! We're both really brown! [Zion and I start laughing] Well, we were talking about your pants. What color are they?

Zion: Uh, uh, this color is blue!

Virginia: How 'bout black? Black. Look at your shoes.

Zion: Black!

Virginia: [Touching a black stripe in Zion's shirt] And oh, you've got stripes! I love stripes! [Pointing to a black, then a white stripe] These are called *stripes*!

Zion: Black and white stripes!

Virginia: Yes, your shirt has black and white stripes! Just like a—[Zion interrupts]

Zion: Zebra!

Virginia: Bingo! You are right, right, right!

That night I read the transcript of our first session repeatedly. Zion used many complete sentences and, most of the time, they were grammatically correct. I wondered why he didn't talk in class. Further, when he did communicate, instead of his usual "Yah," why didn't he use sentences as he did during our session? Then I tried to think—why would

Zion's language use be different in his classroom? I hypothesized that the number of children (20) in his class might intimidate him. I also speculated that his classroom's short, half-day sessions did not give his teachers enough time to spend with individual children.

During this session, Zion also told me some things about porcupines that appeared to demonstrate higher-level thinking. For example, he explained that porcupines had *quills*, but that these "were bigger than spines [the text stated that hedgehogs had *spines*] and probably sharper, too." In another comparison, he said that hedgehogs ate ants (he saw an ant in one of the photographs), but quickly added that porcupines ate *acorns*. He then reasoned that acorns might make hedgehogs sick because they were a "different kind of animal and can't eat the same kind of food." I found these comparisons logical and given his age, even ventured to guess they were astute.

Last, I thought about the experience Zion and I shared during our comparison of race and skin color. He seemed to understand that physical characteristics (namely, skin) determined race. During our interchange, however, he discovered that the color used to describe his race did not actually describe his skin. Did Zion's incredulous expression indicate that this was his first exposure to the many nuances of the English language?

Highlights of Session Two

Although Zion did not walk beside me on our way to the session (he followed behind me), he appeared enthusiastic about coming with me. In the session, he made a text-to-self connection to his family, expressed his desire to be a "big boy," and interchanged *there* (Standard English) with *dere* (a dialectical or developmentally influenced pronunciation).

When Zion came into class, I told him that it was his day “to go to my office and read books.” He did not comment, but he seemed to find his name tag and put away his folder more quickly than usual. His mother was outside the door and I waved. By the time Zion and I left, she was gone. I wondered whether her departure was deliberate because she did not want Zion to see her.

As we walked, I again greeted children and parents with a smile and “Good morning!” As we made our way down the hall, Zion watched me carefully. He continued to walk behind me and I continued to wait for him to catch up. Once again, we repeated this pattern all the way down the hall. When I thought about this later that day, I realized that, in his class, Zion was required to form a line and follow his teacher whenever they left the classroom. I was a teacher and we were outside of his classroom. I theorized that Zion transferred his classroom procedures to our situation. I guessed that, if I wanted this behavior to change, I needed to explain explicitly to Zion what he could and could not do when he was with me.

Zion again selected his book quickly. It was an informational text about bears. He seemed to remember last week’s routine and I did not need to prompt him to sit down in front of the tape recorder. Zion waited patiently for me to see if the recorder was working correctly and he remembered to say, “Testing, testing, one, two, three. When all was ready, I began our session by saying, “The title of this book is *Bears* (M. Berger & G. Berger, 2010). Can you open the book so that we can get started?” As he did so, I recalled what I had perceived at the time to be Terrell’s hesitancy to ask questions. I told Zion that, as we read the book, he could ask questions. “You know, like ‘What’s that?’ or ‘What’s the bear doing?’ You can also say ‘I don’t know’ if Mrs. Miller asks you

something and you don't know the answer." Zion looked directly at me and seemed to be paying attention; still, he did not respond.

Zion did not seem nervous when he was in my office, nor did he exhibit any behavior that might indicate he did not want to come with me. Earlier, I even guessed that he very much wanted to join me as I watched his hurried completion of classroom tasks. Now, however, he sat down and immediately put both hands in his mouth. I had not seen him do this before and theorized that, for some reason, Zion felt insecure. His hands remained in his mouth until we began to share our book of the day:

Virginia: [Gently removing Zion's hands from his mouth] All right. Remember that what you say is important and I want to hear it, so we can't put our hands in our mouths. I can't understand what you say if you do that.

Zion: Okay.

Virginia: [Opening the book] Look! Here's the first picture. What do you see?

Zion: A big bear and a little bear [Photo shows a female bear and two cubs; Zion points] Dat da big bear and dat's da baby.

Virginia: Oh, the little one is the baby? [Zion nods and I point to the other cub] So who do you think this bear is?

Zion: A daddy one.

Virginia: Daddy? Do you? [Zion nods] Why do you think that's the daddy bear?

Zion: [Adamantly maintaining his opinion] Dat da daddy bear! He go right in dis way.

Virginia: [Photograph shows female standing at the foot of a tree, watching her cubs climb into its limbs] He goes right in this way? Okay. Well, could it be the mama bear?

Zion: No.

Virginia: So you don't think that this might be the mama bear? [Zion shakes his head] Well, do you think this could be the mama bear and her two children? Her two kids?

Zion: [Smiling as if in recognition] Yah!

Virginia: Your mama has two kids, right?

Zion: Yah.

Virginia: You and your what?

Zion: A big boy.

Virginia: Big boy? Who is a big boy?

Zion: Me!

Virginia: I'm sure you are! Well, do you think the two baby bears are like you and your brother?

Zion: Yah.

Virginia: Yes, you and your brother. [Pointing to one of the cubs] So could this be Zion?

Zion: [Breaking into a wide grin] Yah!

Virginia: [Laughing] What's your brother's name? I can't remember it right now.

Zion: [Undecipherable]

Virginia: Please say that again for me.

Zion: Cayden

Virginia: [Pointing to the other cub] So that's Cayden and is the big one your mama?

Zion: Yah!

Virginia: And maybe she took Zion and Cayden out to play?

Zion: Yah!

Virginia: And you know what? Maybe that mama is teaching her kids, her cubs to climb that tree! Do you think so?

Zion: Yah!

Virginia: Just like your mama might take you out to play? Don't you have a playground where you live? [Zion nods] Mrs. Miller can't remember if you have a slide there. Do you have one? You know, a sliding board? [Gestures a sliding movement] You climb up and slide down. [Gesturing both climbing and sliding down] Is there a slide?

Zion: [Undecipherable]

Virginia: I can't hear you with your hands in your mouth. [Zion removes his hands] Good boy, thank you for doing that by yourself. Okay. Is there a slide?

Zion: Yah.

Virginia: Yes, that's what I thought. Maybe, see, like you had to learn to climb up that slide? Maybe Mama Bear is saying [Assuming deep bear voice] 'C'mon, Zion! C'mon, Cayden! Let's climb up that tree!' Think so? [Zion and Virginia begin to laugh] Yes, mamas teach their kids lots of things! [Zion nods]

Later, because Zion pointed at the text and said "What that spell?" I assumed that this phrase meant, "What does that say?" The photograph showed a grizzly bear in the rapids of a stream in pursuit of salmon. All four paws were in the water and its neck was wet. Zion's comment was "Bears catch fish to eat." He then continued, "Look!" He pointed to the bear's neck. The water made it appear stringy, as if was separated into thin spikes. These spikes looked very different from the dry, fuzzy fur on the bear's head. "What do you see, Zion?" I asked. "I don't know!" he replied. I was confused, as from my perspective, I saw nothing but what Zion described: a fishing bear. I was unsure of what he wanted me to notice. But Zion was very insistent, and tapped his finger on the bear's neck. In a frustrated voice, he exclaimed, "There! Right dere!" I did not understand why Zion appeared so agitated. Finally, I thought to suggest that maybe the bear's fur was

stuck together on his neck because it was wet. I grabbed a lock of my hair, twisted it into a thin strand, and explained that this was how my hair looked when it was wet. Then I added, “The water makes it stick together. I think what you see is where the bear’s fur got all wet and stuck together.” Zion appeared satisfied with this explanation.

This session raised several questions. First, I wondered why Zion initially insisted that one of the bear cubs was the “daddy.” I theorized that, if Zion knew the story of *The Three Bears* (Galdone, 1985), he may have made a text-to-text connection because of the three bears in the photograph. Was this why Zion refuted my suggestion that there were two cubs and a female bear in the picture, until I proposed that the bears might represent him, his mother, and his brother? Second, I was curious as to why Zion appeared frustrated when I could not initially identify and explain why the bear’s fur was wet. I theorized that Zion was not happy when others could not understand what he said or meant.

Third, I noted how Zion referred to himself as a “big boy” when I was talking about this mother and his younger brother. I recalled that Terrell also mentioned this term and explained that his mother told him if he didn’t cry when he was hurt, he would be a “big boy.” It appeared that both Zion and Terrell aspired to be big boys. I recalled that the African American mothers enrolled in my home visitation program used “big boy” or “big girl” almost exclusively when praising their children. As I read the transcript of this session, I found that I praised Zion with the words “good boy.” I wondered if he understood that, with my words, I, too, intended to instill a sense of accomplishment and pride.

Finally, I noticed the way that Zion interchanged the Standard English (SE) pronunciation of the word *there* with the dialectical *dere*. Initially, I attributed Zion's habit of replacing *there* with *dere* as a developing language trait. During this session, however, Zion correctly pronounced *there*, followed by *dere* in the same utterance ("There! Right dere!"). Was he speaking in dialect when he said *dere*? Did his use of the SE form *there* come from television, his teacher, or his European American classmates? Was it possible that Zion knew how to code-switch?

Highlights of Session Three

Several things happened in session three: I gave Zion explicit instruction about walking next to me, he used complete sentences, and his mother told me about his placement in a special education classroom the previous year. Before we walked to my office for that third session, I gave Zion some explicit instructions about where he could walk. "It would be nice if you would walk right by my side when we go to my office, Zion! Can you show me where *beside me* is?" Zion then stood at my side "Thank you, Zion! Is this okay with you?" He nodded. As usual, he paid close attention to me as I greeted others. When we arrived at my office, Zion walked straight to the non-fiction book tub and took out several books. He carefully looked at the front cover of each. He then chose one about turtles. That night, after reading the transcript of this session, I was surprised at the number of complete sentences that Zion used and made a list.

- That's a big turtle.
- Turtle shells are made out of bone.
- There's his shell.
- He has a big shell.

- Look at this one!
- He eat a fish!
- He gonna eat him
- The turtles are hatching.
- Or I like this one.
- I like the green one.

I then decided to go back through the transcript again to determine whether Zion's sentences were the result of spontaneous language or whether they were answers to questions. I found that only three of the ten were responses. The remaining seven were comments Zion made about what he found interesting. I wondered if his motivation to make comments was because he turned the book's pages at his own discretion and we talked about his choice of topics.

The list of Zion's sentences also motivated me to tell his mother how excited I was that he was proactively using language. I saw Zion's mother the next morning and when I told her about Zion, a look of relief passed over her face. She then told me about Zion's placement in a PDD class the previous year. She related that Zion entered the class because of a language delay. Further, she explained that the school took him out of the special education class and mainstreamed him into the 4-K program "because they [his teachers] thought he might be okay."

Our conversation left me wondering about Zion's year in the special classroom. Did the time spent there strongly nurture his language development? Were our one-on-one sessions more like his experiences the previous year? Did the structure and practices used during our time together more closely resemble those of his former class? I also

wondered if the structure, practices, and number of students in his current class inhibited his use of language in the classroom.

Highlights of Sessions Five Through Seven

During sessions five through seven, Zion began to spontaneously greet other students and adults. He demonstrated knowledge of syntactical forms (present participles) and expressed his desire to “read the book.” He appeared to seek approval that his picture reading was accurate and/or that I agreed with him.

Our next session began routinely, but once in the hallway, Zion saw a classmate. As the child passed, Zion turned and said, “Good morning!” An older boy approached us. Zion looked at him and again said, “Good morning!” He greeted two more children and by then we were in front of my door. Instead of coming in, Zion headed for the school’s front lobby, just beyond my office. I did not understand what he intended to do, but I did see a woman standing there. I assumed she was the mother of a student. When Zion was directly in front of her, he greeted her. She appeared very surprised, looked down at Zion and exclaimed, “Well, good morning to you, too!” Smiling broadly, Zion strode back to the doorway.

As soon as we entered the room, I shouted: “Woo hoo! Aren’t you the big boy today! Wow! Pow! Zow! That was a very nice thing to do and I’m sure that everyone you greeted thought you were a big boy, too! I’m so proud of you that I’m going to do my Happy Dance!” I then began to jump up and down, twirl around, and wave my hands above my head as I chanted, “I’m happy, happy, happy! Zion made me happy! I’m proud, proud, proud! Zion made me proud. He can say ‘good morning,’ he can say ‘good morning,’ he can say ‘good morning, yes, he can!’” The next morning, Zion

walked into the classroom, looked straight into my eyes and said “Good morning!” After I returned his greeting, I stood back and watched as he said the same thing to each of his teachers.

This event seemed to provide a measure of confidence for Zion. At our next meeting, he chose a non-fiction book entitled *Chickens* (Clay, 2013). The front cover showed a rooster, a hen, and several chicks gathered as a family group. He held the book out for me to see and told me it was a “rooster book.” When I asked, “What’s a rooster?” He replied, “A chicken.” Then I took the book from him and pointed at the rooster. “Okay, this one is a rooster and he is the what? “Daddy!” was his immediate reply. Then I asked him in turn about the hen and the chicks. When he named all according to their family designation (daddy, mama, babies), he took the book out of my hands. I told him, “Yah, you just take right over with that book! Go for it!” Zion did not comment.

On the first page, he pointed at a hen’s bright red comb and said, “What’s that? A few pages later, he tapped his finger on a rooster’s wattle and demanded, “I wanna know what’s that!” On yet another page, he ignored my question about a hen and peered at a brood of chicks. He pointed at three and related them to his family: “This one is Zion, and this Xavier [?] and this Cayden.” I pointed at the hen and asked, “Who’s this?” “The mama,” he replied. I began to talk about how mothers care for their children when Zion stopped me and said, “I wanna turn the page now.”

I wondered if Zion’s statement about turning the page indicated that he was becoming more confident. I also wondered if some of the concepts and syntactic skills he demonstrated were new or whether they were already in his funds of knowledge. For example, he looked at a photograph of a large group of hens. He pointed at several in

turn and explained that “H-m-m, this one big, and this one medium, anda, this one bigger. This one, uh, this one the baby!” I did not understand this last comment because the photograph did not include any chicks, so I asked, “How do you know this is a baby?” His reply: “Because this [pointing at the hen’s wattle] is smaller!”

Zion requested that I read to him more and more often. Pointing at the text, he continued to phrase his request as “What’s that spell?” One time he did this several times in a row.

- Zion: [Discussing a book about opossums] There are little babies!
- Virginia: Yes! [Baby opossums are hanging upside down from their mother’s tail] What’s mama doing?
- Zion: She onna branch.
- Virginia: Yes, she is and—[Zion interrupts]
- Zion: What they [baby opossums] doing?
- Virginia: What do you think?
- Zion: [Pointing at the text] What that spell?
- Virginia: What do you think they’re doing, Zion?
- Zion: [Again points at the text] Uh, what that spell?
- Virginia: How about a guess?
- Zion: [Sounding frustrated] I don’t know what they doing!
- Virginia: Good for you, Zion! It’s always okay to say “I don’t know.” But it’s also okay to take a guess. Sometimes we might be wrong, but lots of times we are right and we can find out things for ourselves!

I hypothesized that Zion wanted to be sure that what he said about the photograph was correct. For this reason, he asked that I read the text before he risked giving an opinion.

I speculated that Zion was using language to exercise more agency during our sessions than he did in the classroom.

Walking to our next session, he walked beside me and tugged at his shirt. “Look!” he cried. I looked and saw that he was wearing a colorful shirt that had several large robots on the front. Holding out his shirt, he exclaimed, “Robots!” “Well, Zion, what are those robots doing?” I asked. “Running and jumping!” was his quick answer. I tried purposely to elicit action verbs from Zion. I not only heard two such verbs, but in addition, I heard them used as present participles. I was not sure I had heard him use this verb tense before. I thought that his use of verbs was a good measure of his language development, as their acquisition and use usually happened later in a child’s language learning trajectory. Further, I guessed that his use of past participles indicated that Zion knew how to use verbs in several ways that made his words more grammatically accurate. In a subsequent walk to my office, Zion looked up at me saying, “Look! My shirt has a jar of bugs on it! [Tapping his chest] Look! There’s a ant and there’s a fly and there’s a roach, and there’s a spider!”

On the same day Zion told me about the jar on his shirt, I decided to ask him a question he had not yet heard: “Well, Zion, what are we going to do with the book today?” Zion did not hesitate and responded, “I gonna read the book!” and so we began our session:

Virginia: Oh, you’re going to read the book? Very good! Okay. Let me move this [recorder] out of your way. Can you put the book where I can see it, too? [Zion complies] Thank you! Okay, now I’m your audience! That means the person who’s listening. Okay, Zion, go right ahead!

Zion: [Front cover shows a fox staring straight ahead and Zion invents a title] The fox is lookin.’ [Looks at me for approval]

- Virginia: [Laughing with delight] You are very good at reading! I love the title. The fox is looking. Yes!
- Zion: [Turns page that shows another fox looking straight ahead, but his head is at a different angle] He is looking around. [Zion turns the page where the photograph shows a fox in autumn. A branch of leaves is draped over its back and the leaves extend parallel to its mouth. One of the leaves looks like it is in the fox's mouth] The fox is looking for food. Uh, the leaf [Zion stops reading]
- Virginia Tell me more about the fox's food.
- Zion: Fox don't eat leaves!
- Virginia: [Not understanding why Zion said this] No, uh they don't, uh [looking at the photograph closely] Oh my goodness! It does look like he's eating the leaves. It looks exactly like he's eating the leaves! [Talking to myself because I can't believe this] Zion, you're right, yes, you're right! Foxes do not eat leaves!
- Zion: [Turning the page] What's that spell?

I wondered why Zion stopped picture reading the book and asked me to continue. My first guess was that he was not accustomed to assuming the sole responsibility for a narrative and was too intimidated to continue. I also theorized that the photograph of the fox and Zion's interpretation that it was eating leaves made him question what he thought was factual. For example, it certainly appeared that the fox was eating leaves in the photograph, but Zion's knowledge of foxes contradicted this image and he adamantly maintained that they did not. For this reason, he wanted information from the text to verify that his interpretations made sense or, perhaps more significantly, were correct.

Highlights of Sessions Eight Through Fourteen

In the last half of our sessions together, Zion revealed his growing interest in using language to both effectively communicate and accurately convey his meaning to others. This became apparent as he (a) spontaneously corrected his pronunciations, (b) began to practice his word pronunciation using the tape recorder, (c) mimicked my use of

gesture to help me understand his pronunciation when I failed repeatedly to do so, (d) demonstrated a growing interest in new vocabulary, (e) began to use new vocabulary independently, (f) began to interrupt me to voice his opinion or to refute mine, (g) demonstrated his sense of humor, and (h) ignored me in his classroom after our sessions ended.

I continued to speculate that Zion asked me to read text because in most cases, this helped him make sense of what he saw. I also theorized that he was beginning to understand that photographs and other visuals could be misleading. For example, one day, we shared a book about opossums. We looked at a photograph of an adult sitting with its tail curled around the branch of a tree. Zion initiated the following discussion:

- Zion: That's a big *possole*!
- Virginia: [Noting the mispronunciation] It is a big possum. [Repeating the sentence for emphasis] Yes, it is a big *possum*.
- Zion: Possum!
- Virginia: Thank you for fixing that word!
- Zion: He gonna turn around.
- Virginia: Tell me some more about that.
- Zion: Uh, he a-climbin' and a-climbin'.
- Virginia: Uh-huh, he's climbing in the tree. And what's he doing with his tail?
- Zion: He hold da tree.
- Virginia: You're absolutely right! Good eyes! You looked carefully!
- Zion: Whus dat? [Zion points to a long, tapered, purple stripe that extends from the photograph to the bottom of the page. It looks like a purple tail extending out from behind the photograph. The line eventually encases the page number.]

- Virginia: [Pointing] That? Oh, that's just part of the page, it's just a decoration. [Pointing again] See, there's the page number. It points to the page number and then it goes around it [Tracing it with my finger] That's just a, uh, a decoration to help us find the page number. It's kind of like a picture frame [Pointing to the framed photographs on my desk] See, the frame helps us see the picture better. See how it goes all the way around—[Zion interrupts]
- Zion: That look like a tail! A purple tail! Yah, a purple tail! Maybe a purple animal!
- Virginia: Yes, it certainly does look like a tail! It sure does look like it might belong to a purple animal, doesn't it? [Zion nods] You are absolutely right!
- Zion: [Turns the page and points at the page number encased in a similar graphic] That's page eleven!
- Virginia: Oh! Wow! Right! It's page eleven! I didn't know you knew your numbers!

I noted that, with explanation, Zion was quickly able to change his perspective of the graphic, recognize it, and use it purposefully.

A few weeks later, Zion again sought clarification of a photograph. We were sharing a book about bats and Zion lingered on a photograph of a very small bat cradled in a glove-protected hand. The bat's wings were wrapped tightly around its body; Zion commented, "He, he, got the baby." I responded that the bat in the photograph actually did look like a baby, which led to the following conversation:

- Virginia: Why do you think this is a baby bat?
- Zion: It have no wings.
- Virginia: No, it doesn't look like it has wings. So you think maybe the babies are born without wings and they have to grow when the bat gets bigger?
- Zion: Yes!

Virginia: Well, I'm thinking that all bats have wings, but this one has his wrapped around him like this [demonstrating with my arms] so we can't really see them.

Zion: [Staring intently at the photograph] Yah, yah, got some wings.

[Later in the same session, both Zion and I were confounded by another photograph. It showed a bat hanging upside down. Next to the bat was a small, dark, cylindrical object.]
Zion began our discussion:

Zion: Dis one got it for dis one. He fly and push in stomach.

Virginia: Fly and push in his stomach?

Zion: Yah. Let that [Undecipherable]

Virginia: Let's turn this [book] over 'cause he's hanging upside down. Let's turn the book like this and maybe we can see his face. H-m-m. Okay. [Pointing] That looks like his mouth, right? [Zion nods] There's his ears. What's. . . Mrs. Miller is having trouble figuring out what this is [pointing to the grape-like object]. Uh, maybe, uh, maybe a grape!

Zion: I don't know what dat is!

Virginia: Gosh, Zion, I don't know either! Maybe the words will tell us. Shall we find out?

Zion: Yah.

Virginia: [Pointing] This looks like ice [surrounding the bat].

Zion: Ice.

Virginia: So, he's probably someplace cold, but I can't figure out what . . . uh, I better read this! [Reading the text] "Most female"—that means *girl*—"bats give birth while hanging upside down. They catch their"—baby bats are called *pups*—"pups in their folded wings." Okay! Now I get it! See, Mrs. Miller read the words and they helped her understand what was happening in the picture. This is a mama bat and she has just had her baby! That's a baby bat—that little thing that looks like a grape. She caught it with one of her wings. So he wouldn't fall. And he's all curled up like this [Curling myself into a ball to demonstrate] 'cause he was just born, just born! He's brand new, Zion! The words helped us understand the picture, didn't they? [Zion nods slowly]

As we tried to understand the photograph, Zion seemed to have difficulty expressing his ideas and at one point, his language became undecipherable. I theorized that he used a great deal of mental energy trying to comprehend the photograph. As he channeled this energy, I wondered if he experienced a cognitive overload and struggled to maintain his language skills.

Over time, I observed that Zion showed increasing interest in correct pronunciation and using new vocabulary. When we shared a book about nocturnal animals, the word *nocturnal* appeared in a large font. I pointed to it and said, “See this word right here? It says *noc-tur-nal*. *Nocturnal*. Zion repeated “*Noc-turtle*.” Some weeks prior to this, I started to play back the recorder so Zion could hear himself practice saying the new “big word” and found that he loved this activity. I tried hard not to laugh and said, “Good job! *Noc-turnal*,” stressing the last syllable. “Big word,” I added. Zion picked up the tape recorder microphone. “Oh, good idea! You can practice with the mike and we’ll replay it so you can hear your voice. Go ahead!” Taking a deep breath, Zion said, “Mac, *mac-turnal*!” I responded, “Right! *Noc-turnal*! You sure worked hard on that one!” Near the end of this book, Zion saw a picture of a skunk. He hesitated and then declared that it was a “*stunk*”! I laughed and as if understanding his error’s double meaning, Zion joined me.

Many times, I used gestures to help Zion understand the meaning of words, but in a session that featured a book about goats, he used them to help me.

Virginia: [At the end of the session] Sweetheart, come over here. You did a great job! I’m so proud of you and you should be proud of you, too! Did you like the book about goats?

Zion: Yah.

Virginia: Can you tell me what you like about it?

Zion: I like da goat be-because fweese the goat.

Virginia: They do what to the goat?

Zion: They fweese the goat.

Virginia: Freeze?

Zion: No, I say *fweese* it!

Virginia: [Muttering under my breath in an attempt to understand Zion] Fweese, tweeze, breeze—

Zion: [Patiently continues to try to help me understand] I say fwee— [attempts a different pronunciation] uh, flee—Look! [Zion makes a fist and demonstrates a squeezing motion] Uh, I say *shreeze* it. [Silently moving his mouth] Squ-eeze! *Squeeze* it!

Virginia: Oh, my goodness! Squeeze! Of course! Mrs. Miller must have her ears on backwards today! Oh, Zion, you tried so hard to make me understand! And you did it! You said it just right! Hooray, hooray, hooray! Zion is a Super Hero!

Zion: [Nodding and smiling broadly] Yah, I gonna *squeeze* a goat!

Virginia: And just why would you do that?

Zion: ‘Cause I gonna get milk!

Virginia: Oh-h-h-h! You like goats because you can milk them! And squeeze them! Yep, yep, yep, you can milk goats just like you milk a cow! Holey moley! [Zion starts to laugh] You are so smart, Zion! [Zion nods in agreement and I start to laugh] I can’t believe you! You think you’re smart, too? [Zion nods] Yes, you are! Do you know I told your mama how smart you were?

Zion: Yah!

Virginia: Oh-h-h, yes! I told her how well you’re using your words!

Zion: Yah!

As our sessions ended, I began to observe Zion self-correct his mispronunciations without my intervention. For example, he made the statement, “I *yike* [like] this one” immediately followed by “I *like* this one.” At another session, he began to talk about a

flamingo and called it a *damingo*. I interrupted only long enough to say *flamingo* and Zion continued his narrative. Later, he found another bird and started to compare it with the flamingo and said, “Well, the damingo, uh, no, no, the *famingo*, uh, *fla-min-go* is bigger.”

In addition to correcting his own mispronunciations, Zion was developing an interest in the vocabulary we discussed and wanted to use it to clarify his descriptions and ideas. For example, in three different sessions, we talked about the words *stripe*, *hook*, and *hatching*. In one of those sessions, I commented on the white and black stripes on Zion’s polo shirt. Later, he described a caterpillar saying, “He got yellow, black, red and white *stripes*. He used another vocabulary word when we were looking at a picture of a bat that had speared a small apple with its claw. Zion could not understand how the bat managed to grasp the apple and said, “How he do that?” Zion and I had previously discussed fishhooks and how their shape helped to catch fish. As I prepared to explain about the bat catching the apple, I curved one of my fingers into a hook to illustrate the bat’s claw. Immediately, Zion exclaimed, “Oh, it make a *hook*! That’s how he got it! He *hooked* it!” Similarly, in one of our earliest sessions, the word *hatching* appeared in a book about turtles. Later, when Zion chose to read a book about chickens, he saw a group of chicks next to a nest and told me, “Oh! They come out of the eggs. They cracked the eggs. They, uh, *hatched*!”

A few weeks before our sessions ended, Zion seemed more willing to talk to and with me. He was using complete sentences, and had increased his grasp of grammatical conventions such verb tenses. He was also demonstrating an interest in vocabulary and a strong desire to pronounce words correctly. I remembered how he began to practice the

pragmatic function of language when he learned to greet others and look at them when engaged in conversation. I surmised that, on some level, he was beginning to understand the nuances of language and that he could not take everything literally. Zion's transcripts indicated that he was beginning to interrupt me to voice his opinion and that he sometimes refuted the explanations I gave him. For example, when Zion studied a photograph of a mother skunk and her offspring, curled together in their den, he said:

Zion: What are dese doing?

Virginia: Well, it looks like all of them are curled up asleep.

Zion: Maybe not sleep!

Virginia: Maybe not!

Further, I theorized that there were rules in the culture of school and in our sessions that Zion did not readily intuit. I recalled giving him several explicit demonstrations and explanations of behaviors that I assumed he understood. For example, I recollected that I told him about standing next to me when we walked down the hall. I particularly remembered giving Zion permission to laugh. For example, during a discussion about kangaroos, I explained to Zion how a kangaroo might be dangerous. He then asked if a bear could eat a kangaroo. I answered:

You know what? If it's big enough, it could eat a kangaroo. You're right! Usually, the kangaroos can go boinka, boinka, boink [making hopping gestures] and get away, but if the bear was big enough, yes, it could get a kangaroo because bears have very sharp teeth and kangaroos don't. They protect themselves with their feet. [Demonstrating] They can lay back like this—here, Mrs. Miller will show you---those big ol' feet are strong and—I don't want to kick you—but they lay back like that and they go [kicking with each word] Boom! Boom! Boom! [Zion starts to laugh, then looks at me apologetically and stops] Yah, I'll bet I look funny! [I start to laugh] I know I do! You can laugh, Okay? I do look funny and it's okay to laugh, Zion!

After that day, Zion and I started to laugh more and more. For example, at one point during our discussion of the book about bats, I was attempting to explain the meaning of the word *swoop*.

Virginia: Okay. Watch Mrs. Miller's hand [Making swooping gestures] This means to swoop. Can you do it? [Zion complies and begins to laugh]. Very good! All right. If my hand is the bat, or your hand is the bat, here's the bat swooping. See, he goes flyin' along and then he goes—[Zion interrupts]

Zion: [I continue the swooping gesture; Zion says "woo" each time I move my hand] Woo! Woo! Woo! [Zion and I both laugh hard]

Virginia: [Still laughing] Well, I guess we see a lot of bats at Halloween that say "woo," don't we? You are too funny, Zion!

In one session, we talked about opossums and looked at a photograph that showed one pretending to be dead. I explained this behavior and the term *playing possum* to Zion. Then, feeling a bit zany, I said, "See, I'm playing possum!" I closed my eyes, dropped my head, and stuck out my tongue in the corner of my mouth. Peals of laughter filled my office and Zion could not seem to stop. His laughter fueled mine and when both of us finally caught our breath, he said, "Look! Look at me!" I'm playin' possum, too! He then copied my actions exactly. Not surprisingly, more peals of laughter followed.

I observed another change in Zion's behavior. After we had our last session together, I made this journal entry:

This is the last day before Spring break and Zion and I met for the last time. There is a definite sense of freedom and casualness in the air. Per our custom, all teachers are dressed in jeans, which are normally not allowed. Zion walked into my office and went directly to the tape recorder. He took it down and proceeded to turn it on. When asked to rewind it first, he knew exactly how to stop it and then rewind. He also remembered that he had to push two buttons to record, but only one to play back. While I so welcome this confidence in Zion, there were moments today when he was just on the edge of being non-compliant. His voice and affect were very flat as well. His teachers report that in class last week, he acted out twice. Both said they were 'shocked.' Once he turned his back and put his hands over his ears when he did not want to participate in a whole group

activity. Gosh, I thought Zion changed, but not for the worst! Miss Taylor said he also has begun to tattle on classmates. I saw an example of this today when I observed him leave the rug without permission, approach the teacher, and say 'Tyler's lookin' at me!' In one sense, I was elated that Zion tattled. It said to me that he thought enough of himself to want the harassment or whatever it was that was going on stopped. Of course, I am also wondering about all the individual attention and choices he had with me and I'm thinking that while these choices seemed to encourage his language, he may now expect the same kind of freedom in his classroom. I could assure him that this will not be the case. The thought also crossed my mind that he is mad at me. I took Terrell in his place last week as I found out Terrell is moving and I wanted to make sure we got to do our 14th session before he left. Zion had a hard time understanding why he had to give up his turn and was definitely not a happy camper! I am hoping that he is just as tired as I am and like all of us, very ready for this break!

Although I completed my research study sessions with Zion, I still saw him in the classroom almost daily. He did not single me out for conversation, nor did he greet me. In fact, his demeanor reminded me of my impression of him at the beginning of the year. I also was concerned because I thought his affect was still flat. When it was time for me to leave their classroom, the children were always on the rug ready to begin their community time. As I left, Zion consistently turned around and stared at me as though waiting to see if, even at the very last moment, I would gesture for him to come with me. One day, as I closed the door, I glanced through the window and saw that he was still staring after me. I talked to his teacher after school about this and she said, "I think Zion really misses the time you spent with him. He always came back with a smile." I sighed and lamented, "Well, these days, his eyes say a lot more to me than his mouth."

Chapter VI: Portrait Three—Kanai

Introduction

Kanai did not enter his 4–K classroom until the third week of October. Because he had registered late, there was no more room in the class and he was put on a waiting list. Since his screening scores were the lowest among the children on this list, Kanai was eligible to receive the first available opening.

When I first observed Kanai, I guessed that he was a confident, purposeful, and determined child. He walked into the classroom in a business-like manner and then went about his initial tasks methodically. He never called attention to himself, nor did he appear unfriendly or withdrawn. He seemed to appreciate order and appeared comfortable following a sequenced agenda like the one in place in his classroom. He was tall, very thin, and gave the impression of being older than he was.

Four years earlier, his sister, Ky’Lasia, was in the 4–K class. Because of this, Kanai’s teachers and I knew his mother. Using Kanai’s daily take-home folder, I sent his mother a note, explaining that I wanted Kanai to be a part of my research study. She promptly returned the paperwork, granting her permission; my sessions with Kanai began the following week.

Highlights of Session One

In our first session together, Kanai asked to read a book that was not among those offered to him, but rather, was a part of a personal book display on a shelf near my desk. He also conventionally retold and matched his narrative to the cumulative structure of a text by means of his interpretation of its illustrations.

On our first day together, Kanai walked beside me down the hall. He did not talk, nor did he acknowledge his sister's classroom as we passed. When we entered my office, he immediately spied my large plush toy, Mr. Frog, and asked about the book that was propped against it. I told him that the title of the book was *Jump Frog Jump* (Kalan, 1981). It was a cumulative tale and its title was a repetitive phrase that appeared predictably in the text. I was glad to see Kanai's interest—I theorized that it might eventually be a good book for him to retell. I also remembered that this book had its dust cover taped on upside down. I then explained the book tubs and invited Kanai to browse through them and make a selection. Kanai turned back to the toy, picked up *Jump Frog Jump*, and asked, "Can I read this one?" I assured him that he could always choose what book we shared.

I did not want Kanai to be confused or flustered, so I thought I should tell him about the dust cover. I explained, "Now this book is called a *fooler* because (pointing at the dust cover) this is on backwards." Kanai responded, "Oh, so it upside down?" "Why, uh yes, yes it is." I replied, "You're right! I never thought about that before! It's backwards and it's upside down! H-m-m, good thinking, Kanai!" I handed the book to him and he said, "I read a book to you!" "Fab-u-lous!" I laughed. He opened the book and hesitated. I prompted, "What do you think is going on here? What do you think

[pointing at the text] those words might say? What does the picture tell you about what is happening?”

The first illustration in the book showed a dripping dragonfly, crawling up a tall water plant that was growing in a pond. A frog watched the dragonfly. Kanai began:

Uh, uh ‘squito eatin’ leaves! And a little water on him tail. Dis frog swim in dis water. [Kanai turns the page, sees the dragonfly at the top of the water plant.] Then the frog jump up on it and try to eat it. [Kanai turns the page, sees a fish.] The fish look at him. An’ da fish scare away da frog. [Turns another page, sees the fish chasing the frog, frog leaping toward a log, snake peering down from a tree. Kanai repeats:] An’ da fish scare away da frog. Anna snake scare away a fish. [Turns page: snake dives under the water and only his tail shows.] Den da turtle, uh den da snake go under da water and den da turtle was getting mad at him for go he under water cause’ snakes can’t go under da water. An’ den da turtle scare away the frog.

Most of Kanai’s interpretation of the illustrations closely matched the cumulative structure of the text. I did not think he had heard the book read in his classroom, as I knew his teacher usually introduced this book in the spring when she taught a unit on pond life. When I asked him if he had ever seen the book, he replied, “I don’t know dis book!”

As the story continued, the three boys trapped the turtle and the frog in a net, but the frog managed to escape. Kanai explained, “Den dese little kids have dis turtle. And den dey got out da boat and dey, dey look at da frog. One of da kids say uh, ‘how do you catch that?’” The illustration also showed the boys carrying a basket, which Kanai described as a *basket pickle* [picnic basket]. I wondered how many children his age would use a little-used term like picnic basket to describe the illustration. I also thought that, maybe Kanai surmised that the pond and its surroundings might be a good place for a picnic, or perhaps he and his family had enjoyed such a picnic in the past. When he finished the book, I asked Kanai what he liked about it:

- Virginia: What did you like about [the book]? Can you tell me?
- Kanai: The frog trap the turtle!
- [In the illustration, the turtle is tangled in the net, but the frog leaps over it.]
- Virginia: You like it because the frog trapped the turtle.
- Kanai: Yah, and he so small!
- Virginia: He was so small? Who was so small, the frog or the turtle?
- Kanai: Frog.
- Virginia: [Thinking I understood what Kanai might be expressing] Oh! Maybe you're thinking it was kind of strange because the frog was smaller than the turtle, but he was able to trap it. Is that it?
- Kanai: [Nodding his head vigorously] Yah! Turtle shoulda trap da frog!
- Virginia: [Very emphatic] The turtle should have trapped the frog! Wow! Yes, because he was the bigger, stronger one, right? [Kanai nods] You're so smart, Kanai! I never thought about that before and I've read this story lots of times!

Highlights of Session Two

In session two, Kanai made his book selection independently and without explicit permission from me. He also demonstrated conceptual understanding of a text's storyline and supplied the novel word *sledding* to describe an illustration.

The next time we met, Kanai walked into my office and went directly to the book tub. It reminded me of the direct and focused attitude he displayed when following classroom procedures. He chose a book called *Snowmen at Night* (Buehner, 2005), which was about a young boy who made a snowman, only to find it looking bedraggled and without its hat and mittens the next morning. The boy in the story thought this was mysterious. The text and illustrations revealed that all the neighborhood snowmen came alive at night and traveled down the street to a nearby park where they drank hot

chocolate and enjoyed winter sports. When dawn appeared, they trudged back to their yards—tired, unkempt, and missing a few articles of clothing.

When Kanai commented on this book, I theorized that he knew something about snow and its potential effect on humans and snowmen. For example, he reasoned that the snowman's missing mittens and hat were a consequence of melting: "Because da snowman 'bout to melt." Then, perhaps making a connection to what happens to humans in the cold, he told me that the snowmen were having hot chocolate because "da snowman was shakin'." I theorized that Kanai was less knowledgeable about winter sports. When he saw the snowmen lying prone after falling while ice skating, he reasoned that "all them asleep and look at da sars [stars]." However, it did seem that he was familiar with the idea that sports might involve a lot of noise. For example, as we looked at an illustration of the frolicking snowmen, I asked Kanai why the snowmen played at night. He told me, "They so up, nobody couldn't sleep. 'Cause they makin' too much racken [racket] noise!"

In this same illustration, was a bright yellow circle that represented the moon; Kanai looked at it and said, "But it gettin' sunny now." I hypothesized that this might indicate Kanai's developmental stage of drawing and, for him, a yellow circle likely symbolized the sun. Later in the session, however, he conventionally interpreted the illustration of the snowmen tobogganing and supplied the word *sledding*: "And they were sledding. Down da ice, down da snow hill!" Because he lived in a geographical area where sledding was not possible, I assumed that sledding was a novel word; I wondered how Kanai came to retrieve it and use it to describe the illustration.

Highlights of Session Five

In session five, Kanai began to picture read in complete sentences. He demonstrated that he could construct compound sentences and he related text content to his own experiences. Like Terrell, Kanai seemed to enjoy the independence that picture reading afforded him. As usual, in this session, Kanai went straight to the book tub, made his selection, and told me, "I read to you." I was particularly eager for Kanai to begin this session because his choice, *Peter's Chair* (Keats, 1998), was a book that Terrell also chose.

Kanai made no mention of the book title or the title page. He opened the book to the first page of text and began his narrative. He did not stop until he completed the book. I heard many complete sentences and decided to make a list:

- This little boy went an', uh build this blocks, uh outa blocks.
- He play with his toy alligator.
- And den him [the dog] knock over him [Peter's] blocks.
- And then they nothin' to do and then he saw his mama getting da baby.
- He wanna play wid da baby.
- He got nothin' to do, so he just get the baby and play with it.
- Den he goin' out da door.
- Den he grab da chair.
- The dog was chasing him and the dog tried to lick him.
- He don't got nothin' to do so he look at da baby.
- He try to sit in the chair, but it too little.
- Den da boy was hiding somewhere else.

- He playin' *Hide and Go Seek*.
- Then he ate dinner.
- And he paint a chair.

Kanai used fifteen complete sentences; some of them were compound and he used those to express more than one idea at a time. To others, he added clauses to create complex sentences that clarified and elaborated on his ideas. I hypothesized that a more knowledgeable other (Vygotsky, 1962) had talked regularly with Kanai and, in so doing, supported his language acquisition and development. Later in the session, I asked Kanai if he played games like the book's main character, Peter.

Virginia: Do you play games like Peter did?

Kanai: Yah, at da park.

Virginia: Oh, you go to the park? [Kanai nods] Who takes you to the park?

Kanai: My dad.

Virginia: Oh, now nice! [Kanai nods.] What do you do at the park?

Kanai: Uh, go down the slide.

Virginia: Oh, you like the slide! [Kanai nods] So do I! [Kanai looks incredulous] Big people can go on slides if the slides are big enough! What else do you do at the park?

Kanai: Play tag.

Virginia: Play tag? Who plays tag with you?

Kanai: My friend and my cousin and my sister.

Virginia: Oh, Ky'Lasia [Kanai's older sister] goes to the park, too? [Kanai nods] Does your daddy play with you?

Kanai: Yah.

Virginia: Does he play tag with you? [Kanai smiles and nods, and I laugh] That's great! When do you go to the park? Uh, on Saturday, uh, on the weekend?

Kanai: On da day, um-m-m, Wednesdays.

Virginia: Oh, you go on Wednesdays. Well, that's just great. I'll bet you have fun! Well, sir, you did a great job telling me about this book. You are a very good reader, did you know that? [Kanai smiles] You like coming here? [Kanai nods vigorously] Well, I like having you come here with me! You are a super star! Do you want to turn this [tape recorder] off? [Kanai nods] Okay. Just push the red button.

When I read the transcript of this session, I guessed that Kanai's father might be an important more knowledgeable other for Kanai. I also discovered that, for the most part, Kanai's interpretation of the illustrations was much like Terrell's. I wondered if this was because the book's main character, Peter, was also an African American preschooler like Kanai and Terrell. I also theorized that neither of the boys understood that the book was about the jealousy Peter felt regarding his new baby sister. Further, I guessed that neither boy knew that the colors pink and blue were sometimes used to designate gender; nor did they realize that, as Peter watched his father paint his blue baby chair pink, he came to understand that his furniture was being given to the new baby.

A change in the boys' interpretations occurred when Kanai began to talk about Peter hiding from his mother. He stated, "But him mother saw wheres at [his mother saw him] under da curtain. Den da boy was hidin' somewhere else. He playin' *Hide and Go Seek!*" I surmised that it was unusual for a child in Kanai's circumstances to know an old children's game like *Hide and Go Seek*. It was an outdoor game and many children in our school's attendance area were not allowed to play outside for various reasons.

However, I knew that Kanai and his sister went to their grandmother's house after school

and I knew that their grandmother had a large yard. Did Kanai's grandmother teach him the game? I recalled that Kanai had told me that his father played tag with him—did they play *Hide and Go Seek*, too?

Highlights of Session Six

During session six, Kanai (a) independently assumed complete responsibility for recording our sessions; (b) demonstrated his knowledge of various print conventions; (c) spontaneously repeated a new vocabulary word, replicating my pronunciation; (d) used the novel word *puma*; and (e) told a spontaneous and highly imaginative story about a trip to the beach.

Kanai now independently assumed the responsibility for the tape recorder. To my surprise, he did not need further instruction. Like everything he did, he prepared for our session in quiet competence. When all was ready, Kanai chose a non-fiction book titled *Deadly Creatures* (de la Bedoyere, 2007). This was the only time that Kanai chose an informational text.

Kanai sat looking at the front cover of his chosen book. He looked with interest at one of the letters and began to trace it with his finger. He exclaimed, "That's my name!" "Yes," I responded, "That's right! Your eyes did a good job finding that letter! It is the first letter of your name! Well, this book is about dangerous animals. [Kanai repeated the word *dangerous*] Wow! Dan-ger-ous! Right! Thank you for trying that new word! Okay, what kind of animals do you think are dangerous?" Kanai then stated that both sharks [featured on the front cover] and tigers were dangerous. He explained that sharks were dangerous because they had sharp teeth and that tigers were dangerous

because “them got long hair and try and scare everybody.” I guessed that Kanai was confusing tigers with lions.

Kanai continued to identify dangerous animals. I was surprised when he mentioned a *puma*, as I did not expect him to be familiar with this word. When I asked him, “What’s a puma?” Kanai looked at me matter-of-factly and explained, “A puma is a[n] animal!” When I asked the color of a puma, Kanai got up, walked to a shelf, pointed to a donkey puppet, and said, “Like that.” “Oh, you mean that pumas are brown like the donkey?” I asked. Kanai nodded his head. I wondered how Kanai had mastered and used a novel word like *puma*, but did not seem to know the common word *brown*.

Kanai then told me that pumas were dangerous because they had *shark* teeth. I did not know if he mispronounced *sharp* or if he meant that pumas had teeth like a shark’s. I guessed that he meant *sharp* when he pointed at an alligator puppet. “What are you pointing at, Kanai?” I asked. I wondered why he did not immediately label the puppet because I remembered that he correctly identified a toy alligator in the book, *Peter’s Chair*. “Uh, alligator!” he replied at once. Without me asking, Kanai then explained why alligators were dangerous: “Cause them got shark teeth, too!” “Thank you for using your words, Kanai!” I complimented, “and thank you for telling me why alligators are dangerous!”

Since we were still discussing the front cover of the book, I suggested to Kanai that he open the book. Kanai opened to the title page. It featured a single photograph of a lizard with a tightly coiled tail. Kanai exclaimed, “Tha-that’s a snake!” We then discussed the photograph:

Virginia: It does look like a snake, Kanai. But look [pointing at the lizard’s front legs]. Does this animal have legs? [Kanai nods] Yes! Do

snakes have legs? [Kanai shakes his head] No. No, snakes don't have legs. So, what do you think that might be?

Kanai: It got a tail.

Virginia: It does have a tail. A long one. It's all curled up and it kinda looks like a snake.

Kanai: I think it's a lizard.

Virginia: I think you're right! I think it's a lizard, too. Well, if it's in this book, it must be a dangerous lizard. Should we see if we can find out why it's a dangerous lizard?

Kanai: My sister tried to kill a lizard.

Virginia: How come? Why was she trying to kill a lizard?

Kanai: Her, her didn't do it with her hand [undecipherable]; her did it with the dog. With Ding.

Virginia: Ding? You have a dog named Ding? [Kanai nods] Well, you know, I had a cat once and she liked to catch lizards. Little ones. But they weren't dangerous. No. They weren't dangerous. [I measure their length with my hands] Little bitty ones like this.

Kanai: My dog, my dog got *shark* teeth.

Virginia: Oh, he has sharp [emphasizing the *p* sound] teeth, too?

Kanai: Yah, he got shark teeth, but he don't bite.

Our shared exchange of personal experiences seemed to encourage Kanai's story-telling ability and I came to understand that his stories, whether true or imaginary, were rich and colorful. For example, Kanai went on to tell me that his mother sent a note and he was a car rider that day. He told me that he and his mother were going to the beach where, he explained, he was going to "put big dirt on my daddy." I realized later that Kanai meant that he was going to bury his dad *deep* in the *sand*. He went on to tell me that boys wore a *swimming suit*, but girls wore a *bathing suit*. He then told me that his "big sister" dropped her phone in the water. Kanai went on to explain that "actually, we didn't been

in the water ‘cause a shark was there and he bite my sister’s phone!” I hoped to encourage Kanai to continue and said, “You’re telling me a great story! Tell me some more!”

Kanai then told me that his mama brought a watermelon and a book to the beach and he brought toys. Then he told me:

I dive in the water and I got out before the shark bit me. I kicked the shark out of the water all the way over there an’ the shark didn’t get me ‘cause I slapped him and kicked him. Then me and my mama saw a bigger and bigger and bigger man. He was strong! He pick that shark up and threw it! ‘Cause I tell him to. I tell him “there a shark” and he throw it away! He, uh, he throw it at the cows! [There is a small field near our school where a few cattle are pastured.]

“Oh, yes,” I told him, “I know just where you mean!” I wondered how Kanai came to differentiate girls’ swimwear from boys. I also theorized that Kanai had other personal experiences to relate and that his imagination was strong. Further, I noticed that he had asked some *why* questions for the first time. For example, he asked me “Why your cat do dat?” Later he asked, “Why those cows there?” I suspected that our discussions piqued Kanai’s interest and I hypothesized that his interest would motivate him to share his knowledge and ask even more questions.

Highlights of Session Seven

In session seven, Kanai understood that the color pink was associated with baby girls. He understood and then elaborated on a text’s implication that a young boy was jealous of his baby sister. He also offered a logical cause and effect conclusion for a character’s actions.

Kanai, like Terrell, also requested that we read *Peter’s Chair* (Keats, 1998) a second time. For the first time, however, Kanai requested, “You read to me.” I responded,

Alrighty then, let's get started. Now remember, it's okay to say "Mrs. Miller, I don't understand that or will you tell me more about that?" So, if you want to know something, you go ahead and ask me and we'll talk about it."

Kanai nodded his head. When we began, Kanai identified the main character, Peter, and told me that the book was about a chair. The text referred to the baby's bed as a *cradle*.

When asked what that might be, Kanai told me it was a *crid* [crib]. The text continued to explain that the cradle was painted pink. Kanai looked carefully at the illustration and, as if thinking aloud, quietly said, "Pink. It pink." During our previous session, sharing this book, I theorized that neither Kanai nor Terrell would know that the colors pink and blue sometimes denoted gender. I asked Kanai, "Is pink a color for boys or girls?" Without hesitation, he replied, "Girls." I continued reading the text; I wondered how Kanai came to such a deep understanding of the book's implications.

Virginia: [Reading text] "Hi, Peter said his father. Would you like to help paint your sister's high chair?"

Kanai: He said "No!"

Virginia: [Continuing to read in a dramatic whisper] "It's my high chair, whispered Peter."

Kanai: He hated da baby!

Virginia: [Incredulous] Really? He hates the baby? Why do you think he hates the baby?

Kanai: 'Cause him get mad!

Virginia: Why did he get so mad, Kanai?

Kanai: 'Cause they love the baby more than him!

Virginia: Wow! So you think his mom and dad love the baby more? I think that's a really good guess! Thank you for telling me what you think! That's called an opinion. You told me your opinion! Wow! [Continues reading the text] "He picked it [chair] up and ran to his room."

- Kanai: An' he locked the door!
- Virginia: Why would he run and lock the door?
- Kanai: 'C—cause no one could get in!
- Virginia: And why didn't he want anyone to get in his room?
- Kanai: Uh, 'cause he got a secret.
- Virginia: Oh, he's got a secret? And what's his secret, Kanai?
- Kanai: Uh, him gonna tell nobody!
- Virginia: He's not going to tell anybody! Yes, that's what a secret. What do you think the secret is about? Uh, what's your opinion?
- Kanai: Uh, him decide him gonna love the baby!

When I transcribed the tape of this session, I marveled at Kanai's apparent knowledge concerning the concept of *jealousy*. I theorized that Kanai understood that there are often consequences due to jealousy. The consequences are often negative, but Kanai created an addition to the story that brought resolution to Peter's jealousy in a positive way: Peter secretly decided to love the baby. It seemed obvious that Kanai's inference skills were excellent, but I wondered what funds of knowledge enabled Kanai to formulate such conceptually sophisticated ideas.

Later in the story, the text implies that Peter attempted to run away with his dog, Willie.

- Virginia: [Reading text] "Peter fills a shopping bag with cookies and dog biscuits. We'll take my blue chair, my toy crocodile, and the picture of me when I was a baby. Willie got his bone. 'This is a good place,' said Peter. He arranged his things very nicely." Do you know what *arranged* means?
- Kanai: It looks nice!
- Virginia: Right! When things are arranged, they look nice! Good for you, you knew what that word meant!

Kanai: He [Peter] got him revenge!

Virginia: He got what, Sweetheart?

Kanai: He got him revenge!

Virginia: He got his revenge? Wow, that's a big word! What does that mean, Kanai?

Kanai: He got his revenge and now he goin' back!

My journal entry for that day read: "Jealousy of a new baby? A secret that resolves the jealousy? Revenge identified as the reason for running away? How on earth did Kanai understand the implications in this story?"

Highlights of Sessions Eight Through Eleven

Throughout sessions eight through eleven, Kanai seemed confused by contemporary, non-traditional illustrations. He argued that his opinion was correct and asserted that mine was wrong; he further maintained that he did not want to share information about our sessions with his teacher because he was "shy" and "nervous." He became excited when he discovered that I knew where he lived, and he expressed an interest in my puppets and their relationship to the main characters of the books displayed with them.

In the first three of these sessions, Kanai chose recently published, contemporary children's books. Some of their illustrations seemed to confuse him, as they had Terrell. For example, the first of these books, *Fidgety Fish* (Galloway, 2001), featured a mother fish and her son, Tiddler. Many of the illustrations of the characters were very large and covered most of the page. In one such illustration of Tiddler and his mother, Kanai asked, "Who is that?" I told him that it was the mama fish and her son. Kanai stoutly maintained that it could not be the mama and her son because "that him dad!" When I

repeated that the character was the boy fish's mother, Kanai raised his voice slightly and said, "That is the dad! 'Cause he really big! Dat's da daddy 'cause dat's his son! Daddy *big* and da son *little*. Dat hafta be da daddy 'cause he so big!"

Later, Kanai saw some shellfish called *limpets*. They were purple and were faceted with white lines. They looked very much like gems lying on the ocean floor. Kanai labeled them "diamonds" and said that they "prickled." I thought he might mean "sparkled." I explained that what he saw were not diamonds but were animals that lived under water, inside the shells. Kanai then turned his attention to the facet lines:

Kanai: Dey turn white dey will get sick.

Virginia: [I have no idea what Kanai is talking about] Why?

Kanai: 'Cause they make people sick.

Virginia: [Pointing at the limpets] These make people sick?

Kanai: Uh-huh.

Virginia: What makes people sick?

Kanai: Da whiteness.

Virginia: The whiteness? What about the whiteness? Where is it?

Kanai: Nowhere.

Virginia: But the whiteness makes people sick.

Kanai: Yah.

I was frustrated and confused and I guessed that Kanai felt the same way. I also wondered why this dialogue was so different from some of the other conversations we shared.

I forgot that Kanai's book selection included a CD of the story. He discovered it in a pocket on the last page of the book. He then made a suggestion that revealed something about himself that I would not have guessed.

Kanai: You got a CD!

Virginia: You know what? Mrs. Miller forgot she had that in there! So, the end! What did you think about Tiddler?

Kanai: You should let people have this [CD]!

Virginia: You think so? Really? [Kanai nods his head vigorously] Well, what would they do with it?

Kanai: They could put it in the, uh in da, DVD and da computer!

Virginia: Oh. What do you think is on that CD?

Kanai: Uh, da story!

Virginia: I think you're right. You know what? I'm gonna have to do that.

Kanai: You gonna put it on Miss Taylor's SMART Board ?

Virginia: Gosh, I sure could put it on Miss Taylor's SMART Board ! You're right! How about if I talk to Miss Taylor about that? Would that be a good idea? [Kanai nods vigorously] Okay! You tell her about it, too! Will you tell her about it today! [Kanai adamantly shakes his head back and forth] Oh, why don't you want to tell her about it? It was your idea!

Kanai: I don't want to!

Virginia: Can you tell me why you don't want to tell her so I understand, too?

Kanai: I shy.

Virginia: [Very quietly] Oh, you're shy. What makes you feel shy?

Kanai: I nervous.

Virginia: H-m-m, you're nervous to talk to your teacher. [Kanai nods his head] I'm sorry to hear that. Kanai, I'm a teacher like Miss Taylor and I like to have boys and girls talk to me!

- Kanai: [Agitated] I don't!
- Virginia: [Quietly] Okay, Kanai. You're shy and nervous and you don't want to tell her. [Kanai nods] You don't have to.
- Kanai: It probably time to go!
- Virginia: [Recognizing that Kanai is attempting to extricate himself from an uncomfortable situation] You're right! I think it is time to go. Why don't you go ahead and take care of the recorder?

Why did Kanai feel shy and anxious when he thought about talking to his teacher? Like him, she was African American. She was also soft-spoken, methodical, and very much interested in procedures. In the past, she told me that she "did not like change." I guessed that Kanai would appreciate such characteristics. However, I also recalled that the teaching assistant was the one who appeared to take care of the children's immediate needs and that most of the children seemed to gravitate toward her when they wanted to talk about something.

All day, I thought about Kanai's behavior and, after school, went to talk to his teacher. I did not tell her what Kanai said, but instead asked her if she would take a minute and list as many things as she could about him. We sat down and she quickly made her list:

- Excited about learning
- Ability to use high-order thinking
- Friendly
- Likes to make sure he's following directions correctly (wants to do the right thing)
- Likes conversations with peers
- Never tattles or berates others

- Very observant
- Sometimes gets over-anxious to take a turn or to get something he wants, but will not break a rule to get what he wants
- He has pride in accomplishment
- Does not readily contribute to class discussions
- Only approaches his teachers verbally when he makes a request for something that is a necessity such as “Can I go to the bathroom?”

I was especially interested in the last item on the list. It described behavior that was so different from what I observed and had come to expect from Kanai. When we were together, his language was usually effusive and complex. Currently, there were times when he used language not only to explain, inquire, and create, but also to assert his opinion. Perhaps more significantly, when his opinion differed from mine, he had the confidence to disagree with me. Thus, I was surprised that Kanai was so reticent with his teacher about his ideas. At first, I guessed that he was modest and did not want her to think he was bragging. I also theorized that, because Kanai and I were alone when we talked and not in a classroom, he might be more willing to communicate with me than with his teachers.

The following week, Kanai chose another of Terrell’s favorite books, *Hibernation Station* (Meadows, 2010). I asked Kanai about the front cover, “What do you think is going on here?” Uncharacteristically, he did not respond. There were several woodland animals on the cover. When I asked him to identify them, he named one and stopped. After much probing on my part, he named the animals and told me that they were

sleeping because “I see them snuggled up in the covers,” Kanai did not mention that the animals were on a train.

Kanai opened the book to the pages preceding the title page. The illustration portrayed a lonely, barren landscape with leafless trees and brown grass. I remembered Terrell’s beautiful interpretation of this illustration and I wondered how it would impress Kanai.

Kanai: Uh, no pic—uh, no words!

Virginia: Exactly! There are no words! Even though there are no words here to tell us, can you see what time of the year it might be?

Kanai: Uh—[Kanai pauses for several seconds]

Virginia: Is it spring?

Kanai: Uh, Thanksgiving?

Virginia: Thanksgiving! Why did you say Thanksgiving?

Kanai: ‘Cause they goin’ back to their place where they live to have Thanksgiving!

Virginia: Oh! So that’s why they’re on the train! What a great idea! You are very smart, Kanai! And this looks like Fall, doesn’t it, uh and Thanksgiving comes in the Fall! Do you remember what month Thanksgiving comes in?

Kanai: Uh, [long pause], uh, [another pause] February!

Virginia: You’re very close! February is a month and that’s when Valentine’s Day comes. Thanksgiving comes in November. Do you know the months? [4–K children sing a *Months of the Year* song daily] I know you sing them every day. [Kanai nods]

Kanai: [Begins to sing] *April, December*, uh . . .

Virginia: Wow! You can really sing! Start the song with January.

Kanai: [Singing] *January, March, April, December, July*. . .

Virginia: Very good!

Kanai: My birthday [is] on December 5th!

Virginia: Oh, your birthday's December 5th! Happy late birthday, right? [Virginia and Kanai smile] My birthday is February 20th, so it's a late happy birthday for me, too, isn't it? [Virginia and Kanai smile; Kanai nods at Virginia]

Kanai: It's late?

Virginia: Are you talking about here [pointing at the illustration and thinking that Kanai might mean late in the day] or you talking about my birthday?

Kanai: My birthday!

Virginia: Your birthday comes late in the year.

Kanai: How?

Virginia: Well, let's think about when the months come. January is first, then February, then March, then April—that's where we are right now, right? [Kanai nods]—then May, June, July, August, September, October, November, and finally December. It's the last month in the year and that's when your birthday comes, so we say that it comes late in the year. Then we start all over again with January. That's why in January we say "Happy New Year!" because it's the beginning of a new year.

Kanai: I can't wait 'til I turn six!

Virginia: Oh! Yes, you'll be six!

Kanai: After I turn six, then I be turnin' seven!

Virginia: [Incredulous] That's right! And then what happens?

Kanai: You turn eight!

Virginia: [Laughing in delight] Right!

Kanai: Just like my sister!

Virginia: Oh, yes, Ky'Lasia did tell me she was eight!

I wondered why, after six months of singing the *Days of the Week* song, Kanai could not name the months of the year in order. I theorized that the names of the months were not

important to him, or that the song featured the names out of context. I also guessed that Kanai did not understand that their sequence indicated the completion of one year.

Kanai then asked about some large notebooks on the bookshelf adjacent to my desk. I explained that I wrote in them about reading books with “little kids” at their house. Kanai exclaimed, “My sister saw you in that black car! [A child in my home visitation program lived two doors from Kanai’s grandmother. This child’s sister, Savannah, was in Kanai’s class.] You pull over to Savannah’s house?” After I said that I did, Kanai explained, “I live in Flowertown Village [the name of the subdivision]. I got that green house.” “Oh, yes, you live in the green house, and . . .” I replied, but I was unable to finish because Kanai interrupted and corrected me. “Uh, no, my gramma does. I spend the night there.” Later that day, I came to understand that Kanai and his sister stayed with their grandmother Monday through Friday.

Then Kanai started to talk about Savannah and her pets. He told me that she had a new dog and I told him that I was becoming acquainted with it. I told Kanai that the dog was a “boy,” and his name was *Buddy*. I then explained that Buddy was not very old. “What do we call baby dogs?” I asked. “Uh, Chihauhas?” was the reply. This was the beginning of a complex discussion.

Virginia: Well, that’s a kind of dog or a breed of dog. We call baby dogs *puppies*.

Kanai: Puppies.

Virginia: Right. Or we can call them *pups*. You can say *pups* or *puppies*.

Kanai: I would rather got it *puppies*!

Virginia: You would rather call them *puppies*? [Kanai nods] Okay, then that’s what we’ll call them!

Kanai: You call it pups, den you be in a hurry! If you call it pups, you won't remember it!

I wondered if Kanai understood that *pup* was an abbreviated form of *puppy* and therefore one may use it if s/he were in a hurry. I speculated that Kanai thought that using this abbreviated form was not a good idea because, in so doing, a person might forget the whole word. Kanai's imaginative conclusion seemed more creative than those made by other children of his age.

We continued our session. Kanai talked about his sister's birthday and that he intended to buy her a necklace because "it a good present for a girl." He then told me that he went home (to "Somerset," which is an apartment complex) from his grandmother's house on the weekends and that he and his family were moving "before my next birthday." Kanai again talked about his "friend," Savannah, and her family. Then he stood and walked to the wall-to-wall bookshelf and scanned the contents. An animal puppet, displayed next to or behind each book, represented each book's main character. Kanai stopped and studied a baby gorilla puppet. He asked me to identify it and then asked me to supply the name of every puppet. When I was done, he inspected the books one by one. Finally, he concluded: "Oh, the book is about the puppet!" I guessed that Kanai was interested in the relationship between the paired items. It also appeared that for the first time, Kanai was not interested in his chosen book.

Highlights of Sessions Twelve Through Fourteen

In the last three of our sessions, Kanai (a) demonstrated an understanding of rhyming words, (b) began to relate more text-to-self connections with the books he chose, (c) became frustrated when a term for one of his ideas was not a part of his lexicon and he could not adequately express his thoughts, (d) became strongly engaged when I told

him a story about my son that related to an event in his self-selected book, and (e) asked if I was going to write a book about our sessions and what we discussed.

For our last three sessions, Kanai chose the books, *Stellaluna* (Cannon, 1993), *Jesse Bear What Will You Wear?* (Carlstrom, 1996), and *Goodnight Moon* (Brown, 1947/2007). I was eager to observe Kanai's reaction to the books' text and illustrations, as all of them had older publication dates. The book Kanai chose for session twelve was *Stellaluna*, a story about a baby bat. In the book, Stellaluna falls and becomes separated from her mother. Eventually, she makes her way into a bird's nest and shares it with three fledglings. At the end of the book, Stellaluna is reunited with her mother and a large colony of bats, but not before she tries to adopt some of the baby birds' habits.

The illustrations in this book seemed to confuse Kanai. For example, when Kanai saw the illustration that showed the outline of bones through the thin skin of the mother bat's wings, he concluded that the book was about "bat ghosts." Then, when he saw the bats hanging from a branch, their position disturbed him. He became agitated and exclaimed, "A bat hang upside down!" He began to turn the book around and around to get different perspectives of the illustration. Still puzzled, he muttered, "Somethin' 'bout him! He 'posed to be like this!" and held the book upside down so the bat appeared to be sitting on a branch rather than hanging from it. Kanai brought the book closer to his face for a better look and again muttered something, this time undecipherable. He did, however, seem to understand that the baby birds were waiting for their mother to return to the nest and remarked, "Birds callin' for da mama."

When the mother bird returned to the nest and saw Stellaluna, her expression was one of annoyance. Kanai told me "and da bat had cry." When I asked why, he said

“Cause da bird be mean to da bat!” He continued, “Den da bat have a id—, uh a iday [idea]. He gonna fly back to da mama.” As Kanai turned the page and saw a bat hanging upside down, he again appeared confused.

Kanai: Da book upside down!

Virginia: Oh, is it upside down?

Kanai: I think.

Virginia: Is the book upside down or are the bats upside down?

Kanai: Dis different! Uh, somethin’ like dis one.

Virginia: [Unsure what *dis one* refers to] Yes.

Kanai: [Kanai continues to turn book around and around] And look! Dis one got [undecipherable] too!

Virginia: Yes, it looks different each way you put that book.

Kanai: [Pointing at the illustration] Dis one should be up, not down.

Virginia: Why should it be up?

Kanai: ‘Cause. It coming, uh dis a down book!

Virginia: Oh, it’s just supposed to be down? [Kanai nods]

Kanai: Dis a long book!

Because of Kanai’s last comment, I wondered if he found the book tedious and, without offending me, was trying to say that he was not enjoying it.

At the end of the book there were several pages entitled *Bat Facts*. These pages also included some small black and white illustrations. When Kanai saw these, he was surprised and said, “Them forgotta color!” I explained: “It does look like they forgot to color it! But these pages are different. They tell about real bats. See, this story is about pretend bats [pointing to an illustration of *Stellaluna*], but these words and pictures tell us

about real bats.” After this explanation, Kanai began to ask many questions about the fact section.

Kanai: A bat scared of a fox? That’s a fox?

Virginia: Yes, that’s a fox.

Kanai: Da fox try to eat the bat?

Virginia: Gosh, I don’t know. Shall we find out? [Kanai nods] Let’s look at the words. Let’s see what the words tell us. Let’s see [skimming the text for information] h-m-m, I’m looking, Kanai! Oh, yes! Here it is! It says that if a fox can catch one, he will eat a bat. The fox is the bat’s predator. A predator is an animal that eats another animal. Like if a bat caught and ate crickets, then the bat would be the cricket’s predator.

Kanai: Fox eat crickets, too?

Virginia: Yes, a fox will eat about anything!

Kanai: Like people?

Virginia: No, foxes do not eat people. They eat, uh—[Kanai interrupts].

Kanai: Mouse?

Virginia: Yes, they eat mice if they can catch them. They like mice and oh-h-h, they like chickens!

Kanai: [Smiles and uses same inflection as Virginia] Oh-h-h, and roosters!

Virginia: Yes! Yes!

Kanai: Anda turkey!

Virginia: Yes. If they can catch ‘em, they’ll eat birds of all kinds. They eat ducks, too.

Kanai: Even eagles?

Virginia: You know what? I’m not sure—I’m thinking that—I’m not sure that a fox could grab an eagle because eagles are so strong and they have very long talons.

Kanai: Claws?

Virginia: Yes! Great guess, Kanai! When a bird has really long claws, they're called *talons*. So we wouldn't say the eagle's *claws* we would say its *talons*. I think that an eagle would probably be too strong for the fox. But they can eat chickens and roosters for sure!

Kanai: What about a bear?

Virginia: Oh, you mean could a fox get a bear? [Kanai nods] No. He's too small.

Kanai: But a bear can get da eagle.

Virginia: You think so? [Kanai nods] Why would you think the bear could get the eagle?

Kanai: 'Cause him the biggest animal in the entiger [entire] world!

Virginia: Oh-h-h, the entire world! Wow! Are there lots of kinds of bears?

Kanai: Polar bears.

Virginia: Yes! Where do polar bears live?

Kanai: At the North Pole.

Virginia: Right again! What other kind of bears are there? Are there other kinds?

Kanai: Them that eat fishes.

Virginia: Yes! I think I know the name of the kind you mean. I think its name is grizzly bear. They catch big fish called salmon.

Kanai: Yah, grizzly bears!

Virginia: They're brown and they're big. I think they're bigger than polar bears.

Kanai: And elephants.

Virginia: Oh, elephants are big, too. Are they the same kind of animal as bears? Do elephants eat meat and fish like bears?

Kanai: They all drink water!

Virginia: Yes, yes they do! Just like us! Everything has to have water! You are so smart!

I noticed that Kanai was able to categorize animals according to species (e.g., chickens, roosters, eagles, turkey). He also identified a polar bear and knew the geographical location of its habitat. Further, although he lacked their specific name, he identified grizzly bears by one of their most notable characteristics, eating fish. He also inferred that talons were a type of claw. I also guessed that his description of a bear as the “biggest animal in the entire [entire] world” might demonstrate verbal and conceptual ability beyond that of an average five year old.

Session Thirteen

When Kanai chose *Jesse Bear, What Will You Wear?* (Carlstrom, 1996) for our 13th session, I was a little taken aback. When I added it to the book tub, I predicted that the illustrations in this book might not appeal to a child as mature as Kanai appeared to be. The book described a typical day in the life of Jesse Bear, a little preschooler bear, who had a stay-at-home mom and a dad who arrived home from work, wearing a suit and carrying a briefcase. The first page of the book featured a bright, sunny child’s room and showed Jesse Bear taking off his pajamas. Kanai told me that Jesse was “puttin’ on his pajamas.” Then he saw Jesse approach a chest of drawers and he told me that Jesse was “bick [pick] to wear.” I verified that he meant “picking out clothes to wear.”

Kanai again requested that I read *Jesse Bear*. “Jesse Bear, what will you wear? What will you wear in the morning?” I read. Then I asked Kanai, “He’s getting clothes and he’s going to put them on and then he’s going to be what?” Kanai did not respond, which was unusual for him. I tried to support him with a cloze sentence: “He’s all_____.” Almost shouting, Kanai filled in the blank with “Freak out!” I expected the

word *dressed* and could not, [nor did I ever] understand, why he thought that Jesse Bear would “freak out.”

The book consisted of rhyming phrases. When I read, “My shirt of red, pulled over my _____.” Kanai immediately supplied the word *head*. I continued to try to involve Kanai in this manner, but he was not very responsive. I theorized that he was either not interested in participating or was busy trying to match the content of the illustrations with what I was reading aloud. For example, the book portrayed Jesse Bear with both arms raised high and one foot lifted high into the air. He appeared to be laughing. I read the following sentence to Kanai: “I’ll wear my pants, my pants that dance, my pants that_____.” He immediately supplied the word *tickle*. When I looked at the illustration closely, I realized that an individual might indeed look like Jesse if s/he was being tickled. I continued to read: “I’ll wear the sun on my legs that run, sun on the_____.” I waited for Kanai to supply a word but, once again, he did not respond. Finally, I asked, “What does that mean?”

Kanai: I don’t know.

Virginia: He could wear the sun on his legs?

Kanai: Un-uh! No!

Virginia: Does that make sense? [Kanai shakes his head] No, it doesn’t make sense to me either! I wonder why the book said that. Why do you think the author wrote those words?

Kanai: ‘Cause he probly silly!

Virginia: ‘Cause he’s probably silly! I think you are absolutely right! It does sound silly! Good thinking! Maybe we can figure this out. Look at Jesse’s leg right here [his knee area is lighter than the rest of his fur, as if light is striking his body there] What do you think that is? [Referring to the sunlight]

Kanai: [Grabbing his knee] I got one right here!

Virginia: And what is that part of your body called?

Kanai: Uh, I don't know.

Virginia: That is your knee.

Kanai: Knee?

Virginia: Yes, that's your knee.

Kanai: [Jesse's knee was bent upward. It appeared round and knobby] Look like a ball in it!

Virginia: Kanai! It does look like there's a ball in it! [Pointing to the lightest portion] See this part of his knee? Is it lighter or darker than this [pointing to the rest of his leg].

Kanai: Darker

Virginia: [Pointing to the rays coming from the sun in the illustration] h-m-m, is it about the same color as the sunshine? [Kanai nods] What color is the sun?

Kanai: Lellow [yellow]

Virginia: [Pointing to the knee] Is this about the same color as the sun? [Kanai nods] Could that be the sun on Jesse's legs? [Kanai nods] Do you think that maybe those words mean that the sun is shining on his legs? [Kanai pauses, then slowly and thoughtfully nods] Well, maybe that's what the author means. I can't think of anything else! I'm kind of having trouble figuring that out.

Kanai: Me, too!

A few minutes later, Kanai took the opportunity to explain some text to me. Jesse Bear stated, "I'll wear my chair." I responded, "Wear his chair?????" Calmly, Kanai told me "It means sit in it!" In response, I asked for verification and said, "Oh, that means he's going to be sitting in it?" [Kanai nodded solemnly] Oh, thank you for explaining that to me. I couldn't understand that either!" Kanai smiled broadly.

Jesse sat in his chair for lunch. The illustration showed him holding a cup. He had a milk moustache and a small drop of milk on his nose. Kanai became very excited

and said, “His tooth fell out!” I started to laugh and said, “His tooth fell out? I don’t see any tooth!” Kanai pointed to a drop of milk on Jesse’s nose, “Right there on his nose!” “Oh, my goodness,” I replied, “I never saw that! Boy, do you have good eyes! [Kanai smiles] Do you know what a moustache is?” Kanai nodded and rubbed his finger back and forth on his upper lip. “Right,” I confirmed, “It’s whiskers on a man’s upper lip. Does Jesse have a moustache?” [Kanai nodded] “I didn’t know little boys had whiskers!” Kanai looked at me as if he could not believe that I did not understand the obvious: “No! ‘Cause dat da milk!”

Kanai’s funds of knowledge seemed to be expansive and sophisticated. For example, he told me that Jesse Bear’s lunch must include rice. Kanai added that he liked rice with butter and he liked “Sinese [Chinese] rice.” When Father Bear arrived home from work, Kanai told me he knew that Jesse’s father was coming home from work “‘Cause he have a suit.” Interestingly, he was not referring to the character’s clothing, but to the briefcase in his hand. I came to understand that he meant *suitcase*. He went on to describe a scene that showed Father Bear at the table “readin’ the newspaper and havin’ a cup of tea.”

In contrast to Kanai’s conventional interpretation of the previous illustration, he did not seem to grasp the intent of the two that followed. The first showed Father Bear arriving home with his arms extended, waiting for a hug from Jesse who was standing in front of him. When I asked what Father was doing, Kanai replied, “I don’t know. Uh, claws?” On the next page, Jesse frolicked in the bathtub, splashing water over the edge. The tub contained several water toys. Kanai did not seem to focus on the fun Jesse was experiencing, but was worried about the water. Peering at the illustration, Kanai’s eyes

widened and he said, “All the water leakin’ out! Oh! “Cause him put too much in!” I wondered if Kanai’s parents or grandmother cautioned him about using too much water when he bathed. I also wondered if he had ever played in the water while taking a bath.

This sparked a memory I had of him. One morning, I watched Kanai wash his hands at the sink in the classroom. He lathered his hands with soap and then began to rinse them. He let the water run over his hands again and again, moving them up and down as the water flowed in different directions. He spread his fingers and smiled as the water rushed through them. Finally, Mrs. Golden, the teaching assistant, found it necessary to remind him that there were others waiting to use the sink. Before I left the classroom that day, I asked her about the incident. She told me that many of the children seemed fascinated by the water and that Kanai’s behavior was not unusual. I knew that there was a water table in the classroom and I asked her if she and Miss Taylor ever used it during free play; she told me they did not. She further explained that it was now full of rice, so they stored it and did not bring it out often because it was “very heavy.” I surmised that the experience of playing in or with water was not included in Kanai’s fund of knowledge.

A subsequent illustration in the book showed a wallpaper mural above the bathtub; Kanai became very curious about this. He asked me about it and I explained that the wallpaper depicted a swan family, lily pads, and water lilies. I also said, “For some reason, the illustrator made the water purple.” He then asked me “Where are those ducks [swans] with da bear?” I answered, “Oh, Kanai those aren’t real! There aren’t real ducks [swans] with Jesse! It’s like a picture on the wall and [Kanai interrupts] “Real! No, they are real live!” I guessed that because there was a lot of water in the bathtub and Jesse

was playing, Kanai thought that the tub could accommodate ducks and they came to participate in the fun. I also theorized that perhaps Kanai thought that it would be only natural for Jesse to bathe with real ducks, because he was an animal, too. Eventually we reached the final pages and shared this dialogue:

- Virginia: [Reading the text] “My blanket that’s blue and plays_____.”
- Kanai: Don’t wake him up!
- Virginia: That’s right! He’s all covered up and it looks like he’s asleep! We might say, ‘Don’t wake him up!’ [Demonstrating by covering and uncovering my face] And if I go like this and then like this, what am I playing?
- Kanai: *Peek-A-Boo!*
- Virginia: Yes! [Reading the text] “My blanket that’s blue and plays _____.” [Kanai completes the sentence]
- Kanai: *Peek-A-Boo!*
- Virginia: Oh, look what Jesse has with him!
- Kanai: A teddy bear! [Smiling broadly] Oh-h-h, another bear!
- Virginia: Oh, that’s funny, isn’t it? A bear with a bear! [Kanai and Virginia laugh]

At the end of the book, Mama Bear tucked Jesse into bed, then kissed and hugged him. He was not asleep, however, and appeared to be talking to Mama Bear as she stood in the doorway of his room. I asked Kanai what he thought Jesse was saying. I expected him to say “Good-night!” so I was startled when he stated, “What do I wear in da morning?”

Given Kanai’s comments about this book, I theorized that he enjoyed a rich family life. After I noticed that he understood the humor of “a bear with a bear,” I also surmised that his family was playful and mentioned things that were unique or funny. Kanai’s answer to my final question, “What do I wear in da morning?” made me guess

that he understood the repetitive nature of the text. It also seemed to indicate that Kanai understood that the book was about the passage of time and about what people usually do at different times of the day.

Session Fourteen

On the way to our last session, Kanai talked continuously about his weekend. He had attended two birthday parties, one for a boy cousin and one for a girl cousin. He said that, at the girl cousin's party, he did not have any cake, but that the "birthday girl" put icing "onna face." Misunderstanding Kanai, I asked, "Who put the ice cream on the face?" By this time, we were in my office. Kanai stopped, turned to face me, and with slow and deliberate diction said, "I-cing. Or-e-o i-cing. I realized that he was pronouncing words for me, as I had for him. In that moment, it crossed my mind that we had reversed our roles—Kanai was the more knowledgeable other (Vygotsky, 1962) and I, the novice learner. Kanai supported my learning as well. I exclaimed, "Oh, icing! I thought you said "ice cream." Excuse me. Yes, the icing!" But Kanai was not finished instructing me: "Da [with marked emphasis] *Oreo* icing." Kanai also told me that he got new flip-flops that "blowed" [glowed]. When I told him that I had never seen flip-flops that glowed, he looked incredulous and stated, "That's weird!"

That day Kanai chose the book, *Goodnight Moon* (Brown, 1947/2007). Once more, I was excited—I was eager to observe how he would react to an older, but still popular, children's book (it had first been published over 50 years ago). As Kanai was walking back from the book tub, I asked him what he thought the book was about. He told me it was about a "Christmas carol." Probing further, I asked why he thought it was

about a Christmas carol. Kanai's expression told me that he thought this information was obvious. With a hint of exasperation in his voice, he answered, "'Cause it Christmas!"

I decided to question him even further and asked, "How can you tell?" Kanai put the book directly in front of me, tapped a fireplace on the cover, and said, "Look!" I responded, "But I still don't understand why this looks like Christmas." Kanai took a deep breath, again pointed at the fireplace, and said, "Da fire!" "Oh, the fireplace, I intoned, "Yes, we see lots of pictures of fireplaces at Christmas, don't we?" Kanai nodded vigorously. I surmised that Kanai did not know the term *fireplace* and guessed that he was frustrated because he did not know a term that would explain his thoughts. I wondered if he experienced this often.

After Kanai selected his book, I remembered a larger edition and suggested that we use that one. I fetched the book and told him the title, *Goodnight Moon* (Brown, 1947/2007). The story is about a little white rabbit that was in bed, but did not want to go to sleep. He had a fireplace in his room and a very old-fashioned telephone on a night table beside his bed. There were two framed pictures on the wall. One portrayed the story of *The Three Bears* (Galdone, 1985) and the other portrayed the traditional nursery rhyme, *Hey Diddle Diddle* (Caldecott, 1882). Kanai took the book and began to compare it with the edition that he had initially selected from the book tub.

Kanai: But look, uh this slicker den da udder one. [The book cover's finish was different from the other book.]

Virginia: Yes, it is slicker. It's not a hard cover, is it? But the cover is different, a different kind of—[Kanai interrupts]

Kanai: But what about the other one? [Kanai points at the other edition] Tha—that one.

Virginia: Oh, you want to feel this one? [I give the other edition to Kanai]

Kanai: [Kanai rubs cover] This one not slicker, it sticky!

Virginia: [I rub the cover] You know what? You're right! This is kinda sticky.

Kanai: [Leafing through pages] I see, uh gonna see this part, and dis, and dis.

Virginia: There are some differences, aren't there? They are a little different.

Kanai: Anda pictures and da color, too! [Kanai looks at the first page of the book and compares it to the other edition.] H-m-m, is dis da same color? [Kanai answers his own question] No!

Virginia: I think it's a little different. I think the green is a little darker, don't you?

Kanai: Yah! [Kanai begins to point at various objects and compare them] Look at dis one! Dis is light, not dark!

Virginia: Uh-huh, it is. [Pointing] That is lighter than this one. This one is very dark green—[Kanai interrupts].

Kanai: [Pointing] And dis lighter.

Virginia: Yes.

Kanai: Oh, and dis lighter and dis darker. What about dis one?

Virginia: Uh, I think it's darker.

Kanai: Yah, yah.

This analysis continued for several minutes. I wondered what piqued Kanai's interest so much about the comparison. Was it the use of *lighter* and *darker*? I remembered using these words when we discussed the sunlight that shined on Jesse Bear's knee; I had asked Kanai if the fur on Jesse's knee was *lighter* or *darker* than the rest of his body. At that time, I also asked him to compare the color of the knee with the rest of Jesse's body. I wondered if Kanai used the words to compare the shades of color in the two books to replicate a teacher-supported experience independently. I also wondered if the two

editions of the book might conceptually appear as “the same but different.” Did the combination of these opposite concepts create a cognitive dissonance that Kanai’s exploration sought to resolve?

As we studied the first illustration of the little rabbit’s bedroom, Kanai noticed a framed picture of *The Three Bears* (Galdone, 1985) above the bed. “I know a story about three bears,” exclaimed Kanai. He then focused his attention elsewhere and said, “Oh, I see a bunny?” In a very disappointed voice, he complained, “Dat don’t look like a bunny!” Indeed, the illustration made the rabbit’s face appear very fuzzy. I remembered that earlier, Kanai told me about a cousin who had a black and white bunny as a pet. I asked, “Why don’t you think that looks like a bunny?” Kanai pointed at the rabbit’s face, “‘Cause he got dose things, long fur. He don’ look like a bunny!” I tried to explain and said, “There are some bunnies that have long fur. They’re called *Angora* rabbits.” “Angora rabbits,” repeated Kanai. He seemed satisfied with this and turned the page. The next page revealed the white rabbit’s bedroom in its entirety.

We began our discussion of this page with a question: “Whose room do you think this is?” Kanai pointed at the illustration and said “Dat one [the rabbit]. Him, uh, her, a girl! You can’t tell da difference because dey look like da same or a girl?” responded Kanai. “You’re right!” I answered, “So if it’s a boy we’d say what?” “Him!” exclaimed Kanai. “How ‘bout a girl?” I asked. The prompt reply: “Her!”

I became very attentive to our conversation because I hoped to understand how Kanai perceived the rabbit. First, from my European American, middle-class, perspective, the rabbit was definitively a boy. What experiences or knowledge conveyed this impression? Conversely, how did Kanai conclude that the book’s character was a

girl, especially after he said, “You can’t tell da difference.” Second, I noted that Kanai seemed well able to understand the gender-related pronouns. For this reason, I wondered why I did not hear him use *he* in the subjective case but rather the grammatically incorrect, *him*. For example, just that morning I had heard him refer to a classmate, saying, “*Him* in the bathroom.” I surmised that might be an error related to developmental milestones. According to common and expected early language trajectories, children of Kanai’s age should have already achieved this milestone. I wondered why Kanai continued to make this error, especially when he appeared to master and apply other grammar rules correctly.

As we continued looking at the book, Kanai decided he had changed his mind about the rabbit’s gender. An illustration in the book showed a round table that held, among other things, a bowl of mush. After studying the page, Kanai announced, “Oh, dis a boy!” I asked, “Why do you think it’s a boy now?” Kanai started to explain:

Kanai: Well, look! Look at him! He eatin’ later! Uh, boys junk up dere room!

Virginia: Oh, so you think that’s junkin’ up his room because he left food in his room, right? [Kanai nods]

Kanai: Do boys really do that?

Virginia: Well, have you ever left anything in your room? Have you ever eaten anything in your room and left it?

Kanai: Un-uh

Virginia: Well, can I tell you a little story about the time my son, uh—the boy at my house—who left his plate of food on the floor? [Kanai nods]

I then told Kanai about the time my then teenaged son took a plate of steak, French fries, and salad to his room and put it on the floor. He left for a minute and our dog came in and ate all the steak and French fries. Kanai looked transfixed and did not take his eyes

off me. Every now and then, he would interrupt with a question or comment:

- [Did you get the steak] out to a restaurant?
- Was [your son] a little boy then or a teenager?
- All the mess was on the floor!
- He [your son] was mad [that his food was gone]?
- [Pointing at a framed photograph of my family's dog] Oh, I see that one right there!
- Dogs like steak?
- So he [the dog] jus' ate the steak?
- An' he licked the plate!
- What about rice?
- He [dog] didn't like da salad.
- The boy just ate the salad.
- [Giggling] He [your son] got some more [food]?
- What about da dog?
- Did he [dog] go crazy? [Begging and whining for more steak]

After this session, it seemed apparent that Kanai's parents and grandmother did not allow him to eat in his room. He also seemed to think that boys "junked" up their rooms. For this reason, I wondered if his mother compared his room with his sister's and found Kanai lacking in terms of his housekeeping skills. When I studied the comments he made during the story, I realized that it appeared Kanai thought steak only came from restaurants and/or that he thought going to a restaurant was an unusual event. In addition, he seemed surprised that there was no rice included in this meal. Rice was filling and

inexpensive and I guessed that Kanai and his sister ate it often.

In addition, I guessed that the phrasing of his question, “was he a little boy or a teenager,” and the nature of this inquiry were both developmentally mature. I could not recall other children his age using the term “teenager.” I also guessed that this inquiry might reveal an understanding of the passage of time not yet shared by his peers; I had suspected the same thing during our reading of *Jesse Bear, What Will You Wear?* (Carlstrom, 1996). Finally, I recalled that, when we read *Peter’s Chair* (Keats, 1998), I surmised that Kanai understood cause and effect. I speculated that Kanai’s question about my son’s anger over the loss of his meal was another indication that he understood this concept. Thus, I guessed that Kanai would expect anger as the consequence of the loss of an expensive meal and/or the action of an errant pet. When I finished my story about the lesson my son learned about leaving food in inappropriate places, Kanai asked me, “Are you gonna write a book about dis?” I told him that this was a wonderful idea, but that I probably would not, “because I really like to tell this story!”

Our session continued. Kanai focused on an old-fashioned telephone on the white rabbit’s nightstand and we began another discussion.

Virginia: [Pointing at old-fashioned telephone] Do you know what that is?

Kanai: A telephone.

Virginia: Right! It’s a real, real old telephone.

Kanai: Back in the days?

Virginia: [Bursting into laughter] Back in the days! Right!

Kanai: But we still have dese.

Virginia: Yes, once in a while, you can find these to buy.

- Kanai: But it pretty old. They fix them and they give them to the store right now.
- Virginia: Anything that's really old is called an *antique*.
- Kanai: Like a car?
- Virginia: Yes, antique cars.
- Kanai: Books?
- Virginia: Antique books. I have some at home.
- Kanai: Antique chairs?
- Virginia: [Patting an armchair behind us] This is an antique chair. It's a very old chair.
- Kanai: I think it's for a grandma!
- Virginia: Well, my daddy, uh—my son's grandpa fixed this chair up so it looked nice again.
- Kanai: [Pointing to a hand-painted table] What about that? Is this a antique?

Kanai continued trying to verify the antique status of various objects, including my wedding rings. Again, his behavior seemed advanced and unusual for a child of five; I wondered what motivated his interest.

We continued to look at illustrations and read the text. There was another framed picture in one of the illustrations, which portrayed the traditional nursery rhyme, *Hey Diddle Diddle* (Caldecott, 1882). Kanai said, “The book rhymes.” I agreed and began to read the text.

- Virginia: “Goodnight moon. Goodnight cow jumping over the_____.”
- Kanai: [Filling in the blank] Moon! That's silly! Cow don't really jump over moon!

Virginia: No. That's called a nursery rhyme. You're right. It's pretend, isn't it?

Kanai: That a fairy tale!

Virginia: [Amazed] Yes, Kanai, it is a like a fairy tale! Wow, are you smart!

Kanai: A tooth fairy is really real.

Virginia: Oh, the tooth fairy is real?

Kanai: People say dey not real!

Virginia: Oh, do they?

Kanai: That true?

Virginia: I think that's true if you believe it in your heart.

Kanai: [Adamant] Yah, it is true, even Santa Claus!

Virginia: Santa Claus. Yes.

Kanai: Him came. Him came at Christmas.

Virginia: [Smiling] I'm sure he came to your house!

Kanai: Him never let little kids down!

Virginia: [Struggling to keep my composure and slowly shaking my head] No, he never lets little kids down. Wow. Who told you that, Kanai?

Kanai: My mama.

Virginia: [Very softly] Your mama! Your mama's right! Your mom was right. I don't think your mom would ever let you down either!
[Kanai solemnly shakes his head in agreement]

Before we left to go back to class, I wanted to talk with Kanai for a few minutes about one of his comments during our last session. At that time, he declared that when referring to a baby dog, *puppy* was a better word to use than *pup*. He stated that he preferred to use the word *puppy* because if a person used the abbreviated form, *pup*, he

would likely forget the word in its entirety.

- Virginia: You know what I want to know, Kanai? You and I talked last time about what we should call baby dogs.
- Kanai: Pups and puppies.
- Virginia: [Laughing] You are such a good rememberer! [Kanai smiles]
- Kanai: Should call it puppy!
- Virginia: Why?
- Kanai: Oh, *pup* is much harder!
- Virginia: Hm-m-m. Help me understand. Why is the word *pup* harder?
- Kanai: Well, you can say *pup* or *up* or *cup*.
- Virginia: Okay. Maybe you just fooled Mrs. Miller! Let's see if I can get it! [Kanai smiles] Okay, so you might say *pup*. Or you might make a mistake and say *up* or *cup* because they rhyme with *pup*, uh they sound like *pup*? Uh, they're like *pup*?
- Kanai: Yah! A baby can't be sayin' that. They need to say puppies!
- Virginia: Do you mean that that *pup*, *up*, and *cup* sound alike and might mix babies up and then they would use the wrong word? [Kanai nods vigorously] Oh! [Very excited] Babies don't know rhyming! But *puppies* doesn't sound like many other words, uh, it doesn't rhyme with many other words, so babies wouldn't get mixed up? [Laughing] Did I get it? [Kanai nods his head and smiles] Wow! Pow! Zow! Oh, Sweetheart, you are so incredible, so, so smart!

I wondered if my hypothesis about Kanai's idea about the words *pup* and *puppies* was feasible. I also wondered if Kanai's agile thinking skills and his curious nature evidenced a great deal of academic potential. I looked forward to observing Kanai's learning trajectory next year. .

A few weeks before our last session, Kanai mentioned that he was going to move "before my next birthday." Because his family lived in our attendance area for a considerable length of time, I dismissed this information and attributed it to Kanai's

active imagination. A week after our final session, Kanai's teacher told me that he had started to arrive late every day and was coming to school by car rather than bus. I wondered about the sudden change in transportation and recalled Kanai's story about moving. I decided to ask him about it. Kanai told me that they already moved "out on Benton Road." This was not in our attendance area and the drive from that area was significant, especially during heavy morning traffic. I now understood why he was late every day and explained this to Ms. Taylor and Mrs. Golden. A day or so later, the school's attendance secretary told me that Kanai's mother came in to inform her that they had moved, but would finish out the school year. The secretary did not know what school Kanai would attend next. I wondered if his new teacher would recognize and nurture what I guessed was Kanai's astute aptitude. I desperately hoped so.

Chapter VII: Findings, Conclusions, Recommendations, and Postscript

Introduction

When we sit back and reflect on what people have said and written . . . we often discover better, deeper, and more humane interpretations. The small child whom the teacher assumed made no sense at sharing time looks a lot smarter after a little reflection, which can be helped along by recording the child for a later, more reflective listening. A person from a different race, class, or culture looks, on reflection, if the reflection is based on any knowledge, to have made both a better point and a better impression on second thought than on first. (Gee, 2005, p. xi)

When I began this study, I wanted to understand the effect of fiction and non-fiction books on the spontaneous language production of young African American boys in a four-year-old kindergarten program for low-income children. Early into my data collection, I realized that I had an anticipatory frame of mind, based on previous experiences, which, in turn, influenced my review of literature. I initially thought that the boys would not have the kind of oral language that would easily enable them to become literate. I also believed that they would more often prefer informational texts and that this preference would generate language that was more expressive.

By the end of the study, I realized that the boys had considerable oral and written language competencies and did not share a preference for either picture books or informational texts. For example, Terrell showed a distinct preference for fiction and chose a picture book for every session, while Kanai chose a picture book thirteen out of fourteen times. Zion chose the same genre type each time, but preferred non-fiction. Further, I noted several patterns that emerged from the boys' language behaviors. These included a command of their home language, the increased use of school language

(Standard English), and the use of agentive language that included *wh*-questions. I also witnessed the boys' growing, persistent interest in conventional articulation and vocabulary acquisition. In Terrell's case, I recognized his desire and ability to invent words that conveyed precise, specific meaning to his conversational partner (me).

Throughout this study, I also learned from the boys. They taught me about myself as a teacher. I came to this realization when I began to recognize patterns that revealed I had shifted from teacher-centered to child-centered instruction. Eventually, I understood how the conditions this transition created enabled the boys to show me what they knew. Initially and along the way, I noticed the conditions I created that enabled the children to show me what they knew. Throughout this study, I learned from them and about them.

Terrell, Zion, and Kanai

Oral Language Competencies

The boys' oral language competencies included their command of emergent home language, similar to that used in school; growth of school language, which included an increasing use of agentive language, including *wh*-questions; interest in using standard articulation; and interest in using invented and new vocabulary.

Command of home language. According to a variety of standardized assessment tools, Terrell, Zion, and Kanai were "at-risk" for academic failure. This is where Terrell landed at age three, when he met the requirements for Head Start. The year Terrell entered the Head Start program was the first time that the program had rented space in our school district. Initially, the number of students accepted into the program was limited—there were only three Head Start classrooms (15 children each) for 14

school attendance areas. The children chosen for the program were those the Head Start personnel deemed most in need of academic support.

Zion's story began, also at age three, when he was screened at a Child Find clinic within our school district, as part of the Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The Child Find clinic used multiple screening tools to assess Zion's language and conceptual development. After his scores on those assessments indicated that he qualified for special education, he was enrolled in a self-contained classroom for children with PDD.

Kanai, too, received an evaluation based on a standardized test of concept and language development given to determine his eligibility for our district's 40-student 4-K program. He was chosen from several children on a waiting list for a vacated space in the program because his test score was lowest (sixth percentile) among the applicants.

Terrell, Zion, and Kanai's teachers also thought that the boys had limited language abilities. They said that Terrell sometimes tried to talk with them but they "couldn't understand anything he said" because of his misarticulations and his persistent stutter. Kanai, they suspected, had more "language ability." However, they reported that he seemed to speak "only when necessary." For example, Kanai spoke to designate his center choice or for personal needs, like using the bathroom or getting a tissue. In comparison, they said that Zion was silent, until they demanded that he "use his words" (their term for talking) if he wanted to go to the play center of his choice. For this classroom requirement (Ms. Taylor's method of encouraging the children to speak), he needed only to speak one word: the name of the center, for example, *blocks* or *puzzles*.

During our first session together, I observed that, although Terrell's, Zion's, and Kanai's language abilities differed in scope and sequence, all owned and accessed a rich

repository of language conventions and vocabulary. Further, although their developmental trajectory varied, all of the boys possessed a command of their home language that included emergent oral language similar to that used in school. The following examples were taken from our first sessions together; each exemplify my theory:

- Terrell: [In answer to a question concerning what constitutes yummy food, he describes an incident when he was given permission by his mother to get gum out of a drawer] “But I got it from my mom. And I got the gum out, and yah, yah, it too hard an’, an’ and then I got in there and cut it in half and then I cut it and I cut it and I eat it and I eat it. I eat five pieces of it!” When I asked why he cut the gum, he replied, “Cause it too big, hard! I break my teeth!”
- Zion: [Zion and I discussed what porcupines might eat] “Miz Miller! He find a bug! No, porkypines not eat bugs. I don’t eat bugs ‘cause I’d get sick! There another one [porcupine] he, uh, he find a acorn! He like spiders and bees and berries and acorns!
- Kanai: [Kanai picture read a book about a frog and other pond animals including a dragonfly and fish] “Dis frog swim in dis water. Da bug climbin’ up leaves [stem of a water plant]. It climb up the whole thing [it climbed to the top]. Then the frog jump up on it [water plant] and try to eat it [dragonfly]. The fish look at him. An’ da fish scare away da frog!”

This documentation from the boys’ first session portrayed Terrell, Zion, and Kanai as not only competent, but, in some cases, accomplished speakers. This contrasted with how the boys’ teachers perceived their language. This competence also refuted the boys’ low scores on the commercial language assessments that had determined their eligibility and subsequent placement in special interventional programs.

Increased School Language, Questions, and Agentive Language

As our sessions continued, Terrell’s, Zion’s, and Kanai’s transcripts revealed an increasing use of school language and agentive language, including *wh*-questions.

School Language

Terrell, Zion, and Kanai all used aspects of AAVE Language in their speech. These included: (a) dropping the copula *be*, (b) substituting a personal pronoun for a definitive article, (c) using uninflected present tense verbs, and (d) substituting consonant and consonant blend sounds. See below for examples of the boys' speech that exemplified each of these AAVE characteristics. For clarification, I have included the Standard English syntax.

- Dropping the copula *be*: “Where he at?” [Where is he?]
- Substituting a personal pronoun for a definitive article: “I have some of them games.” [I have some of those games.]
- Using uninflected present tense verbs: “He laying down.” [He is laying down.]
- Substituting consonant and consonant blend sounds: “It has scripes! [It has stripes.]

Terrell's, Zion's, and Kanai's transcripts increasingly contained many features of school language (Standard English).

Terrell:

- [Picture reading] It was too dark in there and that's why he got out! [Session 7]
- [Picture reading] And then somebody knocked on the door. And that was tricky, though! [Session 9]
- [Picture reading] And then the pig laughed! Then he, uh the fox [Here, it appeared that Terrell inserted the noun fox so there would be no referent

confusion with the pronoun *he*] maked [Notice young children's common habit of adding the common past tense marker, *ed*, to an irregular verb] the pig eat broccoli! And the pig don't like broccoli! [Session 12]

Zion:

- [Comment about a new T-shirt he wore] Look! My shirt has a jar of bugs on it! Look, there's an ant and there's a fly and there's a roach and there's a spider! [Session 8]
- [Describing the animals in a book] And they have wings, bones, an', an' big ears! [Session 11]
- [Commenting on a photograph] I know dat's a squirrel 'cause I looked closely! [Session 13]

Kanai:

- [Commenting on a book choice] The dog was chasing him and the dog tried to lick him. [Session 7]
- [Commenting on how he tried to influence his classmates' bus behavior during a conversation] I tell everybody to stop. [Session 8]
- [Question related to a personal story about my son] Was he a little boy or a teenager? [Session 14]

Agentive Language, Including the Use of *Wh*-Questions

Terrell, Zion, and Kanai also asked an increasing the number of *wh*-questions (*what, where, why, when, how*). In sessions one through seven, the boys asked a combined total of 67 questions. Most of these could be attributed to Zion's habit of asking "What's that spell?" whenever he wanted me to read text. A few others were

questions that sought affirmation or permission, such as “Can I get a tissue?” Of 67 questions, only six elicited *wh*-questions. In the second half of the study, the boys asked a total of 221 questions, including 115 *wh*-questions. This increase in *wh*-questions suggested to me that the boys were using inquiry as a learning tool. These are examples of the boys’ questions from sessions eight through fourteen.

Terrell:

- What is this thing?
- What is this book about anyway?
- And what dis part [of the book]?
- Uh, what this called?

Zion:

- What he doing?
- Where he put all the eggs?
- What are dese call?
- What is that duck doing?

Kanai:

- But what about the other one?
- What happened to their stomach?
- Why the people clapping?
- How did they make these?

The increase in the number of Terrell’s, Zion’s, and Kanai’s questions precipitated a growing sense of their *agency*, which Bruner defined as the actualization of an individual’s own power to impact situations such as the dialogue we shared in our

sessions (Bruner, 1996). When the boys' began to use questions, they were acknowledging a "relational agency." They demonstrated this by their willingness seek information from a more knowledgeable other (Edwards, 2004). They took ownership of their competencies and willingly became proactive contributors to the learning community we shared. As they did so, Terrell's, Zion's, and Kanai's roles as inquirers expanded. The conversations that followed their questions guided the content of our dialogue. This content often contained something that was relevant to them and gave them a chance to share what they knew. As the study progressed, there were times when the boys and I reversed our roles—I became the apprentice and they, the more knowledgeable others. This was significant, as changes "*in the positions* [italics added], tasks, and relations of the participants and his or her community are the central outcomes of learning" (Rainio, 2008, p. 18).

There were other changes in Terrell's, Zion's, and Kanai's language, which I theorized were reflections of emerging agentive behavior. As the boys engaged further in our dialogue, I suspected that they were beginning to recognize their competence as active contributors to the learning that occurred during our conversations. When they began to voice their opinions and, in some cases, refute mine, I theorized that they were acknowledging this competence.

In the following excerpt, Kanai and I were discussing an illustration of two fish, one large and one small. I told him that I thought it was probably a mother with her child; Kana disagreed.

Kanai: Look! That him dad!

Virginia: Oh, you think that's his dad? Well, I—[Kanai interrupts]

Kanai: [Raising his voice] That is! That is the dad ‘cause he really big!

Virginia: Oh, he’s daddy be—[Kanai interrupts]

Kanai: [Sighing deeply and speaking with exasperation] Dat’s da daddy cause dat’s his son! Daddy big and da son little!

Another day, we compared shades of green:

Kanai: Look at dis!

Virginia: Oh, yah, that one looks a little darker.

Kanai: Uh, no, dis is not dark, dis is light!

In the same session, Kanai commented on the nursery rhyme *Hey Diddle Diddle* (Caldecott, 1882). When I recited the rhyme and said “and the cow jumped over the moon!” Kanai appeared incredulous and commented, “Moon? *Moon?* That’s silly! Cow don’t really jump over a moon!”

In a later session, Zion asked me to explain a photograph of some baby animals snuggled against their mother.

Zion: What they doing?

Virginia: H-m-m, well, I think they’re all snuggled up with their mama sleeping.

Zion: [Taking a close, long look at the photograph, then looking directly at me] H-m-m, maybe not!

Zion also strongly objected when we discussed a fox that appeared to be eating a leaf. Without hesitation, he exclaimed, “Foxes don’t eat that [leaves]!” Another time, he indicated that his favorite animal in our shared book was the tarsier, an animal with huge, oval eyes; however, he did not agree with the terminology I used to describe those eyes.

Zion: I like the one have long eyes!

Virginia: Yes, those tarsiers really do have big eyes!

Zion: [Tentative but adamant] Uh-h-h, no-o-o!

Virginia: No? That's right! If I don't have it right, then you tell me "no." Okay. Can you explain it to me?

Zion: Yah!

Virginia: Go ahead!

Zion: Because that be like long eyes!

Still another day, we looked a photograph of an opossum playing "dead." Its mouth was slightly open and one of its canine teeth was very prominent.

Zion: Look! He laying!

Virginia: [Pointing to the tooth] Yes! I think he's playing dead. [Now pointing at the canine tooth] Oh, Zion, what's that?

Zion: I don' know.

Virginia: What do you have in your mouth [Pointing to my teeth and clicking them]

Zion: Teeth!

Virginia: So do you think that might be one of the possum's sharp teeth?

Zion: Uh, maybe it is. [Pointedly dismissing further conversation about the tooth by turning the page and asking me to continue reading the text] What that spell?

During the second half our sessions, there was also an increase in the number of times Terrell, Zion, and Kanai interrupted me. I interpreted this as an assertive behavior and an indication that they considered their utterances more important than mine. I construed this as additional agentive behavior.

Interest in Conventional Articulation, Invented Words, and Vocabulary Acquisition

Over time, a pattern emerged that indicated that Zion and Kanai were interested in correcting their articulation and Terrell was working on controlling his stutter. For

example, initially, Kanai did not seem to differentiate the ending sounds in the words *shark* and *sharp*. As we shared a book during one of our sessions, he told me that his dog had *shark* teeth. I did not comment on this and we continued to talk about the book he chose. Then he told me that tigers, too, had *shark* teeth. Finally, he told me that a lizard did not have any *shark* teeth. I understood what he meant, but thinking that others might not, I offered an explanation and then modeled the pronunciation for him.

Virginia: [Emphasizing *p* sound] Sharp teeth.

Kanai: Shark

Virginia: Sharp-p-p. Let's make the *p* sound: *puh, puh, puh*.

Kanai: [Looking at me for approval] *Puh, puh, puh!*

Virginia: Great! Okay, *sharp*.

Kanai: Sharp!

Virginia: Perfecto! Just right!

Later in the session, he pronounced the word correctly when he told me that one animal made another animal bleed: "He make dis one [another animal] bleed with his sharp teeth." Some of Kanai's subsequent transcripts revealed that he used the word sharp again and remembered to replace *k* with *p*.

As we continued to focus on Zion's emerging interest in pronunciation, he, too, improved his articulation. Eventually, he started to self-correct his own speech; I theorized that he wanted me to understand him and that he may have been using school language to accomplish this. Examples of Zion's self-corrections follow.

Virginia: Which one do you like?

Zion: [Stammering] I-I-I yike [like], uh, I [hesitating, then pronouncing slowly] like dis one!

Later in the same session, Zion self-corrected again, while looking at a photograph of an armadillo.

- Zion: That a diddo [armadillo].
- Virginia: Right! It is an armadillo! You are an animal expert! That means you know a lot about animals! [We turn several pages and see a bird and another armadillo] Oh, and let me see if I remember this one—h-m-m, uh, let's see if Mrs. Miller can remember this one. Oh, it rhymed! H-m-m, I need some think time! Oh, I know! Cock of the rock!
- Zion: Cock of the rock! [Photograph features another armadillo] There that armajillo again!
- Virginia: Yes, there's that old [emphasizing *d*] *armadillo*!
- Zion: *Armadillo* [emphasizing the last syllable]
- Virginia: Thank you for practicing that word all by yourself! Wow! Your word was absolutely perfecto!

In another session, Zion referred to a bear going into a *cage* [cave]. He did this on several occasions. I found it interesting that when looking at a book about zoo animals, he correctly used the word *cage* to identify the animals' enclosures. Eventually, I explained the misarticulation and modeled the correction.

- Virginia: [Tapping my chin] Please look at my mouth. [Zion looks directly at my mouth] It's *ca-vah* [putting a strong emphasis on the *v*].
- Zion: [Carefully modeling my exaggerated pronunciation] *Ca-vuh!*
- Virginia: *Cave*
- Zion: *Cave!*
- Virginia: [Clapping] Thank you for practicing!

Zion and I encountered the word *cave* a few more time and he never again substituted the word *cage*.

Like the other boys, it appeared that Terrell, too, very much wanted others to understand his speech. He had several misarticulations, but they were easily recognizable. For example, he substituted the letter *w* for *r* and pronounced *grass* as *gwass*. Rather, it was his consistent stutter and the rapidity of his speech that sometimes made him incomprehensible to others. I thought that deep breathing exercises might help Terrell slow his speech and I modeled the exercises for him. I explained that, when I asked him to repeat himself, he should take three deep breaths, while raising his arms slowly over his head. I said that his “magic arms” would give him time to think about what he wanted to say. Eventually, he began to do the exercises independently. Once, when I asked him to repeat an utterance, we had this exchange:

Virginia: My ears are on backwards. Would you please say that again, Terrell? Please slow—[Terrell interrupts]

Terrell: I-I-I know! I needa slow down, yah! Uh, just a minute, I gotta breathe [takes three deep breaths, slowing raising his arms over his head each time, then looks at me and smiles] Ready now!

This technique worked very well for Terrell; his transcripts show that, once he started practicing it, I asked him for repetitions less often. Also, when transcribing his tapes, there were fewer instances when I could not understand his speech and coded the passage *indecipherable*.

Interest in Invented Words and Vocabulary

I discovered that Terrell was particularly clever at inventing substitute words that conveyed a concept or object that he could not yet label conventionally. For example, he used the word *bakers* when he did not know the term *baking pan*. Another morning, he was picture reading a fiction book about African animals and came to an illustration of a porcupine that was with a group of baboons. The illustrator had used the same color to

portray the porcupine's quills and the baboons' fur. Terrell hesitated when he saw the porcupine; he studied the illustration for a few moments. Finally, he said, "One day, da baboon, uh, the *pickedy* baboon stay in his cave so baboon was just makin' some *pointies*." He invented the word *pickedy* (quills would certainly *pick!*) and, in so doing, he accounted for the difference between the baboons and the porcupine. He then provided a rationale for this difference by saying that the "pickedy baboon [the porcupine] got them [the quills] by staying in a cave and making *pointies*." I recognized that, when describing the porcupine, Terrell's invented word *pickedy* correctly described the function of quills. It also conformed grammatically to the *y* ending in adjectives, as used in standard syntactic structures. Finally, when Terrell found that his sentence structure required a noun, he invented a new word, *pointies*, which also described the pointed characteristic of quills.

In that same session, Terrell came across an illustration of a rhinoceros, which showed the varying thicknesses of a rhino's skin. When Terrell saw the picture, he hesitated, as if he was searching for the name of the animal. After a few moments, his face brightened and he said, "But the wockysaurus [rockysaurus] just stay there until all the animals leave." Indeed, when I looked closely at the illustration, the raised, thicker areas of the rhino's skin looked like large, flat rocks. In addition, the illustrator's depiction of the rhinoceros closely resembled a dinosaur. Terrell had combined his description of the rhinoceros (rocky) with a species type (dinosaur), applied it to the animal in the illustration, and supplied his own label.

On another occasion, when Zion and I were sharing a book about sharks, I noticed that he seemed captivated by a novel word:

Virginia: These words say, [Reading from the text] “What is quick? What has five rows of teeth? What glides”—Oh, that’s such a good word! [Demonstrating by moving my hand smoothly through the air, with Zion imitating me]. That’s right! You do it, too! Glide! Our hands are gliding!

Zion: [Smiling and continuing to move his hand through the air] Glide! Gliding!

Virginia: [Both of us stop moving our hands] Glide. So, he swims very smoothly. Smoothly through the water! He glides through the water!

Zion: He glides through the water! Glide!

A few weeks later, Zion not only learned a new word, but seemed to make, what, for him, was an exciting phonemic discovery. We were looking at a book about bears, when he referred to the bear’s paw as its *hand*. I explained that animals like bears’ have *paws*.

Virginia: Bears have paws, dogs have paws, cats have paws—[Zion interrupts]

Zion: H-m-m, paw. Paw, claw!

Virginia: Yep, paw, claw! Yes, paws have claws! Does that rhyme?

Zion: [Eyes widening] Yah! Paw, claw! [Smiling and shaking his head from side to side, as if incredulous] That a good one! That a *good* one!

Another day, Zion brought a book from his classroom to our session. Before we left for my office, he showed me a picture from the book, of an anteater, and told me that it was “huge.” We continued on to my office to share the book:

Virginia: He is big! Do you remember that super word you used to tell me about him when we were in your classroom? You said he was_____ [waiting for Zion to supply the word]

Zion: Huge!

Virginia: [Laughing in delight] Wow! He is huge! What a great word! *Huge!*

Zion: Look at that big tail!

Virginia: Oh-h-h, that is big! Wow, pow, zow! Yes, he has a big tail! [Zion points at the anteater's long jaw] What are you pointing at?

Zion: Dis

Virginia: What is it?

Zion: A beak!

Virginia: It sure does look like some of those long bird beaks we saw in the bird book! Good thinking! Another good word!

Zion: [Pointing] Snake

Virginia: Yes. That's an anaconda. They are—I'll use your word—*huge*, I mean—very, very big!

The following week, Zion brought the same book from class. He opened it and began commenting on the illustrations.

Zion: Look! A butterfly!

Virginia: Yah, those are the butterflies we saw. Good eyes, Zion!

Zion: Dat a parrot!

Virginia: Right!

Zion: [Looking at an illustration of the anaconda we discussed last week] Dat a lot of snake!

Virginia: [Trying not to laugh] It sure is!

Zion: I know dat—anaconda!

Virginia: Wow! Listen to you with those words! You knew what kind of snake that was! That's a real hard word! Fantastic! I'm gonna give you one my famous Silent Cheers! [Gesturing like a cheer leader, with Zion smiling broadly]

Zion: [Pointing at another illustration] That called puma.

Virginia: I don't believe you! It is called a puma! We don't hear that word very much! Wow!

During another session, Zion and I talked about the word *silver* and I showed him my watch and ring. I told him, "These are made of silver and silver is also a color." He

promptly replied, slowly and distinctly, “*Sil-ver. Silver.* I didn’t know *silver!*” Another time, he proudly used a new word, *dot*, which he learned in a previous session. When I asked him what shape was on my dress, he correctly replied, “Circles.” I replied, “Right. And they are also called *dots* and sometimes *polka dots*.” I then explained that these two terms usually referred to a decoration of some kind. In a subsequent session, we were looking at butterflies and talking about how beautifully they were decorated. Zion pointed to one and said, “This one have cir—, uh *dots!*”

Kanai seemed especially astute in defining novel words and phrases. For example, he correctly defined the novel word, *enormous* as “gettin’ big” and the word *arranged* as “it looks nice.” He defined the phrase *used up all his energy* as “he gettin’ tired.” He also showed a marked interest in constructing a relevant meaning for the words I used when we talked to each other. For example, I recalled his fascination with the word *antique*. After giving him the definition for this word, he pointed to seven different objects in my office and asked, “Is this an antique?” I also remembered that, when I explained to him that “bears have to eat a lot of food before they hibernate,” Kanai asked “What does *before* mean?”

Knowledge of Book Language

The written language found in books varies considerably from oral language and the differences are largely due to the syntactical forms that characterize each function (Loban, 1963). Chafe (1982) compiled a list of the forms that he considered best illustrated the distinction between oral and written language; the differences he noted included:

- Oral language is often not characterized by using attributive adjectives. These are modifiers, as in “the big, brown dog,” rather than assertions like “The dog was big and brown.”
- Written language contains literary words and phrases that are typical in writing, but sound out of place when spoken, such as “on the horizon.”
- Oral language does not often use nouns, verbs, adjectives, or adverbs in a series, as in “The rabbit hopped, jumped, and leaped over the fence.”
- Oral language does not often use *ly*-adverbs to modify verbs, such as “he slowly walked.”

Many researchers attribute children’s knowledge of written language to the books caregivers read to them (M. M. Clay, 1992; Holdaway, 1979). For example, Chomsky (1972), a language acquisition theorist, found that, for pre-readers, listening to books read aloud is positively related to linguistic stage, as measured by the pre-reader’s ability to use more complex syntactic constructions. Similarly, Sulzby (1985), using some of Chafe’s (1982) criteria for oral and written language, studied two-, three-, and four-year-old children, as they verbally shared their favorite storybooks. Like Chomsky, Sulzby also found a progression in these children’s ability to differentiate their oral language and the language they used as they picture read books.

In varying degrees, Terrell, Zion, and Kanai all possessed an emerging awareness of written language. Terrell seemed to be the most familiar with the features of the written language register, as demonstrated in the following sentences.

Terrell:

- An' Mama Duck say, "Get away, Fox"! But he still won't get away!
- After a long time, the fox runned home.
- Da duck jumped in the water many times.
- What's that fox up to?
- And then the fox runned and runned and runned!
- In a winter morning, da bears sleep.
- In the lonesome woods we don't see the bears. Where the bears at?
- One day, da two mouse was sleepin'.
- And then he said, "Come along!"
- First, he followed the duck like he can follow the duck. He teaches the ducks how to do it.
- He followed the mommy duck and then he came back.
- First, da bird and da rabbit was speakin'.
- One day, the fox was scratching some straws.
- But soon, he went back on the thing.
- But, after long [time], he made the pig go to sleep.
- Then he runned and runned and got to the bear's house.
- After long, da wolf was here.
- An' affa, affa [after] then the boy was, the boy saw the chair.
- One day, the train was a-goin' again.
- And then, the boy and the dog sneaked into the baby's room. But then, the boy saw the mom or the dad.

- Then, all then, the dog hugged the boy and then the boy hugged him back.

In addition to the examples compiled by Chafe (1982), I also noted that Terrell used words and phrases that denoted sequence, such as *then*, *after long [time]*, *but soon*, and *first*. I theorized that, by using these particular words and phrases, Terrell was demonstrating his understanding that a story is a progression of events. The use of these words as a lead-in also appeared to give Terrell time to garner an explanation of illustrations he saw during picture reading. Terrell also used written language conventions; in addition, he was the only one of the three boys who mentioned visiting the library and reading books with his family.

Kanai and Zion also showed an emerging knowledge of written language structures. For example, in session five, Kanai used a series of adjectives when he described a dollhouse: “And one of them is a tiny, little house.” He demonstrated that he understood the structure of cumulative stories when he picture read a book about a frog, a fish, a snake, and a turtle: “An’ da fish scared away da frog. Anna snake scare away a fish. An’ den da turtle scared away da frog.” Like Terrell, Kanai also recognized and implemented the phrase *and then* to connect and sequence his storyline: “He got nothin’ to do, so he just get the baby and play with it. And den [then], he goin’ out the door. And den [then], he grab da chair. And den [then] the dog was chasing him and the dog tried to lick him.

One of Zion’s transcripts revealed that he used an *ly* adverb when he assured me that “Yah, I look closely!” He also demonstrated an increase in the number of complete sentences he used (sessions 1–7= 94; sessions 8–14= 194). Many of these sentences were statements of fact. I wondered if Zion’s sentences were replications of the factual

statements typically found in informational texts. I theorized that, to some degree, his increased use of complete sentences might demonstrate his knowledge of the written structure of the book genre we shared in every session.

Original Interpretation of Photographs and Illustrations

When Terrell looked at his favorite picture book, he pointed at a bear and asked me “Why they [the other characters] cut his head off?” I could not understand his visual perspective until later, when I spent several minutes peering at the illustration from different angles. Still, Terrell would not accept my explanation of the illustration. Eventually, to give Terrell a three-dimensional representation, I had to physically assume the position of the bear. After I did this, he finally agreed that the bear’s head was still attached to his body. Later, another illustration in the same book showed the bear walking from the train at night, amid falling snow. This time, Terrell told me that the bear was going out to get popcorn for the other animals on the train, “but he didn’t.”

I did not understand Terrell’s original interpretation until I discovered that illustrations and photographs were considered *visual literacy*. In connection, I thought about how a young child’s limited experience might influence his ideas about what illustrations meant or what photographs depicted. I considered how differing cultural practices might create interpretive differences among children (or adults, for that matter). Kennedy (1974) helped ground my ideas about visual literacy when he suggested that

The fact is in all the studies most subjects identified most depicted objects [in illustrations]. What the depicted men and animals seem to be doing is another story; when subjects have to say where the objects are in relation to each other, and the objects are doing to one another, cultural differences boil up.” (p. 79)

Kennedy's words seemed to find a complete and perfect application to Terrell's interpretations of where exactly the bear's head was in comparison to his body and what exactly the fox was doing with one of his eyes.

Another time, Zion became very agitated when a photograph made a fox appear to eat a leaf and he stoutly maintained, "Fox don't eat that!" Several weeks later, both he and I initially agreed that what we saw in a photograph was a fruit bat with a "grape." After consulting the text, we discovered that the "grape" was a newborn bat caught and held by its mother's wing. In another yet another photograph, Zion could not understand why the fur on a bear's neck appeared different from the rest of his body (the answer: it was wet).

At times, illustrations also perplexed Kanai. On one occasion, he turned a picture book about bats around and around and finally, visibly frustrated, uttered, "Dis one [book] should be up, not down." He could not understand the bat's upside down position even though we previously looked at an informational text about bats where he saw several photographs of them hanging in various locations.

Another time, Kanai looked at an illustration showing the main character, a preschool-aged bear, taking a bath. Above the tub was wallpaper that depicted groups of swans swimming among water plants. Kanai asked about the swans. I did my best to explain the concept of wallpaper, but even after my lengthy explanation, Kanai adamantly asserted that, within the context of the book, the swans (Kanai called them "ducks") were "real live." He then wanted to know on what page he could find the ducks "playing with the bear." On the way back to his classroom, we took a different route so that we could look at some wallpaper borders that decorated an inner-hallway of the

school. The borders featured dolphins and Kanai readily agreed that they were not “real.” By comparing the dolphins to the swans, Kanai was then able to understand the illustration in the book.

Virginia: Teaching to Learn and Learning to Teach

At the end of the study, I thought that Terrell’s, Zion’s, and Kanai’s behaviors were nothing short of amazing. It was hard to believe that these verbal, articulate, inventive learners were the sometimes silent, often withdrawn boys described by their teachers. What made the difference? I hypothesized that the boys’ language capabilities did not change, but rather they felt free to express themselves. Further, their eventual barrage of questions seemed to demonstrate that they began to practice proactive inquiry, but perhaps more importantly, that they were engaged learners. I believe that these capacities were always present—I had unintentionally overshadowed them with my behaviors. In the end, I understood that I was the one who had changed. As I consciously reduced my verbal presence, I made room for Terrell, Zion, and Kanai to create spaces large enough to accommodate their own expanding verbal repertoire. I changed in many ways.

- I talked less and listened more.
- I modeled what it meant (to me) to be a learner.
- I asked questions to clarify and expand the boys’ ideas.
- I encouraged choices and I gave permission.
- I practiced student-centered teaching.
- I emphasized the importance of words.
- I emphasized the importance of new words.

- I interpreted ambiguous illustrations.
- I provided explicit information about social skills and the use of pragmatic language and conventions.

I Talked Less and Listened More

After study began, and I read the initial transcripts, I made a journal entry that stated, “Oh, this is not conversation, it’s narrative—mine!” For many years, I was convinced that “teachers talk too much.” However, as often happens when individuals recognize the foibles of others, I found that I did not apply this criticism to myself. Fortunately, the written text of the transcripts allowed me to see and contemplate what I recognized as my verbal dominance. I recognized that, after making their initial book choice, Terrell, Zion, and Kanai had little input into how we would explore it or what conversational topics it might inspire.

Initially, I assumed that, to stimulate conversation, I would probably read the chosen book to the boys each time we met; indeed, this is what happened in the first two sessions. As we read, I was most eager to start a conversation. I quickly noted content and asked questions about what I thought was important. I also sought to scaffold the boys’ prior knowledge; in so doing, I gave them information about my own personal experiences as a means of modeling narrative. With all good intent, my conversational scaffolding created a “dominating role” (Wells, 1986, p. 87). Wells explained that when teachers asserted this dominance, they were likely to develop and extend the ideas that they found meaningful, rather than inviting children to share their own ideas and experiences (Wells, 1986). For this reason, Wells admonished that, when in the classroom, it is a “small wonder that some children have little to say or even appear to be

lacking in conversational skills altogether” (p. 87). This statement immediately conjured conversations with Terrell’s, Zion’s, and Kanai’s teachers when they shared their observations concerning the paucity of the boys’ expressive language. I wondered if they considered their conversational roles to be domineering.

When I consciously reflected back on what seemed to be my non-stop narrative and questions, I remembered two incidents in particular. Both yielded evidence that, in the guise of support, my dominance overpowered the boys. The first was an early session with Zion and a discussion we had about opossums. I told him that a large one came into my garage foraging for food. At our next session, I said, “Did I tell you about the ‘possum in my garage?” Zion nodded his head “yes,” but the transcript revealed that I went ahead and repeated the story anyway. Zion made no comment when I finished. I also recalled about another time that I told Kanai about an unusual animal. After I finished speaking, he made no comment, but quickly turned the page of the book, as if to escape from the illustration of the animal that evoked what Kanai might have considered a long and tedious explanation. I decided that I must make sure that the boys not only enjoyed a choice of books, but perhaps more importantly, a choice of how we proceeded to talk about them. In subsequent meetings with the boys, I said things like:

- How are we going to read this book today? You could read it or I could read it or we could just talk about the pictures. You choose!
- How should we find out what happens in the book?
- Well, what are we going to do with this book? You tell me!
- Any time you’re ready, just start the book!

- Please tell me some more about that.
- Can you tell me about a time you did that?

As a teacher, I did not set out to impose myself on Terrell, Zion, and Kanai. What initially seemed to be my constant flow of comments, explanations, and questions was meant to support them. My intentions were good. In a paradoxical way, however, they demonstrated that I had more concern for myself and what I hoped to accomplish during my study than in finding out what might be interesting or relevant to the boys. Lindfors (1999) wrote:

How to manage imposition in our interactions with others is central to language, and it is central in a way that reaches deep, deep into human relationship, for it has to do with balancing concern for self and other. This is the very heart of human relationships: me and you. Us. (p. 19)

When I assumed the role of an active listener, Terrell, Zion, and Kenai started to take a dominant role in creating the conversation and discussion that surrounded their books. We forged a different kind of relationship when I acknowledged this reciprocity and became consciously aware of my role as listener. Through this experience, I learned that I needed to evolve from “teacher as transmission device to teacher as learning partner” (Lindfors, 1999, p. 117) and perhaps more importantly, I needed to maintain this status.

I Modeled What it Meant (to me) to be a Learner

During the first half of the data collection, I recorded a code that meant the boys did not respond verbally, often in response to a question. The code designation was *no response* and there were twenty-eight occurrences in that period. This lack of response bothered me for two reasons. First, I established a conscious effort to listen more and talk less and the transcripts indicated that I had accomplished that goal. I theorized that maybe I was wrong to think that my pervasive verbal scaffolding was overwhelming to

Terrell, Zion, and Kanai. Second, relative to this scaffolding, I strongly believed that language learning was an interactional, social process. For this reason, I believed that the boys' silence denied them an opportunity to further ground, expand, and diversify their communication practices by means of a one-on-one interaction with someone more knowledgeable (Vygotsky, 1968). As I thought about what I considered a conundrum, I first acknowledged that Terrell, Zion, and Kanai seemed comfortable with me. They began to make spontaneous comments and always seemed delighted to make the weekly trip to my office. For this reason, I remained puzzled about the unresponsiveness that sometimes occurred when we met.

Again, I tried to reason why this might happen. My coding records showed that I asked questions for both information and clarification. I asked these questions primarily to model their syntactic structure because my past experiences taught me that this structure seemed unfamiliar to many of the children I served. I also knew that AAVE structured questions differently than did Standard English (SE) and I wondered if this difference confused the boys (Fasold, 2005).

I decided to demonstrate the use of inquiry. I was careful, however, to try to ask questions that I was sure the boys could answer. Later, I wondered if I misjudged the content or complexity of my questions and, therefore, the boys simply did not know how to respond.

Finally, I thought about the cultural differences that diverse children often bring to mainstream classrooms and wondered if Terrell, Zion, and Kanai thought that verbal inquiry was inappropriate or disrespectful. With this in mind, I decided that I needed to define the role of a learner and show the boys what kind of language and behaviors a

learner might demonstrate at school. First, I explained that learners were people who wanted to know things, “all kinds of things.” Then I told them that it was both acceptable and appropriate for learners to say, “I don’t know,” because no one expected learners to know everything; that’s why they were learners! I emphasized that our reason for coming to school was to learn. In addition, I confided, much to their amazement, that even though I was a “grown-up and a teacher,” I was a learner, went to school “far away,” and often said “I don’t know.” I further explained that learners had a special “magic trick” to find out what they did not know and I would tell them what it was. I then imitated a drum roll, stood up, bowed low, and with a flourish, announced: “learners ask questions!”

In subsequent sessions, I tried to demonstrate my learner status and looked for opportunities to communicate that I was “not in the know.” Entries in the transcripts increasingly typified this behavior. Three examples of this behavior included the following interactions.

Virginia: Do you remember the name of that one? I don’t! Want to go back and find out what he is?

Zion: Yah! I don’t remember, too!

Virginia: Uh, I’m thinking that they called that, uh that they called that. . . I’m not sure! I don’t think I know. Let me think, that was a new one to me, too---h-m-m, oh! I think it was called a *peccary*!

Zion: Yah! Peccary!

Virginia: [Looking at the next photograph of a puma] Do you know where puma’s live?

Zion: I don’t know.

Virginia: H-m-m, I don’t know either. [Looking in book] Maybe the words will tell us!

Virginia: [Looking at photograph] Can you tell what's going on here?
Zion: I don't know.
Virginia: H-m-m. I don't know either! Let's see if we can find out, okay?
Zion: Yah!

I Encouraged Choices and I Gave Permission

Johnston (2004) suggested that teacher responses such as *I don't know* asserts the “authority of the child in discourse, the fallibility of the teacher” (p. 57). Such teacher practices served to imbue children with a sense of competence and ability that is central in language and literacy learning. Further, the collaborative implication of the word *let's* engage both child and teacher in “the same intellectual project” (p. 57). In addition, this joint engagement held the potential to found and encourage the growth of a learning community driven by inquiry. Further, the collaborative or *collective agency* of such a community also provides the child with a means of developing an identity as a successful learner through his affiliation with more knowledgeable others (Johnston, 2004). For this reason, it seemed that when teachers were willing to pose themselves as learners, they did much to build a children's sense of agency, an attitude of “I can do it!”

I also surmised that perhaps this attitude contributed to children's resilience. The influence of affiliation also seemed to suggest that teachers would be wise to create many opportunities for children to work collaboratively with more capable peers and older children. This potential affiliation and collaboration reminded me of explicitly teaching Terrell, Zion, and Kanai social skills such as walking side-by-side and establishing eye contact during conversation. In addition, we practiced pragmatic language skills such as greeting people, asking about their health and emotions (“How are you doing today?”), and showing an interest in their lives (“What did you do over the weekend?”). I

wondered if this also played a part in the development of the boys' sense of agency as it might be construed that these social skills and pragmatic language use showed the boys how one can appropriately demonstrate the kind of behaviors that encourage and establish agentive relationships.

As I thought about scaffolding Terrell's, Zion's, and Kanai's sense of agency, I recognized two teaching practices—student choice and teacher permission—that I theorized could support this important element in the learning process; indeed, both increased over time. The boys' choice of book genre was a preplanned component of the study and was central to my research. Accordingly, I spent a considerable amount of time explaining the procedure for choosing books during the first session with the boys. I found that Terrell, Zion, and Kanai understood the procedure quickly and seemed to enjoy their independence as they confidently entered my office, chose their book, and sat on the floor in our customary place.

Over the course of the study, however, I found that their assumption of choice and the idea of initiating an act without teacher permission did not seem to generalize to other areas. For example, after choosing their book, they did not proceed with any type of book exploration. Instead, they often sat with the book in their lap or on the floor and looked at me. This invariably occurred at the beginning of each session. I realized that Terrell, Zion, and Kanai seemed unfamiliar with acting and thinking independently in the presence of a teacher. For this reason, I found myself giving the boys permission to examine the books they chose. For example:

- Virginia to Terrell: Are we ready? [Terrell nods, otherwise motionless]
- Why don't you go ahead, okay? [Terrell holds book, looks at me]
- So, anytime you're ready! [I smile, put my hands in my lap, look at Terrell]
- Okay, I can't wait! Go for it!
- Virginia to Zion: [Zion tentatively opens book] Sure! Go ahead and open up the book!
- So, you turn [the pages] anytime you want to! [Zion looks at me]
- You just start whenever you want to!
- Virginia to Kanai: Okay! You go ahead whenever you're ready!
- Please start whenever you're ready!
- You gonna open the book and turn the pages?

I also observed Zion did not participate in imitating my instructive gestures, for example, without my inviting him to do so. In addition, Terrell and Kanai did not seem to feel comfortable taking care of physical needs independently. The following examples demonstrated teacher permission that sanctioned both.

- Virginia to Terrell: [Terrell had a bad cold]: Oh! You need a tissue! Go get one! You don't have to ask, Sweetheart!
- Virginia to Zion: [Using a gesture to explain a vocabulary word] C'mon! You can do it with me! C'mon, let's go for it!
- Virginia to Kanai: [Kanai complained that his feet hurt and I suggested he sit up on his knees; he was not allowed to do this in his classroom. While there, he was required to sit in one position only when seated on the rug.]: Why don't you get up on your knees? Maybe that will help! [Kanai's eyes widened and he appeared incredulous] It's okay! You know, maybe you need to stand up and stretch!"

I Practiced Student-Centered Teaching

I had heard about a teaching practice that emphasized student engagement. I recalled that the name was *student-centered teaching* and I remembered hearing that it moved the focus of activity from teacher to learner (King, 1993). I thought about my resolve to stop dominating, and perhaps even intimidating, Terrell, Zion, and Kanai with *teacher talk*. I looked up a few articles and found that student-centered teaching enabled students to participate in active learning, which included problem solving, formulating questions, discussion, explanation, debate, and brainstorming. It also depended on cooperative learning, in which students worked in teams on problems and projects in environments that assured both positive interdependence and individual accountability. In addition, the method relied on inquiry-based learning for its participants.

Student-centered methods were cited as superior to traditional teacher-centered instructional approaches because they fostered short-term mastery, long-term retention, depth of understanding, acquisition of critical thinking and creative problem-solving skills. In addition, the methods also seemed to encourage the formation of positive attitudes toward school and the student's level of confidence in knowledge or skills (Felder, 1996). Felder and Brent (1996) added that these methods "increased motivation to learn" (p. 46).

After reviewing student-centered teaching, I was flooded with the realization that the components of this teaching method matched how I eventually interacted (it was not my intention to teach) with Terrell, Zion, and Kanai during our sessions! This was fascinating to me and I decided to make a comparison chart (unlike the original, this duplication includes only one example in each category).

Table 7.1

Student-centered teaching methods and my behaviors.

Student-Centered Teaching	Virginia’s Interactional Behaviors
Focus from teacher to students	Virginia decides she talks too much
Problem-solving	Virginia and the boys collaborate to find answers (“Let’s find out!”)
Formulating questions	Virginia: Begins to clarify and expand the boys’ ideas Boys: Begin to ask questions that reflect all levels cognitive skill (1-4)
Discussion	Virginia and boys: Reciprocal interchanges in each session
Explanation	Virginia: Vocabulary, illustrations, lived experiences Boys: Vocabulary, illustrations, lived experiences
Debate	Boys: Begin to express their own opinions
Cooperative learning	Virginia and boys: Problem-solve together
Short-term mastery	Boys: All remember and replicate corrected pronunciations within sessions
Long-term retention	Boys: Remember pronunciation and new vocabulary over time (Zion: <i>anaconda, flamingo</i>)
Depth of Understanding	Kanai: Asked if an event occurred “back in the day” as we discussed a boyhood story about my adult son
Acquisition of critical thinking	Kanai: Gave his rationale for using the term <i>puppy</i> rather than <i>pup</i>
Acquisition of creative problem solving	Terrell: Invented a word to label an animal Zion: Made a gesture that accurately emulates a word he says that I cannot understand
Formation of positive attitude about school	Virginia: Reported marked improvement in Zion’s classroom interaction with peers
Level of confidence in knowledge or skills	Boys: Independently assumed all recording responsibilities

One of the articles I read about Student-Centered Teaching referred to the often dominant, all-knowing teacher as the *sage on the stage* (King, 1993, p.30). I laughed, but an old saying came to mind: *Many a truth is said in jest*. In that moment, I understood that the sage on the stage was me. The structure of the chart helped me recognize the change that occurred in me—the sage on the stage appeared to be gone. Although I worked hard to create a parallel phrase to replace sage on the stage, I could not. One day, near the end of the study, I came close. As Zion and I walked down the hall, side by side, I recalled how he used to follow me. Then I thought about the implied equality of walking with someone this way. It seemed that Terrell, Zion, Kanai, and I did, indeed, become equal participants in learning about the world and ourselves. As I looked down at Zion that day, I thought, “He is the pride by my side.”

I Emphasized the Importance of Words

Although Terrell and Zion received speech services twice a week, their speech continued to contain misarticulations, as did Kanai’s. Their teachers continued to report that they could not readily understand the boys; sometimes, neither could I. My comprehension of the boys’ speech was the critical factor in my study. For this reason, I decided that I would ask them to repeat any words or sentences I did not understand.

When I asked the boys for a repetition, I invariably told them that I had “my ears on backwards.” This phrase amused them and never failed to elicit a smile. Although I asked them to repeat many words, they never denied my request, nor did they ever seem frustrated or annoyed.

I also consistently used the phrase “maybe the words will tell us” when we searched text for answers to our questions. I began to tell Terrell, Zion, and Kanai that

their words were important. To reinforce this sentiment (and to release some energy), I composed a chant that we used while marching in place: “Words are important, words are important, words are important, say them all!” The boys loved the chant and we usually repeated it several times. In addition, I gave an action-specific compliment for every attempt they made to echo spontaneously my correction or to initiate a self-correction.

As we continued to use the chant and I continued to give the boys compliments, they seemed to pay more and more attention to their “words.” First, all of them developed a penchant for being recorded, as they immensely enjoyed hearing themselves speak. For example, one day I happened to tell Terrell that I made a mistake and erased part of our last session. He looked at me with a scowl and warned, “You better be more careful!” Another time, I was talking, when Zion suddenly picked up the microphone. He held it close to my mouth and said, “Words are important!”

Another day, Kanai entered my office without a word and, in his usual efficiency, began to prepare the tape recorder. When all was situated, he turned it on and proceeded to voice our recording test, “Testing, testing, 1, 2, 3. My name is Kanai.” He played it back, found that the recorder was functioning, and seemed satisfied that all was well. I saw, however, that he hesitated to pick up his book so we could get started with our story. I looked at him questioningly and he said, “Oh, this [our book discussion] important. You better try the test, too!” I complied and after he replayed the “test” and again found it satisfactory, he rewound the tape, turned the recorder on, and opened his book. “Gotta make sure,” he said. I also noted that at the end of our sessions, Kanai often asked to hear an excerpt of the recording. When time allowed me to honor his request, he listened

raptly. As he listened to himself speak, Kanai's face reflected pleasure and a sense of wonder.

By the middle of February, all three boys independently assumed complete responsibility for recording our sessions. When I realized this, I laughed and wrote in one of my memos, "Well, I guess they don't trust me to get the job done right!"

I found the boys' behavior intriguing. In an attempt to create a natural environment during our time together, I downplayed the use of the tape recorder, even to the extent that, on several occasions, I told the boys that we needed to "get that [the tape recorder and microphone] out of our way." I could only surmise that the boys came to believe that what they said was valuable.

I Emphasized the Importance of New Words

As early as 1925, Whipple maintained that, "Growth in reading means, therefore, continuous enriching and enlarging of the reading vocabulary and increasing clarity of discrimination in appreciation of word values" (Whipple, as cited in Hiebert & Kamil, 2005, p. 1). I also believed that it was a critical element in learning to read. Further, I believed that vocabulary should be taught explicitly and in context. Additionally, I agreed with the long-established idea that vocabulary contributed largely to reading comprehension (Davis, 1944).

Over time, these beliefs and the boys' attention to vocabulary increased my emphasis on developing their lexicon. During the second half of the study, I found 96 instances when I introduced new words either verbally or with gestures (sometimes both). What really impressed me, however, was what the boys already knew about words and their meanings. This seemed contrary to a significant amount of educational research that

documented disparity in the vocabulary development of racially and economically diverse children, when compared with their mainstream counterparts (Hart & Risley, 1992, 1995; Smith, Brooks–Gunn, & Klebanov, 1997; Washington & Craig, 1999). It also seemed contrary to how Terrell’s, Zion’s, and Kanai’s teachers perceived their language skills. When I thought about this, I wondered how it was possible for teachers to evaluate children’s language if they did not create classroom environments and implement procedures that provided and encouraged daily opportunities for conversation and inquiry.

I Interpreted Ambiguous Illustrations and Photographs

Galda and Cullinan (2006) stated that the illustrations in picture books are “*as important as the text in the creation of meaning -sometimes even more important* [italics added]” (p. 29). Further, Nodelman and Reimer (1995) conjectured that young children need illustrations in books “because they find them easier to understand than words and need pictorial information to guide their response to verbal information” (p. 216). As a teacher, I agreed with both of these suppositions. I thought that illustrations and photographs represented relatively familiar, concrete experiences that young children could identify with. Fang (1996) also suggested that illustrations often made a connection with a child’s life experiences and enabled the child to “construct meaning based on their existing schemas or schemata” (p. 138).

I observed, however, that many times, the boys assigned original interpretations to illustrations and photographs. Their interpretations often seemed to confuse them, perhaps because they conflicted with textual coherence or because they did not provide referential clues that helped a reader make sense of the text. For this reason, the

illustrations and photographs were often a detriment to the boys' attempts to narrate meaningfully the book's storyline during picture reads. This was also the case with photographs in informational texts.

Many educators have endorsed illustrations as effective aids that serve to clarify and enhance student learning (Watkins, Miller, & Brubaker, 2004). Others have claimed that illustrations support and improve comprehension (Holliday & Harvey, 1976). Still other educators, however, have warned that, if misinterpreted, illustrations detract from learning and, more distinctively, interfere with text comprehension (Pena & Quilez, 2001; Waddill, McDaniel, & Einstein, 1988).

In addition, as I had a discussion with Ms. Taylor, the boys' teacher, she told me that sometimes her students' comments about the picture books she read aloud did not make sense and that she regarded these comments as "off the wall." I now theorized that these "off the wall" comments might be her children's original interpretations of picture book illustrations.

I weighed what I thought might be the repercussions of original interpretations. I surmised that children, especially those whose cultural experiences did not match those of the authors and illustrators, would benefit from learning about visual literacy. Downey (1980) suggested that the effective use of visual representations depended solely on the learner's ability to interpret them independently and conventionally. To become independent and accurate, young learners needed instruction in visual literacy, to ensure that they were able to use illustrations and photographs effectively to scaffold their reading skills. Glasgow (1994) stated, "Since our goal is to educate them [students] to

make text their own, we must provide them with skills to interpret the content of visual images as well as print” (p. 499).

Again, I thought of Terrell and another of his favorite books, *Do Like a Duck Does* (Hindley, 2002). The story was about a hapless fox that attempts to fool a mother duck by saying that he wants to join her family of ducklings. A subsequent illustration of the fox shows him winking at the reader. The fox’s dialogue in the accompanying text is pleasant and friendly. As an experienced adult, I understood that the wink implied that the fox’s words were not true and that his intentions were not to join the duck family, but to eat it. When we came to this part of the book, I was interested to see if Terrell could tell me that the fox was trying to “fool” the mother duck. I prompted, “What’s the fox doing to Mama Duck?” Terrell answered, “Oh, the fox take a nap!”

Terrell readily identified the fox as he had earlier identified the bear, but his interpretation of the bear’s spatial position and the fox’s action made it clear that, for him, the illustrations did not convey the intent of the author. In terms of this type of pictorial perception, Kennedy (1974) stated that varying interpretations were not unusual for people with different cultural backgrounds:

The fact is that in all the studies most subjects identified most of the depicted objects. What depicted men [people] and animals seem to be doing is another story; when subjects have to say where the objects are in relation to each other, and what the objects are doing to one another, cultural differences boil up. (p. 79)

Based on Nodelman’s (1988) tenet that “perception is dependent upon prior experience” (p. 9), I also ascribed the boys’ original interpretations as a reflection of their young age. Further, I was of the opinion that many of the illustrations were not well matched to the texts and that some of the photographs were poor. For example, my perception and Zion’s perception of a fox amid fall leaves were the same: it appeared that the fox was

eating a leaf. It was only my experience that helped me make sense of what Zion found so disturbing.

As a teacher, I came to realize that understanding the words and the story by examining and interpreting the illustrations might well be an additional function of picture books that young children needed to understand. Nodelman (1988) clarified this opinion when he suggested that the interpretation of pictures depends on schemata. He explained that these mental structures categorized what we understand. He further explained that the categories these schemata represented were labeled so that individuals could “name and explain our sense impression” (p. 8). The labels are, in fact, a product of our verbal knowledge. Nodelman concluded that, “All perception, therefore, including the perception of pictures, might actually be an act of verbalization—a *linguistic skill* [italics added] rather than an automatic act” (p. 8).

I thought this concept had far-reaching implications for children, in terms of communicating their knowledge about books when retelling. I also wondered how this concept might influence a child’s ability to use pictures and photographs first as a tool to understand written material and then as a tool to express their comprehension of such material. For this reason, I decided that awareness of and instruction in visual literacy might well be an additional scaffold to encourage the language and literacy development of students.

For the remainder of our sessions, I explained any illustration or photograph that I thought might be difficult for a young child to understand. There were many. By the end of the study, I noted that the boys’ original interpretations of illustrations and photographs had decreased, while conventional interpretations had increased. I surmised

that the boys had become aware of visual literacy, as their requests for me to explain an aspect of an illustration or photograph increased from five requests in the first half of the study to 32 requests during the second half.

Differences between the Boys' Classroom and the Weekly Sessions with Me

During my study, I became aware that Terrell's, Kanai's, and Zion's teachers saw the boys differently. For example, both Ms. Taylor and Mrs. Golden stated that they could not understand Terrell when he spoke. They also described both Kanai and Zion in terms of their uncommunicative behaviors. In addition, neither of them had mentioned the many things the boys knew and understood. For this reason, I decided to spend some more time in the boys' classroom, hoping to glean some clues that would help me understand their classroom habits and routines. I noticed several differences between the boys' classroom setting and the weekly sessions in my office.

Choice

I noticed that it seemed like the children did not have many opportunities to make choices. I guessed that perhaps the large class size (20) or the brevity of the daily classroom schedule (approximately two and one half hours), made it difficult to accommodate individual requests. I did, however, learn that they had a choice of free play centers. There were also times when, as a group activity, all the children sat on the community rug and looked at books. During this time, they had access to the book center, taking any book that might catch their interest.

At work time (usually various work or coloring sheets), I observed that the children were required to follow explicit directions. Variations that did not align with these directions did not seem to be allowed. For example, when the children were

learning the color *black*, they were given a zebra coloring sheet and were given directions to color its stripes the conventional *black*. After following these directions, one child began to color meticulously the zebra's mane in sections of purple then green, creating an AB pattern. He was given another paper to color and was told that he did not follow directions.

Bruner (1996) suggested that, within our current educational systems, the paradoxical situation of control and lack of choice is a reproductive technique for maintaining a dominant culture. These practices seemed to inhibit agency and initiative and encourage a rote performance that aligned with the academic standards the children were expected to achieve. Also within current educational practices, the children's achievement was carefully measured and monitored and served not only to reflect their competence, but also that of their teacher. Perhaps Bruner said it best:

We must constantly reassess what school does to the young student's conception of his own powers (his sense of agency) and his sensed chances of being able to cope with the world both in school and after (his self-esteem). In many democratic cultures, I think, we have become so preoccupied with the moral formal criteria of performance and with the bureaucratic demands of education as an institution that we have neglected this personal side of education. (p. 39)

Talk Time

I also noticed other differences between the boys' classroom and our weekly sessions. As compared to our exclusively one-on-one interactions, there seemed to be few opportunities for individual attention in their classroom. I also did not observe any small group instruction that would afford children a chance to initiate conversations or ask questions about what might pique their interest. I did observe the children engaged in a speech activity called *Speakers Five*, in which they were given a sentence stem such as *I had a good weekend because _____*. The teacher then called five children at a time to

the front of the classroom. Each of the five took a turn adding personal information to the stem to form a complete sentence such as *I had a good weekend because I played*. The remainder of the class became their audience. I did not observe the children given an opportunity to talk individually about a topic of their choice.

When I mentioned my observations to Ms. Taylor, she reported that there was “no time” for individual or small group dialogue. She explained that she felt constrained by academic grade level standards, district implementation of student performance criteria, and technology requirements. As a result, she provided direct, decontextualized instruction (often with flash cards) in identifying colors, shapes, letters (both name and sound), and numbers; instruction that targeted specific academic skills that were assessed in her students’ report cards. For this reason, she and her fellow 4–K colleagues were required to be in strict compliance in teaching these skills.

Curriculum

After the study was completed, Ms. Taylor and her teaching assistant, Mrs. Golden, and I met to talk about the boys’ transcripts and behaviors. We focused our discussion on the boys’ avid language use during my sessions, compared to the paucity of language their teachers observed them using in the classroom. They seemed eager to hear about what activities and “materials” I used during our sessions and they listened with interest as I told them that I did not implement any special materials, games, or computer programs, nor did I follow a guided curriculum. I simply told them, “We looked at books and talked.” I hastened to add that this, of course, meant that within the context of our sessions, our “book talks” were one-on-one and focused on language and

conversational interaction. I explained that I thought these were the most important factors in what they deemed a “transformation” of the boys.

Both Ms. Taylor and Mrs. Golden were frustrated that their schedule did not afford them “down time” when child-initiated conversation or inquiry could be encouraged. Rather, they stated that their time with the children had been severely constrained by a mandated computer program that reinforced alphabet letter names and sounds in isolation. Each child was required to spend 15 minutes a day engaged in this program. Because the children were not allowed to do this in a computer lab, they shared six classroom computers, which were used exclusively for this program. Computer time generally fell during direct instruction or the teacher’s read-aloud period. All of us recalled that, prior to the introduction of this computer program, it was part of my job description to provide one-on-one intervention services to the children in the 4–K classes. Eventually, administration told me that, “30 minutes a week (the amount of time per child that I could allot to this service) was not enough to be effective” and they eliminated this aspect of my job description. Ms. Taylor quickly countered that 30 minutes a week was exactly what I spent with Terrell, Zion, and Kanai over the course of the study.

As I continued to explain the differences between my sessions with the boys and their classroom time, I reminded the teachers that I was not constrained by the necessity of aligning my instruction with standardized grade level skills that children were required to master. These included learning letter names, sounds, and 21 sight vocabulary words. I then explained to the teachers that the focal skills I currently considered important for Terrell, Zion, and Kanai did not include the memorization of letter names and sounds.

For now, I explained, my objective was to scaffold and expand Terrell's, Zion's, and Kanai's language competence. First, I shared that I concentrated on both expressive and receptive language learning because I believed that the type and extent of verbal interactions that children experienced were a foundational core of successful literacy learning. Further, we discussed the idea that it was especially important that diverse learners were introduced to language subtleties that we, as mainstream teachers, might take for granted. For example, pragmatic language conventions such as greetings, eye contact, and conversational turn-taking might require explicit teaching as such conventions varied among cultures and were also dependent on previous experiences that some young children had not yet encountered.

Second, I told them that I felt that I had a good understanding of the importance language played in literacy acquisition, particularly for children who were not members of the mainstream culture of our public schools. When I asked if they had any type of language development curriculum, they told me that they did not. Further, when I asked about coursework, neither of the teachers had taken coursework or received any district-level staff development that addressed children's language acquisition.

As I continued, I was quick to tell them that my emphasis on language did not mean that I was ignoring exposure to alphabetic principles, but this was not accomplished by teaching any of these principles in isolation, but within the context of where they occurred in our sessions. For Terrell, Zion, and Kanai this happened when we pronounced words and during the time we looked at the text in printed materials. The teachers asked for examples.

I explained that when we talked about new vocabulary or the boys worked to correct a misarticulation, I pronounced words and matched letter sounds with letter names. For example, I told them that, when Kanai and I worked to pronounce the *p* sound at the end of the word *sharp*, I told him, “There’s a *p* at the end of the word and the letter *p* usually makes a *puh* sound when it is in a word.” I then pronounced the word, giving emphasis to the targeted sound. I also sometimes wrote our target word on a small, portable whiteboard and circled the letter we were voicing in a different color.

I explained to Ms. Taylor and Mrs. Golden that, to help children understand written language, I used a chant and a big book to help explain the relationship of letters, words, and sentences in written language. The chant was *letters make words, words make sentences, sentences are in books, yes, yes, yes!* I introduced this chant, using a big book with a single sentence on each page. First, I pointed out a letter, then a word, and then, a complete sentence. Then, I very slowly voiced the chant and matched it with the text as I pointed to the first letter of a word, then underscored the entire word with my finger, and finally underscored the complete sentence. I said that I thought this helped children better understand when teachers later asked them to “look at this sentence” or “write a sentence.” I told the teachers that this was one of my ideas for teaching within a context of what I considered were real literacy events, such as sharing books and exploring print.

We went on to discuss student-teacher interaction and this reminded me of something else that I thought strongly contributed to Terrell’s, Zion’s, and Kanai’s behavior changes during the course of the study. I told the teachers that I embraced a constructivist stance. I clarified this term and defined it as a learning theory. I explained

that the theory suggested that much of what children learn is commensurate with the interaction they experience with more knowledgeable others. I also told them that I thought this learning was best achieved when it took place within a context that enabled children to relate new ideas to prior knowledge. I explained that this built an individual's schema. I described this as an individual's cognitive recognition and understanding of objects and actions that s/he could label or describe. All of us agreed that this was important for comprehending text or illustrations. Mrs. Golden said, "I didn't know that! I can see why that's so important, especially since some of these kids haven't had many experiences!" She then added, "Oh, Virginia, we're doing it all wrong in here!"

I addressed Mrs. Golden's remark and assured her and Ms. Taylor that they were not "doing it all wrong." Yes, I explained, there was always room for improvement—for any us—but much of what caused Mrs. Golden's angst was out of the teachers' control: they taught under the auspices of an increasing number of mandated standards and practices and they were held accountable for the implementation of both.

Conclusions

There are five patterns that characterized my time with Terrell, Zion, and Kanai and which might explain why their language practices in their classroom so differed from those they initiated during our sessions. I took a constructivist approach and, as part of that, I proactively encouraged and scaffolded conversation, provided explicit instruction within the context of shared reading, explicitly gave the boys permission to become learners by encouraging them to state "I don't know" and, modeling inquiry as a method of learning, I gave them choices and encouraged independent actions. I also provided one-on-one instruction.

I Took a Constructivist Stance and Enacted a Whole Language Approach

A constructivist view of learning with a strong emphasis on literacy, whole language seeks to emphasize and capitalize on what it views are the social and psycholinguistic influences inherent within the reading process (Weaver, 1996). It also relies on a theoretical framework that suggests that children learn to read and write by learning the basic structure of language, much in the same way they learn to talk (Weaver, 1996). Further, a whole language approach to literacy learning relies on the idea that forming concepts about language, whether oral or written, is easier for learners when they experience instruction within the context of whole, natural language. Characteristically, whole language seeks to (a) accept all learners and engage them in what interests them, (b) exhibit flexibility within structure, (c) provide a supportive classroom community that teaches skills for interacting and solving interpersonal conflicts, (d) expect children to succeed as they engage in authentic tasks, (e) teach skills in context, (f) provide consistent scaffolding for and collaboration with children, and (g) provide assessment that emphasizes individual's growth (Weaver, 1996).

An early and staunch advocate of whole language, Goodman (1973, 1998), suggested that “whole language has had a profound influence on how curriculum, materials, methodology and assessment are viewed. . . . [It] has helped to redefine teaching and its relationship to learning” (1998, p. 3). He also recognized the close association of reading and language and equated learning to read with language emergence (1973). Over time, I recognized several of the tenets of the whole language approach in the behavioral patterns that emerged in this study. I realized how powerful the “profound influence” of whole language could be when I acknowledged that this

theoretical orientation acted as a compass to help Terrell, Zion, and Kanai—in Malik’s words—“know where they were going” as their exploration of language and literacy freed them to tap their own rich supply of language and literacy resources. I recalled when Terrell began using his creative store of descriptive words to invent explanatory adjectives. I remembered how Kanai combined the best of fictional and informational texts when he related a story about a real visit to the beach that eventually and quite logically evolved into a cautionary tale about his super-hero powers to vanquish a shark. Finally, I remembered my amazement when Zion not only provided and understood the novel word *hook*, but also changed it to the verb form *hooked*, with ease.

In support of this stance, emergent literacy researchers, such as Sulzby (1985), Taylor and Dorsey–Gaines (1988), and Teale (1986) provided clear evidence that reading and writing do not begin with learning letter names and sounds as isolated skills before children have at least a rudimentary knowledge of how our language/literacy system works. They pointed out that children often have difficulty learning such alphabetic principles when taught as separate skill sets. In summary, I believe with Purcell–Gates (1991) that if

children have not had the opportunity to explore the whole of written language in meaningful, functional literacy events, then instruction must provide this opportunity. Otherwise, we are asking these children, from a phenomenological perspective, to learn the fine points of a process of which they have little or no understanding. This is not possible for any learner of any age. (p. 30)

In contrast to a skills-based approach, the whole language approach I used allowed the children to learn skills as part of understanding written and oral language. For example, I watched Zion eventually self-correct a print-related misconception that, initially, no amount of isolated instructive intervention seemed to remediate. Beginning with our

first session and continuing with regularity, he never failed to ask me to “spell” the text he wanted read aloud. I would stop, and restructure his question by saying, “Oh, what does that say?” Sometimes I would offer a short explanation of the difference between spelling a word and saying a word. Zion would then nod his head in concurrence and I would proceed to read the passage. I eventually gave up my isolated explanations of the difference between spelling and saying a word. As we continued to explore books and print, I began to point out various print conventions within the context of the book we were sharing. Zion was very attentive, but made no comment. One day, much to my delight, Zion spontaneously pointed at a specific section of the text we shared and asked, “What do those words say?”

I encouraged and scaffolded conversation. There is evidence of a direct correspondence between how teachers construct the language environments of preschool classrooms and their students’ language productivity (Girolametto & Weitzman, 2002; Girolametto, Weitzman & Greenberg, 2003). When the boys and I were together, I provided the children with ample opportunities to talk and I learned to talk less and listen more. I implemented conversational strategies that expanded and extended their dialogue. In addition, I explicitly modeled and encouraged various pragmatic features of conversations such as turn-taking and making eye contact. For example, I asked Terrell, Zion, and Kanai questions that did not require a response that was right or wrong. I might ask, “What do you think about that?” or “Why do you think he (the character) did that?” I did this strategically to solicit responses of more than one word or scaffold an opportunity to construct complete sentences. This practice also helped the boys engage in higher-level thinking. I avoided yes/no questions except when I did not know an

answer. This helped ground my status as a fellow-learner and offer opportunities for inquiry. For instance, I often said, “I didn’t know that, did you?” This question was often followed by “Do you want to find out?” which invariably led to a time of inquiry and discovery. In addition, when the boys made a spontaneous comment, I often told them to “Tell me more about that!” This not only provided spaces for extended narrative, but also situated Terrell, Zion, and Kanai in the role of the more knowledgeable other. Because this scenario clearly situated me as the learner, I surmised that it was a good way to build their confidence.

I provided explicit instruction within the context of shared reading. It is well known that reading to children is an important contributor to children’s language and literacy development (Anderson, Hieber, Scott, & Wilkinson, 1985; Trelease, 2006). However, I observed that, although dialogic reading was established as an efficacious means of sharing books with children at school and at home, some teachers read only the printed text during shared reading (Zucker, Cabell, Justice, Pentimonti, & Kaderavek, 2013). In contrast, during our sessions, I found myself stopping to explain novel words. I also often used props or gestures to make my explanation easier for Terrell, Zion, and Kanai to understand. When I was satisfied that they understood, I reread the sentence I had begun and continued reading. In addition, I noticed early in our time together that the picture books the boys chose contained inferential statements and illustrations. When encountering either, I again stopped reading and asked the boys questions to determine if they understood the implications. An example of this was Terrell’s idea that a winking fox was taking a nap. If their understanding of the text or illustration was in error, I explained the statement or the illustration and tried to cement this verbal explanation with

a demonstration of some sort. In this instance, I winked at Terrell and told him that when people wink, they are often telling others that they are trying to fool someone or are trying to keep or share a secret. I helped him further by reminding him of another story he chose that featured an illustration of a winking rabbit who was trying to help his friends understand that the birthday party he was planning was a surprise. I found that ignoring such inferential elements posed a deterrent to boys' comprehension of the story. This idea was also suggested by Scheiner and Gorsetmen (2009). Further, from my experiences with Terrell, Zion, and Kanai, I learned that some of their interpretations of illustrations and photographs were original. After noting how illustrations and photographs sometimes confused them (and me), I purposefully pointed out and explained any visual details that I thought might interfere with their ability to align the content of the illustrations/photographs with the content of the text (Nodelman, 1996).

These kinds of interactions led to extended discussions. Dickinson and Smith (1994) suggested that children learn more vocabulary when teachers used this style of shared reading. In addition, this interactive reading style allowed me to make use of the boys' extra-textual comments, encourage their dialogue, and field their questions, encouraging their inquiry. Perhaps more importantly, my comments and questions bootstrapped the children's ability to make inferences and to use higher levels of inferential language, both of which contribute to reading comprehension (Danis, Bernard, & Leproux, 2000; Van Kleeck, 2008; Zucker, Justice, Piasta, & Kaderavek, 2010).

I gave permission and allowed choice. When I demonstrated the characteristics of a learner to Terrell, Zion, and Kanai, and encouraged them to assume this role, I realized that I had, in essence, given them permission to learn. For example, I told them

that it was acceptable, even an advantageous thing, to say “I don’t know.” Unwittingly, the utterance “I don’t know” ushered the boys into the world of inquiry and the amount of their questions increased greatly. In turn, this inquiry seemed to foster a sense of personal agency as evidenced by the increasing number of independent actions they took and the numerous times they began to assert their opinion over mine. Opportunities to exercise personal choice also strengthen a child’s sense of agency and contribute positively to how the child personally assesses his or her competence (Johnston, 2004).

Further, the behavioral patterns gleaned from the data led me to believe that choice and the interest it implies served two other purposes for Terrell, Zion, and Kanai: it motivated them to embrace learning (Hidi, Renninger, & Krapp, 2004) and it contributed to their engagement in literacy acts (Wigfield & Baker, 1999). These are powerful reasons for offering children personal choices within the classroom.

I engaged in one-on-one instruction. In their comparative study of children from low SES households who succeeded or failed at early literacy learning, Purcell-Gates and Dahl (1991) stated that most of the children in their study who experienced successful literacy learning did so only after receiving individual instruction. Further, this instruction was specifically geared to the children’s individual levels of conceptual development. This is not an isolated phenomenon. M. M. Clay’s (1991) highly successful beginning reading intervention capitalized on helping young struggling readers by means of individualized instruction with a specially-trained reading teacher who acted as an interventionist. This program, *Reading Recovery*, was consistently compared with small group intervention and consistently emerged as the most effective strategy for

helping struggling readers succeed (Dorn & Allen, 1996; Harrison, 2002; Pinnell, Lyons, DeFord, Bryk, & Seltzer, 1994; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998; Wasik & Slavin, 1993).

Further, DeFord (1991) suggested that if a child's household does not provide the language use and literacy events that contribute to the experiences children need to learn to read and write in school, then the "experience in school must provide the context" (p. 78). Within this provision, she maintained that "the instructional program must be fashioned to create talk about books and writing that is *reminiscent of early parent/child literacy experiences in the home*" [italics added, p. 79]. Such home experiences are often one-on-one situations that enable parents to focus on the children's strengths and interests, while scaffolding and providing information in areas where support and instruction is needed. I provided this context for Terrell, Zion, and Kanai, and to best replicate a home experience, our sessions were, of necessity, one-on-one.

Recommendations

Grounded in what I learned about Terrell, Zion, and Kanai's language competencies, about myself as a teacher and about the characteristics that distinguished the context I provided with the context of their 4–K classroom, I would recommend that (a) constructivist models of both language and literacy instruction be used in early childhood classroom; (b) early childhood educators deeply understand the scope and sequence of language development, its importance to literacy trajectories, and strategies that support oral language and vocabulary acquisition; and that (c) computers should not be used in early childhood classrooms. These changes could help ensure that teachers provide ample time to talk with children and allow the children to talk with each other.

Use of a Constructivist Model of Learning in Preschool Classrooms

Scribner and Cole (1981) posited that the significant cognitive growth evidenced by schooling was not generated by instruction in techniques such as reading and writing, but rather through active participation in educational discourse. When early childhood teachers are mandated to teach age-inappropriate academic skills dictated by state or district standards, they find their time severely constrained, especially in half-day programs. For this reason, teacher-child discourse or even peer-to-peer conversation is often not feasible or is severely minimized. In lieu of engagement in conversation, dialogue, and inquiry, teachers must devote much of their time to teaching academic skills, often out of context and by means of rote memorization. Such teaching often minimizes or thwarts the potential of young children, particularly those from low SES households. For this reason, I advocate the use of a constructivist approach to instructional strategies in preschool classrooms. School districts would be well advised to seek out a curriculum that aligns with that approach and implement its use in preschool classrooms district-wide.

Ensure that Teachers Understand the Dynamics of Language Acquisition and Development

Although some nationally organized early childhood advocates consistently emphasize language as a key instructional domain for preschool children (National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1998), its importance appears to be ignored by policy makers, higher education institutes, and school districts. For example, none of the teachers I spoke with had taken a class featuring language acquisition and development either in their undergraduate or graduate programs. Because of this, I

would recommend that undergraduate programs in early childhood education make some type of language acquisition course a mandatory class in their curriculum. Further, none of these teachers could recall attending any type of in-service training or educational program that addressed the topic of language development, the dynamic between language skills and literacy acquisition, or strategies to help young children use language and build their vocabulary. For this reason, I would encourage school districts to offer in-service opportunities for teachers of young children to learn more about the critical importance of language and its vital role in children's literacy trajectories. I also suggest that school districts offer these in-service opportunities to Head Start teachers, teaching assistants and local daycare personnel to provide them with specific language-facilitating strategies. As part of these in-service sessions, teachers should examine their language patterns. Dickinson, Friebert, and Barnes (2011) found that on average, teachers produced 80% of all the talking that took place in the classroom, including book reading and discussion. Teachers spend time giving directions that tell children what to do and what not to do or asking questions that require a one or two word response (Dickinson, 2011). Too often, teachers do not offer children the chance to engage in dialogue and they may not scaffold children's language. Therefore, it is important that teachers explore their communication patterns and practices with children and come to understand how their interactions encourage or discourage meaningful conversation, dialogue, and contextual language—and then apply what they've learned in purposeful and functional ways.

After this initial exploration of the prevalent language habits in their classrooms, teachers may recognize and appreciate a series of in-service events that provide effective

strategies to help them understand, ground, and further enhance their children's language growth. The first of these strategies is active listening. This may be particularly important for diverse children whose home language practices and proclivities differ from the mainstream expectations of school. Such instruction includes helping children understand that in the classroom, talking with someone means looking at them (an explanation of "eyes on the speaker"). Children also need to understand that while in the classroom, they are not supposed to talk while another person is talking (convention of conversational turn-taking). To encourage active listening, teachers may also want to consider giving children choices concerning the topics or books that are open for discussion.

Other in-service topics might include (a) the implementation and use of strategic conversations and demonstration of specific techniques that extend such conversations; (b) the use of open-ended questions and recognition of adequate, age-appropriate response time; (c) conversational strategies that expand and children's language and introduce pertinent new vocabulary; (d) quality of teacher talk/language that includes variation and the use of descriptive nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs; (e) the addition of synonyms, antonyms, and novel words to vocabulary and concepts children already know (e.g., *huge* and *gigantic* are other words that mean *big*); and/or (f) repetition of child utterances that expand the variety of vocabulary, extend the content, and/or provide the examples of Standard English syntax and pronunciation. With the aid of effective interventive strategies, teachers can improve both the language and early literacy skills of young children during a period when such intervention is most developmentally expedient. Significantly, the implementation of supportive language interventions can

provide a foundation for core literacy skills that is key to academic success (Wasik & Iannone–Campbell, 2012). Commenting on why some children from low SES households succeed and others fail to achieve the literacy skills that support later learning, Greenburg (1989) commented that “someone—either a teacher or a parent or both—did something somewhat out of the ordinary, something that had an academic focus and that eventually led to the child’s better-than-expected reading achievement” (p. 51). Without the provision of a positive, relational interventive support system, I suggest that a primary nexus between children from low SES households and academic success is often their lack of opportunities to engage in dialogue, inquiry, and vocabulary acquisition. Importantly, I believe that this connection is mediated by both explicit permission to engage in such activities in combination with rich description and modeling of the participatory roles these activities require.

Use of Computers in Early Childhood Classrooms

Many early childhood teachers who appreciate and adhere to constructivist learning strategies for young children such as learning through discourse, book sharing, and play, find that the use of these strategies is increasingly mediated by required computer programs that seek to teach their students without benefit of contextual connections. Perhaps more importantly, touted as “more cost-effective” than employing teachers for intervention services, computers deny children any chance of verbal interaction or explanatory support. I strongly discourage the use of such commercially-produced computer programs in early childhood classrooms. Instead, I recommend that both specifically-trained teachers such as early literacy coaches, and speech pathologists be provided as intervention support staff in preschool classrooms.

Postscript

We are the meaning makers---every one of us: children, parents, and teachers. To try to make sense, to construct stories, and to share them with others in speech and in writing is an essential part of being human. For those of us who are more knowledgeable and more mature—parents and teachers—the *responsibility* [italics added] is clear: to *interact* [italics added] with those in our care in such a way as to foster and enrich their meaning making. (Wells, 1986, p. 222)

As my study progressed, it not only became a story about Terrell's, Zion's, and Kanai's growth as conversationalists, inquirers, and literacy learners, it also became the story of my recognition of the specific strategies that seemed to help tap the boys' rich, creative, and diversified language resources. As I mapped and studied language events across Terrell's, Zion's, and Kanai's transcripts, patterns emerged that helped me understand the personal and instructional practices that seemed to best scaffold the boys' use of expressive language. These patterns also helped me understand my own growth as a teacher and to see how this role evolved. The most notable pattern seemed to be precipitated by my decision to explicitly situate both the boys and myself as learners.

When Terrell, Zion, and Kanai assumed active verbal roles, they expanded and enriched their narrative, dialogue, and questions. When this happened, my role as the *sage on the stage*, with its accompanying verbal dominance, gave way to a new role as coach, supporter, and mentor. As collegial learners, the boys and I developed a reciprocal relationship. The absence of my words seemed to encourage Terrell, Zion, and Kanai to use and expand their language for varying purposes. The presence of their words helped me understand how and why their language emerged and grew more complex.

Not long after my discussion with Terrell's, Zion's, and Kanai's teachers, the school year ended. Within the first week of school the following year, Zion's new

kindergarten teacher came to my office and said, “Ms. Taylor told me that you worked with Zion last year and thought maybe you could help me.” I smiled and responded, “Sure, he amazed me last year!” She did not return my smile. Instead, she exclaimed, “Well, this year he talks way too loud and I thought maybe you could give me some hints on how to stop this. It’s very annoying!” What she said disturbed me. Zion and his mother passed my office on Meet the Teacher Night (an evening prior to the first day of school when parents and children came to meet their teachers) and stopped in to chat for a few minutes. At that time, Zion was communicative, met my eye gaze, and engaged in appropriate conversational turn-taking. I did not think his voice was loud. I told his teacher that I would observe him soon, but first I wanted a chance to think about why he might be exhibiting these behaviors.

I took some time to think about Zion’s behavior and I recalled that, during our sessions, he seemed particularly interested that I understand his articulation. He even began to self-correct regularly to ensure that this happened. In addition, as his conversational partner, I noticed that he was anxious that I understand the ideas he was expressing. For this reason, I theorized that, when Zion entered his new classroom, he found himself in competition with 25 other children in a full-day program. In the first few days of school, when teachers traditionally work hard to establish and cement classroom procedures, there would be no time for him to ask questions and receive individual attention. Despite these factors, Zion had a strong desire “to try to make sense, to construct stories, and to share them with others in speech” (Wells, 1986, p. 222). I guessed that Zion was acting according to a five-year-old’s logic—maybe if he talked louder, someone would notice him and acknowledge his speech. And maybe if he talked

louder, his articulation and his ideas would be understood even more. I wondered if Zion was confusing *hearing* with *comprehending*. Perhaps this was an outlandish idea, but I was always impressed by the energy Zion exerted to ensure that he would “make sense” (p. 222).

The next day, before I had a chance to talk with Zion, I saw his teacher, who told me, “Oh, you don’t need to talk to Zion. He doesn’t talk too loud anymore! I told him that his talking was inappropriate and that seemed to work!” I theorized that Zion understood at least the gist of the word *inappropriate*. However, I guessed that he did not understand that it was not his words that were inappropriate, but the amplitude of his speech. Sadly, I wondered if Zion would interpret his teacher’s words to mean that talking within the context of his classroom was not a good thing.

I recalled Zion’s reaction when our sessions ended and he no longer came to my office to talk and look at books. He became angry with me, would not greet me, return my greeting, or make eye contact. It was during that same time when he began to act out and display some antisocial behaviors in Ms. Taylor’s class. I wondered if he would shut down in his new kindergarten class. I wondered if he would be angry with his new teacher. I imagined that Zion could potentially do one of two things: withdraw into silence and academic failure or lash out in anger, perhaps eventually becoming a part of our penal system. I told myself that I was being melodramatic, but I knew that academic failure and antisocial behavior took root very early in a child’s life. I had read many articles stating that, statistically, many low SES African American boys either drop out of school or are later incarcerated. Sadly, it is often both.

A day or so after my experience with Zion's teacher, I saw Kanai walking down the hall in a line with his classmates. I immediately noticed that all the children, including Kanai, had one index finger firmly pressed to their lips, as if saying "Sh-h-h." As Kanai approached, I noticed that both of his shoes were untied and he seemed to be having trouble keeping them on his feet. I approached the line, and gently pulled him aside. He stood before me, mute, as I exclaimed, "Oh, Kanai, I am so-o-o glad to see you! How are you?" There was no response. I tried again, "How are you, h-m-m?" Once again, there was no response. Finally, I looked directly in his eyes and said, "Kanai, I know how well you can use your words! Can you tell me how you're doing?" He glanced nervously at his teacher and finally said, "Hi, Mrs. Miller!" I recalled the day Kanai refused to speak with Ms. Taylor because he was, in his own words, "shy." I also noticed that he was surreptitiously glancing at his teacher. I did not want to make him uncomfortable or make him feel that he was disobedient for being out of line, so I quickly tied his shoes, patted his arm, and said "Maybe your teacher will let you come down to my office and we can talk!" Kanai made no reply as he put his finger to his mouth and proceeded to walk down the hall. I went back in my office and sat down heavily. From the beginning of the study, I hypothesized that Kanai had a great deal of academic potential. Would he take a chance and show his teachers his logic like the time he explained why we should use the term *puppy* instead of *pup*? Would he indulge his curiosity as he had when we discussed antiques and ask, "Oh, back in the day?" Would he risk demonstrating his adroit use of language like the time he asked, "Was he [my son] a little boy or a teenager?" I didn't know, but I thought it was demeaning to make children maintain silence in such a manner. I also thought of an old slogan from the

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People: *A mind is a terrible thing to waste.*

I wondered about Terrell and hoped he had a teacher who would give him the opportunity to reveal his creativity and flair for words. I wished him well. I could not help but think, “Mr. Frog and I love you, too, Terrell! We miss you!”

Terrell’s, Zion’s, and Kanai’s patience with me as a fellow learner humbled me and made me a better teacher—one who has a much deeper metacognitive grasp on how best to perform her craft. This has given me a sense that, in some small way, I can contribute to the collective educational world. Terrell’s, Zion’s, and Kanai’s “ways with words” (Heath, 1983) will remain queued to the very front of my mind. Their ingenuity and resourcefulness will remind me (and hopefully others) to acknowledge their resilience and adaptability.

Terrell’s, Zion’s, and Kanai’s kindness to and respect for me as a person provided what I construe as an ineffable human experience. I will remember Terrell’s gentle hand as he leaned toward me and reached to sweep my long hair out of my eyes. I will remember Kanai’s respect and concern for me when he insistently put away all the books we shared, always concerned that they were put in the “right tubs” so I could “be sure to find them.” I will especially remember the morning Zion very deliberately made eye contact, smiled and said, “Good morning, Mrs. Miller!” and the day he greeted every person he saw. Perhaps I will best remember the day he talked incessantly all the way to my office about the insects on his new T-shirt, pointing at and labeling every one.

Most critically, I will remember that Terrell, Zion, and Kanai’s teachers characterized them as non-communicative. In my mind, this assessment of the boys’

language and speech behaviors sharply contrasts with Terrell's eloquent descriptions of the illustrations he saw and his clever use of invented words to make his narrative accurately depict those same illustrations. It contrasts with Zion's persistent efforts to correct his misarticulations and once given permission to ask, his endless questions. Perhaps most salient, it contrasts sharply with Kanai's interest in a novel word like *antique*, his adult-like use of the phrase "back in the day," and his admonition that one should not use the abbreviated term *pup* because then one might forget the "real word" *puppy*.

For many reasons, Terrell, Zion, and Kanai's teachers experienced only one facet of these three students: their silence. What I experienced with them was like a multi-paned mirror that reflected not only their language, but their cognitive understanding of inquiry, invention, and interpretation. I was concerned about how Terrell's, Zion's, and Kanai's new confidence and assertive behavior in using language would generalize to a new classroom. I worried that, if they were not given explicit permission to converse, engage in dialogue, and ask questions, they would not be recognized or appreciated for what they were: facile meaning makers (I thought again about Zion's teacher telling him that his talk was inappropriate and I felt sure that he would misunderstand this).

While I do not know the details of Terrell's, Zion's, and Kanai's academic fates, I do know that Johnston (2004) was correct when he stated that, "teachers play a critical role in arranging the discursive histories from which [these] children speak. *Talk is the central tool of their trade* [italics added]. With it they mediate children's activity and experience, and help them make sense of learning, literacy, life and themselves" (p. 4).

I also know that silence is not golden, at least not for boys like Terrell, Zion, and Kanai.

Sticks and stones may break the bones
But leave the spirit whole,
But simple words can break the heart
Or silence crush the soul.
(Warren, 1982)

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Appendix A: Coding Key

A: Child Behavior	B: Child Discourse	C: Teacher Discourse
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Changes discussion topic to related topic 2. Changes to unrelated topic 3. Asks to repeat previous texts 4. Initiative/Confidence <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Self-directed page turning b. Requests book not in selection offering c. Asks/chooses to read book himself d. Asks question e. Asks <i>wh</i> question f. Makes request as imperative g. Shares personal information 5. Indicates he does not know <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Verbally b. By gesture 6. Expresses frustration 7. Displays humor 8. Smiles/laughs to express pleasure 9. Changes Intonation <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Excitement b. Confidence c. Irritation 10. Disagrees with or corrects teacher 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Convention of turn-taking 2. Makes eye contact with speaker 3. Verbal responses <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Yes/no b. Single word c. More than 1 word d. Complete sentence 4. Use of new vocab introduced by teacher 5. Use of teacher's words/ explanation(s)/intona. personal expressions 6. Use of gesture to replace speech <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Affirm with nod b. Negate with head shake c. Pointing d. Iconic replacing language 7. Spontaneous speech <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Related b. Unrelated c. Replaces term: phonetically similar=shark/sharp d. Invents word: conceptually correct (baker=baking pan) e. Spec. sounds 8. Verbal courtesy 9. No response 10. Pronounces new vocab. word independently 11. Verbal hesitation (uh, um, etc) 12. Does not understand/ misinterprets vocab. 13. Corrects pronunciation 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Repeats child utterance <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. affirmation b. model Academic English 2. Expand child utter. Explanations <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. text b. illus./photo c. other 4. Shares personal experience: relevance 5. Affirms child's knowledge 6. Affirms child's experience 7. Asks questions <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. For information b. For clarification c. As affirmation d. To understand speech (artic.) 8. Uses props (puppets, concrete objects, mimicry) and/or gesture to explain text or illustrations 9. Action-specific praise 10. Refers to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Print conven. b. Alphabetic prin. 11. Directives 12. Gives permission 13. Scaffolds 14. Intro. new vocab. 15. Shows respect via courtesy words 16. Answers question 17. Displays humor 18. Teacher states she doesn't know answer

D. Standard English	E. Illus/Photo Interp/D	F. Inference
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Spontaneous speech 2. Discourse 3. To ask question 4. To answer question 5. Picture-reading 6. Retelling 7. Story-telling lang. 8. Text quotation 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Illus: conventional 2. Illus: original 3. Photo: conventional 4. Photo: original 5. Original interpret. of conventional meaning of winking, yawning, etc. 6. Asks for picture ID 7. Asks for explanation of picture 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conventional 2. Original
G. Schema Connections	H. Concepts of Print/Read	I. Alphabetic Principle
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Family 2. Personal experiences 3. Classroom experiences 4. References other books 5. Transfers common attributes of text characters/topics to <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. the same and/or similar characters/topics in other texts b. to self 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identifies book parts <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. front cover b. back cover c. page(s) d. title page e. spine 2. Follows text left-to-right 3. Follows text top-to-Bottom 4. Attempts to echo read with teacher 5. Asks teacher to read entire page of text 6. Print/oral language connection 7. Parts of story <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Beginning/title b. Middle c. End 8. Author 9. Illustrator 10. Table of contents 11. Attempts to read text 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Refers to letter 2. Refers to and names a specific letter(s) 3. Refers to the term word 4. Refers to specific words in text 5. Distinguishes letters from numbers 6. Refers to letter sounds/rhymes 7. Phonemic awareness

Appendix C: Behavior Tally Totals

Wk	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	T	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	T	I/D
A1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	15	8	1	2	0	9	8	43	I
A2	0	0	0	3	0	1	0	4	6	7	0	1	4	27	20	65	I
A3	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	D
A4a	5	5	7	18	9	7	5	56	15	3	1	5	29	3	3	59	n/a
A4b	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	30	0	0	0	I
A4c	0	1	0	1	5	0	0	6	1	2	0	0	0	2	1	6	n/a
A4d	13	15	8	14	7	1	3	61	10	8	16	6	5	21	40	96	I
A4e	0	0	0	1	5	0	0	6	7	28	19	30	2	14	15	115	I
A4f	0	3	2	3	3	1	3	15	5	23	8	19	2	14	10	81	I
A4g	2	3	0	2	0	3	0	10	6	2	0	1	0	0	2	11	n/a
A5a	2	6	4	1	0	2	0	15	6	3	4	8	4	5	4	34	I
A5b	3	0	0	2	0	0	0	5	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	n/a
A6	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	2	3	1	8	I
A7	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	n/a
A8	0	3	5	4	4	6	0	22	3	8	8	5	7	9	9	49	I
A9a	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	2	9	0	0	0	0	13	18	40	I
A9b	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	8	11	I
A10	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	2	2	2	2	10	21	I
B1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	19	0	0	20	I
B2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	n/a
B3a	23	47	43	16	15	23	14	181	35	26	13	23	17	5	19	138	D
B3b	42	26	28	24	14	7	7	148	40	19	17	13	30	26	20	165	I
B3c	39	36	44	27	24	37	18	225	33	43	31	45	35	29	57	173	D
B3d	38	29	66	95	38	73	56	395	108	90	66	58	64	99	108	593	I
B4	14	4	0	1	3	0	0	22	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	D
B5	1	1	2	1	1	3	2	11	6	7	3	6	2	8	11	43	I
B6a	7	20	9	31	8	3	0	78	14	26	11	15	12	24	31	133	I
B6b	5	6	3	7	0	0	0	21	6	3	5	2	6	7	10	39	I
B6c	2	0	3	9	11	2	4	31	13	7	5	8	8	11	24	76	I
B6d	0	0	3	0	0	2	0	5	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	3	n/a
B7a	9	11	17	27	13	21	4	102	26	49	32	31	8	54	37	237	I
B7b	3	3	1	4	3	2	0	16	1	3	1	4	1	6	2	20	n/a
B7c	1	0	9	3	1	0	1	15	16	7	5	7	1	2	5	43	I

Wk	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	T	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	T	I/D
B7d	1	0	1	3	5	6	0	16	1	6	2	7	7	0	1	24	n/a
B7e	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	n/a
B8	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	n/a
B9	3	11	7	4	0	3	0	28	0	1	2	0	3	3	8	17	D
B10	10	7	7	0	0	3	0	27	17	4	6	4	0	13	2	29	n/a
B11	0	22	8	21	1	8	22	82	51	5	8	3	14	25	18	124	I
B12	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	3	n/a
B13	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	2	0	6	I

C1a	32	44	42	13	25	27	8	191	34	32	27	24	22	25	48	212	I
C1b	15	19	2	14	8	8	4	62	26	24	14	13	7	14	13	110	I
C2	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	4	n/a
C3a	31	31	12	29	15	15	2	134	6	3	15	6	0	6	6	47	D
C3b	37	52	54	66	10	8	2	229	31	50	67	50	4	34	33	169	D
C3c	32	60	66	17	23	23	8	229	49	58	15	40	13	94	57	326	I
C3d	1	3	0	4	0	0	0	8	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	3	n/a
C4	11	18	15	15	4	12	2	77	24	31	16	19	14	23	24	151	I
C5	34	12	12	24	15	29	8	134	62	46	36	49	33	60	53	339	I
C6	8	1	0	13	4	3	0	29	11	2	5	4	0	10	67	99	I
C7a	28	146	115	124	24	61	27	525	39	51	36	61	72	68	64	391	D
C7b	49	56	50	37	18	26	5	241	24	27	20	20	36	36	36	199	D
C7c	8	19	19	25	15	10	97	34	23	18	22	11	35	6	149	149	I
C7d	1	4	2	2	1	2	0	12	0	4	3	3	4	1	6	21	I
C8	7	19	23	9	5	13	1	77	3	16	4	12	3	4	8	50	D
C9	17	31	18	19	10	27	8	130	29	15	10	14	13	25	12	119	I
C10a	5	10	27	6	3	11	6	58	10	7	6	6	6	6	5	46	n/a
C10b	4	0	10	5	3	5	0	27	4	7	9	5	1	6	9	40	I
C11	29	21	52	11	10	21	6	150	26	17	17	11	9	36	19	135	n/a
C12	5	2	2	1	1	2	3	16	4	10	4	7	1	10	6	42	I
C13	8	20	22	4	2	14	4	74	12	21	7	18	7	8	13	86	n/a
C14	4	19	15	17	4	15	5	79	21	17	7	14	8	16	13	96	I
C15	2	4	2	2	2	8	3	23	6	9	5	12	6	14	18	70	I
C16	0	1	2	3	2	1	1	11	12	27	24	26	4	20	29	142	I
C17	1	6	10	9	2	8	1	37	7	13	9	9	7	16	14	75	I
C18	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	2	6	10	4	10	3	12	5	50	I
D1	5	3	5	12	7	7	1	40	28	12	7	3	3	28	30	111	I
D2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	6	0	0	1	0	0	0	7	I
D3	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	4	0	0	1	1	4	11	I

Wk	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	T	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	T	I/D
D4	6	8	7	7	4	2	0	34	9	17	6	0	4	2	10	48	n/a
D5	0	0	0	0	0	3	4	7	0	12	0	0	0	3	11	26	I
D6	0	0	0	29	8	10	3	50	3	2	9	3	16	8	0	41	n/a
D7	0	0	0	1	2	11	0	14	1	0	0	0	12	5	5	23	I
D8	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	2	0	1	0	0	3	2	0	6	n/a
E1	0	0	0	7	8	5	8	28	0	6	21	2	13	21	18	81	I
E2	0	0	0	12	22	11	7	52	0	7	10	4	17	10	11	59	n/a
E3	0	0	0	0	3	14	0	17	3	0	0	0	0	0	1	4	D
E4	0	0	0	1	6	0	3	10	0	4	0	0	0	0	1	5	D
E5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	2	n/a
E6	0	0	0	1	0	6	0	7	0	4	6	0	0	6	6	22	I
E7	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	24	1	0	0	0	7	32	I

F1	1	5	11	12	6	2	6	43	1	14	0	0	12	5	13	45	n/a
F2	1	2	6	5	7	3	2	26	0	1	0	0	13	8	9	31	I
F3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	n/a
F4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	n/a
G1	4	3	5	0	3	3	0	18	6	0	0	0	1	2	6	15	n/a
G2	5	5	0	0	1	0	1	12	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	D

G3	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
G4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	n/a
G5a	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	0	0	0	1	1	4	9	I
G5b	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	n/a
H1a	1	2	2	2	0	0	1	8	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	D
H1b	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
H1c	1	1	0	0	5	0	0	7	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	2	D
H1d	0	3	0	0	2	2	1	8	1	1	1	0	2	0	3	8	n/a
H1e	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	n/a
H2	1	1	2	0	0	3	0	7	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	3	n/a
H3	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
H4	8	2	3	0	2	18	0	33	0	6	0	6	0	1	2	15	D
H5	2	1	0	7	8	10	3	31	0	4	0	4	0	5	0	13	D
H6	1	2	0	2	1	0	0	6	1	1	0	2	0	1	0	5	n/a
H7a	0	2	1	2	1	2	1	9	0	0	1	2	1	1	0	5	n/a
H7b	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
H7c	0	0	1	1	12	2	1	17	1	3	2	2	2	1	4	15	n/a
H8	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	2	3	0	0	2	1	6	0	11	I
H9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	5	2	4	2	14	I
H10	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
H11	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	4	n/a
I1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	n/a
I2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	n/a
I3	4	5	1	2	1	2	0	15	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	2	D
I4	3	0	0	0	0	1	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	n/a
I5	0	1	2	1	0	3	1	8	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	4	n/a
I6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	5	9	I
I7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	8	I