Chapter 7 Notes

I. Introduction
   a. Good description of a skilled early childhood educator is a “responsive opportunist” who is enthusiastic, who enjoys discovery, and who is able to establish and maintain a warm, supportive environment
      i. Child language learning is promoted when a reciprocal relationship between a child and an adult or between children is based on equality, respect, trust, and authentic dialogue (real communication)
      ii. Speech is at the foundation of a child’s learning life
          1. Teachers need to create a classroom atmosphere where children:
             a. Can expect success
             b. See the teacher as a significant person
             c. Are allowed choice
             d. Are able to make mistakes
          2. Ideally, children should join in planned activities eagerly
             a. These activities should end before the child’s capacity to focus is exhausted
             b. Child should be able to expect the teacher to listen and respond to the child’s communication in a way that respects the child’s sense of the importance of the communication
   b. Studies examining the quality of language environments in American preschools found that many preschools serving poor children scored in the inadequate range
      i. Quality of group book experiences, cognitively challenging conversation, and teacher use of a wide vocabulary were associated with quality environments and young children’s subsequent language and literacy development
         1. Impossible to underemphasize the importance of adult-child interaction
         2. In schools and centers of questionable quality, some children may rarely interact with a preschool teacher and receive little or no individualized attention.
            a. These schools fail the children who most need a quality literacy environment to prepare them for later schooling
      c. Preschool programs can affect intellectual growth during early childhood years, but some of those effects may decline over time
         i. Not always the case
            1. Children enrolled in the Abecedarian Project, an experimental preschool program that emphasizes language and cognitive development, attained
significantly higher reading achievement that lasted through grade eight in elementary school

a. Project took place in rural North Carolina with a study sample of poor African-American children
b. Their intervention program included a pre-literacy and pre-phonics curricula emphasizing phoneme identification
c. School-age follow-up component provided families with activities to reinforce basic reading concepts being taught at school

2. Researchers found that the project affected children’s reading and literacy scores in a positive way into early adulthood

II. Teaching Strategies and Behaviors

a. Three specific teaching functions encourage the development of language arts and literacy:

i. Teacher serves as a model of everyday language use
   1. What is communicated and how it is communicated are important

ii. Teacher is a provider of experiences
   1. Many of these events are planned; others happen in the normal course of activities

iii. Teacher is an interactor, sharing experiences with the children and encouraging conversation

b. These three functions should be balanced, relative to each child’s level and individual needs

i. Teaching role requires constant decision making: knowing when to supply or withhold information to help self-discovery and when to talk or listen

ii. Sensitivity can make the teacher the child’s best ally in the growth of language skills

iii. Importance of teachers’ attitudes toward children’s talk and teachers’ recognition of children’s thinking is critical

iv. Researchers studying teacher-child interactions believe teachers with more education are more responsive and sensitive

v. Newer, stricter licensing regulations and standards regarding the training of early childhood educators in most states aim to improve the quality of teacher-child interactions

vi. Research consistently shows that training is an important predictor of involved, sensitive teacher-child conversations

b. Observing all elements of a program, as well as children’s behavior and progress, involves watching, listening, and recording

i. Can be the most difficult part of teaching because of time constraints and supervisory requirements
ii. In-depth observation is best accomplished when a teacher is relieved of other responsibilities and can focus without distractions
   1. Many teachers who do not have duty-free observation time must observe while on duty

iii. Observation often unearths questions regarding children’s difficulties, talents, and a wide range of special needs that can then be incorporated into plans and daily exchanges

d. Teacher’s role as an observer is an ongoing responsibility that influences all daily teacher-child exchanges and allows the teacher to decide on courses of action with individual children
   i. Knowing children’s interests, present behaviors, and emerging skills helps the teacher perform the three aforementioned functions, based on group and individual needs
   ii. Teachers must be part detective and part researcher, sifting through the clues children leave, collecting data, testing hypotheses, and examining the way children really are to make a credible record of their growth and development

e. Listening intimately is highly advisable
   i. Providing growth depends partially on being on a child’s or group’s wavelength
   ii. Conversations are more valuable when teachers try to converse and question based on the child’s line of thought
   iii. Activities provided should increase children’s ability to think and rethink and therefore make sense from what they encounter

f. Unplanned teacher talk can be viewed as less important than talk in teacher-guided activities
   i. If a teacher thinks this way, it can limit his ability to support problem solving, child discovery, and child expression of events important to the child
   ii. Listening and observing behavior of teachers increases the quality and pertinence of teachers’ communicative interactions

III. The Teacher as a Model

a. Teachers model not only speech but also attitudes and behaviors in listening, writing, and reading
   i. Children watch and listen to adults’ use of grammar, intonation, and sentence patterns and imitate and use adults as examples

b. Consider the different and similar ways teachers verbally interact with young children by examining
   i. An early and classic study by Bernstein, who studied British families, and concluded that a recognizable style of verbal interaction based on social class exists
      1. Working-class speakers used a restricted code type of speech
      2. Middle-class speakers used both elaborated code and restricted code speech in some verbal exchanges
3. Restricted code speech characteristics are described as follows:
   a. Specific to a current physical context
   b. Limited
   c. Stereotyped
   d. Condensed
   e. Inexact
   f. Nonspecific
   g. Short in sentence length
   h. Vague and indefinite

4. Elaborate code speech, in Bernstein’s view, is:
   a. More differentiated
   b. More precise
   c. Not specific to a particular situation or context and affords opportunities for more complex thought

3. Speakers’ styles of communication were seen by Bernstein as powerful determining factors in the young child’s development of cognitive structures and modes of communication
   i. Believed that young children exposed exclusively to restricted code speakers are at an educational disadvantage in school settings where elaborated code speech predominates
   ii. Major assumption behind this view is that middle-class ways of talking with children support literacy development, whereas working-class ways inhibit it

4. Many other researchers have investigated verbal exchanges between parents and children to pinpoint connections between adult talk and its relationship to child speech, thinking ability, and literacy
   i. More current studies describe parents’ high-level and low-level distancing strategies in verbal exchanges
   ii. High-level distancing strategies include:
      1. Drawing conclusions
      2. Inferring cause-and-effect relationships
      3. Planning
      4. Evaluating consequences
      5. Evaluating effect
   iii. Low-level distancing strategies include:
      1. Labeling
      2. Producing information
      3. Observing
   iv. Researchers hypothesized that social class alone does not predict children’s cognitive and linguistic outcomes
      1. Early childhood educators observing young children would agree
   e. It is suggested that early childhood teachers focus on studying their ability to use explanatory talk in child-teacher verbal exchanges
i. Explanatory talk consists of conversation concerning some connection between objects, events, concepts, and/or conclusions that one speaker is pointing out to another

ii. Teachers commonly and typically explain their intent and actions to children and provide explanations in response to child comments and questions
   1. This is a preferred behavior in early childhood teachers’ verbal interactive exchanges

iii. Explanatory style sometimes carries over into teachers’ personal lives
   1. Teachers report family members often say to them, “Yes, I know why you’re doing that!”

f. Adults should use clear, descriptive speech at a speed and pitch easily understood

i. Articulation should be as precise as possible

ii. Appropriate models during infancy and the toddler period would have the following characteristics, which are also desirable in teachers of preschoolers
   1. A good model:
      a. Uses a variety of facial expressions and other forms of nonverbal communication
      b. Associates talking with love, understanding, and affection
      c. Provides happy, pleasant experiences associated with talking
      d. Demonstrates the importance of clearly spoken words
      e. Takes advantage of various timely situations

h. Teachers also need to be sure that reward in the form of attention is present in their teaching behavior as they deal with young children’s attitudes, skills, and behaviors in language arts activities

i. Educators should use language patterns with which they feel comfortable and natural and should analyze their speech, working toward providing the best English model possible

ii. Familiar language patterns reflect each teacher’s personality and ethnic culture

iii. Knowing what kind of model one presents is important, because knowing that there is room for improvement can help a teacher become more professional

i. Modeling the correct word or sentence is done by simply supplying it in a relaxed, natural way rather than in a corrective tone

j. Teacher’s example is a strong influence

   1. When a teacher adds courtesy words (“please” and “thank you,” for instance), these words appear in children’s speech
2. Finishing an incomplete word by adding an ending or beginning may be appropriate with very young speakers.
3. Completing a phrase or offering complete sentences in Standard English suits older speakers.
   ii. Although adult modeling has its limits in facilitating spontaneous language, it is an essential first step in learning language.
i. After hearing corrections modeled, the child will probably not shift to correct grammar or usage immediately.
   i. May take many repetitions by teachers and adults over time.
   ii. What is important is the teacher’s acceptance and recognition of the child’s idea within the verbalization and the addition of pertinent comments along the same line.

j. When adults focus on the way something was said (grammar) rather than the meaning, they miss opportunities to increase awareness and extend child interest.
   i. Overt correction often ends teacher-child conversation.
   ii. Affirmation is appropriate.
      1. Teacher should emphasize the child’s intended message.

k. Adults can sometimes develop the habit of talking and listening to themselves rather than to the children.
   i. It is hypnotic and can be a deterrent to really hearing the child.
   ii. If one’s mind wanders or if one listens only for the purpose of refuting, agreeing, or jumping to value judgments, it interferes with receiving communication from others.
   iii. Teachers need not be afraid of silences and pauses before answering.
   iv. Recommended listening suggestions:
      1. Work as hard to listen as you do to talk.
      2. Try to hear the message behind the words.
      3. Consciously practice good listening.

l. One teaching technique that promotes language skill is simple modeling of grammar or filling in missing words and completing simple sentences.
   i. This is called expansion.
   ii. Almost becomes second nature and automatic after a short period of intentional practice.
   iii. When using an expansion, the adult responds to the child by expanding the syntactic composition of the child’s utterance.
   iv. Teacher’s expansion is contingent and responsive, focusing on what the child was experiencing.

m. Although using the strategy of expansion is a widely accepted and practiced teacher behavior, Crawford notes there is little research evidence that it has any positive effect.
   i. Evidence showing a negative effect is also yet to be found.
ii. Even without research validating the technique, many educators feel the practice is still valuable, and when additional research takes place it will confirm their actions.

n. While using expansion, the teacher can also promote wider depth of meaning or spark interest by contributing or suggesting an idea for further exploration.
   i. Additional conversation usually occurs.

o. The teacher is a model for listening as well as speaking.
   i. Words, expressions, pronunciations, and gestures are copied, as is listening behavior.
      1. Quiet teacher may have a quiet classroom.
      2. Enthusiastic, talkative teacher (who also listens) may have a classroom where children talk, listen, and share experiences.

ii. The way children feel about themselves is reflected in their behavior.
   1. When teachers listen closely, children come to feel that what they say is worthwhile.

p. Children seem to absorb everything in their environment, so it is necessary to provide correctly formed alphabet letters and numerals on children’s work, charts, bulletin boards, and any displayed classroom print.

q. Teachers’ use and care of books are modeled, as are their attitudes toward story and nonfiction book experiences.
   i. Through their observations of teachers’ actions, children begin to develop ideas about how books should be handled and stored.

r. When an educator considers teacher modeling behavior according to Au, teachers must demonstrate the kind of literacy they want students to show.
   i. Must see themselves as readers and writers and convince students of the value of reading and writing.
      1. In doing so, they help young children gain an appreciation for literacy in their own lives.
   ii. With picture books, some of the ways this is accomplished is by:
      1. Selecting and sharing books with an obvious enjoyment factor.
      2. Building on children’s interests.
      3. Discussing enjoyed book sections as these relate to individual children.

s. An educator on any teaching day can model their thinking by talking aloud to promote children’s thinking along the same lines.
   i. Done often when sharing a book, but there are many additional opportunities.

IV. The Teacher as Provider.
a. As providers, preschool teachers strive to provide experiences that promote literacy
   i. Teachers rely on both their own creativity and the many resources available to plan experiences based on identified goals
   ii. Early childhood resource books, other teachers, teacher magazines, workshops, and conferences all contribute ideas
b. Gathering activity ideas and storing them in a personal resource file is suggested, because it is almost impossible to remember all the activity ideas one comes upon
   i. An activity file can include new or tried-and-true activity ideas
   ii. Developing a usable file starts with identifying initial categories (file headings) and then adding more heads as the file grows
      1. Some teachers use oversized file cards; others use binders or file folders
      2. Whatever the file size, teachers find that files are very worthwhile when it comes to daily, weekly, and monthly planning
      3. Often, files are helpful when ideas on a certain subject or theme are needed or when a child exhibits a special interest
   iii. A file collection is not used as the basis for activity planning but rather as a collection of good ideas or ideas you might like to try at a later time
c. Suggestions for separate file headings (categories) include:
   i. Audiovisual Activities
   ii. Bulletin Board Ideas
   iii. Child Drama Ideas
   iv. Children’s Books
   v. Circle Time Ideas
   vi. Classroom Environment Ideas
   vii. Listening Centers
   viii. Reading Centers
   ix. Writing Centers
   x. Dramatic Play Stimulators
   xi. Dramatic Play Theme Ideas
   xii. Experience Stories
   xiii. Field Trip Ideas
   xiv. Finger Plays
   xv. Flannel Board Ideas
   xvi. Free and Inexpensive Material Resources
   xvii. Language Game Ideas
   xviii. Listening Activities
   xix. Listening Center Ideas
   xx. Magazine (Child’s) Activities
   xxi. Patterns
d. As a provider of materials, a teacher must realize that every classroom object can become a useful program tool to stimulate language.
   i. From the clock on the wall to the doorknob, every safe item can be discussed, compared, and explored in some way.
   ii. Because most school budgets are limited, early childhood teachers find ways to use available equipment and materials to their fullest.

e. Each teacher is a unique resource who can plan activities based on personal interests and abilities.
   i. Most teachers are pleasantly surprised to see how avidly their classes respond to their personal interests.

f. When the teacher shares enthusiasm for out-of-school interests, hobbies, projects, trips, and individual talents, he can help introduce children to important knowledge.
   i. Almost anything appropriate can be presented at the child’s level.
   ii. Enthusiasm is the key to inspired teaching.

g. Providing for abundant play.
   i. Abundant opportunities for play are important to the child’s language acquisition.
      1. Considerable research shows that child’s play is in fact more complex than it is commonly believed to be.
      2. Provides a rich variety of experiences:
         a. Communication with other children
         b. Verbal rituals
         c. Topic development and maintenance
         d. Turn taking
         e. Intimate speech in friendships
         f. Follower-leader conversations
         g. Many other kinds of language exchanges
   3. Peer play helps develop a wide range of communicative skills
      a. Except when the children’s safety is in question, children’s natural ability to pretend should be encouraged, and the flow of this kind of play should proceed without the teacher’s interference.
b. Children will want to talk to teachers about their play, and the teacher’s proper involvement is to show interest and be playful themselves at times

ii. If a child has chosen to engage a teacher in conversation instead of play, or during play, the teacher should be both a willing listener and a competent, skillful conversationalist
   1. Opportunities for play and opportunities to engage both children and adults in extended, warm, and personal conversations should be readily and equally available to the child

iii. Young children explore constantly
   1. They want to do what they see others doing
   2. Play opportunities usually involve manipulating something
   3. When deeply involved in play, children may seem to be momentarily awestruck in their search for meanings, but soon they will approach adults with questions or comments

iv. When one observes preschoolers at play, it is obvious that they learn a great deal of language from each other
   1. They gain skills in approaching other children and asking if they can play, or just nonverbally joining a play group in progress
   2. They begin to understand:
      a. What attracts others to them
      b. How to imitate another child’s actions or words
      c. How to express affection or hostility
      d. How to assume a leadership role
      e. How to negotiate
      f. How to follow or refuse playmates’ requests
   3. These and other play skills help them stay engaged in a play group for a longer period of time

v. Preschoolers at play may even argue over correct language use
   1. Some observers believe that the majority of language teaching that takes place in the four-year-olds’ classroom is child-to-child teaching

vi. A resourceful teacher will strive to provide a variety of play by regarding all of a center’s area (and furnishings) as a possible place (or object) for safe and appropriate play
   1. Creative use can be made of each foot of floor space

vii. Children need large blocks of uninterrupted time to construct knowledge and actively explore their problem-solving options in an environment thoughtfully and carefully prepared by the teacher

h. Providing accurate and specific speech in all content areas
i. Every subject area has its own vocabulary and common terms that can overlap other fields of study

ii. Teacher comments should be as accurate and specific as possible in light of what the teacher believes the children might already know or have experienced

1. Purposeful teacher conversation adds a little more information than the children know and reinforces and adds depth to words already in the children’s vocabulary

2. When working with numbers or other subjects, the teacher should use terminology that is appropriate to the subject area but at a level the children will understand

3. In movement or music activities, many descriptive terms can be added to teacher demonstrations and conversations
   a. These are easily understood while the child is in the process of experiencing them
   b. The quality of the words children hear is crucial for their later school and language performance
   c. Children build meaning as adults and teachers:
       i. Make comments
       ii. Provide information
       iii. Comfort them
       iv. Guide them
       v. Praise and encourage their efforts
       vi. Display excitement and enthusiasm for the world around them

iii. Teachers sometimes are reluctant to use big, new words

1. Neuman and Roskos urge educators to remember teacher words and phrases are one of the main sources for giving children new knowledge
   a. Stress giving explanations and examples

iv. Teacher prompts children’s use of the words that the teacher provides

1. Most times a teacher is careful to define new words immediately after using the new terms

2. In number activities, number words are used in the presence of a corresponding number of objects

3. In movement activities, types of movement are discussed with quick demonstrations

v. Important to introduce new terms in a natural conversational tone rather than within the framework of an obvious lesson

1. Leading a child or groups of children to new discoveries offers the teacher an opportunity to use specific and accurate terms and also makes children feel like partners in the discoveries
vi. In the theme (unit) approach to instruction, there is often identifiable terminology attached to the theme
   1. Teachers sometimes outline the terms that might be encountered in a particular unit and try to include these specific terms in conversations

V. The Teacher as an Educator who Interacts
   a. An educator can be defined as a person who is always interested in what a child is saying or doing
      i. This person encourages conversation on any subject the child selects, and is never too busy to talk and share interests and concerns and listens with the intent to understand
         1. Understanding the child’s message makes the educator’s response more educationally valuable
         2. Time is purposely planned for daily conversations with each child
         3. When teachers talk about what they are doing, explain why particular results occur, and let children ask questions about procedures and results, children will have more exposure to and experience with extended forms of discourse
         4. These private, personal, one-on-one encounters build the child’s feelings of self-worth and open communications
   b. Educators are aware of the “reciprocal opportunity” that is always present in work with young children
      i. Teacher tries to really hear verbal communications and sense nonverbal messages
      ii. They give undivided attention (if possible), which lends importance to and shows interest in children’s ideas and also rewards children’s efforts to use language and initiate social contact
      iii. Teacher can respond skillfully, first clarifying what the teacher thought he heard and then adding to the conversation and attempting to stimulate more verbal output, child discovery, some new feature or detail, or a different way of viewing what has captured his interest
      iv. Correctness of children’s verbal expression of their thoughts, feelings, requests, or other intent is accepted and corrected only when it is socially unacceptable speech
   c. Studies of teacher-child interaction have discovered that some teachers were warm and accepting but offered children little invitation to talk
      i. “Teachers found it quicker and easier to anticipate students’ needs and thus failed to seize opportunities that would make children want and need to talk.”
d. Teachers can emphasize the mental or symbolic component of an activity and help children identify problems or dilemmas by promoting children to put their ideas into words

e. Teachers may need to raise their own awareness of their interactions with children, in other words, rate themselves on their ability to expand children’s verbal output and accuracy

f. When a preschool teacher attends to certain events in the classroom, she reveals to children what she values, which hopefully includes preschoolers’ literacy efforts

g. It is wise to be aware and up to date on topics of special interest to preschoolers
   i. Current popular toys, cartoon figures, community happenings, sports, and individual family events may often be the focus of young children’s conversations

h. When a teacher has background knowledge, such as what current Disney characters are popular or familiar to her students or which children have a new infant sibling at home, his responses when children discuss these items can be more pertinent and connected to the reality of enrolled children’s lives

i. Early childhood educators use a technique called extension
   i. Building on a child’s statement, the teacher adds information, factual data, or additional meaning
      1. Can both add vocabulary and clarify some aspect or concept encountered in the conversational interchange

j. Many teachers have used a conversational interaction technique called closure
   i. Involves hesitating in the middle of a sentence or at sentence endings
   ii. Prompts child guessing, and the teacher is willing to accept any guess
      1. Most often, child guesses are logical but may not be what the teacher expected
      2. Those children with a sense of the ridiculous may offer off-the-wall guesses equally acceptable to the teacher
   iii. Often promotes further dialogue

k. In looking at individual children, Covey reminds us of what we know in our hearts to be true, fair, and compassionate
   i. Each child is to be valued for his identity as a person and for his unique individuality, separateness, and worth
   ii. Comparisons between children cloud our view
   iii. Traits teachers may see as negative can be fostered by the environment we offer and our own perceptions of correct student behavior
   iv. Covey states that an educator’s job is to recognize potential, then coddle and inspire that potential to emerge at its own pace
v. Weitzman urges teacher waiting behavior, stating that when you wait, you give the child time to initiate or to get involved in an activity

l. Studies of adult-child interactions have shown that adults give children approximately one second in which to respond to a question
i. After one second, the adult repeats and rephrases the question or provides the answer
ii. Most children need much longer than one second to process the question and figure out their response

m. Adult speech containing a relatively high proportion of statements or declaratives has been associated with accelerated language development in young children
i. Adult-child conversations tend to last longer if adults add new relevant information
ii. If adults verbally accept and react to children’s statements with “oh, really?” or “I see,” additional conversation seems to be promoted

n. When a teacher answers a child by showing interest, this rewards the child for speaking
i. Positive feelings are read internally as an automatic signal to continue to do what we are doing
ii. Many experts suggest that teachers should guide and collaborate to promote children’s independent problem solving in any given situation
iii. Most often, teachers show their attention by listening to, looking at, smiling at, patting, or answering a child, or by acting favorably to what a child has said or done

o. Teachers can get into the habit of asking recall questions that call for a “right” answer
i. Sanders describes this type of question as a memory question
ii. These questions do not promote critical thinking
iii. Sanders’ other question types are:
   1. Transition
   2. Interpretation
   3. Application
   4. Analysis
   5. Synthesis
   6. Evaluation
iv. Critical thinking, judgment, and problem solving are required to answer these questions

p. Teachers often act as interpreters, especially with younger preschoolers
i. Most children will let teachers know when they have interpreted incorrectly by trying again

q. Language-developing, teacher speech interactions that may be used in conversations with young children:
i. Use language slightly more complex than the child’s
ii. Speak with young or limited-language children by referring to an action, object, person, and/or event that is currently happening
iii. Base your reactive conversation on the meaning the child intended
   1. Three ways to do this:
      a. Repetition
      b. Expansion
      c. Recasting
iv. Use “I see,” “Yes,” or a similar expression to indicate you are listening
r. Encouraging children to tell about happenings and how they feel is possible throughout the preschool day
s. Teacher may find it harder to interact verbally with quiet children than with those children who frequently start conversations with the teacher
   i. Teacher should be aware of this tendency and make a daily effort to converse with all attending children
   ii. Teacher’s role includes associating language with pleasure and enjoyment
t. Teachers shift to more mature or less mature speech as they converse with children of differing ages and abilities
   i. They try to speak to each according to his understanding
   ii. They use shorter, less complex utterances and use more gestures and nonverbal signals with infants, toddlers, and speakers trying to learn English
   iii. Generally, the ability to understand longer and more complex sentences increases with the child’s age
u. At times, it will be prudent for the teacher to pause or refrain from speaking
   i. Young children, who are talking to themselves directing their actions with self-talk, will appear to be in their own little world
      1. Intrusion by an adult is not expected by the child, nor is it necessary
   ii. Children usually think out loud while they are deeply absorbed in self-pursued activities
      1. Adult talk at these times can be interruptive
v. Teacher who interacts in daily experiences can help improve the child’s ability to see relationships
   i. Although there is current disagreement as to the teacher’s ability to promote cognitive growth (the act or process of knowing), attention can be focused and help provided by answering and asking questions
   ii. Often, a teacher can help children see clear links between material already learned and new material
   iii. Words teachers provide are paired with the child’s mental images that have come through the senses
iv. Language aids memory because words attached to mental images help the child retrieve stored information

w. Intellectually valuable experiences involve the teacher and parent as active participants in tasks with the child
   i. Adults can label, describe, compare, classify, and question, supporting children’s intellectual development

x. As the teacher interacts by supplying words to fit situations, it should be remembered that a new word often needs to be repeated in a subtle way
   i. Has been said that at least three repetitions of a new word are needed for adults to master the word
      1. Young children need more

y. In some cases, when a new word is very salient and the child is highly motivated, a child may acquire the word after a single, brief exposure
   i. Called fast mapping
   ii. Children also more readily learn new words that are conceptually similar to words they already know
   iii. Repeated exposure to a new word in the same and other meaningful contexts is still recommended in most situations
   iv. Walley, Metsala, and Garlock note that new words that are phonologically similar to a known word are also easier to acquire

z. When offering a new word, Bennett-Armstead and Duke and Moses suggest making sure the words you say around the new word give clues to the word’s meaning

aa. There are times when a teacher chooses to supply information in answer to direct child questions
   i. No easy way for the child to discover answers to questions like, “What’s the name of today?” or “Why is that man using that funny stick with a cup on the end?”
   ii. A precise, age-level answer is necessary; such as “Today is Monday, May 9” and (while demonstrating) “It’s a stick, called a plunger. It pushes air and water down the drain and helps open the pipes so that the water in the sink will run out.”
   iii. As a provider of information, the teacher acts as a reference and resource person, providing the information a child desires
      1. If the teacher does not wish to answer a question directly, he may encourage the child to ask the same question of someone else or help the child find out where the answer is available

bb. Teacher can help the child focus on something of interest
   i. Child’s desire to know can be encouraged
   ii. Repetition of words and many firsthand activities on the same theme will help the child form an idea or concept
   iii. Child may even touch and try something new with the teacher’s encouragement
cc. Can teachers promote children’s curiosity about words?
   i. By being aware that children sometimes ask about words they do not understand
   ii. Educators reward the child’s interest with attention

dd. The teacher’s reaction supplies children with feedback to their actions
   i. Teacher is responsible for reinforcing the use of a new word and gently ensuring that the children have good attitudes about themselves as speakers

ee. Every day, the teacher can take advantage of unplanned things that happen to promote language and speech

ff. Being able to make the most of an unexpected event is a valuable skill
   i. Moving into a situation with skill and helping the child discover something and tell about it is part of promoting word growth

gg. Teachable moments
   i. This strategy involves a four- to five-step process:
      1. Observe a child or a child group’s self-chosen actions and efforts
      2. Make a hypothesis about exactly what the children are pursuing, exploring, discovering and playing with, and so on
      3. Make a teacher decision to intervene, act, provide, extend, or in some way offer an educational opportunity to further growth or knowledge related to the child-chosen agenda
         a. Can be done a number of ways, so this step often involves teacher contemplation
      4. Determine exactly what you will do or provide
      5. Consider having the children tell, act out, communicate, dictate, or in some way represent what has been experienced, if this is appropriate

hh. Time constraints
   i. Comments such as, “You finished,” “That’s yellow,” “How colorful,” “It’s heavy,” “I like that too,” or “A new shirt,” may give attention, show acceptance, provide encouragement, and reinforce behavior
      1. They feel like suitable and natural comments or responses, and they slip out almost unconsciously
      2. In a busy classroom, they often are said in haste when the teacher may have no time for an extended conversation because he is supervising a group of children.
         a. The best a teacher can do time permitting
   ii. Consciously trying to be specific and expanding takes focus, effort, and quick thinking, but with practice, it can become second nature

VI. Scaffolding
a. Scaffolding can be support with challenge
   i. Refers to a teaching technique that includes responsive conversation, open-ended questions, and facilitation of the child’s initiatives
   ii. Adults estimate the amount of necessary verbal support and provide challenging questions for child growth in any given situation
   iii. Idea is to promote the child’s understanding and solutions
b. Adult attempts to build upon what a child already knows to help the child accomplish a task or may suggest breaking down the task into simpler components
c. As the child ages, the autonomous pursuit of knowledge will need less adult support
d. Believed that children need experiences and educational opportunities with adults who carefully evaluate, think, and talk daily occurrences through
e. What specific teacher verbalizations and behaviors are suggested in scaffolding?
   i. Ones that:
      1. Offer responsive and authentic conversation
      2. Offer a facilitation of the child’s initiatives
      3. Use open-ended questions
      4. Prompt
      5. Promote language by using modeling of slightly more mature language forms and some language structures that are new to children
      6. Offer invitations for children to express thoughts and feelings in words
      7. Promote longer, more precise child comments
      8. Invite divergent responses
      9. Offer specific word cues in statements and questions that help children grasp further information, for example, what, who, why, because, so, and, next, but, except, if, when, before, after, etc.
      10. Provoke lively discussions and quests for knowing more about subjects that interest them
      11. Increase collaborative communication with adults and other children
f. Scaffolding is not as easy as it first may appear to teachers
   i. What is opportunity and challenge for one child may not be for the next
   ii. In scaffolding, teacher decision making is constant and complex
g. An educator using scaffolding believes understanding, discovery, and problem solving can be guided
   i. Rather than always being dependent on adults for help, the child actually is moved toward becoming an independent thinker
ii. Adults who accompany children at home or at school can use a scaffolding approach to talk through and plan activities as simple as setting the table, cleaning the sink, getting an art area ready for finger painting, or taking care of the needs of the school pet.

h. What is right or wrong becomes less important than the child’s expression of his own conclusions
   i. Child is encouraged to verbalize the “whys” of his thinking
   ii. Valuable teacher collaboration with children sustains the momentum of the search, actions, or exploration
      i. Small group projects are often a natural part of children’s block area play and can also be promoted in other aspects of daily play and program.

VII. Teacher Interactive Styles
   a. Central task for the educator is to find a balance between helping a child consolidate new understanding and offering challenges that will promote growth.
   b. Some educators believe that there are two teaching styles—transmission and interpretation.
      i. Transmission teaching is the traditional, believing child knowledge is acquired through the teacher talking, sharing books, and explaining classroom events and experiences.
      ii. Interpretation teaching is based on the understanding that children reinterpret information for themselves, and consequently, the teacher’s role involves dialogues that support the children’s efforts to verbalize their ideas and actual experiences.
   c. Easy it is to become a transmission teacher because it is overwhelmingly modeled in a teacher’s own schooling.
      i. Interpretation teacher really listens and does not monopolize conversations by a display of what the teacher knows.
      ii. Achieving balance between these two styles is the key.
         1. Educators both transmit and interpret.
   d. In promoting developing language arts and literacy in early childhood, an interpretation style would not only help children talk about what they know but also help them put ideas and impressions in print by offering to take dictation or by using some other form of expression.
      i. Teacher’s role is to provide the occasions, resources, and enabling climate for the pursuit of individual meaning.
   e. Teachers can be fun-filled and playful companions at times, exhibiting their love and enthusiasm for life and the child’s company.
      i. This side of teachers comes naturally to some adults and less easily to others.
      ii. Early childhood practitioners bent on language development are careful not to dominate conversations at these times but rather to be responsive companions.
f. Interaction in symbolic play situations
   i. Pretend play (symbolic play) teacher interactions take both understanding and finesse
      1. Teacher may wish to preserve the child's chosen play direction and not encroach upon self-directed imaginative activity but, at the same time, may wish to promote the child activity by giving attention, and therefore status, to the child's pursuit
      2. Will definitely be many times when teacher interaction may be deemed intrusive because of the child's deep involvement
         a. At those times teachers simply monitor at a distance
      3. In other instances, particularly with younger preschoolers, teacher interaction may enrich the child's experience
   ii. Smilansky pioneered attempts to train children who were less able to engage in appropriate pretend play.
      1. Through adult modeling and assuming a play role in reenacted real-life experiences and through outside-of-play intervention by making suggestions, giving directions, asking questions, and clarifying behavior
      2. She successfully taught some study children to engage in and sustain socio-dramatic play

   g. Stressing language connections
   i. Teacher interested in stressing connections between classroom language arts events and activities, as is done in an integrated approach or a whole-language approach, may often purposefully make the following comments:
      1. “I am writing down your ideas.”
      2. “This printing I am reading says ‘Please knock’.”
      3. “Do you want me to read what is printed on the wall?”
      4. “I can print that word.”
      5. “What does the sign for your parking garage need to say?”
      6. “You seemed to be listening to the story I was reading.”
      7. “Yes, s is the first alphabet letter in your name.”
      8. “You want me to print your name on your work, right?”
      9. “I can read what this small printing on the box says.”

   h. Accepting approximations
   i. Just as parents accept and celebrate inaccurate and incorrect language and writing attempts because they are seen as signs of growth, teachers also give attention to beginning attempts and provide encouragement
   ii. Lively, interesting environments and experiences where children offer their ideas and comments, feeling safe from criticism and
insensitive grammar correction, help children risk and push ahead

i. Handling interruptions
   i. Children often interrupt adults during planned activities
      1. When an idea hits, they want to share it
      2. Their interruptions can indicate genuine involvement and interest, or they can reflect a variety of unrelated thoughts and feelings
      3. Teachers usually acknowledge the interruption, accept it, and may calmly remind the one who interrupts that when one wants to speak during group activities, one should raise one’s hand first
      4. Other teachers believe preschoolers’ enthusiasm to speak is natural and characteristic
         a. These teachers believe that asking children to raise their hands during group discussions is best reserved for a later age
         b. Interruptions give the teacher an opportunity to make a key decision that affects the flow of the activity
            i. Will the interruption break the flow of what is going on, will it add to the discussion, or is it best discussed at a later time?
      ii. Because preschoolers are action-packed, they enjoy activities that include an opportunity to perform the action words they encounter in books, discussions, or daily happenings
         1. Teachers can promote “acting out” words with their own behaviors
         2. Some descriptive words are easily enacted
      iii. Incorporating the children’s ideas and suggestions into group conversations and giving children credit for their ideas make children aware of the importance of their expressed ideas

j. Using sequential approaches to instruction
   i. Teachers need a clear understanding of how children learn words and concepts
   ii. One approach to teacher interaction during structured, planned, or incidental activities, described by Maria Montessori, is called three-stage interaction
      1. Shows movement from the child’s sensory exploration to showing understanding, and then to verbalizing the understanding
         a. Step 1: Associating Sense Perception with Words.
         b. Step 2: Probing Understanding
         c. Step 3: Expressing Understanding
      iii. When using the three-step approach, Montessori suggests that if a child is uninterested, the adult should stop at that point
1. If a mistake is made, the adult remains silent
2. Mistake indicates only that the child is not ready to learn—not that he is unable to learn

iv. This verbal approach may seem mechanical and ritualistic to some, yet it clearly illustrates the sequence in a child’s progress from not knowing to knowing

v. Goal of prompting in a child-adult conversation is to encourage the child to express ideas perhaps more precisely and/or specifically
1. Used slightly different with younger preschoolers

vi. Can teachers really make a difference in the level and quality of children’s language development?
1. Very significant correlations were found between both the frequency of informative staff talk, the frequency with which the staff answered the children, and the language comprehension scores of the children

vii. Interaction does require teachers to “wonder out loud”
1. They express their own curiosity while at the same time noticing each child’s quest to find out what makes others tick and what the world is all about

viii. How can teachers interact skillfully?
1. Expand topics in which the child shows interest
2. Add depth to information on topics of interest
3. Answer and clarify children’s questions
4. Help children sort out features of events, problems, and experiences, reducing confusion
5. Urge children to put what is newly learned or discovered into words
6. Cue children into routinely attending to times when the adult and child are learning and discovering together through discussion of daily events

k. Dealing with children’s past experiences
i. A teacher encounters a wide range of children’s perceptions concerning the way children should communicate with adults
1. Child’s family or past child care arrangements may have taught the child to behave in a certain way
2. With this in mind, the teacher can almost envision what it means to be a conversationalist in a particular family or societal group
3. Some families expect children to interrupt; others expect respectful manners
4. Wild, excited gesturing and weaving body movements are characteristic of some children, whereas motionless, barely audible whispering is typical of others
5. Teachers working with newly arrived children from other cultures may see sharp contrasts in communication styles
6. Some children verbally seek help, whereas others find this extremely difficult
7. Some speak their feelings openly; others rarely express them.
   ii. To promote child learning, teachers need to consider children’s various styles and how they will interface and help children understand school may be very different than home
   iii. Past child care experiences may have left their mark
   iv. It can be difficult for a child to engage an adult in conversation
      1. Seeking the availability of a teacher or child care provider and assuring one’s right to her attention and reply often calls for persistence and ingenuity in some poor quality child care situations
   
I. Children’s inquisitive honesty
   i. Young children rarely limit their questions or modify their responses to the teacher for the purpose of hiding their ignorance, as older children sometimes do
   ii. During conversations, most young children intent on answers will probe enthusiastically for what they want to know
   iii. Teachers actively promote guesses and appreciate error making in an atmosphere of trust
      1. They interact in conversations by focusing child attention, posing questions, discussing problems, suggesting alternatives, and providing information at the teachable moment
   
m. Outdoor play and literacy
   i. Interacting to promote literacy during outdoor play challenges educators but it is possible to offer some materials and activities that include a literacy feature
      1. Probably the most common include reading books on a blanket, in the shade, in the playhouse, or under a tree
   ii. Sidewalk chalk activities and games can be fun and might include printing names to jump on or over, or printing simple directions that read “Stamp your feet” or “Follow this line,” etc.
      1. Snapping instant photos and writing captions with the photographed child is a favorite activity
      2. Occasionally labeling bikes A, B, C, etc. with hang on cards might improve letter recognition but caution is needed here
      3. Overzealous teachers whose aim is to “teach on all occasions” should skip this discussion for children need a lot of undirected time and freedom to pursue their own
agendas particularly when out of doors and using their own creative play ideas

VIII. The Teacher as a Balancer
   a. In all roles, the teacher needs to maintain a balance. This means
      i. Giving, but withholding when self-discovery is practical and possible
      ii. Interacting, but not interfering with or dominating the child’s train of thought or actions
      iii. Giving support, but not hovering
      iv. Talking, but not over talking
      v. Listening, but remaining responsive
      vi. Providing many opportunities for the child to speak
      vii. Being patient and understanding
   b. As is most often the case, when adults know the answer, many may find it difficult to be patient so children can figure out the answer for themselves
   c. To maintain a balance, the educator is a model, a provider, and one who interacts, matching his behavior and speech to the ability of each child
      i. As a model, the teacher’s example offers the child a step above (but not too far above)
         1. In doing this, the teacher watches and listens while working with individual children, learning as much from the child’s misunderstandings or speech mistakes as from correct or appropriate responses and behavior
         2. Does not mean the teacher can’t just enjoy talking with children
            a. It means the teacher is ready to make the most of situations, while both child and adult find pleasure in each other’s company and learning together
      ii. Teacher orally reflects and guards against being overly invasive
   d. Teacher’s attitude toward child growth in language should be one of optimism
      i. Provide the best learning environment and realize the child will grow and learn new language skills when he is ready and sometimes with the educator’s help
      ii. Early childhood centers plan for as much growth as possible in language abilities
   e. Teachers thoughtfully screen their comments and conversation to insure they are free of sexist, or biased attitudes, or stereotypes
      i. If a teacher is talking about a stuffed teddy bear or the school’s pet guinea pig (whose sex is yet to be discovered), “it,” rather than “he” or “she,” is recommended
   f. Giving children the opportunity to re-express what they have discovered, felt, or learned with classroom art materials, building
blocks, dramatic play props, and so on, is another way to promote their language growth and further expression of ideas.