

1. Respect and seek the individual qualities of the child;
2. experiment and not be discouraged by the lack of immediate response; and
3. draw on the local rich performative and visual traditions (especially in South Asia, Africa, etc);

As the punning title promises, *Drama with Children* could also be a splendid resource book for workshops on drama and language learning, if we reconfigure in our multilingual contexts, many of its pedagogic and expressive assumptions.

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Rhyner, Paula M. (Ed.), 2009, **Emergent Literacy and Language Development: Promoting Learning in early Childhood.** New York: Guilford Press, 240 pages.

Reviewed by Aditya Raj

There has been a surge of transdisciplinary research on various facets of literacy in recent times. *Emergent Literacy and Language*

*Development* is indeed a good addition to this corpus of research as it forms a bridge which tries to establish bidirectional relationships between emergent literacy and language acquisition. The book is a compilation of six essays by leading scholars in the genre of emergent literacy. Early childhood education is the thread which moors the discourse of this collection. The book is edited by Rhyner, who is known for her work on the effectiveness of various strategies in facilitating language learning in early childhood, especially communicative strategies between adults and children. According to the editor, emergent literacy involves knowledge, skills, and attitudes that develop before literacy, but are related to conventional literacy skills. However, there is disagreement on the exact knowledge that defines emergent literacy. The chapters address the early formative experiences of listening and speaking. However, research, from which the maze of discussion is delineated in this edited book, pertains to clinical or social settings. The case studies illustrated are significant and evocative. They guide parents and practitioners towards instructions and practices that contribute to the development of a strong foundation in school readiness.

The framework for emergent literacy is categorized into three perspectives—developmental, components, and child and environmental influence. The different approaches towards emergent literacy are explained in the first chapter. The focus of the next chapter is the importance of the book sharing experience for the child. In sharing words with the young ones we also bring the world to them. The semantically rich cultural atmosphere contributes to oral language development, as well as development of meaning for emergent literacy. The discourse in chapter three looks at how a child's

phonology develops in tandem with other components of language, specifically the lexical and syntactic components, and how a child maintains an awareness of the connection between the sound and its meaning. The focus of chapter four is on children's early writing and spelling acquisition, and their bidirectional influence on early oral language attainment. The interrelationship of children's early language learning, and their early story and expository discourse is discussed in chapter five. The last chapter is significant, and delineates the connection between emergent literacy and cultural and linguistic diversity with regard to assessment and intervention with young children.

Research at the Human Early Learning Partnership (HELP) and The Institute of Early Childhood Education and Research (IECER) at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, also suggest that early environment and experiences contribute significantly to inequalities in child development. In this context, learning assumes centrality because child development happens in cognizance with learning. Learning begins long before a child starts comprehending a language and expressing. Oral communication is pivotal as well. Nevertheless, the process in which learning is initiated, and the warmth with which the process is conducted holds centrality. It is in the same vein that we have come to accept the necessity of giving due importance to emotional quotient (EQ) along with intelligence quotient (IQ) in the educational process.

Literacy is the baseline of the educational process and conventional literacy is significant since it is the formal marker. However, the talk and the text should attempt to map terrains beyond conventional wisdom to include educative processes, and should also attempt to understand the undercurrent that situates the

possibility of all round human development. A holistic development can be expected to negate learning outcomes located specifically in time and space. Although, there are periods of sparks just as there are crests and turfs, the educative process can best be understood as a lifelong learning. Rigorous research should attempt to understand these interrelated facets as well as the complexity of human experiences.

Reading and oral skills are important for emergent literacy but one has to take into consideration the changing nature of society and the ever emergent complexity of the global age. The role of the technologies of information communication in the everyday experiences of parents and their young ones cannot be overlooked. The involvement with media is another issue that needs to be considered. The media has taken over the role of grandparents--at least in a developing society such as that of India. The young ones hear stories, but from record players at home or in the car in which they travel with their parents. The migratory nature of contemporary society is another case in point. Also, I would have loved a serious engagement with the works of Bourdieu and Bernstein, because of the seminal nature of their work around cultural capital and the codes for the socialization of the young respectively.

The book is commendable. Nevertheless, one has to go beyond scratching the tip of the social convulsion. The problem lies not in the scholarship of this edited collection but in the hold of the formal process of knowledge construction. The grip of modernity is paramount on the research designs and the assumed outcomes. Research under Newtonian-Baconian-Cartesian epistemology has inherent limitations, for they suggest a linear specific diagnostic developmental outcome. A

fine start is important in order to do well in life, and therefore a co-relation is useful. A good milieu for early human development through emergent language acquisition is important. However, it does not mean that children who may have had a comparatively less advantageous start will not be able to make it up later in life. Therefore, while acknowledging the contributions in this edited collection, it is essential to keep other lines of inquiry around language learning in early human development and related aspects open.

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Alan Davies, 2003, **The Native Speaker: Myth and Reality**, Buffalo: Multilingual Matters, pp 237 Hardbound.

Reviewed by Rajesh Kumar  
& Amit Sethi

Davies' book is published in the series 'Bilingual Education and Bilingualism: 38' of Multilingual Matters Ltd. This book explores and examines critical questions pertaining to the concept of a native speaker from different perspectives. The idea of a *native speaker* always appears fresh in linguistics. Researchers in various sub-fields of linguistics define *native speaker* with the traits that are typical of a sub-field. *Knowledge of Language* appears as a common thread in most of the working definitions of native speaker. Chomsky's works (since 1965) also contribute to the idea of the *Knowledge of Language*. In fact, most definitions seem to incorporate the idea that the '*Knowledge of Language*' makes a

speaker native to the language. This book is an attempt to look at the *native speaker* in a more comprehensive manner. It is also an attempt to bring several perspectives on native speakers together in one book. It has ten chapters including the introduction and conclusion. Out of this, eight chapters examine the questions and the concepts of native speakers in linguistics from the psycholinguistic, sociolinguistic, and language acquisition perspectives. The book effectively argues that the concept of a native speaker is in fact a myth, and concludes that a native speaker is a nothing more than a social construct. The book begins with personal anecdotes that are significant for the discussions on the native speaker. It engages the discussion in the context of many previous works namely Chomsky (1965), Paikeday (1985), Ferguson (1983), and Katz and Fodor 1962 among others. Defining the goal of this book, the author aims to make the concept of a native speaker unambiguous.

With regard to examinations, Davies supports the view in Felix (1987). This position argues in favor of the following: (a) language processing is done by two different cognitive systems, (b) where native speakers know two or more languages, both these languages use different cognitive systems (c) the adult learner primarily uses the problem-solving system in addition to the language-specific system. Davies seems to agree with Felix that the use of two systems makes language acquisition harder for an adult learner. Hence, he seems to be giving due recognition to Chomsky for the technical contributions that define *Knowledge of Language*, and Paikeday for the discussion on 'practical significance' of the term native speaker.

In the first few chapters, Davies highlights how difficult it is to define 'first language' or 'mother tongue', especially in multilingual homes and communities as some people are