Helping Young Children Learn Language and Literacy
Birth Through Kindergarten

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About the Authors

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BILLIE ENZ is an Emeritus Professor of Early Childhood Education at Arizona State University, where she taught and served as an administrator for 25 years. She has coauthored several texts on mentorship and new teacher development and was the founding director of the Beginning Educator Support Team (BEST) grant which provided induction support for new teachers statewide. Her research interests include language and literacy development and family literacy. Dr. Enz has coauthored Teaching Language and Literacy, 5th ed. (Pearson, 2014) and Assessing Preschool Literacy Development (International Reading Association, 2009) and numerous articles and book chapters. She also served as the founding executive director for Educare Arizona.

KATHLEEN A. ROSKOS is a Professor Emeritus at John Carroll University, where she continues to teach courses in literacy assessment/intervention and the language arts. She has developed and coordinated numerous educational grants, including a DOD grant for military veterans entering teaching, Early Reading First grants and a Straight A Innovation grant. Dr. Roskos coordinated one of the first public preschools in Ohio (Bridges and Links). She was instrumental in the development of statewide online professional development in literacy for P-12 teachers. Dr. Roskos studies early literacy development, digital book design, and teacher professional education. She has published several books, book chapters, and research articles on these topics.

JAMES CHRISTIE was a Professor Emeritus in the T. Denny Sanford School of Social and Family Dynamics at Arizona State University, where he taught courses in play and early language and literacy development. Dr. Christie coauthored Play, Development, and Early Education (Allyn & Bacon, 2005), Teaching Language and Literacy: Preschool Through the Elementary Grades, 5th ed. (Pearson, 2014), and Building a Foundation for Preschool Literacy, 2nd ed. (International Reading Association, 2009). He codirected three Early Reading First projects: the Arizona Centers of Excellence in Early Education in San Luis, AZ; the Mohave Desert Coalition in Bullhead City, AZ; and Pump Up the Volume in Preschool in Gallup, NM.
Preface

We are dedicating this edition of *Helping Young Children Learn Language and Literacy* to our dear colleague James F. Christie. Jim passed away at his favorite mountain retreat in northern Arizona. Some of the words in this Fifth Edition are his. We cherish them, and we acknowledge his contribution by continuing his authorship of this edition. We miss him.

*Helping Young Children Learn Language and Literacy*, Fifth Edition, is about teaching the language arts—about facilitating children’s reading, writing, speaking, and listening development from birth through kindergarten. The language arts are essential to everyday life and central to all learning; through reading, listening, writing, and talking, children come to understand the world. To be a successful teacher of language and literacy, you need to understand how children’s language and literacy develop and how to help children become fluent, flexible, effective users of oral and written language. Children are at the center of all good language and literacy teaching. This principle underlies the four themes that run throughout this book: a perspective on teaching and learning that blends natural and explicit instruction, respect for diversity, instruction-based assessment, and family involvement in literacy learning.

This book presents an integrative view of how children learn language and literacy from an early age through the first year of school. It describes the emergence and development of speaking and listening skills that are the foundations of reading and writing that young children need for school success. It is written in a friendly, engaging style that shows how children learn to use language effectively and to engage in literacy experiences that develop their knowledge of the purposes and uses of print. We believe that children construct their own knowledge about oral and written language by engaging in integrated, meaningful, and functional activities with other people. Children do not first “study” speaking, then listening, then reading, then writing. They learn by engaging in activities in which language and literacy are embedded. We also believe, however, that literacy skills can be increased via direct, systematic instruction. This instruction can often take the form of games and other engaging activities, and it also contains the elements of direct instruction: explanations, teacher modeling, guided practice, and independent practice.

New to This Edition

There are numerous new features to this edition that reflect recent developments in the field of language arts education.

- We continue to believe that it is important to frame the ideas presented in this book within the broader national context of what is happening in language and literacy in the United States. In the 3rd edition, we introduced the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts, Grades K-12. By the 4th edition, many states had developed birth to age 5 standards, though few states called what they wanted their young citizens to know and be able to do standards. We introduce the Common Core State Standards and states’ birth to age 5 standards in Chapter 1. The remaining chapters, when appropriate, each feature the standards that fit with that chapter’s content. Our goal is for students to see the connections between learning expectations and instruction.
- We have greatly expanded our coverage of strategies for promoting language and literacy in infants and toddlers, both at home and in day care settings. In this edition, given the number of young children in home care and education settings, we have expanded the discussions of children’s learning environments to include
learning in home settings. A special focus in these discussions is the creation of inexpensive early literacy learning environments.

- At the request of reviewers, we also have extended the content from discussions of the teaching of early reading and writing to the teaching of beginning reading and writing.

- Since the publication of the 4th edition of this book, much has been written about how to best support children’s language and literacy development. Of course, we have revised the ideas presented in this book, so that the information shared is reflective of what is known about language and literacy development today. Many references were eliminated because they provided outdated information, and many new references were added. More than 30 percent of the references have been changed in this new edition.

- We provide descriptions of the increasing role of technology in language and literacy teaching and learning. Students learn about the digital approaches and resources that support language and literacy experiences and development.

- We also are grateful to the veteran teachers who describe how they provide their students with effective language arts instruction. This has been a feature of each of our previous editions. This edition includes several illustrations of how the teaching strategies we describe can be applied to specific situations and how real teachers deal with practical problems that arise in the course of daily life in the classroom.

- We have added a number of new pedagogical features, including:
  - Chapter Goals that outline the learning objectives for each chapter which are assessed through multiple choice assessments and application exercises;
  - Pause and Think About … that encourages students to reflect on the chapter content;
  - Link to Practice that enables students to apply key concepts in classrooms where they are doing observations and internships.

Enhanced Pearson eText

The Enhanced Pearson eText provides a rich, interactive learning environment designed to improve student mastery of content with the following multimedia features:

- Video Examples illustrate a teacher using one of the many instructional strategies described in the text. Seeing the strategy in action in a classroom with children helps to bring the print to life.

- Application Exercises challenge learners to use chapter content to reflect on teaching and learning in real classrooms. The questions in these exercises are usually constructed-response. Once learners provide their own answers to the questions, they receive feedback in the form of model answers written by experts.

- Self-Checks help assess how well learners have mastered the content. The self-checks are made up of self-grading multiple-choice items that provide instant feedback on whether questions are answered correctly or incorrectly.

Themes

Children are at the center of all good language and literacy teaching. This principle underlies the four themes that run throughout this book: blending natural and explicit instruction into a high-quality program, respect for diversity, instructionally linked assessment, and family involvement.
Our first theme acknowledges the two very different views on how to teach language and literacy to young children, the natural approach and the explicit instruction approach. We believe that both approaches to early literacy instruction have their advantages. The natural approach provides opportunities for children to learn about literacy on their own and with help from the teacher and peers. Learning can occur at the appropriate pace for each child and build on what he or she already knows. This approach provides children with rich opportunities to acquire oral language and to move through the developmental progressions in emergent reading and writing. The downside to this approach is that not all children are ready or able to take full advantage of these learning opportunities. These children have a tendency to “fall through the cracks” in programs that emphasize the natural approach only and make very little progress. Such children need to be explicitly taught vocabulary, phonological awareness, alphabet, and concepts of print before they can fully profit from the learning experiences in an emergent literacy program. The book describes how children acquire language and literacy knowledge in many different contexts, how teachers can design authentic classroom opportunities for using oral and written language, and how teachers can design developmentally appropriate ways to explicitly teach the core skills that have been found to be predictive of later reading achievement.

Our second theme is respect for diversity. Children’s personal experiences, both at home and at school, are important factors in learning. In our diverse society, children come to school with vastly different backgrounds, both in terms of life experiences and language. This diversity needs to be taken into account when designing instructional activities for children and in evaluating children’s responses to these activities. Illustrations of how teachers can work effectively with diverse learners can be found throughout this book. This new edition includes special features in several chapters that explain how to adapt instruction for English language learners and children with special needs. Every child comes to school with a wealth of information about how written and spoken language works in the real world. Teachers must discover what each student already knows to build on that student’s knowledge through appropriate classroom activities.

Because we recognize that assessment cannot be separated from good teaching, instructionally linked assessment is our third major theme. We introduce the principles of assessment guided instruction in Chapter 1. Chapter 9 focuses on assessment and describes strategies that teachers can use to understand children’s language and literacy knowledge in the context of specific learning and teaching events. Chapter 9 also describes how standardized tests can be used to document how well schools, and now individual teachers, are doing their jobs. This “accountability” function of assessment is becoming increasingly important in the current political climate, so it is crucial that teachers understand how to interpret the results of these standardized assessment instruments. So, assessment-guided instruction is our third theme. Find out what children know and can do—and plan instruction based on each child’s needs.

The fourth theme running through this edition is the importance of the family in young children’s language and literacy development. The family and the home environment shape children’s early language and literacy experiences—the sounds and words they hear, the storybooks read to them, the experiences they have with written language. Connecting home and school is critically important. In several chapters, we include descriptions of how early childhood teachers can connect with families and engage caregivers in their children’s school or center. The aims are twofold—to provide effective communication strategies to share information with and receive information from caregivers about the children, and to provide suggestions for what families might do to support and celebrate language and literacy learning in the home.
Acknowledgments

Many outstanding educators helped us write this book. In a series of new special features, Luisa Araújo and Myae Han describe how teachers can help English language learners become bilingual and biliterate. Laura Justice and Karen Burstein have written special features on meeting the needs of children with special needs. Karen Burstein also provides her insights into assessing young children. Thanks to Michelle Rhodes and Marilyn LaCount for sharing their parent and child activities which encourages language and early literacy. Sohyun Meacham provides readers with best practice recommendations for appropriate assessment of young children whose home language is not English, and Colleen Quinn shares information on a specific assessment strategy used in many early childhood programs. Like us, they sat before their computers for many days. Thanks, colleagues!

Several classroom teachers and professors shared their secrets, showing how theory and research link with quality classroom practice. We are grateful to Lisa Lemos, Cathy Coppol, Patty Gleason, Dawn Foley, Tiffany Bodemann, Marcia Euriech, and Diane Corley. From these teachers and others like them, we have seen how exciting language and literacy learning can be when teachers and children are engaged in purposeful language arts activities. From them and their students, we have learned much.

Several of our colleagues played a role in the construction of this book through their willingness to engage us in many conversations about children’s language and literacy learning. Never unwilling to hear our ideas and to share their own, colleagues like Susan B. Neuman, New York University; Jay Blanchard, Cory Hansen, and Nancy Perry at Arizona State University; and, Roberta Golinkoff, Chrystalla Mouza, Kim Wagner, and Sharon Walpole, University of Delaware, have greatly helped us frame our arguments. We would also like to thank the reviewers of this edition, Barbara G. McWethy, Mercer University and Mary Barbara Trube, Ohio University- Chillicothe, who provided valuable feedback. The students we have nurtured and taught, both young children and college students, also have influenced the development of our ideas. Their questions, their talk, their play, their responses, their enthusiasm—each one of them has taught us about the importance of the language arts in our lives. Their positive response to our ideas fueled our eagerness to share those ideas more broadly.

Finally, our families have helped us write this book. Our grandchildren and grandnieces and grandnephews are providing wonderful examples of their use and enjoyment of oral and written language. The stories of their journeys to being competent language users bring life to the research and theory discussed in our book. Don (Skip) Enz, Ron Vukelich, and Philip Roskos gave us time to write but also pulled us from our computers to experience antique shows, museums, trips, home repairs, life. And then, of course, there is our extended family—our parents, David and Dorothy Palm, Art and Emma Larson, Bill and Jeannine Fullerton, William and Arlene Schenk,—who provided our early reading, writing, speaking, and listening experiences and helped us know firsthand the joys of learning and teaching the language arts.

—C.V., B.E., K.A.R.