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* ACCEPTING JOHNNY & HIS LANGUAGE

(LANGUAGE FOR LIVING

and

LANGUAGE FOR LEARNING)

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"Pupils are individual human beings who have learnt language in the process of learning how to live the life of their communities: the whole process has taken place in the context of patterns of relationships, habits and values that make up that specifically human environment. If we are to make sense of the pupil's problems and needs when he comes to use the language he has learnt in the context of the school, then we must be very clear about the processes by which he has learnt it, and the human environment in which the learning has taken place." (Peter Doughty, from the introduction to *Language and Community*.)

JOHNNY COMES TO SCHOOL

Once upon a time a little boy called Johnny started school. He was very excited. His Mummy and Daddy had been telling him for what seemed a long time that he would soon go to school. At school he would learn to read and write and do sums. Johnny's Mummy bought him some new clothes - school clothes - and a little suitcase for his school lunch. At last the day arrived, and Mummy took Johnny to the school. Mummy talked to some big people and signed some papers. A nice lady came and talked to Johnny and Mummy. Then Mummy said it was time to go and she would see Johnny after school. The nice teacher lady took Johnny into a room with a lot of other children.

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Johnny had started school and it was all still a bit magical and mystical...and perhaps a little bit frightening.

How our tale of Johnny and his school career unfolds depends upon which little Johnny each of us has been visualising. Let us look at some of the variables that now encroach on our story. Johnny may be an only child in a middle class family with strong social and educational aspirations - or he may be the fifth child in an unskilled labourer's family, - or maybe his parents are migrants who maintain their mother tongue and culture within the home, - or his family may be Aboriginal or part Aboriginal, living in a town situation, - or his parents may live out of town and he is going to stay with Grandma while he goes to school, -or, - or, - or,...Maybe, and most likely in the Northern Territory, Johnny has been to Preschool; maybe he has experienced at least one child minding centre; maybe he has a Grandma and a Grandpa that he sees fairly regularly because they live in the same town; or perhaps 'Grans' are special old people that he goes to visit on the jet every one or two years. Johnny's Daddy might come home from work each day and be interested in Johnny and what he has been doing; or he might come home late at night; or maybe Johnny does not even have a Daddy. Maybe Johnny's Mummy and Daddy talk with him a lot and read him stories at night when he goes to bed or maybe they are both very busy working and do not have much time to talk with him, let alone read him stories; and maybe Johnny's parents do not read him stories because they do not know how to read.

We could extend this list of 'ors' and 'maybes' almost ad infinitum as each child - Johnny or Mary - is an individual, and a wide range of factors and experiences are combined in each young child who, one day, is confronted with the beginning of formal education, that is, schooling.

A significant part of Johnny's experience that he will bring with him to school is his language, and this may or may not be good foundation for succeeding in the school's language arts program, which will include not only the listening and speaking skills, some of which he has already developed, but also the introduction to, and development of, the literary or literacy skills of reading and writing.

JOHNNY'S LANGUAGE BACKGROUND

As a baby, Johnny is born into a small group that is part of a larger speech community. The size and membership of this group, usually a family, will vary according to its geographic location in the world and the basic culture of the larger community. The family

may be a nuclear family with some or no other children in it, or it may be an extended family with several generations living together. Contact with other members of the family, such as uncles, aunts and cousins, may be anything from close and frequent to distant and occasional, if at all. The number of other human beings outside the family with whom the infant is brought into contact at birth and with whom he establishes contact in his early years will vary. The pattern of relationships that his family and others have with each other and with him will also vary. However, the amount and kind of language that the daily working-out of these relationships generate will have far-reaching consequences for his language learning, for it is during these early years of life that the foundations of language are laid - and never again will the child be in so intimate and dependent a relationship with those from whom he is learning.

The process of learning language is essentially an interactive process between the innate capacity of the brain for language learning and the language of the child's environment, regardless of what that language or environment may be. The process appears to be universal, but what actually happens can only be deduced by observation. In some way, the child learns to pick out and discriminate between more and more of the elements of the language around him. These elements include the sounds, the rhythms, the intonation and, perhaps at a slightly later stage the structures of which the language is composed. In English, for example, there is a difference between 'cat' and 'cap'; between 'pin' and 'bin'; between 'cot' and 'coat'; between 'I scream' and 'ice-cream'; between 'Grade A' and 'grey day'; between 'Coming?' asked as a question and 'Coming' made as a statement. These are but a few examples which represent some of the kinds of distinctions, that the child learns, and also learns to make.

Progress in language learning is traditionally recognised as the ability to build sounds into words and words into sentences. "Is he talking yet?" is the question often asked of the parents of a young child. In the popular view, the ability to talk is equated with learning language, but there is evidence by observation to suggest that the child learns intonation patterns before he learns words. Thus the ability to produce the meaningful sounds of language is not necessarily an indication of how much language the child has learnt. There is a time lag between being able to recognise, and attach meaning to, words and sequences of words, and being able to use them. Thus, a child is able to ask a question by using one word and the appropriate intonation long before he can put together a sequence involving the kind of word order needed for 'Can I have a glass of milk?' or 'Do you want one of my lollies?' Similarly, he can respond

to questions, though not necessarily through speech. Language is not his only means of communication. He may use bodily gesture - pointing, shaking his head - or facial expression, because while he is learning language he is also learning the non-linguistic features of his environment which are also used for communication amongst his social group.

However, the child learns to string words together, two at a time, three at a time, until he can eventually formulate utterances that follow the grammatical patterns of the language spoken in his home. These patterns occur in every language and every variety of every language, because all languages must have a grammar or structure in order to function.

While the child is learning how the language functions he also learns the functions of the language. That is, while he is learning how to speak, he is also learning how the members of his community use speech to modify behaviour, to share or discover information and to define relationships. Professor Halliday has listed at least seven functions of language. These are:

1. *Instrumental* - Language for getting things done and for satisfying needs. The child probably learns this as the 'I want' kind of language.
2. *Regulatory* - Language for controlling the behaviour of others. The 'Do as I tell you' kind of language.
3. *Interactional* - Language for getting on with other people. The 'Give Mummy a kiss' or 'Will you play with me?' kind of language.
4. *Personal* - Language for expressing personality and individuality. The 'I'm going to be a jet pilot when I grow up' kind of language.
5. *Heuristic* - Language for finding things out and exploring the environment. The 'Why?' and 'What for?' and 'Tell me how...' kind of language.
6. *Imaginative* - Language for imaginative purposes. The 'Let's pretend' kind of language.
7. *Representational* - Language for conveying information. The 'I've got something to tell you' kind of language, whether that something is about persons, objects, processes, states, abstractions or relationships in the real world.

Halliday then goes on to say:

"This (the representational) is the only model of language that many adults have; and a very inadequate model it is, from the point of view of the child. There is no need to go so far as to suggest that the transmission of content is, for the child, the least important function of language; we have no way of evaluating the various functions relatively to one another. It is certainly not, however, one of the earliest to come into prominence; and it does not become a dominant function until a much later stage in the development towards maturity. Perhaps it never becomes in any real sense the dominant function; but it does, in later years, tend to become the dominant *model*. It is very easy for the adult, when he attempts to formulate his ideas about the nature of language, to be simply unaware of most of what language means to the child; this is not because he no longer uses language in the same variety of different functions (one or two may have atrophied, but not all), but because only one of these functions, in general, is the subject of conscious attention".

There is another view of language which Halliday mentions - the 'ritual' model of language, which, he says, may be derived from the interactional function, since it may serve to define or delimit a particular social group. This ritual function of language is the view internalised by those people for whom language is a means of showing how well one has been brought up. 'It downgrades language to the level of table manners.' (Halliday). This view of language as manners has no counterpart in the child's developing language experience since his understanding of what language is is derived from his own experience of language in situations of use.

Having looked at how a child acquires language and how he develops an understanding of its functions, let us turn to another important aspect of Johnny's language background. Because Johnny learns his language and his culture by becoming part of a family or group in an already established community his language will conform with the language of that group. He began the process at birth with the aid of a genetic potential for language learning and a capacity to order experience which enables him, through language, to interpret, evaluate and store his experiences. By the time Johnny is five or so years old, he has a good command of his language and he can use it in a wide variety of ways in his everyday life. It is this total capacity for using language in everyday life that is called 'language for living'. The name reflects the basic idea that

without language there can be no community, no shared activity or experience as we understand the terms.

The content of any individual child's language for living will be intimately bound to the ways of speaking of his particular family and social group, since the child can only make use of the ways of speaking that are available to him. Closely related to this, of course, is the family's or community's attitude towards children. If Johnny lives in a community where children have little scope for meeting new situations, and adults, including parents, have little time or inclination for talking with young children, then his repertoire of the different functions of language will be limited. Similarly, if a community view of 'children should be seen and not heard' or 'children should only speak when they are spoken to' is generally held, then Johnny's language for living will be markedly different from a child who has been encouraged to talk when he has something to say, to explain what he has been doing, to ask questions and express preferences.

However, whatever the child's background may be, his language for living will have proved adequate for his needs in his home community - simply because his language has been learnt in that community and it is particularly suited to the needs and interests of that community. Also, within that community some allowances will be made for any language difficulty he encounters - 'because he is only a child'.

What happens, or may happen, to Johnny when he moves out of his own family and community and becomes a member of another community for several hours each day?

WHAT THE SCHOOL EXPECTS OF JOHNNY'S LANGUAGE

"Every child knows how to use language as a member of a human community before he ever enters school. However, 'Schools are communities which exist to promote learning.' The school does in little what is done by the larger community outside. It uses language to create and transmit values. It uses language as a major means of conveying information of all kinds. For the majority of teachers, however, 'language' in school is only what is used for conveying information they call 'knowledge' backwards and forwards between teachers and pupils." - Geoffrey Thornton.

Thus, Johnny, at the age of five or thereabouts, and with the opportunities available to him, has learnt what he can do with

language. Now he will have to learn what the school wants him to do with language. For some children this will be easier than for others and some will encounter obstacles that do not seem to appear in the way of others.

'Language for learning' is a label we can use to refer to the ways of using language which are required by the activities and processes of formal education, and these may or may not be a part of the child's language for living. Language for learning also includes the ability to use written language as well as spoken language, and very few children come to school with anything other than a very rudimentary element of written language in their language for living. In fact, the vast majority of children have never been faced with a situation within their own family where they have been expected to come to terms with the writing system before they begin school. However, children will bring to school a variety of attitudes towards and expectations about written language, and these will be a reflection of their home and community values. These may vary along a spectrum from an illiterate, bookless community, which may thus generate either very high or very low expectations of book learnings, to a highly literate family where the child is continually seeing adults and older children reading and writing for a variety of reasons, including for the sheer pleasure of doing so. However, most children will probably have a concept of school as a place for 'learning to read and write and do sums' because this is the view of the school's function which they have derived from their parents and community.

Education - or schooling - causes change. Most teachers believe that they have a responsibility towards their pupils and that they have a specific role to play in the development of the pupils. They believe that they go into a classroom to do something, and this 'something' will cause change in the pupils - change in knowledge, change in attitudes, change in skills or change in behaviour. This view of the teacher's role may find its realisation in patterns of classroom activity that differ very widely from teacher to teacher. A random sample of teaching philosophy could elicit such statements as varied as these: 'They don't know a damn thing until I ram it down their throats.'; 'It's our job to turn them out able to do a good day's work.'; 'We must start from where the children are and lead them on from there.'; and 'I just want to create a good learning environment where each individual child can find himself.' However, teachers are committed to changing pupils. They want to move them from where they are now to a somewhere that they judge that the pupils must reach some time in the future. But, is this concept of 'changing' - so well understood by the teacher - also understood by

the pupil and his home community as one of the consequences of school? And, will this 'changing' cause stresses and conflicts between the child and his community, particularly when the 'changing' may involve the child's language, and, therefore, his view of and attitude towards his own family and community?

This may well be the situation if the child's language for living does not dovetail with the school's or teacher's concept of and attitude towards the language for learning. In almost all cases in Australia, the language for learning will be equated with Standard English, regardless of the child's home background and the language he brings with him to school. Standard English may be the mother tongue of some of the pupils in our schools, and others may acquire it, in addition to the language or dialect of their home, by the time they leave school.

For a definition of Standard English, we will turn to James Britton:

"When we speak of acceptable forms we probably have in the backs of our minds the variety of English that has been labelled 'Standard English'. It has been defined as 'that type of English used by educated people when carrying on their affairs publicly in writing and in speech.' (Cassidy 1966). What is important is to recognise that the term indicates in fact not one but many varieties of English. The Standard English used in Glasgow differs from that used in Edinburgh, that of Boston differs from that of San Francisco - and so on for Melbourne, London, Toronto and the rest. Over and above differences in vocabulary and - less prominently - in syntax, Standard English is spoken in a great variety of regional accents. Nevertheless, all these differences are of less importance than the common intelligibility and the common functions of Standard English - and this, of course, is seen at its greatest in the written forms."

Usually, the teaching of, and in, Standard English is justified on the grounds that it is the most socially valued variety and no child, including our Johnny, should be disadvantaged by not being able to speak and write this most desirable form. Thus, the teaching of Standard English is supported by many on the grounds of social expediency. However, there are other, equally good reasons why it is desirable to promote the teaching of Standard English. One is that what we know collectively about subjects such as history, literature and philosophy is largely recorded in Standard English. The expositions of science use Standard English, as do technical books such

as text books, car manuals and recipe books. Most magazines and newspapers are written in current Standard English. News broadcasts and information programs on radio and television make use of Standard English, though appropriate dialectal forms may be used in other programs, including drama. Anthony Burgess says of Standard English:

"Its virtue lies in its neutrality, its lack of purely local associations, its transparency, its suitability for intellectual discourses or dispassionate Government pronouncements."

However, having looked at some of the justifications for Standard English as the language for learning, let us return to Cassidy's definition: "that type of English used by educated people when carrying on their affairs publicly, in writing and in speech." That word publicly is very significant, for it allows that even educated people do not always speak or write in the same way. They have other ways of speaking and writing which belong to their private lives. Randolph Quirk says:

"Each of us works not just with one English but with many Englishes, and the wider the range of our life and the more various the contrasts we have, the wider and suppler must be our command over a wide range of English styles, each of which we must know how to use consistently."

The parson delivering the sermon from the pulpit on Sunday may also be a father, a husband, a son, a football fanatic, an amateur geologist, a classical music fan, a home gardener, as well as a religious instructor at schools, a counsellor to his parishioners, a member of a chess club. In each of these roles, some private and some public, some formal and some informal, he will use different varieties or registers of English, some regarded as 'Standard' and some not, merely because he is in different situations and interacting with different people who have different expectations of him and his language in that particular role. Not only will his vocabulary change to suit the situation but so also will his grammar, to some extent. Unless he is a pedant of the first order, he will not always speak or write what some people - and you can read their views in the 'Letters to the Editor' - believe is 'correct English'.

There is no such thing as 'correct' or 'incorrect' English. There is, however, language which is appropriate or inappropriate for the situation in which it is used. Johnny's father - or mother -

may swear like the proverbial trooper when he is with his mates or at home - but not before his employer, maiden aunts or visiting social workers, unless he is provoked and then he will probably ask them to excuse his straight talking. The notion of 'correct' English belongs in Halliday's 'ritual function' of language as good manners - but many adults, including teachers, hold firmly to this view, and even when you catch them out, they will argue hotly that they did not, indeed could not possibly say *THAT*.

These are the people who maintain, for instance, that 'It's me' is wrong, and 'It is I' is grammatically correct. They also still persist in maintaining distinctions between the use of 'shall' and 'will', and between 'may' and 'can', when the majority of educated speakers have accepted that these are no longer valid.

"Languages change, and we cannot stop them from changing nor, once we are reconciled to their changing, can we determine the modes in which they shall change. It is not possible to legislate for a language, to say what is right and what is wrong. If it is wrong to say 'you was', then the educated men of the eighteenth century were wrong. If sluts drop their aitches, then Queen Elizabeth I was a slut. What we regard as errors are often merely survivals from an earlier form of the language...They may not be in use in Standard English, but it is hard to see how they can be 'wrong'."

(Anthony Burgess).

However, there are many adults, including teachers, who are convinced that utterances such as 'I done it', 'We should of gone', and 'Let's you and me go for a swim,eh' are examples of bad English grammar. But James Britton says that:

"Grammar...must be seen for what it is; a system of relationships that make language possible: something therefore that is found in any and every dialect or variant of any language. As Henry Sweet put it in 1891, 'Whatever is in general use in a language is for that reason grammatically correct.' Thus the grammatical features that we may find unacceptable in a child's speech are not examples of 'bad grammar': they are grammatical features of a language we find unacceptable."

Andrew Wilkinson endorses Britton's view:

"It is time we stopped calling some usages correct (or good, bad, better), and looked at them for their appropriateness, for what situations they exist to serve."

Children do not learn the rules of grammar as they learn their language - but they do learn the grammar of that language. As Tony Delves says:

"Language is developed not by rules but by contact with language in situations that have meaning to the child."

It could be assumed that if children learnt language by rules, then the stages they pass through on their way to acquiring a mature adult form of the language would be partial versions of that adult language. However, this is not true. One of the most dramatic findings of studies in child language acquisition is that these stages show striking similarities across children, but equally striking deviations from the adult language. Children do not hear 'foots' and 'goed'. These words are over-generalisations of rules which each child is somehow extracting from the language he hears.

When Johnny starts school he will have a good command of his language, but he may not yet be using the full adult form of the language. Thus, he may not be using Standard English because of developmental rather than dialectal differences. He may have articulation problems, such as incomplete mastery of the 'r', 'e' and 'th' sounds. Some of the complex consonant clusters in English may still be causing him trouble. Johnny may have developmental problems with his grammatical system. Irregular noun and verb endings may still confuse him and he may still be regularising them occasionally: 'foots' for 'feet'. 'goed' for 'went', 'bringed' for 'brought' and 'womans' for 'women'. He may be failing to show reversal of subject and auxiliary in the WH-type questions - or even failing to use an auxiliary, e.g. 'What he did do?' or 'Where he went?' He may occasionally lapse into double negatives e.g. 'I don't like nobody'.

Unfortunately, many of these developmental forms of Standard English coincide with accepted usage in some non-standard dialectal forms. This has wrongly led people to assume that non-standard English speakers are simply retarded in their language development. However, if Johnny comes from a Standard English background, he will outgrow his developmental differences as his language conforms more and more to his family's language models. On the other hand, if Johnny has mastered a dialect form which has similarities to the

developmental stages of Standard English, he will not naturally out-grow them for they are part of the adult language, and, as such, will be continually reinforced in the home.

In either of these cases, when Johnny begins school, he will not be speaking what the school regards as Standard English, and therefore, his language for living and the language for learning may come into conflict.

HELPING JOHNNY DEVELOP HIS LANGUAGE

In order for Johnny to participate actively as a pupil in a school community, he has to learn to create the appropriate language for this new situation. The attitude of his teacher, and the school policy towards its language arts program, will either help or hinder him in his development of an appropriate language for learning. Hopefully, he will enter a school with an enlightened approach, where there is the opportunity for him to develop a relationship of mutual respect and concern with his teacher. This requires a sensitive understanding on the part of the teacher; an awareness of the emotional, cognitive and language difficulties of the child, and an ability to make the child feel accepted within the school community.

The school policy should show a recognition of the fact that there are different but co-existent language codes within the school. It should go even further than recognition to an acceptance that all language codes are equal, and not place value judgements on different varieties of language. The child needs his own variety of language to be able to live and function in his own family and society. Consequently, attempts by the school to destroy Johnny's language for living may destroy his orientation to his own society. The teacher must build - not destroy; not change the pupil's language but extend its range and power.

The aim of the school language arts program should not simply be 'communication', but the development of the communication skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing in a wide variety of styles and for a wide variety of functions. It should also include an appreciation of the use of an appropriate variety of language for a particular situation. Then, and only then, will the school, and the teacher, be able to accept and expand the language that Johnny brings to school as a part of him, instead of attempting to change his language in a way that he and his community may see as being destructive and degrading.

Without an enlightened, accepting approach towards Johnny's language, the school will place him at a disadvantage in learning

to read, if he is a non-standard English speaker. This will not be because of any inherent weakness in him, but because his language will not be taken into consideration when preparing reading materials. He may meet enormous obstacles because the printed words frequently occur in patterns which are foreign to him, or some of the words themselves, though common enough, may be foreign, because they are not commonly used in his home language. Another difficulty which may confront him is that writing has traditionally been linked with reading and, therefore, children have been expected to use written Standard English from the start. This means that Johnny may have to write down things in a way that he does not say them. Thus, at the crucial early stages of the development of reading and writing skills, the non-standard English speaking child is often expected to learn far more than his Standard speaking peer, unless the program is broad and flexible enough to allow Johnny to concentrate on the development of the skills, rather than the language associated with them.

How, then, can some of Johnny's problems be overcome in a practical, constructive way? Once the school or teacher recognises that the language arts program is causing conflict and additional difficulties for non-standard speaking children, a beginning has been made, and the scope of the current program can be broadened to accept and expand the communication skills, not only of the non-standard speakers, but of all the children.

The broad-based language arts program should begin when the child starts school, so that, even if he is not regularly using school language by the time he begins to read and write, he at least is familiar with it, understands it, and accepts it as a viable alternative to the language of his home.

Particularly in the early stages, the teacher should use daily activities and experiences to provide essential familiarity with the standard usage. Children need to hear a particular pattern frequently before they adopt it. Therefore, the language model that the teacher presents is very important. This can be reinforced by telling and reading stories, and by records and tapes of stories and poetry or rhymes that the children can listen to and later recite. However, it may be necessary, on occasions, to point out to a child or group some of the differences between home language and school language. This should never be done in such a way as to cause the child to feel embarrassed or shamed. Certainly, grammar should never be corrected at the expense of a flow of ideas. The child must feel that what he says is more important than how he says it, and gain security from that to be able to change his how as his language competence and flexibility develops.

Language habits change slowly, so even if the child registers the difference between his 'I seen it' and the teacher's 'I saw it', he may not adopt it immediately or use it consistently, because of the continuing influence of his home language. However, it will be easier for him to adopt a new pattern if he can practise hearing and speaking it often. Therefore, it may be necessary for the teacher to plan or devise special games and activities to promote and give practice in new language patterns. A simple example is that if Johnny and some of the class consistently say 'I got', then the teacher may concentrate on a series of activities which include the pattern 'I've got' - maybe with a slight stress on the 'I've' and occasionally using the full form 'I have (got)' as preparation for written language.

Another practical way of preparing Johnny for reading is for the teacher to read to the class or group. Just as written language is different from spoken language, so the art of listening to someone reading is different from listening to someone talking to you.

As well as providing Johnny with plenty of opportunities of listening to Standard usage and practising it, the broad-based language arts program should also be making Johnny aware of when different forms of language are appropriate. Here, it is just as important for the standard speaking child to recognise that other forms of language are valid in certain situations, so that he does not come to feel that his variety of language is the only acceptable form.

A valuable activity which permits the pupils to use many different varieties of language is in unscripted role-playing, where the child is expected to speak like the person he is portraying, whether that be a king, a gangster, a doctor or a garage mechanic. In effect, this recognises a natural ability of most children to become totally involved in the characterisation of a role. Have you ever watched a child playing the role of a favourite T.V. character with his mates? With older children this activity can be followed up by discussion about how appropriately the role was played, particularly with regard to how the audience thought that that character should have spoken. A word of caution, though: the discussion should be about the *role* and not the *child*, and any adverse criticism should be given in a constructive manner.

Opportunities for Johnny to become aware of different types of language for different purposes and situations should not be restricted to the oral language forms. They should also be available in reading and writing situations. Books that contain dialogue between characters in different situations and from different social backgrounds and language styles should be included in the over-all

reading program. Some of the 'New Look' readers such as 'Kidsbooks' from Pergamon Press and 'Reading Rigby' may be used to supplement or replace existing reading schemes within the school.

Comic strips with balloons which allow the child to write in or have written in for him - the appropriate kind of speech for the characters may also be valuable. In a sense, this is an extension of the young child telling the teacher a story about his drawing or painting and the teacher recording it for him. In both these types of activities, a standard written version may also be introduced, either by the child or the teacher. However, acceptance of the child's original version is important. For instance, if Johnny dictates to the teacher 'Mummy buyed me some shoes', the teacher should record this as Johnny's story, but may also write 'Johnny's mummy bought him some new shoes'. The teacher's version then does not deny or denigrate Johnny's story but adds to it in a way that makes it more available for other people to look at his work and see the acceptance of both forms.

These are but a few suggestions for broadening the scope of the language arts program so that it can cater for the development of communication skills of all the children within the school. For its implementation to be successful, the initial change must come from the school and the teachers with a realisation that every child brings to school a perfectly valid form of language. It is valid because it is the language of his home and social group and it enables him to function effectively as a member of that group. To place a value judgement on his language, which is a part of his birthright, is to judge Johnny and his family. Because of dialectal or developmental differences, the child's language may differ from the language required of him in the various learning situations in the school. However, this does not give the school the right to label him or his language as being deprived, restricted, or disadvantaged. These are merely value-laden middle-class labels which serve no constructive purpose.

When a child's language for living differs from the school's language for learning, it is negative and destructive to try to make the child conform to the school's language. A positive, constructive approach is required, and this begins with accepting the child's language and expanding it by offering him alternatives which he may adopt as being more appropriate for the school situation. As well as developing the skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing, Johnny and his standard English speaking friends should also learn that language is a powerful and flexible means of communication, and

that much of its power lies in the ability to be able to use the appropriate variety or register of language to suit the appropriate purpose or situation.

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