

## Chapter 6

### **Influential factors in co-constructive decision-making:**

#### **Teacher reflections and researcher interpretations**

*“In the learning-centered model, expertise is explicitly and continuously shared with the student as teacher and student engage together in meaningful and productive shared activities.”*

(Wilhelm, 2001, p.9).

#### **Introduction**

How do co-construction processes influence outcomes?

Believing that co-construction facilitates improved student outcomes is not enough. Teachers and researchers need to demonstrate, see, experience and understand the conversion of co-construction theory to classroom practice. Unless participants “accept” that co-construction processes translate theories of child language development, early childhood education and student data to classroom practice, co-construction will remain a plausible developing theory. Here, participants’ reflections and interpretations clearly support co-construction as an effective means of accommodating variation and supporting change in teachers’ personal constructs, pedagogy and their self-perceptions. Teachers, as active learners, influence their personal outcomes.

In this study, I demonstrate that most teachers support co-construction as an acceptable, appropriate and effective way to engage in changing their thinking and pedagogy. Teachers who contribute to and implement co-constructed classroom language practices for students at educational risk are empowered by growth in their confidence and expertise. Consultancy and collaboration are alternative support services for classroom teachers seeking to support the language development of students at educational risk. In this chapter Vygotskian thinking and teachers’ data

are brought together to argue that co-construction compares well to consultancy and collaboration as potential means for effecting change in teacher thinking and practice.

I acknowledge that consultancy, collaboration and co-construction can all improve students' language learning outcomes. I report on the advantages of co-constructed learning and the positive influence of the teachers' "voice" as an important principle of co-construction. Each participant has a voice that is acknowledged and valued as making a difference to the negotiation of thought and practice. Preferences, ideas, concerns and evaluations of both the content and processes of co-construction are expressed as teacher voice.

Throughout this study, teacher voice is used as a tool for monitoring continuous learning, respecting current constructs, defining prior beliefs, experiences and practices and interacting with peers, researchers or expert service providers. Sometimes, teacher voice is a collective term for the opinions of teacher participants in this study. Elsewhere individual participant teachers reflect on how their co-constructive experiences influenced their teaching and learning outcomes.

Co-constructive processes for building and translating teachers' understandings about students at educational risk to effective pedagogy, present a new contribution to early childhood education and the management of students at educational risk. Researchers and educators acknowledge that "high quality teaching is most important in children's literacy learning" and conclude that "investment in long-term professional development for teachers working with students who have learning difficulties" is of "the utmost importance" (Rohl & Rivalland, 2002, p. 37). Co-construction is a way of personalizing effective professional development in classrooms.

### **Teachers as learners**

Teachers as learners have stylistic preferences for learning just as I, also a learner, prefer particular interactive processes. In this study, data analysis shows how teacher-researcher learning interactions were modified as participants became

attuned to the personal constructs, preferred learning styles and expected outcomes of their co-constructive partner/s. Data from the fourth and final action research cycle substantiate the extent to which teachers negotiated and manipulated their personal constructs of early childhood language development and educational risk during this project. Emphasis is given to teachers' reflections on factors that provoked changes to existing classroom practices or prompted the development of new classroom strategies. The elicitation of teacher voice throughout the project is shown to influence the maintenance, repair or elaboration of co-construction processes. Teacher voice is the essential monitoring tool during co-construction processes.

The interactive nature of co-construction allows the teacher voice to be developed and to function like a metacognitive gauge, used by all participants to shape further co-construction. In Wilhelm's (2001) terms, co-construction could be described as a two-sided, learning-centered process during which "expertise is explicitly and continuously shared (as participants) engage together in meaningful and productive shared activities" (p.9). *Interactive learning* is used as an abbreviation for two-way, learning-centered processes throughout this text. Interactive learning is a feature of co-constructed planning and classroom practice.

Since in this study (and as a principle of education) teachers and researchers are both learners *and* teachers, I have modified Wilhelm's (2001) terminology to apply his Vygotskian perspective to co-constructed adult learning. Where Wilhelm (2001) critiques teacher-centered models as information rather than process focused, I refer to "information centered learning" rather than teacher-centered learning. Where Wilhelm is concerned that student-centered models "assume that much learning occurs naturally" (p. 9), albeit in a supported learning environment, I refer to "learner-centered learning" rather than student-centered learning. Both information and learner-centered learning can be limited by their one-way initiatives. By contrast, "interactive learning" engages participants in two-way learning-centered processes.

Expert information given to teachers by consultants is a form of information-centered learning for adults. It is one-sided. Adult collaborative learning implies that teachers can initiate and shape their learning, supported by others, like students' in learning-centered classrooms. In reality collaborative learning between classroom teachers

and visiting service providers (often regarded as experts in their field) has various outcomes. Unlike Tripp's (1993) recommendations for establishing teacher-researcher partnerships, collaborative processes can be limited by the reduced motivation, ability and confidence of teachers to share their strengths and needs with experts (CBRD14/8/00).

Both consultancy and collaboration processes could elicit teacher voice. But neither model relies on teacher voice to check how the information given or requested sits with the personal constructs and prior experiences of both participants. Unlike co-construction, neither consultancy nor collaboration require classroom practice to test conversion of theory to practice or to reflect on the effectiveness of planning. Bennett and Rolheiser (2001) remind teacher educators of the effectiveness of teachers' interactive and sustained learning, in classrooms. As with co-construction, effective classroom teachers are best supported by other active and creative learners who respond to classroom complexity.

### **Co-construction: data for research question three**

Previous data analysis confirmed that co-construction doesn't "just happen". It requires that participants' needs, preferred content, processes and intended outcomes be negotiated. Co-construction relies on a two-way information exchange and a focus to reciprocal learning. Participants' learning is based on common constructs, negotiated planning and actual classroom practice. The third research question asked, *What are the implications of the co-construction of classroom language development plans for effecting transitions in teacher thought and pedagogy?* Co-construction is proposed as a way for participants to learn (rather than be told) about classroom language planning, selection, implementation and outcomes.

Links between teacher confidence, expertise and the co-construction of classroom language development practices remained unclear until Term Four data was analysed and interpreted. As teachers reflected and reported on outcomes of their participation in this study, a pattern emerged. Teachers' self-confidence (Analytical Statement 6, Chapter 4) and teachers' perceptions of themselves as having developed new language expertise (Analytical Statement 7, Chapter 4) increased, as they reflected

on their learning and when peers acknowledged their expertise. Further teacher stories confirm how co-construction shaped the confident selection and implementation of classroom language development practices.

During the fourth action research cycle teachers were particularly encouraged to reflect and report on their perceived increments in language development expertise and their level of confidence to use this expertise. Thus, research data from action research cycles two, three and four are used to confirm Analytical Statements 8 – 13 (Chapter 5). However, teacher and researcher interpretations are more appropriately reported as continuing teacher stories than as a statement-by-statement report. The continuation of teacher stories confirms how different the co-construction experience was for Jacqui, Penny, Toni and Maree. This selection of these teacher stories indicates how and why each teacher's voice and each interactive partnership determined different co-constructive outcomes.

Generally, co-constructive processes effect change in thought and pedagogy. Data confirm that all participant teachers reported some increments in language development expertise and related confidence (SR4/9/00). All identified areas for further development (Evaluation 21/11/00). However, specific outcomes of co-constructed change are determined by participants' constructs, emotions, reciprocal input (voice), self-concept and engagement with interactive learning in their classroom contexts.

At the beginning of this study, I had not expected to examine teacher confidence and perceived expertise as elements of change in teacher thinking and pedagogy. However, eliciting teacher voice and tapping into teachers' self-concepts became part of the interactive process of co-construction. Teacher reflection data from Term Four is a powerful means of confirming and amending my interpretations of teacher self-judgements and confirming positive outcomes from the co-construction of language development practices. The Staff Review Workshop (for data triangulation on 4/9/00), the staff professional development and LDP evaluation session, final teacher interviews, outcome summaries (presented 14/11/00; 21/11/00 & 24/11/00) and my Research Diary all document teachers' levels of confidence, competence and expertise as outcomes of the Language development Project.

## Researchers and teacher stories

Teacher voice changes the researcher's role in collecting teacher stories. Rather than simply reporting teacher practice or assuming teacher thinking, the co-constructive researcher functions as an interpreter of teacher thinking, making and checking links to classroom practice. Furthermore, the researcher's participation in the story provides a first-person story-teller role. As interpreter, participant and reciprocal learner co-constructive researchers use data analysis to inform theory and practice. Interaction between teachers and researchers provides for constant verification of story events, story telling, interpretation and generalizations.

Tripp (1993) believes that material from teachers' practical experiences can inform theory. Radnor (2002) states of interpretive research, "It is the researcher's responsibility to engage in transactions with the participants in their own natural setting" (p. 32). Carr and Kemmis (1986) assert,

the only legitimate task for any educational research to pursue is to develop theories of educational practice that are rooted in the concrete educational experiences and situations of practitioners and that attempt to confront and resolve the educational problems to which these experiences and situations give rise (p. 118).

The importance of teacher stories in this study became clear as the content and processes of language development planning were specified and co-constructed by teacher-researcher pairs. Story directions were determined as participants interacted and redirected one another's thinking and practices about classroom language development. Each story involved many characters (teacher, researcher, students and parents). The continuous elicitation of teacher voice clarified how each teacher regarded our co-construction of classroom language plans. Individual teachers reviewed and reported factors influencing changes in *their* thinking and practice.

A grounded theory approach involves teachers "in the process of theorizing" (Tripp, 1993, p. 148). Tripp discusses improving teacher judgement of "critical incidents... through the construction, documentation and theorization" of them (ibid). Although

I did not refer to our selection of constructs or classroom practice as critical incidents, I shared Tripp's view that teachers had to have "control" over the extent of change to their classroom practice, in accord with their personal constructs. My intent in having teachers reflect and report on their experiences of co-construction was to involve them in the process of generalizing. Like Tripp, I sought to work from teachers' understandings "deeply contextualised in the culture of classrooms and the actions and values of teachers" (p. 152). My role was to document, data analyse, interpret and tell unfolding stories. Participants were encouraged to critique and verify our learning. In this way the teachers' voice, interactive reflections and interpretations of language planning, influenced co-construction. The stories of Jacqui, Penny, Toni and Maree show the differentiation of these processes for each teacher.

### **Teacher voice**

The interactive process of co-construction relied on the exchange of teacher and researcher voices. Interaction could not be occasional or limited to the sharing of classroom time and teacher interviews. Rather, the continuous and reciprocal identification of strengths and needs in thinking about classroom practice became a scaffold for the co-construction of pedagogy.

One teacher reflected how the bringing together of prior knowledge, beliefs, experience and practice distinguished co-construction from the "creation" of language development plans. This teacher said, "the parts are already there and you're building something together... 'creation' would be new thought, new parts. The parts are already there. You use the parts in the right way. All the theory is already there" (CBRD23/1/03). This teacher's use of the "right way" was discussed. We clarified that 'right' in this context meant an appropriate and acceptable practice for the given context. It does not imply a single correct response.

An essential part of the co-constructive process was the intentional use of each teacher's personal lens of prior belief, experience and practice. Personal perspectives determined the selection, knowledge, innovation, development and review of links to planned change. Participants' voices needed to be ever-present to provoke, consider,

suggest, select, reject or decide to implement appropriate language development practices. Teacher voice described change in teachers' thinking and practice. By definition, the co-construction of language development plans required that my voice was also heard, that all participants were both learners and teachers. Teacher voice facilitated my interpretation of teachers' reflections on our experiences.

During the four school terms of this project, teacher voice provided a way of knowing how individual teachers construed issues in our planning and whether our co-constructed classroom practice was acceptable and appropriate to them. Teachers' input to co-constructed practices and their responses to my input also provided a way of monitoring teachers' awareness of, and interest in, current oral and written language pedagogy (CBRD30/11/00; CBRD6/12/00; CBRD7/12/00, CBRD11/12/00). New or alternative classroom practices needed to be acceptable for all participants. Teachers will reject recommended practice, when it is appropriate to the classroom in question but not acceptable to their current constructs (T2TDI290).

I argue that co-construction can challenge, extend and develop one's zone of actual development (ZAD) when the co-constructive partner provides acceptable support and encouragement. The zone of actual development is defined by Wilhelm (2001) as what one can do alone, without any kind of assistance. In this study, as in other classrooms, teachers working in their ZAD may or may not accommodate the strengths and needs of students at risk in their classrooms. Co-constructive partners acknowledge each participant's zone of actual development and aim to work within a shared zone of proximal development (ZPD). Each person's zone of proximal development is recognized by tasks they can do with a more expert person's help. When one is given a task s/he cannot do, there is teaching opportunity, the chance to support the learner through his/her zone of proximal development to a new zone of actual development (Wilhelm, 2001). It follows that the teacher's voice was essential when deciding what could be achieved in this Language Development Project.



## **Metacognitive processes and interactive learning**

Wilhelm's (2001) premise for interactive learning is applied to co-constructive contexts, "The most important thing we can teach (each other) is how to learn" (p. 6). Wilhelm confirms the importance of learners "actively using procedures to construct understanding" (ibid). Co-construction provides an active process by which adults interact with, and learn from, one another. Wilhelm specifies how speech forms work as metacognitive tools for learning. He links Vygotsky's concept of cognitive learning zones to social, private and inner speech to show how each "speech form" assists the transition from actual, to proximal, to new actual zones of development. In this study, participants were both teachers and learners, co-constructing their learning and teaching others.

Attention to social, private and inner speech in interactive learning is another way to interpret co-constructive processes. Wilhelm (2001) regards social speech as a means of sharing discussion about the processes of learning, as well as, a tool for sharing "language and activity" (p. 11). Social speech was used regularly to co-construct the thinking and practice for language development plans in this study. Social speech can be recognized in the template of co-construction used to interpret teachers' experiences. Social speech was used to:

- (a) Consider alternative theories of language-based educational risk and language teaching-learning strategies,
- (b) relate alternative theories and strategies about language teaching –learning to participants' prior experiences and beliefs,
- (c) reconstruct understandings for future teaching-learning possibilities,
- (d) negotiate aspects of alternative thinking /practice specific to language-based educational risk, acceptable and appropriate for particular classrooms, and to
- (e) co-construct theory and practice specific to language-based educational risk as necessary.

Social speech acts as a scaffold for participants to move from their individual zones of actual development towards a zone of proximal development.

Private speech is described as the language of self-control (Wilhelm, 2001, p. 11). It is a means of self-cueing or decision-making, linked to transitions from supported learning (in the ZPD) towards independent teaching or learning. Wilhelm uses examples from literacy teaching to illustrate how children become able to select and use strategies previously defined, explained, modelled and reinforced. In doing so the learner uses language for self-teaching, to make new or tacit understandings explicit. Private speech is included in the co-construction template when teachers:

- (a) Reflect on the adequacy of their personal theories about language-based educational risk for current students,
- (b) reflect on their repertoire of language teaching and learning strategies with which to respond to perceived educational risk in their students, and
- (c) identify gaps in their current repertoire of oral and written language teaching-learning strategies for students they teach.

The importance of private speech also distinguishes co-construction from collaboration or consultancy. Private speech is used to reflect on, and select, constructs and prior learning (personal beliefs, experience and practice) as contributions to co-construction. Whereas social speech can assist the recognition and selection of constructs and practice, the self-teaching function of private speech defines individuals' contributions to co-construction. Private speech equips participants to work within a *shared* zone of proximal development as both teachers and learners. This *is* co-construction.

The third form of speech discussed in Wilhelm's (2001) Vygotskian model is inner speech. It is described as a type of self-dialogue "that is the essence of conscious mental activity" like an "inner verbal thought" or self-regulation (p. 11). Wilhelm's learners used inner speech to transform new explicit understandings to new zones of actual development. In this study teachers developed new constructs of early childhood development and used new classroom practices independently. Their new and unique ways of seeing language-based educational risk and language development practices through personal belief, experience and practice were made conscious by inner speech.

Teachers' inner speech was interpreted through their actions. They chose to:

- (a) accept, reject or ignore alternative thinking or practices specific to language-based educational risk in their early childhood classrooms, and
- (b) select and implement explicit language development practices for students in their early childhood class (not only those at educational risk).

In the stories that follow, teachers' inner speech is heard as personal reflections as they reviewed, selected and interpreted constructs of oral and written language development for future use. Participants understood how they had co-constructed change through zones of actual, proximal and new actual development. Participants could access new zones of actual development as teachers and learners.

This metacognitive awareness of change was a common outcome of co-construction. Next, reflections from Jacqui, Penny, Toni and Maree, reinforce the influence of participant voice and interactive learning on the effective co-construction of classroom language development practices. Despite the diversity of needs and intended outcomes of teacher-researcher pairs, teacher voice and interactive learning processes are shown to be influential factors throughout this study.

### **Jacqui's story**

Jacqui's story so far has included her identification of the need for more specific language assessment skill and greater confidence to identify and manage children at educational risk in her classroom. Given this level of awareness of her own needs, Jacqui may have been suited to a learner-centered, teacher support model. Her story is continued to explain her engagement in co-construction and to show how she reviewed her constructs of educational risk with several others. Jacqui initiated discussions with school staff about contentious issues arising in the project year (CBRD4/5/00). She began to act as an agent of change for, and with, her peers. I had not predicted that Jacqui would embrace this proactive role in the study year.

One example of Jacqui's commitment to addressing teachers' thinking and practice relates to student placement. Jacqui objected to being asked, in semester one, to nominate students for retention at Kindergarten level into the next school year (CBRD4/5/00). She was concerned that semester one was too early in the school year

to make these judgements (ibid). She perceived that teachers' constructs of benchmarking and outcomes-focused education varied widely. Jacqui sought to review her constructs of outcomes-focused education and year placement for students at risk with others and me. She and I agreed that although most teachers held a construct of "typical attainment" for each school year level, benchmarks were recommended minimal standards for entering a subsequent year level. Benchmarks did not equate to "cut-offs for (students) to pass or fail each year" (CBRD4/5/00). Instead we expected to address students' strengths and needs via individual education plans and a differentiated curriculum.

This issue of year placement for students at educational risk arose several times during the research year. Jacqui and I were confident and able to make language planning decisions independently but chose to co-construct a view of students at educational risk for students we shared. This view included constructs of explicit language teaching (Rohl & Rivalland, 1999) towards specified educational outcomes, for students with language-based educational risk. Our co-construction clarified classroom language planning and our respective tasks and responsibilities. Together we achieved language outcomes that we were unlikely to have achieved alone (CBRD8/5/00).

Jacqui influenced the co-constructive process in several other ways. For example, she recommended changing the schedule of explicit language development activities for her students at educational risk. Despite her initial requests for in-class language development support, Jacqui requested that students were grouped for language development tasks outside her whole class teaching time. This rescheduling allowed Jacqui to become more actively involved in explicit language development practices for her students at risk. She discussed how classroom factors such as noise and visual distractions impacted on the learning of different children in different ways (CBRD14/8/00, CBRD15/8/00). Her rescheduling of language development time was to enhance her own learning and, therefore, the students' learning outcomes.

Jacqui made requests, contributed initiatives and reviewed her needs during this study. She frequently contributed her personal voice to this project, expecting to interact with teaching peers, including me (CBRD16/5/00). She requested language

planning meetings as needed and reported concerns, achievements and areas for further co-construction (CBRD2/11/00). Jacqui's personal constructs initially focused her co-constructed planning to students at educational risk in her classroom but she also expected to apply co-constructed thinking and practice to whole-class language teaching (CBRD20/11/00). She discussed the idea of repeating small group language activities during whole class mat sessions (CBRD2/11/00) and applying speech-language strategies, planned for individual children, to other children with similar needs (CBRD7/11/00). At the end of the project year Jacqui identified her enhanced understanding of oral language components in educational risk as one outcome of co-constructed language planning. She included new and explicit language teaching and learning strategies into her whole class program and was planning for 2001 on the basis of her changed thinking and practices during 2000 (CBRD20/11/00).

Jacqui's story is significant from another perspective. It shows her insights into teachers' learning. She stressed the need for teachers to become familiar with specific language teaching strategies so that they became part of the teacher's automatic repertoire. She reflected on written summaries of strategies and activities that we had planned and used together. Jacqui filed and referred to the planning and activity notes that summarized our classroom language development program during the year. She referred to particular strategies for eliciting speech sound production in young children (TKJDI119-120) as having been helpful for all of her students. She focused on teachers' responsibility for their own professional development. "The teacher just needs to take it on board to learn" what they need to know (TKJDI129).

Each participating teacher was interviewed in Term Four 2000. The questions used as a basis for the informal interviews are given in the latter part of Appendix F. The data item (DI) numbers for final interviews continue on from the data item numbers used in initial interviews. For example, Jacqui's initial interview is coded as TKJDI1-91. Her final interview is coded as TKJDI92-129.

During her final project review interview Jacqui chose to discuss her parent intake survey for the following school year. She talked about the specific student data we had collected during the project year and suggested modifying the survey questions

so that all of the information was meaningful to her (TKJDI92-94). We went on to discuss the parents' positive perceptions of Jacqui's involvement in the Language Development Project and their varied responses to the OWLD summaries shared each school term. We exchanged parent feedback about our Language Development Project and agreed, "The parents have said they've learnt to understand the kids much more through the informal discussion... and by actually working together" than from written reports (TKJD113). Jacqui commented on the value of both written information and shared activities (TKJDI114-116). Her opinion was that the combination of written reports and parent involvement in planned language development sessions allowed parents to share responsibility for the language learning outcomes of students at educational risk.

Teacher interviews were used to probe teacher opinions on the value of co-constructive processes, as well as, changes to their thinking and practice about early childhood language development. Processes for facilitating change in teacher (and researcher) thinking and practice were not referred to as co-construction during the project. However, a *Research Diary* entry from Term Four indicates an attempt to name the kind of "partnership" that had developed through shared planning with teachers. (CBRD31/10/00).

Teachers had opportunities to provide written feedback on the Language Development Project each school term, during individual interviews, during the Staff Review Workshop (data triangulation session) and at a Professional Development-Evaluation workshop in Term Four. The latter was a formal opportunity for teachers to evaluate the Language Development Project. Informal reviews of the LDP occurred during weekly language planning sessions with individual teachers.

The Staff Review Workshop, facilitated by two university staff members (SR4/9/00) probed teacher thinking and practice, as well as, the content and processes of the Language Development Project. All participants were told I would access the audiotapes and reviewer notes. Data collected by the visiting researchers matched that elicited at the evaluation workshop in Term Four (E21/11/00). All teachers had verified their selection and implementation of classroom language development strategies during the course of the project, at the Staff Review Workshop and at the

Evaluation Workshop. In this way my interpretations of teacher data were triangulated.

At the Evaluation Workshop, participant teachers were asked also, to report on whether or not they felt able to select and implement appropriate language development practices for students at risk in future early childhood classes. I was interested in gaining further insights into teachers' levels of self-confidence and perceived expertise beyond the term of this project. This written review probed teacher's perceptions of durable changes to their classroom practice as an outcome of the Language Development Project.

Project data illustrate the diverse ways that participants contributed to interactive learning during the year. Teacher stories show the various ways that teacher voice was elicited and used to inform further co-constructive planning. In her review, Jacqui gave three examples of interactive learning that she valued. These were:

1. Observing and participating in small group work.
2. Shared mat sessions, during which Jacqui and I planned and taught explicit speech-language skills and tasks.
3. Notes and discussions. (TKJE21/11/00).

At the end of the research year Jacqui's context-specific, thick descriptive story responded to each research question. Jacqui's personal constructs (based on prior beliefs, experiences and practices) determined her pedagogy. Her constructs and classroom practice were further shaped by co-constructive language development practice. Furthermore, Jacqui's attention to teachers' responsibility for their own learning and her deliberate interaction with contentious issues, were noted. Jacqui's reflections implied that teachers who confidently contribute a voice to co-construction, and who expect to interact with others to clarify teacher thinking and develop practice, may be agents for co-constructing change within their schools. Jacqui had begun that process.

## **Penny's story**

By contrast, Penny began the research year with a reputation as a confident and proactive teacher (T2TDI213). She spontaneously voiced her expectations, input and responses to the co-constructive process, believing that she could match her needs as a learner to the demands of her classroom. Penny clearly expected learning to be interactive. She and I interpreted one another's strengths, needs and opinions relatively effortlessly. We knew from our previous working relationship that we were compatible as co-constructive partners. In addition, Penny understood my task to facilitate change in teacher thinking and pedagogy (CBRDWeek4, Term4). In this sequel to her story, she reflects on ways to consolidate co-construction processes. Penny represents teachers who contribute to effective co-constructed partnerships.

In many ways, the co-constructive partnership Penny and I developed, matched Tripp's (1993) model of collaborative teacher-researcher partnerships. Tripp posits that the "value for both parties should be mutual and symmetrical" but that the particular contributions and outcomes from shared projects need not be identical. Indeed, he states, "it is the very difference between contributions and expectations that make collaboration so strong methodologically" (p. 149). He recognizes benefits in teachers making "their own choices (as) active researchers and self-reflective interpreters of their own practice and situation" (p. 151).

Tripp's (1993) comments also clarify "many different forms of collaboration" (p. 148). I acknowledge the potential of collaborative working relationships but am aware that collaboration with experts is often a misnomer for their direction of teachers' practice in schools. Tripp's clarification of collaboration has much in common with co-construction processes. (See his five points of agreement for *researching* collaboratively in Chapter 5, p. 158.) As in the current study, Tripp identifies teacher gains "in the form of improved practices and understanding of their teaching, while the researcher gains data for theorizing schooling and teacher's practical knowledge" (p. 151).

Penny acknowledged her improved practice and understanding as outcomes of this study. Her written feedback confirmed her confidence to independently select and



implement language development strategies for her students in the future. She reported feeling able to select appropriate ideas and to “identify problems and/or questionable problems” (T1PE21/11/00). Penny also reported her intent to implement language development strategies with other children (not at risk) because she could “see the benefits” (ibid). Penny assisted my theorizing about co-construction as a process for effecting change in teachers’ practical knowledge and for school-based teacher support systems (T1P7/12/00). She specified two features as “most useful” in this study:

1. The support and assistance.
2. “The great information and the way it was presented” for classroom use (T1PE21/11/00).

Penny influenced our partnership by making clear requests, clarifying and monitoring my involvement in her classroom planning and practice through the project year. Indeed she showed me “where she wanted to take me”.

During school Term Three, Penny’s growing expertise and confidence with co-constructed language development carried over to her relationship with the school support teacher, Karen. At this time, Penny and I were co-constructing whole class, small group and some individual language development goals and activities. Although we taught together we did not necessarily teach in the same way (CBRD22/8/00). We recognized that individual teachers use similar strategies for different reasons with different outcomes, and that our reflections on shared teaching could be influenced by our personal constructs. Together, teachers Penny and Suze requested that the support teacher provide in-class support for their children at risk, related to their classroom teaching program, rather than withdraw students for language support.

Penny explained that attempts to set times for classroom-based support and to specify expectations for individual students with the support teacher, had been unsuccessful (T1PDI251). She expressed frustration that the support teacher did not meet her expectations to select and implement appropriate language development strategies or suggest classroom strategies for students with language-based educational risk (ibid). Later in the study year Penny shared ideas for improving her partnership with the support teacher. They included setting time to better understand

one another, to develop a shared view of the support program for students at educational risk, to negotiate their roles, to exchange information about how each of them worked with students at risk, and to program together (T1PDI250-258). Reflecting on teacher partnerships, Penny added that knowing the other teacher and his/her prior specialist experiences could be helpful (T1PDI259). Penny valued personal constructs, teacher voice, interactive learning and co-constructive processes.

By the end of the year Penny was concerned about supporting the teacher who would replace her. She specified her intent to offer support to others, rather than prescribe thought and practice. She reflected on her experience as a graduate teacher who needed “something to work from” (T1PDI220). Penny valued our documentation of classroom practice, referring to multiple data sources to develop language plans. For example, she used the *Literacy Net* (1999) class profile sheet and individual student profiles. She also read, filed and referred back to Language Development Project classroom records we used to document our co-teaching. Penny acknowledged the usefulness of information from specialist sources (T1PDI228-229) to develop individual education plans (IEPs) for students at risk.

Penny contributed her thoughts, experiences and recommendations enthusiastically to our review of the co-construction of language development plans (T1PE21/11/00). We shared alternative views, understood the benefit of different constructs and voiced our preferences for next stage co-planning. I asked Penny how she thought teachers who planned only whole class language programs might be supported to differentiate individuals’ language-learning goals. Penny identified several practical points. Each highlights the importance of developing the teacher’s thinking within the classroom context using co-construction processes (T1PDI139-242). A summary of Penny’s suggestions follows.

1. Respond to a teacher’s identification of weak students by examining work samples together.
2. Agree on a focus. For example, “you’re not worrying about how neat it is, you’re worrying about (whether the child) can spell, or... sound out.”
3. Explain an assessment to the teacher. For example a phonological awareness assessment or “something that pinpoints language problems.”
4. Give the teacher the opportunity to do the assessment.

5. Explain the implications of an identified problem so the teacher can “gauge where they need to go with that child.”
6. Identify a starting point from which to form goals. (T1PDI239-242).

I added recommendations about the importance of being sensitive to the teacher’s self-perception of his/her expertise and confidence, to deal with students at educational risk. Additional strategies for starting to work co-constructively follow.

7. Identify current classroom practices that can be continued or used by other adult helpers (eg. Teacher Assistants or volunteers).
8. Identify current whole group strategies that can be used with individual students, used more often or changed slightly to accommodate the strengths or needs of students at educational risk.
9. Begin to co-construct IEPs using existing classroom practice rather than new pedagogy only.
10. Identify participants’ personal constructs related to classroom language development and the potential role of the classroom teacher with students at risk.

We discussed the idea of classroom teachers and language specialists sharing responsibility for students at educational risk. Penny considered that classroom teachers, language support teachers and parents did not necessarily share one view of their respective roles in managing students at educational risk. She stated, “That’s a problem because if they believe that (students at risk are not their responsibility), we can’t make them” take responsibility (T1PDI245).

Penny reflected on her experience of interactive co-construction for her input to the Staff Review Workshop in Term Three (SR4/9/00) and her final interview in Term Four (T1P11/12/00). She gave examples of successful teaching using whole class, small group and individual language development strategies. Penny compared her Year 1 classes of 2000 and 1999 to highlight the positive outcomes of Language Development Project strategies developed during the year 2000. She attributed her improved teaching outcomes, with the more difficult class to the support she had received in planning and managing whole class, small group and individual language learning (T1PDI172-173).

## **Researcher interpretations**

Penny's story does not represent all teachers. Her voice was strong, her message clear and influential. Her interactions were intentional, enthusiastic and reflective. Our partnership worked. Like Jacqui, Penny contributed thick, descriptive data to illustrate links between teachers' personal constructs and classroom practice, influential factors in co-construction and the implications of co-constructed language development plans for classroom-based language support services.

The stories of Jacqui and Penny represent co-constructed outcomes for teachers who were intentionally and enthusiastically involved, the gourmet omnivores of this action research (Joyce & Showers, 1988). They reinforce the potential of co-constructive language development practices in schools and indicate that positive outcomes from one co-constructive partnership encourage the pursuit of others. Jacqui and Penny believed that co-construction was applicable and appropriate to their needs as classroom literacy teachers. They accepted responsibility for their own learning and expected to contribute to the culture of learning for their teaching peers (including me, as a teacher-researcher). Despite Jacqui's challenges when addressing contentious issues with her peers, and Penny's dissatisfaction when working with particular peers, both teachers demonstrated a persistence and commitment to co-construction with others. These characteristics contributed to my positive experiences of co-construction. Jacqui, Penny and I accepted that the personal effort required for continuous and intentional co-construction was worthwhile.

By contrast, the stories of Toni and Maree are powerful representations of the potential for co-constructive language development planning when teachers are not initially accepting of the content or processes of co-constructed practice. These stories contribute to later conclusions about the implications of co-constructive classroom-based language support services in other educational contexts. Both stories demonstrate the importance of reciprocal voices and reflective interaction as ways to improve co-constructive outcomes.

Earlier anecdotes have illustrated Toni's and Maree's doubts about the potential of co-constructed language development planning to meet their particular classroom

needs, despite their voluntary participation in this action research. Both stories show how I learnt about using reciprocal voices and continuous interaction to repair, as well as, develop, co-construction. Repairs were required for different reasons in each partnership. Toni's story details how continuous listening empowers participants to learn to work together over time. Maree's story details how interaction is enhanced by shared reflection on both the content and process of co-construction. Maree's Term Four reflections on the Language Development Project were not as I had predicted. Without sharing our reflections and interpretations, reported outcomes would have been limited to my personal and inaccurate views of Maree's co-construction experience.

### **Toni's story**

Previous discussion clarified that Toni and I began the year with very different views of our potential working relationship. Toni disclosed particular concerns about her inability to identify children at educational risk and her limited experience of early childhood language development (T2TDI132-139). She was equally direct about her perception of my participant researcher role:

We need someone like yourself (with) the expertise to tell us, 'That's the problem' and once we know what the problem is then you can give us strategies and we can do something about it. If you're identifying them then you're telling us what the child needs (T2TDI194-196).

One point of initial incompatibility was Toni's request for a list of "ten to fifteen strategies" to use in the classroom (T2TDI222), while I expected that we would work together to identify students at risk, plan and implement classroom language development strategies as co-teachers. Yet as I listened to Toni, I came to understand that she was requesting an information-centered, rather than an interactive model of working together. Toni believed that expert opinion was required to identify students at risk (T2TDI203-209) and that experts needed to pass information on to teachers, in a useable form (T2TDI289-290).

Gradually, I came to understand that Toni's unfamiliarity with interactive learning models was not, as I had interpreted, a rejection of the content and process of co-construction. Her requests for information were confirmation of her willingness to accept my recommendations because she trusted and valued the information I shared. Toni did not perceive herself as someone who could decide which aspects of her classroom language development practice to change. She regarded decision-making as my role (T2TDI194-196). However, once we negotiated how our shared classroom practice would begin, Toni assumed an increasingly active role in our partnership. She accepted my need to work in the classroom in order to make links between children's language-learning difficulties and the whole class program. Toni agreed that children could be supported in-class "with structure and a set routine" (T2TDI198). She was frequently reflective about ideas and practices that worked, or didn't work for her. Much later in the year, Toni reflected that our reciprocal roles in the classroom promoted our "teamwork" and ensured that our ideas and practices were linked and relevant (T2TDI200).

Toni's final interview comments about our working relationship were interpreted with Vygotskian principles. Toni discussed at some length her experiences and ideas about teachers as learners, emphasizing teachers' need to work with people who know more than they do about particular learning areas. She was clear that visiting experts who "know all the theory and give pages of written recommendations" were not valued (T2TDI228). Her view of working together was that the teacher's support person is the "next level up" in expertise from the teacher and s/he brings that expertise "into the classroom, to make it practical" (T2TDI227-229). Here, Toni's opinions are paraphrased from her explanation of incidents in which she had (and had not) been supported to develop new classroom practices. Additional examples are documented in Toni's interview records (T2TDI248-252, T2TDI254-256, T2TDI267-269, T2TDI283-285).

Toni's summary comment, "You have to live through something before you can put it into practice" (T2TDI235) clearly communicates her experience of learning to change her pedagogy. I use this particular quote to capture the continuous and interactive features of co-constructive *practice* and to emphasize how different co-construction is from consultative or collaborative *planning* between language

specialists and classroom teachers. Co-construction is the on-going process of working together to translate shared theory to effective practice (and vice versa).

Toni's final interview also clarified changes in her professional confidence as an outcome of the Language Development Project. Toni discussed children's characteristics of language-based educational risk using information we had shared earlier in the year. She remained cautious about her ability to identify students' educational risk (T2TDI204) but expressed greater confidence in her ability to make decisions about classroom practice, once characteristics of educational risk had been identified (T2TDI205). By Term Four, Toni had become accustomed to learning with rather than from me. We used information-centered, learner-centered and interactive learning processes at different times. Toni believed that co-construction would enable her, "like Penny" (T2TDI213), to develop greater expertise with early childhood language development.

Toni specified changes in her thinking about the importance of oral language in primary classrooms, practices for teaching editing of written language, her improved understanding of spelling and ways to teach spelling to young learners (T2T6/12/00). She reported that her LDP involvement had benefited her whole class teaching, as well as, her response to students at risk (T2TDI224-225). With each example, Toni stressed her preference for ideas to be demonstrated or recommended as classroom practice, rather than discussed as principles of teaching and learning. During the staff evaluation, she focused on her learning about "strategies for parents and teachers in reading, writing, spelling and oral language activities" (T2TE21/11/00) and the importance of the teacher workshop for peer sharing.

Toni's story also taught me about interpreting qualitative data during action research. I reflected on why I had initially tried to lead Toni to where I thought she "needed to be taken". Toni showed me that her familiarity with information-centered learning was her way of seeing our partnership. By understanding this preference and listening to Toni's practical reflection on the strategies she tried, we gradually built a partnership that was co-constructive in nature. When asked about the importance of teacher choice during her final interview, Toni stressed the importance of flexibility, suggestion (rather than direction) and choice in successful partnerships. She

reminded me, “it’s up to the teacher to decide how they want to do it” (T2TDI262). Her view of teacher-researcher partnerships and strategy sharing was, “If it works, people will do it” (T2TDI259).

As I became attuned to Toni’s way of selecting, trying a strategy, commenting on its effectiveness and showing readiness for another, I came to know when she preferred a new idea, to be encouraged to continue with current practices, to be challenged to problem solve, or to reflect on the content or processes of language planning to date. This development could be interpreted using Loucks-Horsley’s (1996) application of the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM). Loucks-Horsley believes that supporting teachers through change is essential for learning to “take hold” (p. 1). She (1996) notes, “people considering and experiencing change evolve in the kinds of questions they ask and in their use of whatever the change is” (p. 1). Her sequence of questions, from self-oriented, to task-oriented and finally impact focused, is similar to that used by Hall and Jones (1976).

Over one school year, Toni’s questions were less sequential but included concerns about herself as a teacher, classroom tasks and learning outcomes. Toni’s view of co-construction was a flexible one. She needed to move between ways of learning and teaching depending on how familiar and confident she felt with a particular language planning issue. Over time, Toni specified aspects of co-construction that worked for her. She wanted to be given a range of strategies to try in response to a presenting language need. She wanted also to choose the strategy she would try (T2TDI263) and not be told, “This is what you do” (T2TDI285). One exception was Toni’s request for direction in the first few weeks of the following school year. She anticipated that making decisions about students’ language needs early in the school year was difficult and that each year she didn’t “know where to start” (T2TDI281). Her solution was for someone with greater expertise to make those decisions. Toni recommended, “Just point and say, “This is the direction you go” (ibid).

Through this study year, Toni and I learnt to talk and work together; to keep listening to one another and interacting in the classroom until we were both satisfied that our way of co-constructing language development practice worked for us and for our students. The use of social speech (Wilhelm, 2001) was particularly important when



working with Toni. If I was unsure about Toni's intent or needs, I discussed and rephrased her meaning with classroom examples, to determine whether or not we had established a shared zone of proximal development. When Toni's need for information, choice, or co-teaching mismatched with mine we renegotiated our content and/or processes for learning. Toni and I worked continuously to make co-construction happen. Finally, my interpretation of this experience, and Toni's reflection on it (SR4/9/00; T2TE21/11/00; T2T6/12/00) confirmed the importance of participant voice and negotiated interactions. We continued to listen to one another to build and repair language plans and to ensure that co-construction 'worked' for us.

### **Maree's story**

Maree's story is the final one to be continued and interpreted. It is chosen to reiterate the importance of data selection in qualitative educational research. Maree's story enhanced this research by providing an alternative insight into the thinking and practice of early childhood teachers and contributing data for the analysis of breakdown in co-constructive relationships. Action research method and structured narrative reporting accommodated Maree's story as a valuable, albeit dissimilar, representation of co-construction processes.

For some time I considered deleting Maree's data from this structured narrative because she had participated for the last semester only. Although I had less data from Maree than other teachers, the thickness of her data proved to be more important than the quantity of it (Bassey, 1999). Similarly, Fehring (1999) argues to retain inconsistent data in qualitative research. Teachers' stories "may be similar or dissimilar, redundancy and variety each having voice" (p. 41). Analysis and interpretation of Maree's story (with her) increased my understanding of unsatisfactory aspects of our partnership.

In earlier chapters I concluded that Maree and I needed more time to share "our ways of seeing the world" (Wadsworth, 1997, p. 11). Simple as it sounds, Maree and I thought we had constructed a shared view of early childhood language development during our previous working relationship. We thought we had reviewed shared constructs through informal discussion prior to Maree's return to school. Yet our

attempts to co-construct language development practice demonstrated that we had not adequately established shared constructs or identified shared zones of proximal development. Instead of setting the scene for interactive learning, our partnership began as a one-sided process.

In the second week, Maree stated that she did not “need help” with oral language activities in her classroom, that language development sessions could be reduced to one session per week and that two of the students at educational risk needed to be referred to speech pathology services rather than participate in the Language Development Project (CBRD20/7/00). Here was a cue for us to review our constructs of early childhood classroom language development practices and to learn about our strengths, needs and preferences as co-constructive partners.

In retrospect, at this point our potential for co-construction was replaced with an awkward partnership, temporarily controlled by Maree. Driven by my belief in the need for teachers to make choices and input to classroom practice decisions, I accepted Maree’s decision-making role while reflecting on how to encourage more interactive processes, how to repair our partnership and facilitate interactive learning. Since I did not voice my unease with Maree’s dominant role, she was encouraged to think that I could adopt her constructs of early childhood language development. My relationship with Maree was unlike any I experienced with her peers. I needed to understand why. Term Four data was helpful.

Recall that Maree and I had needed to “reconstruct” our working relationship after understanding that practices co-constructed with the previous teacher, Peta, could not be transferred to my partnership with Maree. We learnt that we had to co-construct our shared pedagogy by acknowledged our contrary opinions of speech-language-hearing development in the early years (CBRD13/9/00), our disparate views of parent involvement in early childhood classes, and our common interest being the best learning outcomes for our students. During Term Three, Maree and I shared occasional planning discussions, parallel classroom teaching time, participation in early childhood and whole-staff meetings. We were not co-planning explicit classroom language development practices or co-teaching, as I was with other teachers.

However, the relocation of the language development group enabled Maree to observe my thinking and practice without necessitating change in her current classroom practice. Maree and I could commit more time and attention to exchanging and validating our thinking. Maree changed her perception of the parent participants, as committed and capable facilitators of child language development in the early years. We began to discuss ideas for classroom language development.

Maree's Term Four interview was presented as an opportunity to reflect on our attempts to co-construct language development plans and to critique co-construction processes and outcomes. Perhaps the interview format prompted us to reflect on the potential of our thinking and practice. Maree's Term Four interview facilitated a lengthy sharing of oral and written language theories and practices (TPMDI14-16). Both Maree and I contributed examples of our thinking and practice specific to news telling, the physical set-up of the early childhood centre, children's ability to make choices, the amount of structure in early childhood programs, ways of explaining activities to young children, speech-language characteristics of children at risk, the role of parents in supporting children at risk, and links between the whole class program, home reading and parents' roles in early childhood education (TPMDI36-43, TPMDI49, TPMDI58-65). We came to appreciate how our individual "interests and values" (Wadsworth, 1997, p. 11) influenced our thinking and practice and helped to explain differences in practice between teachers. This final interview was also an opportunity to discuss examples of the co-constructive processes used with other teachers in this study (TPM7/12/00, side B).

During the final term of the Language Development Project I considered that Maree and I had not reached our potential as co-constructive partners. I anticipated Maree's negative written feedback on her co-constructed experiences. Wadsworth (1997) cautions against researchers assuming they have understood other's ways of seeing the world and not being sceptical of interpretations. I had not predicted that Maree's reflective data would show her regard for the co-constructive experience as beneficial to herself and her students. She particularly commented on her learning about the way I interacted with students at educational risk and her intent to use some of our shared classroom language development practices in the future.

By the end of the year Maree and I had both benefited from our partnership, but in different ways. I was prompted to review the templates for co-construction (in Chapter 5) to recommend that teacher-researcher partnerships begin with the reciprocal sharing of personal theories about language-based educational risk in addition to private reflections. Theoretically, the use of private speech creates an opportunity for adults to decide whether or not they perceive a need for change in their thinking or practice (Wilhelm, 2001). Social speech facilitates our understanding of co-constructive partners and ourselves in that partnership.

Unlike my beginning with other participant teachers, Maree and I did not have opportunity to reflect on our personal theories and discuss our observations as we shared a new class of students in the first month of a new school year. Instead, Maree returned to her new class of children, whom I knew, had planned for and had worked with. Inadvertently, she may have felt an obligation to accept my interpretation of students' strengths and needs rather than form her own. Alternatively, Maree and I could have begun our partnership with the reciprocal sharing of our constructs and private reflections. I could have modelled my reflection on personal theories about language-based educational risk for particular students, and my need for constant review and changes to thinking and classroom practice over time. If I had also clarified Maree's constructs of early childhood language development as applied to our shared class, I might have encouraged both reciprocal sharing and private reflection early in our partnership.

Modelling facilitates "shared language and activity" about the topic in focus within learners' zones of proximal development (Wilhelm, 2001, p. 11). On reflection, I understood that the initial weeks of participant observation had provided other teachers and myself the opportunity to use both social speech and private reflection on our personal theories, specific to each new class. Maree and I needed to do this. I knew the class but not Maree's constructs of it. Maree and I knew one another but not in the particular context of this class. Such experience of the importance of context for the prediction of outcomes is discussed by Flyvberg (2001) as one of the great challenges of social science research.

This experience illustrated that the content and processes of co-construction need to be reviewed through continuous language and activity with each co-constructive partner. Beginning co-construction with the active clarification of reciprocal understandings helps to identify partners' respective zones of proximal development. Co-construction with Maree was compromised by our initial lack of clarification of respective constructs and our need to identify a shared zone of proximal development. (Perhaps this is also what happens when consultancy and nominally collaborative processes become dysfunctional.). Typically, it is the social sharing that provokes personal reflection and metacognitive awareness of the need or possibility for co-constructed change.

Working with Maree provided significant opportunities to reflect on and learn from dysfunctional co-construction. I revisited the data collected with Maree to interpret factors emerging as recommendations for effective co-construction:

1. Continue to seek and value reciprocal input.
2. Continue to recognize the strengths, needs and preferences of individuals.
3. Schedule regular time for reflection and review of the content and process of co-construction.

My interactions with Maree, her data and interpretations were unique because they prompted further review of the developing template for co-construction processes.

Unlike my experiences with Jacqui, Penny and other teachers, language planning with Maree had been characterised by unequal contributions and outcomes that were not valued in the same way by each of us. The failure to establish shared zones of actual or proximal development had prevented effective co-construction. During our semester together, we came to recognize the need for change to the content and processes of our language development planning. Eventually, opportunities for continuous and reciprocal sharing of our personal constructs of early childhood language development and classroom language development practices allowed us to begin to repair our co-construction.

## **Influences and outcomes**

Discussion, examples and teacher reflections have shown the importance of eliciting teacher voice and promoting interactive learning when supporting teachers. Teacher voice and interactive processes influenced the content, process and outcomes of co-constructed decisions throughout the research year. Despite the range of constructs, experiences and processes of co-construction, Term Four data confirmed that teachers engaged in meaningful and productive co-construction of classroom language development plans. Each of us could be heard as co-constructive partners. We found ways to develop and repair co-constructive processes, as required.

Empirical data now support minor amendments to analytical statements (AS6 and AS7). Teacher stories provide examples of how early childhood teachers' confidence in their personal theories of child language development and language-based educational risk *encourages* their identification of children "at risk" in their classrooms (AS6b). Other examples indicate that early childhood teachers' perceptions of themselves as having developed language expertise *encourage* their identification of language-based educational risk in their students (AS7b). In summary, teachers' increased awareness of how they have made a difference to children's language development encourages their further learning.

Teachers reported increments in their expertise as a result of our explicit, continuous planning and our implementation of strategies for children at educational risk in early childhood classrooms. Teacher reflections verified the claim that learning results from "meaningful and productive shared activities" (Wilhelm, 2001, p.9). As the action research focus turned to determining influential factors in co-construction processes, teachers' perceptions of self were embedded in change processes. Teachers' descriptive stories confirm how each of them influenced the co-construction of language development plans to ensure that classroom outcomes were acceptable and appropriate to them. Teachers' final reflections on study outcomes related to how well their classroom needs had been met by involvement in this study.

Collectively teachers' data supported the analytical statements applied to Term Two, Three and Four data. Co-constructive language development planning can:

- enhance the significance of language components in teachers' personal constructs of educational risk. Analytical Statement 8 (AS8)
- shape the specificity of oral and written language links in teachers' personal constructs of educational risk. Analytical Statement 9 (AS9)
- shape teachers' understandings of oral and written language profiles as part of their personal constructs of educational risk. Analytical Statement 10 (AS10)
- shape teachers' understandings of the benefits of explicit language development practices in response to educational risk. Analytical Statement 11 (AS11)
- facilitate teachers' independent use of explicit language development practices in response to language-based educational risk. Analytical Statement 12 (AS12)
- shape teachers' confidence in selecting and implementing classroom language development practices in response to students at educational risk. Analytical Statement 13 (AS13)

Terms Two, Three and Four data also substantiate our learning about the selection of content, the development of processes and the need for repair during co-constructive language planning. Data collection, analysis and interpretation across one school year indicate that co-construction is as a defensible alternative to expert-recipient language support services for classroom teachers.

Teacher voice is regarded as a critical tool in the co-construction of classroom language development plans and the translation of teachers' understandings about students at educational risk to personal pedagogies. Effective co-construction is characterised by interactive learning during which participants teach and learn together. Indeed, once co-construction processes had been developed, refined or repaired with individual teachers, positive outcomes acted like "hooks on which further learning could be hung". (This analogy of interactive learning being like hooks comes from colloquial use in early childhood education. I could not locate an original source but have used it here to reinforce the value of the teachers' voice.)

## **Summary**

Here, teachers' reflections affirmed their engagement in processes and outcomes of co-constructed change. For participants in this study, co-construction became an on-going process of working together to translate shared theory to effective classroom practice. In the next chapter, the focus moves from teacher stories to research generalizations. Co-construction is presented as a way to establish and develop a culture of learning for teachers in schools. The potential to co-construct change beyond the project school is examined.