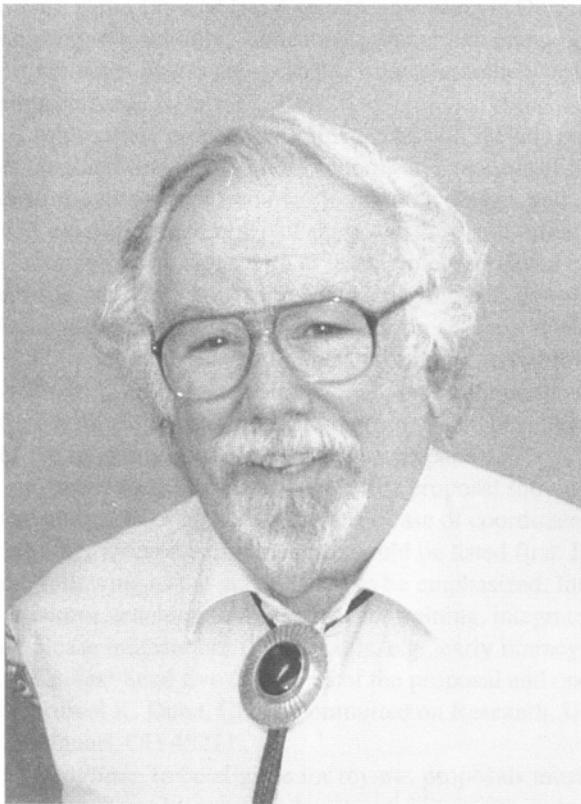


KEN AND YETTA GOODMAN: EXPLORING THE ROOTS OF WHOLE LANGUAGE

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Editor's note: The second NCTE Award for Outstanding Educator in the Language Arts is being presented at this year's convention in Chicago. This award, proposed by the Elementary Section Steering Committee of NCTE, recognizes a distinguished educator who has made major contributions to the field of language arts in elementary education. In order to win this award, one must have (a) dramatically influenced classroom practice, (b) made ongoing contributions to the field of language arts, (c) obtained national and/or international influence, and (d) contributed a body of work that is compatible with the mission of NCTE. It should come as no surprise that

this year's award is being given to the name Goodman since that name has influenced so many language arts educators in such a wide variety of ways. And, to those who know them and their work with teachers, it likely is neither surprising that this year's award is being given to two Goodmans. As teachers and teacher educators, Ken and Yetta Goodman have worked so closely together that it is often difficult to discern where one's ideas leave off and the other's begin. It is also difficult for those of us in the field to think of one without thinking of the other. Certainly each is a unique person, and each has made singular and unique contributions to the field of lan-

guage arts education, but it is fitting that we honor them together with this award. Along with exceeding all of the criteria listed above for the award, what I find overwhelming about Ken and Yetta Goodman as educators is their deep and abiding dedication and honesty. Whatever your position on their ideas about whole language and language arts education, you cannot help but see their integrity and commitment as they have worked with and for children and teachers throughout the world. This profile, written by Jerry Harste and Kathy Short of the Elementary Section Steering Committee of NCTE, helps us know “the Goodmans” and their work even better. Ken and Yetta will be honored at the Elementary Section Get-Together later this month at the convention. Please come along to thank them for their gifts to us and our profession. (WHT)

Almost a century ago, John Dewey recognized that no progress in education could be sustained unless it was led by knowledgeable professional teachers. What makes the whole language movement so remarkable is that over the past 25 years it has been led by just that, two teachers by both trade and heart. In this interview, Ken and Yetta Goodman share their perspectives on whole language—its origins, its current state, and its future. It is with great honor that the Elementary Section of the National Council of Teachers of English bestows on these teacher-researchers its award for Outstanding Educators in the Language Arts. This article is a tribute to their lives and work.

A bit of background information—the facts, if you will—serve as a beginning. Ken grew up in Detroit, Michigan, in a non-orthodox Jewish home. He completed his B. A. in economics at UCLA in 1948 after attending both Wayne State University in Detroit and the University of Michigan. After graduation, he worked on his teaching certificate at California State College in Los Angeles and then taught in self-contained seventh- and eighth-grade classrooms. He was also active in the Jewish Center Day Camps where he met Yetta. Ten years later, in 1962, he graduated with an Ed.D. from UCLA and took a position at Wayne State University in Detroit where he began what has become known as miscue research. In 1975, Ken and Yetta moved to the University of Arizona. For Ken, the “whole” in whole language meant seeing reading as part of language more generally: He believed that anything said about language could also be said about reading. It was this thought that sparked a revolution.

Yetta grew up in Cleveland, Ohio, in an orthodox Jewish home. Considered “fussy” by her teachers and given a check (needs improvement) in “Citizenship,” she grew up to become a Regents Professor at the University of Arizona. Yetta got her undergraduate and masters degrees at Los Angeles State College in 1952

and 1956 and her Ed.D. at Wayne State University in 1967. She taught in Los Angeles City and County Schools, initially working with middle school students and later with elementary-aged learners. After completing her doctorate, she taught at the Dearborn campus of the University of Michigan before accepting a position at the University of Arizona. Professionally, she is best

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known for her work in curriculum, early literacy learning, kidwatching, reading strategy instruction, and retrospective miscue analysis. Dr. Bill Page once said of Yetta, “She sees the whole world as a Girl Scout camp and she is Den Mother.” In the interview that follows you will learn why there is a good deal of truth in this observation.

KGS: Although you are getting this award together, you each have your own separate bodies of work which have significantly influenced the field, and individually you each deserve the award. However, as the Elementary Section of NCTE, we saw your work as coming together in a powerful way and decided to make a statement about your collaboration. What do each of you see as the other's contribution to your thinking and work?

Ken: I think that our collaboration hasn't always been clear to people. People haven't always differentiated us. In fact, we sometimes get confused about who wrote what. There was a lady in Peru who thought we were brother and sister for awhile.

One important contribution is Yetta's caring and also her understanding of the natural way that oral language is learned. She realized before I did that there had to be evidence that written language was also learned naturally in the cultural context, just as oral language is. I've often described that as similar to astronomers recognizing there had to be planets out beyond the known ones and then looking for them. Yetta really was the one who said there has to be evidence of kids' literacy development outside of school and then went and looked for it. The other thing, though, is that it's been terribly important for us to bounce ideas off each other.

Yetta: I think we both influence each other. There are some things we don't know who thought of first. For example, one of the things we argue about is which one

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of us first came up with *invention* and *convention*. What we do know is that it is an idea that we worked out over a long period of time together. We've taken the lead in different areas that complement the other's work. My work with early literacy and the extension of miscue analysis are areas where I have taken the lead.

I wouldn't have been a researcher or a scholar without Ken's support because I never envisioned myself that way until I got into the doctoral program. Although E. Brooks Smith helped me believe in myself, Ken encouraged me a lot. Ken's forte is theoretical questions as well as questions of philosophy. I've heard Ken speak probably more than anybody in the world. I'm always amazed when I hear certain speeches that I've already heard hundreds of times and there it is—some new in-depth insight that provides me with opportunities to think more deeply.

KGS: How do you see your early experiences growing up as children in Jewish families as influencing your work and stance as educators?

Ken: This is a hard thing for me to figure out. I do know that in the Jewish tradition, faith is less important than studying the law. The goal is not to memorize the law but to understand it through discussion. A law is read and then various commentaries or interpretations by great scholars are discussed. This discourse tradition is called *pilpul* in Hebrew. I think I have carried it over into my research as well as my teaching. I realize that's my way of reasoning and the way I teach—I don't say this is right, take it down, and I'll test you on it. We explore the different possibilities in relation to issues.

JCH: Yetta, weren't women in an orthodox Jewish household put down?

Yetta: Not in my family. My father never, never questioned whether I would go to work. My family was working class, but also we have very strong women in the family. My mother was the only woman of all her sisters who worked at home. Her 4 sisters were garment workers or had small businesses of their own. I knew women who worked and had a voice. My insecurities come from other parts of my life. They come from schools where I was a bilingual kid. My first language was Yiddish. I went to school not speaking English in the way the teachers wanted me to. I was very poor and attended school in an inner city ghetto area. Teachers kept telling me I was not a good student.

KGS: Where do you think you got your voice?

Yetta: I believe that your greatest weaknesses are your greatest strengths. I was insecure and felt uncomfort-

able with who I was—I was big and gangly. In elementary school, my report card read, "If Yetta would only stay in her seat, she might be a good student." They called me "fussy, very fussy." As a high school student, I was loud and boisterous. When I went to college I got involved with the Jewish organization on campus, Hillel, and the rabbi there was a psychologist. He realized that my outgoingness, which could be obnoxious, also had potential. He began to ask me to do things. I became the president of Hillel. Then I became the director of a day camp before I was 20. That same energy which I could use to be obnoxious and silly was made useful. The same personality turned into a strength rather than a weakness.

KGS: How did your early experiences as teachers and graduate students influence your perspectives and philosophies as teachers and researchers?

Yetta: In many ways our philosophy of education goes back to our Jewish center day camp experiences in Los Angeles. The camps we worked in were group work oriented and not activity oriented. We contrasted our camps with those that advertised activities like horseback riding and swimming. We learned how to work with groups. We'd talk about autocratic, democratic, and laissez faire groups, and how we could establish a democratic group in day camps. Also, we worked with kids outdoors, and that allowed us to see them in ways that went beyond pencil and paper experiences. We saw all kinds of strengths in kids that we might not see in a school setting. They called us by our first names.

Ken: Eventually, when our own kids were small, Yetta substitute taught, but she also directed day camps for the LA Jewish centers—about 15 camps.

Yetta: I ran camp counselor programs, and my first publication was a camp counselor's manual. We used to take our counselors to an overnight retreat for 3 or 4 days. I was the song leader and played my guitar. That's where my singing of kids' songs started.

Ken: I started teaching in 1950, and we got married in 1952. Yetta began teaching in 1952 with a junior high school certificate. The first year we were married, we were both teaching self-contained eighth grades. We used to joke that we took 72 kids to bed with us.

Yetta: We began teaching in California during the biggest immigration time of anywhere in the world—people were just pouring into California.

Ken: Most men in elementary education were just back from World War II. They were going into elementary education at that time to become principals. I was not

interested in that at all. I decided fairly early that I wanted to teach at the university.

I left teaching for a while and worked as a social worker for the Jewish Centers Association (JCA). Then I taught part-time in private schools while I was working on my doctorate at UCLA with John Goodlad.

Yetta: I substitute taught during most of that period of time and also worked for the JCA. My full-time teaching experience was in middle school. And then when I began to sub because of our own children, I subbed a lot in early childhood classes, and that's when I picked up a lot of my early childhood ideas. Progressive education was still strong in California at that time. We discussed the concept in our teacher education programs, and Dewey was a big deal, along with Hilda Taba, Helen Heffernan, and other progressive educators.

Ken: At UCLA, I worked as a teaching assistant for George Kneller, an educational philosopher. Then I worked as a research assistant for a psychologist. Even as an undergraduate, I fought the system. I avoided taking classes just because they were required.

Yetta: So Ken received his doctorate at UCLA in 1962 and we moved to Detroit when he was offered a position at Wayne State University. I had no intention of going on for a doctorate. I really wanted to continue teaching. I loved teaching, but I had problems getting my certification transferred from California to Michigan. Then one day Ken came home and said that E. Brooks Smith, the chair of his department, was looking for supervisors, and they only had to have masters degrees. So I said, "Sounds interesting," and started supervising student teachers. I could have continued doing that with a masters but there were a lot of interesting things going on at Wayne, and I enjoyed the people there.

Ken: Brooks started what we at first called an instructor internship program. We hired people full time. They got \$8000 a year, which you could live on at that time, and they taught a full load of courses. They had four years to finish their doctorate. Yetta went through the program at the same time as Carolyn Burke, Dorothy Watson, Rudine Sims Bishop, Dave Allen, Bill Page, and Dorothy Menosky.

Yetta: As part of the professional internship at Wayne, Brooks and the elementary education department developed an on-site preservice program, so that all the undergraduate courses were taught in the schools.

Ken: We organized on-site or school-based centers that collaborated with the schools with methods courses and student teaching. We also required our students to do two student teaching placements for 8 weeks each.

One had to be inner city and one could be outer city or suburban. At the time we started this program, Wayne State was not placing student teachers in Detroit, particularly in the inner city. Through our program, students became comfortable enough with inner city schools that a lot of them were recruited to teach there. I was coordinating a center also, so that most of the time I was at Wayne State I was involved in student teaching. One of the important things is that Wayne probably was the only major university that had a continuous involvement with the public schools, unlike universities in Chicago and New York where there was almost no relationship. Because of Wayne's involvement, African American students were comfortable attending Wayne.

Yetta: I would bet the city of Detroit has a higher percentage of African American college students and administrators than any big city in the country. Wayne State had probably the best doctoral program I've ever experienced anywhere. We loved the opportunity to teach and to present. We were involved in research activities. We were involved in teaching. We went to conferences together. It was a powerful time. When I did my doctorate in 1967, Brooks encouraged me to do a miscue dissertation, which made me nervous because of questioning about my relationship with Ken. I really wanted to do an ethnographic dissertation, but of course our educational psychology program was very experimental so I did miscue analysis and had to come up with experimental statistics.

Ken: I finished my doctorate at UCLA in 1962. My dissertation was a study of the characteristics teachers value in kids. I used a Q-sort technique. I had statements about kids that I developed from interviewing teachers. I sorted them out into certain types, like the good student, the good behavior, etc. Then I had teachers sort these and assign values to them so that I could develop a profile. I found out that teachers like kids who behave themselves and know the answers when you ask the questions. In the last year that I was working on my dissertation, I became interested in linguistics, but I didn't take any linguistic courses at UCLA. The way I got interested in linguistics was that I was reading the literature and there was this big hubbub in NCTE over traditional grammar, descriptive linguistics, and Charles Fries's work.

I took a graduate course in language arts that was a wonderful course in the history of education. The paper that I wrote for the class was an exploration of the application of linguistics to the study of grammar. I began to try to link that idea with what I was trying to understand about reading. It began to gnaw at me the year before I

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went to Wayne State. I searched the literature. I couldn't find reading studies that were based on linguistics. That's very scary as a graduate student, so I did a paper for a class that I called "A Communicative Theory of the Reading Curriculum" (K. Goodman, 1963). I had grandiose ideas even at that time. I sent it to *Elementary English* (later *Language Arts*), and much to my surprise they accepted it for publication. That was the first article that I published.

I began to plan what turned out to be the miscue research, but I didn't start it until I got to Wayne. As soon as I started at Wayne, I knew I wanted to go out and tape kids reading. At that point, I didn't know anything about psycholinguistics. I was really trying to prove that you should be able to look at reading as a language process. As soon as I started to get into linguistics, I said, "Wait a minute, there's something wrong. Nobody in reading research is treating reading as language." So I took \$200 of college seed money and started going out to Cortland School in Highland Park, Michigan. I did this study of first-, second-, and third-grade kids. I took 100 kids out of the 200 that were in first, second, and third grade and a selection of stories from the pre-primer to the eighth grade out of the American Book Company series. I chose it because it wasn't being used in the Detroit area. I categorized the words by grammatical function. I presented this study on cues and miscues in reading at AERA, and it was published later in *Elementary English* (K. Goodman, 1965). I was so amused when it began to be cited as a classic study. It's the only study of mine that experimentalists think they understand.

Yetta: By that time I was already in the doctoral program, and I decided to take a course in linguistics. In that course I taped my daughter Karen reading, and then we did a miscue study on Karen. My first article with Ken was on Karen's spelling development. At that point, Ken was already thinking holistically about the reading process and teaching a course on linguistics and reading.

Ken: My beginning research in miscue analysis won a competition at Wayne for an assistant professor research recognition award. I wrote an extremely elaborate research proposal that encompassed anything one could ever want to study relating to the reading process, with the core being miscue analysis, and I submitted that. My assistant dean said somebody from the committee called and said, "Is this guy nuts or is he really on to something?" And he said, "He's nuts, but he's on to something." That was a big break because I got a semester off from teaching and I got \$5000 to organize a

conference and publish a book. That led to the book, *The Psycholinguistic Nature of the Reading Process* (K. Goodman, 1968). I wrote to Ruth Strickland and she didn't come, but she sent Robert Rudell. I wrote to Ruth Wier at Stanford. She didn't come, but she sent Dick Venezky. Rosemary Weber and Carl Lefevre came too. I called the conference "The Psycholinguistic Nature of the Reading Process." I had already decided it wasn't just linguistics; it was psycholinguistics.

JCH: Why did you make that shift from linguistics to psycholinguistics?

Ken: I realized that it was a relationship of language and thought. We were reading Vygotsky and Chomsky. Then Frank Smith edited a book with George Miller called *The Genesis of Language* (Smith & Miller, 1966). There was an article that Miller wrote for psychologists telling them that they needed to be psycholinguists. He really laid out the field of psycholinguistics. The work of Roger Brown and Ursula Bellugi also had a major influence on me. Before his language development work, Roger Brown (1958) wrote a book called *Words and Things* which brought language and thought together again.

KGS: Yetta, what were you doing during this period?

Yetta: I was working with Ken on the miscue research, collecting data, and completing my coursework.

Ken: Yetta wasn't an active doctoral student until she was almost ready to take her preliminary exams. That's when she finally admitted she was in the program.

Yetta: I was really insecure about doing it because I didn't feel I was smart enough to earn a doctorate. But Ken's work began to be published, and people were talking about it. People kept saying to Ken, "Sure, maybe you're right about the reading process, but that can't be for little kids. You've got to teach them to read directly." And so, I decided I would see what I could do about applying Ken's work to young children.

Ken: When Yetta was deciding what to do for her dissertation research, Brooks said he had a masters student who was just finishing that he wanted me to talk to. He sent me Carolyn Burke. She was teaching a pre-first classroom at an inner city school.

Yetta: When I was going to do my dissertation, Ken suggested that I visit Carol's classroom. I went to see Carol and decided to do a longitudinal study of miscue analysis. I had to do an experimental study that compared kids. I took 3 kids from Carol's class who were pre-first grade and 3 from a regular first-grade class-

room. Then I compared them as good readers and poor readers. For my dissertation I followed these kids for 18 months. Subsequently, I followed them until they were eighth graders.

Ken: A funny story out of Yetta's dissertation is that when she went to her committee, we had already anticipated she was going to be asked why she was using all black kids. There were white kids in these classes, but she had decided to eliminate one variable and use all black kids.

Yetta: So my committee said to me, "Why are you using all black kids?" My response simply was, "You know, did you ever question a study before where they were using all white kids?"

Ken: Just by choosing to work in the city with multi-racial groups, not in suburbs, we found ourselves confronted with dialect issues. That got us into sociolinguistics and social attitudes toward language. The dialect issue got us into the battle over language development, and that all kids go through the same language development no matter what dialect they speak. Yetta picked that up after her dissertation and said, if

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kids are learning oral language in this normal linguistic way, they also have to be learning written language in the same way. It made sense to me right away, but it was really her formulation that there had to be evidence out there if we looked at kids before they start school.

Yetta: I started my print awareness work right after I finished my dissertation and moved to the Dearborn campus at the University of Michigan in 1967. I realized as soon as I began to work with Carol's kids that these kids could handle texts from the beginning—even though they were not supposed to be able to read, they were voice pointing. So I began to ask myself, "What must they already know before school about reading, and how am I going to find that out?" That's when I began to go to preschools and play around with print awareness. I realized that reading must have happened before they got to school. The whole notion of writing

came a little later for me. At that point, we were already aware of Marie Clay's work.

Ken: I was at an IRA/NCTE Linguistics and Reading Committee with Helen Robinson at the University of Chicago around 1965 or 1966. Helen said, "I've got this dissertation I want you to look at." It was Marie Clay's. I saw that she was looking at errors and had 100 students in her study. She was using terminology like errors and self-correction. We were also looking at self-correction. She developed the running record in her dissertation. That started a correspondence with her. A couple of years later, she came and visited us in Detroit. Then in 1975 we went to New Zealand. We spoke to every IRA Council in New Zealand and visited Marie in her home.

Yetta: Her work helped confirm my ideas about early reading.

JCH: What about Frank Smith? When did you become aware of his work?

Ken: The first time I met Frank was as a result of Holt sending me his manuscript for *Understanding Reading* (Smith, 1971). I thought they were pulling a fast one—that they had given a pseudonym to someone I knew. It seemed impossible that anybody could have written a book like this that I wouldn't know. I was doing a pre-conference at Anaheim and somebody canceled, so I called Frank and he came. Two weeks after the conference, I got a manuscript from him. I edited and he edited, we went back and forth, and we published the article "On the Psycholinguistic Method of Teaching Reading" (K. Goodman & Smith, 1971).

KGS: Tell us more about the miscue research and the initial studies you conducted to examine the reading process.

Ken: I got a small grant from the United States Office of Education, and Carol Burke left her classroom to work as a research assistant. Out of that came her dissertation, *A Psycholinguistic Description of Grammatical Restructurings in the Oral Reading of a Selected Group of Middle School Children* (Burke, 1969). Then I got a proposal funded to do a miscue study on second-, fourth-, sixth-, eighth-, and tenth-grade readers. We used standardized test scores to choose low, low average, high average, and high readers in Detroit and Highland Park, Michigan. They read whole stories and then did a retelling. I developed the taxonomy of reading miscues through that study. We got that funding just as Carol finished her dissertation. She decided to stay and direct that 3-year study.

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Yetta: I was already at the University of Michigan, Dearborn campus. Somewhere between 1970 and 1973, Carol and I got involved in El Cajon in California and conceptualized the *Reading Miscue Inventory Manual* (Y. Goodman & C. Burke, 1972) as we worked with teachers in classrooms. Ken's graduate students were involved in miscue studies at that time.

Ken: Dorothy Watson studied middle grade students reading books, and Rudine Sims Bishop studied African American students' miscues as they read dialect readers. The deal that I had with Scott Foresman publishing company at that time was that we did informal miscue analysis on every story in their reading program before the decision was made about whether to include it or not. We tried it out. They would write a story, we tested it, it was rewritten, and we tested it again. I didn't get royalties. I got an annual retainer, half of which went for two research assistants. That was in addition to supporting students to do the miscue analysis on the Scott Foresman program. So I used the Scott Foresman money to support graduate students.

Yetta: And we've been supporting students ever since.

Ken: Then there was a hiatus of funded research for about a year or two, the only time a university has ever supported a research office for me. The College of Education continued to support our secretary and the research office. Then our proposal for the eight population study was funded by the National Institute of Education, so that there was a period of about 8 years when we had funded research. In this study, we moved beyond Detroit to other communities and regions of the United States and studied miscues made by 4 different dialect groups and 4 different second language populations. In that study, each student read two stories.

Yetta: Just as the study finished in 1975, we moved to Arizona.

Ken: I took all the data with me on a 9-inch computer tape. We didn't finish the report until about 1978. I spent the first 2 years in Arizona writing the report of that study.

JCH: The two of you really developed the notion of support groups and the importance of thought collectives when it wasn't getting much attention.

Yetta: Brooks Smith always wanted us to talk about ideas. He loved people to come together and talk. We had a lot of social activities. We formed a musical group, and we had many academic discussions. And then we had the SALE group, Society for the Application of Linguistics in Education. We met at different

people's houses or our research office every month and talked about issues of language. We did a project together; we read The Robert's English Series, which was based on transformational grammar. It was an instructional disaster. We reviewed that and wrote an article in *Elementary English* as a group (Allen, Martellock, Olsen, & Ray, 1970).

What I remember most is that when Carol Burke, David Allen, Rudine Sims Bishop, and Dorothy Menosky left they kept calling us and saying, "There's nobody to talk to. Who are we going to talk to? We have to do something." So we organized a support group that would meet at IRA and NCTE conferences for a few hours to discuss psycholinguistics and reading issues. We incorporated it into the Center for the Expansion of Language and Thinking (CELT). We continue to meet 25 years later. Later, CELT members wanted to create thought collectives in their own neighborhoods with the teachers with whom they worked. Dorothy Watson and a group of teachers in Columbia, Missouri, started the first TAWL (Teachers Applying Whole Language) group.

Ken: We've always conceptualized that you work with people at multiple levels at the same time, so when we wrote research proposals we included money to support research assistants, and we worked hard to make sure those people would be graduate students. As we're working on research, we're also supporting graduate students who in turn become part of the collegial team.

Yetta: During the years Ken was at the Miscue Center at Wayne State we met weekly—talking about miscues, talking about issues of linguistics, developing conferences. There was just a lot of activity going on all the time. Again it had to do with our doctoral experience. We were so much a part of the faculty. I think a lot of us in CELT try to replicate that with our own graduate students today.

JCH: You're saying "thought collectives" and "support groups" represent a powerful set of ideas which few people understood at the time?

Ken: I think your "thought collective" is what I would call a paradigm. Recently on the Vygotsky listserv, people were challenging a physicist who teaches physics by discovery. They said, "Come on, you don't believe that students could discover physics on their own, do you?" What I began to realize is nobody teaches somebody to be a Newtonian physicist. What happens is that you're inducted into a Newtonian physics community, and you begin to talk like them and use their language and their examples. You never make a decision by saying, "I'm going to study the 6 physics paradigms that are avail-

able to me and choose one.” In fact, you never make that decision at all. The only choice you have is either to join the paradigm or not, and not joining a paradigm is exactly what I did with the psychologists at UCLA. I either had to join their paradigm or reject it. Rejecting it was a powerful process for me because I had to think through what I believed in relation to behaviorism, which was what I was being offered.

Most of the time you join a paradigm or thought collective and *then* you start rationalizing why you believe in it. That’s what makes it so hard to move to another paradigm because you’re not only rejecting ideas, you’re rejecting a community. You’re putting yourself at jeopardy; it’s almost like being shunned. I began to realize that in a sense this is what we’ve been doing except that with our students we raise the process to a conscious level because we keep challenging them. We’re always inducting them into a way of thinking, of acting, of researching.

JCH: I think you’ve encouraged kids to be theoretical about reading—that’s what prediction is about—but you want to encourage teachers to theorize and re-theorize constantly, too.

Ken: That’s why we keep saying that what teachers do is based on what they know. That’s the relation between theory and practice, the knowledge base and the theoretical base.

Yetta: Again, I go back to the Wayne State doctoral program. One of the reasons we had this strong theory/practice relationship was that the people who came into the doctoral program were outstanding practicing teachers. That was one of the criteria. They had to have been outstanding teachers, or they couldn’t come into the program.

JCH: I’ve heard you say that you have never met a reader who didn’t at first believe he or she was a reader. That seems to be a theory-to-practice statement. The insight that theoretically kids need to see themselves as readers before practically they become readers seems extremely profound.

Yetta: This is what retrospective miscue analysis is all about: articulating your theory. It invites kids to articulate their theory of reading as well as articulate who they are as literate human beings. Are you a good reader? How do you know you’re a good reader? In a sense that’s what we’re talking about in teacher education. We are inviting teachers to define for themselves who they are, to define themselves as professionals. Who are you as a professional? What roles do you play?

Ken: Partly the theory/practice relationship goes back to the philosophy background that I had. The research we did was always from the point of view of how it was going to influence what happened in classrooms. I found when I started teaching the course in linguistics and reading that I was up against a wall because there already was a conception out there that linguistics is a method of teaching reading. People came into my class

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expecting to be taught the linguistic method. I began to realize that I couldn’t teach people what I knew about reading. I had to give them a whole theoretical base because otherwise they couldn’t assimilate what I was saying. It wasn’t that the concepts were hard; it was that unless people have a theoretical framework and some way of dealing with what they are learning about the reading process, they can’t appreciate new understandings about reading.

JCH: But before you came along, the field of reading wasn’t theoretical. You got the revolution started.

Ken: My model not only served as a basis for people who understood and supported it; it was also the basis for other people to articulate their own models. Phil Gough’s (1985) “One Second of Reading” was his articulation of an alternative model to what I had.

I’ve always had a great deal of respect for other theorists and researchers who take consistent positions and stick to them. We can disagree and debate if we each have models that we believe in. During the period when I was challenging what were considered the “estab-

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lished” facts in the field of reading, I got very good treatment from the people who held those theories. They were secure enough that they could debate somebody with different ideas. And what bothers me today is that some researchers don’t have that same kind of respect for other people’s ideas. They are so anxious to prove themselves in their own thought collective or paradigm that they refuse to consider other ideas and say foolish things which they don’t want to take political responsibility for.

KGS: People understand the contributions you’ve made to understanding language development, understanding the reading process, but they don’t seem to understand the contributions you’ve made to the field of research.

Ken: The reading field is the worst example of one where people did study after study where they started with methodology and then thought of a question to ask.

Yetta: A case in point is reading passages orally and readability. The assumptions are never questioned. You assume that errors are bad. You assume that five mistakes per hundred words equals a certain kind of reading. Then you do studies—not to prove those things—but based on those things. You never examine the basic assumptions. I think that’s what Ken was doing with reading more than anything else. He was uncovering the basic assumptions that underlie the reading process.

Ken: The irony is it wasn’t until I read Ernie House’s article (1991) on scientific realism, that I knew my research paradigm was scientific realism. What scientific realism does is change the understanding of what you’re researching. The Cartesian model, the model within which we’ve all been caught, is looking for cause and effect. Scientific realism is looking for underlying processes and structures. Scientific realism tries to get past the observable events, past superficial kinds of things. It attempts to get at the underlying structures. That’s what I’d been doing with the reading process.

JCH: Isn’t it also a form of ethnography, too?

Ken: Well, I’d argue the other way, that ethnography is probably also scientific realism. It’s about uncovering and not looking for cause/effect relationships. I love the example that House (1991) quotes from Boscar: The question of what if the tree in the forest falls and there’s nobody there to see or hear it. One view is that there was an event whether anybody was there to perceive it or not. But he says that scientific realism adds a dimension to that. Whether there’s anybody there or not, the real questions are: When do trees stand, and when do

they fall? What are the conditions under which trees stand, and what are the conditions under which they fall? When I started doing reading research I didn’t want to go out where students were successful. I wanted to go to the places where schools weren’t working so well. That was very deliberate. That’s the real world. That’s what got us into sociolinguistics and looking at dialect. The kids we were studying represented a range of languages. I wasn’t afraid to ask questions that I didn’t know how to answer because I figured I could find some way of answering those questions. I think that’s part of the scientific realism that I’ve only now realized. If you’re going to get at fundamental structures and processes, you’re always going to run into things that are not easily explained by current popular ways of looking at them.

KGS: What do you see as your greatest contributions?

Ken: I think we have covered them. Our contributions relate to the issue of theory, shared theory, and the creation of a community of learners, thinkers—what we like to call “the collective.” One way of looking at our contribution is to see the collective. Some people say that somehow we brainwash the people that work with us so they all sound the same, but that misses the big picture. What is much more significant is that we share a common theory that we understand well enough so that we are able to build knowledge in ways that no one of us could build alone.

Yetta: That’s the collective.

Ken: One of the most wonderful things is to be some place where I’m meeting a teacher I’ve never met who has read our work, has understood it, and is doing things that are informing me and the rest of the field.

Yetta: I’d say we each made our own contributions, but I don’t think either of us could have made them without the other. One of the things I like to think about is the grassroots nature of whole language. Whole language is the first time in North American history that such a large number of teachers have changed paradigms. Progressive education stayed in private schools. You didn’t have public schools in inner cities and people all over talking and taking action. The grassroots nature of whole language is very powerful, but I think that without reaching out to the teacher-researchers we and others have worked with, the same thing would not have happened. There is a new kind of energy about. There are a lot of teachers who feel good about who they are; our work supports them in wanting to go back and fight the good fight, argue the argument, and look for others to work with.

Ken: Not only have I committed myself to trying to situate my understandings and my research theoretically, but I've also tried to accept responsibility. I don't take responsibility for having a total theory in language, but I do take responsibility that the theories of reading I have fit within a theory of language. Part of that has led to the concept of wholeness—that everything we do relates to everything else. What that has meant is that as whole language has developed, it has had an inclusivity. It can include process writing. It can include psychogenesis and Piagetian insights. It can include Vygotsky and the zone of proximal development. By including these understandings, we are forced to articulate whole language anew and more deeply. It also, of course, leads to some of the controversies.

One of the most wonderful things is to be some place where I'm meeting a teacher I've never met who has read our work, has understood it, and is doing things that are informing me and the rest of the field.

Yetta: We believe all people learn in the same way—adults as well as children. In order for teachers to become knowledgeable, they must go through similar kinds of experiences. They have to examine their own thinking. They have to begin by observing kids.

Ken: We can't tell teachers how kids learn and not understand that the same principles apply to how teachers learn. It's understanding that people have to have a commitment to what they're doing. You can't mandate whole language. The attacks on whole language suggest that teachers have been forced to do whole language. If that has ever happened, it certainly wasn't with our blessing. What we've understood is that teachers have to understand and make their own commitments; otherwise, it isn't going to work anyway.

Yetta: People come up to us when we do workshops together and often say, "You know, we've learned a lot, but the thing that really amazed us is how human you are." They sense our respect for them as educators. It saddens me because everybody who works with teachers should be interacting at this humane level.

Ken: It's one of the reasons why when I lay out the foundations of whole language, I always say that science and humanism are not contradictory. We start from

a scientific premise, but we also start from a humanistic premise. We value people. We treat people as strong and capable. Once at an IRA convention, Bill Eller applied the term "moral" to my views; it shocked me. We were in a session on different views of literacy in which three models were presented. He labeled mine a moral position. I never thought of it as a moral position, but it is a moral position in the sense that the critical theorists are trying to say that you have to look at theory from the perspective of who it helps and who it hurts.

JCH: Where is whole language going? What about the attacks?

Ken: I have a feeling that things are going to get worse, but they're also going to get better. I think that there is an element in the press that's beginning to wake up to the fact that there's a political agenda involved here, not only an educational one. So there are going to be stories about the politics of the attacks on whole language. What's happening in California is a case in point. The press continues to report that there are awful scores in reading and that these declining scores are the result of whole language. Some people are beginning to realize that there's a red herring there.

Yetta: The issue isn't whole language; the issue is public education.

Ken: And there are various groups of people who are interested in the demise of public education as we know it.

Yetta: The California Reading Framework (*English-Language Arts Framework*, 1987) was *not* a whole language document. The main people behind that framework do not see themselves as whole language educators. They used "literature-based" in that document so now the press is attacking literature-based instruction.

Ken: They're attacking the math standards, and they had to conjure up a term "The New, New Math" to attack it because it didn't have a name. If we all stopped using whole language terminology, the attack wouldn't stop. In England the politicians and newspapers attacked "real book reading" because they don't use the term *whole language* there much. Those of us in teacher education need to be proactive and defend the courageous teachers who are bearing the brunt of the attack in the classroom.

KGS: Do you think it's getting worse or getting better?

Ken: Since that article appeared in *The Atlantic Monthly* (Levine, 1994), the same things are appearing in the

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far right newsletters and in the Reading Reform Foundation newsletters. At the time I predicted that those kinds of accusations were going to move into the mainstream press. That's what happened. I wasn't making this prediction out of a crystal ball. It's exactly the pattern that happened in England. Now the attack is broadening from whole language to teachers and teacher organizations as an entity. A recent popular news journal had an attack on the National Education Association which said the problem with education was teacher unions and they should get rid of teacher unions and teacher tenure and that would solve the problem.

Yetta: Some of whole language has become institutionalized in this country. Even our critics are saying, "Oh, of course, we like whole language; of course, we want to use children's literature; of course, we want kids to write." So these experiences for kids are not going to go away.

KGS: In closing, give us your perspectives on the current situation.

Ken: Whole language is the name many teachers in the schools have given to their grassroots movement toward a balanced pedagogy that has changed what happens in schools more than we and perhaps even John Dewey would ever have predicted. Moved by "their own independent intelligence" (Dewey, 1904) they have broken through the political mesh and coil of circumstances and liberated their pupils to learn more than we ever imagined they could.

Yetta: That's why the attack on teachers and schools focuses on whole language. Our Australian colleagues say that it is the tall poppies that get cut down. Those who prefer to limit education to a standardized curriculum, safely transmitted to a limited number of learners, wouldn't be so threatened if teachers weren't doing such a good job. Teachers who are creating possibilities for those the schools have repeatedly failed are being blamed for sensationalized and untrue declines in test scores and literacy.

Ken: Research continuously demonstrates what we don't need research to know—hard working professional teachers are *the* most important component in creating classrooms that can actually fulfill the historic mission of educating all children to the highest level possible. That level is to be knowledgeable, empowered citizens of a democratic society.

Yetta: In the attacks on public education in North America, whole language has become a code for an attack on any innovation in teaching.

Ken: It is an attack on all teachers who take power in their classrooms.

Yetta: It is an attack on teachers who advocate for children. It is part of the battle for and against progress in universal education which Dewey foresaw could only be ended by enlightened and empowered teachers. We celebrate the role of teachers in achieving the possibilities of public education.

Ken: But we must not stop there. There are those in our society who would prefer not to pay for the education of the poor, the disenfranchised, the nonconformists.

There are those who wish to portray public education as a failed experiment. To do this, they attack teachers and learners, blaming the best for the failures of the system. All of us need to actively respond to such attacks, telling and retelling the stories of the lives that teachers make possible in our schools on a daily basis.

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