



# Improvised Dialogues: Emergence and Creativity in Conversation (Publications in Creativity Research)

*R. Keith Sawyer*

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*Improvised Dialogues* is the first social-scientific study of Chicago improv theater. It focuses on the collaborative verbal creativity that improvising actors use to generate their unscripted dialogues. The author spent two years as a performer, and videotaped 15 different Chicago theater groups—both live performances and rehearsals—resulting in almost 50 hours of performance data. To analyze these dialogues, the book presents the theory of collaborative emergence, which focuses on how different pre-existing structures guide improvisation, and how actors use dialogue to jointly create a novel, dramatically coherent performance. Although the dialogue is not scripted, a highly structured performance emerges. Because these elements of improvisation are present in all linguistic interaction, the theory shows how these dialogues are relevant to all researchers who study verbal performance.

*Improvised Dialogues* is thus positioned at the intersection of several fields, each of which includes a tradition of research on improvisation and conversation. In sociology, researchers such as conversation analysts have long studied how participants in interaction creatively produce an orderly dialogue. In folkloristics and linguistic anthropology, researchers have begun to emphasize the importance of creativity in performance. In psychology, contemporary creativity theory has begun to take account of interactional and social factors influencing creativity. All of these fields study collaborative, interactive creativity; no single performer controls the group, but each performer is subtly influenced by the actions of the others.

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