

THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH IN GRADE 8  
IN AN OBE APPROACH

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## **ABSTRACT**

Towards the close of the last century, a new curriculum was introduced in South Africa: Curriculum 2005. This outcomes-based curriculum (OBE) was a radical break with previous education policy: it aimed at eliminating discrimination and encouraging independent learning.

This new curriculum, however, left teachers uncertain and confused largely because the in-service training provided did not provide clear direction. This study first describes the attempt by an English teacher to explore the theoretical base of the new curriculum; it then attempts to ascertain whether the teaching of English would have to change as a result of the OBE Curriculum 2005 and whether material selected in the initial phase of Curriculum 2005 would meet the needs of the learners.

The survey of the literature on language teaching pays particular attention to communicative language teaching (CLT) with its emphasis on using the language for relevant, real-life communicative acts. In addition, it investigates the origins and nature of outcomes-based education to determine whether CLT and OBE combined are suitable vehicles for effective language teaching. The literature survey also suggests a disjunction between the South African version of OBE and CLT. The strong emphasis on achieving certain predetermined outcomes in South African OBE, with the underlying assumption that learning is linear, runs counter to the CLT view that language learning cannot be controlled.

The survey of the literature on CLT and OBE also reveals the need for relevant, interesting material that promotes purposeful communication, encouraging learners to invest in developing their language skills. CLT requires learner engagement in real communication and OBE promotes independent learning and learner responsibility. In the light of the demands made by continuous evaluation and other record keeping, it is unrealistic to expect teachers to design or even adapt material for classroom use.

The semi-empirical part of this study attempts to test the appropriacy of the material and its effect on teaching and learning. A qualitative case study traces classroom events in two grade 8 classes over a period of five weeks using a module taken from the material which was in use at the time at a particular school. This material was specifically acquired by the school with a view to meeting the requirements of the OBE curriculum. Learners in the classes were taught by two different teachers, who recorded their observations, in accordance with a basic observation schedule, during this time. Additional data were produced in two sets of questionnaires. The learners who did the module were

asked to indicate their perceptions of language teaching in the previous year as well as during the five weeks when the module was , and a selected group of teachers at local schools completed a questionnaire on their perceptions of the new curriculum. The responses to the questionnaires are analysed in relation to the literature survey and the conclusions reached by the two teachers involved.

This study reveals that the custom-designed OBE material is not much different from that in traditional language textbooks. It also highlights the difficulties associated with finding language learning material which reflects the dynamics of real-life communication and is hospitable to using the insights of current language acquisition theory, while at the same time meeting the requirements of a South African OBE approach.

In reflecting on what is needed in effective curricular change, this dissertation reveals the importance of involving practising teachers in developing a new curriculum and providing them with the necessary professional development opportunities. In that context, carefully designed and selected learning material is likely to contribute significantly to successful change.

## OPSOMMING

Teen die einde van die vorige eeu is 'n nuwe kurrikulum, Kurrikulum 2005, ingefaseer in Suid-Afrika. Uitkoms-gebaseerde kurrikulum (UGO), wat 'n radikale nuwe benadering tot onderrig in hierdie land ingelui het, was daarop gemik om diskriminasie uit te skakel en om onafhanklike leer te bevorder.

Hierdie nuwe kurrikulum het onderwysers onseker en verward laat voel omdat die indiensopleiding nie duidelik rigtinggewend was nie. Hierdie studie beskryf die poging van 'n Engels-onderwyser om die teoretiese basis van die nuwe kurrikulum te peil en dan om vas te stel of die onderrig van Engels sou moes verander as gevolg van UGO/ Kurrikulum 2005 en of die materiaal wat in die aanvangsfase van Kurrikulum 2005 geselekteer is in die behoeftes van die leerders sou voldoen.

Die oorsig van die literatuur rakende taalonderrig gee besondere aandag aan kommunikatiewe taalonderrig (KTO), met sy klem op die gebruik van taal vir relevante, lewensgetroue kommunikasie. Verder ondersoek dit die oorsprong en aard van UGO om te bepaal of KTO en UGO gekombineerd voorsiening kan maak vir effektiewe taalonderrig. Dit suggereer dat die Suid-Afrikaanse weergawe van UGO en KTO nie heeltemal met mekaar versoen kan word nie. Die sterk klem op die bereiking van sekere voorafbepaalde uitkomst in Suid-Afrikaanse UGO, met die onderliggende aanname dat leer liniêr is, is teenstrydig met KTO se siening dat taalleer nie beheer kan word nie..

Die literatuuroorsig van KTO en UGO openbaar die belangrikheid van relevante, interessante materiaal wat doelgerigte kommunikasie bevorder en leerders aanmoedig om te belê in hul taalvaardighede. KTO vereis dat die leerders deelneem aan werklike kommunikasie en UGO beklemtoon onderwyserfasilitering en leerderverantwoordelikheid. In die lig van die eise wat deurlopende evaluering en ander rekordhouding stel, is dit onrealisties om te verwag dat dat onderwysers materiaal moet ontwerp of selfs aanpas vir klaskamergebruik.

Die semi-empiriese deel van hierdie studie poog om die geskiktheid van die materiaal en die effek daarvan op onderrig en leer te ondersoek. 'n Kwalitatiewe studie vertel wat in twee Gr. 8 klaskamers gebeur het oor 'n periode van vyf weke toe 'n module, geneem uit die materiaal wat in gebruik was in ten tyde van die ondersoek, in die klaskamer geïmplementeer is. Die materiaal is spesifiek aangeskaf deur die skool met die oog daarop om die vereistes van die UGO kurrikulum na te kom. Die leerders is onderrig deur twee verskillende onderwysers wat hul waarneemings

neersgeskryf het volgens 'n basiese waarnemingskedule. Addisionele data is verkry met twee stelle vraelyste. Die leerders wat die module meegemaak het, is gevra vir hul persepsies rakende taalonderrig die vorige jaar sowel as gedurende die vyf weke toe die module gebruik is, en 'n geselekteerde groep onderwysers aan plaaslike skole het 'n vraesly voltooi oor hul persepsies van die nuwe kurrikulum. Die response op die vraelyste is ontleed met verwysing na die literatuurstudie en die gevolgtrekkings van die twee onderwysers wat betrokke was .

Hierdie studie onthul dat die spesiaal ontwerpte UGO materiaal nie baie verskil van dit wat in tradisionele taalhandboeke te vinde was nie. Verder beklemtoon dit die probleme wat ondervind word met die vind van geskikte taalleermateriaal wat die dinamika van werklike kommunikasie reflekteer en die insigte van die huidige linguistiese teorie aangaande taalaanleer akkommodeer, terwyl dit die vereistes van 'n Suid-Afrikaanse UGO benadering probeer bereik.

Waanner daar gereflekteer word oor wat nodig is vir effektiewe kurrikulêre verandering, openbaar hierdie dissertasie die belangrikheid daarvan om diensdoensde onderwysers te betrek in die ontwikkeling van 'n nuwe kurrikulum en om hulle toe te rus met die nodige professionele ontwikkelingsgeleenthede. In daardie konteks is dit waarskynlik dat sorgvuldig ontwerpte en geselekteerde leermateriaal aansienlik sal bydra tot suksesvolle verandering.

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# CHAPTER 1: AIMS AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to situate the discussion in the rest of the dissertation, which focuses on the role of material in teaching English as a second language (for definition of terms see 1.8) in Curriculum 2005.

Since 1994 South African schools have been undergoing radical transformation. The most important reason for this is the critical need for all South African children to have an equal opportunity to acquire the knowledge, competencies and values that will enable them to contribute optimally to a developing, democratic country. In an attempt to eliminate disparities, the post-1994 government insisted on the right of all learners to education. It elected to introduce a curriculum that would grant all learners equal opportunities for skills acquisition: learners and educators who had been “marginalised from mainstream economic and political decision making” would be empowered to take their place in a democratic society as “literate, creative and critical citizens” (WCED 2000a: 4). The result was the implementation of Curriculum 2005, an outcomes-based education (OBE) approach, in grade 1 at the beginning of 1998. At an ideological level the new curriculum required a “revolution in thinking and practices” since it was a departure from the compartmentalisation and specialisation in the old curricula and a move towards the inclusivity of the new. This required a “major reorganisation of South African education” (Naicker 1999: 13).

The change from the curricula of the past to OBE is complicated by the simultaneous move from apartheid education to OBE or, as Naicker puts it, “from exclusionary and authoritarian education based on discriminatory and racist assumptions to inclusive and learner-sensitive education based on human rights” (1990: 14, 15).

The hope was that, in the new South Africa, education would counter the effects of entrenched privilege and the association of ‘whiteness’ with superior intellectual ability and ‘blackness’ with inferior intellectual ability, which had taken root in South Africa, as in many countries with colonial histories. In pre-democratic South Africa funding was predicated on the belief that white children would generally have a profession and black learners would generally become unskilled workers (McKeever 2000: 105, 106). There were consequently huge disparities between the financial support given to white learners compared to black learners. Indian and Coloured learners received more than black learners, but appreciably less than white learners (Molteno 1984: 69; Tunmer 1968:

10). This not only affected the facilities that schools had available, but also had an impact on the learner-teacher ratio. As far back as 1963 the learner ratio translated into 23:1 for whites, 31:1 for coloureds and 58:1 for blacks (Tunmer 1968: 10).

## **1.2 THE STUDY IN CONTEXT**

As a result of the implementation of Curriculum 2005 both teachers and learners face new challenges in the language classrooms of South Africa. Not only must they use a curricular approach which is in great measure a break with the past. but there are also the challenges of creating situations which enable individual learners to acquire skills, knowledge, understanding and values. Change is never easy because it “involves, loss, anxiety, and struggle” (Fullan 2001: 30), no matter whether the change is voluntary or by imposition. Factored into all these challenges is the complexity of change, even when it is welcomed. Often people resist change because they do not understand the “nature or ramifications” of the change (Fullan 2001: 3).

Teachers also have to face the increased marking load and extra administrative work occasioned by the detailed record keeping that Curriculum 2005 demands. In addition, because of a higher learner:teacher ratio (as a result of cutbacks in teacher numbers), learners and teachers have had to adapt to meet the challenges associated with large classes. The view that the workload of teachers has appreciably increased is a nationwide perception, as was highlighted by the President of the NUE in 2002 (Venter 2003: 11). The characterisation of teachers as being “overloaded” (Venter 2003: 12) and the fact of the increased administrative load of teachers emerged strongly in a nationwide survey. In that survey teachers also indicated their concerns about OBE and their confusion about the curricular changes (Hayward 2003: 16).

In my own context, I am one of only four English language teachers in a former Model C school (in which parents of the learners at a particular school undertake to provide that school with greater funding than the government provides) with 830 learners. Prior to 1995 I used to teach, on average, 120 learners in total per year. I now teach 207 learners on average in one year. In our school the average class size has virtually doubled since the reduction of teaching staff began in 1995. In addition, two of the English teachers at our school are Governing Body appointments. Without that funding, I would be teaching twice as many learners in a particular class. Informal discussions with teachers at similar Article 21 schools suggest that this situation is very much the norm at these previously advantaged schools. At schools where the Governing Body cannot afford any teachers who are not on the government’s payroll, the learner:teacher ratio is even bigger, resulting in an

even greater workload for the teacher and a concomitant decrease in the amount of individual attention any particular learner is liable to receive.

Although Chisholm (2000: 26) states that “[f]ormer Model C schools appear to have been able to implement Curriculum 2005 with greater ease than the majority of schools largely because of being better resourced”, these teachers are nevertheless struggling, as anecdotal evidence as well as written responses by teachers (Chapter 5) will show. The majority of schools in South Africa, which have fewer resources, are struggling even more (Chisholm 2000: 26).

At the same time teachers have not undergone the necessary paradigm shift which involves “changes in belief and understanding” (Fullan 2001: 45) that is necessary for lasting reform to occur. I would agree with him that change must be multidimensional and would involve “the possible use of new or revised materials”, “the possible use of new teaching approaches” and “the possible alteration of beliefs” (Fullan 2001: 39). New classroom material, as the literature review will clearly reveal, should be based on the tenets of OBE/ Curriculum 2005. This point will be made in greater detail in 2.5 and 3.7.

While it is a fair assumption that professional teachers should be able to design materials and adapt them to the exigencies of particular curricula or classrooms, many teachers are not in a position to do so. One reason involves the increased administrative load (Chapter 3) and the large class sizes. This entails that the teacher must expend more time on administrative matters and marking, with less time to devote to the design or adaptation of classroom material. Secondly, they have also not been involved sufficiently in “processes that engage teachers in developing new understanding” (Fullan 2001: 44). In comments made by some experienced teachers (le Grange and van der Merwe, 2005: Personal communication), it is clear that not enough has been done to prepare even well qualified and experienced teachers for the radical break with past approaches to teaching and learning. This anecdotal evidence is borne out by Taylor and Vinjevold, who contend that teachers “lack the knowledge resources to give effect to” the demands that the new curriculum makes (1999a: 230).

In summary, it has not generally been practicable for classroom teachers to design the new materials that are needed. Not surprisingly, one of the findings of the Chisholm Review Committee (2000) was that the production of learner support material by publishers should be strongly encouraged (Chisholm 2000: viii). Apart from suggesting the need to provide the necessary materials, studies support the view that “textbooks are the most cost-effective way to improve classroom practice”

(Chisholm 2000: 68). In addition, at least one local study suggests that it is critically important that the classroom material match the competence of the teachers implementing the material, and that such material be reasonably familiar to teachers and “reflect at least some of the practices with which they are familiar” (Taylor and Vinjevoll 1999b: 356). If teachers cannot design material from scratch or adapt existing material, or where the mismatch between teacher competence and material is too great, the teachers will continue to depend on material with which they are familiar, whether it is appropriate or not. In the same vein, if the material invites retrograde approaches, the learners stand to lose many opportunities for skills development. It stands to reason that the competence of teachers is “crucial for effective teaching and learning” (Taylor and Vinjevoll 1999a: 234). There is a close link between the competence of the teacher, the material selected for classroom use and the skills acquisition on the part of the learner, which means that there is “a range of contextual and personal factors” (Taylor and Vinjevoll 1999b: 356) which influence classroom learning. This competence includes the ability to design, adapt, select and use appropriate classroom material.

Change driven from the top is ineffective; teacher support for any educational change is vital (Fullan 2001: 66, 73). When teachers have constructed the meaning of, and the reasons for, the change themselves, they are able to drive transformation, engaging in “ongoing problem-solving”. However, when teachers experience the opposite, namely “confusion, overload, and low sense of efficacy”, their energies are depleted at the very time they are needed most (Fullan 2001: 48). Teachers in general seem to feel that Curriculum 2005 was developed at national level and that they were only involved at the time they were given training to apply the new curriculum just before the implementation phase (Carl 2005: 223). It is therefore all the more essential that teachers are assisted in the process of transformation if there is to be long-lasting meaningful change. It must be borne in mind that the transition period during the process of change is characterised by ambivalence as well as uncertainty because the people involved will try to create meaning for themselves in the light of what they are familiar with. One manifestation of this is the phenomenon of hanging on to elements of the familiar (Fullan 2001: 30-32), which underlines the need for effective classroom material.

Education authorities do not seem able to provide clear guidance on programmes to be implemented (see Chapter 5) nor to effect the necessary pre-implementation planning. At the beginning of 2005, for example, learners who had experienced Curriculum 2005 in grades 7, 8 and 9 suddenly found that they had to do the old curriculum in 2005 because the full implementation of the FET phase



had not been completed. In the face of this debacle, it is hard to escape the conclusion that the implementation of change was overhasty.

Small wonder, then, that in their responses to a questionnaire in the Western Cape 70% of the teachers were negative about the implementation of the new curriculum in grades 10–12. Most of them were confident about their ability to implement the curriculum despite their negative comments regarding their training for the new curriculum (Carl 2007, pre-publication copy). These responses could easily have been affected by the implementation of Curriculum 2005 in grades 8 and 9 a few years previously. It would seem that in the process of implementing the new curriculum teachers have been disempowered rather than empowered. Full account will have to be taken of teachers' views in future, if they are to take ownership of the changes. This will not only influence the quality of implementation but also the long-term quality of education the learners will receive (Carl 2007, pre-publication copy).



In addition, the inaccessible terminology, and the language in which documents dealing with Curriculum 2005 were couched, heightened teachers' sense of disempowerment. Linda Chisholm highlights this problem in her report in May 2000 when she refers to the effects of "obscure curriculum terminology" (Chisholm 2000: vii, 16, 18, 50). This situation was satirised in the

cartoon in *The Teacher* of August 2000, which shows a teacher being led away in a straitjacket, mumbling terminology pertaining to Curriculum 2005.

With the shift from an approach that was largely informed by behaviourism (2.4) (WCED 2000a: 11) to one that is influenced by constructivism, requiring learners and teachers to be actively involved in constructing and reconstructing knowledge and the development of thinking skills (WCED 2000a: 18, 19), there is a need to do research on what is actually happening in classrooms in South Africa and whether these new tenets are feasible.

Although there has been limited classroom-based research (see Taylor and Vinjevold 1999b for a summary of some of this research), there does not appear to be a study which traces the course of events in English language classrooms over a period of some weeks or longer. Although far from having the scope of the seminal classroom-based study of the kind that Woods (1992) undertook, this present study aims to contribute to an understanding of the role of classroom materials in the implementation of a particular educational approach. It also records and explores the process in two English language classrooms, where material purportedly designed for an OBE approach was used. It is in the light of this that the present limited study hopes to make a contribution to the on-going debate about the OBE curriculum.

### **1.3 THE UNDERLYING ASSUMPTIONS OF THE STUDY**

As a serving teacher, I was caught largely unawares the first time I heard OBE mentioned in the 1990s and decided to satisfy my professional curiosity, because I have always taken pride in my professional development. After graduating in 1972 (BA) and completing my Teacher's Diploma (STD), I did a BEd degree (now called a BEd (Hons)) in 1979 to strengthen my capacity in the area of Instructional Leadership. Some years later, in 1990, I undertook research on the role of grammar in the teaching of English for my master's degree. The role of grammar in the acquisition of language proficiency and how best to teach it had become pressing issues for me when the Education Department of the then Cape Province reduced the mark allocation for grammar in the Senior Certificate examination of that year. I believe that teachers should be largely responsible for their own "personal development and self-actualization" (Crookes 2003: 8) and this may be enhanced by a healthy scepticism and critical attitude regarding their own practices and the institution in which they work (Crookes 2003: 8). The imminent advent of Curriculum 2005 in the late 1990s therefore set me on the road to exploring critically what ground-level changes an OBE approach to the teaching of English would entail, just how suitable the material available for

classroom use was (especially with regard to achieving the specified language outcomes) and how events in English language classrooms would be affected as a result of the changes demanded by Curriculum 2005. As I saw it, CLT aims at communicative proficiency. It therefore requires language teaching that engages learners in purposeful communication. OBE, on the other hand, appears to focus on pre-determined outcomes, assuming that language learning can be directed or controlled. There did not appear too much room for real-life communication with its many unplanned moments.

I had a further strong personal commitment to this study. The pre-service teacher training I underwent in the early 1970s did not equip me to deal with the changed role of the teacher and the learner and the other challenges presented by Curriculum 2005. It had not equipped me to deal with CLT either. My previous study had made me realise that attention to mastery of grammatical structures does not result in language learning as effectively as I had believed before. That study helped me to recognise that overt teaching of discrete structures was not the best approach. I came to see the importance of activities that met the interests and needs of the learners and engaged them in using language for authentic purposes. With the advent of OBE, I felt that I would have to engage in a similar exploration of the new curricular approach to develop the necessary theoretical understanding and the professional expertise to implement it in the classroom.

In the past ten years I have frequently heard the lament “I was never trained for this” from my peers in the Cape Province. Although this point is based on anecdotal evidence, I have yet to come across anyone who feels that the brief sessions aimed at orientating serving teachers to Curriculum 2005 were even adequate. This perspective is supported by the Chisholm Review Committee, which writes of “[m]any problems and difficulties [which] were experienced in the process of training” (Chisholm 2000: 19, 56, 80). Transformation can only happen if there is deep-seated questioning and sustained learning, and it is here that many teachers appear to feel let down because of training which is perceived to have been inadequate. Like me, teachers have expressed concerns about the benefits of co-operative learning, especially in the large classes which seem to be the norm currently. There were also concerns about the competence of learners to apply individual and peer assessment.

This study has taken quite a long time. One reason is the increased marking load required by the large classes and the requirements for each grade which were introduced by the Department of Education, first in grades 8 and 9 from the start of Curriculum 2005, and in 2006 also in grade 10. Full implementation of the assessment tasks to be marked in grades 10, 11 and 12 was supposed to

be achieved in 2008. This drastically reduced the time available for me to work on the dissertation. Another reason is the constant changes regarding the implementation of OBE, which illustrates the great need for suitable material to be used in the classroom as personal experience does not equip one for the task of designing or selecting suitable material. To a large extent, the quality of the material supplied or selected for classroom use will determine the extent to which Curriculum 2005 is implemented.

It is in the light of this that I use “I” to somehow illustrate my own enlightenment as this study progressed and how meaning and significance were constructed for me (cf. le Guin 1989). It is my sincere hope that my journey will be of value to others.

#### **1.4 THE RESEARCH PARADIGM**

In the light of my own learning process in the course of this investigation, I find it difficult to place the study in one of the traditional research paradigms. I started the investigation with the hope of finding out whether traditional teaching practice and current classroom language material would have to change to meet the demands of Curriculum 2005. I undertook this investigation to reveal what happens in a language classroom in the normal course of language-learning events and possibly to contribute to the optimisation of teaching and learning events in the language classroom. In the course of my investigation, it was inevitable that a degree of selection occurred. In that sense there is a large measure of interpretation on the part of the two teachers involved in the two classrooms. The research may thus be described as an interpretive qualitative investigation (Merriam 1998: 19), although every attempt has been made to let the data speak for itself (Lather 1991: 92).

#### **1.5 THE RESEARCH DESIGN**

In order to determine the extent to which the teaching of English might have to change in the OBE-based Curriculum 2005, I reviewed the literature on the origins of OBE as well as current and recent approaches to language teaching. The insights gained by the literature review are supplemented by actual classroom events involving the use of apparently suitable material for an OBE approach, according to the publisher. In order to find out whether current OBE classroom material would in fact meet the needs of language learners, I selected two sets of material, one because the school was using this material in Grades 8 and 9 and the other because it was being used by schools in the vicinity as suitable OBE-based language material.

In the year the classroom observation was undertaken, I was allocated one of the Grade8 classes on the timetable and the other class was allocated to the teacher I wanted to include in the study. My reason for selecting her was that she was an experienced, dedicated teacher and could be relied on to work closely with me. Two different teachers teaching the same set of material to two different classes offered the possibility of triangulation, which occurs when data from one source corroborates data derived from another source. This was in the interests of greater trustworthiness regarding the data (Stake 2003: 148).

We used one module from a commercially available set of materials we had decided to use that year and, apart from being involved in teaching the module, we acted as observers, taking down notes on classroom events in the classroom as time allowed and reflected on classroom events afterwards. This meant that classroom events were reasonably intensively monitored and observed for a period of about six weeks.

As both learners and teachers worked their way through this set of classroom materials I hoped to provide some insight into the 'lived experiences' in those classrooms and at the same time cast some light on how appropriate this classroom material was. Grade 8 was chosen because it is the entry year to high school. At our school we had selected and implemented material designed for OBE classrooms for these learners in the years immediately prior to the investigation. The module selected was implemented over a period of about six weeks, with both teachers seeing our learners for six periods, each lasting on average for forty-five minutes, in every nine-day cycle.

It seemed obvious that, because events in two classrooms were being intensively studied over a period of time, a qualitative approach was called for. Since a particular instance was being investigated for local truths, a case study approach seemed the appropriate way of gaining insights from this investigation and, in particular, an observational case study. After that had been determined, I designed a very basic observational schedule so that both teachers would concentrate on observing and noting largely the same aspects. After discussing the implementation with the other teacher, she and I taught the selected module in our classes. Both of us observed certain aspects of the classroom process and made notes in the course of the period whenever possible and later that same day, while the events were fresh in our minds to ensure that the data were authentic and that the clearest meaning would emerge from such data (Babbie and Mouton 2001: 282, 293; Cohen and Manion 1994: 50).

It is hoped that the investigation of these events could inform what happens in other similar English language classrooms (Babbie 2001: 285). If that proves to be the case, the insights gained in the course of this investigation could possibly contribute to the more effective implementation of the Revised National Curriculum Statement.

To strengthen the validity of this particular study, some of the problems such as the changing role of teachers, the uncertainty and anxiety some teachers apparently feel, the management of large classes and the consequent difficulty of tracking individual learners were explored using a teacher questionnaire. This was administered to teachers in the same region as the school at which I was teaching (4.8).

Learners, too, face changing roles and some of them seem to have qualms about the demands being made on them, such as taking responsibility for their own learning and being co-constructors of knowledge in the classroom, and the problems associated with co-operative learning. As Tomlinson (1999: 10, 17) pointed out, learners' belief in the value of the content of the materials being used and the learners' underlying approach to language learning affects the success of a programme of language learning. In order to produce data on the perspective of the learners involved in this study, learners in both classes were asked to complete a questionnaire.

In the light of the above, two research questions, which formed the basis of this study, were formulated. These research questions were process-oriented and called for detailed descriptions and explanations. These questions, in turn, will inform the methodology which will be followed in this study (Willig 2001: 19, 20).

Both questions involved a literature study as well as classroom observation and analysis of language teaching materials. To strengthen the validity of the interpretation of the data, a learner questionnaire, completed by the learners who participated in this study, and a teacher questionnaire, completed by English teachers at neighbouring schools and other teachers teaching similar classes using similar materials, were analysed.

This investigation broadly tried to determine

- \* what changes have to be made to the teaching of English to accommodate the implementation of OBE/ Curriculum 2005.

It also endeavoured to determine

- \* the extent to which particular commercially available material in the initial phase of Curriculum 2005 met the needs of English language learners in an OBE/ Curriculum 2005 classroom.

These research questions dictated the direction and format of this investigation.

## **1.6 OUTLINE OF THE CHAPTERS**

In this introductory chapter I have tried to emphasise the importance of the challenges facing teachers and learners in the English language classrooms in this country at present in the light of the implementation of OBE in the form of Curriculum 2005 as well as the move from a discriminatory past. The importance of the design and selection of appropriate material by teachers facing educational change and uncertainty was emphasised, as well as the need for material to facilitate the acquisition of language and other skills in order for learners to reach the critical and language outcomes demanded by Curriculum 2005. I highlighted other challenges facing teachers and learners (such as the large classes in schools and the administrative load borne by teachers), and I have also drawn attention to my own lack of knowledge regarding OBE and the need to do a thorough literature review.

Chapter 2 reviews traditional approaches to English language teaching as well as the rise of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) (2.5). It highlights the essential characteristics of CLT, the development of language learning skills and the broad design features of CLT. The chapter also reviews recent trends in curriculum design.

Chapter 3 begins by investigating the origins of OBE and attempts to describe the need for and rationale of OBE. Next I review changed and changing perspectives on classroom learning in an OBE approach before tracing the development of OBE in South Africa and explore some of the ways in which English teaching is shaped by an OBE environment. After examining some of the general problems regarding OBE, I probe some of the links between CLT and OBE. Particular attention is given to the role of materials, since in times of uncertainty the appropriate materials can provide necessary support to teachers and learners. The final section looks at various criteria that can be used to determine the suitability of the material.

In order to investigate whether the implementation of Curriculum 2005 necessitated changes to the way that English is to be taught and whether particular commercially available material would facilitate the achievement of the outcomes as determined in Curriculum 2005, I had to devise a study in which the course of the actual events in the two language classrooms concerned were monitored. Chapter 4 provides a detailed discussion of the research design and research methodology, with particular reasons for my decision to do a qualitative case study. It also describes the instruments I used: a rudimentary observation schedule and two questionnaires.

The data produced during the classroom observation, as well as by the learner and teacher questionnaires, are explored in detail in Chapter 5.

In Chapter 6, I analyse the other modules in the textbook used as well as those in another set of commercially available material. This was a form of triangulation to confirm the validity of the analysis in Chapter 5.

In Chapter 7, the study is summarised, the main conclusions are detailed and the limitations of the study explored. Recommendations are made for future study and, in the final section, I reflect on the value of the study.

## **1.7 KEY CONCEPTS**

I offer the following definitions of key concepts as they are understood in policy documents and in South African schools and, therefore, in this investigation.

### **1.7.1 Outcomes-based Education (OBE)**

OBE has been defined as “clearly focusing and organizing everything in an educational system around what is essential for all students to be able to do successfully at the end of their learning experiences” (Spady 1994a: 1). In order to do this, precise exit outcomes are set and schools are allowed to find their own ways in which learners are able to achieve these outcomes. In other words the outcomes are predetermined (King and Evans 1994: 74).

OBE is also very firmly learner-centred and geared towards ensuring that each learner will succeed by focusing on his/her particular needs in order to ensure continuous improvement.



### **1.7.2 Curriculum 2005**

South African schools implemented OBE in grade 1 in 1998 and in other grades in subsequent years. The intention was that OBE would be fully implemented by 2005 (Rooi 1997: 6). The curriculum has become known as Curriculum 2005 and emphasises lifelong learning (van der Horst and McDonald 1997: 5), with a new emphasis on the principles of co-operation, critical thinking and social responsibility in order to achieve this goal (Manganyi 1997). In terms of Curriculum 2005, certain cross-curricular outcomes were determined, which would be addressed in all the learning areas, and specific outcomes were determined for each learning area. It is on this period, which lasted from 2000 until 2005 for grade 8 (the group for whom the material was implemented), that this study concentrates, hence the consistent use of the term Curriculum 2005.

It is acknowledged that Curriculum 2005 has since been amended by the Revised National Curriculum Statement (and the term Curriculum 2005 dropped) and certain outcomes have been revised, but in this study I will consistently use the term Curriculum 2005 as that was the term used during the time of the investigation.

### **1.7.3 Critical outcomes (COs)**

An outcome has been defined as a “high quality culminating demonstration of something that really matters in the long run” (Spady as quoted in WCED 2000a: 47). An outcome has therefore been achieved when the learner can demonstrate at the end of a particular programme that he or she can actually do what the outcome specifies and it can therefore “be seen, heard or noticed in some way” by an observer (WCED 2000a: 57).

Critical outcomes are “broad, generic cross-curricular goals” (WCED 2000a: 46). As such they form the basis of all the learning areas. They are “things that we need to be trained in and to practise every day” and therefore “critical tools rather than distant goals” (WCED 2000a: 47). These outcomes “will ensure that learners gain the skills, knowledge and values that will allow them to contribute to their own success” (DoE 1997: 15).

### **1.7.4 Language outcomes (LOs)**

Specific outcomes, here called language or learning outcomes (for the Language and Literacy Language Area), are derived from the critical outcomes (WCED 2000a: 47) and define the learning

area (WCED 2000a: 45). They are what the learner can demonstrate to prove that (s)he has been able to master a certain skill within a learning area and will include the “skills, knowledge and values” which enable the learner “to demonstrate the achievement of an outcome” (DoE 1997: 21).

Both the critical outcomes and the specific outcomes must be “part of the daily experience of the learners” (WCED 2000a: 47).

## **1.8 USE OF TERMS**

In order to avoid any confusion, the following terms have been used consistently throughout the study, unless taken directly from a source:

- \* He or she and his or her to avoid gender stereotyping;
- \* Learner – in keeping with the latest use in South Africa as opposed to the traditional ‘pupil’ (in South Africa and the United Kingdom) and ‘student’ (mainly in the USA);
- \* Teacher (not the term ‘educator’ used in current South African policy documents);
- \* First language (not the term ‘primary language’ used in South African policy documents in force at the time of the study and now officially referred to as ‘home language’);
- \* Second language, in the sense of any language other than a first language, no matter where he or she is learning that language or how many languages (s)he has already learnt (Sharwood Smith 1994: 7) (not the term ‘additional language’ in use at the time or ‘first additional language’ or ‘second additional language’ which is used in current South African policy documents);
- \* ‘learnt’ and ‘acquired’ are used interchangeably unless there is explicit reference to specific differentiation;
- \* Curriculum 2005, the OBE-based official curriculum for South African schools which was current in Grades 8 and 9 from 2001 - 2005, the period covered by this

investigation. The Revised National Curriculum Statement has since supplanted Curriculum 2005 (2008);

- \* The term outcome is used in this dissertation as meaning “a culminating demonstration of learning” (Brandt 1993: 66). Authors use a variety of synonymous terms when referring to outcomes. The words ‘outcome’, ‘goal’, ‘purpose’ and ‘end’ are used interchangeably in the literature. To avoid possible confusion, Spady (1994a: 50) recommends that only the word ‘outcome’ should be used. This advice has been adopted in South Africa. The practice followed will be to use the term originally used by a particular author when discussing his/her work, but at all other times the term ‘outcome’ will be used.

## **1.9 SUMMARY**

In this chapter I have situated this study in a transforming South Africa, where a new curriculum is being implemented which aims at equipping all learners in South Africa with equal opportunities to learn and to acquire the skills they need in order to prepare themselves for life in a fast-changing global environment. At present most teachers, even those who are very experienced and well qualified, remain uncertain about the implementation of this Curriculum. I have argued that the appropriate materials will be a critical factor in determining whether English teachers will be able to rise to the challenges presented by the new Curriculum. Two research questions were formulated to guide the exploration of the changes that have to be made to the teaching of English to accommodate the implementation of OBE/Curriculum 2005, and the extent to which particular commercially available material in the initial phase of Curriculum 2005 met the needs of English language learners in an OBE/Curriculum 2005 classroom.

The next chapter will examine previous and prevailing language teaching methods and curricula internationally and locally in order to illuminate the curriculum choices that have been made by the national Department of Education in order to equip the learners of South Africa for their present and future roles.

## CHAPTER 2: ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING METHODS AND CURRICULA

### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

The literature review reported in this and the next chapter was undertaken to establish a theoretically accountable framework for my study. This chapter outlines views of language and their impact on how language learning and language teaching are viewed internationally, before going on to explore language learning and teaching methods and approaches that have influenced second language teaching in South Africa.

I conducted my study at a time when, in the interests of democratising education, Curriculum 2005, an OBE curriculum, was being implemented (Naicker 1999: 69; WCED 2000).

I began the review by demarcating which literature should be surveyed to provide an account of the theories of language that resulted in language teaching that focuses on communicative competence rather than merely on linguistic competence. As Mouton (2001:90) points out, reviewing every article or contribution written on a particular topic is an “unattainable” goal. I have followed his recommendation to review the literature that was strictly relevant to my research goals. Since the research is concerned with language-teaching materials in use in South Africa just after the turn of the twenty-first century, the review in this chapter focuses mainly on studies covering the period from 1980 to 2003. This literature review informed the research design and the interpretation of the findings. However, where required, contributions from older studies are used. Some recent studies (2004 – 2009) have been included to fine-tune the discussions of language teaching within an OBE framework. As mentioned, my discussion gives particular attention to the development of broad-based Communicative Language Teaching since this was the approach adopted within our OBE system. This was (and continues to be) the approach advocated in the South African school language curriculum at the time of my empirical investigation.

Second language acquisition studies have tended to draw on first language studies since there are certain similarities between the ways in which a first and second language are acquired. Therefore, I first look briefly at first language acquisition.

## 2.2 FIRST LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

The typical child learns to speak his/her first language with apparent ease (Aitchison 1998: 6, 7; Crain and Lillo-Martin 1999: 7). Although their research was conducted thirty years ago, the definition of language structures and forms provided by Cairns and Cairns (1976) remains a useful one. They see language acquisition as the development of “linguistic competence in that [the child] develops an internal representation of the grammar of his/her language that eventually allows him to make the kinds of linguistic judgements an adult can make ...” But linguistic competence does not adequately explain the child’s developmental ability “to make himself or herself understood to others and also understand what others are telling him with increasing complexity” (Aitchison 1998: 76). Although there have been a great number of theoretical and empirical studies in the field of this phenomenon, there is as yet no theory that sufficiently accounts for the acquisition process. As Lust (2006: 100) puts it, “the superb ability of ... children to learn a language (or many) remains to be explained”. The most influential study thus far is the longitudinal one done by Roger Brown (1973). Studies such as Brown’s (1973: 273-279) and others quoted by Ellis (1994) and Aitchison (1998: 83) have shown that children appear to acquire their first language in certain developmental phases and in relatively the same order. Young language learners “actively engage in a gradual subconscious and creative process of discovery” leading to the acquisition of the rule system of the language (Ovando and Collier 1985: 59). According to theorists like McNeill (1970), the child constructs a simple grammar from all the primary language data he or she hears from those around him/her, which is why the child’s grammar is remarkably like those of other children at a similar stage who are in the same speech community. Language learners seem to have some form of internal syllabus (Sharwood Smith 1994: 48).

Working on the premise posited by Allport and others, who saw imitation as the key mechanism (Gleason and Weintraub 1878: 173) and linguistic knowledge as consisting of “chains of associations”, behaviourists like Skinner tried to explain language acquisition as a process of being conditioned to learn a certain language behaviour (Cairns and Cairns 1976: 191, 192; Howatt 2004: 273-4). Chomsky (1957) vigorously refutes this because imitation and practice cannot account for children’s ability to engage in spontaneous, free language use. Not only do children create sentences they have never heard, but they also frequently fail to imitate correctly the sentences they hear (Fodor, Bever and Garrett 1974: 457, 458; Aitchison 1998: 75). It seems clear that language acquisition relies on certain cognitive skills (Pavio and Begg 1981: 252; Crain and Lillo-Martin 1999: 12) and that there is some kind of internal syllabus (Sharwood Smith 1994: 48). Language acquisition is essentially a “continuing progress” (Barton 1998: 107), which is likely to relate to the

richness and appropriateness of exposure in the environment, particularly in the area of situated discourse (Nippold 1998: 4; Crain and Lillo-Martin 1999: 4, 31).

### **2.3 SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION**

Considerable research has been done in the field of second language acquisition since the 1970s (see, for instance, Larson-Freeman and Long 1991; Ellis 1985, 1990, 1994; Lightbown and Spada 2006). As Ellis (1997) points out, however, second language research findings do not and probably never will offer clear guidelines for the classroom teacher. However, a better understanding of research findings will permit teachers and learners to make the most of the time they spend together in “the twin processes of teaching and learning a second language” (Lightbown and Spada 2006: 194). Second language research suggests some interesting similarities between first and second language acquisition. First, learners seem to move through similar stages in the development of competence in the second language (Nunan 2001: 88; Howatt 2004: 336). Secondly, they seem to discover the rules underlying a language as part of their progress from one developmental stage to the next (Ovando and Collier 1985: 59; Ellis 1994: 20, 21; Howatt 2004: 336). It should be noted, however, that these systematic developmental stages are highly complex (Ellis 1997: 24).

According to Larson-Freeman and Long (1991: 227-269), the many theories attempting to explain second language acquisition can be grouped in 3 main types, viz. nativist, environmentalist and interactionist. Nativist theories try to explain language learning in terms of an “innate biological endowment” (Larson-Freeman and Long 1991: 227). Exponents of environmentalist theories of second language acquisition attach greater importance to experience than to inherited factors (Larson-Freeman and Long 1991: 250), while exponents of interactionist theories of second language acquisition try to combine both nativist and environmentalist theories in their description of the learner using his/her innate ability to construct discourse with a caretaker (Larson-Freeman and Long 1991: 266).

Stephen Krashen may be seen as an environmentalist in that he sees exposure to comprehensible input in a low-stress environment as essential. He is also a nativist in that he sees language acquisition as an unconscious process in which a learner uses his/her innate language acquisition device to acquire a language in a natural way by using it for meaningful purposes (Krashen 1982: 10; Richards and Rodgers 2001: 181; Howatt 2004: 337). For him there is a strong difference between language acquisition and language learning. In his input hypothesis, he emphasises that learning is a “conscious process of studying” language forms (Ellis 1994: 20, 27, 47). During

formal teaching sessions the learner is consciously taught about the rules of the language (Krashen 1982: 10; Richards and Rodgers 2001: 181). As a result the learner develops a 'monitor' and is thus able to self-correct his/her own use of language. For him, the use of this monitor is subject to very specific conditions. The speaker must be focusing on accuracy when (s)he is doing this and (s)he must know the relevant rule that (s)he is applying (Klein 1986: 20, 29). His no-interface position hypothesises that consciously learned grammar knowledge cannot prepare the learner for "a particular linguistic target form before all the forms that are supposed to precede that particular form have been acquired". Thus, Krashen says, the natural sequence of acquisition cannot be changed by conscious learning (Sharwood Smith 1994: 94) because learning, according to Krashen, cannot lead to acquisition (Richards and Rodgers 2001: 181; Krashen 1982: 83).

In sum, for Krashen, languages are not learned by practising them or through interaction (Ellis 1997: 47, 49), but through input, which Sharwood Smith (1984) defines as "potentially processible language data available to the learner", which actually causes language acquisition (Lee and Vanpatten 1995: 29).

Although Krashen has had a strong influence on language practitioners, his views have been widely criticised and his claims do not have the support they previously did (Larson-Freeman and Long: 1991: 249; Nunan 2001:90). The input hypothesis and  $i+1$  was untestable, as Krashen himself has admitted. McLaughlin (1978) and Ellis (1985) are among those who have revealed the weakness in the argument for conscious and subconscious processes. Cook (1991) criticises  $i+1$  as being far too vague to be of any assistance to a teacher because it does not pay much heed to the actual listening or learning processes. Part of the challenge is that learners' language development "is a gradual and protracted process, and can be difficult to observe" (Nippold 1998: 3). Spolsky (1989: 4) is even more dismissive, seeing Krashen's entire model as too vague to meet a fundamental requirement of a theory of second language learning: i.e. that it "must be testable against any example". Taking an interactionist view, Swain (1985) contends that input is not sufficient: output also has a role to play in language acquisition (the comprehensible output hypothesis, Ellis 1994: 27), because output provides feedback to the learner regarding his/her state of language use and acquisition (Ellis 1997: 49). Similarly, Scarcella (1990: 70, 71) argues that comprehensible input is not sufficient. Learners must interact with one another so that they use the language for "real, personally significant purposes". They need to use the language in order to involve learners more competent than themselves; they need to be able to communicate successfully in order to enhance their language and academic skills. While the view that "[t]he best environment appears to be the richest natural

productive interactive one” (Lust 2006: 122) is persuasive, it would be a daunting challenge to achieve this in a school environment.

Although there are some similarities between first and second language learning, such as the stages of development, there are some obvious differences between them. In a sense learners learning a second language in schools have a clear advantage. They should already have a vast amount of knowledge about language and it is reasonable to assume that they will draw on this knowledge and apply it when learning their second language (Ellis 1997: 5). In other ways learners are at a disadvantage. A child learning his/her mother tongue will hear an enormous amount of language (at home and at school) in “full-time practice”; obviously the amount of exposure to a second language and the time spent in hearing and practising it is significantly less. In addition, the child would have a stronger motivation for learning his/her mother tongue than a second language. As Hawkins (1987: 181) points out, children in school learning a second language are generally simply learning new ways of expressing what they are fully able to do in their mother tongue or learning new terms for things discovered long ago.

In his comprehensive survey Dörnyei (2005) demonstrates the way in which factors such as personality traits, motivation and language aptitude can influence the level of success in learning a second language. There are many factors which can affect motivation. Negative attitudes and beliefs on the part of the teacher or the learner, for instance, can reduce a learner’s motivation and thus impede language learning (Oxford 2001: 168). One negative attitude might be towards the use of the learners’ first language in second language classrooms – the ‘English-only’ approach. It is very important for learners to feel that their first languages are valued (Scarcella 1990: 56). Another is an authoritarian approach that relies on extrinsic motivation. Although extrinsic or external motivation may bring about short-term increases in performance, it is much weaker than intrinsic motivation, which comes from within the learner (Brown 2002: 12; Crookes 2003: 133), so ways to arouse the interest and curiosity of the learners must be used in the classroom (2.4) and in Outcomes-based Education (OBE) (3.8.2). Where this is successfully achieved, it is likely that learners will be prepared to invest in their language development and new ‘social identity’ (Norton quoted in Morgan 2004: 162). Investment here refers to the time and effort the learners are prepared to put into their language development so that this investment in its turn may produce benefits and changes in the learners themselves (Brown 2002: 12; Morgan 2004: 162). Yet another constraint is the kind of environment. A first language is generally developed in a very supportive environment. As Brown (2002: 12) emphasises, it is important to recognise that a learner’s confidence is fragile. He uses the term ‘language ego’ to describe the fragility that learners experience when their lack of



words or strategies leave them feeling helpless. Even organisational procedures can affect confidence or diminish motivation. Crookes (2003: 132), for instance, found that learners lost interest when they were assigned to a group, instead of choosing their own group members. Most theorists within a humanist framework believe that second language teachers should be sensitive to the affective needs of language learners. Ways of motivating learners and eliminating stress must therefore be incorporated into every aspect of classroom activities (Scarcella 1990: 58-59; Richards and Rogers 2001; Brown 2002; Lewis 2002: 41).

The implication for formal or classroom teaching is that not only should teachers consciously work towards creating an environment that encourages learning (Scarcella 1990: 58, 59; Richards and Rogers 2001: 183; Brown 2002:11-12), but they should do all they can to continually and dynamically engage learners with comprehensible input, written and spoken English, and regular and substantial interaction for “diverse, real, personally significant communicative purposes” (Scarcella 1990: 53-54).

A strong body of researchers argues that learners also need a curriculum that allows them to develop the ability to use structures of a language meaningfully and appropriately in complex communication (Ellis 1992, 1999; Doughty and Long 2005; Lightbown and Spada 2006). Although much work has been done in this area, the issue of how best to help learners to acquire and use these structures ‘meaningfully and appropriately’ in a second language situation needs further research. As Lust (2006: 100) stresses, “language learning is affected by many factors. Among these are the personal characteristics of the learner, the structure of the native and target languages, opportunities for interaction with speakers of the target language, and access to correction and form-focused instruction”. For more detailed attention to this point, see 2.5 in the discussion of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT).

Given the complexities of second language acquisition, it should not be surprising that there is no single theory or model that can incorporate and explain all the facets of second language learning satisfactorily (Bialystok 1994: 138; Ellis 1997: 89; Nunan 2001: 87).

The next section will outline some approaches to language teaching that preceded Communicative Language Teaching. This is necessary because these approaches continue to influence approaches to second language teaching throughout the world.

## 2.4 SOME PRE-COMMUNICATIVE APPROACHES TO LANGUAGE LEARNING/TEACHING

According to Bell (1981: 79), from the very beginnings of the study of language teaching there has been a fundamental difference between those who regarded language as a logical system and emphasised the form, and those who saw it as arising from social and individual needs and emphasised the function of language. There have also been divisions between those who sought to discover those universal characteristics which are the same for all languages and those who wanted to draw up systems for each particular language.

The grammar-translation method has been used since at least the sixteenth century. Learners are taught by means of translating, rote learning of vocabulary and traditional grammar exercises. The literature of the language being studied was the main focus of this method (Stern 1983: 458). It is a “method for which there is no theory” (Richards and Rodgers 2001: 3, 4, 7). In South Africa the translation aspect of the method has not generally been used, except in teaching foreign languages, but the legacy which Howatt (2004: 130) describes lives on in second-language classrooms:

[I]t ... contained the seeds, which eventually grew into a jungle of obscure rules, endless lists of gender classes and gender-class exceptions, self-conscious ‘literary’ archaisms, snippets of philology, and **a total loss of genuine feeling for the language** (my emphasis).

At the beginning of the twentieth century the direct method arose in reaction to the grammar-translation method (Richardson 1983: 19) and attempts were made to develop language-teaching principles from “naturalistic principles of language learning” (Richards and Rodgers 2001: 11). Learners are exposed to the spoken language and they are expected to speak it (Richardson 1983: 19). The language is taught inductively and learners have to work out the rules on their own (Krashen 1982: 135).

From about 1920 until 1960 there was little significant change in the way second-language English was taught in Britain (Allen 1973: 30). Palmer, Hornby and others developed systematic principles regarding selection, gradation and presentation leading to the oral approach and situational language teaching. This was regarded as a British structural approach coming from a “behaviourist habit-learning” theory, with one difference from the American view discussed below – the pre-eminence of the situation, leading to “purposeful activity .... in the real world” (Richards and Rodgers 2001:

40). On the other side of the Atlantic American linguistics was dominated by the descriptive linguistics (structuralism) of Bloomfield and Fries from 1933 to 1957 (Whitehead 1973: 153 - 155).

As Howatt (2004: 306) points out, the simplistic habit-formation employed by Fries does not really need a theory of learning. The methods such as the Army Method and audiolingualism were rather a matter of over-learning built on commonsense. Language learning meant that there was to be lots of practice, with “constant repetition” (Bloomfield 1933b: 505). “Real language teaching [constituted] a building up in the pupil those associative habits” of the language and was mainly accomplished by linguistic and phonetic drills (Bloomfield 1933a: 294, 299).

B.F. Skinner’s behaviourist theories had a very strong influence on second language teaching (Richards and Rogers, 2001; Howatt, 2004). In these theories language was viewed by behavioural scientists as a set of habits which could be taught and learned if there was the necessary feedback and reinforcement. Learners had to memorise pattern sentences and dialogue, which were followed by exercises in which the learning had to be applied. The teacher had to control the classroom activities so that learners would avoid making errors, seen as undesirable habits to be avoided and the main aim was the learning of the grammatical structures of the language (Rivers 1968: 35; Chastain 1976: 109, 112 – 113; Larsen-Freeman 2000: 41). An obvious criticism is that this presupposes a control over language learning that teachers simply cannot have – a criticism which also could be made of outcomes-based education with its emphasis on predetermined learning outcomes (3.4, 3.7.2 ). The major criticism of audiolingualism and associated methods is that it decontextualises language, ignoring its social dimension and its essentially dynamic nature.

In 1957 another “scientifically”-based view, namely language as a cognitive code, came to prominence. This postulated that, in order to acquire the necessary “system of abstract knowledge” (linguistic competence), a learner had to “actively formulate rules (or hypotheses) and test these against experience” (Branigan and Stokes 1984: 5).

The basic idea was that a language has an underlying system of rules and that a language learner internalises this rule system in the process of acquiring a language. Once a learner had acquired the rule system of the language, he or she would be able to make many different, also unique, utterances. Teaching learners the structures of a language was done in the belief that the rules underlying a language were the same as the traditional grammar rules. Getting learners to do exercises was used as a complementary mechanism and also a means of testing whether the learner had mastered the structures which had been taught (Chastain 1976: 147, 150; Rivers 1984: 6, 33).

Other proposals trying to account for human grammar include Archangeli and Langendoen's Optimality Theory, which links language knowledge and language usage and suggests that "there are no fixed bounds on language" (Aitchison 1998: 263, 264).

The cognitive code advocated by Chastain (1976) and Jacobovits (1970), among others, supported the explicit teaching of grammar, since the learner would have to make use of his/her cognitive skills in the process. It did, however, recognise that learners needed opportunities to use the language creatively in "language-demanding situations" (Ellis 1990: 38, 39). Nevertheless, it does not make adequate provision for the role of meaning-making in language development. Learners learn a language by actively integrating and applying the language they know in meaningful interaction with others. The need for learners to interact in "real communicative experiences" (Ellis 1997: 79) of this kind in a learner-centred approach gave rise to the approach known as Communicative Language Teaching and "marks the beginning of a major paradigm shift within language teaching in the twentieth century, and whose ramifications continue to be felt today", the principles of which "are today widely accepted around the world" (Richards and Rodgers 2001: 151). It is to this approach that I now turn.

## **2.5 COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING**

The favoured approach to teaching English to second language learners in the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the earlier part of the 21<sup>st</sup> century has been the communicative approach (Howatt 2004: 326) and all over "[t]eaching materials, course descriptions, and curriculum guidelines proclaim a goal of communicative competence" (Savignon 2002: 3). The communicative approach can be seen as a contrast to a structural or grammatical approach (Stern 1983: 259) and came about largely in Europe as a result of the work of British linguists such as Widdowson and Candlin, who drew on the work of Halliday and Firth, who were concerned with the social as well as the linguistic context of language use (Richards and Rogers 2001: 153; Savignon 2002: 1; Howatt 2004: 328f). A parallel development in America emanated from the work of Hymes (1972) and his notion of communicative competence, a point to which I will return later.

The initial work done for the Council of Europe in the 1970s, including notional and functional syllabi, concentrated on the assessment of the communicative needs of learners (Richards and Rodgers 2001: 154; Howatt 2004: 326-330). In 1978 Munby proposed a communicative syllabus which would be appropriate to the needs of a group of learners. In 1980 Breen and Candlin explored the theoretical implications of a process approach to language teaching. In their view the learner had

much to bring to the act of language learning and these assets had to be utilised during language learning activities. The focus is on knowledge which is relevant to the learner and on activities which promote communication (Melrose 1991: 8-11; Marx 1997: 351) with many links to life outside the classroom (Nunan 1990: 115).

### **2.5.1 A new view of language**

In contrast to earlier methodologies which focused on the language as being made up of elements that were produced in a rule-governed structural way (Richards and Rodgers 2001; Howatt 2004), CLT thus emanates from a theory of language which regards language as communication (Richards and Rodgers 2001: 19): language is a means of performing functions, such as expressing meaning and allowing “interaction and communication”, and is “to be seen as part of a more general theory incorporating communication and culture” (Richards and Rodgers 2001: 159, 161).

In learning a language within this paradigm, as was indicated in an earlier paragraph, the focus is on the learners and primacy is given to their communicative needs (Savignon 2002: 3). Broadly, the view is that learners who acquire or learn English as a second language have two main reasons for using it outside the classroom: psycho-social and informational-cognitive (Lee and Vanpatten 1995: 150). The former entails bonding socially or engaging in some form of social behaviour. The latter involves obtaining information, usually to accomplish some task. In their view, beginner and intermediate learners in the language classroom would not use the language much for social purposes, but would be primarily concerned with activities in which information is exchanged (Lee and Vanpatten 1995: 151). When learners are using the target language, what is at issue is their ability to understand and use the language.

### **2.5.2 Broad characteristics of CLT**

In this section, aspects such as communicative competence, the variety of the faces of CLT, and some common or characteristic features will be outlined. As indicated earlier, the desired outcome of language learning is seen as communicative competence, a term introduced by Hymes in 1971, very different from the Chomskyan view of competence, which was largely concerned with grammatical competence in the ideal learner rather than the dynamics of language produced in particular contexts (Berns 1990: 30). In the term ‘communicative competence’ Hymes included being able to use the language successfully in communicative interactions (Savignon 1983: v; Berns 1990: 30). CLT emphasises “the engagement of learners in communication to allow them to

develop their communicative competence” (Savignon 2002: 7) and the development of communicative skills by means of practice (Richards and Rodgers 2001: 162). Initially, communicative competence was seen as having four elements: sociolinguistic competence, linguistic competence, discourse competence and strategic competence (Breen and Candlin 1980). There have been a number of models since then. Perhaps the best known are the ones by Bachman (1991) and Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei, and Thurrel (1997).

A communicative approach may be described as “any approach to language teaching that claims to be based on a view of language as communication” involving activities that involve real communication, use meaningful tasks and promote meaningful learning (Richards and Rodgers (2001: 161). Because CLT “refers to a wide set of principles that reflect a communicative view of language and language learning and that can be used to support a wide variety of classroom procedures”, there are many differences of interpretation and application and a wide range of ‘camps’ that identify with it (Richards and Rodgers (2001: 157, 172). Many practitioners, for instance, draw on methods such as Total Physical Response, Suggestopedia and the Silent Way (Richards and Rogers 2001).

CLT calls for an expanded role for teachers and for learners. While the traditional role of teacher as instructor or transmitter remains, it is generally curtailed. Breen and Candlin (1980: 99) describe the roles of the teacher as a facilitator of classroom communication, an independent participant (organiser of resources, a resource, and a director of classroom procedures and activities), and a researcher and learner. These roles are rather idealistic as they assume that the teacher has appropriate knowledge of how language works, the nature of language learning and effective classroom organisation. Research done in the South African context suggests a rather different picture (see, for instance, van der Merwe 1994; Nathanson 2008).

The learner is expected to take on a much more active role and to share responsibility for learning. As Breen and Candlin (1980:10) argue, “[the learner] should contribute as much as he gains”. In practice, however, the role of the learner is influenced by the role adopted by the teacher, the environment established in the classroom and the activities that he or she is required to participate in.

Although there is much variation in implementation, as is clear from the previous paragraphs, practitioners use the terms ‘communicative approach’ or ‘communicative teaching’ as if everyone means the same thing (Berns 1990: 80-82). In addition, as Savignon (2002: 3) and Ridge (1996:

66), for instance, point out, there are a number of misconceptions about CLT. One is that group work is a characteristic feature. Another is that ‘communicative’ means oral aspects are paramount. A third is that a meaning-focus means that no grammar teaching should be done.

Despite the variation, it is possible to identify characteristic features of CLT. Johnson and Johnson (cited in Richards and Rodgers 2001: 173), for instance, see the following as core characteristics that underpin “applications of communicative methodology”. These are:

1. Appropriateness
2. Message focus
3. Psycholinguistic processing
4. Risk taking
5. Free practice.

All of these reflect the focus on meaning-making and meaning-creating in a particular situation. **Appropriateness**, in line with the work of Halliday, underlines the need to use language that is appropriate for the context, the relationship between the participants and the purpose. Choices, therefore, involve far more than linguistic correctness. **Message focus** places the emphasis on making or negotiating meaning as opposed to being engaged in mechanical activities. **Psycholinguistic processes** point to the use of cognitive and other processes that underlie language acquisition. **Risk taking** focuses on the need to go beyond what has been taught and apply strategies to make informed guesses. **Free practice** highlights the nature of real use of language, which involves the simultaneous use of a variety of sub-skills rather than one discrete skill.

### 2.5.3 Current emphases in CLT

Although the characteristics Johnson identified are still largely evident, CLT has undergone some change since it was first implemented and this section will concentrate on the main thrust of these changes over the last two decades.

#### 2.5.3.1 *Focus on form*

Having had its beginnings in the functional syllabus, “it has evolved into a basis for culturally and socially responsive language teaching that does not dictate or prescribe a syllabus type or teaching methodology” (Berns 1990: 103). As briefly referred to in the previous section, an erroneous

interpretation of appropriacy led many to assume that accuracy was no longer important. Because of this, many practitioners of CLT assumed that no structural input (grammar teaching) whatsoever was to be given to their learners. Additional arguments against grammar teaching were based on the notion that it was impossible, since the knowledge required by the speaker was simply too complex (advanced by Prabhu 1987), or on the notion that being exposed to the language was sufficient (Krashen's view). More recently, these views have increasingly been challenged and the view that some form of grammar teaching has a place in modern language teaching and in the communicative approach has gained wide support (Fotos and Ellis 1991: 622; Thompson 1996: 10; Nunan 1998: 101; Ellis 2006: 101). Widdowson (1991: 86, 87, 95-98) has argued strongly against a false dichotomy between form and function, demonstrating that form is essential in the realisation of meaning.

The judicious use of structural input is thus enjoying a return to favour and there is increasing support for a focus on form (Savignon 2002: 7). As Doughty and Williams (1998: 2) point out, it should be emphasised that this is not the same as “a return to discrete point grammar instruction” or a focus on the grammar of the target language which promotes the correct use of linguistic items in carefully controlled circumstances, which is often posed as a binary opposite to authentic communication that involves a focus on meaning in unpredictable circumstances (Richards 2002: 154, 155). Long (1988, 1991) suggests that it would be better to use the term “focus on forms” for work on isolated linguistic structure forms. In part this term represents an attempt to deal with concerns that too much free and unpredictable speech in the language classroom without appropriate error correction and conscious teaching of language structure might lead to the fossilisation of errors early on in the language learning experience of learners (Beglar and Hunt 2002: 103; Lightbown and Spada 2000: 119). However, it seems that the main thrust is far less reactionary than this would suggest. Although formal instruction does not alter the sequences of acquisition (Larsen-Freeman and Long 1991: 321), it can affect second language acquisition in a “possibly positive” way, with “clearly positive” effects on the rate of acquisition and “probably beneficial effects” on the level that learners ultimately attain. This is not limited to greater accuracy. Spolsky (1989: 194 – 197, 200) cites studies involving learners (including adults) in arguing that formal instruction does aid second language acquisition as long as the linguistic items are situated in appropriate contexts. Ellis (2006: 102) takes a stronger stand on the role of a focus on form. Others such as Ridge (1999: 32, 33) emphasise that form is an essential part of meaning. For that reason a binary distinction between meaning and form is not a useful one.



The issue then becomes not whether to teach grammar, but how to teach it. Clearly, as has already been stated, the traditional approach in which grammar items were taught discretely is not what is being advocated here. In a recent article Ellis (2006) argues that, although the selection of the language structures which should be taught remains problematic, he feels that the evidence favours teaching which takes the form of feedback based on the errors which the learners have made in the classroom (Ellis 2006: 89). This argument is supported by Larsen-Freeman (2001: 40). In general Ellis recommends a task-based approach to the teaching of grammar (Ellis 2006: 91), which should contain elements of intensive (with a series of lessons covering a limited number of grammatical structures) and also extensive teaching (with many structures receiving attention within a short space of time) (Ellis 2006: 93, 95). Savignon (2002: 7), presenting a similar argument, contends that “research findings overwhelmingly support the integration of form-focused exercises with meaning-focused experience” and “learners seem to focus best on grammar when it relates to their communicative needs and experiences” (Savignon 2002: 7). Tomlinson (1999b: 3) favours indirect teaching, arguing that it is the most effective way of teaching a language as it helps “the learners to discover things for themselves” as opposed to direct teaching, the overt transmission of information to the learners by the teacher. He (1996: 11) suggests that the learner should be exposed to comprehensible input and only then be led to discover the underlying grammatical forms by means of discussion and guidance from the teacher. This retrospective approach to the teaching of grammar will then have the effect of engaging the attention of the learner because of the relevance or perceived importance of a particular aspect at that point.

However, as Ellis (2006: 102, 103) argues, because “[t]he acquisition of the grammatical system of a second language is a complex process and almost certainly can be assisted best by a variety of approaches”, “there are many imponderables with regard to grammar teaching and this issue merits much further investigation”. At least there is now a greater appreciation for the “complexity of challenges facing teachers” (Larsen-Freeman 2001: 41). It appears that a combination of language exposure and formal instruction would achieve the best acquisition results (Ellis 1994: 603, 615, 617).

Thus learners should be led to “achieve their communicative ends through the appropriate deployment of grammatical resources” (Nunan 1998: 103). However, it is only when learners realise that they can use language forms in order to communicate effectively about aspects which are relevant to them that grammar teaching can make some contribution (Nunan 1998: 108) because many learners fail to see the connection between form and function. For this reason some researchers emphasise the importance of ‘noticing’ the effect of a particular form through

consciousness-raising approaches. As Wallace (2001) points out, the development of critical literacy can usefully be employed to achieve this end. Fotos (1994), on the other hand, advocates an integration of grammar learning and task-based learning. Learners should be given grammar “consciousness-raising tasks” in which they are presented with structures which cause them problems and are then assigned communicative tasks in order to solve these problems for themselves. She is convinced that tasks like these can be applied to many language structures effectively (Fotos 1994: 340, 342) when teaching intermediate and advanced learners (Fotos and Ellis 1991: 610, 623). A task-based approach provides many opportunities for interaction to promote language acquisition (Richards and Rodgers (2005: 229). Yet other approaches can be used to raise consciousness of the effect or function of structures. These include cooperative language learning and content-based instruction (Richards and Rodgers 2001: 192 – 220).

It should be remembered that grammar is not just “structures and rules”, but “a range of highly complex phenomena” (Cook 1991: 25). The final aim of any form of grammar instruction is for the learner to internalise knowledge about the language so that (s)he can use the language effectively and for his/her own benefit. The teaching of a language can never ignore the learner’s internal processes (Cook 1991: 25). In spite of this, most language textbooks focus on explicit language learning and not on implicit language acquisition (Tomlinson 2001: 67).

Much research must still be done before final judgements can be made on how comprehensible input and attention to form in language acquisition can best serve learners’ interests (Sharwood Smith 1994: 113, 117, 118, 185, 186; Lightbown and Spada 2006: 176). However, it seems teaching should balance “form-focused instruction and corrective feedback within a communicative programme” (Lightbown and Spada 2006: 179), so that the needs of the variety of learners are catered for (Ovando and Collier 1985: 61). Admittedly, this is a difficult task because the individual characteristics of learners “interact in complex ways” and little is known about these “complex interactions”. Integrating “tasks with form-focused instruction” remains a challenge, given the complexities and variables involved in language learning (Nunan 2001: 91, 92).

It should also be noted that an approach or method must be practicable, and if it can easily be used as the basis for classroom material and textbooks, it will “readily adopted” (Richards and Rodgers 2001: 246). Perhaps because there is not much research to “support the often simplistic theories and prescriptions found in some approaches and methods”, teachers should be able “to use approaches and methods flexibly and creatively based on their own judgement and experience” (Richards and Rodgers 2001: 250). “All classroom practices reflect teachers’ principles and beliefs, and different

belief systems among teachers can often explain why teachers conduct their classes in different ways” (Richards and Rodgers 2001: 251). This is why the views of individual teachers are given prominence in Chapter 5, which deals with the classroom implementation of the selected material (5.4). Whichever aspects of CLT are referred to, be they process-oriented, task-based and inductive or discovery-based, the goals of CLT require materials and methods “appropriate to a given context of learning” (Savignon 2002: 7), which is why this study emphasises the material used in the classroom.

The goal of CLT is to develop a learner’s communicative competence and, whether one talks of CLT, some form of “postmethod condition” or an “informed approach”, achievement of this ideal is the key challenge (Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei and Thurrell 1997: 149). In addition, “[c]ommunicative language teaching methods designed to enhance the interpretation, expression and negotiation of meaning” (Savignon 2002: 7) will also continue to be explored and adapted. In making choices to meet the needs of their learners, teachers ideally need to have a clear understanding of the view of language which underlies CLT and the processes of teaching and learning that facilitate language acquisition (Richards and Rodgers 2001: 250, 251). This would not result in *laissez faire* eclecticism because they would work in a principled manner (Larsen-Freeman 2000: 183). This is not without complications because, “[d]espite changes in the status of approaches and methods, we can therefore expect the field of second ... language teaching in the twenty-first century to be no less a ferment of theories, ideas, and practices than it has been in the past” (Richards and Rodgers 2001: 254)

Brown (2002:11) is concerned that advocacy of a personal eclectic approach may mean that the practice of individual teachers is the result of “tinkering” based on their observations and experiences in the language classrooms. Consequently, he suggests a principled approach to language teaching. While admitting that his list of principles is far from exhaustive, he nevertheless claims that these principles are “central to most language acquisition constructs”.

These principles (Brown 2002: 12, 13) are

1. **automaticity** (which means that a few language forms are moved to the learner’s “automatic processing” of language forms, without over-emphasis on language forms);
2. **meaningful learning** (which will lead to more effective language acquisition than rote learning, an example of which is content-centred approaches);

3. **rewards** (in which he envisages short-term rewards that “keep classrooms interesting”);
4. **intrinsic motivation** (which stems from the “needs, wants or desires” of the learners themselves);
5. **strategic investment** (which reflects the learner’s “time, effort, and attention” to the target language);
6. **language ego** (the acquisition of a second language can lead to “a sense of fragility, defensiveness, and a raising of inhibitions”);
7. **self-confidence** (the learner actually believes (s)he can achieve the task);
8. **risk-taking** (the learners are prepared to go slightly beyond what they believe they can do);
9. **language-culture connection** (learning a language involves learning a “complex system of cultural customs, values, and ways of thinking, feeling, and acting”);
10. **native language effect** (the first language will both facilitate and interfere with the acquisition of the second language);
11. **interlanguage** (second language learners undergo certain developmental stages which can provide valuable feedback) and
12. **communicative competence** (“the goal of the language classroom”), achieved by attention to meaning and form, using “authentic language and contexts”.

(Brown 2002: 12, 13)

It is against the backdrop of this principled approach to language teaching that I now turn to the language learning strategies, dealing mainly with the second language, that learners employ in trying to acquiring skill in speaking, listening, reading and writing. This brief survey is not intended to be definitive, but serves to frame the discussion of the implementation of the selected material (5.2). Although listening, reading and writing are listed separately, the intention is not to suggest that they be dealt with in isolation in the classroom (McDonough and Shaw 2003: 89).

### **2.5.3.2 Development of language learning skill**

“[L]anguage learning involves much more than teachers and learners simply interacting with one another and then sitting back and observing how well the learners have soaked it all up”. The teacher’s input does not automatically lead to the learner’s output (Macaro 2001: 1; 2.2.2; 3.8.4.2;). Therefore the learners need to devise ways in which they can better acquire the target language and

teachers have to “offer learners the opportunity to develop independent language learning skills” while they are learning the language (Macaro 2001: 20).

These language learning strategies relate to the concepts of control, goal-directedness, autonomy and self-efficacy (Oxford 2001: 166). Learners often use more than one strategy at a time. These strategies include cognitive strategies, in which the learner creates new information and makes associations with known information. Examples are contextual guessing, analysing, reasoning inductively and deductively, note-taking and reorganising information. This involves searching for clues, hypothesising and trying to determine if it makes meaning. Mnemonic strategies are used when learners try to link the familiar with the unfamiliar by memorising information, such as acronyms, or the specific location of information (Oxford 2001: 167). Metacognitive strategies involve using a learner’s learning styles which work for that learner, establishing goals and deciding which approaches will help to deal with a language task (Oxford 2001: 167, 168). Compensatory strategies help a learner to compensate for gaps in information. These include the use of synonyms, circumlocution and gesturing. Affective strategies include a learner identifying his/her feelings. There is often the fear within the learner that (s)he cannot accomplish the task, and negative beliefs and attitudes can negatively influence motivation and the rate of language learning. Social strategies help when working with others and understanding the culture of the target language. These include asking questions, asking for help and studying together after class (Oxford 2001: 168, 169). There are indications that language learning is facilitated by an increased strategy use and teachers should be aware of these strategies and actively teach and foster them (Oxford 2001: 169, 172) as learners acquire increasing proficiency in what are commonly regarded as the four fundamental skills in language learning.

#### 2.5.3.2.1 *Speaking*

Being able to speak a second language is a “complex task” when one considers that speaking is done for many purposes and different skills are associated with each purpose (Richards and Renandya 2002a: 201). Thus a person may need to give instructions in one situation and entertain people with jokes in another, for instance. Each of these contexts assumes that the speaker is aware of how the language should be tailored to the situation (Richards and Renandya 2002a: 201). It is clear, then, that “[s]ociocultural rules of appropriacy” are part and parcel of communicative competence” (Celce-Murcia and Olshtain 2000: 170). The clear implication is that classroom activities need to provide for real communication and promote fluency. Choices should be made on the basis of a needs analysis which could include learners providing input on the communicative

skills they feel they need. It is likely that activities which allow learners to simulate using the target language for real purposes outside the classroom (such as getting information from an office) would be useful activities (Celce-Murcia and Olshtain 2000: 176, 177). There are a variety of other activities that could be used such as communication games, problem solving activities and activities designed to elicit personal communication (McDonough and Shaw 2003: 144, 145, 147). Sufficient feedback also needs to be given, but in such a way that it is supportive and not embarrassing (Celce-Murcia and Olshtain 2000: 176, 177; Brown 2002: 12). In developing the speaking skills of learners, there is always an element of a ‘trade-off’ between fluency and accuracy, depending on the focus of the task. Some tasks could target fluency to a greater extent and others could target accuracy specifically. Bygate (2001: 17, 19) suggests the expedience of concentrating on fluency first and then moving on to accuracy as learners gain confidence. Possibly from there the teacher could move to an emphasis on more complex language and also explore the role of routine in developing discourse skills. In addition, there seems to be some value in repeating a speaking task previously done (Bygate 2001: 17), with the implication that context setting and “content recycling” should be incorporated in classroom materials (Bygate 2001: 17).

#### 2.5.3.2.2 *Listening*

As with other skills, there are two forms of processing in listening: bottom-up and top-down (Rost 2001: 7). In bottom-up processing, involving knowledge of the language system such as phonology or grammar (Celce-Murcia and Olshtain 2000: 103), the contention is that “listening is a linear, data-driven process” and comprehension takes place when the learner has decoded the spoken text (Nunan 2002: 239). In top-down processing the learner is “actively constructing meaning based on expectations, inferences, intentions, and other relevant prior knowledge” (Nunan 2002: 239). Top-down processing thus “involves activation of schematic and contextual knowledge”. Schematic knowledge involves content schemata (background information) and formal schemata (how the text is organised for different purposes or genres) (Celce-Murcia and Olshtain 2000: 102). If some prior knowledge is lacking, listening activities “can be preceded by schema-building activities in order to prepare the learner” (Nunan 2002: 239). These should not be too long, but should include enough context and create motivation (Field 2002: 243).

Until recently, not much time was spent on developing listening skills (Richards and Renandya 2002b: 235). Now language curricula acknowledge the importance of this “complex process that allows us to understand spoken language” (Rost: 2001: 7). The ideal listening activities are those which require the learner to engage interactively with the text and involve both top-down and

bottom-up skills (Nunan 2002: 239). Materials set real-life activities such as responding to pre-set questions and doing tasks (Field 2002: 243, 244). They also focus on listening strategies, which are plans the listener makes consciously while trying to deal with speech (Rost 2001: 8) such as “selective listening, listening for different purposes, predicting, ... inferencing and personalising” (Nunan 2002: 240, 241). The teacher needs to create opportunities for learners to improve their listening skills (Richards and Reynanda 2002b: 23) in “[a]wareness-raising and skills-enabling exercises” (Lam 2002: 250). There should be a clear focus on content and meaning and the learners should then use the information gained in a follow-up activity (Celce-Murcia and Olshtain 2000: 103) so the development of listening is integrated with the other language skills (Rost 2001: 11). These learning-centred development activities should emphasise the process (Rost 2001: 12) so that the emphasis is on allowing development rather than on testing listening skills (product) (Field 2002: 246).

#### 2.5.3.2.3 *Reading*

It has become even more important to develop each learner’s reading skill in the light of the increased demands made on learners by CLT (McDonough and Shaw 2003: 21) and Curriculum 2005, the South African variant of OBE, with its emphasis on discovery learning, greater learner involvement in learning, as well as cooperative learning (Chapter 3).

In trying to make meaning (3.8.2) and interpret written texts, learners seem to use a combination of top-down processing, which entails using the context of the text and linking that with what the learner knows, as well as bottom-up processing, which entails analysing individual words and phrases for meaning and syntactic clues (Macaro 2001: 37).

In reading the emphasis may be either on the product, in which case the focus is on the text, or the process, in which case the focus is on the reader. When the text is the focus, the “text-based features” of words and sentences emphasise the acquisition of a “sight vocabulary” (Wallace 2001: 21, 22). The learner will then progress from known to new words.

In the top-down approach, the emphasis is on the reader and the “background knowledge and values which the reader brings to reading” (Wallace 2001: 22). “All readers bring with them information that is not given in the text” and it is largely when this prior knowledge is activated that reading becomes possible (Grow 1996). In this view the reader brings a schema, or “high order comprehension activities” in the brain to the text (Day and Bamford 1998: 14), “allowing a reader to relate new,

text-based knowledge to existing world knowledge” (Wallace 2001: 22). This enables the learner to make sense of the text before him (see Day and Bamford 1998: 14; Celce-Murcia and Olshtain 2000: 119 and Carrell 1983 for a comprehensive discussion). A schema is “used to organize memory, to focus attention, to interpret experience, and to codify actions” (Grow 1996) and can be seen as the “organized background knowledge”, which leads us to “expect or predict” (Ajideh 2003: 4).

For those who lack the pre-knowledge or experience necessary to (re)construct the text, helping the learners to construct the necessary schemas is essential for comprehension and should form part of pre-reading activities in class (Day and Bamford 1998: 14, 15) so that, while reading, all learners will “activate schemata”. There is also a need to recognise that activation of knowledge before reading, unless carefully scaffolded, could mean that learners could activate only “partially useful” information, while some will call up irrelevant or misleading information (Grabe 2002: 282).

‘Priming’ or ‘prompting’ the learner beforehand must be supplemented with the use of strategies that enable the reader to make maximum use of cognitive and linguistic resources during text processing, i.e. while reading (Wallace 2001:26).

The genre approach offers useful insights into and emphasises the text as a whole, and concentrates on the “value for readers of an awareness of the distinctive features of the range of text type characteristics of social settings” (Wallace 2001: 22). In this way, the genre approach acts as a kind of schema which the reader draws on “to guide reading” (Montgomery *et al.* 2007). As such, it provides “an important frame of reference which helps readers to identify, select and interpret texts” because there would appear to be a triangular relationship between the text, the producers of the text and the readers (Chandler 2000: 5). Genre theory might find much in common with schema theory because “genre is a framework within which to make sense of related texts” and “a schema is a kind of mental template” with which the reader makes sense “of related experiences in everyday life. From the point of view of schema theory, genres are textual schemata” (Chandler: 2000: 7).

The basic tenet of a process-orientated approach is that meaning is only partial: during the reading process, readers bring meaning to the text. The implication is that there is a dynamic interaction “negotiat[ing] meaning” between both the writer and the reader (Wallace 2001: 22). In addition, no text is entirely neutral (Traves 1994: 93) and so readers should be encouraged to share the different meanings texts have for them (Short 1994: 171). For second language readers, reading is seen as both a reading and a language problem because much depends on the reader’s stage of language



development (Wallace 2001: 22). It is clear that “the coherence of the text lies within the reader” (Grabe 2002: 279). However, “a significant portion of textual coherence resides in the text” (Grabe 2002: 279). Form and meaning are both important and “the specific, judicious teaching of formal aspects of written English texts scaffold a broadly process-favoured teaching approach” (Wallace 2001: 27; see also 3.7.2).

A problem associated with reading is that a learner’s home environment strongly influences that learner’s reading development. One possible way to enhance the reading development of those learners who did not have home environments conducive to the development of reading is to emphasise extended reading (Grabe 2002: 280). In extended reading the emphasis is on reading longer texts to emphasise meaning (Renandya and Jacobs 2002: 295) as opposed to intensive reading in which learners read short texts with much teacher guidance in order to extract “detailed meaning from the text” (Renandya and Jacobs 2002: 296).

#### 2.5.3.2.4 *Writing*

Writing would appear to be the most difficult of the language skills to acquire in a second language (Richards and Reynanda 2002c: 303; Celce-Murcia and Olshtain 2000: 161). When learners have to write something themselves, most appear to either limit themselves to the target language and use that as the language of thought, or they “take risks with creating new sentences” by using the primary language to think in and then translate their thoughts. More advanced learners seem to use these strategies in combination (Macaro 2001: 37). When it comes to learning new vocabulary, successful learners seem to use a variety of strategies and rely far less on the teaching process (Macaro 2001: 38). However, effective vocabulary building requires attention, with a variation of emphasis depending on the needs of the learners (Beglar and Hunt 2002: 264), as part of the general language learning programme (Nation 2001: 272).

Berlin (1988) describes writing in simple terms as having four components: the writer, the reader, the context and the language of the text. An expressivist approach to writing emphasises self-discovery and would include personal journals. A cognitivist approach would emphasise thinking and process. Using this approach, the writer plans, chooses, argues and arrives at a conclusion (Celce-Murcia and Olshtain 2000: 146). Some argue strongly for a process approach to writing, using five basic stages: planning, drafting, revising, editing and publication. Planning activities involve pre-writing activities such as brainstorming (McDonough and Shaw 2003: 165), free writing and asking wh-questions. After the initial drafting activity, the teacher or other learners

provide “quick initial reaction” as well as some text-specific responses (Seow 2002: 316, 317). Similar opportunities for teacher or learner response follow the revision process. Finally, learners edit their own or their peers’ writing (McDonough and Shaw 2003: 165, 166). Publication could take the form of reading aloud, staging, displaying or even sending off the work to an appropriate recipient (Seow: 2002: 318, 319; McDonough and Shaw 2003: 168). A criticism of this approach is that it is only feasible in small classes. More recently Johns (2003) has questioned the process approach on the grounds of its lack of effectiveness in teaching learners to write appropriately. She argues for a text-based or genre approach in which learners become conscious of the ways in which certain texts are written and are then able to use these patterns to construct appropriate writing. As Seow (2002: 315, 316) argues, the emphasis should be on systematically teaching learners those writing strategies which will guide them to write better. In order to achieve this, the learner will be subjected to “planned learning experiences”. Reppen cautions that within a genre approach learners should “learn to respond to the informational and organizational demands of various settings” and not just be taught to “manipulate certain features” (Reppen 2002: 323, 326).

“The ultimate aim” is to encourage “students to develop techniques and self-evaluation strategies that will enable them to write according to their personal needs” (Celce-Murcia and Olshtain 2000: 161), with a clear focus on the “writer’s decision-making processes and on the ongoing evaluation process, both of which are integral parts of the composing act” (Celce-Murcia and Olshtain 2000: 161). In trying to achieve this aim, there is scope for co-operative writing, while using “relevant, authentic materials and tasks” in a “variety of approaches” (Reid 2001: 32). A portfolio containing all a learner’s writing has become an important way of providing teachers with a more balanced view of a particular learner’s writing (Celce-Murcia and Olshtain 2000: 158).

#### **2.5.4 Critique of CLT**

Already in the mid-1980s serious issues regarding the adoption of CLT were being raised (Richards and Rodgers 1986: 83). These include the suitability of CLT for all levels in language learning, whether it suits ESL and EFL equally well, how learners can be evaluated and how suitable it is for non-native teachers (Richards and Rodgers 1986: 83).

I wish to explore matters of evaluation and some of the criticisms related to the effectiveness of CLT as a formal teaching approach.

#### **2.5.4.1 *Challenges relating to assessment***

Because of its focus on the communicative needs of the learners, CLT requires qualitative evaluation of learner achievement. Increasingly, attempts are being made to provide learners with assessment tasks such as they would face in life outside the classroom (Brindley 2001: 139), although such assessment tasks are considered by some not to be “based on an underlying theoretical model of communicative language ability and thus lack generalisability beyond the assessment situation”. Another criticism is that they fail “to provide sufficient precision” (Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei and Thurrell 1997: 143). The major problem is for these assessment tasks to be valid, reliable and feasible in practice, and it is vital that they provide support for teachers developing their own assessment tasks (Brindley 2001: 140, 141). A complicating factor in South Africa is that goals (e.g. “negotiation of meaning”) (3.7.2) are very vague (Ridge 2000).

Holistic assessment in the form of portfolios has been initiated in South Africa and elsewhere. This, however, presents the danger of assessment driving the whole teaching process, as it would appear to be doing currently (3.8.1).

#### **2.5.4.2 *Challenges relating to classroom teaching***

Lee and Vanpatten (1995: 272) question whether a CLT classroom can prepare a language learner fully for effective communication, because the classroom limits the “breadth of interaction” in which a learner can take part. The classroom will inevitably impose constraints on the development of a learner’s sociolinguistic competence, because it cannot duplicate natural interaction with native speakers. This leads to the question of whether CLT is sufficient for the long-term needs of the general language learner.

Another classroom-related issue is the extent to which the variety in competence levels in the language classroom can be accommodated in a CLT approach. Other issues, such as whether the amount of interlanguage present in a CLT classroom is conducive to language learning or whether fossilisation will be encouraged, also need to be resolved. Yule’s assertion (1996: 195) that language development in the classroom will take place naturally remains untested. Clearly, extensive and rigorous classroom-based studies need to be done.

Other criticisms related to CLT in larger classrooms involve the materials it requires, problems related to differentiation and whether teachers have the competence to teach according to this

approach (Mitchell 1988: 42, 43, 44; Ridge 1999: 35). Chapter 3 shows that many of these difficulties apply to OBE as well. In the section that follows an attempt is made to sum up the broad features that should characterise the design of materials.

## **2.6 BROAD DESIGN FEATURES OF CLT**

Design here is taken to relate to objectives or desired outcome(s), the types of learning/teaching activities, the selection and ordering of material and the implied role of teachers and learners. The following features will be outlined in what follows: focus on meaning, purposeful (involving real world activities and the use of authentic texts) learner independence, and learner/learning-centredness. The context is one in which learners are being prepared for “interaction in the real world” in the language classroom (Tomlinson 1999c: 88). They need to be engaged in meaningful communication which prepares them for real-life communication (Nunan 1990: 115). The underlying assumption is that no method will ever meet the needs of all learners (cf Nunan 1991). The ideal is that each learning situation will dictate its own teaching approach. “[F]lexibility and adaptability” in applying CLT is therefore essential “if the communicative needs of learners of any language, second or foreign, and in any setting, native or non-native, are to be met” (Berns 1990: 169).

### **2.6.1 Focus on meaning**

Because of the strong emphasis on learning to communicate through interaction in the target language, the primary focus is on meaning, which includes seeing grammatical elements as part of the realisation of meaning. The success of the interaction must be judged in terms of how well the task has been accomplished rather than merely in terms of the accuracy of the language (Brown 1987: 49).

### **2.6.2 Purposeful activities (‘something to communicate’)**

Not only should learners be exposed to rich and authentic input (Cook 1991: 94), but activities also need to have a clear purpose, hence the importance of having something to communicate and find out within the context of dynamic interaction (Richards and Rogers 2005: 172; Howatt 2004). Consequently, activities chosen in the CLT classroom require an exchange of information. They are usually referred to as information gap activities (cf. Larsen-Freeman 2000: 129), but have been extended to include opinion gap activities (Howatt 2004; Prabhu: 1987: 47). Common techniques

used are role play and language games, as well as a variety of problem-solving techniques (Richards and Rogers 2005: 169; Larsen- Freeman 2000: 134, 135). Essentially, activities of this kind require communication.

Arguments for authentic real-world activities (Richards and Rogers 2005: 170; Nunan 2004: 49, 50; van Lier 1996: 13-14) are directly tied to the need to have meaningful, purposeful interaction (Larsen-Freeman 2000: 129). This has to be interpreted within a learner-centred approach. As Day and Bamford (1998: 55) point out, there is the danger that classroom texts can be too difficult, especially for second language learners and, as such, may actually hinder reading development. Widdowson is also sharply critical of a simplistic view of the use of ‘authentic’ language. He argues that authenticity does not “depend on the source from which the language as an object is drawn but on the learner’s engagement with it” (Widdowson 1991: 44, 55). Van Lier (1996: 138) takes a similar view when he argues that authenticity is “the result of authentication” or, as Bachman (1990: 9-10) puts it, authentic interaction between learners, the material and the situation. The implication here would be to link the learner’s experiences with the content of the text (2.4.1.4).

CLT emphasises relevant, meaningful communication as a language learning tool in order to prepare learners for real-life communication to a far greater extent than any method or approach preceding it.

### **2.6.3 Independent learners**

There is a strong emphasis on active participation by the learners, with concomitant encouragement for them to take responsibility for their own learning (Richards and Rogers 2005 166; Reppen 2002: 322). This is inevitably affected by learner confidence and a positive attitude to learning the target language. It is uncertain whether they feel good about the target language and the culture because they are making progress, or whether their progress makes them feel good about the target language and culture (Macaro 2001: 38). Whatever the case, provision must be made for opportunities for learners to focus not only on language but also on the learning process itself (2.4.3). As Randi and Corno (2000: 651) argue, “theory suggests the need for a better understanding of the strategies that successful learners use to maintain efforts and protect commitment in school”.

With the increased emphasis on learner-centred approaches and the development of learner independence, which Long and Porter (1985) suggest have enhanced both the quality and the

quantity of language learning in the classroom in recent years, group work is an important strategy. This point will be developed further in 3.7.3.

#### **2.6.4 Learner/learning-centredness**

CLT works in marked contrast to transmission teaching. Widdowson (1991: 121) describes the kind of learning involved as a “self-generating process by the learners themselves” as opposed to “conformity to the conditions of transmission controlled by the teacher”. A central aim of a learner-centred approach is to “find or create shared common ground between students’ knowledge and experience and the course material and requirements” (Curry 1996:28).

### **2.7 CLT AND THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM**

In the past the term ‘syllabus’ was widely used as a term referring to the guidelines which were issued to specify the content to be dealt with in a particular course. The broader term, curriculum, includes not only “what pupils learn, but how they learn it, how teachers help them learn, using what supporting materials, styles and methods of assessment, and in what kinds of facilities” (Rodgers 1989: 25, 26). The curriculum is concerned with course content and competencies to be attained and is thus implicitly concerned with process. Process involves the steps taken in an effort to organise the content according to general goals (Ramírez 1995: 85). In other words, curriculum includes syllabus and methodology (Nunan 1988: 158).

The concept of curriculum can be viewed as a technocratic one, outlining the plan as well as the topics to be taught and providing directions for teaching and testing (Cornbleth 1990: 12, 13). This mainstream view is that of a rational management model. Objectives to be achieved by the learners are enumerated, and then learning activities and the relevant means of assessment are designed. The implied view is that “classroom practices can be changed by changing curriculum documents and materials” (Cornbleth 1990: 14, 16). However, this does not take account of the difference between an intended curriculum and a realised curriculum. An illustration of the gulf between the intended curriculum and the realised curriculum may be seen in a study done on a limited scale in the Western Cape. In this study, van der Merwe (1994: 202) found that, despite the fact that CLT had been prescribed for many years, teachers remain tied to the methodologies of the past (see also 5.4). This has obvious implications for the shift in thinking and practice that OBE requires, an issue which is examined in greater detail later in Chapter 3.

It should be clear that any curriculum practice cannot be divorced from its setting or context. The context is both structural (which includes all aspects of education, from the classroom to the national education department) and sociocultural (which refers to the environment outside of education which potentially or actually influences the curriculum) (Cornbleth 1990: 6). If the curriculum is viewed as a contextualized social process, curriculum review will be practice-oriented, with contextual change as the focus (Cornbleth 1990: 12, 13). This view is in line with that of Grundy, who writes about “curriculum in praxis”, which implies that curriculum is an active process involving “actual learning situations with actual students”, that learning is a social process and that knowledge about the curriculum is socially constructed and subject to reconstruction (cited in Cornbleth 1990: 6). This last point means that the curriculum is unavoidably political, because criticism and interpretation “involve differing and conflicting meanings or constructions of knowledge” (Cornbleth 1990: 6). If this is to happen, the curriculum “must be seen as value-laden and contextualized.” A curriculum can be thought of as that which really happens in the classroom, “an ongoing social process comprised of the interactions of students, teachers, knowledge and milieu” (Cornbleth 1990: 5), that which “is to be achieved through teaching and learning” (Breen 2001: 151). This is far removed from the concept of the curriculum as a document or plan.

A critical view of the curriculum, however, does not discount planning, but planning alone “provides an inert curriculum skeleton”. The curriculum is not a tangible product, but the actual day-to-day interactions of students, teachers, knowledge and milieu. The curriculum viewed as a contextualised social process affords both subject matter and social organisations their rightful place. According to this view, the curriculum is “constructed and reconstructed in situated practice” (Cornbleth 1990: 24, 25, 26). A critical approach to the curriculum takes societal injustices into account and attempts to determine in which ways these can be reduced, so that social justice may be served. Its aim is thus to improve society (Schreuder *et al.* 2002: unnumbered).

Knowledge can be viewed as either stable and unchanging, or as tentative and subject to constant revision. The former view tends to distance knowledge from the learners and remove it from their experience of everyday life. The latter view, however, can enable learners to personalise that knowledge and to relate it to everyday experience and will also, in so doing, invite the participation of the learners “in the construction and critique” of such knowledge. It also helps learners to make sense of, and to interpret, their experiences afresh and even perhaps to create new knowledge (Cornbleth 1990: 185, 186). Thus her view is that knowledge is not there to be passed on like some consumer product, but to be made available for learners so that they can relate to it actively (Cornbleth 1990: 193).

For McCutcheon, the curriculum is “what students have an opportunity to learn” and also the opportunities that they are not afforded (Cherryholmes 1987: 296, 297). Thus the curriculum is at least partly a “study of what is valued and given priority and what is devalued and excluded” (Cherryholmes 1987: 296, 297). Cherryholmes states that instead of talking in the first place of taxonomies of objectives, structures of disciplines and learning objectives, what should be discussed is the kind of society and schools that are desired, “knowing full well that they constitute each other.” Because power affords opportunities and “non-opportunities”, the curriculum and educational administration are closely intertwined. The curriculum is not an independent field of study, because it is part of the larger society and is affected by that society as much as politics and business. “The study of curriculum is the process of rolling over one answer onto the next when asked what students should have the opportunity to learn”. It is always a question of “whose interests are being served and whose interests are excluded” (Cherryholmes 1987: 310, 311).

Teachers influence the programme of instruction. They tend to teach that with which they are familiar or what they have been trained to teach (Krahnke 1987: 78, 79). In times of uncertainty teachers are more inclined to follow a textbook slavishly. In fact, it is becoming more and more evident that individual teachers in actual classrooms are the keys to what happens in classroom curriculum practice (Cornbleth 1990: 161, 167), an experience which can be attested to by at least some teachers in the Western Cape at this time of major curricular change. If teachers have not indicated their willingness, and/or lack the ability, to teach according to a certain programme of instruction or clear guidance in the form of materials, they will not change their ways of teaching or they will not be able to make a success of the newly selected syllabus (Krahnke 1987: 78, 79) which has been imposed on them.

The learners who are to undergo the learning programme and their needs may also influence the syllabus choice (Krahnke 1987: 79), but general language learners in South African public schools have no choice in the matter and it is difficult to predict exactly what their needs are as they have to face many differing language scenarios after leaving school. One possible way in which to meet these challenges is to adopt a reductionist approach. This approach defines the minimum standards that must be met in the programme. Considering the challenges that language learners in general have to face after leaving school, this approach could have more disadvantages than advantages. These learners have to be provided with the broadest range of abilities and knowledge possible (Krahnke 1987: 82, 83).



Two factors relating to the curriculum, which will be mentioned when the classroom implementation of the selected material is discussed, are change and assessment. A curriculum is an agent for change, but requires ‘ownership’ by those who need to implement it to make that possible. Consequently, it must not make unrealistic demands or be unacceptable to those who must implement it (Brumfit 1992: 117). Within a curriculum, assessment seems to play a key role because it often influences what and how teachers teach and also how teachers change their classroom practices to enhance learner test performance (and concomitantly their own reputations), a practice referred to as curriculum alignment. It is also well-known that tests have a marked influence on instruction programmes (Krahnke 1987: 76, 77).

A number of salient factors emerge. A school curriculum which adopts a CLT methodology has to recognise that language learning ‘plans’ have to be flexible. There must also be due recognition that the chief objective must be to enable the learner to meet the real-world demands that will be made on him/her when (s)he leaves school. Teachers need to have appropriate training and the will to effect such a curriculum. They also need to have appropriately equipped classrooms, including materials that will support the learning process. The approach to assessment would be aligned to the principles and objectives of CLT and must not make unrealistic demands on teachers.

## **2.8 CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS**

The 1986 syllabus for language teaching aimed at utilising CLT and emphasised communication with “interest, purpose and enjoyment” in the classroom (DoE 1986). It was the introduction of this syllabus which stimulated my interest in the origin of the language teaching approach that reduced the previously dominant position of structural input. This syllabus was slightly adapted with the implementation of Nated 550 (DNE 1989).

CLT demands a primary concern with the nature of language, which is seen as essentially a meaning-making process, requiring purpose-drive interaction between the participants concerned. Consequently, the primary elements of language are not only grammatical or structural, but also include the functional and communicative elements of discourse. Since language learning is not a linear process, this makes syllabus or curriculum construction more challenging. What is essential is that teachers provide opportunities for learners to engage in meaning-making. Purposeful interaction in the target language requires relevant and authenticated texts and activities (in the sense that there is a link to the ways in which this particular language is used in the real world). It also requires overt development of language strategies.

In simple terms, CLT tries to cater for the individual language needs of learners by creating opportunities for learners to engage in meaningful activities that will allow them to develop the ability to interpret and produce communication with increasing skill. A communication-oriented curriculum would therefore reflect an integration of “form, function, task and process in different ways” that is directly linked to “aims, content, methodology and evaluation” (Breen 2001: 158). A clear implication is that appropriate materials must be available.

CLT remains largely in vogue, but with at least two additional strands in the debate. One would appear a refinement of CLT, in the form of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), and the other is that it is time to move on beyond specific methods.

CLIL involves the teaching of subjects other than language through the medium of a selected target language, which is often English. Learners thus increase their subject knowledge while learning a second language. Such language teaching draws on elements of CLT (Várkuti 2010: 67), but the integration of language and subject matter is critical (Wolf 2007) as there is a dual focus in the classroom: the subject matter and the target language (Marsh n.d.). This implies that the language teacher is then often the teacher of the subject matter, or that the subject teacher must be able to exploit opportunities for language development (Darn 2006). CLIL is even lauded as an “innovative approach with holistic features” and has the potential to bring about the integration of curricula (Novotná, Hadj-Moussová and Homannová n.d.).

The other post-CLT development is the move beyond methods. According to Kumaravadivelu, teachers have always found it difficult to implement teaching methods the way they have been designed because of the limitations of methods which are based “on idealized concepts geared toward idealized contexts” (2003: 28). Teachers are encouraged to “develop informed or enlightened eclecticism based on their own understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of established methods” (2003: 30).

The problem with an eclectic view is that there are no criteria by which a teacher can judge a theory or parts of the theory of language teaching. The teacher is then left with his/her own judgement, and consequently finds himself/herself between the imposed method and the one they have improvised. (2003:31). Increasing dissatisfaction with this state of affairs has led to what Kumaravadivelu calls the “postmethod condition” (2003: 32). This ‘condition’ has three attributes: a bottom-up quest for an alternative to method; teacher autonomy, in which the teacher acts independently and develops a

critical approach to materials and his/her own teaching practice; and a pragmatism as a result of which the teacher decides on what is done in the classroom as a result of critical classroom analysis and evaluation (2003: 32, 33).

Bell (2003) takes issue with the 'postmethod condition' and is convinced that the answer does not lie solely there. He asserts (2003: 332) that some of Kumaravadivelu's macrostrategies, advocated in the place of a method, seem quite like aspects of CLT. Bell argues that it not a question of either/or, but that, as a result of the ongoing debate between method and postmethod, where the one tries to bring about some sort of coherence in teaching practice and the other deconstructs the attempt to impose method, teaching practice can be "liberated" (Bell 2003: 334).

The focus of the next chapter will be on key aspects of OBE and Curriculum 2005, which is the form of OBE selected for implementation in South Africa. The chapter will also examine the role of language learning in Curriculum 2005 and, more particularly, ways of determining the suitability of classroom material to facilitate language learning in Curriculum 2005.

## **CHAPTER 3: OUTCOMES-BASED EDUCATION AND THE LANGUAGE, LITERACY AND COMMUNICATION LEARNING AREA**

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

In the previous chapter I outlined theories of language acquisition, how they try to account for language acquisition and informed various language teaching methods and approaches. I then surveyed those methods and approaches and curricula in order to develop a perspective on language teaching before the advent of OBE Curriculum 2005.

In this chapter I now turn to this important approach, which is currently official policy in South African schools. This chapter outlines the changing role of, and the perceived need for, a new approach to education as well as the rise of OBE, its nature and implementation. Particular attention is given to the Language, Literacy and Communication learning area in Curriculum 2005, the approach to OBE initially taken in South Africa. (Curriculum 2005 was briefly known as Curriculum 21, but this name was soon discarded. Since 2006 the official curriculum for schools has been implemented as the Revised National Curriculum Statement, but this period falls outside the ambit of this study.) Finally, this chapter examines materials selection because without suitable and relevant classroom material teacher, the learner and the learning programme will not interact effectively to promote the learners' language acquisition.

### **3.2 THE RATIONALE FOR OUTCOMES-BASED EDUCATION**

Education is both a means of transmitting culture and also a means of keeping pace with change. According to See (1994: 30), there have been four seminal inventions that have led to fundamental change. Taking a Social Darwinist line, he argues that the first was spoken language, which allowed people to make sounds that signified ideas and creative thought. That enabled "information professionals" to pass on the sum total of human knowledge and culture to succeeding generations. The second revolution came about with the invention of alphabets, which resulted in the ability to keep accurate written records. The third revolution was the invention of the printing press, which led to the far more rapid dissemination of the written word than ever before. At present the world is experiencing a fourth revolution, the digital information revolution.

Technology and the ever-increasing pace at which information is being digitalised has changed the way people access, gather, analyse, present, transmit and stimulate information. Inevitably this has implications for schooling. Therefore learners need to develop appropriate skills and attitudes to

achieve success in the socio-economic system and in what has been termed an era of limitless information (see 1994:30). South Africans, like people in the rest of the world, have to compete in a “complex, high-technology, competitive, unpredictable, and globally interdependent marketplace that is demanding constant change, adaptation, learning, innovation and quality .... [A]lmost 90% of jobs will, within the foreseeable future, involve the sophisticated handling of information” (Spady 1994a: 29). South Africa will have to find ways of meeting the needs of all members of a greatly increased school population in order to prepare them to face this vastly changed and uncertain local and global environment. OBE has been advocated by some as being the means of equipping learners to do just that.

### **3.3 THE ORIGINS OF OUTCOMES-BASED EDUCATION**

The origins of OBE are usually traced to the 1940s. However, they can be found far earlier (Pounds 1968: 19). In very early times, although some children were given academic education by scholars or tutors, most children were trained for an occupation in and around the home. As the demand for skilled labourers increased before and during Roman times, a form of apprenticeship developed whereby children were taught valuable skills for the arts and crafts (Pounds 1968: 51, 52, 64). The test of having acquired an education was thus a particular competence.

Later, in the Middle Ages, a more rigorous system of apprenticeship was instituted whereby a learner was apprenticed to a skilled artisan and vocational training was demanding, lengthy and carefully supervised so that standards could be ensured (Lucas 1972: 216, 217; Good and Teller 1969: 93; Pounds 1968: 95) and the demands of the marketplace were met. There is a clear link between this system and the emphasis in OBE on the training of learners to achieve demonstrable outcomes after careful supervision and assessment to meet the demands of the modern workplace (cf. Spady 1994a: 4).

A person’s working life demands a definite focus and a commitment to lifelong learning to meet changing circumstances. This entails narrowing the gap between formal and informal education (Mallinson 1980: 65) so that learners can be equipped to be increasingly adaptable and able to face major job changes a few times in their lifetime (Mallinson 1980: 67, 71).

It is important to recognise that schooling on its own cannot offer equal opportunities (Husén 1979: 75, 76). Somehow ways will have to be found of making changes in the broader society. However, it is vital that learners’ studies and learning experiences are relevant and meaningful, otherwise they

fall prey to “lethargy, inertia and finally despair” because of the divide between their home backgrounds and school (Mallison 1980: 71, 77), an issue which was raised in Chapter 2 and will receive further attention in 5.2.1.

In the USA Tyler’s *Basic Principles of Curriculum Design and Instruction*, published in 1949, is seen as the precursor of more formalised outcomes-based education (Sossniak 1994: 1801), although Bobbit (1918) had earlier attempted to define the general objectives of education. Tyler noted that it was important to determine objectives for educational experiences. According to him, a well-planned objective should identify the behaviour and the “area of content” in which this behaviour was to be performed (in King and Evans 1994: 73).

After Tyler, taxonomies of objectives in the cognitive and affective domains were developed by Bloom (see Bloom’s revised taxonomy of thinking processes in Farrell 2001: 38), while Mager developed objectives concerning learner behaviour. The focus had thus narrowed from Bobbitt’s general objectives to Bloom’s specifications of types of learner behaviour to Mager’s replacement of educational objectives by instructional objectives. The result has been an increasing number of “carefully worded objectives” in order to specify how the desired outcome is to be achieved (Sossniak 1994: 1801).

Bloom’s Learning for Mastery model was based on Carroll’s model of school learning (Anderson and Block 1987: 59). These authors describe Bloom’s model, which uses group instruction, as varying both the learning programme and the time needed to meet the individual learner’s needs. This has become an integral part of what has become OBE (Guskey 1994: 3626).

Mastery learning relies heavily on carefully selected goals being set, appropriate materials being provided and activities being devised to achieve those goals. Each unit of learning goes through a cycle of instruction, testing and grading until each learner has mastered the unit well (Anderson and Block 1987: 63). After assessment, additional instruction is provided so that learners can focus on those aspects which have not yet been mastered. All these aspects must be congruent and in line with one another (Guskey 1994: 3626, 3628). An important aspect is that learners are given extra time and assistance so that errors and misunderstandings can be eliminated (Anderson and Block 1987: 59). Mastery learning concentrated on the learners achieving a small number of important goals excellently (Anderson and Block 1987: 59 - 61). Although few learning approaches would not subscribe to this kind of coherence, mastery learning gives it central emphasis. The role of the

teacher is critical in ensuring that the goals are achieved and there are those who regard mastery learning as being teacher-controlled (van der Horst and McDonald 1997: 11).

In the late 1960s competency-based education was introduced in the USA in order to adequately prepare the learners leaving the school system for life (King and Evans 1994: 74). The requirements were clearly stated for each group of learners (Houston 1987: 86, 87). These competencies are made known to the learner before the start of the programme. The time spent on a programme is not important; what is important is the extent to which the learner has mastered the specific competency at a particular point (Houston 1987: 87). These objectives, which are the final products of the learning process, should be externally observable or should reflect internal changes in the learner (King and Evans 1994: 73). The learner is not compared to other learners, but is assessed on how well (s)he has done in demonstrating that (s)he has mastered a specific outcome (Houston 1987: 87). It is therefore criterion-based rather than normative. It must be pointed out that this is not necessarily a feature exclusive to competency-based education and later to OBE; possibly any learning programme can encourage a learner to compete against his/her own previous achievements.

Thus an outcomes-based approach differs from the traditional curriculum in one fundamental respect: the focus shifts from “objectives derived often from content or textbook outlines to objectives based on desired changes in the learner” (King and Evans 1994: 73). It is, however, a moot point whether any learning experience leaves a learner unchanged.

Having briefly traced the origins of outcomes-based education (OBE), I shall now highlight its essential features.

### **3.4 THE ESSENTIALS OF OUTCOMES-BASED EDUCATION**

As was established in the earlier section, OBE rests on a number of premises. Essentially it is the close link between the goals or intentions of the curriculum and the final results or outcomes of the curriculum that is the core of OBE. Killen (1996: 3) identifies three basic premises underlying OBE. They are that “[a]ll learners can learn and succeed, at their own pace and in their own way”, “[s]uccess is bred at schools” and that “[s]chools and teachers control the conditions determining whether learners will succeed or not” (Killen 1996: 2; Spady 1996: 9). Spady, who was very influential in establishing OBE in South Africa, subscribes to the first and last principles, but argues

that it would be more accurate to define the second premise as “successful learning promotes even more successful learning” (Spady 1994a: 9).

The first step is to establish minimum proficiency levels for each level of a learner’s school career with “quantifiable standards in academic skills and subjects” which “can be verified through objective testing” (What is OBE 1997: 1). Spady defines OBE as “clearly focusing and organizing everything in an educational system around what is essential for all students to be able to do successfully at the end of their learning experiences” (Spady 1994a: 1). Learners are given a clear idea of what they have to be able to do. In an ideal situation, alternative methods of achieving the outcomes are used, since not all learners can learn in the same way, equally well or at the same rate (Killen 1996:9).

According to Spady, an outcome “is a culminating demonstration of learning.” He adds that “outcomes are not content, they’re performances” (in Brandt 1993: 66). Outcomes are “high-quality, culminating demonstrations of significant learning in context”, but “[a]n outcome is not a score or a grade, but the end product of a clearly defined process that students carry out” (Spady 1994: 18). An outcome is further defined as an action or performance that the learner must be able to do and demonstrate at the end of certain learning processes. Thus outcomes “reflect learner competence in using content, information, ideas and tools successfully” (Spady 1994a: 2). Before this, he or she must be able to demonstrate intermediate outcomes, what Spady calls “enabling outcomes”, because they enable the learner to progress to the final outcomes (in Brandt 1993: 66). Outcomes that must be demonstrated at the end of the learner’s school career are called “exit outcomes” (Spady 1994a: 2) to differentiate between them and outcomes which must be demonstrated at the end of particular learning experiences. Content is not regarded as an outcome, but knowledge of content has to be demonstrated and has to occur in a definite context or setting (Spady 1994: 18).

In this way precise exit outcomes are set and schools are allowed to find their own ways in which learners are able to achieve these outcomes. In other words, the outcomes are predetermined, but schools have the freedom to adopt their own learning programmes, but are then held accountable for their learners having achieved the desired outcomes (King and Evans 1994: 74) and then the curriculum design process is started afresh back from there (Brandt 1993: 66; Spady: 1994a: 10).

Within each outcome there are specific elements sometimes referred to as attributes or indicators, but more usually known as proficiencies. The curriculum, instruction and assessment are built



around these more specific proficiencies. In this way specific proficiencies together make up the broader outcomes (Marzano 1994: 45).

In addition the outcomes should be useful and practical, there should be a flexible time frame to allow for individual learner differences and styles, assessment should form an integral part of the instruction process, and learners should assume at least a measure of responsibility for their own learning (Killen 1996: 3). The implementation of a successful OBE programme will thus require a very clear specification of what a learner needs to be able to achieve and an equally clear plan on how to go about it (Killen 1996: 11). Spady (1994a) adds that the whole plan must be “tightly articulated”, employing “a rich diversity of methods and strategies” set against the background of “applied learning in relevant, life-role contexts” (Spady 1994a: 102 – 104; Day and Bamford 1998: 54). Classroom practice should, then, be “rooted in real-world experiences and have real-world applications” (Barchers 1998: 399). Authentic language texts, however, have to be selected in the light of their appropriacy for particular class levels. There is the danger that such texts can be too difficult, especially for second language learners and, as such, actually hinder reading development (Day and Bamford 1998: 55).

The links between the aspects listed above and Curriculum 2005 (3.6ff) are clear. In the course of the investigation into the classroom events which form part of this study (5.2.1), these aspects will be addressed in greater detail.

In some respects, outcomes-based education is thus very firmly learner-centred. However, it is also deterministic and positivist in that it is geared towards specific predetermined results. In OBE the skills, knowledge and ways of thinking that the designers of the curriculum consider that learners need in order to be able to function successfully in the world need to be determined in advance and the curriculum geared towards achieving them (Boschee and Baron 1994: 193). OBE is unrelenting in focusing on outcomes. “OBE forces us to express what we value in education .... and – in contrast to present practice – to continue until we have succeeded. Educators become accountable for producing exit outcomes in virtually every student who enters school” (King and Evans 1994: 74). This approach assumes that learners are prepared to accept the goals and work towards them (Killen 1996: 10).

The idealistic base of OBE is that each learner will succeed by focusing on the required outcomes and so ensure continuous improvement. Thus success, according to the ideal, will breed success as the learners gain in confidence (Boschee and Baron 1994: 193, 194).

To Spady and Marshall (1991: 68) all that glitters, however, is not OBE. They distinguish between traditional, transitional and transformational OBE.

In traditional OBE, the traditional curriculum is not much changed, but it has a clearer focus and the process is streamlined. Traditional OBE can be viewed as little more than refining the traditional curriculum, which could be called curriculum-based objectives since the curriculum was designed before the outcomes. Traditional OBE concentrates on what learners need to know and do when they leave school (Capper and Jamison 1993: 431).

Transitional OBE goes beyond that in trying to design the curriculum and assessment around higher-order exit outcomes. The guiding vision is what a competent school-leaving learner must “know, be able to do, and be like in order to be successful once they’ve left” school. Schools implementing this approach pay particular attention to “critical thinking, effective communication, technological applications, and complex problem solving” (Capper and Jamison 1993: 431).

Transformational OBE is guided by the vision of equipping the learner to such an extent that (s)he will be a “competent future citizen. In the process nothing is taken for granted and anything can be changed when the curriculum is designed (Capper and Jamison 1993: 431). Transformational OBE attempts to equip the future citizen with the relevant skills so that he or she can succeed in an increasingly “complex, challenging, high-tech future”. For Spady and Marshall, transformational OBE alone will ensure that success in school is of lasting benefit and thus the other types of OBE are to be dismissed (Spady and Marshall 1991: 68-70). South Africa has opted for the ideal of transformational OBE, in the guise of Curriculum 2005.

To summarise, proponents of OBE describe it in lavish terms as “a means of meeting the needs of all students regardless of their environment, ethnicity, economic status or disabling condition” (Capper and Jamison 1993: 428). OBE claims to create greater curricular focus, develop better instructional methods, and assess student achievement “with precise clarity and validity” (Capper and Jamison 1993: 428). Whether these claims are valid is another matter. It is clear that there is a divide between the idealistic notions of OBE and the real difficulties of meeting individual needs in large classrooms.

Having dealt with the essentials of OBE, I will now turn to its implementation in South Africa.

### **3.5 OUTCOMES-BASED EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA**

South African schools implemented OBE in grade 1 in 1998 and other grades in subsequent years, with the intention that OBE would be fully implemented by 2005 (Rooi 1997: 6). The curriculum which became known as Curriculum 2005 emphasises lifelong learning (van der Horst and McDonald 1997: 5), with a new emphasis on the principles of co-operation, critical thinking and social responsibility in order to achieve this goal (Manganyi 1997).

Discussion in COSATU (Congress of South African Trade Unions) on training was crystallised in the documents of the National Training Board, which has subsequently become known as the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), formulated by the South African Qualifications Act of 1995. As a result of discussions about competencies within the NQF, it was decided to integrate education and training. In the Department of Education these competencies were renamed ‘outcomes’ (Jansen 1997: 1, 2).

The NQF consists of eight NQF levels, which provide for General, Further and Higher Education and Training Bands. The General Education and Training Band is Level 1, which includes Pre-school, the Foundation Phase (Grades 1 - 3), the Intermediate Phase (grades 4 - 6) and the Senior Phase (Grades 7 - 9). The Further Education and Training Band consists of Levels 2 (grade 10), 3 (grade 11) and 4 (grade 12). Levels 5 to 8 constitute the Higher Education and Training Band (Olivier 1998: 5).

The NQF aims at achieving “an integrated national framework for learning achievement” which is accessible and permits “mobility and progress” while acquiring one’s education, so that the full potential of each learner is realised. This is done in order to achieve “the social and economic development of the nation at large” (Olivier 1998: 6).

Learners are assessed according to standards which are clearly defined in order to earn credits. On demonstrating successfully that certain outcomes have been mastered, the learner will earn credits, as opposed to having completed a specific learning programme. When a specific number of outcomes have been achieved, the learner will be awarded a specific school grade. The implementation of OBE in South Africa as a result of the SAQA Act has meant that a paradigm shift was made away from “the traditional content-based and competency-based learning towards outcomes-based learning” (Olivier 1998: 7, 9, 19).

## **3.6 THE IMPLEMENTATION OF OBE FOR ENGLISH**

### **3.6.1 The National Curriculum**

Various sub-committees of the National Curriculum Development Committee developed three documents: The National Qualifications Framework the Curriculum Framework for General and Further Education and Training; and Structures for the Development of National Policy regarding Curriculum and Related Issues.

The summary of these three documents is called *A Lifelong Learning Development Framework for General and Further Education and Training in South Africa* (WCED 1997a: unnumbered). The Department of Education released their Policy Document covering grades 7 to 9 in the same year (DoE 1997).

The National Curriculum is “the heart of the education and training system” in the country, and the resources of the government are utilised to “provide essentially the same quality of learning opportunities for all citizens” in order to bring about “[a] prosperous, truly united, democratic and internationally competitive country with literate, creative and critical citizens leading productive, self-fulfilled lives in a country free of violence, discrimination and prejudice” (DoE 1997: 1). The emphasis, especially in grades 7 to 9, is on holistic teaching and learning, and the integration of subjects and of theory and practice (DoE 1997: 1, 8).

What follows is a very brief listing of the main points of the total curriculum. The aim in this section is to show how the English learning area fits into the national curriculum. Officially the following eight learning areas that have been approved by the Council of Education Ministers are:

1. Language, Literacy and Communication
2. Mathematical Literacy, Mathematics and Mathematical Sciences
3. Human and Social Sciences
4. Natural Sciences
5. Technology
6. Arts and Culture
7. Economic and Management Sciences
8. Life Orientation.

(WCED 1997a: unnumbered)

The connection between the key competencies and the learning areas are very obvious in some places, such as the connection between technology skills and the Technology learning area, information and communications skills and the Language, Literacy and Communication learning area, and also between numeracy skills and the Mathematical Literacy, Mathematics and Mathematical Sciences learning area. Links between some other skills and learning areas are less clearly defined. For example, problem-solving skills can be addressed in any learning area.

Learning area committees that developed outcomes for the eight learning areas were established. For each learning area the committees supplied a rationale, critical outcomes (applying “knowledge, skills and attitudes” in broad outline) and specific outcomes (which specified “[c]ontextually demonstrated knowledge, skills and attitudes” and which were “[c]usters of related [s]pecific [o]utcomes”) (WCED 1997a: unnumbered). According to the circular, in-service training, support materials and assessment were among the issues receiving attention.

The critical outcomes which relate to all eight learning areas, in fact to all levels of education, are the following:

1. Identify and solve problems in which responses display that responsible decisions using critical and creative thinking have been made;
2. Work effectively with others as a member of a team, group, organisation, community;
3. Organise and manage oneself and one’s activities responsibly and effectively;
4. Collect, analyse, organise and critically evaluate information;
5. Communicate effectively using visual, mathematical and/or language skills in the modes of oral and/or written presentation;
6. Use science and technology effectively and critically, showing responsibility towards the environment and health of others;
7. Demonstrate an understanding of the world as a set of related systems by recognising that problem solving contexts do not exist in isolation.

(WCED 1997a: unnumbered; DoE 1997: 15)

In addition, all learning programmes must “make an individual aware of the importance of”:

1. Reflecting on and exploring a variety of strategies to learn more effectively;
2. Participating as responsible citizens in the life of local, national and global communities;
3. Being culturally and aesthetically sensitive across a range of social contexts;
4. Exploring education and career opportunities;
5. Developing entrepreneurial opportunities.

(WCED 1997a: unnumbered; DoE 1997: 15)

Olivier adds another critical outcome not mentioned by WCED. It is “[c]ontributing to the full personal development of each learner and the social and economic development of the society at large” (Olivier 1998: 17). While undergoing learning programmes, learners must develop knowledge, understanding, skills, and attitudes and values (DoE 1997: 23). It is clearly stated in this source that South Africa has opted for transformational OBE, the most radical form of OBE, which requires a highly integrated curriculum, the aim of which is to ensure maximum “transferability of knowledge in real life” (WCED 1997a: 32, 33). It is noted that these outcomes emphasise skills which pertain to critical faculties that are to be developed within the learner over a period of time. The focus is not knowledge of content.

Specific outcomes which support each critical outcome are then clearly defined in order for learning to take place. These specific outcomes are:

- (a) achievements learners should be able to demonstrate in a specific context in particular areas of learning at a specific level;
- (b) a comprehensive package of achievements to be accomplished in order to constitute a learning programme;
- (c) the basis for assessing the progress of learners;
- (d) the basis for selecting subject matter needed to achieve outcomes;
- (e) the basis for selecting cognitive learning objectives and technical skills which will enable learners to achieve outcomes; and
- (f) together with assessment criteria, supportive towards the achievements of unit standards, credits and qualifications.

(Olivier 1998: 18)

A further step was the short-lived range statement (Chisholm 2000: 98). These described the broad context and the choices made to achieve the outcomes (Olivier 1998: 18).

The following section will take a closer look at the learning area outcomes for language, literacy and communication.

### **3.6.2 The Language, Literacy and Communication Learning Area**

Initially the specific outcomes for the Language, Literacy and Communication learning area were that learners would be able to:

1. make meaning, both verbally and non-verbally;
2. negotiate meaning and understanding;
3. experience and appreciate the aesthetic, affective, cultural and social values of language;
4. show a critical awareness of language;
5. communicate and mediate in different languages;
6. use language to access and process information;
7. control and reflect on the language by knowing and understanding its structures and conventions in context;
8. understand and appreciate the dynamic nature of language;
9. use language in improving their learning styles and strategies;
10. speak, listen, read and write with purpose, sensitivity, effect and confidence in a wide range of contexts and aspects of media.

(WCED 1997b: 3, 4)

These outcomes were soon refined and shortened and then read as follows:

1. Learners make and negotiate meaning and understanding;
2. Learners show critical awareness of language usage;
3. Learners respond to the aesthetic, affective, cultural and social values in context;
4. Learners access, process and use information from a variety of sources and situations;
5. Learners understand, know and apply language structures and conventions in context;

6. Learners use language for learning;
7. Learners use appropriate communication strategies for specific purposes and situations.

(DoE 1997: LLC –3)

It is clear that the learner needs to be able to use language in an OBE approach, not in order to demonstrate knowledge about the language for its own sake, but as a tool with which to achieve other goals, such as gathering information, making sense of such information and acquiring the skills (s)he needs to be able take his/her place in the world.

According to Manno (1994: 12), the debate on OBE is very confused and “the devil is in the details”. This uncertain ‘devil’ will be dealt with in the next section under general problems, the role that the teacher is expected to adopt in an OBE approach, cooperative learning and the matter of assessment.

### **3.7 PROBLEMS AND CRITIQUE OF OUTCOMES-BASED EDUCATION**

Although OBE has gained much ground in recent years and appears to be a very inclusive approach, embracing everything that happens to a learner in the classroom, with proponents claiming that all learners can learn and succeed, major criticisms have been levelled at the approach in general and there are those who question whether all learners can succeed and whether learning can be broken into precise measurable components whose acquisition can be demonstrated at regular intervals. The assumption that schooling will, in fact, change societies has been called into question. With regard to South Africa specifically, there are those who question the capacity of this country in particular to fund the considerable capital outlay for OBE and also whether the OBE training that is provided will be enough to sufficiently retrain the teaching corps and whether there are enough qualified teachers in the country. In addition there have been the complicating factors of the speed with which OBE was implemented and the confusion resulting from the on-going changes to Curriculum 2005.

#### **3.7.1 General problems and critique of outcomes-based education**

OBE has come in for robust criticism. Simonds criticises the whole concept of OBE and maintains that OBE is not a practicable model of teaching and learning at all, but only a “flawed theory”,



claiming that OBE is simply the “latest bandwagon of reform” in an attempt to be creative, innovative and “on the leading edge of educational theory and reform (Simonds 1994: 34).

McKernan questions all three fundamental premises of OBE, namely that all learners can be successful, that success in school breeds success later, and that schools are in control of the conditions of success. He claims that, at best, this may be true only for certain learners in certain subjects (McKernan 1993: 345, 346).

McKernan further maintains that there seems to be no empirical evidence to show that an OBE approach is better than a process model or that learners learn better in an OBE approach. It is even possible that the outcomes have been selected or will be selected simply on the basis that they will be the easiest to assess, because these outcomes are measured by external testing. By determining each outcome beforehand, what is really being implemented is a minimalist model of instruction, because all the outcomes have been specified in advance. This is not to suggest that one should not have goals or aims, but that OBE “carries much of the baggage of behaviorist psychology applied to schooling and curriculum. Its basic argument suggests that education should be about planning behavioral changes in students’ performances” (McKernan 1993: 347, 348). Instead of Spady’s “organizing for results” or Glatthorn’s focus on the outcomes, it has been suggested that the relationship between what must be achieved in the classroom is far more complex than what OBE proponents would suggest (McKernan 1993: 344). McKernan has no objection to using OBE for training or low-level skills, but hypothesises that it is inadequate for “using knowledge to produce meaning” (McKernan 1993: 348).

In addition, OBE assumes that knowledge and curriculum content can be broken down into smaller outcomes that fit neatly and sequentially. The process of acquiring knowledge and being taught always carries with it the excitement of veering off into unplanned directions during the process itself. “Knowledge and understanding can never be reduced to behaviors, lists of skills and observable performances. Knowledge is an open-ended inquiry, not some product or outcome to ultimately reach” (McKernan 1993: 346). It is problematic to see knowledge acquisition and understanding in linear sequence. It is quite likely that knowledge and understanding and affect interact continuously in a classroom, and that the process is developmental rather than linear (McKernan 1993: 346).

Since outcomes have to be precise and measurable (Kudlas 1994: 32, 35), the underlying assumption is that all desirable learning outcomes and, in fact, all learning can be reduced to these

precise and measurable terms. This equates performance with competence. Catering for a learner in a general school programme is challenging, but learning a language does not lend itself to such precise measurement (see for instance, Brown 1994; Ellis 1997; Nunan 2001).

The OBE curriculum focuses on the roles a learner will have to play when (s)he leaves the place of learning. This seems a contradiction in terms when one considers the pace of change in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Its deterministic assumption that schooling will change society can also be challenged. As Jansen (1997: 2, 3, 4) points out, there is no evidence in the literature of 80 years of curriculum change that changing the curriculum will in any way change a country's economy. Even in industrialised nations, young people face high rates of unemployment in spite of much more formal education than their forebears. Implementing OBE in isolation in South Africa, therefore, will not be a panacea. Although conceding that the education system in South Africa was in need of overhaul, Jansen argued that more attention should be paid to the lessons learned in other countries that have implemented OBE (Jansen 1997: 9). The fundamental question is whether the contexts in countries where OBE has been successful are in any way parallel to those in SA (Mostert 1997: 1, 2).

Even more significantly, van der Horst and McDonald (1997: 18) identify a further constraint. It has been expensive to implement OBE, and South Africa's financial capacity to offer effective in-service teacher retraining, curriculum revision and the development and confident implementation of new assessment criteria and procedures possible has been questioned. The failure to address this issue effectively has meant that teachers' confidence in OBE has been undermined. CED circulars, guidelines and workshop notes have often been bureaucratic rather than insightful. Without a doubt, the workload of teachers increased as assessment has to be done on an almost daily basis (Venter 2003: 12; Hayward 2003: 16) to ensure that the detailed records of each learner's progress are kept (Towers 1994: 626). Jansen's (1997: 5) prediction that the assessment procedures would drive the system seems to have been fulfilled.

The assumption upon implementation was that there was an abundance of skilled, highly qualified teachers in the classrooms of South Africa (Jansen 1997: 8) who would be able to design resource materials for their classes. At the time of the implementation, however, South African had just been through a rationalisation process, which meant that the number of serving teachers was reduced. Jansen rightly recognised that the implementation of OBE would "escalat[e] the administrative burden of change at the very time that rationalisation further limits the human resource capacity for managing such change" (1997: 9).

Another problem is that the social-reconstructionist intent of OBE in South Africa means it relies not only on the quality and willingness of the teachers involved, but also of the willingness of learners to work hard (van der Horst and McDonald 1997: 6). The current management crisis in schools does not suggest that this assumption was well-grounded.

The initial implementation of Curriculum 2005 was reviewed extensively by the Review Committee on Curriculum 2005 (Chisholm 2000), which delivered its report in May 2000. The recommendation was that Curriculum 2005 should be renamed Curriculum 21, but by September 2000 it was announced that it would still be known as Curriculum 2005 (Potenza 2000: 23) and that certain features would be revised. The most important items that were to be changed included the dropping of range statements (which indicated the scope of achievement), phase organisers (which grouped the specific outcomes, which would be called learning area statements in the future) and programme organisers (which were themes or issues around which classroom activities are grouped) (Chisholm 2000: 98). It was also decided to slow the rapid phasing in of Curriculum 2005 (Chisholm 2000: 107). The aim of the Revised National Curriculum Statement, like that of Curriculum 2005, was still the “creation of a citizen for a democratic society ..... and developing and fulfilling the potential and talents of all its citizens to their fullest degree” (Chisholm 2002: 8).

One of Jansen’s concerns was that the terminology associated with Curriculum 2005 was complex and difficult to understand was also acknowledged and addressed in the New Curriculum Statement (Chisholm 2000: 18). It must in any case be borne in mind that “no empirical evidence suggests that such an approach is inherently better than the others” (Glatthorn 1993: 359). Not only is there a paucity of documented research abroad regarding the effects of OBE (Evans and King 1994: 12), but “whilst research conducted over the past few years has provided rich insights into what is not working and the various reasons militating against change, little has been provided in terms of what can work and the pre-requisites necessary for effective change which policy infers” (Wilmot 2005: 70). Even the South African studies listed by Taylor and Vinjevold (1999) focus on very specific areas and by no means cover the complete spectrum of OBE learning. This matter will be referred to again in the chapter dealing with recommendations for curriculum design (Chapter 7).

Spady, commonly referred to as the father of OBE, has criticised the speed with which OBE was implemented in South Africa. As early as 1994 he argued for greater flexibility in the implementation of OBE, even if it meant moving the final date of implementation to 2010 (Rooi 1997: 6). Recently he was damning in his criticism of the system that was implemented in South Africa (Spady 2008).

### 3.7.2 The role of the teacher

According to See (1994: 31), the information revolution is changing the roles and responsibilities of all people, also teachers. Machines are becoming the dispensers of information, but OBE theorises that teachers are still in demand as people who diagnose, create climates, design instruction, coach and facilitate learning. The implementation of OBE and the critical outcomes adopted by the South African Qualifications Authority make it imperative that language teachers rethink their roles in the classroom (WCED 2000a: 14). Gone, apparently, are the days of traditional teaching, with learners sitting in rows listening to one-way communication. The assumption is that teachers will have to give up their information-giving role and use technology to provide education that is based on outcomes, not overt teacher input. In language teaching, the role of the teacher is especially important in encouraging interaction (Nunan 1995: 207). In this sense, the roles demanded of the teacher in both CLT and OBE appear to coalesce.

Official policy documents issued by the South African Department of Education make it clear that the teachers are not to act as “controllers” in the classroom because their task is no longer to transmit “fixed, innately known” knowledge to be repeated as proof that learning has taken place (WCED 2000a: 7), in the light of the redefinition of the term knowledge (Cornbleth 1990: 185, 186; WCED 2000a: 10). The role of the teacher is officially viewed as being that of one who has to develop “independent, critical and reflective thinkers” in a context in which knowledge is dynamic and constantly changing (WCED 2000a: 8, 10).

This definition of the term ‘transmitter’ of knowledge may view it in rather a limited way in the policy document referred to in the previous paragraph. While it may be true of the behaviour of many teachers in many lessons over the years, it would be unjust to believe that there were no teachers in days gone by who, while “transmitting” some knowledge, also “actively engaged” with their learners in the quest for knowledge and understanding and who developed “independent, critical and reflective thinkers” (WCED 2000a: 7, 8, 10). Generally this traditional model implied that it was the teacher who initiated and controlled classroom interaction, and learning was often perceived to be mainly memorisation. However, there were other more subtle forms of control, because it was the teacher who decided not only what to include in the classroom curriculum, but also what to exclude (Cummins 2000: 256, 257).

The official policy documents take Vygotsky’s views (WCED 2000a: 29) as the point of departure and adopt a strongly social constructivist view (WCED 2000a: 17, 28). Accordingly, the teacher’s

task is to create contexts in which learners engage in activities that are interesting and encourage learning. In addition, the teacher “actively engages” (WCED 2000a: 28) with the learners and responds to their questions and problems. It is the teacher’s task, according to this view, to guide learners and to encourage them to work in groups as they grapple with “real issues and projects”. The teacher should also see to it that opportunities are created for learners to interact with peers who have greater experience (WCED 2000a: 28). This is coupled with the suggestion that learners should work primarily in groups to satisfy these requirements (WCED 2000a: 32).

It would appear that not only must the role of the teacher change, but also that the interactions between teacher and learners take place on the basis of different power relations between them. The teachers will have to ensure that they “foster collaborative relations of power” in the classroom (Cummins 2000: 253) and relinquish their role as the only source of knowledge and of power. In fact, according to Cummins (1996), Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) can be roughly defined as “the interpersonal space where minds meet and new understanding can arise through collaborative interaction and inquiry”. When learner identities are affirmed, the ZPD is extended beyond the sphere of cognition to “the realms of affective development and power relationships” (Cummins 2000: 254).

Increasingly teachers are thus seen as facilitators in the sense of actively guiding the learners. Teachers will have to devolve responsibility for acquiring information and for incorporating this information as new learning down to the learner, who has now been placed at the centre of his or her learning experiences (Marx 1997: 353). It would be fallacious to imagine that there is no further place for instruction in the English language classroom in an OBE environment, and to see facilitation as excluding transmission of knowledge is a serious limitation. Many low-level skills are acquired by means of transmission (Mason 2000: 2), even though (Nunan 1995) language learning is not a linear process (Nunan 1995), but a complex one characterised by various overlapping phases of progression and regression, and a much longer time frame is necessary before a learner moves from one stage of development to the next than was previously thought necessary (Nunan 1995: 146, 147). There will always be something that needs to be explained to, or clarified for, a particular learner or a group of learners.

The terms ‘facilitator’ and ‘mediator’ are used quite loosely in the literature. WCED defines a facilitator as one who “actively engages” with the learners in the classroom (WCED 2000a: 28), while Mason, for example, seems to imply that a facilitator is one who sets up classroom experiences and then tries to be as unobtrusive as possible in the classroom (Mason 2000: 4).

Mason views a mediator as one who plays an active role, striking a balance between being a controller and an unobtrusive facilitator (Mason 2000: 7). Neither Dewey (1963) nor Vygotsky (1978) regards the teacher as a passive facilitator of knowledge, where the teacher simply sets up experiences and then gets out of the way (Mason 2000: 4). Unless otherwise stated, WCED's definition of the term facilitator will be used, as it is unlikely that a teacher will ever just set up activities and interaction among peers and then quietly take no further part in the classroom proceedings.

In Mason's view, based on those of Dewey and Vygotsky, the teacher is actively involved with the learners as they progress from the level that they are at a given moment to reach their full potential (Mason 2000: 4) in the construction of knowledge. In accordance with this view, the teacher has to 'scaffold' knowledge. Scaffolding here means "supporting a course of action" that one wants the learners to pursue (Macaro 2001: 175) in order to undertake tasks and "construct communications" (Carter and Nunan 2001: 226) by leading learners to ever-increasing levels of complexity (Warchauer 2001: 211; Mason 2000: 4) – with a corresponding diminishing of the support given by the teacher over time (Pinto and Dison 1998: 69). Initially there is much scaffolding to be done and, as the learner progresses, the level of scaffolding decreases until the learner eventually becomes independent (Mason 2000: 4).

Mason argues that the teacher should actively seek to teach not simply so that the learners can reproduce facts, but to ensure that they seek "a careful and sensitive path .... in the full awareness of the difficulties and tensions involved, in the knowledge that we will never find a perfect balance, but with the courage always to try" (Mason 2000: 7). There must therefore be a balance in the classroom between the theory and content of so-called facts, and the skills, attitudes and values of the continual enquiry as learners discover new concepts and acquire new skills for themselves.

All learning, according to Mason, should thus be a fine balance of transmitted knowledge, knowledge the learners acquire in a learning activity and knowledge based on attitudes (Mason 2000: 3). Learning is perceived to be a collaborative construction by means of interaction between the teacher and learner peers. The classroom thus becomes a "community of learning where knowledge is generated by teachers and students together" (Cummins 2000: 257, 258).

However, in order to encourage the active learner to "invent knowledge" (WCED 2000a: 17), the teacher has to facilitate the process of learning. The teacher must guide and nurture this process in which the learners in the classroom can become effective, confident communicators who think and

are capable of uncovering new knowledge (WCED 2000a: 15–17). The teacher's changed role is a formidable one, as can be seen by Olivier's categories of tasks. To summarise those categories, according to him, the teacher has to see to it that the learner masters the necessary procedural steps and the necessary knowledge, and acquires the necessary skills (Olivier 1998: 29).

Apart from these fundamental considerations, teachers will have to demonstrate an openness and sense of democracy in the classroom, instead of sticking rigidly to a predetermined timetable according to which knowledge is to be absorbed. It is up to the teacher in an OBE environment to decide which activities the learners are to experience and also how much time is needed to accomplish the outcomes (Kanpol: 1995: 359ff).

In addition, the teacher has to design lessons in such a way that the focus is on the learner and his/her progress and not on the activity or material with which the learner interacts. A learner-centred curriculum implies that the learner has much to bring to the classroom in the line of beliefs and attitudes to language learning, and that these beliefs and attitudes need to be taken into consideration, as opposed to the premise of the teacher-as-expert who assumes that what the learner brings to the classroom can be discounted as of little or no value. This is in line with a learner-centred view. Learners need to be encouraged not only in what to learn, but also how to learn in a way that suits their needs best (Nunan 1995: 178, 179, 181).

Because the learners and their existing beliefs and knowledge are acknowledged, the learner-centred curriculum is a collaborative matter between the teacher and the learner, and the learner is actively involved in the decision-making process regarding the content of the curriculum and how it is taught (Nunan 1990: 2). This has major practical implications because a negotiated curriculum must be managed in a totally different way to the traditional curriculum. The proponents of a learner-centred curriculum assume that learners cannot possibly be taught all they need to know in the classroom, and therefore class time must be used as effectively as possible to enrich the learners with what they regard as the most urgently required knowledge and skills. The more inexperienced the learner is, the more decisions must be taken by the teacher, but as the learner progresses, (s)he must be allowed more and more say in the processes that affect him/her (Nunan 1990: 2-4). In this way, an ongoing interaction between teacher and learner will determine the content and the learning outcomes (Nunan 1990: 5). This is the ideal in a learner-centred environment, but it must be borne in mind that in Curriculum 2005 the learning outcomes have been predetermined. To that extent, Curriculum 2005 does not meet this criterion of a collaborative or learner-centred curriculum.

Outcomes measure performance at any given point, but it is important to differentiate between performance and competence. Performance is what the learner can do at a given moment. Competence is what the learner is capable of under ideal conditions. If it is competence that the teacher is aiming at, learning experiences must be “varied and challenging because they provide a richness of evidence to work from” (Leat 1993: 8, 9). The implication is that the teacher has to create and provide opportunities to extend and demonstrate learning in the classroom so that not only the learner’s performance, but also his/her competence, is developed to the fullest extent possible.

To make this possible the teacher has to select the content of the lessons and ensure that appropriate assessment criteria are used (van der Horst and Macdonald 1997: 157). In addition all the phases must mesh as a coherent whole (van der Horst and Macdonald 1997: 158). The teacher must also make sure that the readability of the resource material and the materials themselves are suited to the age and abilities of the learners (van der Horst and Macdonald 1997: 161). The teacher must encourage the learner to view a problem from different angles while playing an active role in enhancing the acquisition of knowledge and skills in his or her learners, (van der Horst and Macdonald 1997: 231).

Further complicating matters is the fact that, as learners progress to higher grades, the complexity of the academic tasks increase, as does the complexity of the linguistic contexts within which they operate. In addition, the vocabulary the learners are expected to use expands and the language they must use in writing English becomes more distant from the language they might use in everyday conversations. Furthermore, because a Vygotskian approach to literacy emphasises that language and communication are rooted in social contexts, the extent to which the learner has “access to and expertise in using” the appropriate language “required to complete academic tasks” is important (Cummins 2000: 66, 67).

It would appear that language learning will take place most successfully where students are challenged, but also given “contextual and linguistic supports or scaffolds” (Cummins 2000: 71) in order to finish the task. Therefore teachers have to introduce learners to “materials, situations and experiences” in order to achieve this. The teacher, as the “more experienced partner” must ‘scaffold’ learning so that each new learning experience in the classroom taps into and builds on knowledge previously acquired and just as logically leads to the next learning experience (WCED 2000a: 25, 27). This would have the implication that learning should be tailored to meet individual learners at their particular level of knowledge and skills, and give them the opportunity to gain more



knowledge and more skills. Teachers will have to be spontaneous, enthusiastic and flexible (van der Horst and Macdonald 1997: 87) at the very least if they are to meet this challenge.

Because curricula are general documents dealing with planning at the macro level, they do not take the specific needs of individuals or groups into account. It is up to the teacher to interpret the curriculum so that these individual needs are met on a daily basis in such a way that the learners achieve the predetermined results (Killen 1996: 3, 5).

However, the language teacher will have to find ways of not being limited by the deterministic underpinnings of an approach that culminates in:

- “Today I learnt (knowledge)
- Today I learnt to do (skills)
- Now I feel (values, dispositions, attitudes)”

(van der Horst and Macdonald 1997: 122)

It is readily apparent that classroom management and teacher talk are vitally important in sound teaching practice because “it is through language that teachers either succeed or fail to implement their teaching plans” (Nunan 1995: 188). It would appear, drawing on the conclusions of Parker and Chaudron (1987), that studies confirm the view that teachers should not simplify their language for the sake of the learner. It would seem that when a teacher simplifies his/her language, the learners are not as successful in acquiring language as when the teacher uses more elaborate but appropriate language (Nunan 1995: 191). This sounds a warning against an over-emphasis on cooperative learning, because then the learner could be subjected to language which is a great deal less challenging (i.e. the language of his or her peers), which is a factor to be taken into account when designing tasks. For instance, texts provided could be challenging to raise the level of discussion. This also has implications for the selection of material, which will be dealt with in the next section.

Teachers’ roles have thus changed fundamentally in that they have to focus on individual needs and they have had to relinquish the firm control they had over the learning process. Much of what teachers do and are willing to do is based on how seriously they take the changes that they are expected to deal with (Smith 1999: 7, 9). If teachers are to take the leading role in classroom curriculum development, they will have to develop a range of skills and therefore, in a sense, curriculum development will be “largely a matter of staff development” (Nunan 1990: 171). It would appear thus that, to a large extent, the onus rests on the individual teacher.

The question arises as to whether there are enough highly qualified teachers in South Africa to take up the challenge of the changes OBE demands of them, which entail radical departures from past teaching practices. Not only must the theoretical basis of OBE be understood, but the necessary skills must be applied in the classroom (Jansen 1998: 325). Whether the short courses initiated by the Department of National Education will be enough to equip especially the undertrained teachers with the necessary skills, insight and depth of knowledge to successfully implement the multiple facets of OBE, so that each learner in the country will benefit, is open to question (Berkhout, Hodgekinson and van Loggerenberg 1998: 297).

### **3.7.3 Co-operative learning**

For many years the predominant view of how a child learns drew primarily on the work of Piaget and his followers, who maintained that the child as a learner acquired knowledge as an individual, solving problems, adapting his schemes and reformulating his hypotheses in the light of his own progress (Bennett and Dunne 1992: 2 - 3). More recently, this view has been challenged, among others by Bruner and Haste (1987), and there is far more support now for the view, postulated by Bruner in 1986, that a child acquires knowledge while engaged in a social process with his/her peers, teachers and parents. This has paved the way for an increased emphasis on negotiating and sharing in classroom learning.

The social aspect of learning is emphasised in Vygotsky's well-known theory of the Zone of Proximal Development. In this theory he emphasises the importance of interaction with more knowledgeable others, whether they be teachers, peers, parents or others (Vygotsky 1978: 86). According to Vygotsky, people have the ability to learn through social interaction and, by means of this process, children gain an understanding of the social and cultural world; he maintains that an over-emphasis on what learners can do on their own can limit their progress. The underlying argument that Vygotsky presents is that what the learner can do with assistance now, (s)he can do on his/her own later (Vygotsky 1978: 86, 87). This view has led to an increased awareness of talking in cooperative groups as the means by which learners progress (Bennett and Dunne 1992: 3).

Social constructivist learning theory, propounded by Vygotsky (1978) and Piaget (1978), and which has gained widespread currency, has as its basic principle of learning the premise that meaning is created in a continuous process. According to this view, the construction of knowledge takes place

within a “social learning environment which facilitates personal interaction”. Knowledge is therefore not something to be discovered, but something that “is actively constructed by learners, rather than transmitted by teachers” (Geelan 1997: 1), when learners interact with one another and with the teacher, “and such knowledge is constructed on the foundations of students’ existing knowledge” (Geelan 1997: 1). Peer-group interaction is thus regarded as critically important for the construction of knowledge (Blanckenberg 2000: 50). Because constructivist thinking underpins Curriculum 2005 (WCED 2000a: 17), these developments take on an added significance for learners and teachers in South Africa.

For the purpose of this study, Perkins’s view (Perkins 1999: 11), namely that constructivism should be seen as a multiplicity of techniques for differing learning needs, will be adopted. With respect to classroom pedagogy, adopting a constructivist stance demands that the teacher be an effective facilitator in order for cooperative learning groups to “promote socially based learning in the classroom” (Blanckenberg 2000: 86) so that all learners may reach their maximum potential.

The value of using groups has long been recognised. For instance, the 1967 Plowden Report in the UK advised teachers to teach using groups of children “at the same stage” for a particular purpose, the idea being that groups would form and reform depending on particular learning needs. Working in groups would, in all likelihood, ensure more talking and learning time for each learner than would be the case if the class were to be treated as one big group. One disadvantage of treating the class as a single group is that all the learners are competing for opportunities to communicate with the teacher at the same time. It was hoped that peers would help one another in the groups, that individuals within the group would clarify their own thinking when explaining concepts to others, and that both reluctant or slower learners as well as quick learners would benefit (Bennett and Dunne 1992: 10, 11).

There seem to be other advantages to cooperative learning. Psychological research (Perkins 1992; Duffy and Jonassen 1992; Reigeluth 1999; Wilson 1996; Wiske 1998 cited by Perkins (1999), claims that when the learner is actively engaged in learning, it leads to “better retention, understanding, and active use of knowledge”. Whether this is true of cooperative learning has yet to be conclusively established. Perkins (1999: 8) postulates that a social dimension to learning through cooperative learning often encourages learning. Other studies, cited by Bennett and Donne (1992), conducted on the efficacy of the ‘product process’ (Johnson and Johnson 1985, Sharan 1980 and Slavin 1987) report a marked improvement in the levels of achievement on the part of those who learnt in cooperative groups compared to those working individually in the classroom. In addition, it

would seem that there is enough stimulation to cater for learners at different levels (Bennett and Dunne 1992: 28, 29).

Studies by the same researchers found that learners who were working in groups also benefited through an improvement in their self-esteem and social relations, and there also seemed to be a greater sense of sharing and caring among those learners. These researchers focus on certain advantages for cooperative groups. “For pupils these improvements are evident in enhanced levels of involvement, in the range and nature of their talk and in the quality of their completed work; for teachers it is shown in the creation of time; time which is crucially necessary for the diagnosis, assessment and recording of children’s attainments” (Bennett and Dunne 1992: 195, 196). Taken at face value, this suggests obvious advantages for teachers in South Africa, with its large numbers of learners in each classroom. Group work may enhance the motivation of learners (Crookes 2003: 132), but on the other hand, the large classes may mean overcrowding in classes, leading to a situation where learners are not optimally seated to maximise their learning experiences (Spady 1994a: 102 – 104).

Not all the experience of using groups has been as positive. Cooperative group work appears to create sound conditions for learning and, in the light of the frequent injunctions by the Department of Education to use cooperative learning to achieve the aims of OBE (van der Horst and Macdonald 1997: 27), it would seem that groups will become a standard feature in the classroom. However, it would seem that there are many caveats.

Classroom research, cited by Bennett and Dunne (1992), conducted among primary school learners revealed that only half the talk in groups concerned the actual work, and these communications tended to be short (Boydell 1975). Studies cited by Bennett and Dunne (1992) supported these findings and, in addition, found that, although learners sat in groups, they worked individually with little talking between group members, with most of the conversation having little to do with the work in hand. These learners thus worked “in groups, but not as groups” (Bennett and Dunne 1992: 11, 12). The major problem seems to be that, although learners are often grouped together, there seems to be very little demand for them to work together on a group task (Bennett and Dunne 1992: 25). That is why Slavin maintains that group work should be structured in such a way that it demands that learners work together (Blanckenberg 2000: 87). Studies in the UK support this view. They argue that group work succeeds only if learners are encouraged to cooperate by working towards a common outcome or by making individual contributions to the common outcome (Kutnick 1994: 15, 19). Another criticism levelled at cooperative learning is that constructivist

methods are usually more time-consuming than traditional methods and often make very high demands on learners (Perkins 1999: 8). Another related problem is that cooperative learning is effective in promoting learning only if the tasks to be performed and assessed are clearly planned (Kuttnick 1994).

A further cautionary note is sounded by Bennett and Dunne (1992: 30), who warn that there is no certainty as to which type of group will suit a particular learner and in what context a certain group may be of benefit to a particular learner. Peer tutoring and group work can be problematic. Problems have been experienced in some OBE programmes abroad when the groups are heterogeneous. Parents of self-motivated learners could feel that their children are being neglected, if the teacher is perceived to be spending too much time dealing with remedial work with other learners (Kudlas 1994: 34, 35).

It is unfortunately so that there is a paucity of research regarding 'process' (Bennett and Dunne 1992: 31). The key aspects that remain to be thoroughly researched concern what happens in a group to make it effective and how these effects occur. Regarding the helping behaviours in groups, it was found that it helps least if the members of the group give only the answer; a better option is for them to explain their answer. As to be expected, most of the help given in groups comes from children with very good skills. These learners also benefit from organising and clarifying their thoughts as they help. There are very few studies which have investigated the influence of group composition on group processes (Bennett and Dunne 1992: 31, 32, 34). Although the studies cited were undertaken in classrooms, none actually investigated genuine, everyday classroom practice and this kind of information is understandably vital (Bennett and Dunne 1992: 34).

However, Bennett and Dunne (1992) undertook a study to try and ascertain to what extent their questions regarding group work could be answered. The authors worked with 15 primary school teachers working with learners ranging from ages 4 to 12. They found that the task demands made on the group largely determined the talk in those groups. Mixing genders in higher or lower ratios also had an effect. It was found that groups containing few girls and more boys reduced the amount of talk and also the proportion of high-level talk (Bennett and Dunne 1992: 62, 63).

Drawing on other studies, Bennett and Dunne have concluded that the form of the task is of major importance, as is the extent to which the task contains an element of problem-solving (Bennett and Dunne 1992: 89, 90).

They designed three models for group work. In the first model learners can work individually on identical tasks to achieve individual outcomes. In applying this, they found that learners cooperated effectively, valuing the social process and that, on completion of individual tasks, the faster learner would tend to help the slower one. In the second model learners can also work on different aspects of the same task to achieve a joint outcome. This model allows learners to work individually and therefore to be individually accountable, but they also have to co-operate to complete the task jointly. In observing children using this model, they found that younger learners find it difficult to plan. The last model involves working together on one task for a joint outcome. This model is very difficult to implement, as the teacher's planning and organisational skills are tested to the limit. Furthermore, it is very difficult to make sure that all learners are fully involved. When learners got on well with one another group appears to be more effective (Bennett and Dunne 1992: 107, 108).

Bennett and Dunne advise that group work must be part of a wider system of classroom management. Groups of three or four seem to work best (Bennett and Dunne 1992: 133), and some studies report that it was more time-consuming working with groups larger than two (Perkins 1999: 8). Mixed-ability groups are probably being most beneficial to most learners. Mixed gender groups can be used, but they found no evidence that such groups worked better than other groups. Personality features were far more central to group composition. In addition, it would seem that learners need to be trained to work cooperatively (Bennett and Dunne 1992: 133, 170).

Not only should the group process be assessed, but also the product after the learners have completed their group task. Assessment is difficult, however, because both social and cognitive aspects are at work in cooperative learning and also in "the complexity of relationships which may develop and lead to different kinds of interaction and learning" (Bennett and Dunne 1992: 187).

Randall (1999) questions the advisability of placing the onerous responsibility for one learner's progress on another learner, yet this is what cooperative learning requires. Not all learners contribute equally to group tasks and averaging marks or rewarding group effort would seem unfair. Another problem is the high-achieving learners who explain work to other learners. Such high-achieving learners may benefit from this, but there is the drawback of their doing this repeatedly to learners who have no interest in the group proceedings or the work. There is also the phenomenon of the free-rider, namely the learner who refuses to contribute, while others take the responsibility for the group's success (Randall 1999: 30). Topping (1994: 126) cautions that peer-tutoring in groups should not be used too often or seen as a panacea.

Slavin (1991, cited by Randall 1999), warns that cooperative learning is one of a range of “instructional methods” by which knowledge skills are transmitted to others, but it should be used wisely and carefully only under certain circumstances (Randall 1999: 32) “for the right purpose” (Perkins 1999: 8).

To summarise, for cooperative learning to be effective, there must be: a clear purpose for the group work; a clear reason for the individual members to work together as a group; individual and group accountability for a group outcome must be designed into the task; and assessment must take both process and product into account.

#### **3.7.4 Assessment**

After the classroom activities and instruction, learners must undergo guided practice (which will include a “careful selection of examples and problems”) so that they can be evaluated in an informal way, which will provide feedback to increase their learning (Killen 1996: 10). A formative assessment, which is based on the unit’s goals, will be administered when most learners seem ready to demonstrate that they have acquired the necessary knowledge and skills. Learners who can demonstrate the necessary mastery will be given enrichment activities and the others will be given extra instruction and practice. Finally, a summative test is given and those learners who still have not achieved mastery will have to try to achieve to mastery through additional effort. At this stage the learner is given support by the teacher only if (s)he is prepared to accept some responsibility for his/her learning (Killen 1996: 10).

Assessment is thus an integral part of OBE and teachers will have to devise “valid and reliable assessment procedures” and any assessment “must be an integral part of all programming”, not something devised at the end of the instructional programme, or an end in itself (Killen 1996: 7). Assessment in OBE is made up of a series of activities which inform the teacher about the learner’s success on his/her way to achieving the desired outcomes. Assessment is, in addition, “continuous” and “developmental”. The essence of the matter is that learners are assessed against the criteria in the learning programme and given the opportunity to provide further evidence of achieving outcomes (Olivier 1998: 45 - 47). The assessment procedures must test the outcomes of the lesson or curriculum. The better they are, the clearer the picture will be of how the learner is progressing (Killen 1996: 7).

In an OBE approach assessment has to cover all the work done in the instruction period and not just some of it, as is the case with conventional curricula. The idea is not, however, that less work will be covered in an OBE approach compared to a traditional approach in order to achieve this comprehensive assessment. In addition, learners are allowed to show that they have mastered a particular outcome at any stage in their schooling in order to be given full credit. This means that no learner is ever failed in any area, but receives an 'I' for incomplete until such time as (s)he has mastered that particular outcome (Capper and Jamison 1993: 430). It is possible that, in time, an 'I' for incomplete will be perceived by learners just as negatively as failing is under a traditional curriculum. Just how it is going to be possible to track and assess everything in a large class has not yet been clearly explained and will be discussed in Chapter 5, when the responses to the teacher questionnaire are dealt with.

The classroom is a complicated and dynamic place, encompassing moment-to-moment decisions by teachers and learners, where plans are transformed into actions (Nunan 1995: 8). It is in the classroom that the teacher, the learners and the material interact with one another.

### **3.7.5 CLT and OBE**

CLT (Chapter 2) makes broad claims to prepare learners for general competence. Perhaps a criticism is that it is too broad in its general thrust. In this regard OBE may suggest important ways of raising awareness and particular aspects to be learnt, since it requires very specific outcomes for the purposes of assessment and involves instructing the learner in specific tasks, the successful completion of which must be demonstrated. The problem is that the focus is so strongly on the end result. Any curriculum must not only be product-based, but must also contain a process element, otherwise it is simply a restrictive document describing the terminal point for behaviour (Brumfit 1992: 117).

Because language learning is not linear and “a strongly individual process”, and OBE “certainly encourages deterministic assumptions”, there would appear to be a certain tension between the two; this is because one “cannot say with assurance that particular aspects of language learning will take place at a particular point” and it is possible that language learning activities in the classroom “may have unforeseen outcomes” (Ridge 2000: 48). Any target specification will only have a limited value because, although language teachers have the difficult task of trying to reach an “underlying capacity”, the aim of classroom instruction must be to enable the learners to be able to perform



effectively in particular situations (Brumfit 1992: 117). Therefore plenty of room must be allowed for interaction and exploration (Brumfit 1992: 117).

The literature study can be used to illustrate the point. Must a learner be able to demonstrate an ability to interpret a specific poem or must (s)he be able to interpret or respond to poetry in general? It would certainly be difficult to establish assessment criteria or performance indicators for the latter outcome, since it is so broad. Language teachers may well decide to explore a poem on the spur of the moment in response to a perceived or even expressed need of learners. This would not seem altogether compatible with OBE. It would seem that in OBE, because of there is very little time for these unplanned moments, there is a greater emphasis on quantity at the price of quality. This could militate against learner-initiated explorations because of the pressing need to accomplish the pre-determined objectives (Berkhout *et al.* 1998: 297).

### **3.7.6 OBE Curriculum 2005 and its suitability for developing language competence**

The policy, based on the National Education Policy Act (No. 27 of 1996), which informed the documents reaching teachers in schools, was discussed earlier in 3.5 and 3.6.1. This section will confine itself to a discussion of the policy document which was sent to schools to guide teachers' implementation of OBE in schools.

In the introduction to the senior phase (grades 7 - 9) it is clearly stated that a paradigm shift "from the traditional aims-and-objectives" to OBE is necessary (Department of Education:1997: 1). After specifying the areas the document would cover, it goes on to state that the document "should be viewed as an attempt to offer direction" when macro-planning the curriculum. It provides a framework on which schools "may build" their own programmes and is "descriptive rather than prescriptive" (Department of Education 1997: 2).

Not only would teachers have to make a paradigm shift to OBE; they would also have to learn the language and terminology associated with this approach. A learning programme had to be designed to enable the learner to work towards the specific outcomes which are specified for the relevant learning area (Department of Education 1997: 16). Such a learning programme had to include a list of the critical outcomes, specific outcomes, assessment criteria, the notional time for that particular learning area as well as other related matters (Department of Education 1997: 17).

Cornbleth (1990) argues that there has been too little awareness of the difference between an intended curriculum and a realised curriculum (2.7): “It is time for critical curriculum studies to move beyond document analysis and design to examination of practice and contextualized approaches to curriculum change” Cornbleth (1990: 198, 199). An illustration of the gulf between the intended curriculum and the realised curriculum may be seen in a study done on a limited scale in the Western Cape. In this study van der Merwe (1994: 202) found that despite the fact that CLT had been prescribed for many years, teachers remain tied to the methodologies of the past (see also 5.4). This has obvious implications for the shift in thinking and practice that OBE requires, an issue which was examined in greater detail above (3.4).

In the next section I turn to the assessment of textbooks and other classroom material regarding their relevance and suitability for the learners in the classroom. I will also explore their suitability for meeting the requirements of both CLT and OBE/Curriculum 2005.

### **3.8 MATERIALS SELECTION**

#### **3.8.1 The extent to which the material aims to achieve the critical and language outcomes**

It is self-evident that, if the stated aims of language teaching and learning in South Africa are to be achieved, the material which is used in the classroom should promote the outcomes of the policy document as specified by the Department of Education and issued in the provinces (DoE 1997: 13-73). The material selected for classroom use must also accommodate the changed role of the teacher in an OBE environment (WCED 2000a: 28; Mason 2000: 7); it must be regarded as suitable and relevant to their needs by the learners themselves (Spady 1994a: 102 - 104); and it must accommodate the changed role of the learner (Richards and Rodgers 2005: 166; Reppen 2002: 322).

Because any material used in the language classroom should be appropriate in the sense that it must lead to the achievement (Pinto and Dison 1998: 45) of the critical and language outcomes in terms of the 1997 Policy Document (DoE 1997: 15, LLC 13 - LLC 44), it does not mean that any material compiled before the implementation of Curriculum 2005 must be disposed of. If the material has been evaluated in terms of its strengths and weaknesses, the decision can be made as to which part of it can be retained (Pinto and Dison 1998: 53).

DoE (1997: LLC 6) views language as “multi-dimensional and dynamic” and admits that the language outcomes overlap. The function of a language outcome is to “emphasise a certain feature

of language activity” and this feature will only become clear when the learner is confronted with “an integrated set of language activities” in order to meet his/her specific needs (DoE 1997: LLC 6). This is a much more difficult task than it may initially appear and it has been maintained that the general language learner is the learner for whom it is most difficult to design a programme (Krahnke 1987: 76), because it is not easy to predict the kind of language situations this particular learner will have to face on completion of the learning programme. Much thought and care will therefore have to go into the design of such a language-learning programme and the selection of the material by means of which it is to be accomplished.

The DoE Policy Document (DoE 1997: LLC 13 to LLC44) attempts to provide a detailed list of the kind of tasks and activities that the language learner ought to be confronted with in an attempt to attain the desired outcome(s). It is obvious that, if the learning material is to be deemed successful, it will have to attain the critical and specific language outcomes by making use of the kinds of tasks and activities listed in the document. This becomes even more important in the face of criticism of support material being deficient regarding its “availability, quality and use” and the training the teachers were exposed to. It was also maintained that the quality of textbooks in the period covered by this study are “variable” (The Teacher 2000: 8).

### **3.8.2 The assessment of textbooks and classroom material regarding their relevance to, and suitability for, Grade 8 learners**

Textbooks are one of the “core educational resources” (Costas, Long, Moletsane and Mthiyane 2002: 274) and the choice of textbooks and material for use in an English language classroom is not just a straight-forward task of matching material to suit a particular classroom need. Often the choice of material involves complex professional and financial decisions resulting in the selection of sets of relevant and effective material which “often do not seem to provide good value for money” (Sheldon 1988: 237).

The task of selecting material for classroom use is thus not a simple one (McDonough and Shaw 2003: 60), but appropriate pointers can be derived from literature. The following provides a guide to common factors that are involved most frequently in deciding whether any material, whether commercially available, or teacher or learner generated, is being considered for use in a language classroom. It must be borne in mind that no list can be regarded as definitive, nor will all the criteria necessarily be applied at the same time. A careful reading of these factors will reveal that all of them issue from the points already made in the literature survey in Chapters 2 and 3 and which are

discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5, where I deal with the insights revealed by an analysis of the classroom events as well as the material which was used.

It must be borne in mind that commercial enterprises are concerned with profit and product availability on the market as soon as possible. No set of classroom material is going to be perfect (McDonough and Shaw 2003: 61), but thoroughly researched material which is also valid and accurate cannot compete with market deadlines and they will therefore be published later and stand a good chance of not being sold. This very scenario unfolded in 2005 - 2006 with regard to grades 8 – 10 and was repeated in 2007 and 2008 with regard to Grades 11 and 12. Many schools, including the one I teach at, bought material purported to be in line with the new approach, only to find that material which is evidently better appears on the market later. I am in a position to know this better than most teachers as I am responsible for book acquisitions at our school and have seen how many books have been bought and abandoned within a year or two in order to make way for purportedly better books. A further complicating factor is the fact that textbooks sometimes merely imitate one another (Sheldon 1988: 239). Even so, material selection can be aided by some form of system regarding materials evaluation (Nunan 1995: 209).

When commercial material is considered for selection in the classroom, it is important to assess the extent to which the materials match the objectives of the programme as well as insights from research in language and learning (Nunan 1995: 209). Materials for South African schools will have to comply both with insights from research in language and learning and with the outcomes specified in the Language, Literacy and Communication learning area, as well as the critical outcomes defined for Curriculum 2005 as a whole. Although it is impossible to guarantee that a learner will definitely learn something from a particular book or set of materials, the text of the book or material on offer can be assessed with regard to the input it offers the learners, which the learners may or may not make their own in the form of intake (Littlejohn and Windeatt 1989: 156).

Naturally, the material must promote the achievement of the language outcomes of Curriculum 2005. In order for that to happen, the outcomes to be achieved must be clearly stated, and clear and relevant assessment rubrics be provided. Furthermore, the rationale behind the material and what it will try to achieve must be clearly stated (Sheldon 1988: 243) and must dovetail with the long-range goals of the learners in a particular classroom (Breen and Candlin 1987: 19). There needs to be a clear sense of what the linguistic needs of the particular learners in a particular class are and how the material will facilitate language acquisition and learning.

The needs of the learners are of paramount importance and, apart from being at the level of the learners concerned, it is vital that the material matches not only their language learning needs as perceived by the teacher, but also the learning needs as the learners perceive them (Breen and Candlin 1987: 19). This necessitates the use of real-life communication (Tomlinson 1999b: 88) for authentic purposes (Brown 1994: 78; Sheldon 1988: 244) that are seen as worthwhile by the learners, otherwise they may not give the material the attention it deserves (Sheldon 1988: 244).

When the learners perceive the material as relevant and interesting, inviting them to express meaning (Breen and Candlin 1987: 21), their engagement might enhance their personal growth and imagination, and the resulting stimulation lead to creativity. Thus the material must invite the learners to want to invest in the activities and thus in their own language development (Morgan 2004: 162) There should, in addition, be a clear invitation to engage with the material without fear of making mistakes because making errors is a part of learning and reflects the current state of a language learner's language development (Howatt 2004: 336; Nunan 2001: 88) There is also a need for open-ended questions rather than the sense that 'right' answers are being sought.

The material must include activities for language use by the learners and also opportunity for revision and assessment (Sheldon 1988: 244); there also needs to be enrichment material for the learner who progresses quickly, as well as additional activities for the learner who takes longer to achieve the specified outcomes. The activities should also try focus on meaning and form, with the activities at the same time engaging the learner in meaningful communication as well as "consciousness-raising regarding form" (Tomlinson 1999b: 88, 89).

The material must be organised into "teachable units" (McDonough and Shaw 2003: 63) and the units must be carefully sequenced (Breen and Candlin 1987: 15). Any particular section must be linked to the activities that preceded it and also to succeeding activities, so that there is a steady acquisition of knowledge and skills from one level to the next (Sheldon 1988: 243), because continuity and coherence between sections and sub-sections is important (Littlejohn 1999: 193).

In addition to furthering the critical and language outcomes, the material must make provision for meaningful cooperative learning, in accordance with the emphasis that such learning has been given in an OBE Curriculum 2005 environment (van der Horst and Macdonald 1997: 27; Bennett and Dunne 1992: 3). Because of this emphasis, teachers need guidance on utilising group work, its dynamics and what makes for effective group work. Given the need of teachers to be persuaded of the merits and feasibility of group work (Chapter 5), as well as their need to have a greater

understanding of how to facilitate group work, fairly detailed guidance should be offered. This guidance should include effective management strategies, such as the development of learners' group work skills and the provision of clear, learner-centred instructions, as well as facilitation strategies. The rationale for using group work in a particular instance should also be clear.

The guidance on group work must be coupled with guidance for teachers on other issues regarding language teaching because, until very recently, very little effort has been put into teachers' books. They would be widely used if they contained a variety of suggestions about the activities the learners are to be exposed to. Furthermore, the material must contain guidance for the teacher on how to approach the activities, and guidance on the assessment of the activities and assessment techniques. Not doing so would, most likely, encourage teachers to stick with the material they are familiar with, largely defeating the aims of a new approach and new material (Wallace 1998: 189). The teachers' guide books would be even more effective if the accompanying learners' books contained a wide variety of material and options within a particular activity to cater for the particular needs of diverse learners and their varying learning styles. This could also help learners to take responsibility for their own learning (Tomlinson 1999d: 338, 339).

The material must at least reflect current views of knowledge and insights about learning in general and language learning in particular (Sheldon 1988: 244), or the gap between theoretical insights and classroom practices will become enormous. This places the burden on teachers to be well-trained and subsequently be willing to keep up with developments in the fields of learning in general and language learning in particular. Therefore the role that the material accords the teacher must be taken into consideration (Littlejohn 1999: 193; Sheldon 1988: 244) as too much or too little teacher-learner interaction would be detrimental to the amount of language learning taking place in the classroom. The material must lend itself to the idea that the teacher is the creator of a classroom atmosphere conducive to language learning; (s)he is the facilitator of the classroom events and not the oracle imparting information (3.7.2). The teacher also has to see that there is an appropriate mix of form and meaning tailored to the language needs of that particular classroom (3.7.2), while at the same time developing his/her own personal mix of appropriate methods and approaches (3.7.2).

In summary, then, material must be useable, adaptable and flexible. After considering all relevant factors regarding the selection of material, teachers will have to reach their own conclusions, remembering that the ultimate test for any material is trying it out in the classroom and then reflecting on its success or failure (McDonough and Shaw 2003: 71).

Despite taking these factors into consideration when material must be selected, it should be pointed out that combining material which tries to incorporate important aspects of CLT and also OBE/Curriculum 2005 will not be easy. CLT, by emphasising authentic language use for real-life purposes by means of learner interaction, is by its nature open-ended, free ranging and unpredictable. On the other hand, Curriculum 2005, with its OBE heritage, is deterministic and is characterised by a focus on attaining particular predetermined goals. Coupled to teacher resistance to (Hansen 1990: 184; Booysen 1989: 230), and confusion about CLT (van der Merwe 1994: 202), there is a strong likelihood that the element of control would encourage teachers to use traditional approaches which allow for this kind of control, even although they do not allow for the stronger role that learners are meant to play. Therefore teachers implementing Curriculum 2005 might revert to traditional language-teaching methods in order to achieve these goals.

Teacher-generated materials for use in the English language classroom, compared to published material, often appear in a bad light to the very learners they were created for, because the former are usually photocopied and not published with glossy covers, well-reproduced photographs and some pictures in colour. This is the case, despite the fact that these materials produced at school level are often of far more immediate relevance to the learners concerned (Sheldon 1998: 238). From the teacher's point of view, the published material has the advantage of being (hopefully) thoroughly tested and professionally edited. On the other hand, such material might not be sensitive to or serve the needs of, local contexts and suffer from the drawback of being somewhat outdated, since the cycle of feedback and production of improved material is much longer than for home-grown material. Teacher-generated material can often be available for use in the classroom the day following a news-making event – something which is impossible for commercially produced materials. One set of criteria cannot be used for all materials (Tomlinson 2001: 69) and the recommendations above represent at best a set of considerations.

### **3.9 CONCLUSION**

Having traced the essence and the rise of OBE and its implementation world-wide and in South Africa, this chapter pointed out that there are many issues which have to be resolved before OBE Curriculum 2005 can be said to have been implemented successfully or if, indeed, it is the right approach for South African learners, especially for language learning. This question arises because an approach with behaviourist potential (OBE) is being combined with constructivist elements in Curriculum 2005, the South African version of OBE.

It is clear from this chapter that OBE has certain merits, especially its focus on the learner. However, certain issues need to be addressed in order for OBE to be implemented successfully. These include, among others, the assumption that language learning can be broken down into clear, measurable linear elements; the speed with which OBE was introduced in South Africa; and the greatly increased teacher workload as a result of the emphasis on detailed curriculum planning and on tracking the progress of individual learners regularly. Thus OBE is far from being the panacea for the world's or South Africa's educational needs as it is an approach fraught with uncertainties, intangibles and difficulties, especially as regards the teaching of English.

The teaching of English demands classroom material that will facilitate language learning. With Communicative Language Teaching being the preferred language teaching approach and Curriculum 2005 being the stipulated teaching approach in South Africa, the classroom material must cater for the demands of both these approaches. The selection of suitable material is critically important, because it must encourage the communicative performance of learners as well as furthering the aims of Curriculum 2005. If the material is not carefully selected with these aims in mind, teachers may revert to the traditional teaching approaches and use the material with which they are familiar.

The next chapter will examine the research methodology for conducting a case study in an attempt to investigate, in actual classrooms, to what extent the insights from the literature survey regarding language teaching and OBE are reflected in the everyday realities of the classroom, using commercially available material.



## **CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter the theoretical aspects of the research and research methodology that I adopted in this investigation will be examined, with particular reference to the case study and observational study. The relevance and importance of this approach in influencing the design of the investigation as well as creating opportunities to generate data will be emphasised.

This chapter will, furthermore, outline the context of the study before discussing the design of the observation schedule used during the classroom observation sessions as well as the design of the post-implementation review questionnaires completed by both learners and teachers. It is hoped that the various forms of data generated in this way will be a trustworthy and credible reflection of what actually happened in the classrooms.

### **4.2 THE NATURE OF RESEARCH**

There are, broadly speaking, two approaches to conducting research. A process known as the deductive approach (Nunan 1992: 13) is conducted in a structured way and according to predetermined methods and procedures. This approach tests whether the original premises or propositions are correct (Babbie 2001: 35; Seale 1999: 2). In addition, each aspect of the investigation must be evaluated critically in order for the researcher to arrive at trustworthy observations on the question at issue (Nunan 1992: 2). The results of research can thus verify or disprove existing theories.

The inductive approach, on the other hand, uses direct observation to confirm ideas or to form theories which underlie the observed events (Bernard 2000: 2; Seale 1999: 101). This approach tries to infer some sort of pattern which will account for the observed events (Babbie 2001: 34) and a researcher may therefore attempt to derive principles or theories from the investigation of single instances (Nunan 1992: 13; Seale 1999: 23). Conclusions drawn on the basis of this approach aim at being either highly probable or highly plausible (Upshur 2001: 18).

The deductive and inductive approaches, however, are not mutually exclusive. The inductive approach is often used when the researcher is in the exploratory phase of the investigation and the deductive approach when the confirmatory phase of the investigation is reached. Both may thus

form part of any investigative research (Bernard 2000: 444). Either way, new insights into the nature of the issue being investigated can be revealed. The aim of the proof, refutation or demystifying of issues investigated by means of research is to enlighten the researcher and others interested in the same field of study (Nunan 1992: 2).

Research is undertaken because the researcher is faced with a problem or has questions about a particular aspect in his or her field of study and wants to explore, describe or explain it. Research often tries to do all three (Babbie 2001: 91). As part of “a systematic process of inquiry” the researcher poses a question before conducting an investigation and in the course of the investigation data will be produced. When the data have been analysed and interpreted, the researcher is in a position to draw certain conclusions (Nunan 1992: 3).

There appear to be two general conceptions about the nature of research. The first is that external truths exist somewhere and research simply has to reveal them. The second view is that particular truths are commodities which can be negotiated within the historical context in which they are observed and interpreted (Nunan 1992: xi, xii). This view maintains that research is “subject to change in the light of practice” and that “the search for a substantive universal ahistorical methodology is futile” (Chalmers in Nunan 1992: xii). It would seem, in fact, that not only are the foundational assumptions of Western knowledge being questioned, but the hope of finding ultimate truths is receding (Lather 1991: vii, xix) and that, in the post-modernist view, there “is actually no ‘objective’ reality”, only “our several subjective views” (Babbie 2004: 12).

Objectivity, apolitical perspectives and neutrality have been for many the bedrock of the field of scientific enquiry and some fear that chaos will reign if these values are devalued or abandoned, but then again absolute knowledge has never been possible. While these long-standing pillars of science’s claim to authority may be merely “cultural dominants” which seem “natural, rational, [and] necessary”, they may really be “regimes of truth” which either limit or promote discourse (Lather 1991).

As a result, there seems to be an increasing shift away from a ‘found world’ which is ‘knowable, objective, factual’ towards an idea of ‘constructed worlds’ where knowledge is regarded as ‘emergent’, ‘contested and partial’. In addition, this knowledge is influenced by what Foucault calls “the interplay between language, power and meaning” (in Lather 1991: 86, 111; Clifford and Marcus, 1986). Positivism had postulated that there was only one truth, but in the post-positivist era it is now argued that truth is not one thing or even one system. Methodology has been cleared

of fixed rules. There is a resultant turmoil that allows for many possibilities by which life can be understood in all its complexity (Lather 1991: 51, 52). If it is so that truths are context-bound, knowledge is tentative and answers are always changing, care should be taken when research outcomes derived in a particular context are applied to other contexts (Nunan: 1990: xii).

It is in the light of this perspective that I began this investigation in the hope that the data would give a trustworthy and sufficiently full account of the 'lived experiences' in the two classrooms involved in the course of the implementation of the selected module. Although I had hoped that teachers in similar situations would find that the account of the study held some relevance for them, I recognized that I would have to exercise caution in attempting to find universal truths which apply to all language classrooms at this level, even if only in the Western Cape Province.

In the debate about postmodernism and science, three shifts seem to be emerging. In the past great emphasis was laid on general theorising, but this is being replaced by an emphasis on the problems that interpreting and describing generate. Not only is the supposed reality under investigation selected, changed and interpreted, but what passes for objectivity and fact often hides "structuring and shaping mechanisms" (Lather 1991: 91).

Secondly, the postmodern era is characterised by a "deconstructive emphasis" on writing. The researcher should strive to use texts that will present data that are rich and can even be re-analysed in different ways to reveal aspects of the study which would otherwise have remained concealed. Such writing does not present one truth, but also probes the blind spots of the interpreter of the data (Lather 1991: 91).

Lastly, it is increasingly being recognized that social relations "mediate the construction of knowledge", with certain people speaking on behalf of others. Ideally, in any study, there should be a "collaborative analysis that doesn't impose the researcher's understanding of reality", but allows the data to speak for itself (Lather 1991: 92). In this way studies will address interested people and speak directly to them, allowing them to see some of what is there, instead of having the researchers impose their views of what they think is really there.

Increasingly the trend seems to have moved from data being presented within researcher-imposed paradigms to data being presented in such a way that the data is allowed "to speak for itself" (Lather 1991: 92, 111). It is for this reason that the data generated in the classrooms in the course of this

investigation have been presented as fully as possible and, where possible, in the words of the learners who were involved in this study.

I tried to be very careful when identifying, selecting and presenting data, lest the findings as presented obscure important aspects of a study which, in turn, could cast doubt on the findings of the research.

### **4.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The quest for an explanation is the quest for theory, and because it must be admitted that this is a delicate quest at the best of times, any social research would seem to be “a precarious and presumptuous process” (Zetterberg in Stenhouse 1981: 12). One can distinguish, as Cohen and Manion (1994: 50) and Brown (1988: 1, 2) do, between primary and secondary research.

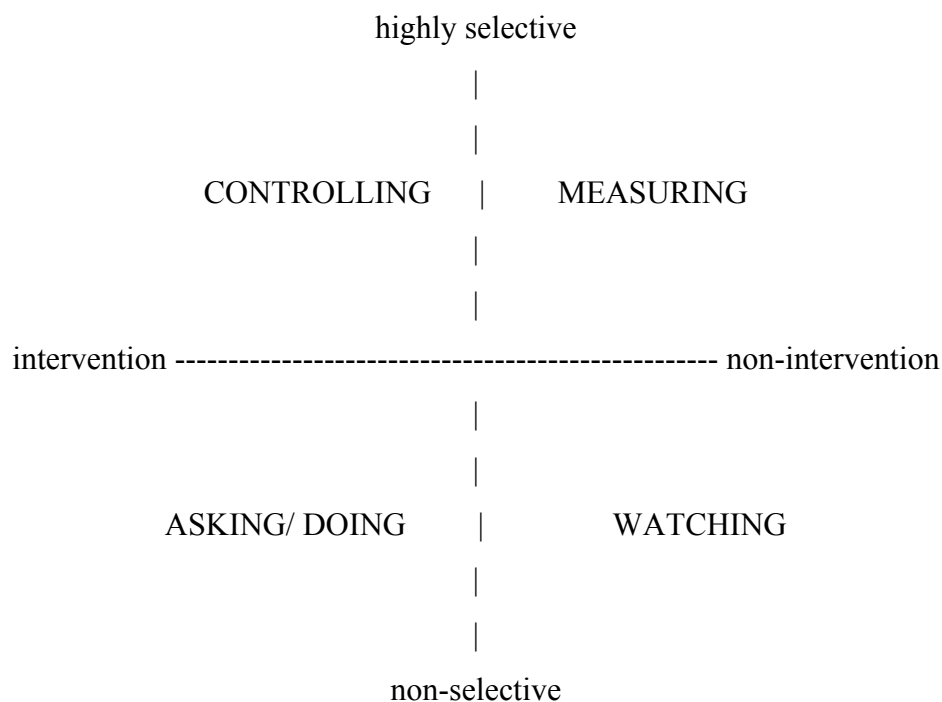
Primary research, in which researchers investigate particular cases or areas of interest and obtain original data, is subdivided into case studies and statistical studies, while secondary research consists of reviewing the relevant literature and synthesising the research findings of others (Brown and Rodgers 2002: 10, 12; Nunan 1992: 13). There is a further traditional distinction, namely between qualitative and quantitative research (Brown and Rodgers 2002: 10, 12; Nunan 1992: 3). The former focuses on meaning in context (Merriam 1998: 1) and involves understanding the action from the subject’s perspective. It entails observation and exploration, is descriptive and inductive by nature, and is assumed to be subjective to a large degree. It is process-oriented and “interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed”. The data are, according to its proponents, “real” and “rich” (Merriam 1998: 6). These studies tend to be single case studies (Wallace 1998: 39). Some commentators have been critical of the value of these studies on the grounds of researcher bias, but all research involves interpretation at some point and interpretation always runs the risk of bias (Wallace 1998: 39).

Quantitative research works within a paradigm of scientific objectivity, using only what it terms reliable “hard” data (Nunan 1992: 4).

The issue of the subjectivity and objectivity of research will receive further attention below when the advantages and disadvantages of observational study are dealt with.

For more than twenty years the qualitative/quantitative distinction has been seen as too simplistic (Nunan 1992: 3). In an attempt to move beyond the distinction between qualitative and quantitative research at that time, Chaudron (1988) identified four types of research traditions in applied linguistics. Psychometric research seeks to determine knowledge by means of the experimental method. Interaction analysis in the classroom investigates relationships and uses observations, systems and schedules. Discourse analysis analyses classroom discourse by means of classroom transcripts. Ethnography tries to obtain insights into the “classroom as a cultural system” through naturalistic observation and description (Nunan 1992: 3). It can be argued that discourse analysis and interaction analysis keep the distinction between qualitative and quantitative methods intact (Babbie 2001: 36, 37; Bernard 2000: 418; Nunan 1992: 5). What is certainly true is that researchers often combine the two approaches in the course of their investigations (Bernard 2000: 21).

Van Lier (1990) provides a useful summary which differentiates between the interventionist and the selectivity parameters in applied linguistic research. He illustrates this as follows:



(Nunan 1992: 7)

As will become clear in a later sub-section, this study is interpretive and is not concerned with intervention. Furthermore, this study involves both selective and non-selective aspects. The learners were not selected to take part in the study on the basis of certain criteria, but formed part of the

study because they happened to be assigned to the two teachers who implemented the material in class. The material was selected on the basis of ready availability and common use in schools.

This study was undertaken as a qualitative case study since this seemed to be an appropriate means of gaining “an in-depth understanding of the situation” (Merriam 1998: 19). In this instance, the situation refers to the implementation of a module in two language classrooms (4.9 and Chapter 5). This investigation tried broadly to determine to what degree the module was in line with an OBE approach and the ways in which the learners interacted with the material and with one another.

My investigation tried to determine (1.5)

- \* to what extent changes have to be made to the teaching of English to accommodate the implementation of OBE/ Curriculum 2005.

It also endeavoured to determine

- \* the extent to which particular commercially available material in the initial phase of Curriculum 2005 initially met the needs of English language learners in an OBE/ Curriculum 2005 classroom.

I will attempt to show that the study fulfils Wallace’s criteria (1998: 39) of being descriptive, inductive by nature, process-oriented and replete with data that are ‘real’ and ‘rich’.

In the next section, the reasons for deciding to do a a case study are explored.

#### **4.4 RESEARCH DESIGN**

The research questions were posed in Chapter 1: These were to determine whether the teaching of English would have to change and, if so, to what extent; and 2. to determine to what extent commercially available material meets the needs of English language learners in an OBE approach. These process-oriented research questions will inform the methodology which will be followed in this study (Willig 2001: 19, 20) and will also call for detailed descriptions and explanations.

In order to answer these questions an extensive literature survey was undertaken on the origins of OBE as well as current and recent approaches to language teaching. This was to assist me to determine the extent to which the teaching of English might have to change in the OBE-based Curriculum 2005. A qualitative approach seemed appropriate in order to find out whether current OBE classroom material does in fact meet the needs of language learners and, since a particular instance was being investigated for local truths, a case study approach – and, in particular, an observational case study – seemed the appropriate way of gaining insights from this investigation.

These insights would be supplemented by monitoring actual classroom events involving the use of apparently suitable material (3.8) for an OBE approach. I selected two grade 8 classes.

I hoped that, as both learners and teachers worked their way through the particular set of classroom material, some insight into the ‘lived experiences’ in those classrooms would be provided and, at the same time, that this would cast some light on how suitable this classroom material was. The selected module was implemented over a period of about five weeks, with both teachers seeing our learners for six periods, lasting on average for forty-five minutes, in every nine-day cycle.

It is hoped that the investigation of these events can inform what happens in other similar English language classrooms (Babbie 2001: 285) so that others can learn from them. It is also possible that the insights gained in the course of this investigation could contribute to the wider discussion on the implementation of Curriculum 2005.

## **4.5 CASE STUDY**

### **4.5.1 Introduction**

The renewed interest in qualitative case study research is a reaction to the psycho-statistical paradigm which appears to have been dominant for research in education for a long time. Within a positivist paradigm behaviour is viewed from a behavioural psychology perspective in which the psychologist sets out to predict behaviour in response to stimuli. The limitations of this approach have long been recognised (see, for instance, Stenhouse 1978: 2, 3).

#### 4.5.2 The essence of a case study

I chose to follow a case study approach because the events in two particular classes over a limited period of time were being investigated. Although it is not easy to define the term ‘case study’, it has generally come to mean those research methods which focus on a field of inquiry involving a specific instance (Babbie 2004: 293; Brown and Rodgers 2002: 21; Adelman, Jenkins and Kemmis 1976: 3) in its natural environment. Case study is furthermore “an intensive, holistic description and analysis” (Merriam 1998: 34). It is possible to study more than one case at a time, but the number must remain small because the “essence of the case-study approach is a careful and holistic look at particular cases” (Johnson 1992: 75, 76). Furthermore, any instance which is the subject of case study research is always a study “in action” (Adelman *et al.* 1976: 3). Case study, therefore, involves “an in-depth, intensive and sharply focused exploration of ... an occurrence” (Willig 2001: 70).

Case study research may be framed in one of two ways. In the first instance a hypothesis is posed and a bounded system selected from a class. In this way, generalisations may be made from the instance to the class (Nunan 1992: 75, 77). An example would be the case of an English classroom being investigated for a specific period so that generalisations could be made to other English classes or even to other learning area situations or completely different learning situations (Adelman *et al.* 1976: 3). In the second instance, the bounded system is selected and then studied in detail in order to try and understand the case as fully as possible (Merriam 1998: 19, 27; Adelman *et al.* 1976: 3), providing a greater understanding of the variables, parameters and dynamics of the case (MacDonald and Walker 1975: 7).

All cases are unique and, as such, “uniquely embedded in their real world situations” (Adelman *et al.* 1976: 4). The strength of case studies is its strong focus on a particular case and its descriptive discourse (Merriam 1998: 34). The “specific and limited nature” of a case study also makes it much more accessible to the practitioners of a profession such as teaching (Wallace 1998: 163). A case study will probably have achieved its goal best when the reader experiences the “shock of recognition” at the similarity between his/her situation or case and the case (s)he is reading about (Adelman *et al.* 1976: 4). For this to be possible, there need to be “thick descriptions” which give sufficient detail about the particular case so that the reader not only understands the case being discussed better (Seale 1999: 41), but may also possibly provide “transferability” to other similar situations as a result of the “thick descriptions” (Walford 2001: 15).



It is possible that the participants in one case study are typical of the members of a larger population (Wallace 1998: 161), bearing in mind that generalisations from a case study can never apply to other unexplored cases directly. Case study is more concerned with particularisation and an emphasis on the uniqueness of the case than with generalising to a wider group (Stake 1995: 8). Thus a case study considers the case within its context and takes place over a period of time. Because a case study can lead to the development of theory, research in case study “can give rise to explanations which *potentially* apply to new cases and the results of the research into one particular case may therefore be applicable to a wider context” (Willig 2001: 70, 71, 82, 86, emphasis in the original). It is with this in mind that the case being investigated in this study will be described in detail later in this chapter and the next, and will include the views of the learners who participated in this study. The conclusions reached in this study therefore have the potential to be applicable to many other language classrooms across the country.

Conducting a case study normally entails three distinct operations: generating and recording the information; organising the information; and writing the report or disseminating the information in some other way. The usual components of fieldwork are: collecting or evoking documents, observing, interviewing and measuring or collecting statistics to provide multiple sources of data. All this is done so that understanding is enhanced (Babbie and Mouton 2001: 282, 293; Stenhouse 1981: 10). Data in a case study are generated by means of naturalistic observations, elicitation, interviewing, verbal reports, using existing information and multiple sources for data in order to arrive at the clearest possible meaning of such data (Babbie and Mouton 2001: 282, 293; Johnson 1992: 86 – 90). It must be borne in mind that any empirical work is “selective, partial, positioned”, which makes “self-reflexivity” very important as the researcher tries to find out more as (s)he interacts with the data and tries to elicit meaning from what is happening (Lather 1991: 79). This was addressed by means of the notes that both the teachers involved in this study made, sometimes during the course of the period when there was time, and also later in the day.

It is important that biographical details be given in the study because biographical factors can affect the reliability and validity of the research (Nunan 1992: 149, 150). This I will do in section 4.9, later in this chapter. Therefore, it is vital that researchers elicit relevant information from the subjects. In order to do this they must be trusted by, and have the confidence of, the subjects; they must speak their language and be able to penetrate their world, and they must be highly conscious of psychological dynamics (Ball 1982: 19). Interviews are often conducted with only one participant, but group interviews provide an ideal opportunity to probe a matter in greater depth while affording an opportunity for reciprocal feedback (Lather 1991: 77).

Qualitative studies are concerned with trustworthiness, in other words the extent to which the findings of the research represent reality, giving no reason to doubt the truth of the findings (Meadows and Morse 2001: 188, 197) or the data (Bernard 2000: 46). This ensures the trustworthiness of the research, which can be scrutinised by other researchers (Babbie and Mouton 2001: 276, 277; Meadows and Morse 2001: 188, 197). This kind of validity or trustworthiness (Denzin and Lincoln 2000: 158) is as important for a case study as for other forms of study.

Any study must establish the correct measures for the concepts being studied. Certain conditions must lead to other conditions. The population to which the findings can be generalised must be established. The study must be replicable with similar results. All these factors are problematic in case studies (Nunan 1992: 80); whereas experimental research, by referring its findings to formal theories, seems to 'guarantee' its results and the results are handed over to the reader intact. Case study research, on the other hand, offers a 'surrogate experience' to the reader and invites the reader to identify with the experience. As in literature, the truth of the case study is "guaranteed" by the reader's "shock of recognition" (Adelman *et al.* 1976: 4). In a case study "thick detailed descriptions" give the reader a sense of "being there ... so that they can use their human judgment to assess the likelihood of the same processes applying to other settings which they know" (Seale 1999: 118). I will include as much participant response as possible in order to render as trustworthy an account as possible with as much "thick description" (Seale 1999: 41) as possible.

In case studies final proof is rarely obtainable and the researcher should rather strive to increase understanding of the variables, parameters and dynamics of the study (Macdonald and Walker 1975: 7). If documented thoroughly, such studies may become archives which can be subsequently reinterpreted (Adelman *et al.* 1976: 8, 9).

One of the ways of generating data in case studies is by means of observation (Stenhouse 1981: 10; Babbie and Mouton 2001: 282), the focus of the next section.

### **4.5.3 Observation**

Observation is an integral part of case study and researchers can approach their role in observation in a variety of ways (Ball 1982: 4, 5, 6).

#### **4.5.3.1 *Centrality of observation***

Although there is wide agreement on the merits of observing teacher and learner actions in classrooms, there is less agreement on the suitable methodology to be used to implement classroom observation. There are two main approaches, viz. qualitative observational techniques and systematic observation (Croll 1986: 1).

#### **4.5.3.2 *Qualitative observation***

The first approach to classroom observation is associated with ethnographic or qualitative observational techniques. In this approach the observer, who may or may not be a participant in the actual classroom events, observes the subjects and then tries to understand the “meaning of social relations and social processes” in the classroom (Wallace 1998: 105, 106). In this study the observation was done by two teachers and the focus of the observation was on the learners during the implementation of the selected classroom material (Wallace 1998: 105, 106), thus they were observed at close range (Seliger and Shohamy 1989: 162), with the teachers reporting by means of field notes and verbatim accounts of certain aspects of the classroom events (Wallace 1998: 106; Croll 1986: 1).

#### **4.5.3.3 *Participant observation***

Researchers can act as observers and not be involved in the activities at all (where others are not aware of their research role), or be complete observers (with no interaction with the subjects and they are not taken into account at all). They can also participate in the activities as participant-as-observer (where others are aware of the observers’ research functions) or as observer-as-participant (involving one-visit interviews). They can also be fully involved as complete participants and only take up their role as observers again later (Bernard 2000: 321; Ball 1982: 4, 5, 6). In this regard the two of us were complete participants, as we were completely involved in the classroom activities as active teachers during the implementation of the module in the two classrooms, but at other times we were participant observers who were observing events around us, while being insiders. In order to keep classroom activities and learner responses as natural as possible, the learners were not told that the module was being implemented for research purposes. An ‘independent’, non-participating observer could not be included in the research design for the same reason. Keeping the information about the research from the learners was easy because the other Grade 8 classes also used those modules in the course of the year.

At times, especially when there was little interaction between the teachers and the learners since the learners were working on their own, we were complete observers, simply recording the learner actions around us, with little if any interaction between teachers and learners.

Although it is certain that the participant researcher will have an effect on the events being observed (Babbie 2001: 278), our role as observers was important for the purposes of this investigation. At the same time, our role as participants was equally important, because we were directly involved in the classroom activities as the teachers responsible for classroom events, even if there had been no investigation. We were thus participants and observers in equal measure, which does not fit neatly into the categories (see also Merriam 1998: 101) one normally associates with case study.

#### **4.5.3.4 Systematic observation**

The crux of systematic observation is that one or more observers devise “a systematic set of rules for recording and classifying classroom events” (Croll 1986: 1).

It must be granted that there can be no such thing as a definitive and ultimate description of the social events and processes in any depiction of classroom events. All reports of these events involve an abstraction of certain aspects from the world of the classroom which are deemed worthy of investigation for particular purposes (Croll 1986: 3-4). In addition, observation always involves sampling (Lee 2000: 44). It is in this sense that the observations by the two participant-observer teachers were recorded. The decision to focus on certain aspects must be seen in this light.

Another perspective is that systematic observation itself involves the rigid selection of categories and criteria for classifying the classroom events into selected categories (Croll 1986: 5). Because of the pre-defined categories for systematic observation, its techniques can be criticised as giving only a partial view of classroom events and therefore being inflexible, because of the constraints which they impose on the researcher. Furthermore, rigorously systematic observation techniques have also been accused of decontextualising the events in the classroom, which results in atomistic data, but this need not be the case if the observations are contextualised (Croll 1986: 162).

In the final analysis, it is not the technique to be followed that is important, but that the researcher confronts the research question “with a self-critical knowledge of the consequences and

implications of decisions about research methods and research design” (Croll 1986: 184). Because classroom events are so complex, it follows that there can be no single generally accepted theory which explains this or any other kind of social action (Stubbs and Delamont 1976: unnumbered Preface). Because of this very complexity, there can be no single methodology for observing social events either and therefore different modes of data production such as direct observation, note-taking, prepared observation schedules, questionnaires and interviews with teachers and learners have to be used.

#### **4.5.3.5 *Observation in this study***

As has already been stated, the purpose of this study was to explore the extent to which the teaching of English would have to change in an OBE approach and to what extent existing OBE teaching material fulfils the purpose for which it has been designed. In this case quantitative measures did not seem appropriate and the learners were not observed systematically in the sense that there was a complete observer whose sole task was recording certain events according to a predetermined timing sequence in the classroom.

Observation in this study was, however, systematic in the sense that the learners were being observed all the time that they were in the English class with the teachers who described events briefly as the learners interacted with the material, and made notes of a more reflective nature after the lesson. In that way the two teachers involved were able to observe certain predetermined aspects of the classroom events; I reasoned that extensive descriptions of what was happening in the classrooms, together with learner feedback, would best generate appropriate data. Because there had to be a coordinated system of observation to be used by both teachers, I decided to use certain elements of systematic observation. I therefore designed an uncomplicated observation schedule (discussed in 4.6 below) which would focus on certain key factors forming the core of this investigation. Some measure of systematic observation was necessary in order to provide trustworthy accounts as opposed to what could be seen as unreliable impressions of classroom events (Allwright 1988: 44).

#### 4.5.4 Ethical dilemmas

Case studies present ethical dilemmas; there is always the danger of the researcher consciously or unconsciously selecting the data and consequently illustrating almost anything he or she wants to. His/her biases can thus affect the findings (Merriam 1998: 42). I tried to guard against that by declaring my possible biases and including as much description as possible so as to let the findings speak for themselves as far as possible.

In addition, in research it is always necessary to make ethical decisions which are rooted in a specific research situation and such decision-making can often be so complex that one cannot turn to “indubitable foundations and incontrovertible principles” (Simons and Usher 2000: 2, 3). Although general principles can be helpful or appropriate, ethics in social practice such as educational research is situated ethics and as such cannot be “universalized” (Simons and Usher 2000: 2, 3).

Just such a situated ethical dilemma arose when the decision had to be made as to whether we (the two teachers concerned) should inform the learners of the research motive behind the implementation of the module. I decided that we should not for two reasons. We were the scheduled teachers for those classes for the year and the module was going to be implemented in the course of the term anyway. Thus there was little chance of the teachers being regarded as outsiders or strangers (Bernard 2000: 328). Of primary importance, was the fact that the learners would be protected because all views and information gained by both the teachers for the purposes of this investigation were treated on the basis of anonymity and confidentiality. In this way the privacy of the learners was assured (Christians 2000: 139). The learners were more likely to behave as they usually do if this period of implementation were to be seen as a series of normal classroom events. Informing them could have led to a phenomenon known as reactivity, including the Hawthorne effect or heightened level of performance, and thus lowered data validity (Bernard 2000: 324, 325). I reasoned that the advantages of obtaining realistic classroom data outweighed the disadvantage of informing the learners of the academic nature of the implementation of the module, with the concomitant possibility of their reactivity reflecting the Hawthorne effect (Babbie 2001: 220).

As was stated in 4.5.3.3, an implication of the decision not to inform the learners about the research was that an additional ‘independent’ observer could not be employed (Bennet and Dunne 1992:34).

#### **4.6 DESIGN OF OBSERVATION SCHEDULE**

Although there have been various attempts to overcome the problem of arriving at a systematic record of classroom activity, finding an appropriate instrument remains as challenging as ever (Ball 1982: 29) and specialists “all assert a multiplicity of views as to how classroom interaction research should be carried out” (Brown and Rodgers 2002: 112). In this case I wanted to avoid using an instrument that was either overly simple or too complex. Of primary importance was that the two teachers implementing the modules in two different classrooms had to be able to teach as well as observe. It was also essential that the observation be done in a similar manner.

Criteria for the observation schedule were determined beforehand so that both teacher-observers could memorise what it was that they had to observe while teaching. This was important for producing data that could be compared. The observation schedule (Addendum A) was divided into two categories. The first category was concerned with whether the classroom material would result in the achievement of certain aims, or not. The second category was concerned with the amount of time the teacher spent teaching and to what extent the material allowed the learner to progress on his or her own, or in collaboration with other learners.

The first category would make it possible to explore whether the activities, tasks and learning material that the module provided would lead to the achievement of the seven critical outcomes as laid down by the Department of National Education. It also made it possible to explore the extent to which achievement of the seven Specific Outcomes laid down for the Language, Literacy and Communication learning area had been realised. These were the language outcomes which were pertinent in the LLC learning area in 2003, the time of the implementation of the module for the purposes of this investigation. Since then the outcomes have been revised in the Revised National Curriculum Statement.

In order for the learners to improve their language competence, it is also important for the necessary language skills to be developed (Ellis 1997: 79; Ellis 1994: 615, 617; Larson-Freeman and Long 1991: 321; Spolsky 1989: 194-197, 200). In addition classroom material should also have strong links with life outside the school and prepare the learner to face real-life communication outside the classroom (Ellis 1997: 79; Marx 1997:351; Brown 1987: 44) by using “an integrated set of language activities” (DoE 1997: LLC 6). This is, after all, the aim of all language teaching/learning, as was seen in Chapter 2, and was one of aims underpinning the introduction of Communicative

Language Teaching. It is also entirely in line with the aims of OBE, which attempts to prepare learners for the fast-changing world they face outside the classroom, as was discussed in Chapter 3.

Therefore one of the purposes of the observation schedule was to monitor whether the classroom material furthers this aim of preparing learners to face real-life communication in a real-life world.

In order for learners to progress from one stage or level of language to the next, it is imperative for activities to be logically sequenced and scaffolded so that learning occurs as seamlessly as possible (Cummins 2000: 71; Mason 2000: 4; WCED 2000a: 27). The teacher should ideally be the facilitator or mediator of knowledge, allowing the learners to take central roles in their own progress. Because classes normally contain learners with mixed language abilities, the material provided should make provision for supplementary tasks and activities so that the learners who progress quickly can continue doing so.

Regarding the second category of the observation schedule, provision had to be made to observe to what extent learners were engaged in different kinds of contact or activities, or allowed to work independently and autonomously, or collaborate with their peers, instead of relying solely or mostly on the teacher as in the past. In both OBE and Curriculum 2005, it has been noted, the teacher surrenders some of his/her centre-stage role and the learner is allowed and led to discover knowledge and insight for himself or herself (WCED 2000a: 15-17; Marx 1997: 353), an issue which was examined in Chapter 3.

For the purposes of observation, activities were classified into five types. The first type was an interactive activity for the whole class (Croll 1986: 20). The second type was group work in which the learner is part of a group working with the teacher (Croll 1986: 20). The third type was cooperative activity, in which learners worked in a group which had a cooperative task to accomplish (Croll 1986: 23). The next type was individual activity, in which learners worked on their own. This activity did not involve a group in the class or the whole class (Croll 1986: 23). The final type was an activity in which the learners were not expected to produce oral or written responses (Croll 1986: 23).

Although Croll (1986) discusses mainly systematic quantitative observation, his categories, including the sub-divisions of differing contacts and activities, were useful for the qualitative observation of the language learning activities to which the learners in the two grade 8 classrooms were being exposed. Apart from responding to the predetermined criteria, both of us made brief



notes, or what Bernard (2000: 356) calls “jottings”, in the course of the English period, followed by more reflective notes later in the day when things were quieter, otherwise called “descriptive notes” (Bernard 2000: 362). This resulted in the continuous monitoring (Bernard 2000: 326) of the learners and their classroom events.

#### **4.7 DESIGN OF LEARNER QUESTIONNAIRE**

The questionnaire the learners in the two classes were asked to complete (Addendum B) was aimed at generating data on the opinions and experiences of the learners regarding the observed classroom events (Wallace 1998: 124). For this reason, the questions were largely open-ended to decrease researcher bias. As active participants in the implementation of the module, the views of the learners regarding aspects of the events during the implementation period were important (Ball 1982: 19) and represented an opportunity to explore a different perspective from that of the two participating teachers and, indeed, the compiler of the module.

There were six questions, with Question 1 divided into two sub-questions. The questions focused on the approach used in this module compared to what the learners had previously encountered, what they felt they could do more successfully after having completed the module, how positive they were about the module (affective factors), their view of working in pairs and groups during the implementation of the module, self-assessment and peer assessment and a final question for them to add any other relevant comments. The underlying aim (which draws in obvious ways on Chapter 3) was to obtain data on the learners’ previous exposure to OBE/Curriculum 2005 (Question 1). Although it was possible that such data would be “selective” and “partial” (Lather 1991:79), since it was based on recollection (Wallace, 1998: 127), I felt it would help me understand their perception of what had happened in their previous classrooms (Lather 1991: 79). The aspect of usefulness (Question 2) was directly tied to the notion that the OBE approach should equip learners to achieve outcomes which are meaningful and useful (Killen 1996:3; Boschee and Baron 1994: 193). Question 3 relates to the role that affective factors play in motivating learners to participate in the classroom activities and thus acquire desired skills and knowledge (van der Horst and Macdonald 1997: 92; Marx 1997: 351; Zitterkopf 1994: 78). Questions 4 and 5 relate to tenets of OBE (cooperative learning (WCED 2000a: 17) and assessment done by learners (DoE n.d.:34).

## 4.8 DESIGN OF TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE

Since the announcement of Curriculum 2005, change regarding learning and teaching in the classrooms of this country has been the order of the day. This process of change has been characterised by uncertainty (Smit and Jordaan 1999: i), anxiety (Fullan 2003: 51) and stress (Fullan 2003: 26). Inherently, change is a painful process, involving chaos, conflict and tremendous tension, even though the goal is the noble one of developing the individual potential of each learner (de Kock 1999: 35). Although Fullan (2003) focused on schools abroad, his point is that learner-centred and assessment-centred systems of learning for all (which is the expectation in schools in SA with Curriculum 2005) are “highly sophisticated in-depth pedagogical reforms which require much greater individual and collective capacity than now exists in school systems” (Fullan 2003: 42).

In addition, the decision to adopt Curriculum 2005, including key issues such as deciding which outcomes were to be included, was taken by technical committees of ‘experts’, thus largely excluding the input of classroom teachers. This flies in the face of research which highlights the importance of involving teachers as “key agents in the design and implementation of new curricula”. As important players in the classroom, teachers are faced with many difficult choices, the consequences of which may be around for a long time (le Grange 1999: 76, 79).

There is often resistance to new programmes, leading to non-implementation or partial implementation. In education it is no different. Two studies, albeit limited ones, which dealt with the implementation of communicative language teaching in primary schools (Booyesen 1989) and high schools (Hansen 1990) showed the degree of resistance to new curricular programmes in schools (Booyesen 1989: 230; Hansen 1990: 184). Because those teachers did not believe that the new language teaching approach was the most appropriate one, they simply did not implement it in their classrooms.

Therefore it cannot be assumed that, when educational policy makers release their documents outlining a new programme, the programme is implemented forthwith, especially when it is borne in mind that teachers, as important stakeholders, were largely ignored when the new curriculum was designed (le Grange 1999: 76). My assumption was that a similar spirit of resistance to, and consequent non-implementation of, communicative language teaching might occur with the implementation of the OBE Curriculum 2005. The views of the teachers who responded to the questionnaire were sought in order to find out how they felt about the implementation of the OBE

Curriculum 2005 approach. The nation-wide survey was undertaken in 2003 (Hayward 2003: 16 – 18).

Since teachers' attitudes and beliefs have an effect on how they teach (Brown and Rodgers 2002: 151), I attempted to generate data that could cast some light on the views of these teachers on English teaching in the prevailing climate of change.

The teachers who completed this questionnaire (Addendum C) did so anonymously. These 16 grade 8 English high school teachers were employed at that time at nine large high schools in the vicinity of the school (i.e. in the Cape Metropole) at which this study was done. Some were included because they used the material I intended to use in the case study in their classrooms. Others were included because many learners similar to those in our two classes went to the schools at which these teachers work. The profile of many of the learners in our school would therefore have some similarity to that of the learners in the schools at which these teachers teach English. This represented a possible means of triangulation.

It would be reasonable to assume that, if teachers were opposed to Curriculum 2005, they would implement it only to the extent that were forced to do so and largely carry on teaching as they had before (Hansen 1990: 184; Booysen 1989: 230). Thus, in Question 1 teachers were asked how they had taught English before they implemented an OBE Curriculum 2005 approach. They were asked to be specific regarding the teaching of reading, writing, speaking and grammar skills. The teaching preferences and styles revealed in Question 1 could, in all likelihood, inform the attitudes of these teachers towards the introduction of OBE Curriculum 2005, which is the focus of Question 2.

In order to gauge the attitude of teachers towards OBE Curriculum 2005, they were asked in Question 2 how they felt about the new approach before they had actually implemented it, in order to test either their acceptance or level of resistance to OBE/Curriculum 2005.

In the next question, Question 3, the teachers were asked how these hopes or fears had been realised upon implementation. I hoped that this would generate data which would allow me to explore their experiences during the initial implementation of OBE Curriculum 2005.

In Question 4 teachers were asked which aspects of teaching they considered vital in order to teach English successfully using an OBE approach. This question was included in an attempt to produce

further information about how they viewed the teaching of English in an OBE Curriculum 2005 environment.

Teachers have largely been used to being the sole assessors in their classrooms up till now. Under the terms of Curriculum 2005, teachers are expected to take into account “self and peer assessment” and “a range of other methods” (WCED 2000a: 66; DoE 1997: 13; DoE n.d.: 24) in addition to their own various forms of continuous assessment, tests and examinations. Therefore, in Question 5, the teachers were asked what effect they thought the use of individual and peer assessment had on the acquisition of the learners’ reading, speaking, writing and grammar skills. If they felt that the use of self, peer and group assessment did not provide the feedback necessary to enhance language acquisition and learning, it could affect their attitude toward and use of, that kind of assessment in their classes.

In Question 6 the teachers were asked whether using an OBE approach would enhance the learners’ acquisition of reading, speaking, writing and grammar skills. Both Questions 5 and 6 address vitally important issues regarding the critical outcomes as well as the language outcomes of Curriculum 2005.

In Question 7 the teachers were asked if they thought that teaching by means of an OBE/ Curriculum 2005 approach would equip the learners to meet the linguistic challenges they would encounter outside the classroom. I hoped that this question would produce further data on the teachers’ attitude to OBE and make some comparisons between them and the teachers in my earlier study possible (Hansen 1990).

Seeing that the questionnaire was to be completed by experienced teachers of English in the process of implementing OBE Curriculum 2005, Question 8 asked for any advice they could give teachers of English who were faced with teaching this Curriculum for the first time.

In Question 9 teachers were asked to elaborate on any aspects of English teaching not referred to in the questionnaire.

## 4.9 DESCRIPTION OF THE CASE

Curriculum 2005 was implemented in grade 8 in high schools at the beginning of 2001 and implementation in grade 9 started in 2002. As the classroom implementation for this study was done in 2003, it provided an opportunity to study the implementation of the new curriculum in the Language, Literacy and Communication learning area in two grade 8 classrooms at one particular school. Grade 8 was chosen as it is an entry year in high school.

In addition to the class taught by me, another class was selected, taught by an experienced teacher of English. This teacher was briefed on the issues involved and asked to teach the same module from one of the sets of materials available to teachers and learners at the time. The selection of the material will be discussed below (4.10) and the implementation of the module will be dealt with in detail in the following chapter. I felt that having a different teacher in each class could result in a greater variety of teacher-learner interaction and reveal richer and more varied insights, and could possibly make me more aware of my own biases (Wallace 1998: 109). It could also suggest the role that different teachers play in the language learning classroom. Thus, the difference in gender, as well as other differences between us, could be seen as important factors in the teaching and learning of English, and the biographical information below is supplied in the knowledge that even this information is subjectively informed, “an inevitable feature of the research act” (Walford 2001: 9).

Because case study methods rely on human instruments and only limited knowledge is obtainable, there is a considerable risk that the researcher might become involved in the “issues, events or situations under study” (Macdonald and Walker 1975: 4). It should be remembered that “what people think they are doing, what they appear to others to be doing, and what they are in fact are doing” may not necessarily be the same thing (Macdonald and Walker 1975: 4, 6). In addition, problems might arise because readers cannot distinguish actual data from the researcher’s interpretation of the data (Macdonald and Walker 1975: 4). This has implications for the selection of events and data thus generated, as well as for the editing and presentation of the material. Furthermore, different people may draw different conclusions from the data which is presented because they come from different research traditions. It is important that data be presented as fully as possible and that the researchers’ possible biases be declared.

I attended this school, then under the auspices of the white House of Assembly, as a pupil in the 1960s. After teacher training at the University of Stellenbosch, then an almost entirely white institution, I returned to this school as a teacher and have taught here from 1974 until the present

(2010). I am an experienced teacher of both English First and Second Language (now known as English Home and First Additional Languages), have been subject head for English since 1975 and Head of Department at the school since 1984. In 1990 I completed a master's study on the role of formal structural input in a communicative syllabus.

The other teacher attended Montana High School in Worcester and the University of Stellenbosch. She has gained extensive teaching experience in English at several large high schools over the last 25 years and has taught at this school for 8 years. I am generally regarded in the school by both other teachers and the learners as being a strict teacher, maintaining firm control of the classroom situation, while the other teacher, with a more gentle personality, favours a more democratic classroom. As a result, she might allow far more learner input and learner interaction in the class than I would, and learners might feel more free to speak their minds in her class than mine. Having two teachers involved in the implementation of the selected module could provide opportunities for reflection and reveal common insights as well aspects that might have gone unnoticed if only one teacher had been involved in the project. This opportunity for triangulation (Stake 2003: 148) would have been lost if I had taught both classes. Experience, gender, class management and attitude to learners could prove to be potentially important factors influencing teachers in an OBE environment.

The Afrikaans-medium high school where the modules were implemented is located in the northern suburbs of the Cape Metropole in the Western Cape. All the subjects, except English, are taught through the medium of Afrikaans. The classes contain about 35 - 40 learners each and these learners are of mixed ability as far as their academic achievement in general and their proficiency in English are concerned. Both classes contain boys and girls who have Afrikaans as their home language. None of the learners in the two classes selected for participation in this study were moved to or from other classes for the purposes of this study.

Before the amalgamation of the various education departments in 1994, the school fell under the auspices of the then Department of Education of the House of Assembly in the so-called tricameral parliament and later became a Model C school in which the parents undertook to fund certain aspects of the education of their children themselves. As such, the school population was exclusively white. Since 1994 the school has been a Section 21 school. This means that the school receives minimal funding from the provincial Department of Education and that the school fees paid by the parents fund all the expenses of the school, excluding the salaries and other benefits of the teachers funded by the government. In the year of this case study (2003), the school had 827

learners who were taught by 24 teachers on the government payroll and 11 teachers who were paid by the governing body of the school. This is a typical statistic for our school over the past several years. The classrooms are roomy, clean and well maintained. In addition they are well resourced with desks, blackboards and overhead projectors. There are also a number of tape recorders and also a few TV sets and VCRs in the school which can be loaned from the media centre, which has a full-time media secretary, who can quite readily duplicate material and notes for both teachers and learners. In addition, the school has two computer rooms for the instruction of Computer Application Technology.

The two teachers taking part in this investigation treated all the learners as if they came from the same Western background but, in reflecting on this case, I have been aware of the fact that I have to be “sensitive ... to the patterns of knowledge introduced by colonialism” and that a researcher at an institution of “Western power-knowledge is given access to all that the colonial system has produced by way of intellectual resources, and the knowledge systems of the colonized ... are rewritten into the text of Western science or literature” (McKeever 2000: 110).

The school has admitted learners of other races since 1992 and, at the time of this study in 2003, of the 827 learners, 0,7% were black,, 24,5% were coloured and 74,8 % were white (WCED Annual Survey March 2008, President High School). The coloured and black learners have to adapt to the predominant culture of the school and are treated as if they were no different from the white learners. The learners come from all levels of society and there are vast differences in their socio-economic backgrounds. There are some who come from stable home backgrounds and others whose parents are quite wealthy, while yet others come from adequately comfortable homes. Some come from very poor or disadvantaged homes. The families of the majority of learners in this school seem to have a lower socio-economic status than that of most families in the still largely white northern suburbs of Cape Town (perception of the senior teachers of the school). On the other hand, by way of comparison with other communities, the Western Cape Education Department has classified this school in the second highest of seven national categories with regard to school funding which is based on, among other things, parental affluence (oral confirmation by the Headmaster, 25 October 2005). The teachers in the English department are white, although there are 4 coloured teachers on the staff. There is an established culture of teaching and learning in the context of a safe learning environment and a reasonably effective system of discipline.

## **4.10 THE SELECTED MODULE**

### **4.10.1 Rationale for the choice**

The module which was implemented was selected from the Teachers' Resource Series: Language, *Firm Foundations*, published by MacRat. The decision to use commercially available classroom material was that the resources produced by this publisher are widely used by teachers in the Cape Town area. Some schools in the immediate vicinity of the school where this study was conducted use resources published by MacRat and also use the *Firm Foundations* series of eight modules for grade 8. The same company has released a series for grade 9. It seemed logical to field test a product which is freely available and is also used by schools at present since this could mean that the study would be of greater interest to local teachers. I felt this could add to the possible value of the study.

The complete set of MacRat materials for grade 8 cover an entire school year. There are eight modules in total, with each module comprising a learner's copy and a teacher's copy (containing answers, notes and guidelines for the teacher, elements which are obviously not in the learner's copy). Each module runs for about three to five weeks, depending on the length of the particular module and the demands it makes on the teacher and the learners.

In this particular high school the learners do the modules in numerical order, starting with Module 1. Thus, in order to give learners time to adapt to the new school environment, it was decided to select Module 2 as the focus of this study. This module was introduced in the latter half of February 2003 and was completed in March of the same year.

### **4.10.2 Description of the module**

This section will give an outline of the content of the module. No attempt will be made to analyse the theoretical assumptions at this point. This will be done in the next chapter. The theme of Module 2 is *Imaginary Treasures* and, according to the publishers, the intention is to stimulate the learners' imagination. Specific aspects covered are adjectives (9 activities), nouns (2 activities), punctuation, abbreviations and acronyms (17 activities, some quite short), written and listening comprehension (7 activities), descriptive and narrative writing (2 activities) and "fluent reading with expression" (2 activities).



More general development includes the learner's ability to do assessment, to work in groups and to think independently and creatively.

#### **4.11 PROCEDURE**

After I had conducted the literature survey, I implemented the semi-empirical part of the study. This involved teaching selected material to two Grade 8 classes.

Grade 8 was chosen because it is the entry year to high school and the selection of the learners had actually been done for me, because I had been allocated one class by the timetable for the year and the teacher I wanted to assist me had also been allocated a Grade 8 class. I particularly wanted to include this teacher in the study because she is an experienced and dedicated teacher and could, in all probability, be relied on to work closely with me.

Material selection was just as easy. I selected two sets of material, one set of which was already in use in the school in Grade 8 and the other set was readily available and seemed to offer suitable material. For the purposes of this study we implemented one module from the set already in use in the school. The two of us were therefore the two full-time teachers for these learners but, apart from teaching the selected module, we acted as observers, taking down notes on classroom events in the classroom as time allowed, reflecting on classroom events afterwards. For the duration of the five weeks that we taught the module the classes were thus intensively monitored.

To facilitate the monitoring of the classroom events I designed a very basic observational schedule so that both of us would concentrate on observing and noting largely on the basis of the same predetermined criteria. After discussing the implementation, we taught the selected module in our classes.

In order to complement the data obtained in this way, a learner questionnaire was completed by the learners who participated in this study, and a teacher questionnaire was completed by English teachers at neighbouring schools and other teachers teaching similar classes using similar material.

A total of 70 learners completed this questionnaire immediately after finishing the module in class in order to have the events as fresh in their minds as possible. Learners who were absent on the day the questionnaires were filled in were not asked to complete them later. Using the questionnaire appeared to be the most practical means of obtaining the views of such a large number of learners

(Wallace 1998: 130). The 16 teachers who filled in the teacher questionnaire were all teachers at either neighbouring schools or schools of similar size in the Cape Metropole. After all the data had been obtained, a detailed analysis of the findings was conducted.

#### **4.11 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter I outlined the research methodology and research design used for this study.

Because of the nature of the investigation, I decided on a qualitative case study covering a period of five weeks in which two classes of about 40 learners each would be closely observed by their teachers. This was done in order to examine the events in the two grade 8 English classes during the implementation of a selected module and to determine to what extent the module succeeded in furthering the aims of the Language, Literacy and Communication learning area as stated in Curriculum 2005.

The observation was done on the basis of a predetermined observation schedule by the two teachers who were teaching those particular classes that year. In addition, the design of the learner questionnaire and the teacher questionnaire were explained. These questionnaires were designed in order to provide data that would be supplementary to that provided by the notes made by the teachers on the basis of the observation schedule. I also listed the contents of the module and described the procedure that was followed.

The next chapter will deal with the classroom implementation of the selected module and the extent to which the material offers opportunities for learners to acquire the language and to realise the critical and language outcomes. Extensive reference will be made to the teachers' notes made during and after the English periods, based largely on the observation schedule (5.2) and two questionnaires, one completed by the learners who were exposed to the material (5.3) and another completed by a sample of teachers of English in the Cape Metropole teaching similar classes (5.4).

## **CHAPTER 5: ANALYSIS OF EMPIRICAL RESEARCH FINDINGS**

### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

The framework for the research, which explores the extent to which particular commercially available material implicitly endorses the roles ‘dictated’ by a traditional approach to teaching, was set out in the previous chapter. This chapter is divided into four main parts. In the first part I explore the data generated by the implementation of the selected module (reprinted as Addendum D) in two classes by two teachers; I also analyse the data generated from the predetermined observation schedule (Addendum A), described in the previous chapter, as well as from later reflection. In the second part I offer an analysis of learner responses to a post-implementation questionnaire (Addendum B), and in the third part I analyse the teacher responses to a questionnaire (Addendum C). The final part of the chapter is a reflection on the broader implications of these analyses.

### **5.2 IMPLEMENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF SELECTED MODULE IN THE CLASSROOM**

In this section I will explore classroom events during the implementation of the module as part of a ‘normal’ teaching programme and attempt to interpret the significance of what we (the two teachers involved) observed by drawing on the literature survey. As was explained in 4.9, we made brief notes during each lesson and later in the day as we reflected on what had happened during the lesson. Further reflection occurred during the process of writing this chapter, as will emerge at times in the discussion and in the reflection at the end of this chapter.

At this point I must concede that there were some conscious deviations from the seemingly narrow dictates of the chosen material. This was occasioned because the module does not usually supply explicit instructions on the mode of presentation. The conclusion to be drawn is that the learners were to work individually and the teacher was presumably to supply the correct answers at some stage. This presented an ethical dilemma. (For other ethical dilemmas inherent in this investigation see 4.5.4.) On the one hand, following that route would limit participation and the sharing of ideas. On the other hand, making changes to the module could compromise my attempt to assess the material. In the end, in consultation with my colleague, I chose which activities would be done individually, which would be done in groups, and which would be done as a whole class activity, where no clear directions were given either in the learner book or the teacher’s manual. In the end,

the interests of the learners had to outweigh strict adherence to the module. I shall indicate clearly where decisions of this kind were made.

Although a professional teacher should ideally be able to develop appropriate material or adapt existing material to meet the needs of a particular class within a particular curriculum, in exploring the data generated during this research, my assumption is that teachers are generally not able to do so. The reasons for this are complex. As Chapter 3 shows, teachers do not generally have much confidence in their understanding of OBE or in their competence to implement it. Some evidence of this is provided by the teachers involved in schools in the area in which I teach (5.4). The comments made by Spady (2005: 3), enjoining teachers to become leaders in their own classrooms, are a response to a situation in South Africa in which teachers generally adopt a passive role, seeing themselves as those required to implement the plans of others. My comments about the material writer's failure to give sufficient guidance to teachers and learners have to be understood in that context.

The discussion in 5.2 explores the data under specific headings. Because this study attempts to determine whether available material meets the needs of learners in an OBE/Curriculum 2005 context, the language learning activities in this module are examined in the light of particular OBE principles. The focus falls in turn on the extent to which the Critical and Specific Outcomes of Curriculum 2005 may be realised by using the material, the mode of presentation (organisation), the role of the teacher, the role of the learner and the type of assessment.

### **5.2.1 Language learning activities and the critical and specific language outcomes**

The design of this module was discussed in the previous chapter (4.10.2).

In this section, the activities in this module will be discussed in the order in which they appear. I will attempt to explore the extent to which these activities create opportunities for the Critical Outcomes (COs) and Specific Outcomes (SOs) of the Language, Literacy and Communication learning area to be achieved. The results of the content analysis are shown in table format after the detailed analysis.

To ensure easy identification, the Critical and Specific Outcomes are listed below.

### Critical Outcomes (COs)

1. Identify and solve problems in which responses display that responsible decisions using critical and creative thinking have been made.
2. Work effectively with others as a member of a team, group, organisation, community.
3. Organise and manage oneself and one's activities responsibly and effectively.
4. Collect, analyse, organise and critically evaluate information.
5. Communicate effectively using visual, mathematical and/or language skills in the modes of oral and/or written presentation.
6. Use science and technology effectively and critically, showing responsibility towards the environment and health of others.
7. Demonstrate an understanding of the world as a set of related systems by recognising that problem solving contexts do not exist in isolation.

(WCED 1997a: unnumbered; WCED 1997c: 15)

### Specific Outcomes (SOs)

1. Learners make and negotiate meaning and understanding.
2. Learners show critical awareness of language usage.
3. Learners respond to the aesthetic, affective, cultural and social values in context.
4. Learners access, process and use information from a variety of sources and situations.
5. Learners understand, know and apply language structures and conventions in context.
6. Learners use language for learning.
7. Learners use appropriate communication strategies for specific purposes and situations.

(WCED 1997c: LLC –3)

It is important to note that both the COs (3.6.1) as well as the SOs for the Language, Literacy and Communication Learning Area (3.6.2) are phrased in very general terms. While one can speak in generalities, it is not an easy task to discern the extent to which they have been realised (Ridge 2002). As far as possible, comments dealing with recurring issues will be dealt with the first time

they arise. This is to avoid needless repetition. Clear reference will be made to later recurrences in the module.

The first activity (Exercise 1) may be described as reading comprehension in a traditional mode. The teacher's guide indicates the following procedure: the learners listen to the teacher while (s)he reads the comprehension passage, following the text in their copies. Next they write their own answers in their books (individual activity).

A reading activity can offer the opportunity to "make and negotiate meaning" (SO1) when learners are required to read a text, understand what they are reading and infer or deduce information from the text that they are reading and not simply retrieve basic information (2.5.3.2.3). It can also provide learners with the opportunity to "show critical awareness of language usage" (SO2) if suitable questions allow them to probe the text and thus develop an "understanding of the way in which" the text "is used as a powerful instrument" (SO3). It can create opportunities to "interpret and consciously reflect on how the language is used" or "respond to the aesthetic, affective, cultural and social values" embedded in the text. Because no text is entirely neutral (Traves 1994: 93), readers should be encouraged to share the different meanings they have for them (Short 1994: 171).

On the face of it, skills such as listening, reading and extracting information, which the exercise seems to demand, all seem directly related to the SOs of Language, Literacy and Communication. These are also arguably skills required in the world outside the classroom. However, the exercise seems to have serious flaws. What appears to be an obvious limitation is that there is no activation or building on learners' relevant prior experience or background knowledge because, for those who lack the pre-knowledge necessary to (re)construct the text, building on prior experience or background knowledge is essential for comprehension (2.5.3.2.3).

A related problem that both of us identified was that the instruction asks learners to ensure that "the answers are as realistic and logical as possible" (Kirby no date b: 3), so learners would have had to be familiar with the Old Testament of the Bible or the Koran, and the story of Jonah in particular, for any realistic sense of the context realism (SO3).

Furthermore, the activity, including the questions, lacks the scaffolding that would make it possible for learners to work independently (3.7.2). It may be argued, therefore, that there is no attempt to build the learning skills and strategies through guided practice using carefully sequenced activities (3.7.1, 3.7.2) or to provide "significant learning in context" of the kind OBE advocates (3.7.2 as

well as Spady 1994: 18; Killen 1996: 10; Mason 2000: 4), which are fundamental to the development of learners who are to succeed in attaining the relevant outcomes (Olivier 1998: 25, 27; Killen 1996: 5, 8).

An analysis of the questions shows that they only once create an opportunity to “demonstrate understanding of the text” (SO3) or “mak[e] or negotiate[e] meaning” (SO1). The other questions do not require high-order thinking (see 3.3) but are closed questions merely requiring retrieval of the ‘right’ answer or a simple choice between the two options given (*Did Jonah praise or curse God when he was in the fish’s stomach?*). No substantiation is required, so a correct answer could be a matter of a lucky guess.

The last question (*How do you think “the word of the Lord came to Jonah”?*) asks the learner to venture an opinion. We noted that learners seemed hesitant to venture an opinion (*Are we really allowed to give our own opinions?*).

The teacher of the other class found she had to take some time to explain the meanings of some of the words used in the text, and to explain what the questions required since most learners clearly demonstrated their inability to interpret the questions or their uncertainty as to what to do. While some did seem able to articulate their difficulties and so asked questions, most learners turned to their peers in a rather desultory fashion to ask what they were meant to do, or simply frowned at what they were ‘reading’. Once she had finished her explanation, she could not see any evident learner interest in doing the work. In my class, the situation was similar. After explanations had been given, there was no observable sign of greater willingness to do the activity. Although there may have been other factors involved, it seemed that the learners had little interest in the activity. The most obvious indication of this was that I had to constantly reprimand one learner, because she was turning round and talking to her neighbours, who appeared only too keen to talk to her. The learners were expected to answer the questions individually after the teacher’s explanations. Our learners did that, and after that we let them mark each other’s work while we gave the suggested answers.

The apparent lack of interest suggests a gap between what they were asked to do and what they felt would be worthwhile. In short, there was no intrinsic motivation. The complex mix of ingredients involved in learner motivation, which is essential if the Specific Outcomes are to be achieved, has been explored by a number of researchers (e.g. Brown, 1994; Crookes, 2003).

The criticisms of the first comprehension exercise discussed above also apply to the other comprehension test in the module. It, too, is a discrete, unscaffolded activity without pre-reading or any attempt to stimulate learners' interest or to create the expectation of success. This second comprehension passage has eight questions for learners to answer, all of which are retrieval questions (*How much rice did Gonta steal each night? Passage: The store owner explained that every night a small amount of rice disappeared.*) and the learners are simply required to give the 'right' answers. None of the questions requires them to reveal their own opinions or insights, or to interpret the text.

Despite the fact that language teaching using a CLT approach should involve "real communicative experiences" (2.3), which are absent here, perhaps the most fundamental weakness is that the comprehension passages are isolated texts, divorced from context and are not linked in any way to the other exercises or activities in the module. This makes "the construction of meaning from a printed or written message" (Day and Bamford 1998: 12) elusive. Reading as a constructive process emphasises the role that integration with the learner's prior knowledge plays (2.5.3.2.3).

The choice of texts is itself problematic. OBE is strongly in favour of opportunities which invite communication (3.7.2; 3.7.3). In the case of the first text, the frozen register of some of the vocabulary ("bound for" and "forfeit the grace") and the metaphorical nature of the text probably explain what made it inaccessible to the learners.

I should also like to comment at this point that the first comprehension passage, dealing with Jonah, might elicit negative reactions of another kind from other learners in South Africa. The activity tacitly assumes that all learners are either Christians, Moslems or Jews and would be conversant with the story of Jonah, or would be comfortable reading this passage from the Old Testament of the Bible. Perhaps because the school at which the module was implemented emphasises its Christian orientation in the school's prospectus, which all prospective parents and learners have to read and sign before enrolment, there were no objections from the learners or their parents to the content of the comprehension passage.

The second text, which is situated in Japan, elicited a degree of xenophobia in both classes. Some learners in our classes, for instance, said the Japanese names loudly in a scoffing tone, which was greeted with hoots of laughter from around the class. We tried to explain to our classes that there are many differences between cultures, including names which sound strange to others.



Exercise 2 requires the learners to discuss, in groups, certain open-ended questions (see Addendum D) based on inferences about the story of Jonah. The requirement is that they use “common sense” in trying to reach “realistic and logical” answers. For a high level of achievement, learners would have to “work effectively with others as a member of a group” (CO2) and “communicate effectively” with their peers (CO5) as they discuss possible answers. In addition, the learners, as I see it, would have to articulate their views in English (SO1), understand what the other learners were saying and synthesise these answers in order to arrive at some kind of consensus (SO7). Determining the level at which these outcomes were actually achieved was something we again found difficult to do (see also Ridge 2002).

The next item in the module is that learners are given a homework activity. They had to paste four different pictures of something like cars or dresses or hairstyles onto an A4 page and bring it to class the following period. They also had to write a description of one of the pictures on the back of the page. In the next period the learners had to work in groups. Their task was to take it in turn to show their pictures and read their descriptions so that the other learners could correctly identify the picture being described. These learning activities could involve making and negotiating meaning (SO1), accessing and processing information (SO4), communicating effectively (SO5) and using appropriate communication strategies for a specific purpose (SO7). A great deal depends on the kind of text the learners produced and whether the pictures were sufficiently similar. This activity has no connection to the previous exercise or to the language exercises which follow.

In both classes almost half of the learners had not done the homework so that they had no text or pictures to contribute. This meant that they seriously compromised the ability of the groups as a whole to work “responsibly and effectively” (CO3). As with other activities in the module, we found that, of those who had done the homework, only some of the learners were prepared to share ideas, others being more reluctant to do so. Many, either because they had not done any preparation or were reluctant to participate, were only too willing to have private conversations, however. Intensive monitoring would have to be done to ensure that these conversations were actually about the scheduled activity. Some learners, however, did succeed in co-operating in order to describe the picture accurately (CO5) and identifying the right picture (CO4) in conjunction with the learner describing it (CO2). There were a few learners among those attempting to do the activity who were unable to match the picture and its description, while some seemed content to let others in the group do all the work in the group. We felt that only a few learners could be said to have achieved the outcomes and thought that the material did not seem to have sufficient impact.

Many of the criticisms which apply to the reading comprehensions also apply to the language exercises, which follow Exercise 2 and the homework activity. They have no communicative purpose (2.5, 3.7.3; 3.8.2), do not cater for the making of meaning, do not relate to real-world experiences (2.5; 3.4), nor do they demonstrate any clear relation to the learners' language needs. Of course there is a place for grammar teaching (2.5.3.1) but any activity in the language classroom should provide for a learner's internal syllabus (2.5.3.1) as well as making meaning and real-world activities (3.4). This is because it would appear that the acquisition of knowledge is a developmental process rather than a linear one (3.4).

The language exercises are not contextualised and consist of unrelated words or phrases. They focus on adjectives: filling in missing adjectives, identifying the adjectives and filling in the adjectives (see Addendum D, Exercises 3, 4, 5 and 6). There are no instructions in the module on whether these exercises are to be done individually, but we let learners answer Exercises 4 and 5 individually initially and then let them compare their answers in groups of 3 or 4 before supplying the correct answers. Exercise 6 was answered in pairs and then they reported to the class.

Generally learners struggled to form proper adjectives derived from the names of countries in Exercise 4. Some of the learners in my class highlighted the mechanical nature of the activity or the focus on product when they complained that they "did not know" the words. Ideally learners should be constantly extending their knowledge and skills, but this exercise does not provide a purpose of the kind that invites learner investment (2.3), nor does it provide sufficient cues for them to work out a likely answer. In the other class, another focus emerged. Here an anxious concern was 'Is this for the exams?'

We noted with interest that sometimes activation of the learners' prior knowledge can be relatively easy. Learners in both classes found the use of the label 'adjective' a hindrance and said they did not know what it meant. Some of the learners frowned as if they were confused and when I asked them what was bothering them, they said "*We don't know what an adjective is*". Teacher B found that making a connection for them with the Afrikaans ("byvoeglike naamwoord") was all it apparently took to get the concept across. At least two of the learners in the class gave examples of Afrikaans adjectives, indicating to the teacher that they understood the concept.

Although I am regarded as a strict teacher who maintains a firm control of classroom behaviour, I encourage learners to express their views or opinions, or say when they do not understand something. I am also alert to the facial expressions or other body language which indicates that

learners are having difficulties of some kind. While doing these exercises, some learners asked for individual support, while there were very puzzled expressions on the faces of others, which indicated the need for support. Most of them got on with these mechanical exercises and produced the correct answers.

In the follow-up activity after Exercise 8 the instruction to learners is “talk to your partner and decide on an answer” as to when it is “good to be the worst at something”, when it is “good to be the fattest” and when it is “bad to be happy” before writing “a poem of between 10 and 30 lines describing any common or abstract noun”.

We asked the learners to discuss the topics in pairs, as instructed in the module, and then, in addition, asked them to provide feedback to the class. We were somewhat pleasantly surprised to find that, in spite of the unlinked nature of the discussion, some learners were clearly engaged by it. There were quite a few amusing contributions as was evident not only from the laughter but the learners’ facial expressions and body language which we observed in the course of this activity. An interesting sign of ‘investment’ (2.3) was that a few clearly became emotional when others disagreed with them. The activity became a “self-generating process” in the hands of learners and not “conformity to the conditions of transmission controlled by the teacher” (3.7.2 and Widdowson 1991).

Our decision to make them work in pairs was based on the assumption that learners would participate more fully in activities if they worked in pairs, as opposed to working in bigger groups or in whole class activities, as the size of a group is important, (3.7.3). In the case of the activity described above and in others where learners worked in pairs, the level of learner participation was higher than when learners worked in larger groups, and the level of participation in the larger groups again was higher than in whole class activities. This observation was based on the number of learners involved in interaction. Although a few Afrikaans words slipped in and the sequence of tenses was often wrong, neither of us intervened as we felt that this would impede the flow of ideas and wished to enable learners to express themselves freely (2.5 and 2.6). After the discussion the learners had to “[W]rite a poem”. The instruction seems to imply an individual effort.

There is no link between the activity (discussion) and anything else either before it or after it in the module. The teacher’s notes introducing the discussion topics say that “the learners need a break from exercises!” This highlights the author’s belief in closed exercises rather than communication in unstructured interaction (2.5).

The next category of exercises is those dealing with punctuation. The first of the subsections starting on p. 9 (Exercise 1.1) was concerned with the use of full stops to mark the end of sentences. The learners' task was to fill in the missing full stops and then to deduce the function of the full stops in this context. Although the module did not require this, we asked the learners to fill in the full stops individually and then edit their answers in pairs. Only then were they asked to provide answers to the whole class. We did this because we wanted to build confidence. By the time they did the second part, they were dealing with a text where the full stops had been correctly inserted. Teacher B reported that her class had enjoyed working in pairs on this exercise. The learners concentrated on the activity and they focused on helping each other. They appeared keen to finish the activity, but also appeared relaxed as their animated faces provided evidence of their involvement and possibly a sense of success that Spady sees as an essential principle in OBE (3.4 and 3.5), although, as becomes clear in the next paragraph, that does not mean they were supplying the forms of punctuation correctly. This active participation on the part of the learners illustrated the importance of scaffolding activities so that learners are able to deal with concepts of ever-increasing complexity (Warchauer 2001: 211; Mason 2000: 4).

Although the learners claimed to be familiar with basic punctuation in the early part of the lesson when the subject of punctuation was introduced, many of them found the exercises daunting in the sense that they were largely unable to supply any forms of punctuation other than capital letters and full stops. They found it difficult to provide the other kinds of punctuation, even though the examples are items that are elementary and they appeared to be enjoying doing the exercises, especially in pairs.

In the next subsection they worked at the use of full stops in abbreviations. When it came to deducing the uses of the full stop, the learners in both classes found it difficult to work out most of the answers, despite working in pairs. It took careful prompting and guidance by both teachers to lead the learners to discover when to use full stops in abbreviations and when not to. This was even more apparent in the exercise on acronyms. Doing these exercises highlighted the importance of the teacher's essential role as a bridging agent when the gap between that which is known and that which is unknown by the learners is too great (3.7.2). In my class of 38 learners only one knew what an acronym was. However, after the concept had been explained to the class and they were asked for acronyms they knew about, some were able to mention a few. The learners then tried to figure out, in pairs, what the abbreviations and acronyms in the exercise stood for.

The exercise is problematic in another respect as well. Given the thrust within a CLT/OBE approach to reflect modern practice and to emphasise the dynamic nature of language (DoE (1997: LLC 6), we noted with some disquiet that the approach to full stops in this module does not take account of modern practice. Increasingly full stops are being left out of abbreviations and after initials. The rule the learners were being asked to deduce reflects a static view of language (Lewis 2002).

We allowed the learners to follow the pattern set by the material's compiler during the next two short subsections. However, once they had finished the next activity (insertion of necessary capital letters and full stops in the paragraph provided), we asked them – given the absence of instructions in the exercise – to assess each other's work in pairs. As in the earlier activity (Exercise 2.1 and 2.2 on p. 10) when they had worked in pairs, there were in most cases lively exchanges and most learners appeared to give their undivided attention to the task in hand.

All three exercises dealing with question marks and exclamation marks were done in pairs (in the absence of instructions in the modules), with learners referring only to the teacher when in doubt, which did not often happen in these exercises, allowing the teacher to adopt a more unobtrusive role. Exercise 3.4, dealing with punctuation in general as well as inferring tone of voice from punctuation marks, was done as a class exercise. The next few exercises were done in groups of three (our decision). Feedback from the groups was done in a whole class situation.

The written test that the learners did on punctuation (found in Module 8, the test module) was peermarked and then returned to the learner concerned. My colleague and I marked a random sample. We found that the learners had marked quite accurately, perhaps because they knew their marking was subject to checking by the original learner and they could appeal to the teachers if they were not satisfied with the quality of the marking by their peers. There were very few appeals by the learners who had written the test and these were generally not upheld. The issue of honesty on the part of the learners engaged in peer and group assessment is discussed later (5.3 and 5.4) with regard to responses to questions in the learner and teacher questionnaires, but the method we tried could point the way to a fairly reliable way of allowing peer marking.

Although most of the learners got most of the answers right in the test set in the module, the test and the punctuation exercises were 'stand alone' or discrete exercises and therefore do not provide a necessary context in which learning about a language is supposed to take place (SO5). The notes addressed to the teacher suggest that they are there as revision of primary school work, and because

learners should be taught the correct terminology because “it is part of training the learners in the lifeskill of being specific and using language carefully” (Kirby n.d. b: 8). This seems to reflect a belief in old-fashioned drill exercises, remote from real purpose (Lewis 2002).

Right at the end of the module comes what is probably the most interesting activity, which has many possibilities for linked and scaffolded activities and exercises, only a few of which are explored in the module. This activity allows some measure of learner interaction and exploration and an integration of product- and process-based curricular practice (2.6).

This exercise involves the drawing of a route on a map in order to find hidden treasure. The teacher had to read instructions for the learners to be able to plot the course to the treasure. This led to much enjoyment as well as confusion, because quite a few of the learners couldn't plot the course they had to follow on the map, which contributed to the merriment on the part of the learners. We had to re-read the instructions before most of the learners were able to follow the intended route to find the treasure and even then some learners were unable to plot the course of the journey on the map. Judging by the concentration of the learners during the completion of the task, as well as the accompanying enjoyment, this type of activity seems to be the kind around which a whole series of interlinked learning experiences could be built. There the learners would have to make use of strategies embedded in COs 1, 3, 4 and 5. In addition, SOs 1, 3, 4 and 6 would be addressed.

In a linked activity, the learners seemed to enjoy the writing assignment in which they had to speculate as to the nature of the treasure. This was treated as preparatory for the last activity, which is a writing assignment on how the treasure came to be on the island in the first place. The compiler then instructs the learners to peer assess their partner's use of adjectives in the first draft before handing the essay in. The teacher is asked to take in the stories with the peer assessment and then mark the story out of twenty, “paying particular attention to the use of descriptive language” (Kirby n.d. b: 16).

Having dealt with the activities in detail, I will now turn to the module as a whole. In the course of this module I found that in my class the degree of interaction within the groups varied considerably. This could have been because the groups were expected to accomplish the activities without clear roles and clear goals being allocated to individual group members. In the case of one group, consisting of 2 girls and 1 boy, there was no interaction at all; the learners all worked on their own. In the groups that were operating well, some had serious expressions on their faces while working on their responses, while others were chatting along and occasionally having great fun. The noise

level was not very high as I am a rather strict teacher who exerts a large measure of control in the class. In the other class the teacher noticed that, while most groups concentrated on the topics, some groups tended to talk about other matters, rather than the relevant topics. She had to monitor them closely to ensure that they stayed focused. Most groups in her class concentrated on the topics, with some apparently relishing the idea of discussing the possible answers freely. They enjoyed being able (in their own words) to be ‘creative’ and ‘free’. They also expressed their enjoyment of ‘discussing’ and ‘arguing’ about the answers. Some learners were uncertain about the free-ranging discussion and asked pointedly, “*Can we actually write our own answers?*”

When learners were asked to share their answers to the first comprehension test with the teacher and the rest of the class, we found that fewer learners were prepared to air their views in a whole class situation. This was in spite of the fact that learners had had the benefit of testing their opinions in a small group and finding out which ones gained credence or met with approval. Significantly more learners took part in the small group discussions than in the whole class discussion. In the small group discussions quite a number of learners appeared to be taking part in the discussions, while in the whole group discussion more learners opted out of participation and remained silent. It would appear that only the seemingly confident or extrovert learners were prepared to air their views in whole class activities. This could be an indicator that activities done in small groups might promote wider learner participation than whole-class activities (3.7.3; Blanckenberg 2000: 50), provided that they were seen as intriguing and relevant by the learners themselves (2.5.3). Some of the learners in the other class volunteered the information that they enjoyed discussing and arguing about possible answers.

We also noticed that, despite the free flow of ideas and words in both classes in the course of group work, in some groups certain learners tended to initiate all the ideas, with others just relaxing (3.7.3). The other teacher’s comment was that some learners clearly do not regard group work as “real work”. In spite of this, the inactivity of some learners and the tendency of other learners to take everything upon themselves was readily apparent in the course of group work (3.7.3). This investigation, as well as the studies cited in 3.7.3, found that, in group work, not all learners are actively engaged.

By way of concluding this sub-section I must state that I found it difficult in many instances to determine whether certain SOs and COs had been achieved. or to what extent they had been achieved. Whenever a learner is dealing with any text or aspect of language, (s)he has to make an attempt to “make and negotiate meaning” (SO1) and demonstrate some measure of a “critical

awareness of language usage” (SO2). Dealing with the language exercises in this module could assist learners in trying to “understand” and “know” language structures (SO). The rest of SO5 is, as has been pointed out above, largely ignored in this module because the learner is afforded very few opportunities to “apply language structures and conventions in context”, since there were very few attempts to contextualise the activities and exercises. The comprehension tests could be construed as addressing SO3 in part, but SOs 4, 6, and 7 are ignored completely. None of the activities or exercises gives the learner an opportunity to “access, process and use information from a variety of sources and situations” (SO4). If the instructions in the module are followed, the learners are also afforded very little opportunity to “use language for learning” (SO5), where the language is the tool and learning the aim. Apart from loosely structured discussions, the learners are not guided to “use appropriate communication strategies for specific purposes and situations” (SO7). On the other hand, the mapping activity right at the end of the module is a clear example of appropriate OBE material.

The critical outcomes, which the learners must strive to attain in all learning areas, will only be addressed by extensive modification of the module by teachers. It seems clear that the module does not live up to its claim to offer teachers self-contained material. On the one hand, while it is undoubtedly true that teachers are professionals who can be expected to adapt material and learning activities, the reality is that many teachers feel the need for some kind of model since they do not feel confident about what an OBE approach demands (5.4).

In summary, I will tabulate the activities in the module and attempt to give some idea of the extent to which the Critical and Specific Outcomes, as well as the principles of OBE, were achieved or not. For each activity the CO and SO will be specified by number (for example CO3 or SO 4) and a digit will be assigned to indicate to what extent the CO or SO was achieved by indicating 2 for achievement to some extent and 3 for substantially achieved. The same digits will indicate the achievement of the principles of OBE, such as learner pace, learner independence and the changed facilitative role of the teacher. I will not indicate the SOs, COs and the OBE Curriculum 2005 principles that were not achieved.



Activity No	Description of activity	Specific Outcomes achieved		Provision for OBE/Curriculum 2005 principles	
Module 2	Theme: Imaginary treasure				
		Outcome	Level	Principle	Level
Exercise 1	Comprehension test				
Exercise 2	Questions using comprehension test as background				
Homework	Learners must attach 4 pictures to A4 page and other learners must guess what they are on the basis of descriptions provided in the next lesson	CO 2 CO 3 CO 6 SO 1 SO 4 SO 5 SO 7	2 2 2 2 2 2 2	Learner independence Teacher facilitation	2 2
Exercise 3	Adjectives				
Exercise 4	Adjectives				
Exercise 5	Adjectives				
Exercise 6	Adjectives				
Exercise 7	Degrees of comparison				
Exercise 8	Degrees of comparison				
Discussion	When is it good or bad to be worst or fattest or happiest	CO 2 CO 4 CO 5 SO 1 SO 3 SO 7	2 2 2 2 2 2	Learner independence Teacher facilitating	2 2
	Write poem				
1.	Punctuation and acronyms				
2.	Punctuation				
3.	Punctuation				
4.	The comma				
	Comprehension test				
Exercise 9	Discuss "honest thief" (from comprehension test)	CO 2 CO 4 CO 5 SO 1 SO 3 SO 7	2 2 2 2 2 2	Learner independence Teacher facilitating	2 2
Discussion	Mercy killing and white lies	CO 2 CO 4 CO 5 SO 1 SO 3 SO 7	2 2 2 2 2 2	Learner independence Teacher facilitating	2 2
Treasure hunt	Map activity to find route	CO 1 CO 3 CO 4 SO 1 SO 3 SO 4 SO 6	3 3 3 3 3 3 3	Learner independence Teacher facilitating	3 3
	Describe the treasure you found	CO 2 CO 4 CO 5 SO 1 SO 5	2 2 2 2 2	Learner independence Teacher facilitating	2 2
	Write story on how treasure came to be left on the island	CO 3 CO 4 CO 5	2 2 2	Learner independence Teacher	2 2

		SO 1	2	facilitating	
		SO 5	2		

It is clear from the table that, although some of the activities attempted to address the COs, SOs and OBE/Curriculum 2005 principles, in the case of quite a few other activities, not much attempt was made to address the outcomes and principles.

### 5.2.2 Aspects of organisation

We found that organisational aspects took up vital lesson time. The first thing that had to be done to prepare for the group discussion in Exercise 2 was that the desks had to be moved around to facilitate the discussion. The learners normally sit in individual desks in rows in both classes. This is a practice in all the classes in the school to aid the teachers in maintaining control in the large classes. A few years earlier many teachers in our school had the desks in their classrooms arranged in various ways which promoted a more cooperative learning approach. However, when the number of learners they had to accommodate increased as a result of the increased learner to teacher ratio, all of them put the desks in their classrooms in rows again. Consequently, learners are not optimally seated for group work in order to maximise their learning experiences (3.7.3).

Moving the desks took between 5 and 10 minutes because the learners also had to decide whom they wanted in their particular groups. Moving the desks back again also took up time. Clearly management issues could usefully be included in the teacher's book. Teachers have to take account of aspects like these in deciding what can be done within a certain period of time. Because the learners had not been in the school that long, we (the two teachers teaching the two classes) were reluctant to place learners in groups ourselves for the first few activities. When dealing with groups, we found that learners can object strongly to having to work with particular learners.

In both classes we were able to monitor learner discussion in groups by walking around the class as unobtrusively as possible. We found that this took up quite a bit of the teachers' time when group work was in progress because groups would ask questions. Sometimes we had to carefully balance the need to monitor with the requests for help from some of the groups. In our reflections after the classes we frequently identified class management issues, such as the time it took to move the desks for group work and motivating some learners to take part in group work. Sometimes whole groups had to be monitored to ensure that they actually concentrated on the group assignments. We both felt that we lacked the necessary expertise to get the learners to work effectively in groups and to be more independent. In addition, material did not suggest ways of ensuring maximum learner

participation and the encouragement of learner accountability to complete the task in hand. Thus, unless learners are given clear instructions and set clear goals, much time will be wasted in the classroom. This loss of time will be aggravated, especially if the teacher is going to pace the activity according to the most reluctant learners.

One of the tenets of OBE is that learners should be able to work at their own pace (3.4). In the case of this module, no provision is made for this. I use two examples, the comprehension activity in Exercise 1 and the degrees of comparison exercises (Exercises 7 and 8), to support my point. Both teachers observed that the rate of progress differed greatly within the class. Some learners took 15 minutes to answer the 5 questions, while the fastest learners had finished the exercise in under five minutes. The differences in learner pace were again noticeable when dealing with degrees of comparison. At this point in the module some learners were not very interested in the exercises and one learner in my class just stared into space, the exercises forgotten, seemingly because of lack of interest. It is likely that at least some of the learners – especially those who progress more quickly – are aware that there is no need to give immediate attention to the work, since they will have ample time to finish.

As is clear from the above, the teacher's book needs to take account of the organisational implications of particular activities and the need to create a classroom environment that is conducive to learner participation and the achievement of the relevant outcomes.

### **5.2.3 The role of the teacher**

It has been noted that not only does the teacher have a greatly changed role in Curriculum 2005, (s)he also has a greatly varied one (3.7.2). What is particularly noteworthy here is that the teacher has to create the conditions in which the learner can complete the tasks and activities which will lead to the necessary knowledge and skills (Olivier 1998: 29). In order to do this, the teacher must analyse the needs of the learners, facilitate language learning events in the classroom, organise resources and at the same time be a resource, a counsellor and a group process manager (Richards and Rodgers 2005: 167). The teacher is thus “an active member of the learning community rather than an expert passing on knowledge” (Richards and Rodgers 2005: 110). Furthermore, the teacher “looks out for teachable moments” in preference to teaching a precisely predetermined script (Richards and Rodgers 2005: 110). The teacher will therefore spend quite a bit of time moving around the classroom, helping groups or individual learners as the need arises (Richards and Rodgers 2005: 199) and promoting interaction (3.7.2).

Of the exercises and activities in the module with specific instructions, five involve the teacher explaining or interacting with the whole class, seven involve activities in which the learners must supply the answers on their own, two are activities in which learners cooperate in pairs and two are explicitly group activities, all followed by teacher feedback. The rest comprise grammar exercises and no instruction is given as to whether they are to be discussed by the whole class, in pairs or in groups. Had the instructions contained in the teacher's edition of the module been followed to the letter, most of the time in the classroom would have been spent with the teacher either explaining language structures or doing the grammar exercises in a whole class situation.

Right at the end of the module, however, there is what is arguably the most successful set of activities in the module. Not only are the activities (map reading, plotting a route by means of a listening exercise and a writing assignment) skilfully linked, but many possibilities for other linked and scaffolded activities and exercises are suggested, affording the teacher the role that CLT and Curriculum 2005 seem to require.

Learners need to employ various strategies while engaged in language learning (2.5) and teachers have to make provision for developing these strategies when devising tasks and assignments, and also while implementing these tasks and assignments in the classroom. Material also has to provide opportunities for learners to use their learning strategies. The successful learners have to be guided to become even more successful and the less effective learners will have to be carefully guided to become more successful. Ways will have to be devised so that less effective learners are encouraged to make more use of the strategies employed by more successful learners. Carefully devised and skilfully linked and scaffolded tasks and assignments would seem to be especially important in this regard (Carter and Nunan 2001: 226; Macaro 2001: 175; WCED 2000a: 25, 27)

It is, however, not just the changed role of the teacher that language learning material has to provide for. The role of the learner has also changed.

#### **5.2.4 The role of the learner**

In an OBE Curriculum 2005 approach the learner needs to be able to negotiate between himself/herself, the process of learning and also the knowledge and skills that need to be acquired. The learner therefore needs to be a far more active and involved partner in the learning process, contributing as much to the learning process as (s)he receives. The emphasis on cooperative

learning compared to an individualised learning process means that the learner is as responsible for successful classroom communication as the teacher is (Richards and Rodgers 2005: 166), because the roles of the teacher and the learner “are, in many ways, complementary” (Nunan 1993: 87). Because the learner is a co-constructor of knowledge in the classroom, it is clear that the learner has to accept co-responsibility as a problem solver and also for the rate of progress in his/her learning, as established in 3.7.2 and 3.7.3. Therefore learners should be guided to accept accountability for their own learning (van der Horst and Macdonald 1997: 92), as an OBE approach requires motivated learners who are prepared to work towards achieving the outcomes (3.4; 3.7.1).

As important as it is for learners to take co-responsibility for their own learning, they need to be persuaded that classroom activities are sufficiently interesting, relevant, accessible and authentic. There also need to be as many links as possible between classroom activities and what happens outside the school in real life (2.5). This aim can be realised if classroom material is chosen carefully. It would be ideal if the learner could be much more actively involved, not only in the activity or learning material, but in the design of these activities and the selection of the learning material, but whether this will materialise in South Africa with its legacy of authoritarian power relations in the classroom and its legacy of having many under-qualified teachers remains to be seen.

Above all, the learner will have to be “adaptable, creative, inventive and most important of all independent” (Nunan: 1993: 81). Enabling learners to become independent is a complex process. One factor is their ability to use learning strategies (2.5). Another is a climate that encourages risk-taking (2.5). Both of these are integrally tied to giving learners as many opportunities as possible to engage in seeking and processing new information in situations which encourage negotiation, because communicative interaction is essential to reach a particular objective (Richards and Rogers 2005: 22; Tomlinson 1999b: 15; Brown 1994: 181).

Given the increased importance accorded to cooperative learning by OBE and Curriculum 2005 (3.7.3), one would expect the module to provide scope for, and guidance in, the use of cooperative learning. As was apparent from the classroom implementation of the module (5.2.1), we often had to make room for cooperative learning as there was very little scope in the module for this approach to learning. When we did make provision for cooperative learning, we discovered that one of the factors influencing the development of risk-taking and the use of learner strategies is the size of the group. The problem with a whole class activity was highlighted in these two classes once again when dealing with the exercises on question marks and exclamation marks – in fact, with most

exercises and activities done which required answers from the class as a whole. Usually only those learners who were confident that they could answer correctly supplied answers voluntarily, and in every whole class activity they were more or less the same learners. The more subdued or less confident learners, who might well have known the answers, as well as those who did not know the answers, did not take part, preferring to remain silent. As I have already noted, the whole class activities also placed on emphasis on offering ‘correct’ answers, which by definition do not entail negotiation.

Our experience illustrated that group work is more time-consuming (3.8.2) and does not ensure that all learners will participate in group discussions (Randall 1999: 30), or even that the group as a whole will actually concentrate on the task, as shown in 3.7.3. In spite of that, in our experience group work does lead to greater participation than whole class activity (see also Savignon 2002: 5), as is evident from the discussion of exercises 3 to 5 (5.2.1). In my class group work seemed to encourage a few learners who had not normally contributed before to take a bolder role. It therefore seems that time and activities should be planned which place the learner at the centre of the learning process as “an active and responsible partner” (Celce-Murcia and Oshtain 2000: 229; 3.4 and 3.8.2), so that it becomes “a self-generating process” and not a teacher-controlled process.

This highlights the shortcomings of this module’s choice of activities and the role accorded to learners even when group work is involved. Effective group work requires a clear sense of what each person in the group is required to do and a goal that cannot be reached unless this is done (Blanckenberg 2000: 87; Bennett and Dunne 1992: 25). However, the compiler of this series does not include advice on managing group work, perhaps assuming that teachers are conversant with the effective implementation of the technique of group work. During the implementation of the module we became aware of shortcomings in our understanding of, and our ability to manage, group work. In addition, both of us found we had to be very firm during group work, otherwise the noise rose to unacceptable levels, with the danger of disturbing neighbouring classes. The fact that not all members of the group participated is another indication of our shortcomings. What is needed is proactive planning rather than reactive responses.

### **5.2.5 Assessment**

As established in 2.5, 2.6, 3.4, 3.5 and 3.6.2, assessment is one of the cornerstones of OBE. A wide range of different types of assessment is provided for in Curriculum 2005, with a strong emphasis on continuous evaluation in the course of the learning process using an equally wide range of

assessment tools. Assessment should have a strong diagnostic element in order to facilitate the learners' achievement of the knowledge and skills they need in order to demonstrate whether they have attained the critical and language learning area outcomes (DoE 1997: 13, LLC 9; DoE 2003 16, 17).

It is, therefore, a significant shortcoming that very little guidance is provided for teachers with regard to assessment. There are no rubrics or other guides to assessment. In the first exercise (the comprehension test), it is left to the teacher to decide how the marks are to be allocated. In most cases there is little opportunity to use continuous assessment as a means of assessing the learning process. The concern with product or 'correct' answers predominates.

Similarly, no indication is given on how the discussion topics, which come after Exercise 8, or the mapping and writing activities, at the end of the module are to be assessed. If guidelines on peer assessment of the writing activity had been given, as well as a simple rubric assessing the number of adjectives, their variety and effectiveness (the focus of the activity), it would have given the learners (and the teachers) an idea of what the indicators of success were. The lack of a clear focus is obviously not in line with the OBE requirement to achieve outcomes, which are "predetermined" (Killen 1996: 3) end products of "a clearly defined process" (Spady 1994a: 18). The crux of OBE (3.4) is that the learner must be able to demonstrate that (s)he has attained certain outcomes and, for that to be possible, the outcomes have to be assessed appropriately and accurately. OBE should be an integrated whole, from achieving outcomes to assessment.

Although the evidence is anecdotal, my observation of teachers (at the WCED conferences and workshops on Curriculum 2005 and assessment that I attended in recent years) suggests that many teachers are still hesitant and unsure of how to assess and assist learners in working towards acquiring the skills they need. One or two suggested rubrics for the activities which have to be assessed would have assisted teachers struggling to cope with the new approach with its strong emphasis on process assessment. In seeming to encourage process assessment but not giving the teacher the necessary skills and tools, the compiler of this module is encouraging the teacher to remain within the familiar realm of product marking. The importance of considering this aspect when evaluating teaching material must be considered (3.8.2). "[T]here is very little point in demonstrating to teachers the theoretical and empirical utility of an approach unless the issues involved in setting it up can also be demonstrated ... for example ... assessment practices" (Bennett and Dunne 1992: 34).

### 5.3 ANALYSIS OF THE LEARNER QUESTIONNAIRE

The design of the learner and teacher questionnaires, the theoretical background and the rationale for the specific questions that were asked in the questionnaires were discussed earlier (4.7 and 4.8). The exploration of the data in 5.2 reflects the implementation process from the perspective of the two teachers involved.

In order to obtain a more complex perspective, it was decided to elicit the views of the learners concerned using a questionnaire (reprinted as Addendum B), which the learners filled in immediately upon completion of the module. These questionnaires were completed in class by 70 learners, 35 in each class with 3 being absent in the other class and 2 in my class.

In this section the responses of the learners will be discussed under the same headings as applied in 5.2 to facilitate the discovery of trends either supportive of, or contradictory to, the findings regarding the implementation reported in 5.2. A detailed discussion of the learner responses, with numerous verbatim quotes of learners as far as possible in the interests of providing a trustworthy account to illustrate the points made, follows.

#### 5.3.1 Language learning activities

##### 5.3.1.1 *No change in the work done*

In response to Question 1.1 (*You have been taught English in a certain way this past month. 1.1 How did this differ from the way you were taught English in Gr. 7? List four ways in which it was different.*), more than a third of the learners reported that the work done in the module was “*the same*” as the work they did in grade 7. Examples of these responses were that it was “*mostly the same*”, “*there is no differences*”, “*more or less the same*”, “*almost the same*”, “*some of the work is the same*”, “*it was not differ*”, “*who dit desyme*” and “*I’m not comlayning*”. This could suggest that the approach in several primary schools was teacher-centred and traditional (with an emphasis on discrete exercises, especially grammar exercises), or that the activities did not encourage the development of independence or make extensive use of group work. The strong dependence that the learners generally exhibited during the time the module was being done and the ease with which they did some of the grammar exercises could support any of these possibilities. The response of the learner who wrote that (s)he had done a lot more grammar (“*we did more exercise in grade 7*”)



seemed to lend support to this conclusion. This issue will be more fully addressed in the next section where the responses to the teacher questionnaire is discussed (5.4).

#### **5.3.1.2 Activities more difficult**

A few learners (5) wrote that the work in grade 7 had been easier than in grade 8. “*Gr. 7’s english was very easy but the high schools english is difficult*”, “[i]t’s (Gr. 7) much easier”, “it was very easier ... more stuf to learn in Gr. 8”. One, however, wrote that in grade 7 “[j]ou don’t work and play the hole time”, while in grade 8 they had played less.

#### **5.3.1.3 Activities more engaging**

Nine of them leavened their comment about greater difficulty by referring to the work as having been more fun: “a [l]ittel bit diffuculteyer [but] [m]uch exating and good than last year” and the work was “more exsating as it was before”; “we learned and had fun at the same time” and “feel comfortable”. One articulate learner thought that “it seemed to have been a successful method”.

#### **5.3.1.4 Activities less engaging**

It seems, however, that the experience of a few of the learners had been different. One wrote very general comments about having had more “*fun stuff*” in grade 7, while 3 mentioned that the work done in grade 8 had been perceived as being more difficult than the implemented module. Despite criticism of their primary school English teachers by 8 learners, which was mainly personality oriented, 3 of the learners specifically commented that they had covered many other aspects of language learning in addition to structural input. Eleven were not as explicit as this, but reported that they had done more reading, oral and group work the year before and less grammar, while others gave examples, such as crossword puzzles, listening activities, speaking and reading much more in class.

#### **5.3.1.5 Activities leading to success**

In response to Question 2 (*Write down the things (anything) which you feel you can do more successfully in English now as a result of the way you have been taught this past month*), 37 learners reported a perceived improvement in their English ability and listed specific matters such as reading, the structure of the language and speaking ability. Fifteen learners, quite naturally, concentrated on the language skills that had been addressed in the module. Four learners were of the

opinion that they were more skilled at punctuating correctly, while two mentioned an improvement in the state of their knowledge about parts of speech. Other comments included “*I can read now*”, “*I talk better English*”, “*torking better English*”, “*I can spel beter*” and “*my writing has improved*”.

Five learners mentioned that they felt more confident when they spoke English and therefore more inclined to use the language. One learner specifically wrote that (s)he felt more confident using English because of speaking English in groups in the course of the module. Eighteen learners wrote that their spelling ability had improved, while one learner seemed certain that it was because they had discussed and checked their answers in groups. It is the policy of the school’s English Department to use English as the medium of instruction. We consequently tried to monitor the learners in the course of implementing the module to ensure that as much English as possible was spoken in class. This possibly resulted in the learners being exposed to English more than in some primary school classes, where the medium of instruction in some cases seems to have been the learners’ primary language.

Whether such young learners are able to differentiate between success on the basis of recent practice and success as a result of teaching methods is an open question. One learner said that “*I do much better now*”. Only a minority gave rather general answers, with one learner not filling in anything. It is possible that any perceived recent success directly related to teaching methods is simply a result of old work revisited being easier the second time around.

### **5.3.2 Aspects of organisation**

This aspect was not addressed in the learner questionnaire.

### **5.3.3 The role of the teacher**

Although Curriculum 2005 (3.7.2) demands a changed role for the teacher, the module in itself seems to follow the traditional trend in providing for a lot of teacher talk while giving explanations and answers, but it does not promote much free conversation between learners themselves or between learners and the teacher. Interestingly, some learners wrote that they liked being involved in the group work which we added to the module.

A significant comment came from a learner who expressed surprise that the teacher had spoken to the whole class so often in the course of the module. We would have liked to speak to the whole

class less, but it was difficult to do this in practice, given the constraints imposed by the compiler of the module.

The responses to Question 1.2 (*In what way did this past month's work differ from the way you were taught English in Gr 6. List four ways in which it was different.*) could be potentially even more revealing of teacher styles, because in grade 6 they were also officially following an OBE/ Curriculum 2005 approach to teaching and learning. It must be remembered, however, that official policy is not necessarily followed in a particular classroom just because it is official policy.

Two learners stated clearly that they could remember hardly anything about grade 6, with one comment being *"I can't remember much of that grade."* Twelve wrote that the work they did in grade 6 was much the same as the work done in grade 8, with 5 learners writing that the work was mostly the same, with *"not much"* being different. Seventeen reported finding grade 8 more difficult than grade 6, with one stating that *"less work is being done for you"* and another that the work in grade 6 had been *"peanuts"* and *"the work was too little to work with"*. Two others commented on the use of games or pictures: *"the easy way with games and stuff like puzzles, snake"*; *"more pictures than now"*. These comments seemed to reflect what a few others expressed explicitly, namely that there was more attention to detail and language terminology in the course of this module. On the other hand, indicative perhaps of a growing competence in English over two years, two stated that they had not understood much in the English class in grade 6 compared to grade 8.

Learner comments make it clear that learners are subjected to many different teacher personalities and there would appear to be a vast array of language teaching styles and approaches in current use, as well as a surprising amount of traditional teaching still taking place in numerous primary school language classes. Learner responses to questions 1.1 (*You have been taught English in a certain way this past month. 1.1 How did this differ from the way you were taught English in Gr. 7? List four ways in which it was different.*) and 1.2 (*In what way did this past month's work differ from the way you were taught English in Gr 6? List four ways in which it was different.*) make it possible to deduce that it is sometimes difficult for learners to differentiate between the differing styles of individual language teachers and differing approaches to language teaching, which can be regarded as a realistic response at their level. They have no theoretical background to answer any differently. Being second-language learners will also impact on the degree of confidence they have in venturing a complex opinion. This is revealed by responses such as *"We didn't work in groups and now we do"*, *"The teacher in Gr 6 never told us the things the sir is telling us"*, *"In Gr 6 we didn't speak*

*English in the class”, The work is’nt taught with so much detail because the children understands the work beter now then they understood it in Gr. 6”, “In Gr 6 it was mor pictaers than now”, “In gr 6 it was peanuts. We did not have to do oral. We did’nt read such difficult words and we normaly did’nt do essas”, “Troun stuf to eatch other (Play when the sir is in the klas)”, “We talk less, we worked alone by ourself”, “Better teachers”, “More fun”.*

One learner indicated that they did not use English at all in grade 7, while three indicated that they “use to speak Afrikaans” in the English classroom. Another added that (s)he could speak English in class now.

#### **5.3.4 The role of the learner**

The questionnaire provided feedback only with regard to group work in dealing with the role of the learner and this discussion is based on learner responses to Question 3 to a very limited extent (*Do you prefer learning English the way you have this past month? Give reasons for your answers.*) and Question 4 to a greater extent (*Do you feel that working in pairs and in groups has helped you to learn English more effectively than before? Give reasons for your answer.*)

As I have already noted, group work is not the be-all and end-all of OBE or Curriculum 2005, but it is strongly encouraged. Interestingly, four of the learners wrote that they worked alone in grade 7 and never in groups, while two wrote that they had done more group work in grade 7. Another one wrote that they had done a lot of work in pairs in grade 7. One learner may have been unconsciously highlighting the importance of the quality of carefully structured group work when (s)he commented that in grade 7 everyone in groups had to work together, while in the course of the module we observed that there were learners who did not want to participate in group activities. In our approach to the module, we did not specify the roles the individual learners had to play. The issue of reluctance to participate, which Randall (1999: 30) notes, was raised by some learners in response to Question 4 and is also dealt with in connection with the responses of some of the teachers in the next section (5.4).

As mentioned in a previous section (5.2), the instructions in the teacher’s notes seem to suggest that the exercises in the module especially are to be done individually and then the teacher has to provide the answers. Two of the learners picked this up and stated that they had been expected to work on their own a lot more than in the previous year, even though we had tried to bring in more work done in conjunction with a partner or in groups of three or four.

The module in itself provides for a lot of teacher talk – contrary to the spirit of the emphasis on learner investigation facilitated by the teacher in OBE (3.7.2), while giving explanations and answers – but does not promote much free conversation between learners.

One learner was ambivalent, writing that *“I like group work, but too much of a good thing’s a bad thing. Sometimes your in a bad group who doesn’t work together and just play or watever”*. Two learners stated that they preferred working alone to working in groups, one because (s)he is reserved by nature, while two others wrote that they did not like group work because *“the learners don’t want to work together in their group’s”* and just wanted others to do the work. (See also the responses to the next question). Eleven learners did not appreciate working in groups because they wanted to get the work done. *“Some of us like to work alone like me, and some don’t work together and play all the time”* and *“I prefer to do things on my own ..... and when you work in groups there’s always some one who doesn’t want to work.”*

Apart from a few vague responses by some learners, the majority of the responses to this question were to the point, with the learners giving definite reasons for their preference. Ten learners took strong exception to working in groups. Three learners stated that they like to work alone simply because that is their preference, with one writing that *“If I learn on my own I don’t forget wat I was learning but if I do work in groups I forget al I stuff I learnd”*. The other 8 who wrote that they don’t like working in groups were mainly against it because of the attitude of some learners in the group, with one writing that *“there is always someone who don’t won’t to shear they answer. According to them, some learners do not want to co-operate as part of a team and just want to “play and make a noise” or “raas en praat more that before”*. Other learners just refuse to work and write down the answers of those who have done something. *“You look at his work and right it down, and then iets not your work or he does nothing and gets the answers from you”*. One wrote that group work was fine, unless *“one person do all the work and the others get his points”*, a view shared by another, who also enjoyed it if everyone in the group cooperated, but who thought *“it’s unfair to give your answers to a person who did’nt do his homework”*. Another learner wrote that some learners refuse to share and then (s)he learns nothing from the activity. Another, who wanted to speak English while doing group work, wrote that *“your friend speak to you in Afrikaans and not in English”*, which shows that teacher monitoring of group activity is not always successful. *“You look at his work and right it down, and then iets not your work or he does nothing and gets the answers from you with even out trying the work.”* Motivating the reluctant learner to work effectively in a group remains an enormous challenge (Randall 1999: 30).

The majority of learners (53) expressed a desire to work in groups and it appeared that they were more likely to discuss matters they did not understand with their peers than with the teacher, where the whole class would find out that they did not know the answer (5.3.4). More than half the learners (45) wrote that working in groups enables learners to learn from one another, which the immediate feedback in comparing their answers provides. One learner stated that *“you can learn from the people in the group”*, and another, *“I have learned more things from the other children”* and also, *“The other person can help me with something and I can help them.”* Another wrote that *“they can give you information that you don’t know and you can give him information that he don’t know.”* One learner was not concerned about helping others, but was just interested in the help (s)he could get when *“I don’t know what the answer is and then the child which I am in a group with can help me and give me the answer”*. Two other learners who stated that they could get answers from the other members in the group shared this sentiment. One even liked group work *“because then everybody gets the same marks”*, perhaps seeing group work as an insurance against getting too low a mark individually. One learner enjoyed the exchange of ideas in groups and another gained by listening to the language used by fellow learners. (S)he learnt new words from group members and *“then I learn it on and asked my parents what it means.”* Three learners valued the exchange of ideas in a group and wrote that they learned a lot while discussing issues and answers in their groups. Five learners seemed more keen to take part in group discussions and are not shy to contribute, risking even views perceived by their peers to be erroneous because most of the learners and the teacher are not listening. Three wrote that one does not have to be shy in front of one’s friends and that they feel far more relaxed while working in groups. One learner stated *“[i]f you don’t understand the children can help u . And it’s nice to work with your friends cause you are not shy to say what u think or don’t understand.”* and another that fellow learners enable one to learn better because friends can explain something at one’s own level of understanding, while another wrote that *“you can see how the other persons way of thinking differs from yours”* and another wrote that *“I learn every time we work in pairs”*; *“the people in the group’s can help you to understanding the work better. Sometimes I’m shy and don’t want to go to the teacher, then the people in the group can help you with it”*. One learner wrote that *“when some of the children don’t know how to pronounce some words we can help each other”* and *“you get more advice from your friends”*. Helping one another in groups seemed to be important to some because *“you can talk about the answers and explain it to each other”*. *“You compare things with its other”*, *“when i don’t understand my work they can help me”* and *“I did learn stuff by the other children”* were some of the positive comments. Evidently peer mentoring can mean a lot. There was one learner who only wanted to work in groups if the task at hand was a difficult one, while another one would

work in a group in which everyone cooperated, otherwise it would be unfair just to supply answers or ready-made ideas to those who did not want to co-operate.

In general learners these seem to prefer working in groups and learning from one another.

### 5.3.5 Assessment

In response to question 5 (*What do you think about your work being assessed by yourself and your fellow learners? Comment on any advantages and/or disadvantages that you see.*) most learners had decided views and gave very specific reasons, with very few being in favour of it. Generally, however, they ignored the comment about self-assessment and concentrated on peer assessment. One was concerned about his/her own competence to assess correctly because “[i]t aint rite because maebly my work aint rite and I don’t now it and marked it rite”. One learner thought “[i]t’s great” to assess one’s own work because “if you assessed your own work, you understand it.” On the other hand, (s)he was concerned about cheating because “some people cheat” or were “disonest”. Another was concerned that “children can change their work”, a concern which could be addressed if teachers moderated only some of the learners’ self- and peer assessment

The three learners who mentioned self-assessment stated that they liked to see where they had gone wrong, so that “i can se were i made a mestake” as one put it, and another thought that marking one’s own work led to an improvement in skills and competencies, “because then I can improof on it”, perhaps because it involved immediate, non-threatening feedback

The 21 learners who were in favour of peer assessment commented on the way it enhanced learning. One learner who was in favour of peer assessment, for instance, thought that learners can learn from one another while assessing one another’s work, while two learners liked to see what the other learners came up with in the line of answers or ideas, “... you can see what is someones idea towards that question”. Another learner thought self- and peer assessment was a good thing because it made the process of assessment transparent (“we must be able to now .... our work is going to be assessed”). Four others reflected an interesting concern for the teacher and stated that teachers have quite a marking load and peer assessment could help the teacher so that “the teatcher can go on whit other work” and one of these said that that would free the teacher to get on with teaching. One of those who wanted the teacher to assess the work, felt it was the teacher’s responsibility: “the teachers shoed do all”.

There were 8 others who doubted whether their peers knew enough to assess competently, with one stating categorically that *“a lot of children don’t know what they are doing so sometimes the marks could be wrong.”* *“Some children assessed things that are right wrong and things that are wrong assessed right”*. They were concerned that their peers would make mistakes while assessing their work. One learner was concerned about fair assessment and wrote that peers award higher marks than the teacher, *“the learners give more points than the teacher”* and two others that learners would award their friends higher marks and lower marks to the learners they did not like. It must be mentioned anecdotally that in my experience learners are quite accurate when assessing their peers when they know that their assessment can and will be reviewed at any time by another learner or the teacher (5.3). Transparency has many benefits.

Ten learners were concerned about possible embarrassment when their marks were low and that other learners would get to know their marks. A learner was afraid that the learner who marked his/her work would *“tel all your friend when you done bad”*. Quite a few others feared the marker, saying assessment was a *“terrible idea”* because one’s peers would then *“make fun of me”*. Others did not trust their peers: *“[w]hen my fellow learners assessed it then I can get a bad point When I assessed it myself, then I can get a bete point”*; *“I assess my own work .... I would probably give the best marks. And my friends would also give me good marks just because I’m their friend. And my enemey would give bad marks because they don’t like me”*

One learner stated that assessing was, after all, the job of the teacher and another was concerned that the teacher would not get to know the learners very well if there were too much peer assessment.

### **5.3.6 Summary of learner responses**

Learners found it difficult to express themselves with regard to OBE and approaches to language learning, seemingly finding it difficult to separate the approach followed in class from the personality of the teacher. Perhaps the learners experience the lessons through their relationship with the teacher. They have no knowledge of theories in practice. A “good” or enjoyable/successful lesson is therefore a product of a good/nice teacher. Even if the teacher uses traditional methods, if the presentation is pleasant, they are unlikely to fault it. “Fun teachers” do “fun” things.

Perhaps they actually have stumbled upon some hidden truth. Is this perhaps one of the reasons why many teachers struggle with new approaches? It could be our naturally autocratic natures that make



learner-centredness such a challenge. The learners were rather more explicit with regard to group work and assessment, which is not surprising as group work and assessment are more tangible phenomena for them. By and large learners expressed a preference for group work, with the proviso that conversations and activities done in groups are carefully planned, monitored and assessed. It was also clear that learners seemed to prefer learning from one another, possibly because the interlanguage used in the groups was at their level and the risk of public embarrassment was less. However, when it came to assessment, it was clear that most learners preferred teacher assessment, citing the possible bias of fellow learners as well as their competence to assess reliably and some were concerned about being ridiculed and embarrassed if fellow learners saw their answers and marks.

In any teaching situation teachers, as key role-players, shape the way in which the curriculum is realised. Specifically in this case, they would strongly influence the way in which particular material was implemented. It was important therefore to obtain their views to test the trustworthiness of my analysis of the module and also to compare their comments with those raised by the learners in their responses above.

#### **5.4 ANALYSIS OF THE TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE**

The next section will focus on the views of 16 teachers within Metropole North (EMDC North) who were teaching English as a first additional language within the framework of Curriculum 2005. The teachers in this sample were all at schools of similar size to the one at which I teach, and with comparable teacher-learner ratios. They could, in that sense, be said to be facing similar challenges.

In this section the responses of the teachers will be discussed under the same headings as applied in 5.2 to facilitate the discovery of trends either supportive of, or contradictory to, the findings regarding the implementation reported in 5.2. Wherever possible, I have quoted from the verbatim responses of the teachers. In cases where the responses were cryptic, I have done my best to express the essence of the response.

A detailed discussion of the teacher responses, with numerous verbatim quotes of teachers as far as possible in the interests of providing a trustworthy account to illustrate the points made, follows.

### 5.4.1 Language learning activities

The responses regarding Question 1 (*How did you teach English before you started implementing an OBE approach? Please be specific about how you taught reading, writing, speaking and grammatical components.*) were quite varied in interpretation and in content. While some gave more general answers, others referred to one or more of the sub-components mentioned.

Four teachers gave vague or general answers and did not seem to have a clearly defined view of the process of language development. One, for instance, wrote that (s)he expected learners “*to have acquired the basic skills*” by the time they got to high school. These skills would then just need “*honing and tuning*” by means of exercises and practice with a focus on “*understanding and thinking skills*”. Others took their lead from what was required in the examination: “*everything is geared towards the examination, especially for the Grade 12s*”.

Of those who gave a more specific answer, only a few teachers openly espoused the traditional approach to language learning. Most of this group revealed by their responses that they used a form of traditional teaching, as will be seen.

This comment by one of the teachers seemed to me to be an example of inconsistent practice:

*“I would use an interesting thematic approach, e.g. film stars and base reading and speaking assignments on this... Grammatical components seem to work better if treated systematically ....”*

Five teachers, judging by their responses, seemed to be following a communicative approach. One wrote “*Communicative approach*”, while the others mentioned either “*thematic approach*” or “*integrated approach*”.

Three teachers who clearly espoused the traditional approach presented a similar approach to grammar teaching. In describing their practice, one claimed to teach grammar in “*logical progression, teaching the rules and giving exercises.*” The second said, “*Grammatical components ... seem to work better if treated systematically – i.e. if certain components are earmarked for each of the four terms. That way one is sure to cover the vast field*”. The third wrote that (s)he covered grammar and “*gave out handout exercises, discussed definitions and then tested work orally, in exercises and tests/ exams*”.

The teachers who said they used a traditional approach wrote that they preferred that approach. One of them added that teaching in the pre-Curriculum 2005 era had been “*much easier*”.

Two of the teachers who used a traditional approach commented on reading. Both seemed to follow a teacher-centred approach. The one teacher allowed learners to take it in turn to read in class, and the teacher provided any explanations that seemed necessary. The work covered in the reading lessons was reinforced by homework assignments. The other focused on discrete reading skills. A text, whether from a book or a magazine, would be read in class and words that would enhance the understanding of the main ideas were identified by the teacher. In addition, learners were given questions that would test their understanding of the main ideas.

#### **5.4.1.1 Discrete skills**

Those who claimed to be teaching thematically or in an integrated way actually seemed to be using a form of traditional teaching or presented a ‘closed’ rather than an ‘open’ view of language with regard to grammar. In general, they developed grammatical skills by concentrating on different language structures at different times, “*in logical progression*” and “*teaching the rules*”, as one teacher put it. This took the form of “formal lessons” on an aspect of language structure with the learners listening to the teacher’s explanations. The learners would then do exercises to practise these structures. One teacher said that (s)he “*used to stick to the text book and teach (emphasis in the original) language rules*”, followed by “*exercises in class and for homework and we would mark the work in class – sometimes books were swapped, sometimes they marked their own work.*” For another teacher the main emphasis was “much more on parts of speech”. A teacher wrote that (s)he would test the learners orally after that and another said that (s)he would let the learners mark one another’s work in groups.

One of these teachers, for instance, interpreted reading very narrowly as referring only to that done for prescribed reading and therefore with a view to the examination. Standard practice was “*Pupils read in class but mostly at home. Discussions and explorations done by teacher. Written work tests + contextual questions set to response to reading*”. (This approach is similar to another of the traditional teachers, which was provided above). Another teacher, who also saw reading as synonymous with the reading of prescribed works similarly reflected a teacher-centred approach. The learners did not read on their own; instead, in the teacher’s words, “*I would read setwork books to the class*”. Although the third teacher took a slightly broader view, the focus was the same as that

of the other teachers: reading was related to study. For her, reading “*entailed the study of the prescribed pieces plus other language matter i.e. newspapers, magazines, etc.*”

Some teachers claimed to be teaching in an integrated way and interpreted reading to mean more than just being confined to books set for examination purposes, but none of them gave any indication that learner competence was being developed. One of these teachers said, for instance, “*I have never really ‘taught’ reading*” in the past and “*would only take those with difficulties and give them more practice*”. Another teacher let the learners read individually in class and then the class would “*discuss new words, discuss [the] story and its background*”. Another teacher saw individual reading as an opportunity to award a mark.

There was one teacher, however, for whom the discussion of issues arising from the text was as important as the reading itself. “*We discussed issues, questions and answers.*”

#### **5.4.1.2 Product-based skills**

The teaching of writing seems to be as product-based as reading. One of the teachers who differentiated in his/her responses to this question in the questionnaire, said (s)he developed writing skills by having the learners write a piece. Once the piece was marked, (s)he let the learners do remedial work with the “*emphasis on error correction and language structure*”. Another teacher said (s)he largely focused “*on correct spelling and grammar*”. Other teachers gave the topics, spoke about the purpose of the writing and the appropriate format of the writing piece and then let the learners write, while others gave the topics in class, led a class discussion on the topics and then let the learners write. One of these teachers “*[g]ave a topic. Wr[ote] it on board, discuss[ed] topic. Wrote down ideas to help them. Lay[-]out discussed – introduction, etc.*” Another teacher followed a similar approach by discussing the topics in class and then letting the learners write, sometimes allowing them to finish the writing at home. One teacher linked the topics to a news item or something they were reading. The emphasis of all these teachers was on evaluating the final product as carefully as possible. The process of writing, however, received very little attention.

Speaking skills were addressed by the teachers in the second category. Most of them concentrated on formal oral topics that the learners had to prepare at home and deliver in class. The teacher would evaluate these presentations. The feedback ranged from correcting language use to “*heavy emphasis on correct pronunciation and general grammar usage*” to discussing the delivery with the learner afterwards. “*A prepared topic included research by the learner and a detailed report back.*

*Unprepared topics [were covered by] everyday conversation when communicating with learner.”* Only 2 mentioned free-flowing conversation as part of their speaking programmes. The emphasis, as with the writing, is largely on evaluating the final prepared product, with only a few teachers including unprepared oral and everyday conversation in their classroom activities and evaluations. This practice also seems to be followed by another of these teachers, with an understanding of the selected texts being quite important to one teacher. In general teachers followed widely differing classroom practices before the coming of the OBE Curriculum 2005 despite being supposed to teach communicatively, with the majority of them seeming to utilise some aspects of the cognitive code. The following quotation suggests that at least some of these teachers were following a communicative approach before the introduction of OBE.

*“I am 100% in favour of learner participation and have always involved my learners in the lessons as much as possible – even to the extent where they present the lessons. I have always done a lot of group work, but definitely within specific structures. I love openness and lively debates, but certainly not the free-for-all I have seen in some classes.”*

The view of the majority of teachers responding to Question 6 (*Do you think that using an OBE approach will enhance the learners’ acquisition of reading, speaking, writing and grammatical skills? Please explain.*) was that an OBE approach would not lead to the acquisition of language skills by learners (3.6). Approximately half of the teachers were totally negative about OBE enhancing the language skills of the learners; five were negative, but saw a possibility that conceded that there could be some enhancement. Only two were wholly positive.

The negative comments were very forthright. One teacher wrote that the learners in his/her class were at levels of language development that varied greatly. (S)he contended that it was even necessary to teach the alphabet to some learners in his/her class. The attention that the weaker learner required could only be given in small classes, where lots of individual attention was possible. While one teacher thought that the ideal teaching approach was a combination of an OBE approach and “*good old-fashioned basic teaching*”, another thought that this “*willy-nilly going about a language is not good enough*” and that the traditional method was a superior way of teaching a language. One teacher wrote that, in the few years Curriculum 2005 had been around, “*I have seen pupils acquiring less and less knowledge. The language itself will suffer as a result, and the pupils will have to make up a tremendous backlog from Gr. 10 onwards. Pupils that I taught in the OLD OLD way still thank me because they say they knew what they had to do and why (emphasis in the original).*” In one teacher’s opinion learners fail to see “*an outcome successfully*

*achieved/ reached as any kind of REAL achievement (emphasis in original) ... I have definitely seen a downward slide in the pupils' skills since returning to teaching. I do feel that OBE is responsible for a lot of this. Detail has been left out and the emphasis has been placed on less important matters."*

Only two of the teachers were unreservedly positive. One teacher thought that it was "[t]oo early to tell" and another one thought that OBE might enhance the skills of the learners, because if a learner "*identifies his or her own mistakes the learners tend to learn not to repeat that mistake again.*" Another teacher felt that "[t]he only obvious skill they have acquired is how to research topics", but that a lot depended on the material the learners were using in class. Another teacher thought that perhaps a learner's speaking skills could show an improvement, as there was "*not enough time for the other skills*" to develop. This seemed to reflect a view that the approach was far more time-consuming than traditional language teaching methods. Another teacher thought that in a less sophisticated language class it could lead to the enhancement of skills, but not in his/her very competent class of that year. This view is shared by one of the teachers who felt that "*[if] already 'clever' ones do not have a problem with this [approach] but the weaker pupil is becoming even weaker, losing interest and feeling more inadequate for not progressing fast enough*". A similar view, albeit more positively expressed, was that it would work in "*smaller classes, yes. You need to know your pupils well. You can pay more attention to each pupil then.*"

One unqualifiedly positive comment was that OBE would enhance a learner's language skills because "*a language is not just acquired information that can be relayed on paper. It is the mastering of skills which links perfectly to the OBE approach. Pupils can't just listen to teachers' instructions and know how to read or speak, they must themselves practise these skills with the guidance of a teacher handy*".

Despite the slightly greater apparent teacher optimism in response to Question 7 (*Do you think teaching in this way will better equip the learners to meet the linguistic challenges they encounter outside the classroom? Please explain.*), half of these teachers did not think that learners would be better equipped as a result of OBE (3.4). Others added the rider that OBE would help only in certain aspects of their language development. Two felt OBE would help. One teacher felt that teachers were so busy with "*red tape and administration*" in an OBE approach that they didn't have enough time to spend on the learners.

A teacher was emphatic that this approach would not help the learners to cope in a better way because “[r]eading, writing and esp. comprehension of what they have read and try to write have declined, not improved.” (S)he implied that they would continue to decline with the use of this approach. This view was shared by another teacher who was not optimistic that it would help them to cope better with the linguistic challenges they met outside the classroom and stated that “*the learners are ill-prepared for real challenges in the real world*”, a situation OBE was meant to address (3.4). One teacher was concerned that the learners who went to tertiary institutions would not be able to cope with the linguistic demands there after being taught using an OBE approach. One teacher wrote that language teachers had “*always aimed to equip their learners for the outside world*” but it “*is hard to tell*” if “*this way is better*”. Another wrote that correct language use had always been important and, with the apparently lesser role that active teacher intervention has been assigned, not much in the way of linguistic development would take place, adding that this would be an obstacle in the way of the learners after they had left school.

Three teachers were positive. One did not give a reason, making it difficult to interpret this response. A second teacher responded that in using this approach “*we help them to acquire the skills that you can use within a language especially outside the classroom*” and, in so doing, “*increase exposure to the outside world that can benefit the learners.*” Another teacher thought that learners were “*encouraged to think for themselves and express their opinions which will stand them in good stead outside the classroom*” to a far greater extent than the previous methods and would probably increase their self-confidence. This view was shared by another teacher who, however, had reservations. (S)he did not think this approach would help the learners meet the linguistic challenges outside the classroom, but felt that they “*do gain other kinds of knowledge. They learn skills which include working with other people who don’t think the same, who work faster or slower [and] who have different opinions*”. Thus “[t]hey also communicate with more confidence.” One teacher thought learners would only learn to meet the linguistic challenges “*provided you have the facilities, time, media and general support of [the] admin of the school.*” One teacher (“*Very much so*”) was convinced that learning in the OBE way would enable learners to meet the linguistic challenges outside the classroom but declined to give any reasons.

A teacher who thought that this approach might help the learners to communicate was concerned about the development of writing skills. Another thought that only the more capable learner would be able to benefit from this approach. “*If they have the intelligence to do it properly at this level, they will develop confidence and experience new challenges*” but “*this does not apply to the vast majority [of learners] who won’t have enough background knowledge to apply*” what they were

being exposed to in the classroom. Another view was that this approach might help, but this teacher was sure that learners taught in the traditional way were linguistically better equipped. Even if some of the work had been in the form of language drills, the learners would remember them and be able to apply them in the situations they encountered outside school.

It would seem that the majority of teachers who responded to this questionnaire had doubts about the effects of using an OBE approach. The responses related mainly to the perception that using an OBE approach had led to a decrease in linguistic skills and that this would not stand the learners in good stead when they had to face the linguistic challenges of life in the workplace or at tertiary institutions. It seemed that some of the resistance stemmed from a sense that a traditional approach had been better. This sense of negativity is borne out in a survey carried out in 2004 (Carl 2007: 13), a year after the questionnaire was completed for the purposes of this study.

#### **5.4.2 Aspects of organisation**

In response to Question 2 (*How did you feel about teaching English, using an OBE approach, before you actually implemented the approach?*) it was clear that no one had been positively disposed towards it.

The reactions ranged from a rather neutral “*not positive*” in the opinion of two teachers to others being “*apprehensive*” and “*sceptical*”. Others spoke about having “*many reservations*”, being “*confused*”, “*uncertain*”, “*not keen*”, “*not knowing if it was going to work*”, “*negative*”, “*insecure*”, “*very hesitant*”, “*lost*” and one teacher “*felt it was going to be chaos*”. These are the opinions of experienced teachers of English who, admittedly, had not undergone Curriculum 2005 training as part of their teacher training before they had entered the profession. Unfortunately it would appear that the limited training offered to teachers did not have the desired effect (see next paragraph).

Eleven teachers gave reasons for their feelings. One teacher wrote that there “*was too much jargon*” and another teacher could not understand why a proven system was being abandoned. According to him/her, the system “*has worked, creating a climate of ENJOYMENT and APPRECIATION for the language*” (emphasis in original). Another felt that, in spite of the limited training given by the Western Cape Education Department, (s)he was still unsure of how to assess properly because “[a]ssessment seemed to be a real problem, because there was no real training, no-one knew exactly what to do and how to approach it” and that it seemed to be “*too much paper work for too little work*” It fact, it has been stated that often the trainers at local level “*did not understand*”



Curriculum 2005 (*The Teacher* 2000: 8). Possibly because of that, one teacher commented that at the training which the teachers were given at WCED workshops, “*none of the presenters at the various workshops .... sounded very convincing.*” One teacher felt that both teachers and learners would have to do far more work for a perceived limited gain. It cannot be denied that the implementation of an OBE/ Curriculum 2005 approach has increased the administrative load and classroom management systems required of teachers (3.7.1). This was the experience of the teachers at the school where the study was undertaken and many other teachers from other schools have confirmed this anecdotally, in my hearing.

One concern was the time it would take both teachers and learners to adapt to the new system. One teacher was concerned about the time it takes for learners to finish one assignment if one implements Curriculum 2005. The jargon involved and the lack of adequate training and effective, usable information from WCED were recurring concerns (“*would there be good and effective guidelines from the Department?*”). One teacher felt “*it was going to be chaos, that kids would have to work in groups all the time and that it would mean lots of extra prep. and marking.*” Two other teachers wrote about a real sense of being lost and uncertain regarding what was expected of them. “*Too much paperwork for too little work*”, “*Apprehensive, sceptical. Did not know how the extensive syllabus would be covered, spending so much time on finishing one assignment*” (emphasis in original) , “*Confused*” and “*Negative, not eager, lost*” were some of the recurring responses.

The sense of uncertainty, not knowing what is expected and the demands in terms of time seem to underlie some the antagonism towards Curriculum 2005.

Most of the responding teachers answered Question 3 (*If those initial hopes or fears have been realised, describe in which way or ways, referring to Question 2*) and, not surprisingly, they reported that their fears had indeed been realised when subjected to the harsh reality of classroom practice. For them, the implementation of Curriculum 2005 in English language classrooms had led to numerous negative experiences.

One teacher felt that peer assessment was “not very trustworthy”, which is borne out by the observations of many of the learners who answered the questionnaire in 5.3, and that the time spent “*working out rubrics is time-consuming*”. Another reported that information coming from WCED was “*often VERY LATE*” (emphasis in the original), while one teacher pointed out that sometimes information emanating from the WCED was “*contradictory*” to information which had been

received from them before. It is true that in 2002 the assessment guidelines for promotion to grade 9 were received only in November of the year in which those learners were in grade 8 and which were vastly different from what teachers had been informed of before. One teacher also mentioned the problem of dealing with “*unenthusiastic*” and “*uninformed*” departmental officials. Furthermore, this teacher wrote that “[n]obody [was] willing to commit himself/herself to killing our fears and answering our questions”.

In addition, the amount of paperwork expected of teachers has increased enormously. “*Red tape has TRIPLED*” (emphasis in original), wrote one, while another wrote that there is “*more marking than ever before*”. Another wrote that “[I]t is as if we are ‘rushing’, trying to do much more in the limited time and bigger classes”. An additional concern was how learners who had been assessed in this way would progress once they got to the Senior Secondary Phase, when the learners change from an OBE/Curriculum 2005 approach to the previous curriculum, where more stringent pass requirements in grades 10 to 12 apply, because of the difference between the two curricula, as happened in 2005 when the new curriculum for grade 10 was not ready in time. Now that the new approach has been implemented in grade 10, starting in 2006, it is likely that there will be fewer challenges facing the learners entering grade 10.

According to one teacher, “*I still don’t see the point of implementing Curriculum 2005*”. (S)he viewed the language outcomes as so “*vague*” as to be “*almost meaningless*” and felt that “*teaching a learner how to write a business letter*” would teach him far more than concentrating on “*some almost meaningless*” language area outcome. Another wrote that (s)he had learned “*to adapt to the many ‘new’ approaches to teaching that have emerged as the brainchild of educational experts*” and sees this as just the “*latest education fad*” and “*is up in arms*” about it, because of the “*heavy-handed approach to implementing*” this, “*the latest education fad*”. Another felt that the new approach was “*so vague*” and that the teacher was left with “*nothing concrete to rely on*” or anything (s)he “*could use*”.

Two teachers expressed concerns about the ability of especially the weaker learner to cope in the new approach. “*I don’t get to help the really weak pupil. I don’t spend quality time with them*”. Teachers were concerned about learners becoming lazier, because they realised they did not have to put in much effort to get by and meet the minimum requirements, which is the sole aim of many learners. One reported: “*Those who started off by working very hard, become a bit lazier when they see they don’t have to put in so much effort to get by*” and would then “*be dragged down by the majority who know that they can’t fail and don’t work and disrupt classes*”. One teacher said that

(s)he found that there was now less time to spend with the really weak learners and it becomes problematic whether all learners would savour success (3.3 and 3.4). After having concentrated on certain outcomes, one teacher found that those outcomes were not successfully mastered, but does not supply reasons for the conclusion. That would create serious problems regarding time to recap and with regard to progressing to the next grade.

One teacher experienced group work as being “*very noisy*” and “*chaotic*” at times. Another one added that group work was difficult with classes of 40 and more learners, and with classrooms which were not built to accommodate so many learners, especially in an informal setting such as group work. In addition, in large classes the learners often discussed other matters in their groups and monitoring by the teacher became particularly demanding. One teacher found that unless (s)he was standing next to a group, the group was not doing what it was supposed to be doing in the classroom, illustrating a lack of responsibility on the part of many learners. This is in line with what I reported about our experiences in 5.2 above and with the findings reported in 3.7.3.

Two teachers chose not to respond to Question 4 (*Which aspects do you regard as being of vital importance in order to teach English successfully using an OBE approach?*), while other teachers said that one had to believe in an OBECurriculum 2005 approach. “*You need to believe in the approach – and most teachers don’t*”, was one blunt response.

In general teachers stated what they needed in order to make the approach work. The aspects mentioned were quite diverse in nature. The greatest need or asset that was necessary, judging by the responses, was that of useful source material (3.8.2) One of these teachers added that much of what was available was either unimaginative or boring, while another stated that even “*worksheets which have been designed by certain enterprising people are largely good, but can often be too prescriptive or boring after a while*” and “*thus outdated*”. Pre-prepared material was necessary because “[*o*]ne does not always have the time to create one’s own material”. There seems to be a need (or market) for good material that is updated regularly. A teacher was concerned about “[*a*]ccess to resources and availability of material”, while another worried about the affordability and access to material for all schools and all learners. Another teacher stated that good material should be shared by all in the interests of the learners. This could be achieved if all teachers at least had “*easy access to technology*” in order to find, share and then provide such material to their learners. This involves the co-operation of “*school administration*” staff, not just to be able to access and provide the material, but also to lighten the administrative load of teachers. In addition, one needed to be able to consult “*other more experienced OBE educators*”, which also involves

having the time to do so. One mentioned what was probably a pipe-dream, but a real need nevertheless, namely the necessary “*manpower*”, as all practising teachers have become aware of the extra work and hours that the new approach demands in order to be implemented successfully.

One wrote that teachers had to be “[*v*]ery organised” in order to deal with the extra administrative load of assessment and classroom management, while yet others wrote that teachers need to be able to have “*very good discipline*” in order to manage the large classes that they teach. Four other teachers expanded on this issue when they stated the need for “[*s*]maller classes” so that teachers could manage their classrooms more effectively. In the opinion of two teachers this would lead to more effective group work, a point which was raised in response to a previous question. The last aspect mentioned by teachers was that all teachers needed clear guidance from WCED that arrived at schools well before the time of implementation. These teachers emphasised the unnecessary tension caused by conflicting guidelines arriving far too late in any case. One wanted “*clear guidelines given to all schools on time*” (emphasis in original) to avoid teachers becoming “*very frustrated*”. One teacher, perhaps in view of the problems others have mentioned, suggested that teachers need to be endowed with “*endless patience*” in order to make the whole approach work.

In Question 8 teachers were asked what advice they had for other teachers faced with teaching English using an OBE approach for the first time. Almost all the teachers responded to this question, although most of the responses were rather short. The attitudes may be categorised as ‘negative’, ‘resigned’ or ‘positive’.

A negative attitude was strongly expressed in the one-word answer one teacher gave: “*Resign*”. A more stoic attitude was expressed in “*Adapt or die*”, “*Take some deep breaths*” or “*Grin and bear it!*”. More explicit advice suggested some cynicism: “*bend the rules to some extent, to combine some of the old systematic approach with the requirements of OBE*” (this in the interests of the learners).

A few teachers were more positive towards the new approach. Two teachers advised other teachers to “[*t*]ake it slowly” and “*one day at a time*”, while another advised teachers to “[*b*]e relaxed; it is easier than you think”. Another’s advice was “*Contact the authorities (subject advisors/curriculum advisors) for help, don’t be afraid to ask. Don’t feel inferior/hopeless – most other teachers or advisors are like you.*” One teacher suggested that teachers only ask advice from other teachers who are known to be enthusiastic about OBE/Curriculum 2005, while another suggested that teachers “*implement smaller ‘portions’ at a time [rather] than trying to bite off everything at once*”. One

advised other teachers to “[g]et a system going of using peer assessment to your advantage”. Other advice by individual teachers included not doing peer assessment at all, focussing on comprehension, simplifying matters for oneself as much as possible, liaising with primary school teachers, and planning well.

Only four teachers responded to Question 9 (*Do you think teaching in this way will better equip the learners to meet the linguistic challenges they encounter outside the classroom? Please explain.*)

One was very concerned about whether the learners would be allowed to develop to their full potential by grade 12 because of the slower pace required by Curriculum 2005 approach. Another wrote that it would be good to have genuine Curriculum 2005 material to use in the classroom. Teachers would have been more positive about the approach had that been the case, but “*at present it is a mad rush to please everybody*”. The result was too much unnecessary stress. One teacher expressed uneasiness: “*I still fear for what might happen when these learners get to Gr. 12 level. The pace at which we work now (with OBE) is much slower. Will they ever know everything they should?*” (emphasis in the original).

In the opinion of the third teacher “*the whole system*” of Curriculum 2005 has been very badly implemented. The Dept. tried to rush it without proper forethought, in many cases expecting the teachers to solve the problems for them”. In addition, “[t]eachers are thoroughly demoralised because we never know when further changes are going to be dumped on us at the last minute”, as has already been noted. Furthermore, “*Schools are all trying different modules/worksheets, etc, and much time and energy has been wasted*” (emphasis in the original). The fourth teacher expressed concern about the difference between “First and Second Language” in grade 9 and feared that all grade 9s would be examined in the same paper, a fear which has not materialised.

### **5.4.3 The role of the teacher**

This issue was not addressed directly in the questionnaire. One teacher expressed a serious concern that many learners need support as they do not have the necessary sense of responsibility to take charge of their own progress and that “*only the most intelligent or motivated have been able to cope. The less intelligent have ‘fallen by the wayside’*”, perhaps because, as another wrote, “*students are basically ‘left’*” because the teacher is just “*a facilitator but [there is] no real ‘teaching’ going on*” (emphasis in the original), while another stated “*I didn’t take complete*

*responsibility for the learning process now, but let pupils learn by themselves, discovering things working in groups as well*'.

#### **5.4.4 The role of the learner**

This issue was also not addressed directly in the questionnaire. One teacher questioned the success of OBE approaches in other countries (3.5) and added that, according to OBE, learners were supposed to progress at their own pace. How this is to be done in accordance with Curriculum 2005's examination and grading policy is not clear because learners are still graded to pass the end of the academic year.

#### **5.4.5 Assessment**

A minority of teachers responding to Question 5 (*What do you think the effect of using individual and peer assessment has been on the learners' acquisition of reading, speaking, writing and grammatical skills in English?*) were convinced that individual and peer assessment had a negative impact on learners or were ambivalent about the effectiveness of such assessment (5.2.2). One wrote that it was difficult to tell if there was a positive correlation, because *"I have a very gifted and competent class who value the teacher's opinion more highly than that of their peers in whom they have little confidence"*. Others wrote that learners could not help or correct their peers simply because they did not have the background or knowledge necessary to do so. They *"cannot find the errors"* and *"some don't even recognize mistakes"*. Therefore they are unable to suggest improvements (a view expressed by some learners as well (5.3)) and one of them wrote that *"[t]he teacher has to ultimately go back and check, but classes are big"* and there is *"far too much to check"* in the time at his/her disposal. A few teachers commented on the apathy of learners generally, which caused them to *"fool around"*, especially during peer group assessment. *"If learners only took it seriously"* was the lament of one teacher. The bigger the class, the more likely it seems that this factor will play a role.

The tendency of learners to be either dishonest or biased when assessing their peers emerged from the teachers' comments. In the experience of certain teachers, some learners were not honest or did not understand what to do, *"even though one spends half a period explaining how the assessment form should be filled in."* Others tended to assess themselves at a higher level. This could only be countered by *"[g]uided individual assessment"* and careful guiding and monitoring of such assessment, which leads to an increased teacher workload (3.7.1). Even then a teacher felt that such

assessment should not be taken into consideration by the teacher, but only used as part of the learner's learning experience. It also became obvious to these teachers that learners tended to assess on a lower level when they were assessing the work of learners that they did not like. The learners *"tend to fool around or tend to give an unrealistic mark/symbol when assessing others and tend to favour friends (they are not realistic)"*. In one teacher's opinion peer assessment *"is a delightful tool to be nasty to those classmates pupils dislike, or to be kind to those one likes"*. *"[T]hese marks should not be used as part of assessment" but "merely be learning experiences"*. This could impact seriously on the assessment of some learners if not carefully monitored by the teacher. This is a factor that numerous learners mentioned as well (5.3). One teacher did not think assessment was really a problem because *"[l]earners are, in general, not interested in gaining knowledge"* any longer. Learner apathy was therefore the underlying problem, in this teacher's opinion.

The responses of the majority of the teachers can only be regarded as ambivalent. One teacher wrote that the situation might *"improve as the learners become more experienced at assessing"* their own work and that of their peers. Another teacher wrote that assessing one's own work and that of one's peers could build the learners' confidence upon *"seeing peers' work as bad/good as their own"* and that they could possibly learn from the mistakes of others. One wrote that learners may *"learn to be critical ... [and] aware of their own shortcomings that they can then improve upon. They also get a clearer picture of what goes on into an assessment and become more understanding"* of what is really required of them. It was also possible, however, that learners and peer assessment could lull a learner into a false sense of complacency and that (s)he would be satisfied with a mediocre achievement simply because others are satisfied with it.

#### **5.4.6 Summary of teacher responses**

I have tried to allow the teachers who responded to the questionnaire to speak for themselves as far as possible; however, as with the learner responses, a few patterns emerged clearly.

While at least some teachers seemed to be favourably disposed towards Curriculum 2005 and expressed the opinion that they followed a communicative approach in the classroom, none had been completely in favour of an OBE approach before it was implemented in South African schools. The vague wording of documents, inadequate training for teachers and the assessment policy especially were criticised. This seemed to give rise to much confusion and anxiety on the part of teachers. The implementation of Curriculum 2005 seemed to justify their fears and anxiety, with concern for the weaker learner and misgivings about the increased role of group work being

highlighted. Regarding the role of peer assessment, teachers expressed mixed feelings, with some in favour and others expressing misgivings, especially about learner bias and the reliability and validity of peer assessment.

Some teachers were inclined to blame Curriculum 2005 for a decline in linguistic skills and some were convinced that the traditional curriculum had been better. Teacher resistance to the implementation of Curriculum 2005 was readily apparent and even positive responses were expressed in a guarded way. This does not bode well for the notion of the teacher as the confident creator of a personal eclectic approach (2.5.3.1), or as the designer of a mixed product- and process-based curriculum in order to create an environment in which learning can take place (2.6).

## **5.5 CONCLUSION**

The data which were obtained during the process of implementing the selected module as discussed in this chapter will frame the analysis of the other modules in the MacRat grade 8 series and another textbook, which is also currently commercially available. This analysis will be the focus of the next chapter.



## CHAPTER 6: ANALYSIS OF COMMERCIALY AVAILABLE MATERIAL

### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

The discussion in this chapter (6.3 and 6.5) will focus on two commercially available sets of classroom materials that were produced in about 2000. The discussion will further explore the extent to which they are in line with the aims of OBE and Curriculum 2005 (WCED 1997a: unnumbered, WCED 1997c: LLC - 3), including the outcomes of the Revised National Curriculum Statement as well as the way in which the contents of the modules relate to one another.

The module examined in detail in the previous chapter was drawn from the first set of material. The second set was selected from a sample of various sets of material because teachers in the region where I teach selected it to teach grade 8 English as an additional language as part of Curriculum 2005.

Design is interpreted in 6.2 and 6.4 below as the texts, tasks, activities and exercises which constitute the language learning activities which are presented in the various modules in order to promote language acquisition and language learning in the classroom and the way that these modules constitute tightly cohesive units of material.

### 6.2 DESIGN OF *FIRM FOUNDATIONS*, MODULES 1 AND 3 - 8

As can be seen from the table below, the modules in this set of material have been basically designed in the same way. Since aspects of the design of *Firm Foundations* were covered in some detail in Chapter 5, the design of Module 1 and Modules 3 - 8 will be dealt with in fairly broad terms. The discussion in 6.2 will centre on individual examples of recurring features of the design of these modules. References to similar examples will be made where it seems necessary to strengthen an argument.

Before the discussion, I summarise the contents of the modules and provide a very brief criticism of the various activities in the modules in the form of a table. This will highlight certain design features and make comparisons between the chapters easier for the interested reader, dispensing with a long prose description of the contents of the modules.

Activity No	Description of activity	Brief comments (where deemed necessary)
<b>Module 1</b>	Theme: Facing challenges	
Comprehension 1	Comprehension test	Focus on first level factual questions; inappropriate exercise
	Notes on answering comprehension tests	Learners are informed about the mechanics of answering comprehension tests, such as the different types of questions that can be asked – teacher explanation
Exercise 1	Some learners formulate specific questions for the other learners	The assumption is that the learners can draw up appropriate questions
Exercise 2	Punctuation	Learners have to deduce use of elementary punctuation marks
Comprehension 2	Comprehension test	Focus on first level questions
	Discussion: talk about pets	The learners are expected to talk about pets in their groups, but no guidance is given
Comprehension 3	Comprehension test	Focus on first level questions
	Discussion: talk about facing challenges	Open-ended discussion; no guidance given
	Read: poem	The teacher is asked to ensure that the learners understand the poem. The poem is then used as the basis for questions on synonyms and antonyms – teacher explanation assumed
Question 1	Supply synonyms for words in poem	Decontextualised language exercise
Question 2	Supply meanings for words in poem	Retrieval exercise
Question 3	List words which show boy's strangeness in poem	Content awareness of the effect of words
Spelling list 1	List of spelling words to be learnt	Rote learning of discrete words
Exercise 3	Compare characteristics you share with boy in poem	Detailed teacher explanation required
	Diary to be recorded over 2 weeks	Opportunity to reflect on personal experience
	Explanation of diary entry	Teacher explanation
	Words given must be inserted in correct place in paragraph	Assisted cloze exercise
	Definition of nouns supplied	Teacher explanation
Exercise 4	Identification of different kinds of nouns in paragraph	Mechanical classification of nouns
Exercise 5	Crossword puzzle	Authentic activity
Exercise 6	Identification of nouns	Mechanical classification of nouns
	List of collective nouns given	Rote learning exercise
Exercise 7	Supply the words to which the collective nouns refer	Mechanical vocabulary exercise
Spelling list 2	List of spelling words to be learnt, all nouns	Rote learning exercise
Exercise 8	Crossword puzzle	Authentic activity
Exercise 9	Fill in nouns in the blanks in paragraph	Mechanical vocabulary exercise
Exercise 10	Supply words relating to collective nouns	Mechanical vocabulary exercise
Exercise 11	Identify and supply meaning of nouns	Decontextualised mechanical vocabulary exercise
Exercise 12	Identify and name nouns	Mechanical classification of nouns
	Discussion on challenges	Learners have to list the challenges faced by Miriam Makeba, limited text provided
Exercise 13	Noun cloze	All the missing words are nouns
	Discuss different forms of distance communication	Mechanical vocabulary exercise
	Fax form supplied	Detailed teacher explanation followed by contrived letter in the form of a fax
<b>Module 3</b>	Theme: Elephants and apostrophes	
	Short story	Long story to be read to learners; teacher explanation of words required
	Notes on summarising	Teacher explanation
1	Examples of cause and effect	Mechanical exercise based on short story
2	Pronunciation	Learners have to infer why Kipling wrote

		some words incorrectly
3	Emphasis in pronunciation	Mechanical pronunciation exercise
4	Vocabulary	Mechanical dictionary exercise
5	Comparison	Diagrammatic summary activity
6	Learner explanation of similes	Mechanical exercise
7	Discussion on rebellion	Open-ended, unguided discussion
8.1	Nonsense words	Possible fun activity
8.2	Poem: Jabberwocky	Learners must identify and discuss the nonsense words in the poem
	Rubric for poetry reading	Peer evaluation
	Notes on plurals	Teacher explanation
Exercise 1	Change to plurals	Decontextualised mechanical traditional grammar exercise
Exercise 2	Fill in was or were	Mechanical traditional grammar exercise
	Notes on irregular verb forms	Teacher explanation
Exercise 3	Change singular forms to plural	Mechanical traditional grammar exercise
Exercise 4	Change singular forms to plural	Mechanical traditional grammar exercise
Exercise 5	Supply plural forms	Mechanical traditional grammar exercise
Exercise 6	Supply plural forms	Mechanical traditional grammar exercise
Exercise 7	Supply plural forms	Mechanical traditional grammar exercise
	Notes on apostrophes	Teacher explanation
	Examples of apostrophes given	Teacher explanation
	Activity based on the writing of random words to illustrate the use of the apostrophe	Unlinked creative activity
Exercise 8	Supply the shortened form using the apostrophe	Mechanical exercise
Exercise 9	Rewrite phrases in possessive form	Mechanical exercise
Exercise 10	Fill in the apostrophe	Mechanical exercise
Exercise 11	Write out the possessive case	Mechanical exercise
Exercise 12	Give the possessive form	Mechanical exercise
Exercise 13	Change to plural, giving the possessive form	Mechanical exercise
Exercise 14	Write the possessive form	Mechanical exercise
	Notes on using the apostrophe for omission	Teacher explanation
Exercise 15	Use the apostrophe to indicate omission	Mechanical exercise
Exercise 16	Use the apostrophe to indicate omission	Mechanical exercise
Exercise 17	Explain the use of the apostrophe in the given sentences	Mechanical exercise
Exercise 18	Explain the use of the apostrophe in the short story	Mechanical exercise
Exercise 19	Add the apostrophe and explain its use	Mechanical exercise
Exercise 20	Explain the use of the apostrophe in sentences	Mechanical exercise
	Language test	Traditional comprehension focussing on first-level questions and language questions
	Discussion: the moral of the story	Open-ended unguided discussion
	Essay	Very little guidance supplied
<b>Module 4</b>	Theme: Action stations	
	Comprehension passage	Mainly first-level questions
	Notes on verbs	Teacher explanation, notes are 3 pages long
Exercise 1	Identify verbs in sentences	Mechanical grammar exercise
Exercise 2	Identify finite verbs in sentences	Mechanical grammar exercise
Exercise 3	Identify finite verbs in sentences	Mechanical grammar exercise
Exercise 4	Identify finite verbs in sentences	Mechanical grammar exercise
Exercise 5	Write sentences containing finite verbs	Own sentences required
	Notes on tenses	Teacher explanation
Exercise 6	Rewrite paragraph in past tense	Mechanical grammar exercise
Exercise 7	Fill in correct form of the verb	Mechanical grammar exercise
Exercise 8	Fill in correct form of the verb	Mechanical grammar exercise
	Notes on concord	Mechanical grammar exercise
Exercise 9	Fill in is, are, was, were	Mechanical grammar exercise
Exercise 10	Fill in was, were	Mechanical grammar exercise

Exercise 11	Fill in correct verb	Mechanical grammar exercise
Exercise 12	Correct the concord errors in sentences	Mechanical grammar exercise
Exercise 13	Identify concord errors	Mechanical grammar exercise
Exercise 14	Change sentences into plural	Mechanical grammar exercise
Exercise 15	Change sentences into singular	Mechanical grammar exercise
Exercise 16	Fill in correct verbs	Mechanical grammar exercise
Exercise 17	Fill in the correct verbs	Mechanical grammar exercise
	Notes on commands and instructions	Mechanical grammar exercise
Exercise 18	Change sentences into commands	Mechanical grammar exercise
	Activity concerning commands	Creative fun activity
Exercise 19	Write instructions for other learners	Creative activity
Exercise 20	Recipe that learners can try at home	Creative activity if all the learners participate
Exercise 21	Report on their baking experience	Could be interesting – possibly embarrassing for reluctant learners
Exercise 22	Learners must derive clear route instructions from a map	Practical activity involving many skills
Exercise 23	Learners must draw a map and provide the route instructions	Practical activity involving many skills
	Example of friendly letter supplied	Teacher explanation
	Then write a letter on one of two topics	Very little guidance provided
<b>Module 5</b>	Theme: Specifically speaking	
	Examples of strong verbs given	Pictures supplied
	Use strong verbs in describing a grape eating experience	Practical activity in class – learners do this after eating a grape
	Spelling list provided	Rote learning
	Spelling list (#2) provided	Rote learning
	Notes on adverbs	Teacher explanation
Exercise 1	Identify synonymous adverbs	Mechanical vocabulary exercise
Exercise 2	Replace phrases with adverbs	Vocabulary exercise
Exercise 3	Supply adverbs which are antonyms	Decontextualised vocabulary exercise
Exercise 4	Edit reporting on grape eating, adding in more adverbs	Contrived vocabulary exercise
	More notes on adverbs	Teacher explanation
Exercise 5	Identify adverbs	Decontextualised formal grammar exercise
Exercise 6	Choose between adverbs and adjectives	Vocabulary exercise
	Notes on comparison of adverbs	Teacher explanation
Exercise 7	Fill in correct adverb	Vocabulary exercise
	Write a definition of sport	Very little guidance supplied
Exercise 8	Explain certain sport terminology	Very specific jargon
	Notes on jargon	Teacher explanation
Exercise 9	Provide examples of sport jargon	Very specific jargon
Exercise 10	Provide examples of jargon in other careers	Very specific jargon
	Discussion on the favourite sport of learners	Very little guidance supplied
	Comprehension	Focus on first-level questions and language questions
Exercise 11	Identification on nouns, adjectives and adverbs	Contextualised vocabulary exercise
	Interview with sports star provided	Teacher reading or learner silent reading
	Devise interview with another sports star	Little guidance on interview; detailed peer evaluation rubric
	Notes on punctuating interviews	Teacher explanation
Exercise 12	Reported speech	Decontextualised mechanical grammar exercise
	Notes on reported speech	Teacher explanation
Exercise 13	Rewrite sentences in reported speech	Decontextualised mechanical grammar exercise
	Notes on questions	Teacher explanation
Exercise 14	Change to reported speech	Decontextualised mechanical grammar exercise
	Notes on commands	Teacher explanation
Exercise 15	Change to reported speech	Decontextualised mechanical grammar

		exercise
	Notes on greetings	Teacher explanation
Exercise 16	Change to reported speech	Decontextualised mechanical grammar exercise
Exercise 17	Change statements to reported speech	Decontextualised mechanical grammar exercise
Exercise 18	Change questions to reported speech	Decontextualised mechanical grammar exercise
Exercise 19	Change greetings to reported speech	Decontextualised mechanical grammar exercise
Exercise 20	Change commands to reported speech	Decontextualised mechanical grammar exercise
Exercise 21	Write sentences to explain certain adverbs	Learners must generate their own sentences
Exercise 22	Change sentences to reported speech	Decontextualised mechanical grammar exercise
Exercise 23	Change cartoon speech to reported speech	Classroom English
Exercise 24	Edit their interview with a sports star into an article	Requires high-order skills
<b>Module 6</b>	Theme: Meaningful myths	
	Notes on prefixes and suffixes	Teacher explanation
Exercise 1	Supply prefixes for root words	Mechanical vocabulary exercise
Exercise 2	Supply roots when prefixes are given	Mechanical vocabulary exercise
	Notes on the meanings of prefixes and suffixes	Teacher explanation
Exercise 3	Supply prefixes for root words	Mechanical vocabulary exercise
Exercise 4	Supply roots when prefixes are given	Mechanical vocabulary exercise
	Notes on the meanings of prefixes and suffixes	Teacher explanation
Exercise 5	Fill in prefixes	Mechanical vocabulary exercise
Exercise 6	Supply roots when prefixes are given	Mechanical vocabulary exercise
	Notes on suffixes	Teacher explanation
Exercise 7	Add suffixes to root words	Mechanical vocabulary exercise
	Notes on using suffixes to form adjectives	Teacher explanation
Exercise 8	Add suffixes to root words	Mechanical vocabulary exercise
	Notes on using suffixes to form adverbs	Teacher explanation
Exercise 9	Supply suffixes to root words	Mechanical vocabulary exercise
	Notes on using suffixes to form verbs	Teacher explanation
Exercise 10	Supply suffixes to root words	Mechanical vocabulary exercise
Exercise 11	Form different parts of speech by means of suffixes	Mechanical vocabulary exercise
	Project: Learners are given cryptic notes on various myths and then have to explain selected myths to the class	Very little guidance supplied, except for notes on mechanics of oral presentation
	Comprehension test	Un scaffolded passage, focussing on first-level comprehension questions; there are also questions on language
	Then asked to write their own African myth	Very little guidance supplied, except for notes on mechanics of writing
<b>Module 7</b>	Theme: Poetic predators	
	Notes on alliteration	Teacher explanation
Exercise 1	Explain specific examples of alliteration	Focus on the mechanics of alliteration
Exercise 2	Write their own poem containing alliteration	Fun activity
	Notes on assonance	Teacher explanation
Exercise 3	Make up their own examples of assonance	Focus on the mechanics of assonance
	Notes on onomatopoeia	Teacher explanation
Exercise 4	Identify specific examples of onomatopoeia	Focus on the mechanics of onomatopoeia
Exercise 5	Learners must make up their own examples of onomatopoeia	Focus on the mechanics of onomatopoeia
	Poem (The Eagle) supplied	Learners are to read the poem
Exercise 6	Answer questions on the poem	Learners must answer questions on the poem
	Poem (The Hawk) supplied	Learners are to read the poem

	Answer questions on the poem	Focus on first-level questions
	Notes on comparisons	Teacher explanation
Exercise 8	Identify examples of metaphors	Focus on the mechanics of metaphors
Exercise 9	Identify examples of metaphors	Focus on the mechanics of metaphors
Exercise 10	Identify similes and metaphors	Focus on the mechanics of similes and metaphors
Exercise 11	Explain selected similes	Focus on the mechanics of similes
Exercise 12	Explain selected metaphors	Focus on the mechanics of metaphors
Exercise 13	Identify and explain selected similes and metaphors	Focus on the mechanics of similes and metaphors
Exercise 14	Identify and explain selected figures of speech	Focus on the mechanics of figures of speech
	Find examples of figures of speech in literature	Focus on the mechanics of figures of speech
	Listening comprehension	Focus on first level questions
	Discussion: predators	Open-ended unguided activity
Exercise 15	Debate: humans are the worst predators	Open-ended unguided activity
	Poem (Sennacherib) supplied	Learners read the poem
Exercise 16	Answer questions on the poem	Focus on first-level questions
	Vocabulary to be learnt from the poem The Highwayman	Rote learning
Exercise 17	Answer questions on the poem	Focus on first-level questions
Exercise 18	Make their own summary of the poem	
Exercise 19	Questions on the poem must be answered	Focus on figures of speech
	Essay: predators	Unguided activity
<b>Module 8</b>	Theme: test and exams	
		Tests and examination papers are supplied which cover the work done in Modules 1 to 7

As can be seen in the table, the titles of the modules suggest a thematic focus. However, as the discussion below will underline, many of the activities are uncontextualised and discrete. Comprehension tests and language exercises, and to some extent discussion topics, are a core feature of every chapter. Although the comprehension exercises are superficially linked to the theme, the texts are essentially disparate passages. A traditional, deductive approach is used in most of the language learning activities. In other words, they are not directly linked to the theme and the focus is on forms (Richards 2002: 154, 155; Long 1988, 1991). They reflect a concern with usage rather than use. The discussion topics invite only limited contributions from the learners.

The design of the modules will now be analysed in greater detail. The material contained in the modules is critiqued using examples of activities which have been chosen as representative of trends, for the sake of clarity and to avoid tedious repetition.

## 6.3 ANALYSIS OF *FIRM FOUNDATIONS*

### 6.3.1 Language learning activities

The function of classroom material is to further the learner's language learning by promoting the aims of the curriculum (3.8.1). It is against this background that the material will be examined to determine to what extent they allow the learner to achieve this by utilising the generally accepted fundamental language-learning skills (2.5.3.2).

#### 6.3.1.1 Reading

The theme of Module 1 is purportedly Challenges. At the beginning of the module, the item marked "discussion" does not indicate a purpose; learners are merely asked to "*Brainstorm examples of challenges. Mention some challenges that you personally face.*" and "*Write down 3 challenges that you face in English in this year that you wish to meet*" (Kirby n.d. i: 2). It should be noted that not one of the three texts on which comprehension exercises in Module 1 are based is overtly related to challenges. The first is about goal orientation. Entitled "The Story of Babe Erikson", it focuses on her participation at the Olympic Games in 1932 and her achievements during the games. The second is about a near disaster and the third is about an incredible find.

These three comprehension exercises in Module 1 can be described as artificially created or unscaffolded traditional exercises (Macaro 2001: 175; Warchauer 2001: 211; Mason 2000: 4; Carter and Nunan 2001: 226). The questions on texts 1 and 3 focus on first-level questions, i.e. retrieval of information with a strong product-orientation. As can be seen from the table above, this is the predominant pattern in the modules. This approach does not make provision for process in which interaction between the readers is a key part of meaning-making (2.5.3.2.3; Wallace 2001: 22; Grabe 2002: 279). More evidence of the 'closed' approach to language is that learners are given advice on how to answer questions to help them provide 'the right answer' rather than exploring the text.

*"The following note explains exactly what is required of the learners when completing a comprehension exercise. Go through it carefully with the learners, clarifying anything with which they are unfamiliar. There are many occasions in life when following instructions properly is helpful. This is the lifeskill we are imparting here."* Kirby n.d. a: 4).

The notion that the purpose of reading activities is narrowly tied to performing well in tests or examinations is also evident on page 5 where, after the questions have been answered (Exercise 1), learners are asked to “[t]hink of one grammar and one punctuation question” which could arise from the passage. Although could this be seen as a consciousness-raising exercise, in the light of the discussion regarding Module 2 (5.2.1), it would appear that this is an example of a strong focus on the grammatical structures of the language.

The comprehension exercise on a poem highlights another design feature. Texts are approached from a structuralist perspective rather than a communicative perspective. There is no sense of the personal experience or affective response that is appropriate when reading a poem – the poem is merely another text that can be used as an information-retrieving exercise. In keeping with a structuralist view, the next activity is a spelling exercise based on words from the poem (Whitehead 1973: 153 - 155).

#### **6.3.1.2 Speaking**

There are numerous examples of oral communication exercises with vague instructions. One of these will suffice. In Module 1 the learners are told: “[T]alk in groups about long-distance communication: the different methods that exist today, their relative speeds and efficiency, the pros and cons of each.” This activity assumes substantial research, which would have to be done as ‘homework’. A focus on the forms of communication the learners know and use would have been more likely to generate discussion.

#### **6.3.1.3 Listening**

In each module there is an activity which requires the learners to employ listening skills. In Module 3 pp. 2-4, there is a long passage that must be read to the learners. In fact, the learners have the text in front of them and it might have been more appropriate for the learners to read the passage themselves. This long passage that the teacher must read to the class does little to teach listening skills (2.5.3.2.2; Rost 2001: 12). This passage forms the basis of various activities which are linked to the passage. The learners must summarise each paragraph in one sentence and then combine these sentences into 1 paragraph. The learners must link sentences which illustrate cause and effect and there are pronunciation and vocabulary questions.



In Module 2 on pages 15 and 16, by comparison, they have to listen carefully in order to trace a route on an island in order to find buried treasure, which is an excellent listening activity. In Module 7 they have to listen to each other in order to participate in pair discussions: 1. introducing partner, 2. treasure hunt, 3. listening and circling animals' names, 4. listening activities designed to enhance the listening skills of the learners in the set of modules.

#### **6.3.1.4 Focus on form**

A limited form of grammar teaching certainly has a place in modern language teaching and in the communicative approach. A focus on form, in other words integrating grammar instruction and language exposure would seem to be a better route to follow than total reliance on language exposure. There could also be a focus on forms when isolated structural forms are dealt with. Somehow a balance should be found between grammar instruction and communicative activities in order to cater for the needs of the learners (2.5.3.1).

In the discussion on the implementation of Module 2 (Chapter 5) I pointed out that there is hardly any attempt to scaffold or link activities. It is clear that the same is true of Module 1 and the succeeding modules. Throughout the modules, the activities are preceded by teacher explanations rather than learner preparation, and followed by traditional language exercises.

There are many examples of isolated language exercises in this traditional mould. In fact the word 'exercise' is rather appropriate as the language exercises are not part of a scaffolded language learning programme but isolated mechanical exercises.

In one exercise in Module 1 the learners are asked to insert words such as "husband", "glasses" and "guests" in the appropriate blanks in a paragraph which has no link to any activity which appears before or after it. In exercise 7 the learners are asked to supply collective nouns for certain words in sentences, such as "*Take this bunch and put it in water.*" The suggested answer is "flowers". In Module 3 exercise 3 the learners have to supply the plural forms of certain words in sentences, such as "*1. The hat was on a peg in the lounge*", "*4. The housewife engaged a washerwoman for her daughter-in-law*". In exercise 12 the plural possessive form must be supplied, for example "*3. the duty of the girl*", "*4. the hole of the mouse*". In unrelated sentences the learners must insert the apostrophe and explain its use, as in "*3. The woman dress was white*", "*6. Kulani father is a surgeon.*"

In Module 4, exercise 2 the learners are required to identify the finite verbs in isolated sentences, such as “2. *She is stupid.*”; “4. *They will be leaving tomorrow.*” In exercise 7 the correct form of the verb must be inserted into separate paragraphs, like “3. *Michael and Tshepo [does] \_\_\_\_ not want to go to athletics tomorrow. Earlier on they [speak] \_\_\_\_ to the teacher, but she [say] \_\_\_\_ that it [were] \_\_\_\_ compulsory and they [has] \_\_\_\_ to go.*” In exercise 12 the incorrect use of concord must be identified and corrected, such as “6. *Each of them were cracked.*”; “9. *Mathew, as well as his brother, have measles.*” and in exercise 18 sentences must be changed into commands, like: “6. *You can come in.*”; “8. *Could you help me, please?*”

In Module 5 exercise 2 groups of words must be replaced by single words, like: “6. *The car was driven with no caution along the highway.*”; “10. *In a short time the food was ready.*” In exercise 6 a choice must be made between the use of an adverb or an adjective: “5. *The father was \_\_\_\_ (falsely/false) accused by the intruder.*” “9. *The sky was \_\_\_\_ (sudden, suddenly) full of clouds.*” In exercise 13 sentences must be written in indirect speech: “4. *Simon said, ‘The police caught the thieves yesterday.’*” “6. *‘It is no easy matter,’ she replied.*”

In Module 6 exercise 3 certain root words are supplied and the learners must give a prefix that matches. “2. \_\_\_\_opus”; “12. \_\_\_\_pod” and in exercise 8 suffixes must be supplied to match root words: “7. child\_\_\_\_”; “6. thank\_\_\_\_”. In Module 7 exercise 4 learners have to identify the examples of onomatopoeia in an extract: “*Cat! /Cat! /After her, after her, /Sleeky flatterer, /Spitfire, chatterer, /Scatter her, scatter her /Off her mat! /Wuff!!*” In exercise 10 learners have to identify similes and metaphors. “5. *My tongue is the pen of a mighty writer.*”; “9. *The love of money is the root of all evil.*”

Attempts to link some of the language questions to the selected passages betray a narrow view of language learning. In question 1 that is set on the poem in Module 1, the learners have to write down synonyms for words taken from it. “1. *cloakroom* \_\_\_\_\_, 2. *shattering* \_\_\_\_\_”.

The modules make provision for a great deal of teacher instruction rather allowing learners to participate in preparation activity. In some instances notes which the teacher must explain run to 2 or 3 pages, as in Module 4, pp. 4 – 6, where the long teacher explanation forms the introduction to numerous exercises on verbs and tenses. In contrast, there is a paucity of inviting, engaging activities which would interest the learners to such an extent that they would really want to become involved in the language learning activities and which would gradually lead the learner to achieving greater skills in using the language effectively.

### 6.3.1.5 *Links with the world outside the classroom*

The learners encounter much written and some spoken language in the modules, but using “language for learning” (SO 6) does not feature. There is little evidence that learners’ real interests or concerns have been taken into account. When learners were doing Module 2, it was clear that the activities and exercises in the modules did not invite communication that was experienced by the learners as genuine and meaningful and were thus unable to contribute to their language development (Doughty and Williams 1998a: 11; Brown 1987: 49). My scrutiny of the other modules did not suggest that the response to the other modules would be different.

One activity which is different from those found in traditional language textbooks is the map-reading exercise in Module 5. The learners have to study a large-scale map of an area. The instruction reads: “*Your brother needs to get to Princess High School in 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue (marked as B on the map). He lives in Dion Street (marked A on the map). Write down for him clear instructions on how to get there.*” The purpose is clearly to learn how to show someone how to get to a particular place. The teacher is then told to “[A]sk the learners to discuss the activities they have been doing in the English class. Explain the format of a friendly letter to the class and then get the learners to write one.” The last activity in the module is thus introduced without preamble and is entirely unconnected to the map activity. The two topics provided are also unrelated to the map activity.

In Module 3 there is just a hint at what can be done and how the learner can be guided in shorter tasks. The learner has to link certain sentences to illustrate causes and effects which come to the fore in the comprehension test on “The Elephant’s Child”. The sentences are short and to the point and the listed causes and effects are supplied in two columns and have to be linked. For example, the cause (one of 8) “The Elephant’s child was curious” must be linked to the effect “The Elephant’s child asked many questions” (also one of 8). Unfortunately the succeeding activities are unrelated and deal with pronunciation. In Module 5, unnumbered exercise, the learners are asked to eat a grape and then report on how their senses responded to the experience. This invites participation as it involves the learners reporting on their tasting experience.

Interdisciplinary tasks across the curriculum can link interesting experiences in various learning areas and facilitate language learning at the same time. In Module 4 there is a rare example of this

type of learning, a recipe for muffins which could be tried out in the Technology/Home Economics class.

#### **6.3.1.6 Coherence**

In order for effective language learning to take place, each of the elements of classroom material should have a firm connection to the theme, items should be presented in a coherent framework, and learners should be given the opportunity to engage in meaningful interactions which lead to new knowledge being incorporated with what they know. This has direct implications for the sequencing of activities and for individual interpretation. Fundamentally, this means that activities should have a clear relation to each other, or invite learners to explore possible relationships, and that they should create opportunities for learners to make the knowledge or skills their own. Artificially created exercises would therefore be inappropriate. As my discussion will show, items in this book are, for the main part, artificially created exercises and there is no apparent reason for the sequencing that has been chosen. I will focus on the lack of connection first.

Sometimes the tasks are unrealistically lengthy, without a communicative purpose or firm, clear guidelines. The last activity in Module 5, for instance, involves the learners having to convert their interview scripts into articles for a sports magazine. The only guidance for this specialised and complex activity is: *“You need to give your article a headline, structure it correctly (as you learnt to do with the writing worm) and include your name as author.”* The learners are also asked either to read a book and make a summary of it or collect 10 newspaper articles about a sporting tournament and comment on each article in writing.

The connection between the individual items is usually tenuous at best, and the link between the content of the items and the theme is superficial. In Module 1, for instance, the theme is ‘challenges’. At the beginning of the module, the item marked “Discussion” is rather vague. There are no goals set for the learners; they are merely asked: *“Brainstorm examples of challenges. Mention some challenges that you personally face.”* Furthermore they are they are asked to: *“Write down 3 challenges that you face in English this year that you wish to meet”* (Kirby n.d.i: 2). While this could be seen as an activation of prior knowledge activity (Grabe 2002: 282), not only is this pointless, but ‘activation’ of this kind could lead to confusion, since the knowledge is not relevant to what follows.

### 6.3.1.7 Outcomes

In the previous chapter, Module 2 of the *Firm Foundations* series was examined in detail to determine the extent to which the module conformed to the aims of OBE in general and could be said to create opportunities for the achievement of the Critical and Specific Outcomes of Curriculum 2005. That showed that the module did not differ very much from traditional language textbooks, and lacked the clear focus necessary to facilitate the achievement of the Critical and Specific Outcomes specified for the Language, Literacy and Communication Learning Area (5.2). While it is true that any language activity can be said to have an element of SO1 (making and negotiating meaning), meaning-making of any real significance requires personal engagement or mediated activities, each building on the other to enhance meaning and understanding. I have tried to illustrate the shortcomings of the module in this regard. Furthermore, SO5 (understanding and applying language structures in context) is addressed only to a limited extent. The grammar exercises are not contextualised. The learners are presented with comprehension tests and grammar exercises of a very traditional kind based on a view of language as ‘closed’. “Various sources and situations” (SO4) are not often evident in the modules and do not at any point make an overt connection between what learners are asked to do and the ways their English skills could be applied to learning in other subjects (SO6). I was unable to find an example where an opportunity was created for “critical awareness of language usage” (SO2), or for a response to “aesthetic, affective, cultural and social values in context” (SO3).

### 6.3.2 Aspects of organisation

I dealt with organisational factors when the classroom implementation of the selected module was discussed (5.2.2). The factors dealt with there (such as the need to make provision for different rates of learner progress, management of large classes, organisation of classroom furniture to facilitate group work in traditional classrooms, monitoring classroom activities and the effective use of group work) apply to the rest of the modules in this series as a few typical instructions will show.

In an attempt to address the different pace at which different learners work, the compiler suggests in Module 1 that, after doing one comprehension test, the teacher is to “*Ask the faster learners to set one question of each of the other types of questions (which are covered in comprehensive notes that the teacher must explain to the class) and then circulate these questions to the other learners. The person who set the questions must also mark them.*” These are the only instructions provided. Speed is not necessarily a sign of greater competence. And there is no basis for assuming that faster

learners would be competent markers. In addition, as was revealed in the learner questionnaires, learners are wary of other learners marking their work (5.3). No explanation is given as to what the other learners are supposed to be doing when the “faster learners” are setting up their questions or marking them. The differing pace at which learners work is not, therefore, appropriately addressed here.

### 6.3.3 The role of the teacher

It is clear from the tables summarising the design of the modules that the chief role for the teacher is that of instructor. A few examples will suffice to make the point.

In the notes at the start of Module 1 the importance of “*group work, self-discovery, portfolios and experiential learning*” (“understanding”) in an OBE approach to language learning is acknowledged, but the compiler adds that these activities have been combined with the “*time-proven methods of drill and testing*” to enable the learner to “*remember the work*”. The teacher’s role is then narrowly defined as having to “*do preparation for each lesson*”, “*do the marking*”, “*administer the marks*” and “*manage the classroom effectively*”. Ironically, the teacher is exhorted “*to prepare learners .... [to] think*” (Kirby n.d. a: unnumbered).

In the teacher’s notes at the start of Module 4 the focus of the module states very explicitly that “*we will be concentrating on verbs*” (Kirby n.d. d: 2). According to the author, this “*should be easy but will clear up any misconceptions there may be!*” (Kirby n.d. c: 16). The teacher is then expected to provide an explanation before learners do the many exercises in which they either identify the verbs in the sentences or supply the correct form of the verb.

The rationale given for the theme of Module 5, “Specifically speaking”, is that “[u]sing the right word at the right time is a very useful skill.” The compiler states that “[t]his module aims to encourage the learners to use strong, specific words to express exactly what they mean” (Kirby n.d. e: 2). One could assume that the module aims to deal with effective communication. However, one is soon disabused in what immediately follows: in order to achieve “*this end we will deal with strong verbs, jargon, adverbs and direct and reported speech*”. The focus of the module is on exercises which focus on structural aspects of the language that, according to the teacher, play a strong role as the dispenser of knowledge about grammatical structures.

Sometimes the explanations even seem pointless or incorrectly sequenced. In Module 3 the teacher's book tells teachers to give an explanation of similes, but then comments that this explanation simply "*prepares them for a later module when we teach similes*" (Kirby n.d. c: 11). There is no link to anything that went before and the follow-up activities only appear in a later module, making this a more isolated exercise than usual.

The modules reveal a lock-step system of traditional grammar teaching, which demands a great deal of teacher instruction and teacher feedback, with very little room for remediation; nor is there provision for learners who successfully finish the work at a faster pace.

There are exceptions to this lock-step system, however, such as the activities in exercise 22, Module 4, in which the learners are given a map and have to work out instructions enabling someone to move from one point to another, and in exercise 23, in which they have to draw a map in order to provide instructions. In Module 5, unnumbered exercise, the learners are asked to eat a grape and then report on how their senses responded to the experience. These are activities which accommodate the changed role of the teacher as a facilitator as opposed to the traditional role of the teacher as the one who lectures for the whole period.

This set of modules, then, seems to demand that the teacher largely takes on the traditional role of imparting knowledge to those who do not know, as opposed to the role – which CLT and OBE advocates – of facilitator of classroom events to promote learner-centred language learning activities.

This changed role of teachers was addressed in 3.7.2, where it was noted that in an OBE approach the role of the teacher has changed from being a provider of information in a one-way communication situation. The teacher must now create the right climate and facilitate activities conducive to language learning (See 1994: 31; Olivier 1998: 29). It is the teacher's task, according to Education Department policy, to provide guidance to learners and to encourage them to work in groups as they deal with "*real issues and projects*". There is thus an increased emphasis on peer interaction in the classroom (WCED 2000a: 28). The teacher can be seen as an agent who "*actively engages*" with the learners in the classroom (WCED 2000a: 28), or one who simply sets up differing classroom experiences and then plays an unobtrusive background role (Mason 2000: 4). These modules, however, seem to limit the role of the teacher to that of instructor. In this role, the teacher is the one who must give detailed explanations regarding formal language structures,

contexts and words. There is, then, in these modules, little provision for the teacher as a facilitator of engaging, interesting and inviting activities which will promote language acquisition.

It can be rightly argued that teachers should use their initiative and facilitate learning. However, the investigation reported in Chapter 5 as well as other sources (Human 2003: 21; *Mail and Guardian*, 16 November 2001) suggest strongly that teachers are uncertain about OBE and that many do not understand it. They are likely, then, to follow the role the material accords them, for this and a number of other reasons as well. Many teachers have not had the training to enable them to be effective facilitators. In addition, they lack the time to do so because of the big class sizes they have to deal with, which in itself has led to an increased administrative load (Mostert 1997: 1, 2), over and above the administrative load which an OBE approach demands (Jansen 1997: 9).

#### **6.3.4 The role of the learner**

It was noted in the previous section that this set of material demands lots of teacher instruction, with learners listening to the explanations. It follows, then, that there is not much scope for the independent, discovery-oriented learning which OBE/Curriculum 2005 demands (Geelan 1997: 26, Olivier 1998: 45 - 47). This is clearly illustrated by the following examples.

The first comprehension passage in Module 1 provides an example of the many traditional activities in these modules. The comprehension passage is product-orientated in that learners are expected to answer the questions without any assistance at all, as would be the case in a summative assessment. The learners are given detailed instructions in their book on the layout of the page regarding writing their name and the date, where margins should be drawn, that they should skip lines between questions, and that they should write neatly and in full sentences. They are also told that they have to be “*actively imagining the scene*”. They are also advised that questions relate to facts, vocabulary, characters and imagery, among other things (Kirby n.d. i: 3). The comprehension tests and the notes provided are “*designed to develop the learners’ ability to successfully complete comprehensions*” (Kirby n.d. a: 2). This is echoed in the teacher’s book, where clearly the approach focuses on product and aims at mastery learning. The learners are also told that “*if at first you don’t understand, read and read again!*” (Kirby n.d. a: 5), based on the premise that repeated reading of a passage would make it more accessible.

The questions set on the comprehension test are “*Can wild animals be tamed?*”, “*Why was it dangerous to make Sonia jump from the tree?*”, “*Find synonyms for ...*” and “*Why is Jungle Jim in italics?*”. Although the first two questions might test understanding for those learners who would be



interested, the first could elicit simply a ‘yes’ or a ‘no’ and the second involves just retrieving information from the text and the learners simply answer questions rather than demonstrate their understanding.

After answering the comprehension passage, the learners are asked to talk in their groups about topics such as “...*about the pets you have owned*”, “*Would you like to own a tiger as a pet?*” and “*Tell your group about something you have read of taming a wild animal*” (Kirby n.d. i: 6). The first topic relates to their world of experience, the second might elicit some interesting responses, but the last doesn’t link up with the real-life experiences of the learners.

After the comprehension tests, the link with the next activity is a poem which is about a new boy at school. In the preparatory activity the learners are asked to “[*t*]alk to your partner about how you felt about coming to your school for the first time” (Kirby n.d. i: 8). The link with the learners’ own experiences at their new school could have been the basis for a whole series of activities which link with their own emotions and experiences. The teacher’s notes (Kirby n.d. a: 9) encourage a narrow focus on the content of, or information contained in, the poem in that they enjoin the teacher to ensure that “*the learners understand what [the poem] is about*” and that the issues raised in the poem are understood. This also suggests that teachers do the explaining. The next instruction, “[*c*]ontinue with the worksheet provided”, sustains this focus. This consists of questions requiring synonyms for words in the poem and the meaning of certain words, as well as a spelling list. The poem is thus seen as efferent or informational.

Curriculum 2005 requires a far more active role for the learner. Appropriate activities would be ones that engage learners in activities based on the poem that allow them to wrestle with issues raised in the poem, or work out possible meanings of particular lines in order to facilitate understanding of the whole rather than have the teacher explain ‘the meaning’ to the learners.

In Module 6 the teacher is told: if “*the exercise is becoming tedious, turn it into group work*” (Kirby no date f: 2). The compiler of the activities thus suggests that the 10 exercises in which the learners have to fill in the correct prefix, suffix or root word should be done as group work if the learners find the work boring. This suggests that the teacher is a controller, on the one hand, and that group work in itself transforms tedious exercises into more interesting ones.

Another example of an activity which could easily result in disengagement or boredom is found in Module 3, which starts with a story about an elephant that the teacher has to read to the class. The

story is several pages long and it will take about 40 minutes to read the story if only a short time is taken to introduce the story and alert learners to unfamiliar words that could be an obstacle to comprehension. While the teacher reads, the learners have to circle the names of the animals encountered in the course of the story. The author states that this can be treated as a teacher-marked listening comprehension. This seems unrealistic in the light of the length of the story and (in my view) indifferent quality of the narration. During the classroom implementation of Module 2 we found that some learners soon lost interest when even shorter passages were being used.

The follow-up questions ask learners to make a comparison between the elephant's two noses. Tellingly, the notes enjoin the teacher not to "*let the learners get away with being lazy and only finding a few things*" (Kirby n.d. c: 11), thus acknowledging that learners would not find the activity engaging. This issue was dealt with in Chapter 5 (5.2.3). As a rule, activities and tasks should be planned to maximise learner involvement and interest (Costas *et al.* 2002: 122, 123; Kearsley: 1999; Sheldon 1988: 244; Krahnke 1987: 57, 58).

Most activities do not invite learner participation. In Module 3, following the reading of a long passage, the learners have to do a diagrammatic comparison "*to show the differences and similarities of the elephant child's two different noses*". The teachers are instructed to "[e]ncourage imagination here" The compiler's response to the reluctant learner is to tell the teacher not to "*let the learners get away with being lazy and only finding a few things*" (Kirby. n.d. c: 11), which suggests an authoritarian role for the teacher who has to force learners to work.

After dealing with the poem in Module 1, the teacher has to explain a rather involved diagram about unique and shared characteristics. After that there is an opportunity to practise this kind of mapping activity. The next activity is keeping a diary. There is no provision for those who found the task rather easy to attempt a more challenging additional activity, or for those who need more practice to do an additional scaffolded activity.

There are, however, activities which could have been used as the basis of active learner involvement. In Module 5, for example, the learners are asked to bring grapes to school and then examine and chew the grapes, making notes about their taste experience. A whole series of activities could have been devised around this theme, but this activity serves as the introduction to a series of exercises on adverbs and the teacher has to "*Introduce adverbs as per worksheets*" (Kirby n.d. e: 3). The teacher has to explain the different types of adjectives and then there are 6 exercises which would have been quite at home in a traditional language-teaching grammar book. The

learners have to link adjectives which are antonyms, identify different kinds of adjectives, fill in the correct word, and fill in the correct adverb of comparison. The scenario seems to be that of the traditional classroom, with lots of teacher explanation, followed by learner exercises aimed at mastery learning.

Activities assume learner confidence. The teacher's notes for Module 1 say that “[b]y now the learners should be more comfortable with each other and confident enough to speak to the whole class” (Kirby n.d. a: 9). In this module (likely to be done first) the learners have to find out more about a fellow class member and then introduce that class member to the whole class. Although there have been two short opportunities to talk to other learners, the learners have not been in the school for very long and they might not possibly know many of the learners in that particular class: many high schools draw learners from many different primary schools. It is worth noting that during the implementation of Module 2 (Chapter 5) we discovered that only the very confident learners were willing to speak to the whole class, while most learners in our classes never had the confidence to do so, even after completing the whole of Module 2.

### **6.3.5 Assessment**

Assessment is an integral part of teaching (Killen 1996: 3). In fact, OBE emphasises that all classroom experiences, including assessment, are part of learning (Spady 1994a: 102 - 104). The intention is that detailed records are kept on an on-going basis as part of the instructional process of activities, learning, remediation and enrichment (Towers 1994: 626). Assessment should be formative and help the learner to achieve the required outcomes. Peer marking is part of that formative process. An OBE approach therefore creates further opportunities for learning in the light of performance. Assessment is thus an integral part of the learning process (Olivier 1998: 45 - 47). Summative assessment is undertaken when it would be appropriate to allow a learner to demonstrate whether the required outcome has been achieved (Killen 1996: 10).

I shall comment on three aspects: the underlying approach to assessment, the provision for peer marking and the appropriacy of the assessment. The approach to assessment in these modules is product-orientated, in line with the focus on traditional language teaching. At the start of Module 1 the compiler states that “*The best way to help learners to remember is to give them old-fashioned tests*”.

Peer marking is a ‘stand alone’ activity. As has already been noted, in Module 1 the link between the discussion topics after the first comprehension test and the next comprehension (according to the compiler) is that the activities are about facing a challenge. The learners are expected to peer mark the second comprehension test without any guidelines and there is no provision for follow up. There is a similar example in Module 4. Here the compiler suggests that the “*faster learners*” can be asked “*to set up tests for the other learners*” (Kirby n.d. d: 14). The “faster learners” are used as examiners for the “other learners” and these “*tests can be used as group work and extra practice.*”

In order to discuss the appropriacy of the assessment, I will use an activity from Module 1. In this module the learners are asked to keep diaries, making them as realistic and honest as possible. The notion is that they will be evaluated for language and style afterwards. While one could argue that diary writing is an authentic activity, assessment is problematic because diaries are essentially confidential texts and idiosyncratic. It would not be ethical for teachers to insist on seeing these texts and it would be inappropriate to evaluate them for language and style. It must be conceded, too, that it is unlikely that learners would engage in writing a genuine diary if they knew that it was going to be scrutinised by teachers. Characteristically, the diary entries do not link with the other activities or with the theme of the module. The final set of exercises, which do not provide a context, deals with nouns.

The tasks and assignments in these modules have a clear product orientation.

#### **6.4 DESIGN OF NEW SUCCESSFUL ENGLISH, MODULES 1 - 18**

This, the second set of material, is divided into 18 modules, four of which are revision modules. It has a learner’s book, a teacher’s book and a tape. According to the introduction of the teacher’s book, “New Successful English was “developed to support an outcomes-based approach to learning”, “actively supports the critical outcomes” common to all learning areas and “will help learners to achieve the specific outcomes” of the Language, Literacy and Communication learning area”. In order to achieve this, the authors aim to give learners “the opportunity to use English for real purposes”, (emphasis added) and expose learners to a wide range of written and visual material and “most importantly, to work with others while learning” (emphasis added) (Mosala, Paizee and Peires 2003: iv).

The remaining 14 modules each have a common theme to which the activities are linked. As can be seen on pages 5 to 7 of the learner’s book, the authors aimed at giving attention to each of the four

language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing). There are two other elements. The first is termed ‘grammar and language’, but would more accurately be termed ‘grammar’ since it focuses on traditional grammar such as modal verbs, question tags and prepositions. The second element is termed ‘other skills’. This is a catch-all category (crosswords, projects, vocabulary, group work, visual literacy and response to poetry or any other text). As can be seen, there is a curious divide here where aspects such as synonyms (Module 11: Word study nos. 3 and 4) fall under vocabulary (‘other skills’) rather than under ‘language and grammar’. As with the other set of materials, the design of this set will be summarised in table form. The numbering is that of the modules.

<b>Activity no.</b>	<b>Description of activity</b>	<b>Brief comments (where deemed necessary)</b>
<b>Module 1</b>	Theme: Life stories	
Exercise 1	Comprehension: prose	Focus on first-level comprehension
Exercise 2	Comprehension: poem	Focus mainly on first-level comprehension
Exercise 3	Reading comprehension: biographical time line	Focus on first-level comprehension
	Listening comprehension	Focus on first-level comprehension
	Guided speaking	Group activity
	Deductive notes on present tense verbs	Teacher explanation
Exercise 4	Modified cloze (present progressive tense verbs)	
	Set dialogue/ simulation	
Exercise 5	Description of current feelings or actions (use of present tense verbs)	Meaningful drill
	Creation of riddles (guess the character) (use of present or present progressive form of verb)	Link with the outside world
	Deductive notes on adjectives and adverbs	Teacher explanation
Exercise 6	Application of grammar notes – use of adjectives and adverbs to describe the people in the pictures	
Exercise 7	Draw faces depicting mood (adjectives/ adverbs)	Guided drawing activity
	Build up a picture of a character (integration of drawing, question and answer and note making). Guided pair activity leading to a presentation	Group activity not well defined
	Deductive notes on past tense verbs	Teacher explanation
Exercise 8	Learners must tell or write a story based on a series of pictures	Combines visual and writing skills
Exercise 9	Adapted cloze past or past progressive verbs	Traditional cloze exercise
	Construction of a basic timeline based on own life	Adaptation of earlier activity Inductive grammar
<b>Module 2</b>	Theme: Families	
Exercise 1	Vocabulary dealing with families	Rote learning
Exercise 2	Reading comprehension: family tree	Focus on first-level comprehension
	Learners must draw up their own family tree and talk about their families	Builds on previous exercises but speaking activity very unstructured
	Prose reading comprehension	Focus on first-level comprehension
	Role play	Structured, guided role play based on characters in comprehension test
	Guided writing on being part of a family	Link with learner’s family
	Guided writing on roles of family members	Link with learner’s family
	Deductive notes on past tense verbs	Teacher explanation
Exercise 3	Learners answer questions about themselves using past and present tense verbs	Link with learner’s school experiences
Exercise 4	Cloze exercise based on comprehension test	Link with comprehension test
Exercise 5	Learners fill in correct form of the verb	Mechanical exercise

Exercise 6	Deductive notes on pronouns and adjectives	Teacher explanation
	Learners fill in pronouns or adjectives	Link with prose comprehension test
Exercise 7	Filling in pronouns or adjectives	Mechanical exercise
<b>Module 3</b>	Theme: Town life or country life	
	Learners listen to story of boy coming to Johannesburg, must draw the scene	Use of multiple intelligencesmultiple intelligences
	Reading prose comprehension	Focus on first-level comprehension
	Learners must agree or disagree with statements about town and country life	Link to learner's own experiences
	Learners must describe what they see in 2 scenes depicting town and country life	Combines visual and speaking skills
	Learners must write a paragraph comparing the scenes	Builds on previous activity
	Learners must read and act out given conversation	Link with previous activities
	Notes on use of <i>some</i> and <i>any</i>	Teacher explanation
Exercise 1	Learners must fill in <i>some</i> or <i>any</i>	
Exercise 2	Learners must write out guided conversation in country shop	
	Guided speaking activity based on picture of island and one's needs there	Inferential reasoning
	Notes on direct and indirect speech	Teacher explanation
Exercise 3	Learners must change dialogue to indirect speech	Mechanical exercise
	Learners must conduct a guided survey	Expects contrived use of indirect speech
	Pictorial comprehension	Combination of first-level and inferential reasoning
<b>Module 4</b>	Theme: health	
	Listening comprehension	Tests note-taking skills
	Dictionary definitions dealing with health given	
Exercise 1	Learners must construct own sentences using certain words	
Exercise 2	Guided discussion on eating healthily	Very limited discussion possibilities
Exercise 3	Learners write sentences explaining various meanings of <i>healthy</i>	Vocabulary test
	Notes on modal verbs	Teacher explanation
Exercise 4	Cloze exercise on modal verbs	Mechanical exercise
Exercise 5	Guided questions on modal verbs	Pattern sentences
Exercise 6	Learners must match parts of sentences	Some inferential reasoning
Exercise 7	Guided instructions using modal verbs	Link with learner's world
	Learners must conduct a guided survey about healthy living with emphasis on modal verbs	Link with learner's world
	Learners read passage on becoming healthier and draw a programme to become healthy	Tests summary skills
	Prose reading comprehension on traditional healer	Mainly first-level comprehension
	Notes on phrasal verbs	Teacher explanation
Exercise 8	Read poem, finding phrasal verbs	Mechanical exercise
Exercise 9	Replace words with phrasal verbs	Link with learner's world
	Learners listen to rap poems so they can write and perform their own	Real-life activity
<b>Module 5</b>	Revision	Exercises testing work done in Modules 1 to 4
<b>Module 6</b>	Theme: Shopping	
Exercise 1	Learners must study picture of shop, close books and draw the scene from memory	Tests powers of observation
	Learners must examine till slip and collect their own	Link with real life
	Learners must buy items from different shops and compare prices	Link with real life
	Learners must discuss and write up their	Link with real life

	findings	
	Notes on passive voice	Teacher explanation
Exercise 2	Rewrite sentences in passive voice	Mechanical exercise
Exercise 3	Learners design passive voice posters to supply certain information to shoppers	Link with real life
	Reading Comprehension	Some first-level questions and some inferential ones
	Learners complete dialogue based on pictures and act out the dialogue	Inferential answers expected
	Notes on question tags	Teacher explanation
Exercise 4	Learners add question tags to statements	Mechanical exercise
Exercise 5	Paired oral testing question tags	Mechanical exercise
	Notes on definite and indefinite articles	Teacher explanation
Exercise 6	Learners fill in articles	Mechanical exercise
	Reading comprehension	Mainly first-level questions
	Translate certain idioms and then discuss the translations	
<b>Module 7</b>	Theme: Stories our grandmothers tell	
	Reading comprehension test	Focus on first-level questions
	Learners listen to traditional Xhosa story followed by guided discussion	Listening skill honed
	Learners read comic strip	No reason for activity
	Notes on past perfect tense	Teacher explanation
Exercise 1	Learners generate sentences	Contrived past perfect tense exercise
	Notes on progressive past perfect tense	Teacher explanation
	Learners read paragraph and generate sentences in past perfect tense	Contrived language exercise
	Learners have to tell each other stories	Introductory activity
	Notes on writing	Teacher explanation
	Learners must write a traditional story	Guided writing activity
	Crossword puzzle	Link with real life
<b>Module 8</b>	Theme: TV and radio	
	Guided learner discussion based on picture of TV quiz	
	Guided writing exercise based on given sentences	Test learners' powers of observation
	Learners listening to radio quiz	Used as basic vocabulary exercise
	Cloze exercise based on radio quiz	Traditional cloze exercise
	Learners must compile a quiz show	Real-life activity
	Notes on direct and indirect questions	Teacher explanation
Exercise 1	Learners change direct to indirect questions	Mechanical exercise
	Learners must write a letter to TV or radio station	
	Reading comprehension test based on TV guide	Focus on first-level questions
	Oral comprehension based on TV guide	Inferential answers expected
	Notes on relative pronouns	Teacher explanation
Exercise 2	Learners must fill in relative pronouns	Mechanical exercise
Exercise 3	Learners must generate sentences containing relative pronouns	
Exercise 4	Learners must translate certain idioms and then discuss the translations	
Exercise 5	Learners must translate certain idioms from their home language and then discuss the translations	
<b>Module 9</b>	Advertisements	
Exercise 1	Learners must classify given notices and advertisements	Link with real life
Exercise 2	Reading comprehension questions based on notices and advertisements	Focus on first-level comprehension
	Learners must fill in given form	Link with real life

	Learners act out dialogue in answer to advertisement	Link with real life
	Learners must identify certain road signs	Link with real life
	Notes on degrees of comparison	Teacher explanation
Exercise 3	Learners must supply degrees of comparison based on realistic sentences	Link with real life
Exercise 4	Learners must supply degrees of comparison based on labels and notices	Link with real life
Exercise 5	Learners must derive information from bar graphs	
	Notes on <i>much</i> and <i>many</i>	Teacher explanation
Exercise 6	Learners must fill in <i>much</i> or <i>many</i>	Mechanical exercise
Exercise 7	Fill in <i>much</i> or <i>many</i>	Mechanical exercise
	Writing exercise	Unlinked activity
	Reading comprehension	Mix of first-level and inferential questions
	Design their own advertisement	
	Notes on verb sequence	Teacher explanation
Exercise 8	Learners have to fill in the correct form of the verb	Mechanical exercise
<b>Module 10</b>	Revision	Exercises testing work done in Modules 5 to 9
<b>Module 11</b>	Theme: Ceremonies	
	Reading comprehension	Focus on first-level comprehension and vocabulary
	Guided learner discussion in groups or as a class	Little incentive for learners to discuss on their own
	Notes on <i>going to</i>	Teacher explanation
Exercise 1	Learners must generate questions using <i>going to</i>	Mechanical exercise
Exercise 2	Learners must generate more questions using <i>going to</i>	Mechanical exercise
	Learners must listen to a story and discuss given issues	Not an inviting activity
	Notes on prepositions of place and time	Teacher explanation
Exercise 3	Learners must generate sentences using these prepositions	Mechanical exercise
	Learners must talk about rituals they participate in	Link with real life
	Notes on infinitive form	Teacher explanation
Exercise 4	Learners must generate sentences using infinitive form	Mechanical exercise
Exercise 5	Learners must generate infinitive form of <i>make</i>	Mechanical exercise
	Learners must research a community ceremony and present it to the class	Link with real life
<b>Module 12</b>	Theme: Looking good	
	Reading Comprehension	Focus on first-level questions and vocabulary
	Guided discussion on pictures of hair styles	Link to real life
	Learners listen to discussion of dress styles and identify pictures	
	Cloze exercise	Vocabulary exercise
	Learners read poem and generate similar similes	Mechanical exercise
	Notes on prefixes and suffixes	Teacher explanation
Exercise 1	Learners are given words and decide what the prefixes mean	
Exercise 2	Learners must generate words starting with certain prefixes and ending with certain suffixes	Vocabulary exercise
Exercise 3	Learners must generate words ending in <i>-ness</i>	Vocabulary exercise
	Learners must invent new hairstyle or item of	Creative exercise



	attire	
	Learners must generate riddles	
	Learners must read poem	No activity based on poem
<b>Module 13</b>	Theme: clothes	
	Brainstorm word <i>clothes</i>	
	Learners must brainstorm word <i>clothes</i>	
	Learners must select a sentence about clothes and talk about it	Some guidance given but largely unstructured activity
	Listening comprehension	Focus on first-level questions
	Learners must tell the story they have listened to	Some guidance given but largely unstructured activity
	Notes on pronouns	Teacher explanation
Exercise 1	Learners must write about pictures using pronouns	Unstructured activity
Exercise 2	Cloze exercise	Vocabulary exercise
Exercise 3	Learners must supply appropriate pronouns	Mechanical exercise
Exercise 4	Learners must make sentences with reflexive pronouns	Pattern sentences
Exercise 5	Learners must replace words with pronouns	Mechanical exercise
	Learners read views on fashion and have to respond in writing and then orally	Tests powers of observation
	Learners answer questions on the views they have read	Focus on first-level observation
	Learners have to write an article on fashion	Minimal guidance supplied
	Learners look at pictures on fashion from various ages and have to comment on them	No real incentive to participate
	Learners study short passage and some pictures dealing with various fabrics	
	Pictorial comprehension dealing with the way various people are dressed	First-level and inferential questions
	Structured paragraph writing	Pattern sentences
	Notes on past perfect tense	Teacher explanation
	Learners fill in past perfect form of verb	Mechanical exercise
	Learners have to conduct a survey about trade names	Little guidance supplied
	Learners act out how they get dressed	
	Punctuation exercise	Mechanical exercise
<b>Module 14</b>	Homes and houses	
	Listening and pictorial comprehension concerning dwellings	Inferential reasoning expected
	Notes on word sets	Teacher explanation
	Learners have to generate words to certain match word sets	Inferential questions
	Learners supply headings for groups of words	Summary skill
	Learners study pictures depicting homes and say what they think home means in each context	Inferential questions
Exercise 1	Reading comprehension (poetry)	Mix of first-level and inferential questions
Exercise 2	Reading comprehension (poetry)	First-level questions
	Write own poems	High-level task
	Deductive notes on conditional form	Teacher explanation
Exercise 3	Learners have to write sentences using conditional form	Pattern sentences
Exercise 4	Learners must ask their partners 5 sentences using conditional form	Pattern sentences
	Learners study photo of house	
Exercise 5	Learners must write sentences about house using conditional form	Pattern sentences
	Pictorial comprehension about floor plan of dwelling	First level questions
	Learners must draw floor plan of own home	Link with real life

	and write short description to present to class	
<b>Module 15</b>	Revision	Exercises testing work done in Modules 11 to 14
<b>Module 16</b>	Theme: Work on the mines	
	Listening and prose comprehension about a miner's experiences	First-level and vocabulary questions
	Role play/visualisation of experience depicted in passage read aloud	Link to real life
Exercise 1	Reading comprehension (prose and poetry)	First-level questions
Exercise 2	Producing emotive meaning (verb substitution/ use of adjectives or adverbs)	Possibility of critical language awareness
Exercise 3	Identifying synonyms (matching given words)	Possibility of critical language awareness
	Learners rewrite dialogue boxes to add feeling	Possibility of critical language awareness
	Notes on adverbs and adverbial phrases	Teacher explanation
Exercise 4	Learners must fill in adverbs	Mechanical exercise
Exercise 5	Learners must fill in adverbial phrases in dialogue	Mechanical exercise
	Learners must write report based on diagram of mine accident	
	Notes on abbreviations	Teacher explanation
Exercise 6	Learners must link pictures and abbreviations	
Exercise 7	Learners must explain certain abbreviations	
<b>Module 17</b>	Theme: The future	
	Summary activity based on listening comprehension	Retrieval exercise
	Learners must debate certain issues	Some guidance provided
	Learners must ask partners 4 questions on their hopes for the future and write down the answers	Pattern sentences
	Learners must write their views on 2 futuristic pictures	
	Reading comprehension	First-level questions
	Notes on future tense	Teacher explanation
	Learners must change dialogue into future tense	Mechanical exercise
	Learners must complete future tense part of dialogue	Pattern sentences
	Learners must read a story and then turn it into a play	Integrated exercise
<b>Module 18</b>	Revision	Exercises testing work done in Modules 16 to 17

In addition to the activities provided in the modules, the authors suggest different ways of assessing learners, but these suggestions only consist of a list with brief summaries of each point mentioned. Portfolios, written assignments and projects are some of assessment methods listed. The critical outcomes as well as the specific outcomes are listed and the authors try to show how their book helps the learner to achieve these outcomes. They state that “[i]n our course we have placed particular emphasis on reading and listening skills.” They also claim that “[e]very module contains work on language structures and conventions .... The language work is always presented in context and linked to the module’s theme.”

The tables show that although attention is given to the other elements, this set of material, like the other set discussed previously, puts the emphasis on reading comprehension and traditional grammar activities.

In keeping with an OBE approach, which stresses the transparency of learning objectives (Killen 1996: 11), there are notes in the learners' book which try to show how OBE learning differs from the more traditional approach. The critical outcomes as well as the specific outcomes are listed and the authors try to show how their book helps the learner to achieve these outcomes. The authors also suggest a variety of ways of doing assessment.

Some aspects of the design of the modules will now be analysed in greater detail. A key issue is the extent to which they fulfil the demands made by Curriculum 2005 with regard to specific outcomes, language-learning activities, critical outcomes, teacher and learner roles and classroom organisation. The activities and exercises which illustrate the points made are representative of tendencies throughout the set of materials.

The design of the modules will now be analysed in greater detail.

## **6.5 ANALYSIS OF *NEW SUCCESSFUL ENGLISH***

### **6.5.1 Language-learning activities**

In the discussion that follows I will differentiate between 5 kinds of language-learning activities: reading, writing, speaking, listening and a focus on form (traditionally understood and taught as 'grammar'). There will be some inevitable overlap. I have used two other categories: *Links with the world outside the classroom* and *Coherence*. Finally I consider the extent to which the Critical and Specific Outcomes have been met.

Traditional textbooks books have tended to start with a comprehension test, which is then followed by other activities. The previous set of materials, discussed above (6.2 and 6.3), followed this pattern to a large extent. This is also the pattern of the modules in *New Successful English*.

### 6.5.1.1 Reading

The comprehension exercises in this set of material, like the previous set, often focus on first-level factual questions. In Module 2, for instance, there is a reading passage about a black band and all 6 questions focus entirely on first-level comprehension retrieval questions. There are similar examples in all of the modules. Similarly, the other reading passages in other modules, except Modules 6, 13 and 14, to a great extent focus on questions which expect first-level comprehension answers.

There are, however, some passages which include some open-ended questions, such as in Module 4 (about a herbalist) and Module 7 (about dassies). In Module 4 the learners are asked “*What is one reason why people can get sick these days?*” (Q5) and “*Do you think it is a good idea to go to herbalists like Cele? Or is it not always such a good idea? Why?*”(Q8). In Module 7 they are asked “*When would it be useful to tell this story?*”(Q5)

In this set of modules there are comprehension passages which are clearly linked to the theme of the relevant module. One example is the reading comprehension in Module 6, where the theme is shopping. In this case the passage is an extract from a juvenile literature novel, *Mpho's Search* by Sandra Braude. It recounts the story of a hungry boy who watches a customer who is testing the fruit before buying it. Unable to stop himself, he helps himself to grapes. He is rudely awakened from the pleasurable experience of eating them when a security guard takes firm action. Appropriately, the questions largely call for answers based on the opinions and attitudes of learners. In Module 11 the reading passage about initiation rites is clearly related to the theme of the module: ceremonies. The close link between the reading passage and the theme of the module is also evident in Module 12, which is about looking good, and Module 16, where the passage deals with the lives of miners in a core theme of mining.

It is important that the reading activities are followed by appropriate post-reading activities. These could take the form of oral and written presentations, which include listening, reading, speaking and writing activities (Eskey and Grabe: 1988: 231), but could include any activity which would build on the reading activity. In Module 6 (Shopping) the learners are required to examine a till slip and then have to bring till slips to school and compare prices on different till slips. This scaffolding of the reading activity is not always in evidence. In Module 12 (Looking Good) the last activity is a poem and, in spite of a pre-reading question such as *How do you enjoy yourself with your friends?*, there is no follow-up activity to the poem. In Module 16 (Mining) the first reading comprehension

passage is followed by a visualisation activity in which the learners have to close their eyes and imagine different mining scenarios, such as going down in the lift. The next reading passage is followed by 2 activities, one on adjectives that focuses on unrelated and uncontextualised words, and the other a writing activity which focuses on something that happened at school. Not all post-reading activities in the modules are therefore directly related to the reading activities or to the theme of the module.

There is also some attention devoted to reading non-verbal texts, or visual literacy. After a short passage on different kinds of material in Module 13, there are various pictures of people dressed in different kinds of clothing. In order to answer the questions, learners have to infer the answer from what the characters are wearing.

### **6.5.1.2 *Speaking***

In some cases there is a clear attempt to integrate the comprehension passages with the discussion that follows it. In Module 3, for example, the theme of which is town vs. country life, the reading passage is followed by pictures depicting the two life styles, which create the opportunity for learners to discuss the differences between them. However, the purpose of the discussion is not clear since it is followed by a structured activity in which learners have to use the same photographs to write a paragraph comparing the two modes of living based on the same photographs.

### **6.5.1.3 *Listening***

In contrast to *Firm Foundations* (discussed in 6.2 and 6.3 above) this set of modules has a listening activity in each module, except Modules 10 and 15, which are two of the four revision modules. In Modules 1, 2, 4, 5, 8, 9, 13, 16 and 17 the learners have to listen to the readings on a tape and answer mainly first-level retrieval questions. In Module 3 the learners must draw the scene which they are listening to. In Modules 6, 12 and 14 the listening activity is linked to drawings in the learner's book and demands identification of a scene, people or dwellings. In Module 7 the listening activity focuses on interesting words and elements which enhance the listening experience. In spite of the fact that there are many listening activities, though, most of them focus on retrieval questions which simply expect the learners to find information contained in the listening texts.

#### **6.5.1.4 Writing**

In general there is little emphasis in the modules on developing learners' writing skills. In Module 11, which deals with ceremonies, for instance, the reading passage is followed by a structured discussion on the transition from childhood to adulthood. This is a kind of pre-writing activity for a research project in which learners have to investigate and report on a ceremony taking place in their neighbourhood. What is missing, however, is the necessary careful scaffolding (Mason 2000: 4; Pinto and Dison 1998: 69) and a clear communicative purpose.

Most of the writing involves the production of discrete sentences, an illustration of the predominant view in this set of materials that privileges knowledge about the language. However, as can be seen in the sub-sections in *Links with the outside world* and *Reading*, writing sometimes does have an authentic purpose. Another example is to be found in Module 16, where the writing activity asks learners to translate one genre to another: learners are given a diagram of a mine shaft with brief notes about a mining accident, which includes certain terminology connected with mining as well as a summary of the facts about the accident. The learners have to use this information to write a report on the accident.

#### **6.5.1.5 Focus on form**

In general the presentation of grammar focuses solely on form and the follow-up activities consist of drills, or mechanical practice, in the form of discrete sentences. There is usually no link to the preceding part of the module. In Module 2, for example, the first set of grammar notes focuses on the past tense and the present perfect tense, and display sentences are used to 'illustrate' the use of this verb form. The authors work deductively, providing the rule, although they say, "See how it works" (Mosala *et al.* 2004: 24), instead of giving the learners the opportunity of constructing or even noticing the rule (Ellis 2002: 171). The pattern in the second set of grammar notes and exercises (personal and possessive pronouns, and possessive adjectives) is similar: there is no link with the preceding activity; the rule is provided; display sentences are used to present the difference between the two kinds of pronouns; and the exercises which follow (6 and 7) constitute mechanical practice. The grammar information is thus at the level of inert knowledge, knowledge which is available, but which is "not transferable and is not used for problem solving" (Brown 1997). As can be seen from the table, a similar pattern is evident in most of the modules (e.g. Module 3 'some' and 'any' and 'indirect and direct speech'), Module 6 (question tags and articles), Module 9 ('much' and 'many'), Module 11 (use of 'going to') and Module 13 (pronouns). This is in spite of

the fact that the authors state that the “language work is always presented in context and linked to the module’s theme” (Mosala *et al.* 2004: 165).

An example drawn from Module 16 illustrates the way in which the grammar input is divorced from the theme. Here the learners have to rewrite the sentences (indirect speech) that are in speech bubbles, adding emotive words. Neither the pictures nor the sentences in the speech bubbles refer to the theme at all. The same applies to the structured interview which follows, with the learners having to use adverbs and adverbial phrases in order to complete the sentences.

Grammar is, however, sometimes dealt with in a more functional way, which is consistent with applying language structures in context, as specified by Outcome 5. For instance, in Module 6, where the theme is shopping, the focus falls on the passive voice, because the passive is often used in shop signs (Mosala *et al.* 2003: 18). The exercises (which follow the usual deductive presentation of a grammar element) are all drawn from the world of shopping. For instance, the second exercise involves making notices to put up in a shop window. The learners are told “You are a shopkeeper. You want to tell your customers that you: 1. sell cheap furniture, 2. open accounts, 3. accept lay-byes. .... Write ... notices to stick on your shop window. Use the passive”. A bolder and more coherent approach might have dealt with aspects of shopping jargon or even advertising to enable learners to have a conscious awareness of the way language is used (see SO2) in shops and to prepare the learners for what they encounter in shops. As it is, advertising is dealt with three modules later.

Another instance of a more functional/OBE approach is to be found in Module 8. After discussing a picture depicting a TV money game to provide learners with the necessary background knowledge (Spady 1994: 18; Carter and Nunan 2001: 226), they have to write a paragraph about the picture, and do a cloze exercise based on a radio quiz (listening comprehension). They then have to compile their own radio quiz show. Thus a closely-related set of activities leads to a project which the learners have to do independently, drawing on what they have learnt in the previous few activities. The grammar focus is directly related to the larger enterprise as it focuses on the use of indirect questions, and the examples and questions all refer to the theme of the module.

#### **6.5.1.6 *Links with the world outside the classroom***

The importance of classroom material which the learners would perceive as relevant and interesting has been noted before (2.5, 5.2 and 6.3 above). It is well established that material used in the

classroom should be relevant and purposeful to the learner (e.g. Ellis 1987: 161; Larson-Freeman 1986: 52; van der Walt 1987: 23) and should lead to the use of authentic language on the part of the learner (Edelhof 1981: 52). The discussion above refers to some instances where a more functional approach is taken. I shall not repeat those points here. I shall instead discuss other examples of links being made with the outside world. One is an activity in Module 11, which presents the learners with three pictures dealing with different rituals. They are asked to make a list of the rituals and ceremonies they participate in. This is another link, one of several in different modules, with the learners' lives outside school. This is followed by a project involving research and the class presentation of a ceremony.

Other attempts have been made to link the classroom activities with the real world outside the classroom. In Module 6, after the learners have listened to a description of a scene in a supermarket while looking at a picture of the scene, they have to draw the scene. Next, the learners are involved in a market research activity. After a discussion on the pricing of different articles at various shops, the learners have to discuss a till slip and collect and compare other till slips. They actually have to price ten items that they regularly buy at three different shops and compare costs. They then have to briefly write the findings of their research. The suggestion of the authors is that the learners do this whole exercise on their own. It is a good example of making the real world of the learners part of the classroom experience. Because they have to price articles they regularly buy themselves, this could lead to the exchange of genuine information and even a change in shopping behaviour based on more critical thinking about shopping. The learners are then presented with advertisements, notices and announcements from real life in Module 9. This forms the basis of a comprehension test, relying on first-level comprehension. They are also required to fill in an advertisement form and conduct a telephone conversation with someone who is interested in buying the advertised product. This is a real-life experience brought into the class, as everybody buys and sells things at different times.

In Module 8 the learners have to read two letters dealing with viewer and listener comments on shows they have seen or heard. The learners then have to write a letter to a TV or radio station about their programmes. The fact that they actually post the letters to real people makes the activity authentic communication, linking the world of the classroom to the world outside it. The language classroom thus creates the opportunity to use links with real life to develop life skills (Day and Bamford 1998: 54; Barchers 1998: 399). Similarly, later on in the module, learners have to answer questions based on a TV guide. This is followed by a set of questions relating to personal preference. The next activity is a survey of programmes watched by the learners in the class.



The final activity in Module 12 is one in which the learners have to read a poem about partying; they are then guided into responding to the poem so that it relates to their own partying activities. This is another illustration of scaffolded classroom material which allows learners to link what they do in the classroom with the real world outside the classroom. In order to achieve this, learners are asked open-ended questions such as *Do you get dressed in a certain way? How do you enjoy yourself with your friends? What do you think about the way this young man (in the poem) and his friends enjoy themselves?*

#### **6.5.1.7 Coherence**

As I have shown (6.5.1.6), the materials have a degree of coherence. However, sometimes the links are deceptive. I shall use Module 14 to show how what seems to be a set of cohesive and mutually supporting activities and exercises, which allow learners to make and extend meaning, lack coherence. At the beginning of the module, the learners use pictures of various houses to guide them as they listen to a description of the houses (p. 122f). The questions relate to the houses in the pictures and what they tell one about the lifestyles of various peoples. One of the pictures depicts a Tunisian village (which should have been labelled ‘houses in a Tunisian village’ to be consistent with the other five pictures) on what seems to be a fairly flat piece of ground. Question 4, however, asks “*Why are the houses in picture 4 built up on a hill*”. The work on semantic sets which follows uses the theme merely as a springboard (p. 123). The explanation of the sets uses houses and furniture, but those in the two exercises which follow (clothes, farm animals, wild animals, food, transport, sports, drinks, shops, jewellery, colours, plants and vegetables) seem to be randomly chosen to serve the interests of ‘language and grammar review’ rather than an opportunity to construct a deeper sense of the theme or even to allow learners to create a broader repertoire of vocabulary. The next activity places the word ‘home’ in six different, graphically illustrated contexts, creating an opportunity for learners to discover or construct the semantic field of the word. However, the questions that follow the poem “*Where I am going to*” introduce a degree of confusion. Woodraj (the poet) speaks of moving to a new environment. He uses ‘homes’ in the poem to mean warm, inviting, secure houses as opposed to shacks. However, the questions use ‘home’ in the sense of the place in which you live.

In Module 14 there are clear steps (means of scaffolding) towards enabling learners to write a paragraph about their dream house. First some of the necessary jargon is provided. Next they write sentences about various design features related to building a house. Finally they write a paragraph

about their dream house, which could enable learners to explore their own aspirations. In the last activity of the module the learners are given a drawing and floor plan of a Mongolian home. In an interesting set of sub-activities the learners are asked certain questions about the house and then have to draw a floor plan of their own houses in pairs. They have to write a short description of their own house, with a certain amount of guidance (*Where it is situated and which direction it faces. Why it was built this way? (cost, materials available)*) being given in the learner's book. Finally, the learners have to display their work in class or give an oral presentation.

This set of material also devotes space to revision and additional activities. Module 5 is a revision module which includes listening, speaking, reading and writing activities as well as grammar exercises. These "can be done at any time" (Mosala *et al.* 2003: 15), They may be seen as providing additional material which can be used for learners who need additional practice, or by learners who are progressing faster than others in the classroom. These are not presented within a theme, but draw on the themes of modules done so far.

Module 10 is another useful revision module dealing with exercises and activities done in the previous modules. These provide additional activities for the quicker learner or the learner who needs more practice and well as providing scope for assessment. This means that formal assessment can be downplayed in the other modules, where the emphasis can rightly be placed on learning the skills associated with the outcomes addressed in these modules. Modules 15 and 18 are the two other modules devoted entirely to revision exercises.

#### **6.5.1.8 Outcomes**

Throughout the modules the authors are explicit about the outcomes they hope to address in a particular module. They do not state the desired outcomes for each and every activity or exercise and this will not be attempted here either, for reasons of brevity and to avoid endless repetition. The outcomes given are usually relevant, but at times the authors seem to be somewhat arbitrary about the outcomes they list for the various modules.

In the case of some modules it is clear that outcomes other than those stated will also be achieved. In Module 11 the authors do not mention SO3, although this module covers different ceremonies and rituals practised in different cultural and religious groups. In Module 14 SO4 is also not mentioned, although the learners have to use and process information from a variety of sources, textual and pictorial, and this is again the case in Module 16.

In other cases the outcomes that the authors state that they would like the learners to achieve in the modules do not appear to be addressed. In Modules 6, 13 and 17 the authors claim to address SO5, but any such mention is negated by the non-contextual nature of the exercises. In addition, in Module 6 the stated outcomes (SOs 1 and 6) do not appear to be addressed to any great extent.

### **6.5.2 Aspects of organisation**

If the notes in the teacher's book are followed, most of the activities and exercises will be done in pairs or in groups. In the light of the big classes many teachers have to contend with currently, it would have been a great help if they have been given substantial guidance on how to make group activities work under such conditions, as it has been pointed out (Chapter 2) that effective group work requires careful planning and thought.

### **6.5.3 Role of the teacher**

The authors state that in previous approaches the “teacher takes responsibility for the learning and the emphasis is on what the teacher wants to achieve” and that in an OBE approach the “teacher is a facilitator, who encourages learners to take responsibility for what they learn” (Mosala *et al.* 2004: 160). As was established in Chapter 3 (3.7.2), the teacher indeed has to “facilitate” and “administer” classroom learning, “facilitate interaction” between learners and guide the learners so that they “master the competencies”, thus managing classroom events effectively. In addition, for this learning to take place optimally, the teacher has to ensure that the learning activities which have been designed or selected build on the previously acquired knowledge and skills of the learners in that particular class (Olivier 1998: 29; Nunan 1995: 207; 3.7.2). In order to fulfil his/her role as the facilitator of learning, the teacher interprets curriculum documents for his/her learners and makes sure that the needs of those learners are met on a daily basis (Killen 1996: 3, 5). As has been established already, this ideal situation depends on the teacher feeling confident that (s)he knows what is required. However, in the case of OBE, this kind of confidence is not yet evident.

In this section, therefore, we discuss the role of the teacher in terms of the script provided by the textbook. This role is not consistently presented. In Module 2, for example, the teacher or a learner reads an extract from an autobiography to the learners. The learners must understand the meanings of certain words dealing with family relationships, such as grandmother and stepfather. The burden, however, is on the teacher to ensure “that [(s)he] discuss[es] all the relationship words thoroughly”

(Mosala *et al.* 2003: 5), although the learners are given a family tree and have to answer questions based on it. The learners are then required to draw their own family tree and the teacher should “allow the learners to help one another”. The teacher “can assess the learners informally” while they are compiling the family tree of the author of this text (Mosala *et al.* 2003: 5). The activities cannot be said to allow the teacher to facilitate the development of “independent, critical and reflective thinkers” (WCED 2000a: 8, 10). The only point at which this activity could have made this possible (discussion of the relationship words) is dominated by the teacher.

Another example of a teacher-dominated activity is found in Module 14, which deals with various types of dwellings. Most of what the learners are asked to do is carefully controlled. Learners are exposed to pictures, diagrams and vocabulary dealing with different types of housing, while listening to a tape recording or the teacher or a learner reading the text. The questions guide them to answer first-level and inferential comprehension questions, thus not involving them in the construction of meaning. Later in the module the learners are shown a basic floor plan in their books and are required to draw a floor plan of their own or ideal home, to write a short description of the dwelling and to present their work to the class. To achieve this, according to the teacher’s guide, will entail quite a bit of teacher explanation. The teacher has to “*show... them how to ‘read’ a floor plan.*” The compilers admit that “[i]t is not easy to draw a floor plan or to visualize what things should look like”. Therefore, when the teacher has finished explaining how to read a floor plan, “it is important that learners discuss what they are doing, ask each other questions and try to find solutions to problems” (Mosala *et al.* 2003: 45). The teacher would in all likelihood facilitate this process, but this is not explicitly stated. There is scope for individual and group work, with some provision being made for teacher facilitation, although there are no clear guidelines for the teacher. This does not mean that teachers are precluded from teaching the structural elements, or that scene setting by the teacher is wrong, but this should always be done judiciously (2.5.3.1)

#### 6.5.4 Role of the learner

There are notes in the learner's book which try to show how OBE learning differs from the more traditional approach. They state that in "the old way" (traditional teaching) there was "[p]assive learning" and "[l]earners learn facts off by heart and repeat these facts to show what they have learned. These facts are provided by teachers and textbooks". In "the OBE way" there is "[a]ctive learning" and "[l]earners are encouraged to find things out for themselves .... They have to be able to show that they understand what they have learned." In addition, "the [l]earners work by themselves most of the time and are assessed on individual achievement". Furthermore, "[l]earners often work in groups and pairs and have some choice in what they learn" (Mosala *et al.* 2004: 160) in order to achieve the outcomes of the curriculum which have been predetermined by the Department of National Education (Chapter 3).

In the previous section, I already showed that the textbook is designed to allow considerable teacher domination and control, hence a 'passive learning' paradigm for learners. There are many tasks and activities in which the learner has only a minor role to play. These teacher-centred activities involve intensive explanations in the deductive mode, followed by controlled exercises, as can be readily seen in the tabulated contents of the learner's book. Providing the answers to these exercises could involve additional teacher explanation. An example of this is found in Module 6. The learners are given examples of advertisements in the passive voice and the rules for forming the passive voice are given. This would involve intensive teacher explanation and is followed by two exercises testing whether the learners can do this successfully. In Module 13 there are notes on pronouns, which have to be explained by the teacher, followed by four exercises testing the use of pronouns. One exercise instructs the learners to "[u]se who, which or that" in the correct places.

In what follows I will examine the extent to which this textbook allows choice, the extent to which learners have to make use of a variety of resources to find out things for themselves, and the extent to which they have opportunities to work independently in groups.

First, there is no evidence of choice – at no stage are the learners asked to choose what they would like to do. Second, as far as using resource material to "find things out for themselves" is concerned, the learners are rarely asked to do or prepare something at home for use in class. This happens only in 2 activities in the set of modules. In Module 6 (Shopping), learners are asked to bring till slips from home in order to compare them and in Module 9 they are asked to bring a

newspaper or magazine to school in order to find examples of advertisements and notices. Otherwise, resource material is limited to what is provided in the modules.

The learners are, however, given many opportunities to work on their own or with peers. These tasks may be divided into two broad categories. The first group could be described as meaning-making activities in the sense that they require negotiation and co-construction of meaning (Cornbleth 1990: 185, 186; 2.6), and the production of sociolinguistically appropriate language; these activities are suitably scaffolded (WCED 2000a: 25, 27; Cummins 2000: 71; 3.8.2). They would promote independence and learners taking responsibility for their own learning (Tomlinson 1999e: 338, 339) as they become active co-constructors of learning tasks (Geelan 1997: 26).

In Modules 3 and 9 learners are required to read conversations in the modules and then act the scenes in class, which requires peer co-operation because body language, actions and voice inflections have to be worked out in detail. In Module 14 learners are required to draw a floor plan of their houses in pairs and to present this to the class. In the case of this activity, the entire drawing and presentation must be done by means of cooperation. According to Randall (1999), Slavin (1991) states that cooperative learning is only one of a range of instructional methods by which knowledge and skills are developed – and should be used wisely and carefully under certain circumstances (Randall 1999:32), and then for the right purpose (Perkins 1999: 8). It is, officially, an important element in classroom learning and the Education Department even goes so far as to state that “learners should work *primarily* in groups” to satisfy the requirements of the curriculum (WCED 2000b: 31, emphasis added). The authors are thus, officially, on firm ground when they maintain that working in pairs or groups is the most important aim of using English in the classroom (Mosala *et al.* 2003: iv).

An example of this is the last activity in Module 4, in which the learners are first given comprehensible authentic input in the form of rap songs. They are then asked to write their own songs individually or in pairs, with carefully sequenced instructions which highlight what they must do:

Step 1 Listen to these rap songs on the tape as you read the texts.

Step 2 Work in pairs or alone. Write your own rap song. It’s easy. Just remember:

Write two lines at a time.

The words at the ends of the lines must rhyme.

For example, in these lines *fool* and *cool* rhyme, and there are two stressed Words in each line, shown in **bold** print.

Don't **be** a **fool**

Just **keep** your **cool**.

Step 3 Perform your song for the class. Add music if you can.

The task is well scaffolded and the attention of the learners is drawn to the key aspects of rhyme and rhythm. The fact that the music is played first sets the scene and stimulates the interest of the learners. The song is thus authentically represented.

It should be noted that Step 3 does not take account of the need to lower the affective filter or reduce stress in a second-language environment (Lewis 2002: 41). Three other activities, one each in Modules 4, 13 and 16, similarly require learners to perform in front of the whole class. Although some learners would enjoy the chance of acting in front of the whole class, if the experience recounted in Chapter 5 (5.2.1) is anything to go by, only the confident learners are likely to participate voluntarily during whole class activities of this kind.

However, most activities would not fall into the meaning-making activities described above. This second category could broadly be termed traditional activities. Although the authors claim to have “made specific suggestions as to how group and pair work can be organized” (Mosala *et al.* 2003: ix), at times not even the most elementary suggestions (such as whether to let the learners work in small groups or as a big group in a whole class activity) are made. In most instances it is not clear whether activities are to be done individually, in small groups or as a whole class. Only vague directions are given. A few examples will suffice.

In Module 2 the only instruction is that “the learners work in pairs” (Mosala *et al.* 2003: 6). Here the problem is that there is no clear reason why they should do so. In Module 3 the vague instruction is that the learners must “*speak among themselves*” and also “*negotiate*”. In Module 2 in the learner’s book (Mosala 2004: 30) the learners are instructed to work on a writing exercise in pairs or in groups, but in the teacher’s book the only suggestion is that the exercise “*should begin as a group or even class discussion*” (Mosala *et al.* 2003: 9).

In Module 6 learners are required to discuss the prices of goods in shops. A few pointers are given, such as: “*Do all shops charge the same prices for the same things?*” However, there would be

nothing to stop learners from giving a simple yes/no answer. Learners are also asked “*Why are prices different?*” “*Do you always buy things from the same shop? Why?*”. “*Is this a good thing or a bad thing?*” and they are told to “[d]iscuss these question in groups for five or ten minutes”. Further discussion pointers are needed to make discussion more likely.

In Module 11 learners are asked to work in pairs, but the questions are simply additional comprehension questions based on the reading passage about ceremonies. “*How did Camara Laye feel about the circumcision ceremony?*” “*Find words in the passage which mean the same as ...*” It would be very easy for one learner to do the work and the other simply to copy the answers.

In these examples the learners are asked to work together without clearly defined roles. Ideally, successful completion of a group task depends on everyone in the group having to contribute towards the outcome of the activity. The tasks should therefore be structured accordingly. Such tasks provide training opportunities for learners to play their roles effectively in group work. As in the other set of material (6.2 and 6.3), it means there are no practical hints or guidance on how to facilitate effective group work. This is a shortcoming in a textbook so early on in the introduction of OBE, when teachers were rather uncertain about the approach: successful group work depends on effective facilitation (Blanckenberg 2000: 86) (For a detailed analysis of cooperative learning, refer to 3.7.3). There probably also needs to be a clear encouragement to risk-take as is evident in the research reported in Brown (2002: 13), where not all learners readily took part in group discussions (5.3).

Another shortcoming of the group activities is that the tasks rarely have a clearly defined and motivating purpose (3.7.3; Blanckenberg 2000: 87; Randall 1999: 30; Kutnick 1994: 15, 19; Bennett and Dunne 1992: 11, 12).

In addition, although learners appear to be given opportunities to integrate meaning because the material is divided into topics, this is deceptive, because many of the activities are discrete and there are too many sub-divisions. Close examination reveals that the links between activities and sub-sections are often tenuous. One example is taken from Module 14. The theme of the module is ‘homes and houses’. The learners are provided with pictures of houses and word sets related to houses in two activities; no attention is given to homes.. The material introduces confusion as it introduces homes as houses, while in the pictures and the poem which appear later in the module ‘home’ is used as a much wider concept. The questions based on the poem uses ‘home’ in the more general sense of the environment in which one lives.



Although there are a large variety of texts and activities in these modules, the emphasis is on the learners doing controlled activities instead of being allowed to engage actively, creating opportunities for them to discover how English works.

### **6.5.5 Assessment**

The teacher's book states that assessment guidelines are provided at the back of the learner's book (Mosala *et al.* 2003: xi). Unfortunately these guidelines are so brief as to be occasionally misleading and confusing. The learner's book (Mosala 2004: 162, 163) provides no more than a list of possible ways of assessing learners. The authors mention portfolios, observation sheets, written assignments, oral presentations, peer and self-assessment, projects and practical assignments. No detailed assessment guidelines are provided, only a list of activities which can be done. This list cannot be regarded as guidelines, as the teacher's book promises. Under the heading *Written assignments* "essays, lists, comments, reports, etc." are listed, and the reader is informed that "[t]hey can demonstrate the learner's writing and thinking skills" (Mosala 2004: 162). No detailed examples of assessing are provided. The same can be said of the other activities which are suggested for assessment.

There is one example of careful guidance on assessment tasks in Module 9. There an activity requires the learners to make up their own advertisement. The authors supply an assessment grid which allows for self, peer and teacher assessment (Mosala *et al.* 2003: 70). Unfortunately this kind of guidance is rare. It is provided only for four of the activities in the 18 modules. As was pointed out in the discussion on *Firm Foundations* in Chapter 5, as well as in this chapter, this is the kind of guidance which uncertain teachers are in need of as far as assessment is concerned. This kind of practical guidance becomes even more important (3.7.4; Brindley 2001: 141) because information regarding assessment is largely theoretical.

The teacher's book states that the assessment of learners "should be closely related to the outcomes ... for the learning area" (Mosala *et al.* 2003: viii; Killen 1996: 7). "Assessment should not be used to find out how good or bad learners are at a particular task, but rather where weaknesses lie so that the teacher may actively help learners to meet outcomes" (Mosala *et al.* 2003: viii). They then, however, state that they have included revision modules which can be used for "continuous assessment and extra practice" (Mosala *et al.* 2003: iv). While this does allow the teacher to select remedial work for learners who demonstrate that they are not coping with the demands made by the

activities in the modules, it also means that there are no enrichment activities for the learners who progress quickly and it is therefore doubtful that their needs are being met.

What the authors say is in line with the tenets of OBE, but there is a mismatch between these comments and what is done in the textbook. The extra activities in the revision modules do not lead to the identification of weaknesses, nor do they provide a clear opportunity for learners to consolidate their knowledge, or to apply the skills and knowledge they have acquired in previous modules: the revision modules contain more of the same activities to which the learners have already been exposed. There are no real opportunities for learners to come to grips with activities which would enhance their abilities to make meaning and co-construct knowledge. Simply including more practice is closely linked to the audio-lingual approach of the 1950s and not to a constructivist approach to language. This actually emphasises the dichotomy inherent in OBE between its behavioural (McKernan 1993: 346, 347; 3.3) and constructivist elements (WCED 2000a: 17, 28; van der Horst and McDonald 1997: 6).

## **6.6 CONCLUDING COMMENT**

The conclusions arising from the literature survey (Chapters 2, 3 and 4), the analysis of the classroom implementation of one selected module and the two questionnaires (Chapter 5), and the analysis of the two full sets of classroom material (above) will be presented in the next chapter in the light of the framework provided in Chapter 1.

## CHAPTER 7: OVERVIEW, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 7.1 INTRODUCTION

In this final chapter, I shall attempt to summarise the investigation and suggest its significance. I offer my reflections in the belief that others will be able to relate to them and that this will encourage debate and sharing of experience. In addition, I will also make recommendations regarding further research into language teaching and classroom-based research in South Africa.

### 7.2 OVERVIEW

This study was prompted by the introduction of OBE in South Africa, more specifically C2005. The aim of the changes in educational policy was to replace teacher-centred practices with learner-centred ones and also to redress the inequities that are the legacy of South Africa's political past. The new policy would attempt to skill the learners to cope with the challenges of the global economy (Le Grange 2007: 79). As I was a serving English teacher at the time (and still am), I was directly affected by the introduction of C2005 and the concomitant challenges and changes demanded by this seemingly radical new approach to teaching.

In Chapter 1, I made the point that South African learners – and therefore language classrooms – do not share a common history of funding and provision of resources, which meant that, when C2005 was introduced as a new start for South African schools, they did not have the same level of financial and educational resources, including suitably qualified teachers. Implementation of the new curriculum was complicated by the erosion of teacher confidence (1.2), doubts about the suitability of an OBE approach to the teaching of language (3.7), the competence of teachers to effectively implement the approach and the multilingual realities of South African classrooms. As the Minister of Basic Education has recognised (13 August 2009), one of the key ways of overcoming these hindrances is the provision of theoretically sound material that would make the curriculum visible and would provide learners “with materials aligned to the curriculum” (Motshekga, August 2009).

The research questions which guided my exploration were:

1. What changes had to be made to the teaching of English to accommodate the implementation of OBE/Curriculum 2005;

2. To what extent did particular commercially available material in the initial phase of Curriculum 2005 meet the needs of English language learners in an OBE/ Curriculum 2005 classroom.

In order to design a theoretical framework for my investigation, I undertook an extensive literature survey, firstly, on aspects related to the teaching and learning of English as a second language at school level and, secondly, on OBE. At various stages of the investigation, however, I found that I had to revisit the literature as I found that I was confronted with issues and aspects which I had not adequately foreseen in my initial survey. What became evident is that the literature study cannot be finally completed before the empirical research is undertaken, but that the literature requires continuous exploration throughout the process as part of the production of valid and trustworthy research.

In what follows, I will underline the salient insights from the literature study, providing clear references to the chapters and sections in this study where detailed attention is given to particular aspects.

### **7.2.1 The literature review**

As indicated above, the literature review, which forms the theoretical part of this investigation, had two major points of focus: aspects of teaching and learning English as a second language, and OBE. My challenge was to avoid making the literature study overwhelming, but ensuring that it was sufficiently comprehensive to guide and interpret this investigation.

In exploring aspects of teaching and learning a second language, a number of key aspects emerged. The first is a need to be aware that there are many gaps in our knowledge about how a second language is learned. Much of the theory of second language acquisition draws on first language acquisition. Although there are similarities between the acquisition of a first language and a second one (2.3), there are some important differences, even when the second language is acquired in a natural environment.

The learners who participated in this study were learning their second language in a classroom environment. First language learners have every incentive to acquire their first language to understand what is going on around them and to communicate effectively with those close to them.

Second language learners, however, can do this in their first language already, and so do not necessarily have a desire to learn a second language (2.3). This has obvious implications for their attitude to English classes, as evidenced by the two classes involved in this investigation. This makes it important to have language material that will entice learners to participate. Another important element is the need for exposure to the language (Ellis 1994: 603, 615, 617). The classroom environment does not make it possible to provide for the massive amounts of comprehensible input that Krashen and Terrell (1983) advocate as ideal, so the question of how to make optimal use of the input that learners receive becomes critical.

In spite of this constraint, language teaching methods and approaches in the twentieth century have aimed at providing the input to enable classroom learners to acquire the target language effectively. The basic assumption of two of the dominant theories before the 1970s, behaviourism and the cognitive code, was that declarative knowledge of a language could be transmitted. This is partly the reason for focusing on discrete elements and structural rules (2.4). These theories have been challenged and consequently many classrooms have adopted communicative language teaching (CLT), the 'received wisdom' for the past 40 years, with its firm emphasis on the communicative needs of the learners (2.5) and thus on procedural knowledge. CLT views language as primarily a means of communication. Consequently, the vital issue is the ability of learners to understand and use the language appropriately to satisfy personal, educational and social needs. Classroom tasks aim at promoting learning by engaging the learners in activities that they see as meaningful (2.5.2). Although there is a focus on form when required (Ellis 2006: 86-95; Savignon 2002: 7), the transformation of input into intake (3.8.2 and Macaro 2001: 1) is situated in meaning-making.

There is no single version of CLT. There have been refinements and developments in communicative language teaching, such as task-based learning. However, CLT remains essentially an eclectic approach (2.6). Its strength is that it can adapt to the needs of particular learners in a specific classroom (2.5.1). Although CLT is eclectic, there is broad agreement about certain features. The most common feature is the emphasis on communication for a purpose. This would include negotiation of meaning in interaction, usually between at least two people (2.6.1). Another point of agreement is that the development of reading skills is particularly important (2.5.3.2.3). Stephen Krashen (1983) has played a strong role in emphasising this. Among those who have stressed the role of reading are Wallace (2001), Grabe (2002), and Carrol and Devine (1983). Other strong features of CLT are the focus on discovery learning and the integration of reading, writing, listening and speaking rather than discrete attention to them skills (2.5.3.2). Learning is seen as involving 'looping' rather than being a linear process in learning a language (2.8). There is even

increasing support for judicious grammar teaching that aims at raising consciousness of forms or encouraging learners to 'notice' grammatical form so that grammatical competence, a vital part of communicative competence, can be developed (2.5.3.1). In keeping with its humanistic base, CLT emphasises the importance of learner enjoyment and engagement (Richards and Rogers 2001).

However, the notion that nothing is proscribed and nothing prescribed (Richards and Rogers, 2001) may explain the confusion about, and resistance to, this approach (5.4) Change is never easy to accept, but when it is not clearly defined and, in addition, imposed by others, resistance is likely. Many teachers cling to traditional ways of teaching language because they feel more confident using them. Others remain unconvinced of the merits of CLT. This is not just a question of teachers who deal with the practice in the language classrooms resisting the policy imposed by the education authorities. It is a much more complex matter than that (Le Grange 2007: 84).

In my earlier study (Hansen 1990) I found that teachers partly used the lack of suitable material to justify their resistance to CLT, resorting to 'tried and tested' traditional material instead. A further factor that encouraged the retention of traditional teaching methods was that the school-leaving examination to a large extent relied on written communication in awarding marks, much the same as with previous traditional language teaching approaches, while CLT advocates equal recognition of spoken communication (Tomlinson 1999b: 88). In the teachers' view this was a reason to focus on the knowledge they felt learners would need in order to pass. Further justification for retaining a traditional approach was the difficulty of providing opportunities for authentic interaction, given that the constraints of the classroom make CLT difficult, and that practicable ways of assessing learners' ability to use language orally (2.5.4) were not available. Other aspects which are problematic are the difficulty of providing appropriate negative feedback, and the inadequate competence of teachers to implement an approach that requires a sound understanding of the nature of communication. There is the further constraint of the workload imposed by the large class sizes in South Africa. This bias in favour of traditional teaching is also reflected in the responses given to the teacher questionnaire (5.4)

To introduce a personal note, it was my awareness that I did not understand the nature of an OBE/CLT language curriculum, on the one hand, and my awareness of the importance of appropriate language learning material, on the other hand, that directly affected my decision to undertake this particular investigation. Before 1989 I was firmly convinced that learners would be better able to use the language when they had mastered the basic structural elements of English. I therefore spent a great deal of time teaching grammar. This view was modified in the two years in

which I undertook an investigation into the suitability of CLT for English Language teaching at the school at which I teach. For the first time I recognised that learners needed to learn to use the language for personal and communicative purposes. As a result of that study, I changed my approach to language learning so that structural aspects of the language were related to the development of language proficiency so learners could use English effectively.

As someone who felt that I was doing a good job of teaching English, I was not at all happy when the change to OBE was announced. In informal discussions with other language teachers, I found that they felt much the same way. Almost all of the teachers to whom I spoke were upset about having to abandon what they and I felt to have been the tried and tested ways of the past. I suppose the predominant feeling was a sense of disempowerment and helplessness after being sure of what we had been doing. We were all feeling the effects of the Education Department's commitment to transformational OBE, where, seemingly, nothing is left unexamined and everything is open to change. Since it seemed clear that everything that had been done in the past was about to change, I wanted to find out why this was thought to be necessary and where the new approach came from. Much of what the literature survey revealed confirmed my fears rather than allaying them. It seems that OBE had evolved from mastery learning through competency-based learning. Its strong links to mastery learning (3.3) can be seen in the fact that outcomes are predetermined. Learners have to demonstrate mastery of a particular level in order to advance to the next level. While there is attention to process through provision being made for the demonstration of intermediate outcomes on the way to achieving the final outcomes, it remains strongly product-orientated.

What made C2005 even more unpalatable was the use of involved terminology that confused both teachers and learners, as illustrated in the cartoon in Chapter 1. As can be seen in the literature survey, the use of terminology and the large number of outcomes came in for much criticism (3.7). The Chisholm report led to changes in terminology and to the outcomes themselves, although the Revised National Curriculum Statement still demands that learners need to be guided so that the specified outcomes are achieved. The training and the information sessions offered to teachers were also the subject of trenchant criticism (anecdotal, based on many conversations with teachers). My own experience was that these sessions did little or nothing to prepare me for the challenges I was facing. There was lots of bureaucratic rhetoric such as "We will make it work in South Africa", "It's not really so daunting" and "Just follow our advice" (which was very vague), but little else. Obvious areas in which more training – in fact, large-scale teacher retraining – is vital are the changed role of the teacher, cooperative learning and methods of assessment as these were elements about which I heard many teachers clearly express their feelings of confusion and inadequacy. My

own feelings about these issues, as I found out by talking to teachers of similar classes, were shared by most of those teachers. Adequate training, crucial to the implementation of OBE, is still not being provided, even now that C2005 has been supplanted by a revised version, the Revised National Curriculum Statement. More specifically as far as language is concerned, the approach in C2005 was an OBE/CLT approach. The language curriculum RNCS has retained this integration of OBE and CLT.

CLT has a very broad thrust (3.7.5). In addition, language learning is seen as cyclical, with the learner continually interacting with the target language, adjusting and reinterpreting insights into and assumptions about the language (Kumaravadivelu 2005: 141). It is therefore very difficult to pinpoint exactly when certain aspects of a language will be internalised by individual learners. There should, therefore, be lots of room for learner interaction and exploration (3.7.5). OBE's focus on predetermined outcomes is thus problematic for language teaching within a CLT paradigm, as the assumption behind OBE is that learning is a linear process. As such, it does not appear to make much allowance for accommodating unplanned moments. Language outcomes are necessarily very broad, which would seem to argue against the concept of linear, predetermined outcomes. Furthermore, there seems to be a fundamental contradiction between the social constructivist philosophy of learning which underlies the OBE/C2005 and OBE's positivist assumption that knowledge can be divided into discrete elements that can be studied sequentially, and that it can be confidently assumed that these elements will be learnt in the course of lesson. Although in theory OBE advocates a critical, learner-centred approach, in practice similar tasks done in a similar time-frame by learners country-wide entails a strong measure of control. In addition, the individual preferences of curriculum advisors (under C2005 and the NRCS) play a large role in what certain teachers were expected or encouraged to do. In theory, while OBE and CLT share a focus on discovery learning in the interactions between learners, and between learners and teachers, as well as the independent use of resources, the practical implementation of OBE in South Africa seems to encourage lock-step teacher and learner activities. While this may work well for the development of technical skills, it is not appropriate for language learning.

A further encouragement to lock-step language learning were the numerous activities prescribed (and are still being prescribed) for grade 8 (and grade 9) which had to be completed each term and which were then moderated and the marks scrutinised by other teachers and curriculum advisors. The key challenge for teachers was how to encourage open-ended interaction and inquiry in the language classroom in this very constrained situation.



Whether intentional or not, the result of implementing such detailed policy documents was that the greater control over teachers and the heavier teacher workload led to teachers being deskilled and being regarded as non-professionals, whose impact on the teaching process was to be limited and determined by the curriculum. Such a curriculum “denies the particular complexities of teachers’ work” and should never be regarded as the only source of teaching practice. Teachers should be allowed to draw on “a variety of teaching approaches” and “a variety of models ... to construct their own assemblage of practices” (Honan 2004: 273, 279) to meet the needs of the learners in particular learning situations.

Earlier in this section I stated that suitable language learning material was one of the focus areas of this investigation. Even if C2005 had been an ideal curriculum, one of the major constraints in implementing it successfully would have been the non-availability of appropriate classroom material. Producing good materials takes time and expertise. Given the limited number and level of the orientation courses offered by the Department of Education, it is no wonder that many teachers felt inadequate. Policy makers seemed to assume that teachers would easily be able to design or adapt classroom material.

In attempting to assess the appropriateness of the material in question, this study had to explore the broader demands of an OBE curriculum and the specific demands of a CLT/OBE language curriculum. The material also had to take account of the ‘new’ roles learners and teachers would have to play and discourage a continuation of traditional teaching. I would have to concede that the real-world needs of grade 8 learners are difficult to predict in a country with such varied language scenarios.

As the literature survey of OBE revealed, the role of the teacher and the role of the learners in an OBE classroom are very different from those in a traditional classroom. In order to do justice to the social constructivist philosophy underlying C2005, the teacher needs to change from being merely the dispenser of knowledge to the facilitator of classroom events who guides learners on their path of discovery. The learner has to be more independent than in traditional classrooms and has to accept responsibility for his/her own learning in a process which places a much greater emphasis on constructing knowledge.

In addition to the criteria for the material mentioned in the previous paragraphs, the material also has to offer concrete guidance on some of the aspects that teachers were uncertain about. Continuous assessment, an integral part of OBE and of the learning process reflected in C2005, is

one of these aspects. Many teachers I spoke to expressed deep reservations regarding continuous assessment. They were uncertain about how to undertake it, because there was little in the way of practical illustration, and they were not sure how it would be possible to track all the learners individually in the large classes. Material that included continuous assessment could have offered teachers the guidance they needed to develop the ability to apply this kind of assessment appropriately.

Although C2005 was official government policy during the period covered by this investigation, it was met with resistance in language classrooms across the country. As late as 2007 the Western Cape Education Department (2007: 2) conceded that OBE had been implemented in only a few classes and only a few teachers had developed the skill of “alternating effectively between educator- and learner-centred approaches”. I argue that support of the kind that sound material can offer would be a strong factor in promoting teacher ‘buy in’. There were certainly a number of other constraints on implementing C2005 in South Africa. They were, among others, the suitability of an OBE approach to the teaching of language (3.7), the competence of teachers to effectively implement the approach (WCED, 2006: 1) and the differing levels of learner competence in the same classroom. These constraints have also hindered the implementation of the RNCS, which is but a revised version of C2005.

It was against this background that I decided to submit to rigorous examination the material we were using at the time, and also the material which we adopted to replace the original set, both of which purported to be appropriate for teaching English in an OBE environment.

Having summarised the literature survey and highlighted the constraints to implementing C2005 effectively in language classrooms, I will now discuss the research methodology which I followed in order to attempt to answer the research questions.

### **7.2.2 Research methodology**

The exploration may be described as a personal journey aimed at making sense of the teaching situation I found myself in. I felt strongly that a new learning theory was being imposed on teachers and learners by the education authorities, a theory that was untested and seemed to demand too much for far too little in return. At the same time, I was committed to finding ways of meeting my obligations as a teacher. In undertaking this study I have been as careful as I could be in the identification, selection and presentation of the data, so that the data could speak for itself as far as

possible. This I tried to achieve by providing details about the school context, the investigation procedure and the way the data were generated.

The research questions posed in Chapter 1 articulate some of the questions which I found myself asking as I puzzled my way through the new challenges presented by OBE. I decided that the best course of action to enable me to do this would be by carefully observing language-learning events in the classroom, followed by an analysis of the material used in the implementation phase. In addition, I would ask teachers in similar schools for their views on their current teaching experiences. My aim was not to derive certain theories or principles which I would generalise to all language classrooms, but to observe what happened in two language classrooms when particular learners were exposed to particular material (4.10). However, I did hope that teachers in similar classrooms would be able to identify with my experiences.

The material used in this investigation was already in use at the school as well as in at least two other schools in our vicinity. I chose a convenient sample: the learners selected were those assigned to my class and to the class of the other teacher I had asked to take part the investigation. The advantage was that this approach did not involve disruption of classes or extra staffing, and provided an opportunity to investigate an authentic situation. One of the difficulties, which was greater than I had anticipated, was that the two of us spent most of our time in the teaching role and thus devoted far less time to observing and taking notes than we would have wished. This meant that we had to jot down impressions at free moments during the period. Furthermore, reflecting on classroom events later in the day meant that some events or impressions were not recorded. In spite of that, I attempted to describe the events in the two classrooms in as much detail as was possible in order to depict what happened during the course of the implementation of the module. I have done my best to provide the reader with a sense of ‘being there’.

The approach I selected was thus a single case study aimed at generating as much ‘real’, ‘rich’ data as was possible in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the classroom events. The setting can be described as natural, as the two of us were teaching the classes which we had been assigned to teach that year. I did not inform the learners that their classroom activities were part of an investigation as I wanted them to behave in as natural a way as possible. I have also been scrupulous in ensuring that the learners’ identities are not revealed at any point.

This study is interpretive. I was the one who decided on the course of action that would generate data and I was also the one who determined the ‘slant’ of the subsequent discussion, although, as I

have already mentioned, I quote verbatim from the data wherever possible so that it can speak for itself. I also described myself and my particular biases so that my views would be clear, enabling others to bear them in mind when reflecting on any conclusions I reach. In this way I wish to avoid my biases interfering too much in my reporting on the investigation.

I tried to ensure that, as far as possible, the two observers of the classroom events were paying attention to the same aspects by devising an observation schedule (4.6). Given the constraints of our having to teach a class and observe the classroom events at the same time, the observation schedule had to be kept simple. Certain criteria were foregrounded, namely whether the material would result in the achievement of the specified outcomes and also the extent to which the material prescribed formal teaching or allowed the learners to progress on their own, with guidance from the teacher and fellow learners.

I also administered a learner questionnaire and a teacher questionnaire after the module had been completed. In the learner questionnaire (4.7) I elicited certain information on how learners experienced the classroom activities, and in the second questionnaire I elicited information from teachers (4.8) in language classes in similar schools. In this way I hoped to generate additional data which could be used to strengthen (or contest) the data generated during the observation of classroom events. At the same time, it could reduce the possibility of bias in the conclusions reached.

Further information was provided by describing the local situation in the school at which I taught during the course of the investigation (and at which I still teach) and in sketching the general background of the 35 learners in each of the 2 classrooms. Information about the second teacher and me was also provided to give as full a picture of the investigation as possible.

Making tape recordings of the reflective discussions of the two teachers after the classes would have been valuable in helping me to reconstruct events in the classrooms and to offer a rich description to readers.

### **7.2.3 Classroom implementation of material**

#### ***7.2.3.1 Analysis of the classroom implementation of material***

In this section I will comment on salient aspects of the implementation of the material. I will comment on whether the material has in any way acknowledged the changed role of the teacher, as well as on the emphasis the material places on isolated language exercises entailing a high level of teacher instruction, and the lack of scaffolding. The failure to provide for carefully planned group work will again also receive attention.

As indicated, the selected material was implemented over a period of five weeks in two classrooms by another teacher and me (Chapter 5). As Chapter 6 makes clear, the modules in the textbook we used are broadly similar in design. The discussion here focuses on Module 2, the module implemented in the classroom, as representative of the other modules. Reference is made to other modules only where necessary. The last part of this section (7.2.3.2) will briefly comment on the series of modules as a whole.

The role of the teacher as a facilitator is expected to go far beyond moving about the class and helping as required. Even performing the latter role requires the teacher to be attuned to possible needs and to have the necessary competence and confidence to meet those needs (Nunan 1995: 207; Carter and Nunan 2001: 226). I have always found that role a demanding one over the years and that proved to be the case again in the course of this investigation. As can be seen in the discussion of teacher responses (5. 4), teachers' resistance in South Africa to adopting an OBE approach is related to a lack of confidence in fulfilling an even more demanding role. Their resistance may also be explained in part as resistance to change. Similar resistance to change was recorded in the case of some high and primary school teachers in the Cape Peninsula with regard to the introduction of communicative language teaching almost twenty years ago (Hansen 1990: 184; Booysen 1989: 230), which could have been caused by confusion in teacher ranks regarding the implementation of CLT (van der Merwe 1994: 202).

Changes in educational policy have often failed (Swanepoel 2009: 461). An important reason for this, according to Smit (2003), is that policy making is usually done at provincial or national levels: the voices of classroom teachers are seldom heard in spite of union representation. It seems too that little, if any, account is taken of what "teachers actually do in their classrooms" (Stoffels 2004: 9), yet policy makers assume that classroom practice is improved when policy decisions are made. It

would seem axiomatic that the more teachers are involved in the initiation of change, the more positive they will feel about the change and the greater the chances are that they will be willing to engage in more change (Smit 2003: 462). Conversely, if teachers feel threatened by policy decisions, they are likely to resist them.

Resistance to change is not limited to South Africa. Weideman (2001) and Weideman, Tesfariam and Shaalukeni (2003), for instance, refer to a number of countries in Africa where there are few signs that the principles of a communicative-interactive approach have been adopted in classrooms.

Awareness of the different pace at which learners learn is another aspect in which the module falls short. In implementing this module, we found that some learners progressed quickly, while others took considerably longer, even with a lot of teacher assistance, to do the exercises. There are no extra activities in the module or other means of accommodating the different pace at which learners work (5.2.2).

Nor does the module provide, as it claims to do, self-contained material. Because of the extensive role accorded to teacher instruction, I find it difficult to see how the Critical and Specific Outcomes specified in C2005 could be met, except in a very broad way.

Because Communicative Language Teaching regards language as communication and focuses on the communicative needs of the learners (Ovando and Collier 1985: 61), this means that the emphasis in the language classroom situation should be on developing communicative competence through emphasising language as a medium rather than as an object of study in the interests of closing the gap between the classroom and the real world (Byran 2003:69; 2.5.2). The lack of engagement and the low level of performance we observed when learners were answering the comprehension exercises as well as the language exercises confirm the importance of selecting material which learners find interesting and relevant to their needs, with many links to life outside the classroom (2.5.2).

As indicated earlier (5.2.1), a substantial amount of the material consisted of isolated language exercises, not unlike those that had been in vogue before the advent of Communicative Language Teaching. My sense that the largely decontextualised mechanical language exercises reflect a view of language learning as the mastery of structures (Richards and Rodgers 2005: 67; 2.3) is confirmed by the compiler's statement about "the time-proven methods of drill and testing" (Kirby n.d. a: unnumbered note). Isolated, repetitive drill exercises are there to ensure that the learners avoid

making language errors or eliminate those language errors they are already making. This ignores the findings of applied linguistics that learners follow their own internal syllabus process while they are acquiring a language (Ellis 1994: 73; 2.2.1), and that making errors is an integral part of learning a language. In sum, the focus is on the correct use of grammar in narrow contexts or, as Weideman (2006: 5) puts it, a focus on a restrictive view of language as opposed to an open perspective. Grammar must be tied to function for learning a language and is essentially a process of learning to make meaning. What is learnt, then, must be judged in terms of the way it enhances the learner's ability to make meaning (Lamberti 1999: 38). In general the number of decontextualised exercises seems to reflect traditional views, emphasising the 'mechanistic aspects of language learning' focussed on teaching about the language instead of using the language in order to promote the acquisition of the required outcomes.

The apparently random insertion of formal structural input runs counter to the findings of numerous studies which have found that formal instruction promotes language acquisition only when it is directly tied to the communicative needs of learners (Lightbown and Spada 2006: 179; 2.5.2). The numerous unlinked exercises in the module, although attempting to promote understanding, knowledge and application of language structures, are of limited value to learners because they are done in isolation and do not serve to underpin a communicative purpose. What seems important is a richer, more complex perspective on language (cf. Celce-Murcia and Olshstein 2000 180, 182; Lightbown and Spada 2000: 446).

There is very little in the line of preparatory activities or scaffolding to assist the learners. If learners are to make meaning during an activity, the activity has to be part of a set of carefully sequenced and mutually reinforcing activities (3.7.1). There is also little explicit definition of the purpose to the activities. Without an inherent purpose to an activity, there will be little incentive for learners to engage with the activity (2.6.2; 3.8.2) . There are equally few activities related to life outside the classroom. The approach used to learn a language should endeavour to use the language for real-life situations and the aim of learning a language is, after all, to use the language for meaningful purposes outside of the classroom (2.6; 3.5).

Because many activities in this module required extensive teacher explanation, they rarely became language-learning activities (5.2) which would lead to the effective attainment of the specific outcomes. This is not surprising since the approach seems to be based on a transmission view of learning. The compiler often accords a prominent place to the explanation of language rules by the teacher and the learners then have to apply what they have learnt in the subsequent exercises, while

part of the problem is that there is not a logical progression even in terms of the underlying assumptions of this material. This emphasis on the explanation of language rules followed by exercises to test application runs counter not only to the insights provided by applied linguistics and theories of language acquisition (Nunan 1998: 103; Savignon 2002: 3), but also to the tenets of C2005, which expect language structure to be taught in context and for meaning-making to predominate.

I would like to make the point that it is difficult to predict the way in which learners will experience particular language learning activities as they would appear to have a kind of internal syllabus (Sharwood Smith 1994: 48; 2.5), as the following anecdotal evidence illustrates. In a class I taught in 2003, Exercise 2 of Module 2 really succeeded in getting the learners to participate with gusto and there seemed to be hardly any learners who appeared reluctant to take part. The facial expressions and body language of the learners I observed the previous year indicated a genuine interest in the exchange of views. Then I monitored the conversations and the learners were indeed focusing on the activity. This year, on the other hand, there was a significant reluctance in both classes to take part in the discussion required by Exercise 2. Short of intensive investigation of this point, which was not provided for in this study, it is difficult to say whether the material was inadequate or whether other factors were involved.

Because knowledge is increasingly being seen not as something to be transmitted by teachers, but as something which learners actively construct based on their prior knowledge (WCED 2000a: 8, 10), OBE/C2005 provides for learner independence (Olivier 1998: 45 - 47) and discovery learning while learners are interacting with one another and with the teacher (Geelan 1997: 26; Blanckenberg 2000: 50). Instead of a systematic organisation of the activities in Module 5, the learners have to list all the sporting activities they can think of and then discuss whether chess is a sport. The author hopes that this “might ... produce some lively debate” (Kirby n.d. e: 8). This should not be a matter of hope; the activities should be carefully planned, also with regard to learner participation and learner involvement.

This is not an argument for group work to the exclusion of all else in the simplistic belief that group work is the essence of OBE or C2005, but it is important for learners to learn to work in conjunction with others. CO2 in C2005 addresses this very issue, namely working “effectively as a member of a team” or other grouping of people (DoE 1997: 15) and “[g]roup work, project work and peer assessment should, therefore, feature prominently in their learning” (DoE 1997: 5).



Despite the fact that C2005 strongly encourages group work, little attention is devoted to this aspect in the module. If group work is to be done, however, learners (and teachers) will need a lot of guidance. In addition, learners have to be encouraged to air their own views in groups and in the class as a whole. The large classes in South Africa (3.7.1) generally make it impracticable to have learners working at their own pace. Extra activities have to be provided to allow learners to work individually, either in the form of enrichment for the learners who progress quickly, or of remedial work for the slower learners to hone their skills. This module, however, like the whole series, does not do so.

We found that generally it was only the very confident learner who was prepared to speak out in the groups. Furthermore, group work was not easy to implement. In a situation where the desks are positioned in the traditional straight rows, moving desks around takes time. Another problem was that learners were particular about whom they wanted to work with in a group. Lack of interest in many activities meant that we had to constantly monitor the groups to ensure that they were busy with the activity at hand. Despite these challenges, some of the cooperative work seemed to engage the learner. For this reason, and because we were concerned about the predominantly teacher-dominated nature of the material, we created some opportunities for cooperative learning. The material, as already noted, cast the teacher and learners in traditional roles.

In line with the literature (3.7.3), we found that effective group work (both in terms of outcomes and time necessary) meant limiting the groups to three or four members or even pairs. In the exercise on degrees of comparison the learners could choose their partners and this might be an additional explanation for the good quality of the work obtained on this occasion as opposed to what we observed when learners worked in larger groups. We also found that larger groups engaged in conversations not related to the task and even in disruptive behaviour.

### **7.2.3.2 The analysis summarised**

An OBE approach (3.4) requires the teacher to be a facilitator and manager of classroom events, enabling learners to discover and apply learning strategies to enable them to achieve the specified outcomes in individual, group and whole-class activities. The implication is that learners have to be more independent and to take responsibility (at least in part) for their own learning (Blanckenberg 2000: 50; Spady 1994: 102-104; WCED 2000a: 32; 3.7.2). Group work often features in CLT as well.

One of the ways of effecting change successfully is to provide ways of ensuring that those involved have the necessary support they need to be successful (Fullan 2001: 36, 37). Unfortunately, this module is counter-productive. It is largely made up of traditional isolated comprehension exercises, with no links to the rest of the activities, and equally traditional language exercises in which the only context which is provided is the sentence in which the language structure appears. Consequently, the teacher is largely confined to the role of instructor, either transmitting knowledge about the language, giving directions to the learners, or supplying the correct answers for the work. There is little encouragement to develop or deploy elements of the changed role and strategies demanded of the teacher by C2005. In fact, in this module the teacher has to look for, and in many cases create, 'teachable moments'. This is because the module fails to provide material that will encourage active engagement in language learning (3.8.2), a critical weakness.

One indicator of this is that material is not presented in themes that encourage learners to use a constructivist approach to learning. The crux of this approach, according to Bruner, is that "learning is an active process in which learners construct new ideas or concepts based upon their current/past knowledge" (Kearsley 1999). The learner is the one who then "selects and transforms information, constructs hypotheses, and makes decisions" in order to provide "meaning and organization to experiences and allow the individual to 'go beyond the information given'" (Kearsley *ibid.*). The teacher's role is to engage in an "active dialogue" with the learner so that (s)he discovers knowledge by him/herself on the basis of information which is appropriate to a particular learner's needs and understanding. The material and the teaching process should invite learner willingness to learn. In order for this to happen, the material should be readily understood by the learner and should also be effectively sequenced, and incorporated building into the curriculum in a cyclical way so that the learner can continually build on what (s)he has learned already (Kearsley *ibid.*)

This requires that each of the elements of classroom material should have a firm connection to the theme, items should be presented in a coherent framework, and learners should be given the opportunity to engage in meaningful interactions which lead to new knowledge being incorporated into what they know. This has direct implications for the sequencing of activities and for individual interpretation. Fundamentally, this means that activities should have a clear relation to each other, or invite learners to explore possible relationships, and that they should create opportunities for learners to make the knowledge or skills their own. Artificially created exercises are generally inappropriate. Furthermore, the material should make provision for the different rates at which learners progress. An outcomes-based approach should provide additional activities (at a higher

level) for the learners who progress quickly and also remedial activities for the learners who need more time or more opportunities to achieve the specified outcome (Tomlinson 1999b: 88, 89).

In my view, material also needs to offer explicit guidance to teachers on how to integrate learning so that the learners can successfully internalise the knowledge and skills acquired. This would involve not only drawing learners' (and teachers') attention to the ways in which activities are linked, but also providing activities which have a credible purpose.

For learners to play the kind of active role that OBE encourages and to take responsibility for their own learning in an independent way, which is what C2005 is intended to promote (WCED 2000a: 7, 8, 10), they need material which guides them by means of linked, scaffolded and mutually supporting tasks and activities – so that they can employ their learning strategies (5.2.3) to facilitate their language acquisition – and learning activities which they perceive as relevant to their own lives so that they are willing to invest in their language development (Nunan 1998: 108; Spady 1994a: 102 - 104). In doing so, they can have a sense of progression and success. Learners, too, have to be guided and subtly persuaded (especially by means of interesting, relevant activities) to voice their opinions, which some learners might be much more willing to do than others. Only then will the learners be able to strive to achieve SO2 (showing critical awareness of language usage) and SO7 (using appropriate communication strategies) in order to enhance their skills in communication. Thus they need activities which bring real-life, authentic language use into the classroom for authentic purposes (Tomlinson 1999b: 88; Brown 1994: 78). Such activities are not much in evidence in the module.

Some of the inadequacies of the material may stem from the contradictions in the compiler's theoretical position. She notes that OBE emphasises “group work, self-discovery, portfolios and experiential learning which are *all very good*” (emphasis added). However, in the notes to the teacher at the beginning of Module 1 (teacher's guide) the compiler states that these modules were developed “to accommodate the changing needs” of the learners, because they “lacked a firm grasp of the *basics* of English” (emphasis in original) (Kirby n.d. a). These modules are purported to cover “all those basics ... instilling confidence and discipline in the learners”. This suggests a strong bias towards behaviourist modes of mastery learning and a concomitant structural view of language. She speaks of needing to include “time-proven methods of drill and testing” to enable the learner to remember the work (Kirby n.d. a: unnumbered page). There is also a strong emphasis on grammar skills. Although teachers are referred to four supplemental modules “which offer plenty of more creative, skills-based activities and tasks” (Kirby n.d. a), the approach in these modules emphasises

the inculcation of grammatical skills and the completion of grammar exercises. The grammar notes in the modules in general are long and involved, almost exclusively concerned with usage as opposed to use. The teacher's role is largely limited to explaining structural rules and correcting exercises which test whether the learner has mastered certain technical skills rather than acquired knowledge of the language. The nature of the material restricts the role of the learner in terms of grammar to applying structural input. There is little in the material to stimulate learner interest and encourage using language as a means of negotiating meaning. Attention was drawn to the generally isolated nature of exercises and activities in these modules in a previous chapter when the implementation of Module 2 was discussed. These grammar skills are taught and practised in a traditionally formal way, apart from any context, and the comprehension tests are also isolated texts. These exercises appear to be no different from many isolated comprehension tests and language exercises found in grammar books that appeared for many years before the introduction of OBE (Barnes 1990). This ignores many recent insights regarding an inductive, constructivist approach to learning (Scovel 2001: 81), and the use of pre-reading activities (2.5.3.2.3; 5.2.1; Wallace 2001: 26).

Simply explaining language structures and getting the learners to do a lot of exercises in the hope that they may grasp the fundamentals about a language in order to promote language acquisition runs contrary to theories about language learning which emphasise construction of meaning.

Although *Firm Foundations* purports to have an OBE approach to teaching and learning English, it is not much more than a collection of unrelated language and other exercises in much the same vein as language textbooks have been offering for most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and very little is thus done to further the aims of C2005. The modules provide discrete and mechanical ways to practise language structures, consistent with a behaviourist approach to learning and a rather closed view of language. Not only does this fall far short of the criteria for ideal CLT/OBE material, but it encourages traditional teaching. For example, we discovered, in reflecting on the module afterwards, that, although we had felt that we were in tune with a learner-centred approach, we often tended to give explanations rather than enable learners to arrive at answers.

#### **7.2.4 The analysis of the other set of commercially available material**

I now turn to the second set of material, which was analysed in Chapter 6. Issues arising from the literature survey will not be dealt with in detail again in this section (see 7.2.3). I will deal with the

material regarding coherence within the modules, language activities in context, as well as the changed role of the teacher and group work.

Unlike the first set of materials, the comprehension passages are clearly linked to the theme of the module in which they appear. However, they constitute classroom reading rather than purposeful, meaning-making activities (2.5). The questions largely involve literal ‘comprehension’, mainly first-level retrieval. In addition, there is quite often no scaffolding to situate the texts used or to support the development of reading comprehension. In other words, the learners are not systematically prepared to engage with the text and there is no real communicative purpose to reading the comprehension passages. Although listening activities feature in each module, they too often focus on retrieval questions. Generally the activities which deal with writing in the modules are linked to the module, such as writing sentences dealing with the roles of family members (Module 2: Families), writing a rap poem about drugs (Module 4: Health) or writing traditional stories (Module 7: Stories our grandmothers tell). However, there is very little preparation for the writing process and rarely a clear notion that writing is used for meaningful communication. Among the exceptions is the letter which learners are required to write and post (Module 8: TV and radio), and a poem which relates to the partying activities of the learners (Module 12: Looking good).

As illustrated before (6.5.1.6), the authors of this set of materials have been more successful in some modules than in others in presenting language work in context. There is, for instance, some awareness of the need to use authentic material. Examples of this are the use of till slips, with learners being required to collect further examples, and advertisements and announcements from the media. Part of the reason for their limited success in this regard seems to stem from the authors’ view of the nature of language teaching (Mosala *et al.* 2003):

- *Question tags are [a] very common English form. (19).*
- *Revision of articles is important now and again because learners often make mistakes of this type (20).*
- *One of the most common mistakes is this: He makes me to go to school (35)*
- *The reason that we have provided so many practice exercises on relative pronouns is that learners at this stage must be encouraged to use not only simple sentences. We want them to join sentences together using all kinds of connectors, including the relative pronouns (41).*

They appear to regard the inclusion of grammar as a means of reducing or eliminating language errors on the part of the language learners in the classroom, much in the mode of audiolingualism (Richards and Rogers, 2001). This rationale for teaching grammar runs counter to research that suggests that learners acquire the grammar of a second language much in the same way as when they learn their first language (Ovando and Collier 1985: 59; Ellis 1994: 20, 21). It is also impossible to be confident about when learners are ready to learn a particular structure (Scarcella 1990: 58 - 59, 62), or when particular learners are ready for a particular structure. Even then it is difficult to pinpoint to what extent structural input is effective (Larson-Freeman and Long 1991: 321; Spolsky 1989: 194 - 197, 200, citing numerous studies).

It does seem, however, that grammatical structures that are taught at the point when they are required to enable learners to communicate successfully are more likely to be internalised . This means that grammar should be taught in order to assist the learners to accomplish the communicative task at hand, or to prepare them to communicate successfully in future work and social environments (Swan 2002: 151, 152). It would appear that structural input should be taught at some point, but not because it “looks tidy and is relatively teachable” and can be learnt, applied in exercises, or to check apparent progress, or just because it lends itself readily to testing (Swan 2002: 149).

This is some acknowledgement of the importance of this principle: “Care has been taken ..... to explain not only the rules of correct usage but also how the structures are formed and when and where they are used. Wherever possible structures have been taken from the reading and listening passages” (Mosala *et al.* 2003: vii). However, taking a structure from a reading or listening passage and using it to create a discrete activity means that the essential ingredient – communicative purpose – is missing.

In general, there is no explicit reason given for the focus on form and no context provided for the use of this particular form. One example is found in Module 2 (pp. 24, 25) where, instead of activities designed to give explicit attention to the use of the past tense, notes on the past tense verb forms are given. The notes on past tense forms are used as an introduction to two exercises testing past tense forms in discrete sentences, which are in turn followed by notes and exercises on pronouns and adjectives. These notes and exercises conclude the module. The grammar-focused activities are thus in a traditional format – the structures of the language are presented as discrete knowledge, unrelated to communicative tasks. In an apparent attempt to justify the inclusion of grammar-focused material that will supposedly enable learners to enhance their language skills, the

authors assert that “[r]esearch shows that learners of this age benefit from a knowledge of the grammatical structure of language” (Mosala *et al.* 2003: vii). No further elaboration is provided.

As was argued earlier, language teaching should ideally involve input that is closely related to communicative interaction (Scarcella 1990: 70, 71), leading to the use of language for “real, personally significant purposes”. Like formal language instruction, however, exposure and interactive practice has its limitations. There is increasing support for a combination of language exposure and focus on form (Ellis 2006: 86; Savignon 2002: 7; Ellis 1994: 603, 615 617; 2.5) in order to provide for the needs of a particular group of learners (Ovando and Collier 1985: 61).

This set of materials does provide revision as well as additional activities. In fact, Modules 5, 10, 15 and 18 deal exclusively with such activities. This feature gives the individual teacher greater scope when planning activities for individual learners. The revision exercises, however, only provide practice in language structures and not in using the language to communicate. It cannot be said to provide appropriate additional activities for learners who progress rapidly.

Although there are activities which provide for the changed role of the teacher such as the learners having to compile a TV quiz (Module 8) and interpreting adverts and graphs (Module 9), there are still many activities which expect the teacher to assume the traditional role of being the transmitter of information about grammatical structures and providing guidance in these structures. Conversely there are many activities in which the learner plays a relatively passive role. Also in this set of modules there are group activities for the learners, but little guidance is provided on the dynamics of group work and there is no incentive to carry out the task. It is assumed that because the task is given, learners will co-operate and do the task. Vague instructions, such as being asked to “talk about the words” in Module 2 (Families), when learners are presented with words relating to families (Mosala *et al.* 2004: 21), do not help at all.

### **7.3 THE LEARNER AND TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRES**

In addition to the classroom implementation of the material, I asked the learners involved to complete a questionnaire to give them an opportunity to express their views of the material and of their language learning experiences in general. A questionnaire was also submitted to 16 teachers responsible for similar language classrooms to those at the school where we implemented the material. This was done in an attempt to provide additional data to complement the findings in the classroom.

In presenting the opinions of learners and teachers, I have tried, as far as possible, to let the voices of the individual learners and teachers emerge clearly, so I have quoted their responses at length (5.3 and 5.4). Here I wish to highlight the implications of some of those views. In presenting these views, my assumption is that, as the implementation of the material proceeded day by day over a period of some weeks, the learners would be less precise than the two of us who implemented the module (5.2). We are, after all, trained language teachers and we were reflecting on what happened in our classroom on a daily basis. Furthermore, it should be borne in mind that one's perception that one is acquiring a skill is not necessarily a reliable reflection of what is actually happening. It should also be noted that, not surprisingly, learners found it difficult to differentiate between different styles of individual language teachers and different approaches to language teaching.

Judging by the way some learners had commented on the ability and style of the different teachers in their responses to Questions 1.1 and 1.2 of the learner questionnaire, it would appear that the perception learners have of effective teaching is strongly influenced by the teacher's personality. Affective factors have a strong influence in the classroom, a factor which language learning material will have to take into account, however difficult it may be.

There is also a strong indication that the approach to teaching English is still traditional, despite CLT having been official policy for at least 25 years. Only two learners mentioned that they felt more confident about speaking English after doing Module 2. If the implemented material had been of the type which invited learner engagement in what they perceived to be meaningful communication, one would have expected more learners to have agreed with these two. This leads me to think that the material which was implemented for the purposes of this investigation was in the same, or almost the same, mould as the traditional classroom language learning many of the learners had apparently been exposed to.

In general the answers to Question 2, in which the learners were asked what they could do more successfully after the implementation of the selected module, provided generalities and were rather vague, instead of listing specific aspects. Some learners, however, wrote that they felt that their reading, speaking and writing skills had improved, or that they felt better about English than they had before. This could suggest that those learners had enjoyed some parts of the module or gained in confidence in the course of the module and thus participated more freely.



Some learners commented on the non-use of English in grade 7, perhaps suggesting the classrooms had been teacher-centred and so had not welcomed contributions from those learners. It could also suggest that the teacher had used Afrikaans as a medium of instruction. In either event, it does not seem as if the classrooms were operating within an OBE/CLT paradigm.

From responses to Question 1 of the teacher questionnaire on their teaching practice before the advent of C2005, some teachers admitted to formal teaching of language structures as an end in itself. This practice seems still to be widespread despite the introduction of the communicative approach to language teaching in schools as formal policy as far back as 1986. This suggests that classroom practice at any given time has more to do with teacher preference, teaching styles and habit than official government policy (Hansen 1990: 184; Booysen 1989: 230).

Although teachers did not believe they were following a traditional approach, their responses revealed that many of them were and this illustrates a point made by Macdonald and Walker that what teachers believe they do and what they actually do is not the same (1975: 4, 6).

The opinion of one teacher that the weaker learners were becoming weaker and losing interest could be an underlying reason for the learner apathy that some teachers commented on. These comments are in line with the response to the previous question that apathy among weaker or reluctant learners could very well militate against their acquiring much in the line of language skills. This makes it critically important that the language learning material be selected for specific learners, but also serves to emphasise what has been clearly stated before (2.5 and 6.3.1.5), namely that language learning material needs to be perceived to be relevant and meaningful to their communicative needs if it is to succeed in its goal of enhancing the language skills of the learners.

Because an outcomes-based approach to language teaching entails far more comprehensive changes in the classroom, it would be reasonable to assume that implementing such an approach would elicit some resistance on the part of teachers. It would appear that at least some language teachers at grade 8 level prefer teaching a language in the traditional way with a strong emphasis on the study of the grammatical structures of the target language. Earlier studies into the extent to which CLT (the official policy of the National Department of Education in South Africa for the past twenty-five years) had been implemented found that there was a great deal of indirect and direct teacher resistance to it.

These feelings of scepticism on the part of practising teachers, as reflected in their answers to the questionnaire, clearly illustrate how they felt about an OBE approach before its implementation. This meant that any teacher training associated with OBE/C2005 should have attempted to break down the negativity with which the teachers approached what was then a new curriculum, before any attempt could be made to equip teachers for the new approach. This would be important as it has been already pointed out (in the previous section) that teacher preference, style and routine are greater determinants of what happens in a classroom than official government policy.

In OBE/C2005 much depends on the willingness of the learners to work hard and accept responsibility for their own learning (van der Horst and McDonald 1997: 6, 92; Marx 1997: 353; Manganyi 1997; Killen 1996: 3). Although one teacher saw this as a distinct advantage, in general, the group of teachers interviewed were not enthusiastic about the implementation of C2005. Some were convinced that only the very dedicated learner would succeed and that others would not cope, especially when working in groups.

To me it was not surprising that there were mixed responses to peer assessment (Question 5). Killen (2004), one of the experts on OBE assessment, is himself opposed to the use of peer assessment in cases where marks are involved. It is clear from the responses to Questions 5 (the use of peer assessment) and 6 (whether using an OBE approach would enhance the learners' acquisition of language skills) that there is a lot of teacher resistance, and even antagonism, to the implementation of an OBE/C2005 approach in high schools and that even the positive comments were guardedly made. It is interesting that, for some, OBE was not suitable for more competent learners, whereas others felt that only the more competent would benefit from either peer assessment or an OBE curriculum.

This requires consultation and negotiation between teacher and learners (Nunan 1992: 2), and also teachers who are capable of demonstrating flexibility in class and who make the most of each classroom opportunity and activity in order to promote the maximum development of each learner's potential. Teachers thus need to be creative and innovative.

It can be rightly argued that teachers should use their initiative and facilitate learning. However, the way in which the module was implemented (5.2) strongly suggest teacher uncertainty about conceptual aspects of OBE as well as what was being expected of them; this is borne out by other sources (Human 2003: 21; *Mail and Guardian*, 16 November 2001). In such situations teachers will be inclined to resist change and fall back on the patterns of teaching they know best (1.2), and/or

will then adopt the role the material accords them. In the case of OBE, teachers are largely intended to be facilitators, but many teachers have not had the training to enable them to be effective facilitators. In addition, they tend to adopt a more teacher-centred approach because of the difficulty of managing the large class sizes and the concomitant increased administrative load, over and above the administrative load which an OBE approach demands (Jansen 1997: 9).

In general it would seem that teachers are still disgruntled about implementing an approach which they do not believe to be in the best interests of their learners, on which they were hardly consulted, for which very little training was given, insufficient guidance was given and features of which were constantly being changed in the first few years of C2005, such as which tasks would be used to finalise the learners' marks for the year (Chapter 3). The responses to the late arrival of the grade 9 national assessments in one particular year revealed that the strong feelings of uncertainty and resentment were still widespread among teachers. The uncertainties do not end there. As late as 2005, there was still confusion among the WCED officials. This was evident when our school's grade 8 promotions were discussed at the regional office, and some of the officials misinterpreted the guidelines for the promotion of the learners (oral disclosure by the principal, 30 November 2005). It is imperative that all role players are thoroughly briefed during the implementation phase of a new curriculum.

#### **7.4 CONCLUSIONS**

A classroom language programme based on OBE principles is designed in a very specific way. First the outcomes which the learner must master in order to successfully complete the programme are determined. Then the programme is designed to enable the learner to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills so that, upon completion of the programme, the learners can demonstrate that they have mastered these predetermined outcomes.

C2005 thus demanded, just as the RNCS continues to demand, changes in the way that both teachers and learners behave in the classroom. In answer to the first research question as to whether the implementation of OBE /C2005 will demand changes to the way English is taught, it is clear that the changed roles of both teacher and learner demand fundamental changes. However, it cannot be denied that the required changes have not taken place. The comments made by the Minister of Education last year are only one indication of this (Motshekga 2009). Teachers need to promote language learning in the classroom and encourage learner independence. This demands their being able to meet the complex demands made on them as facilitators of classroom events. The emphasis

in an OBE approach is on enabling the learners to assume responsibility for their own learning. This is based on the assumption that a carefully designed learning programme can engineer a process in which learners independently master predetermined outcomes (3.4).

This raises two important problems. First, research into language development emphasises that the learning of a language does not occur in a linear way. Second, teachers need complex in-service development and support programmes if they are to make the transition to fulfilling their roles as managers or facilitators in the classroom. The teacher's book could play a useful role in encouraging teachers to be innovative or by providing guidelines that could help teachers create opportunities for learning to take place. In the case of the material analysed in this study, there is very little guidance – certainly none that suggests an awareness of the management and design factors which influence the success or otherwise of a group task.

The implementation of the material for the purposes of this study revealed the importance of being able to use effective cooperative learning and qualitative assessment, as well as of the critical importance of appropriate commercially available material. My attempt to answer the second research question revealed that at the time of the study that at least some of the material that was available had serious shortcomings.

Certainly teachers could adapt material to particular needs if, after selection, the material was found to have shortcomings. After having been used for a while, any commercially produced materials (or other sets of language materials) being used in language teaching would need to be evaluated again to determine whether the material offered is entirely appropriate (Littlejohn 1999: 204; Sheldon 1988: 245), whether the material should be adapted (Nunan 1995: 219), whether the material should be supplemented with other material or abandoned altogether (Littlejohn 1999: 204; Littlejohn and Windeatt 1989: 175). It is this ongoing evaluation of material that will provide the best guide as to the suitability of a particular textbook or set of materials for a particular group of learners in a particular classroom (Nunan 1995: 211).

The effects of different types of material will have to be the subject of much more research if material is to be produced which will “attract and impress” the learner and also facilitate language learning (Tomlinson 1999c: 264). It is hoped that “the consequent increase in both qualitative and quantitative research will contribute to our knowledge about factors which facilitate the learning of languages” (Tomlinson 2001: 71). It is with the purpose of contributing to this process that this investigation was undertaken.

This study further revealed that, ideally, material should contain a great variety of carefully designed material that is appropriately scaffolded, so that learners are able to work independently. It would also appear that, if learners perceive the material as relevant and worthwhile, they will be sufficiently motivated to engage fully in the learning process (Nunan 1998: 108; Spady 1994a: 102 - 104).

Even now, most grade 8 language teachers have in excess of 40 learners in their classes and have to ensure that prescribed tasks are done by the learners. This means that they are more likely to use commercially available material as it stands, because they do not have the time required to adapt material, let alone design their own programmes from scratch. It follows that their teaching approaches and classroom practice will largely be dictated by the material selected. Thus teachers need well-designed, theoretically sound material that will meet the needs of their language learners and that will meet the criteria of the RNCS in an OBE approach. Furthermore, there is a great need for a teacher's book which provides an appropriate rationale for, and guidance on, the effective implementation of activities and assessment.

In all fairness, this process started, to an increasing extent, from 2005 onwards and in 2008 the Education Department ensured that all grade 10 learners got language and other textbooks, with teacher guides. This was followed in 2009 with textbooks and teacher guides being supplied to grade 11 learners and teachers. Presumably grade 12 learners and teachers were to be supplied with books in 2010, but this did not materialise. It is quite possible that, while removing the burden of designing their own material, language teachers will, in following the textbooks, be implementing the language learning philosophy favoured by the authors and underlying the activities in those books. These books will, therefore, have to be subjected to intensive scrutiny to see whether they fulfil the promise of effectively promoting language acquisition.

The value of a study of this kind, albeit limited, is that it sheds light on one of the reasons why the implementation of C2005 was not successful. The availability of appropriate material could have eliminated many of the uncertainties and contributed to more effective implementation of the curriculum. The Revised Curriculum Statement has introduced some useful changes and there is better material available. However, it seems that many uncertainties and doubts remain. In addition, the large number of prescribed tasks for which mark schedules have to be produced at the end of each year is still driving the system; a decade ago already it was reported that at least some teachers are gearing their work schedules to the completion of such tasks to the detriment of the real

language needs of the learners in their classrooms (The Teacher 2000) and I can vouch – on the basis of anecdotal evidence – that this is still the lament of many language teachers.

## **7.5 RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **7.5.1 Recommendations for in-service teacher development**

This study suggests (3.8.2) that there was a certain measure of resistance to the implementation of CLT; the responses to the teacher questionnaire (5.4) as well as another survey (Carl 2007: 13) seem to bear this out. Change does not come easily (1.2; Fullan 2001: 30) and it would be facile to reason that it is simply a matter of teachers resisting change implemented by the Department of Education (Le Grange 2007: 84). There has been similar resistance to the implementation of the RNCS (Motshekga, August 2009).

Opportunities for in-depth in-service teacher development need to be offered, not the few limited informational sessions which, in my experience, were all that was provided. These workshops should offer teachers in-depth-knowledge of, and insight into, the underlying philosophy of OBE as well as substantial training in the key strategies so they could be better equipped to effectively:

- \* play their complex roles in the classroom as effective facilitators;
- \* use alternative assessment strategies, including peer assessment;
- \* use techniques such as cooperative learning;
- \* be able to select classroom material when they have to choose such material off the shelf;
- \* be designers and editors of classroom material which will promote language acquisition.

They would also have to make provision for opportunities for teachers to contribute to ongoing revision of the curriculum.

Unless this happens, it would be safe to say that a large number of teachers would not be persuaded to implement the nationally selected approach and that these teachers would simply carry on doing what they are comfortable with and just pander notionally to the RNCS. That would stunt the opportunities for teacher development and cause a degradation of effective teaching within the context of the RNCS.

## **7.5.2 Recommendations for further research**

It has been noted (2.3) that learners need a curriculum that enables them to use a language meaningfully and appropriately in complex communication (Ellis 1990, 1999; Doughty and Long 2005; Lightbown and Spada 2006). The question of how best to help learners to achieve this in a second language classroom does need further research. As Lust (2006: 100) emphasises, language learning is influenced by many factors, such as the characteristics of the learner, the formal structures of the native and target languages, the opportunities for interaction with speakers of the target language, and the availability of suitable instruction.

Although, as Ellis (1997) points out (2.5.3.1), second language research findings may never offer clear guidelines for the classroom teacher, they may allow teachers to plan effectively so that teacher-learner interaction in the classroom promotes the acquisition of the second language (Lightbown and Spada 2006: 194).

In the light of a greater appreciation for the complex task facing teachers (Larsen-Freeman 2001: 41), the adoption of a task-based approach to the teaching of language, which includes a mix of instruction types that encompass a focus on both form and meaning to cater for the communicative needs of the learners (Ellis 2006: 91,93, 95; Savignon 2002: 7; Lightbown and Spada 2006: 179), may be advisable. Thus much research must still be done before judgements can be made on what would be the right 'mix' of 'focus on form' and 'meaning-based instruction' to suit the needs of particular learners in the GET phase.

In particular, research is necessary in order to determine the extent to which an OBE approach is feasible as a vehicle to teach English effectively, especially in the large classes which are the norm in South Africa. In my opinion, the specified outcomes in the RNCS will be achieved only by on-going research which is firmly rooted in actual classroom events.

Writing from an Australian perspective, Berlach (2004: 4) argues that little comprehensive evaluation of OBE has been done. The situation in South Africa is similar: studies listed by Taylor and Vinjevoid (3.7.1) cover very specific focus areas only. Therefore considerable classroom-based research, internationally and in South Africa, is necessary.

When Curriculum 2005 was introduced, I felt that I was being confronted with a very new approach, of which I had no knowledge or experience. The overwhelming emotion I had was one of disempowerment (1.2). This sensation was evidently shared by other teachers, as revealed by informal conversations at the time and also by teacher responses to the questionnaire which forms part of this investigation. Nothing in our training or teaching careers up till then had prepared us for an OBE approach. The few days of orientation which passed as teacher training were confusing, because of the tremendous amount of new information being passed on about the then new curriculum. It was so much to be absorbed in a few short days. When, in the course of those few days, teachers questioned the new approach, we were told that it would work in South Africa without any explanation of how or why, despite questions regarding class size and limited funding. Our concerns regarding these issues were left unanswered and we were left feeling as if we weren't able to think for ourselves. From the beginning then, the concerns of serving, experienced teachers were disregarded, and many of those concerns proved to be well founded as the new curriculum was phased in. We were thus left largely to our own devices in coming to grips with the new approach. Little wonder that teachers were resistant to change and often carried on doing their own thing (7.3 and anecdotally).

While assessment is an important part of an OBE approach (3.3; Spady 1994a: 4), it has the potential to drive the whole system instead of being part of a carefully planned programme of learning. With assessment in South Africa being done on an almost daily basis (3.7.4; Venter 2003: 12; Hayward 2003: 16), exactly this seems to be happening. If assessment tools are not carefully designed to meet the language outcomes, there will simply be lots of assessment done because it is expected as part of the prescribed tasks set by the Department of National Education (now the Department of Basic Education) and not because it serves as part of a tightly integrated programme.

Because peer group interaction is thought to play an important role in the construction of knowledge (3.7.3; Blanckenberg 2000: 50) and because of the constructivist thinking underpinning Curriculum 2005 (3.7.3; WCED 2000a: 17), the promotion of cooperative learning would appear to be important. Group work would appear to be a useful tool to enable learners to acquire knowledge and, as part of this investigation it was found that, in general, learners like to work in groups (5.3.4). However, some teachers responding to the teacher questionnaire had misgivings about the increased role allocated to cooperative learning in an OBE environment (5.4.6). If teachers are expected to adopt a more positive attitude towards co-operative learning in their everyday classroom practice, they will need to be thoroughly trained in this aspect by serving practitioners of cooperative learning. Only in this way can teachers be helped to overcome their hesitation or reluctance in this



regard. This would have to be preceded by classroom research in order to determine what really works in everyday classroom situations.

Teachers expressed even more outspoken concerns regarding peer assessment and were generally antagonistic towards the practice (5.4.5). Learners were ambivalent about peer assessment (5.3.5). Concerns included learner dishonesty and lack of knowledge by learners to assess fairly and accurately. Implemented with sufficient forethought and planning, peer assessment could relieve overloaded teachers of some of their marking burden. Teachers would have to be carefully trained to implement this with wisdom and such a programme could only be attempted after careful research in actual classrooms.

## **7.6 CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS**

C2005, the focus of this study, has since been superseded by the Revised National Curriculum Statement. Thus, although this study has focused on the very specific time frame of 2001 – 2005 for grades 8 and 9, this does not detract from its value because the problems highlighted in this study remain (WCED, 2007), namely that teachers are confused, anxious and uncertain about the teaching they are expected to do and find their energy sapped by large classes and high administrative workloads. The need for relevant, suitable classroom material is as great as ever. This being the case, there is the very real danger that teachers will continue to cling to what they know and are used to from the past; this would consequently inhibit the effective and smooth implementation of the Revised National Curriculum Statement.

A final note about myself. I am rather purpose-driven and to the point, preferring to cut through complexities in order to distil the essence of a matter. In addition, I am passionately fond of history, preferring facts, as far as they can be objective, to personal perspectives. This may have detracted from the study and resulted in less ‘rich data’ than if the researcher had been someone with a greater interest in investigating personal perspectives. In addition, the presence of a full-time observer, observing events in one classroom, as opposed to two participant-observers in two different classrooms, may also have yielded far more narrative data, enabling moments to speak for themselves.

In spite of these limitations, I trust that the study may contribute to the ongoing debate about real events in the English second language classroom and the contribution that effective language learning material can make in this regard. What is clear from this investigation is that a top-down

approach, especially when combined with inappropriate material, does not work. Only when the classroom implementers of a new approach are intensively involved from the start, and are provided with well-designed material, can there be meaningful change in the language classrooms of South Africa.

## LIST OF ADDENDA

### ADDENDUM A

#### Qualitative observation schedule

The following are what I identify as the most salient points to look for during the implementation of Module 2 in the classroom in the light of what has been written in Chapters 4 and 5.

1. Observe whether material/ activities:
  - lead to achievement of 7 critical outcomes (Chap.5)
    1. Identify and solve problems in which responses display that responsible decisions using critical and creative thinking have been made.
    2. Work effectively with others as a member of a team, group, organisation, community.
    3. Organise and manage oneself and one's activities responsibly and effectively.
    4. Collect, analyse, organise and critically evaluate information.
    5. Communicate effectively using visual, mathematical and/or language skills in the modes of oral and/or written presentation.
    6. Use science and technology effectively and critically, showing responsibility towards then environment and health of others.
    7. Demonstrate an understanding of the world as a set of related systems by recognising that problem solving contexts do not exist in isolation.

(WCED 1997a: unnumbered; WCED 1997c: 15)

- lead to achievement of 7 LLC specific outcomes (Chap. 5)
  1. Learners make and negotiate meaning and understanding.
  2. Learners show critical awareness of language usage.
  3. Learners respond to the aesthetic, affective, cultural and social values in context.
  4. Learners access, process and use information from a variety of sources and situations.
  5. Learners understand, know and apply language structures and conventions in context.
  6. Learners use language for learning.
  7. Learners use appropriate communication strategies for specific purposes and situations.

(WCED 1997c: LLC –3)

- lead to development of necessary language skills (Chap. 5)

- lead to development of necessary real-life skills (Chap. 5)

- are sequenced and scaffolded so that learner is lead from one activity to the next (Chap. 5)

- are conducive to learners taking active role in their progress and teacher facilitating/mediating (Chap. 5)
- allow some learners to progress quickly and others to do additional support activities in order to acquire the necessary skills at their own pace
- invite learners to take part.

2. Observe whether learner is engaged in

- |                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
| Class contact          | - learner is part of a class lesson or whole class activity. |
| Group contact          | - learner is part of a group working with the teacher .      |
| Cooperative activity   | - learner is in a group which has a cooperative task.        |
| Individual activity    | - learner's activity does not involve class or group work.   |
| Teacher activity alone | - learners passive and only teacher active                   |
- (Croll 1986: 20, 23)

3. Observe effectiveness and quality of interactions.

## ADDENDUM B

### Learner questionnaire

Thanks very much for agreeing to fill in this questionnaire. I really appreciate it.

1. *You have been taught English in a certain way this past month.*  
1.1 *How did this differ from the way you were taught English in Gr. 7? (List four ways in which it was different.)*

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- 1.2 *In what way did this past month's work differ from the way you were taught English in Gr 6? (List four ways in which it was different.)*

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2. *Write down the things (anything) which you feel you can do more successfully in English now as a result of the way you have been taught this past month.*

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3. *Do you prefer learning English the way you have this past month? Give reasons for your answers.*

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4. *Do you feel that working in pairs and in groups has helped you to learn English more effectively than before? Give reasons for your answer.*

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5. *What do you think about your work being assessed by yourself and your fellow learners? Comment on any advantages and/or disadvantages that you see.*

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6. *Please add any other comments on the way you were taught English.*

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Thank you very much for your time.

## ADDENDUM C

Teacher questionnaire:  
Teaching English in an Outcomes-Based environment

Thanks so much for your time. Your input is greatly appreciated.

1. *How did you teach English before you started implementing an OBE approach? Please be specific about how you taught reading, writing, speaking and grammatical components.*

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2. *How did you feel about teaching English, using an OBE approach, before you actually implemented the approach?*

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3. *If those initial hopes or fears have been realised, describe in which way or ways.*

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4. *Which aspects do you regard as being of vital importance in order to teach English successfully using an OBE approach?*

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5. *What do you think the effect of using individual and peer assessment has had on the learners' acquisition of reading, speaking, writing and grammatical skills in English?*

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6. *Do you think that using an OBE approach will enhance the learners' acquisition of reading, speaking, writing and grammatical skills. Please explain.*

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7. *Do you think teaching in this way will better equip the learners to meet the linguistic challenges they encounter outside the classroom? Please explain.*

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8. *What advice do you have for teachers of English who are faced with teaching English in an OBE approach for the first time?*

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9. *Please elaborate on any other aspects of teaching English using an OBE approach that we have not yet touched on.*

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Thanks again so much for your time.

## ADDENDUM D

Language learning exercises from implemented material

### JONAH RUNS AWAY FROM GOD

The word of the LORD came to Jonah son of Amittai: "Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me." But Jonah ran away from the LORD and headed for Tarshish. He went down to Joppa, where he found a ship bound for that port. Then the LORD sent a great wind on the sea, and such a violent storm arose that the ship threatened to break up. ...

Then the sailors said to each other, "Come, let us cast lots to find out who is responsible for this calamity." They cast lots and the lot fell on Jonah. ... The sea was getting rougher and rougher. So they asked him, "What should we do to you to make the sea calm down for us?"

"Pick me up and throw me into the sea," he replied, "and it will become calm. I know that it is my fault that this great storm has come upon you." ... Then they took Jonah and threw him overboard, and the raging sea grew calm. At this the men greatly feared the LORD, and they offered a sacrifice to the LORD and made vows to him.

But the LORD provided a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was inside the fish three days and three nights.

From inside the fish Jonah prayed to the LORD his God. He said:

"In my distress I called to the LORD,  
and he answered me. ...

"Those who cling to worthless idols  
forfeit the grace that could be theirs.

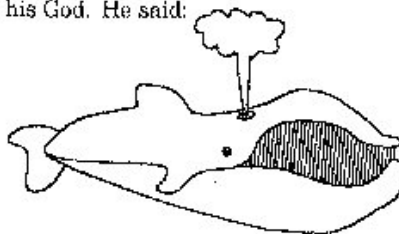
But I, with a song of thanksgiving,  
will sacrifice to you. ...

What I have vowed I will make good.

Salvation comes from the LORD."

And the LORD commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land.

Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time: "Go to the great city of Nineveh and proclaim to it the message I give you." Jonah obeyed the word of the LORD and went to Nineveh.



*Jonah 1 - 3:2*

Exercise 1:

Find the answers to these questions in the passage:

1. Where did God send Jonah? [1]
  2. What did Jonah do rather than being obedient to God? [2]
  3. How did God force him to obey? [4]
  4. Did Jonah praise or curse God when he was in the fish's stomach? [1]
  5. How do you think "the word of the LORD came to Jonah"? [2]
- {10}

Exercise 2:

This story just tells you the basics of what happened. You will have to use your imagination to fill in the details.

There are no right or wrong answers to the questions that follow, but you should use your common sense so that the answers are as realistic and logical as possible.

In groups of three or four discuss the answers to these questions.

1. What time of year did this story take place?
2. Describe the ship Jonah boarded.
3. What did the sailors wear?
4. What did Jonah look like?
5. What did Jonah have for breakfast when he entered the ship?
6. What animals lived on the ship?
7. Describe the storm.
8. How many sailors were there?

9. How old were the sailors?
10. What colour sails did they use?
11. What did the lots look like?
12. What was the weather like when God first spoke to Jonah?
13. How much did Jonah pay for the boat trip?
14. How long did it take Jonah to tell the men it was his fault?
15. What kind of fish swallowed Jonah?
16. What did he do besides pray in the fish's stomach?
17. Who else was on the beach when he was vomited up?
18. What were they doing there?
19. What did Jonah look like after being in the fish's stomach for three days and three nights?
20. What did he smell like?
21. How tall was Jonah?
22. How did he walk?
23. What did Jonah say to the people on the beach?
24. What did the people on the beach say?
25. Who spoke first?
26. Did Jonah preach to anyone on his way to Nineveh?
27. How did Jonah get to Nineveh?
28. What does God's voice sound like?
29. How did God feel when Jonah disobeyed him?
30. How did God feel when Jonah was inside the fish?
31. How did God feel when Jonah obeyed him?

Exercise 3:

Find 3 adjectives for each of these nouns:

- |            |           |
|------------|-----------|
| 1. doctor  | 2. party  |
| 3. teacher | 4. mother |
| 5. taxi    | 6. wind   |
| 7. clothes | 8. rain   |
| 9. music   | 10. shoes |



**Exercise 4:**

Fill in the missing words:

COUNTRY	INHABITANTS	PROPER ADJECTIVE
	Dutch	
Rwanda		
		Turkish
	Batswana	
France		
		Spanish
Italy		
		Norwegian
Great Britain		
	Chinese	
		Angolan
Greece		
Russia		
		Zimbabwean

**Exercise 5:**

Identify the 8 nouns and 11 adjectives from the following paragraph.

*My height is barely 1.5 meters, and I was working with three other short people during an afternoon shift at the hospital when a tall new patient was admitted. He wanted to know which person was the shortest German doctor.*

{19}

ADJECTIVES	NOUNS

**Exercise 7:**

Give the correct form of the word in brackets.

1. She is the (good) friend I have ever had.
2. You are now (tall) than your sister!
3. Miss South Africa is (beautiful) than Miss Brazil.
4. The films are starting (late) this year than last year.
5. Who is the (fast) runner in your team?
6. Your marks are (good) this term than last term.
7. He is the (fat) man I've ever seen.
8. He is (famous) than his father.
9. This is the (far) I have ever run.
10. Was it (cold) yesterday than the day before?
11. Please give me (little) food than my brother.
12. Grade 8 is the (difficult) year so far.
13. Thulani is the (tall) of the two cousins.
14. Zindzi is the (clever) boy in the class.
15. No one can be (careless) than your brother.
16. The weather is (bad) today than it was yesterday.
17. This is the (good) essay I have ever seen.

**Exercise 8:**

Give the degrees of comparison of the following adjectives:

POSITIVE	COMPARATIVE	SUPERLATIVE
easy		
safe		
nasty		
lively		
bad		
few		
painful		
silly		
good		
heavy		

{20}

1

## PUNCTUATION



- 1.1. What is missing from this paragraph? \_\_\_\_\_  
Fill them in!

James met Sandrina on the first day of school He immediately fell head over heels in love with her She was beautiful She had long, dark hair, serious , caring eyes and a small mouth James could not keep his eyes off her Unfortunately Sandrina already had a boyfriend and he was two years older than James and double his size Nevertheless whenever he had the opportunity James spent time with her and soon they were good friends

- 1.2. What is their function? TO INDICATE THE \_\_\_\_\_

Full stops have another function as well: **to indicate abbreviations**

- 1.3. Can you explain why the full stops have been used at the end of some of these **abbreviations** (shortened form of the words) and not at the end of the others?

Doctor ⇒ Dr	Reverend ⇒ Rev.
Mister ⇒ Mr	General ⇒ Gen.
Proprietary ⇒ Pty	Company ⇒ Co.
Mistress ⇒ Miss	referee ⇒ ref.
Road ⇒ Rd	limousine ⇒ limo.
Street ⇒ St	especially ⇒ esp.
Avenue ⇒ Ave	exempli gratia (Latin for "example given") ⇒ e.g.

- 1.4. Now complete this definition of when the **full stop** is used for abbreviations
- If the abbreviation \_\_\_\_\_ same letter as the full word then \_\_\_\_\_ **full stop.**
  - If the abbreviation \_\_\_\_\_ same letter as the full word then \_\_\_\_\_ **full stop.**

ABBREVIATIONS	ACRONYMS
S.A.	UNISA
U.S.A.	COSAS
P.A.C.	SARFU
A.N.C.	NUMSA

- 1.5. With a partner, write a list of at least 5 other acronyms.
- 1.6. Write down the two functions of a full stop in your exercise books.
- 1.7. Write down the rule for when a full stop is used at the end of an abbreviation.

②

- 2.1. What is wrong with this sentence? Write it correctly.  
*the boy's name is peter.* \_\_\_\_\_
- 2.2. Complete this definition of when capital letters should be used.
  - Capital letters are always used at the \_\_\_\_\_ of a sentence and
  - Capital letters are always used for \_\_\_\_\_ nouns.
- 2.2.1. In groups of 4 test each other by writing a sentence using proper nouns BUT leave out the capital letters. Swap sentences and see if you can correctly punctuate each others' sentences.
- 2.2.2. **EXTENSION:** If you find that too easy, write the sentences BUT before you swap them, muddle up the order of the words so that your group must work out the sentence before they can fill in the capitals.
- 2.3. Fill in the full stops and capital letters in the correct places.

gen james is a strange man he lives on 3<sup>rd</sup> ave near the army training school he writes poetry about the war but always signs them "anon " rev saunders is one of his few friends and comes all the way from soutpansberg rd to play computer games with him every wed they used to run a business together it was called "professional connections (ltd)"

③

- 3.1. We know that sentences can end with a full stop, but what about these punctuation marks? What are they called?
  - 3.1.1. Where are you going this Friday night? \_\_\_\_\_
  - 3.1.2. Don't touch that stove! It's hot! \_\_\_\_\_
- 3.2. Complete these sentences:
- 3.3. Use the appropriate punctuation mark to end each of these sentences.
  - 3.3.1. Careful
  - 3.3.2. You don't know how deep that river is
  - 3.3.3. Can you see the bottom
  - 3.3.4. Give me the rope
  - 3.3.5. I'll tie this end around the tree and the other end around my waist
  - 3.3.6. Shall I go first
  - 3.3.7. Aaah It's cold
  - 3.3.8. "Hold the rope and follow me" he shouted (*command*)

**3.4. EXTENSION:**

- 3.4.1. What tone of voice would you use to read these sentences in 3.3?
- 3.4.2. Could the same sentence end with a full stop, question mark or exclamation mark depending on how you read it?
- 3.4.3. With a partner write such a sentence (like the one described in 3.4.2) that makes sense when you end it with each of these three different punctuation marks. Now see how many more you can make.

4.3. Complete the following sentences about the three functions of the COMMA.

- *extra information in parenthesis* means that the words between the commas
- 

- *separating clauses (ideas)* means that the comma
- 

- *to separate items on a list* means that the comma
- 

- *after the name of a person addressed* means that the comma
- 

4.4. Why have these commas been used?

4.4.1. Tebogo, go and fetch Kabelo's birthday presents.

4.4.2. He was given a T-shirt, a soccer ball, chocolates, a bicycle and smaller toys.

4.4.3. His best friend, without telling anyone, arranged for a disco at the party.

4.4.4. They played "Life", "Dance", "I will stay" and many more.

4.4.5. Kabelo's mother was there until midnight, making sure everyone had enough to eat.

4.5. Fill in the missing commas in these sentences:

4.5.1. On the last day of school we are going to see a film but our parents will come too.

4.5.2. Johannes Mariza Nicole and Busi are coming.

4.5.3. After I've phoned the caterer Jonas must phone the video store.

4.5.4. After we have watched the film we will go ice-skating.

4.5.5. Alison begged her parents but they won't allow her to go.

4.5.6. There was a time a few months ago that she lied to them about where she was going.

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## THE HONEST THIEF

One day Ooka, a wise old judge in Japan, received a visit from the rice store owner named Yahichi. He explained that each night a small amount of rice went missing.

Yahichi said, "It is not a large amount that disappears, but it happens every night. I am sorry to trouble you with such a small matter."

Ooka replied immediately, "It is right that you came to me, because it is just as wrong to steal one grain of rice as it is to steal ten bags. Now tell me what happens."

"My guard, Chogoro, has been working for our family for eighty years. He is as loyal as any servant could be and as reliable as he was at twenty years old. He says he sees nothing, but every morning I see some handfuls of rice have been taken. I have even stayed watching with him and I, too, have seen nothing. It is a great mystery to us."

Ooka looked at the eighty-one year old man in front of him and he was sure both men had simply fallen asleep and that it was not such a big mystery. He said nothing of his thoughts. Instead he offered to come and stand guard with them that night.

Ooka met Yahichi at the store as the sun was setting. After an hour or two both Yahichi and Chogoro were fast asleep and the judge's suspicions were proved true. He decided to wait and catch the thief red-handed. Before long he heard a soft shuffling outside and he looked out of the window. The thief was right in front of him. They looked at each other.

Ooka had to think fast. He could not catch him before he had committed the crime and he had to have an excuse for being in the store so late at night. Luckily, the thief did not recognise him so Ooka said, "You have obviously come to steal rice as I have. Let me pass the rice out to you then you don't need to put yourself in danger by coming into the shop." The man, whom Ooka recognised as Gonta, a labourer who had been out of work for some time, thanked him. But when Ooka passed a sack out to him, Gonta protested, "This is too much! I only want enough to feed my family for one day. Perhaps I will find work tomorrow and then I can pay it back."

"You may as well take the whole sack. You will get punished just the same no matter how much you take." Ooka said.

"That would be dishonest! I will only take what I need to survive." Gonta took his few handfuls of rice, gave the rest of the sack back to Ooka and ran off into the darkness.

Ooka was amazed. He thought about it for a long time and then he woke Yahichi and told him what had happened. "I did not catch him, because he is an honest thief."

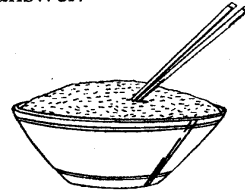
"How can that be?" exclaimed Yahichi.

"He is stealing because he has no job and he intends to pay it all back. Let's test him. Tomorrow I will get him a job that pays enough for him to feed his family and repay you and then we will see if he replaces the rice he stole." Yahichi agreed.

Gonta returned a few handfuls of rice each night just as he said he would, but on the night of his last repayment he found a letter from the judge. It said: "You owe an extra 10% for interest. Honesty is the best policy."

*Adapted From "Ooka The Wise,  
Tales Of Old Japan" By I. G. Edmonds*

1. At the beginning of the story what was Judge Ooka's belief about being dishonest? [1]
2. Did Gonta think of himself as dishonest? Explain your answer. [2]
3. Why did Chogoro and Yahichi fail to catch the thief? [1]
4. Why did Judge Ooka help Gonta steal the rice? [2]
5. Why did he not catch him red-handed? [1]
6. How much rice did Gonta steal each night? [1]
7. How did Judge Ooka test Gonta's honesty? [3]
8. What was Gonta's punishment for stealing the rice? [1]



**Language**

9. Give a synonym for "labourer" [paragraph 7]. [1]
10. Find synonyms, from the paragraph indicated, for the following words:
  - a) trustworthy [paragraph 4]
  - b) done [paragraph 7]
  - c) plans [paragraph 12] [3]
11. Explain the use of the comma line 1.  
*"One day Ooka, a wise old judge in Japan, received a visit from the rice store owner."* [1]
12. What part of speech (i.e. common noun, proper adjective) is:
  - 12.1 "guard" in paragraph 4. [1]
  - 12.2 "eighty" in paragraph 4 [1]
13. Make a proper adjective from the word Japan. [1]

{20}



## ADDENDUM E

### Exercises from a traditional textbook

#### 3. Comprehension

Read the passage and answer the questions that follow:

Few people would think of a whale as a clever animal. In fact, the early harpooner, creeping up on a pod of feeding whales, thought them rather stupid. He had learnt by experience just where they were likely to surface, and he rarely failed to manoeuvre his boat into position for a shot.

A whale is a huge animal. The blue whale, for example, often exceeds 30 metres in length and may have a mass of more than 140 tons. But that is not all. Within its bulk, it is now believed, lies a brain that makes it the most intelligent creature on earth next to man.

Scientists have found that hunted whales have learnt many tricks to avoid being caught. A few years ago, for instance, many whales began to run straight instead of in circles. As a result they were able to outdistance the much slower whale catchers.

Now that faster ships have made its speed useless to it, the whale has started to turn in its tracks under water. And what is more, the hunted whale seems to warn other whales over a wide area.

Whales have changed in other ways, too. They have grown far more restless. Once frightened, they travel fast all night, so that an area rich in whales at dusk may be empty the next morning.

The whale population of the world is dwindling rapidly. Fortunately, other sources of meat and oil have been found, so that the slaughter may stop before the whale becomes as extinct as the dodo.

1. Who thought of the whale as a stupid animal?
2. How clever is the whale now thought to be?
3. Why may the killing of whales stop soon?
4. What do whales do these days once they have been frightened?
5. What did the early harpooner know about the whales he was hunting?
6. Name one trick the whale has learnt to avoid being caught.
7. Which bird is no longer found on earth?
8. Which sentences tell us that there are now fewer whales than there were in the past?
9. Give a good reason for each of the following statements :
  - (a) Some day there may be no more whales in the world.
  - (b) The whale is now believed to be a very clever animal.
  - (c) Hunted whales sometimes turn in their tracks under water.
10. Which word(s) does the writer use to express:
  - (a) a number of whales?
  - (b) to leave far behind?
  - (c) died out so that none are left?
  - (d) to move skilfully?

#### Exercise 1.1

In the above passage we read about a harpooner (one who uses a harpoon, i.e. a spear with a rope attached for catching whales) and a scientist (one who has studied some branch of science). What do we call:

1. one who works with bricks and mortar?
2. one who looks after sheep at pasture?
3. one who sells vegetables?
4. one who sells fresh fruit?
5. one who sells cigarettes, tobacco, etc.?
6. one who sells fish?
7. one who sells cloth and other dress materials?
8. one who sells herbs (to be used as medicine)?
9. one who sells clothes for men and boys?
10. one who is employed in a town (city) to put out fires?
11. one who breaks into a house in order to steal?

12. one who buys things in a shop?
13. one who is ill in hospital?
14. one who flies an aeroplane?
15. one who makes men's suits, etc.?
16. one who works with electrical goods?
17. one who is in charge of a library?
18. one who attends to a person's teeth?
19. one who repairs cars in a garage?
20. one who sells flowers?

B. Give the simple present tense of each verb in brackets. Do orally:

1. Who (to live) in that house, Ellen?
2. There (to come) Bob and his sister.
3. The Orange River (to rise) in Lesotho.
4. One of the boys usually (to ring) the bell.
5. We often (to visit) my uncle on the farm.
6. The postman (to deliver) our letters once a day.
7. A bus (to run) between those two towns.
8. Some of our hens (to lay) well.
9. Reeds and grass (to grow) on the banks of the river.
10. An honest boy always (to speak) the truth.
11. Neither this book nor that one (to belong) to Alice.
12. I (to know) that part of the Transvaal well.
13. Dick, as well as James, always (to catch) the seven o'clock bus.
14. None of these trees (to bear) much fruit.
15. Rain and sunshine (to make) the crops grow well.
16. Neither of the brothers (to play) for the first team.
17. Mary (to look) older than Alice.
18. Each of the two girls (to sing) beautifully.
19. Gordon and Neville (to help) their father on the farm.
20. We usually (to spend) our holidays at the sea.

Choose the correct form of the verb in brackets, making sure that the verb agrees with its subject in number :

1. Alfred and Alan (seem, seems) to be great friends.
2. One of them (farm, farms) in the Sasolburg district.
3. In autumn the leaves (fall, falls) to the ground.
4. Our magistrate (fine, fines) drunken drivers very heavily.
5. This pair of shoes (fit, fits) me well.
6. Our swallows (fly, flies) north at the beginning of winter.
7. Mother (fry, fries) the eggs in butter.
8. Neither of them (read, reads) as well as Jane.
9. Hornets (sting, stings) when they are disturbed.
10. The photo of the children (stand, stands) on a small table.
11. Mary (sing, sings) more beautifully than Eva.
12. Either Bob or Percy usually (drive, drives) the combine.
13. In summer I (sleep, sleeps) on the back stoep.
14. Everything (depend, depends) on the weather.
15. Each of our neighbours (keep, keeps) a dog.
16. Cora usually (watch, watches) television for an hour at night.
17. The common house-fly (lay, lays) thousands of eggs.
18. We (pass, passes) the post office on our way to school.
19. My father (rise, rises) at six every morning.
20. In northern Tanzania it usually (rain, rains) at night.

All of the exercises above were taken from: ASV Barnes 1990, pp 1-3, 5, 14: *English made Easy, The Informal Way*, Standard 6. Nasou Limited

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