

**Action Research: Exploring the use print media as a  
resource in the teaching of English as a Second  
Language.**

**Thesis**

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By

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED

<b>CCD:</b>	Centre for Cognitive Development
<b>CLA:</b>	Critical Language Awareness
<b>CLT:</b>	Communicative Language Awareness
<b>CNE:</b>	Christian National Education
<b>DET:</b>	Department of Education
<b>ESL:</b>	English as a Second language
<b>GC-R:</b>	Grammar Consciousness- Raising
<b>INSET:</b>	In-service Education of Teachers
<b>LAD:</b>	Language Acquisition Device
<b>LOLT:</b>	Language of Learning and Teaching
<b>LRC:</b>	Learners' Representative Council
<b>NECC:</b>	National Education Co-ordinating Committee
<b>NEPI:</b>	National Education Policy Investigation
<b>NLP:</b>	National Language Project
<b>OBE:</b>	Outcomes-Based Education
<b>OBET:</b>	Outcomes-Based Education and Training
<b>PEU:</b>	Professional Educators Union
<b>PRESET:</b>	Pre-service Education of Teachers
<b>SADTU:</b>	South African Democratic Teachers Union
<b>SGB:</b>	School Governing Body
<b>UNESCO:</b>	United Nations Education, Scientific and cultural Organisation

## Abbreviations/codes that refer to the Appendices

<b>AP:</b>	Interview with the Principal
<b>FG I:</b>	First Focus Group Interview (learners)_
<b>FG II:</b>	Second Focus Group Interview (learners)
<b>FG III:</b>	Third Focus Group Interview (learners)

<b>FN I:</b>	First Field Notes
<b>FN II:</b>	Second Field Notes
<b>FN III:</b>	Third Field Notes
<b>LOS I:</b>	Lesson Observation Schedule (teacher dominance)
<b>LOS II:</b>	Lesson Observation Schedule (General)
<b>LOBS:</b>	Consolidated Lesson Observation Sheet
<b>R.D:</b>	Researcher's Diary
<b>TH:</b>	The Afrikaans Teacher
<b>TO:</b>	The English Class Teacher
<b>4A:</b>	Learner Profile Questionnaire
<b>4.B.1:</b>	Learner Questionnaire (End of Cycle 1)
<b>4.B.2:</b>	Learner Questionnaire (End of Cycle 2)
<b>5A:</b>	Print Media Titles Sheet
<b>5B:</b>	"Pupils praised for not avenging deaths" (newspaper article)
<b>5C:</b>	"Just who is responsible" (newspaper article)
<b>5D:</b>	"Recent cases of violence" (newspaper article)
<b>5E:</b>	"Team work" (cartoon)
<b>5F:</b>	"Girl (14) has 'teacher's baby'" (newspaper article)
<b>5G:</b>	"Girl with baby wins right to go back to class" (newspaper article)
<b>6A:</b>	Learners' Self-Assessment form
<b>6B:</b>	Learners' Group Assessment form

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## ABSTRACT

South African education has been going through a process of transformation: from a traditional, transmission system to one of a more progressive nature. In the new curriculum, Curriculum 2005 anchored on Outcomes-based Education (OBE), focus is laid on critical reflection, innovation and creativity by classroom participants. Learning situations are expected to promote flexibility, co-operation and relevance of teaching/learning materials.

This research looks at these aspects in the English Second Language (ESL) situation where print media articles are used as resource. Other than being a rich resource for language, print media texts have been found to be appropriate for this exploration because of their potential to offer opportunities for critical reflection and interaction with authentic issues. Unlike uncritical reliance on textbooks, the proper use of media articles can give the teachers and learners the space to select relevant and exciting materials for their situations.

In this study, the research was done through action research where I (the researcher) actually taught the lessons in collaboration with the English teacher. The teaching method was influenced by the Freirean style of liberatory teaching where critical reflection, socio-political relevance and co-operation are crucial elements.

The action research was done in two cycles. Experiences in the first cycle pointed to, among other aspects, the fact that the learners could not work in a co-operative way as they were not used to it. Addressing this problem consequently became the basis of the second cycle where the skills of co-operative learning were taught before the learners engaged in further lessons.

The conclusions drawn from this research point to the importance of the teacher as an agent in the learning process if the demands of progressive and liberatory teaching are to be met. It has thus been concluded that elements such as critical thinking, creativity, flexibility and selection/development of relevant materials presuppose the existence of a well-trained teacher who is skilled and able to make these possible.

In the light of my findings, my major recommendation is that teacher development needs to be strengthened so that more emphasis is placed on enhancing the teacher's ability to critique texts and improve his or her own practice, acquiring the skills to teach in a critical way and achieving the learning competencies.

## INTRODUCTION

Since 1998 the Department of Education in South Africa has been involved in the process of implementing a new curriculum called Curriculum 2005 or Outcomes-Based Education to attune to the new political dispensation grounded on freedom, equality and democracy.

This is a shift away from the content-based, transmission curriculum that characterised Christian National Education (CNE) and Bantu Education which, resonated with the apartheid political ideology until 1994. These ideas point to the fact that education policy-making is a political act or process. McLaren (1989:160) aptly observes that:

The traditional view of classroom instruction and learning as a neutral process antiseptically removed from the concepts of power, politics, history, and context can no longer be endorsed.

The fact that the apartheid political system was premised on undemocratic principles and was illegitimate, as it represented only white minority interests, saw its architects and proponents bent on encouraging uncritical citizenry. Apartheid education therefore did not encourage any sense of critique by the learners. Enslin (1990) related this dimension to the influence of Fundamental Pedagogics which dominated Black and Afrikaner teacher-training institutions. This home-grown philosophy of education was developed to give a basis for apartheid education. The major tenet of fundamental pedagogics is the establishment of poles of authority between the teacher and the pupil, whereby the teacher is the authority of knowledge, and in authority in the learning situation, and the pupil is an empty vessel who depends on the knowing teacher on his or her way to 'maturity' (Taylor and Vinjevid 1999:132).

This explains the teacher-centredness, pupil passivity, rote-learning and related features that characterised teaching and learning in the majority of South African schools (Taylor and Vinjevid, 1999). I uphold their suggestion that this situation can be overcome by 'the propagation of a liberatory ideology, and the institution of systems which encourage teachers to follow learner-centred classroom practices' (133). My opinion is that the underlying principles of Curriculum 2005 entail

liberatory and learner-centred practices. This makes it (Curriculum 2005) consonant with the new political ideology.

However, Curriculum 2005/OBE is being implemented at a time when the conditions at schools are not conducive to the successful introduction of a new curriculum. These circumstances in South African education relate to, amongst others, a lack of resources, a demoralised teaching corps, a shortage of textbooks, overcrowded classrooms, little or no equipment (Davidoff and Lazarus 1997; *Sunday Times* September 26 1999). Jansen (1999a: 13) believes that the sheer deprivation of resources and inherited inequalities will damn OBE success in South Africa. Mohamed (1999: 168) affirms this scenario and points out that 'the introduction of Curriculum 2005 is occurring in a fragile and volatile context of rapid societal change and a huge legacy of underresourcing'. Unlike Jansen, Mohamed feels the implementation process should not be delayed by these circumstances.

Under this scenario, South Africa needs innovative, creative and competent teachers who will rise to these challenges. Cornia Pretorius (*Sunday Times* January 9 2000) argues that 'teacher training could go some way towards helping educators to be innovative when they do not have the best facilities and resources'. This, however, should not suggest that teachers need not be given material support. No matter how creative and innovative teachers can be, the Department (or the government) still has the responsibility to provide resources to schools. Thus the argument by the State President Thabo Mbeki (*Sowetan* January 11 2000) that 'it is not a good classroom that teaches a child but a good teacher' could be misleading. However, Mbeki's statement has to be seen in the context that the Department does recognise its responsibility, especially in that they had promised that textbooks would be delivered on time that year, 2000.

The president's statement subtly echoes the remark by Education Minister, Kader Asmal (*The Star* 27 September 1999) that the public does not believe that teachers are worth what they are being paid. However, I think that many teachers are trying their best against odds to bring about quality teaching. Davidoff and Lazarus (1997: 4) clearly express a similar sentiment:

Yet, in spite of the most disabling realities many teachers have managed to achieve remarkable successes in terms of fostering a real love for learning and by being extremely innovative with almost no resources.

Such situations, in my opinion, need liberated and creative minds. I thus espouse the liberatory notion of education where education is viewed as praxis (Freire 1972, McLaren 1989). In this vein liberatory teaching recognises learners as an active rather than a passive force in the classroom. Classroom participants (teachers and learners) are expected to engage in critical reflection on issues of curriculum in order to make learning meaningful to their wider social and political lives. In this sense, therefore, prescribed curriculum content is not the most important feature in a liberatory classroom. The Freirean education ideology in fact liberates both the teacher and learner, and empowers them to select and construct their own curriculum content relevant to their contexts (Freire 1972, Shor and Freire 1987, Ferreira and Ferreira 1997). This is where the competence and creativity of the teacher is essential.

These liberatory aspects of the Freirean ideology form the basis for the new education philosophy in South Africa because Curriculum 2005/OBE embraces praxis in that:

- (a) it relates the world of work and the world of learning
- (b) it acknowledges the need to use knowledge and skills across the curriculum to solve real-life problems and that
- (c) it prepares learners for life outside school

(from Wallace, *et al* 1998:5)

The question of relevance and flexibility in terms of the curriculum is recognised by the fact that Curriculum 2005/OBE defines the *outcomes* and not the *content* of the programmes (Wallace *et al*: 7). These are important features of liberatory teaching. The Department of Education (1998) also refers to learning support materials, rather than prescribed textbooks, which may be created from a wide variety of sources. This certainly liberates and empowers teachers and learners to select their own teaching/learning materials.

In my experience as a teacher I have found textbooks, in a system of syllabuses, centralised examinations and certification, to be limiting, imposing, encouraging memorisation and, above all, stifling creativity and critical reflection. They often

become a crutch to the lazy teacher. My experience with teachers in such situations is that teachers accept the textbook content, format and suggested processes uncritically and as absolute authority. A textbook, used in the so-called traditional methods, promotes rote-learning and decontextualisation of content through its pre-determined and pre-packaged format.

I think it is important at this period of our education history 'to break the dependency of teachers on material which is handed out by higher authorities' (Robinson and Mentor, 1991:218). It is this dependency on textbooks that leads to teaching/learning paralysis at the beginning of every school calendar year because such dependent teachers cannot start the teaching/learning process until the Department supplies textbooks (*Sowetan* January 11 2000, *Sunday Times* January 9 2000).

I thus align myself with Criticos' (1991: 228) suggestion that teachers:

...must be able to create resources and to be discerning of those resources produced by others. They need to take care that they ensure that their own and external resources are relevant to the lived experience of their students.

Criticos (*ibid*) aptly concludes that 'what teachers *make* of a resource is just as important as what it is'. This view thus suggests teacher involvement in the construction of curriculum content and ability to use it effectively. This is an element of liberatory pedagogy.

I am inspired to involve myself by any means necessary in projects that would tackle or challenge the transmission, content-based education that promotes rote-learning. This inspiration (or anger) is drawn from the fact that I was subjected to this kind of instruction from the day I started my primary school at Lephepane Primary in 1975 until I passed my matric in 1985 at Mokhapa High School in a rural settlement in the former Lebowa homeland, Northern Province: twelve years of inferior, transmission education in the Black apartheid South Africa!

To cap it all, I went to a historically Black university where I was subjected to a further four years of Fundamental Pedagogics, a philosophy that dovetailed and further entrenched the traditional rote-learning that characterised my school days.

So, after four years of Fundamental Pedagogics, I was ideally set up to continue this vicious cycle of transmission teaching and learning. However, the situation in Black universities during those years was highly charged with the politics of resistance, and brought tension between academic and political interests in my life as a student. It is out of this tension that I developed a sense of awareness of what Bantu Education was doing to me.

When, in 1990, I went to a historically white and liberal university for postgraduate studies, I became conscious of the difference between traditional and progressive education. I was, in most cases, overwhelmed by the kind of space students were given to challenge texts and the lecturers in a critical and mature way. I will always cherish this episode in my educational career.

Alas, the next year, I was back to a traditional teaching situation as a teacher-trainer in a college of education in the former Lebowa. I was at this college until 1997. This was a frustrating period because one was expected to “prepare” the student-teachers for the DET (Department of Education and Training) examinations which were content-based. So, I had to follow the syllabi because a different approach did not arm the students to get the required goal: the certificate. After all, all that the students openly declared they wanted was that piece of paper that served as a key to a job, prosperity and opportunity for them to uplift themselves, their families and, perhaps, relatives.

I am at present attached to a Continuous Professional Development (CPD) centre in the Department of Education, Northern Province, at Ritavi near Tzaneen. I am still involved in teacher-training although in a slightly different way, as an education development officer. I find it exciting because of the current process of implementing Curriculum 2005/OBE, a progressive education philosophy. A sense of fulfilment at last!

In this study I, therefore, attempt to explore a progressive approach to teaching English using print media. This is motivated by the realisation that the use of newspaper and magazine articles can help to encourage critical reflection, arouse interest and provide relevant content because both the teacher and the learners are in a position to select appropriate articles according to their context, outcomes and

learning needs. A striking aspect about newspaper and magazine articles is their authenticity in terms of the language use and portrayal of issues.

Schroenn (no date) suggests that one may envisage many valuable group discussions, report backs and vocabulary exercises springing from the use of the newspaper as a curriculum resource. On this account I suggest that if teachers were to work towards the development of the critical aspect in language construction and deconstruction in an English language classroom, they should do so in close relation to media education, because an important aspect of media education is the development of a critical faculty. Prinsloo (1993: 5) rightly observes that:

The role attached to Media Education is to develop and nurture the critical abilities of learners, to nurture autonomous thinkers who approach information not as transparent, but as constructions that are selective and partial.

The objective of this study is to explore, with a class teacher and learners, the use of print media as a resource in the teaching of English as a second language. The intention is not to prove anything, but to learn and understand; to experience with the classroom participants the teaching/learning process involving the use of print media articles as resources in a liberatory way by engaging in a co-operative learning method.

The plan of study is such that this section serves to introduce the study by giving it context, by introducing major issues engaged in the study and pointing to my personal background and motivation for doing the study.

Chapter 1 gives a detailed background to the study in the light of the wider socio-political context of South African education. The aims of this study are developed in more detail.

Chapter 2 outlines the theoretical underpinning of this study whereby I declare my position on theories of epistemology, pedagogy, and the learning of English as a

second language. This is done through review of literature on the said theories and on media education and Curriculum 2005/OBE.

In chapter 3, I discuss the research methodology and research methods used in the study. I begin by giving broad exposition of research methodologies or paradigms and how they relate to diverse understandings of epistemology and ontology.

The discussion part of the study is captured in chapters 4 and 5, followed by a conclusion and recommendations in chapter 6. In chapter 4 the reconnaissance and teaching in the first cycle are discussed, while discussion of the teaching in the second cycle is presented in chapter five.

In summary, this section has, as a way of introducing the rest of this research project, given a general view of the research question and put it in the wider educational and socio-political context in South Africa. I also declare my background which may enable the reader to see where I am coming from, and how my history may influence the research design and interpretation. The section has also given a brief outline of how the project is planned.

The next chapter gives the background to the study where my motivation to undertake the study, and my position on crucial issues on pedagogy are extrapolated

## CHAPTER ONE: BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

### 1.1. Introduction:

As I write this chapter, education practice, that is, learning and teaching, in South Africa is in a state of transition. Teachers thus find themselves having to adjust to 'new' teaching paradigms that are in line with the new education policy, Curriculum 2005 and Outcomes Based Education (OBE), reflecting the new political dispensation of democracy. This underlines the socio-political nature of any educational policy because:

...public schooling has, among a number of other goals, the goal of infusing the next generation of citizens with a set of values considered politically appropriate by the government of the day (Taylor *et al* 1999: 15).

Before the democratic dispensation in 1994, education provision in South Africa was under the political hegemony of apartheid characterised by racial discrimination, oppression and authoritarianism (Davidoff and Lazarus 1997). The education policy of Christian National Education and Bantu Education were part of the apartheid social system (Kruss 1988: 11). In order to perpetuate and nourish the socio-political system, education practice had to employ complementary, 'appropriate methodologies'. A statement by Hartzenburg in 1980 (as quoted in Christie 1985: 13) attests to this view: 'Education policies in South Africa must be dictated by the apartheid philosophy'. Tendencies in education with the potential to discourage a sense of criticism on the part of the teachers and learners were logically adopted. This explains why apartheid education employed traditional teaching facets exemplified by rote-learning, memorisation, teacher-dominated and exam-oriented classroom practices. Taylor and Vinjevold (1999:132) refer to submissions made by Enslin (1990) Hartshorne (1992) Chisholm (1993) and Hofmeyr (1993) to suggest that the thinking and practice of the teaching corps, especially in Afrikaans and Black teacher training, was detrimentally affected by the doctrine of Fundamental Pedagogics. It promoted the Apartheid ideology.

### **1.2. The Influence of Fundamental Pedagogics:**

Fundamental Pedagogics, on account of its Calvinist orientation (Lewin 1974), regards the teacher (adult) as the one who knows and is charged with the responsibility to lead the unknowing child to maturity. How can the unknowing entity (pupil) challenge issues, and be critical in the classroom? How can he/she meaningfully participate in class discussions? This approach to education necessitates the “banking” view of education (Freire 1972). As Enslin (1990) observes, this system produces teachers who can but only be docile tools that make critical reflection illegitimate.

Teachers therefore are bound to employ teaching methods that are dominated by authoritarianism and a lack of critical development. Christie (1985) records the remarkable discrepancies in the provision of facilities in the apartheid education system between White and Black schools. There is evidence of this legacy in the schools, and it is not surprising that, today, Taylor and Vinjevold (1999: 138) state that ‘discriminatory and authoritarian practices by the previous government resulted in the underresourcing of most school communities’.

No one needs to guess that the intention to under-resource Black schools and disempower their communities was to perpetuate the broader socio-political system of inequality and dominance. As far back as 1953, H.F. Verwoerd, the then Minister of Native Affairs, had proclaimed:

When I have control over native education, I will reform it so that natives will be taught from childhood that equality with Europeans is not for them  
(in Christie 1985 : 12).

### **1.3. Apartheid language in education policy:**

To sustain this inequality, among other things, apartheid education introduced a language in education policy that ensured that Black people remained in the ‘reserves’ and separated from each other according to ethnic grouping. Black students were expected, through the Bantu Education Act of 1953, to have extended use of mother tongue (covering the whole primary education), both English and Afrikaans being media of instruction on a 50-50 basis in the secondary education (Taylor and Vinjevold 1999, Christie 1985, Kruss 1988, NEPI 1993). The idea of how the

apartheid political system 'exploited' the language issue has been aptly recorded by NEPI (1993: 181):

In contemporary South Africa this [language issue] is probably the most sensitive aspect ... largely because of the way in which it has been manipulated by the government in the service of apartheid.

This, including other factors, resulted in the 1976 student resistance that paved the way for the Education and Training Act of 1979, which stated the mother tongue should be the medium of instruction at primary school. The parents or schools had the option to change the medium only after standard two.

Mother tongue instruction continued to be opposed until the 1983 De Lange Commission into education provision recommended three alternatives, which only became applicable in 1990, when the liberation movement was unbanned, and Act 90 of 1979 was amended. According to the amendment, the following options were made available (see NEPI 1993: 183):

1. To go straight for the long-term medium
2. A sudden transfer from the mother tongue to a second language medium.
3. A graduated transfer from the mother tongue to a second language medium.

In the majority of Black settlements, especially schools in the former homelands (and this study is located at a school in the former Gazankulu homeland, now part of the Northern Province) public schools still maintained the language policy proclaimed by Act 90 of 1979. They particularly maintained the option where English replaced mother tongue as medium of instruction from standard three (grade five).

However, Vinjevold (1999: 210) points out that:

There has been no systematic survey of options chosen by parent bodies in the early 1990's but anecdotal evidence suggests that many schools adopted English as the language of learning from Grade 1.

This situation, as it pertains to attitudes to language, has created a scenario where 'middle class' Black parents, with the transition from racist dispensation to non-racial society, seized the opportunity and sent their children to English-medium schools.

The Department of Education has also acknowledged that 'a significant and disturbing number of South African parents want their children to be taught in English' (*The Star*, May 14 1998). This, I think, is due to the understanding that 'language is one of the routes of access to power' (NEPI 1993: 180). Indeed English has become a dominant language. There have been various reasons reported for acceptance of English by many black parents (Christie 1985, Gaganakis 1992, NEPI 1993). According to the National Language Project (NLP) (as quoted in Taylor and Vinjevold 1999:220) for many parents 'English is not seen as a language but as a resource. Delaying acquisition of the resource is incomprehensible' to them. In the South African context, English is now been seen as 'a neutral' language in the sense that many people are suspicious of any attempt to make instruction in an African language official. African languages have come to be associated with the policy of apartheid. Pennycook (1994:10) quotes Kachru as claiming that in such situations English 'has acquired a *neutrality* in a linguistic context where native languages, dialects, and styles sometimes have acquired undesirable connotations'.

Thus the status and socio-political power of languages became a determining factor in language choices. These decisions usually are not made on rational and educational grounds, but on emotional and popular grounds. For instance, research (e.g. Cummins in Brown 1994) has shown that the child's primary language, usually his/her first language, enhances cognitive development and facilitates understanding of concepts.

#### **1.4. What informs the current education policy?**

Education in South Africa, as it has been discussed, has always been 'a site of struggle' between progressive and apartheid forces (Davidoff and Lazarus 1997: 3). During the period 1983 to 1989 Black schools were characterised by chaos, crises, conflict and confrontations between students (representing progressive aspirations) and apartheid forces. This situation had led to the formation of the National Education Co-ordinating Council (NECC) in 1985. It was the NECC that presented alternatives to apartheid education as early as 1986 with the propagation of the People's Education.

The principle of People's Education clearly pointed to a liberatory philosophy to education, with critical, democratic, reflective positions about teaching and learning.

In the movement, 'education is held to have a definite political purpose. The theoretical basis for this is drawn from educationists such as Freire' (Kruss 1988:10). This is a direct opposite to the Calvinist view of education as propagated by Fundamental Pedagogics and apartheid education.

A look at the following statement by Mkhathshwa (then a key NECC official) as quoted in Kruss (1988: 12) points to the liberatory dimension of People's Education elaborating alternative education as:

...one which prepares people for *total human liberation*; one which helps people to be *creative*, to *develop a critical mind*, to help people analyse; one that prepares people for *full participation* in social, political or cultural spheres of society [my italics].

These principles are reflected in the current education philosophy of Curriculum 2005 and OBE. The critical outcomes as set out by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) upon which Curriculum 2005 is grounded indicate the affinity between People's Education and Curriculum 2005 (see Wallace *et al* 1998: 60, Department of Education 1997). These principles/outcomes align education to an open democracy where learners are encouraged to be creative, reflective, analytical and critical so that they can fully participate in their socio-political world.

Taylor and Vinjevoid (1999:133) put this association explicitly by pointing out that solutions to the legacy of Fundamental Pedagogics should involve 'propagation of a liberatory ideology, and the institution of systems which encourage teachers to follow learner-centred classroom practices. These are the premises underlying Curriculum 2005'.

Given the legacy of apartheid education inequities with regard to facilities, overcrowded classrooms, poor teacher training, traditional teaching practices resulting from Fundamental Pedagogics, a low teaching morale, culture of resistance and strikes and tensions, especially in Black schools, the practice of Curriculum 2005 will remain a steep challenge.

Davidoff and Lazarus (1997: 4) quite fairly sketch out the situation as follows:

Lack of resources and, to a certain extent, lack of vision has meant that things have remained much the same. And it promises to get worse before it gets better. Threats of retrenchment of teachers, of insufficient money to buy resources, both human and material, so necessary for our educational reconstruction, make the future seem bleak...In terms of support for those teachers currently in service, there has been a clear lack of an enabling policy environment.

Teachers, both Black and White, need a shift of paradigm, as Hartshorne (1986:131) predicted “no post-apartheid education will be possible without post-apartheid teachers”. However, Van der Westhuizen and Lewis (1998) observe that ‘many educators are adjusting what they do, and developing programmes and materials to fit the new system’. I nevertheless, based on my experience as a “subject advisor” in the Northern Province, cast doubt on this and attest a contrary observation. Curriculum 2005 is still a chimera for many, many teachers!

Wallace *et al* (1998: 5) observe that OBE ‘wants to help teachers to move away from rote learning, irrelevant subject matter and authoritarian values that have had such a negative effect on our society’. But, I think OBE *expects* and necessarily *demand*s of teachers “to move away” from such traditional teaching practices.

### 1.5. The New Curriculum:

Are teachers ready? Taylor and Vinjevold (1999: 133-135) record indications that despite teachers’ familiarity with the jargon and willingness to apply Curriculum 2005 this does not extend beyond mere newspeak as they spontaneously continue to teach in the traditional way characterised by “data recall”, “drilling”, “memorisation” and uncritical use of textbooks. A stunning observation that I have made is that reading, and the teaching of reading, has been all but abdicated. Teachers think there is no reading in OBE .

A few educationists have expressed their dissatisfaction with the way the Department of Education has gone about implementing OBE. Jansen (1997a) bases his criticism on the Department’s “rushing” the implementation for political purposes, while Davidoff and Lazarus (1997) and Van der Westhuizen and Lewis (1998) are concerned about a lack of proper involvement in curriculum change. Davidoff and Lazarus (1997:5) assert that:

Educational policy needs to be developed in such a way that teachers have a supportive framework within which they can participate actively in processes of change and development ... this remains a daunting challenge at all levels of policy formulation.

Indeed, teachers have not been involved but have been made implementers of the curriculum. Van der Westhuizen and Lewis (1998: 4) attribute this lack of involvement to the alienating discourse of OBE materials. As a result they record that 'it is important for educators to come to terms with the dynamics of curriculum change'. Educators should not just be implementers, but also be critically engaged in the implementation process.

At present only Grades 1, 2 and 7 have implemented Curriculum 2005. Grade 8 is expected to implement it this year, 2001. However one can reasonably claim that the majority of teachers are aware of the new ideology and education philosophy, but cannot teach in a progressive way.

#### **1.6. Focus of the study:**

This study was done at Grade 10 level, which was expected to be following the Interim Core Syllabus for English Second Language Higher Grade (Department of Education, 1995). This syllabus has communicative competence - the ability to use language appropriately – as a major concern (Murray and Van der Mescht 1995). The syllabus indicates that teachers need to use the communicative language teaching method. This teaching methodology will be discussed in the next chapter.

Against the background portrayed in this chapter, the purpose of my study was to explore, with the Grade 10 teacher in a Black school, the use of print media texts. These texts were to be taught in a progressive manner, which extended beyond the communicative language teaching methodology. They would also embrace liberatory teaching practices which in Taylor and Vinjevold's terms are 'the premise underlying Curriculum 2005', in the teaching of English as a Second Language.

Despite the multilingual-bias of the present language in education policy, the "unwritten" language policy of the school at which this study is located has English as the supposed language of teaching and learning, and it is also taught as a subject.

A prominent feature of progressive teaching is the notion of authenticity and relevance of classroom practice. This, therefore, places enormous responsibility on the teacher and learners to select and /or create teaching/learning materials that would maximise real learning according to their particular environments.

**1.7. Conclusion:**

This thus provided the rationale for me to select a media resource, rather than a language textbook, as a potential means towards teaching language in a liberating manner.

## CHAPTER TWO: THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING

### 2.1. Introduction:

Educational practice is influenced by the practitioner's view of the nature of knowledge, that is his/her epistemological position. The teaching goals, methods, the classroom relations (attitudes), curriculum creation and assessment of learning normally reflect this influence.

One's location in a particular epistemological position therefore directs one's educational practice. Hinchey (1998:38) elucidates this aspect by comparing educational theory with 'traveling toward a specific destination':

While educators may use a common phrase to describe their goals ... the specific way they define or conceptualize "knowledge" will involve goals as different educationally as California and Florida are geographically. And again educationally as well as geographically, vastly different goals dictate vastly different routes and assessment of progress.

In this chapter I intend to give a brief exposition of the two main epistemological positions, reflect on the Freirean liberatory pedagogy (because it informs this study), discuss ESL theory, Media Education and OBE, the latter being the current official curriculum policy in South Africa.

### 2.2. Epistemological Positions: Positivism and Constructivism

#### 2.2.1. Definition:

Epistemology is a way of viewing or explaining the nature of 'knowledge'. One way is that of explaining knowledge as a real 'thing' existing outside of any human being. According to this view knowledge is external and reflects reality or the "truth" which is untainted by human values.

### 2.2.2. Positivism:

Giroux (1981:43-44) asserts that in the positivist view knowledge is assumed to be objective and value free because values are considered as the nemeses of 'facts'.

McKay and Romm (1992) point out that in this position knowledge is 'depersonalised' and perceived as a representation or 'true' copy of reality. Thus knowledge, as Hinchey (1998) observes, is there waiting to be discovered through methodical exploration or scientific investigation that will uncover this 'truth' as verifiable information. This view of knowledge is called positivism, and it informs most of what is generally referred to as the traditional teaching approach.

### 2.2.3. Constructivism:

The constructivist position, on the contrary, does not view knowledge as existing outside the human consciousness. Knowledge is constructed by human beings. It is not, therefore, something existing independently in the world just waiting for us to find it. Knowledge is not static, nor a fixed body of facts. Frankenstein (1987) acknowledges Freire's view that knowledge is continually created and recreated as people reflect and act on the world. This points to the indispensability of the human element in this view of knowledge. 'There is no knowledge without a knower' (John Mayher, as quoted by Hinchey (1998: 45). McKay and Romm (1992: 70-71) describe knowledge as 'world construction activity' to further indicate the 'process' aspect of knowledge. Knowledge, therefore, is not a finished product or thing that is neutral. Shor and Freire (1987: 12) also talk of 'the myth of value-free enquiry'.

### 2.2.4. Conclusion:

I am of the view that knowledge is socially constructed, and therefore, the constructivist view of education informs my perspective on education and teaching/learning practice. The Freirean popular education methodology (liberatory pedagogy) directs my teaching which is grounded on the constructivist view of knowledge particularly in that 'Paulo Freire insists that there is no dichotomy between objectivity and subjectivity...' (Frankenstein (1987: 181). For this reason, I will take the liberty of reflecting on this methodology in the next section.

### 2.3. Reflection on the Freirean Liberatory Pedagogy:

Popular education methodology, the teaching style based on the views of Brazilian critical pedagogue, Paulo Freire, came about as an alternative to the positivist-influenced traditional teaching paradigm of transmission teaching. Based on the premise that knowledge exists 'out there', positivist theorists believe only experts have the means capable to access it. This therefore suggests that the teacher is the reservoir of knowledge while the student is a helpless empty vessel, which has to be filled with 'facts' or knowledge. Already, this situation implies (and encourages) a relationship of inequality and domination between the teacher and pupil(s). In contradistinction, Freirean critical pedagogy recognises pupils as subjects rather than as mere objects. Berthoff (1987:xviii) captures this aspect by observing that in this pedagogy 'recognition on the part of the teacher, involves acknowledgement of what the learner knows and respect for that knowledge'.

Based on the constructivist notion of knowledge as a process rather than a product, the methodology is concerned with what, in their real communities, the students can use the information for. This is opposed to the notion of students to merely retain the memorised facts until the 'right' moment, normally test and examination time, to regurgitate them.

Because of the given relationship of inequality in the situation (where the teacher is an expert and the student knows nothing yet), Hinchey (*ibid*: 49) postulates that 'a logical characteristic of positivist education is the lecture (teacher talk)'. Freire (1972) describes this characteristic of traditional teaching as "narration sickness" which the positivist education suffers from. Davidoff and Van den Berg (undated: 2) describe this teaching as 'simply a mechanical transferring of information'. In the process of narration or transfer teaching, these facts 'become lifeless and petrified' (Freire 1972: 45). The view suggested by these descriptions is that there is no meaningful interaction in such process and, as a result, the 'banking' concept of education has become tightly associated with the positivist narrative mode of teaching (Freire 1972, Shor and Freire 1987, Frankenstein 1987).

According to Freire (1972) the recognition of reality as external to human experience makes the teacher's task merely that of 'filling' the students with facts. The banking metaphor in the narrative way of teaching does not consider knowledge as emerging after a process of interaction, creation and re-creation. This instead is a central feature of constructivist education. The constructivist position regards interaction as 'inquiry men [*sic*] pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other' (Freire 1972).

Under the influence of the positivist transmission perspective, on the contrary:

Education thus becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor. Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiques and 'makes deposits (Freire *ibid*: 45-6).

Following this observation I conclude that, in the positivist sense, educational practice is seen as a rigid one-way transaction in a hierarchical pattern, with no genuine communication between the 'unequals' in the educational setting. An educational system that views education in this perspective will have its practice conducted in a spirit of authoritarianism rather than authority (Davidoff and Lazarus 1997), teacher dominance and related attitudes and practices.

Critical pedagogy places itself in a position opposed to traditional pedagogy regarding educational conceptions and practice. I will outline the perspective of critical pedagogy upon which Freirean liberatory teaching is based, regarding some pertinent educational conceptions:

- (a) **View of knowledge:** There is a relationship between education and society because knowledge is socially constructed. Knowledge is not an entity or a finished product existing outside human existence. This then suggests participatory learning and perpetual reflection by teachers and learners. 'Knowledge does not exist apart from human consciousness; it is produced by us collectively searching and trying to make sense of our world' (Frankenstein, in Shor, 1987:180). This assertion negates the 'realist' and 'finished' conception of knowledge. Critical pedagogy, understandably, maintains that 'knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention...hopeful inquiry men [*sic*] pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other' (Freire *ibid*: 46).

(b) **Relevance of content/curriculum creation:** Teachers, together with their learners need to be in a position to select or create their own curricula; and the curriculum and/or content should be relevant to their lived experiences and social situations. I thus think that essentially, the use of external ‘sources’ and ‘experts’ is not in tune with the need for classroom participants to create their own curriculum that would address relevant issues, as in Ferreira and Ferreira (1997). Liberatory pedagogy seeks to address the need for relevance of the curriculum, and obviously becomes an attempt to counter the traditional way of prescribing the curriculum. McLaren (1990: 150) aptly suggests:

It seemed to Freire that dreams of the poor were always dreamt for them by distant others who were removed from their daily struggles...and were either unable or unwilling to recognize the dreams that burned in the habitats of their hearts.

In this vein it is argued that the teacher and students are best placed to determine what is relevant or irrelevant for their particular contexts. Shor (in Shor and Freire *ibid*: 79) also challenges the idea of ‘imposed’ or ‘prescribed’ curriculum by contesting that ‘day to day curriculum cannot be invented by someone else from a distance, delivered or imposed on them’.

The imposed ‘curriculum’ coming in the form of ‘official syllabus’ usually offers little or no opportunity for relevant context – creation, stimulation of interest and critical thinking, which I consider to be *sine qua non* for any liberatory classroom. Shor (*ibid*: 88) has this to say about the traditional syllabus:

All this educational activity in the official syllabus has not spoken *their* language, has not developed critical desire, not related to themes intimately rooted in their lives.

(c) **Power relations in the classroom:** The popular education methodology has as its basic principle genuine communication, which can only occur if there is a realisation that all involved are equals as co-learners and co-teachers in a critical, investigative process though with different levels of responsibility. To achieve this kind of attitude ‘education must begin with the solution of the teacher-student contradiction ...so that both are simultaneously teacher and student’ (Freire *ibid*).

The teacher and students should acknowledge each other's potential for contribution in the endeavour to make sense of the information in the didactic setting, and, in the view of McKay and Romm (*ibid*: 150) this will lead to the reconciliation of power poles:

Once it is recognised that we are all intellectuals in the sense that we all have the capacity for world-construction, and once people are able to respect this capacity in others, the superiority of specific 'intellectuals' becomes dissolved...

It is the contention of critical pedagogues that with this democratically-endowed attitude in a classroom, a teaching mode commensurate with it is bound to follow.

(d) **Teaching mode:** Teaching should take the dialogical mode of problem posing where students are allowed to explore the 'world', texts or issues critically by sharing ideas with each other and the teacher. According to Freire (1972) a liberating teacher does not do something *to* the students but *with* them. It is upon the recognition by classroom participants that they are engaged in praxis, that critical education involves problem-solving in which *all* involved are challenged to reconsider and recreate their prior knowledge (Frankenstein in Shor 1987). Co-operative learning in a group or pair work situation becomes appropriate. Davidoff and Van den Berg (no date) point out that in such situations students learn to communicate with one another and also to share ideas among themselves and with their teacher. Frankenstein (*ibid*) concludes that in this way teachers and students can truly learn from each other.

Co-operative learning in a dialogical situation of problem-solving demands from all involved (teacher and students) to trust, love and appreciate one another. This pre-condition is implicit in Freire's (*ibid*: 63) interrogation: 'How can I enter into dialogue if I always project ignorance onto others and never perceive my own?'

(e) **On Textbooks and Assessment:** Centralised curriculum, textbooks and standardised tests and exams are not pivotal to teaching as it is believed no expert knowledge comes from outside, and therefore assessment is not necessarily the prerogative of tests and exams to satisfy outside forces like bureaucrats. Assessment

is seen as part of learning with the sole purpose of developing the students and monitoring performance or competence, rather than the judgmental and quantified measures that serve merely to control education.

The use of prescribed textbooks or centralised curriculum suggests common assessment. Liberatory education argues that similar concepts and competencies can be achieved through different content materials. If teachers and students created their own curriculum content, therefore, they could address similar concepts with their counterparts approaching the same issues through their own curriculum content. Hinchey (1998:51) captures this aspect thus: ‘There is no reason that one student can’t explore division by counting out cookies while another counts out candy corn...’

The principle implied by the above concerns is that teachers have to be empowered to select and/or create their own materials in order to make the teaching / learning situation a meaningful, relevant and interesting experience, through the content that addresses issues that learners (and teachers) can relate to.

Although teachers at various schools will, certainly, be using diverse curriculum content, this does not mean that teachers will not be addressing common issues or concepts. The content in this regard is, therefore, not pivotal to learning. For example, the concept of, or competence in, division, as Hinchey (*ibid*) aptly illustrates, may be taught through the use of different ‘curriculum contents’.

(f) **Education as an ongoing process:** The fact that the constructivist paradigm does not regard knowledge as a finished ‘reality’ or thing, indicates that education is considered to be an ongoing phenomenon. As long as humankind exists in the world, knowledge will continue to be constructed. Freire (1972: 56-57) clarifies this aspect by regarding education as ‘praxis’. Praxis entails the process of seeing the reality, reflecting on it and acting upon it in a continual fashion. This is the basic feature of the liberatory methodology; recognising learners as an active force. The methodology entails three basic steps in a learning situation: to see, to judge and act (Ferreira and Ferreira, 1997). Learners therefore are expected to be critically engaged in activities and applying the knowledge in their lived experiences, and thus make an impact on their societies.

Freire's (*ibid*: 56-57) observation that 'problem-posing education affirms humankind as beings in the process of *becoming*, as unfinished, uncompleted beings in and with likewise unfinished reality' illustrates the continuity of knowledge and education. This is primarily because the action-reflection of the world process can never stop as the reality 'is unfinished'. He adds that 'the unfinished character of men and the transformational character of reality necessitates that education be an ongoing activity' (*ibid*).

(g) **Education as a social and political force:** Critical Pedagogy has come out clearly in recognition of teaching as a social and political activity. This socio-constructivist dimension impels educational practice to move beyond the instrumental use of knowledge to a critical conception of information; learners reflect on and act on that information in order to transform the society, hence praxis.

McLaren's (1999: 51) definition of Critical Pedagogy clarifies the subject:

Critical Pedagogy is a way of thinking about, negotiating, and transforming the relationship among classroom teaching, the production of knowledge, the institutional structures of the school, and the social and material relations of the wider community, society, and nation state.

Thus, Critical Pedagogy encourages teachers, learners and the school to relate classroom teaching with real issues in the world around them, in order to transform their realities. Knowledge in this paradigm therefore only becomes worthwhile if it extends beyond the walls of the classroom, the fences of the school, to the 'wider community, society, and nation state'. As Freire (in Shor & Freire *ibid*: 46) remarks:

This is a great discovery, education is politics! After that, when a teacher discovers that he or she is a politician too, the teacher has to ask, what kind of politics am I doing in the classroom?

Although Critical Pedagogy acknowledges the lack of neutrality in education practice, it encourages subjectivity, which is based on objectivity and, thus condemns 'subjectivism'. Freire (*ibid*: 27) establishes the difference between 'subjectivity' and 'subjectivism'. Subjectivity is the interaction of the subject (person) and the object

(world) in defining the world. Thus subjectivism ‘postulates men [*sic*] without a world’.

Teaching practice is politically-influenced. Educational systems informed by oppressive societies, for example, will embrace the traditional teaching paradigm, whereas those informed by ‘democratic’ principles will probably adopt a progressive one. Freire (table 1), Bennett (table 2) and Rogers (table 3) elicit the various points that characterise traditional/progressive paradigms.

Freire (*ibid*: 47) lists attitudes and practices in education ‘which mirror oppressive society as a whole’. He relates these points to the traditional teaching paradigm:

TABLE 1 **Traditional teaching paradigm** (from Freire 1972: 47)

- |   |
|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The teacher teaches and the students are taught.</li> <li>2. The teacher knows everything and the students know nothing.</li> <li>3. The teacher thinks and the students are thought about.</li> <li>4. The teacher talks and the students listen – meekly.</li> <li>5. The teacher disciplines and the students are disciplined.</li> <li>6. The teacher chooses and enforces his [<i>sic</i>] choice, and the students comply.</li> <li>7. The teacher acts and the students have the illusion of acting through the action of the teacher.</li> <li>8. The teacher chooses the programme content, and the students (who were not consulted) adapt to it.</li> <li>9. The teacher confuses the authority of knowledge with his [<i>sic</i>] own professional authority, which he [<i>sic</i>]sets in opposition to the freedom of students.</li> <li>10. The teacher is the subject of the learning process, while the pupils are mere objects</li> </ol> |
|---|

The observations made by Freire (in Table 1), in the extreme sense, summarise to a large extent the positivist (transmission) teaching practice and attitudes and, evidently, do not stimulate reconciliation of the teacher-student poles. There is no indication of any opportunity for the pupil to decide on content and critically challenge issues.

Rogers (Table 2) and Bennett (Table 3) also offer descriptions of salient features of the two main teaching paradigms:

TABLE 2 (Bennett; in Davidoff &amp; Van den Berg, 1991: 24)

Characteristics of progressive and traditional teachers	
PROGRESSIVE	TRADITIONAL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Integrated subject matter</li> <li>* Teacher as guide to educational experience</li> <li>* Active pupil role</li> <li>* Pupils participate in curriculum planning</li> <li>* Learning predominantly by discovery techniques</li> <li>* External rewards and punishment not necessary i.e. intrinsic motivation</li> <li>* Not too concerned with conventional academic standards</li> <li>* Little testing</li> <li>* Accent on co-operative group work</li> <li>* Teaching not confined to classroom base</li> <li>* Accent on creative expression</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Separate subject matter</li> <li>* Teacher as distributor of knowledge</li> <li>* Passive pupil role</li> <li>* Pupils have no say in curriculum planning</li> <li>* Accent on memory, practice and rote</li> <li>* External rewards used, e.g. grades, i.e. extrinsic motivation</li> <li>* Concerned with academic standards</li> <li>* Regular testing</li> <li>* Accent on competition</li> <li>* Teaching confined to classroom base</li> <li>* Little emphasis on creative expression</li> </ul>

TABLE 3 (Rogers, in Davidoff &amp; Van den Berg, 1991:24-25)

<b>The traditional school</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The teacher is the possessor of knowledge, the student the recipient.</li> <li>• The lecture, as the means of pouring knowledge into the recipients, and the examination as the measure of the extent to which they have received it, are the central elements of this education.</li> <li>• The teacher is the possessor of power, the student the one who obeys.</li> <li>• Authoritarian rule is the accepted policy in the classroom.</li> <li>• Trust is at a minimum.</li> <li>• The subjects (the students) are best governed by being kept in intermittent or constant state of fear.</li> <li>• Democracy and its values are ignored and scorned in practice.</li> <li>• There is no place for the whole person in the educational system, only for the intellect.</li> <li>• .....</li> </ul>
<b>Towards person-centred learning</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The facilitative person shares with others-the students and possibly also parents or community members-the responsibility for the learning process.</li> <li>• Facilitative teachers provide learning resources-from within themselves and their own experience, from books or materials or community experiences.</li> <li>• The students develop their own individual programme of learning, alone or in co-operation with others.</li> <li>• A facilitative learning climate is provided.</li> <li>• The focus is primarily on fostering the continuing process of learning.</li> <li>• The discipline necessary to reach the students' goals is a self-discipline.</li> <li>• The evaluation of the extent and significance of the students' learning is made primarily by the learners themselves.</li> <li>• In this growth-promoting climate, the learning is deeper, proceeds at a more rapid rate, and is more pervasive in life and behaviour of the students than learning acquired in the traditional classroom</li> </ul>

I am aware that the idea of education as a politically-influenced act, and the role of the teacher in the practice, has been a point of incessant debate, conflict and tension in South Africa before, during and after apartheid. It has had profound implications for education policy throughout the years (Christie, 1985; Davidoff and Lazarus, 1997). However, directly relating certain attitudes and practices from either school, as Freire, Bennett and Rogers (in tables 1-3 above) do, to a particular political ideology in an impermeable manner is being too extreme. The authors suggest an either-or-situation in education practice, particularly in terms of attitude and methodology.

In practice, however, we do observe an amount of interplay of practices and /or attitudes from the two 'schools', so that I perceive education practice as a process influenced by such attitudes on the continuum of the two schools, because we certainly do need some aspects of traditional teaching such as memorisation at some point in our teaching in the progressive paradigm. This has to be done with caution, though. It is this 'caution' which teachers need because, as Hinchey (*ibid*: 38-39) observes:

...teacher education programs have, alas, been more likely to provide a teacher-in-training predesigned Trip-Tiks [*sic*] than to teach them to be navigators in charge of their own classroom journeys.

Nevertheless, there are basic characteristics that set a progressive teacher apart from the traditional teacher, and these basics would make him/her ground his/her teaching in the progressive domain of the continuum. It is this 'navigational' ability to position one's teaching in the paradigm that enables the teacher to avoid using 'positivist methodology to reach constructivist goals, or vice versa' (Hinchey, 39); an act that is indeed uninspiring.

It thus becomes important, in South Africa today, to understand the current educational philosophy of Outcomes-Based Education (OBE), as grounded in Curriculum 2005, and how to place it in terms of its epistemological paradigm so that one can conduct one's teaching with an informed background. In the next section I will explore OBE as developed in South Africa and appraise it in the light of my educational philosophy as expounded above.

## 2.4. Locating outcomes-based education (OBE) in the context of this study:

### 2.4.1. Background:

After the change of government in 1994, South Africa experienced socio-political transformation. Educational transformation obviously had to follow (see chapters one and two). The basis for this transformation was Outcomes-Based Education and Training (OBET), commonly referred to as OBE, which is described as:

...education which accepts as its premise that the definition of outcomes should form the basis of all educational activity, including...the development of curricula, the assessment of learners, the development of educational structures...and other resources (Malan 1997: 10).

### 2.4.2. The need for OBE:

OBE is considered as an answer to questions that characterised People's Education because it offers an alternative to Bantu Education by grounding itself on principles which underline progressive and critical pedagogy. According to an official publication of the Department of Education (undated: 25) "Curriculum 2005 makes a major shift away from the present curriculum in South Africa and toward an OBE curriculum". The following "key shifts" (*ibid*) are said to characterise the new policy:

- It creates opportunities for all through emphasising life-long learning.
- It is people-centred by moving from teacher and content-centred curriculum to a relevant, learner-centred one.
- Curriculum 2005 is derived from nationally agreed critical cross-field outcomes.
- Traditional school subjects give way to broader learning areas.
- It introduces new aspects of knowledge such as *Technology* and emphasises previously marginalised areas such as *Arts and Culture* and *Life Orientation*.
- It does not prescribe syllabus and content, rather each learning area has detailed specific outcomes that 'ensure that the specific learning achieves its contextualised and specific forms of the broader critical outcomes' (26). This has been done to provide learners with a degree of freedom to select the content and methods through which learners will achieve the outcomes.
- Assessment criteria and more concretely performance indicators are provided to clarify the sort of evidence to be used to evaluate learners against the outcomes. Artificial barriers between education and training are removed by integrating theoretical and practical learning and teaching.

All this, it is asserted, is in place in order to prepare learners for the “real world” by equipping them to apply what they have learned to real situations. These principles, it may be argued, are in line with the Freirean education philosophy and interlock with the progressive views of Rogers and Bennett as discussed earlier on. The “key shifts” outlined above encapsulate the notion of praxis (and praxis is the lifeline of liberatory education) as the only education that relates the learner to the “real world” and can influence him/her to bring about impact and transformation in his/her community.

Van der Horst and McDonald (1997: 6) also assert that the stimulus for OBE is political in that the South African version of OBE is aimed at:

...developing a thinking, problem-solving citizen who will be empowered to participate in the development of the country in an active and productive way. This is typical of a social-reconstructivist view of schooling, where schooling is regarded as a way to change and improve society.

In order to “change and improve society”, the learner should be able to do certain things. These are reflected by the critical or cross-curricular outcomes which are broad and generic. These outcomes which lay the foundation for developing more specific outcomes are:

- Learners should be able to identify and solve problems by using critical and creative thinking skills.
- Learners should be able to work effectively with others as a member of a team, group, organisation or community.
- Learners should be able to manage themselves and their activities responsibly and effectively.
- Learners should be able to collect, analyse, organise and critically evaluate information (i.e. conduct investigations and do research).
- Learners should be able to communicate effectively using visual, mathematical and/or language skills in the modes of oral and/or written presentation.
- Learners should be able to use science and technology effectively and critically, showing responsibility towards the environment and the health of others.

- Learners should be able to demonstrate an understanding of the world as a set of related systems by recognising that problem-solving contexts do not exist in isolation.

### 2.4.3. Transformational OBE:

#### 2.4.3.1. Introduction:

A number of the official documents from the Department of Education point out that South African OBE is transformational. It is this supposed transformational nature that makes it liberatory, which is a crucial characteristic of Critical Pedagogy and Freirean education philosophy. Education should have an impact on the learners, who also have to impact on the society, and thus transform it. The definition of Transformational OBE by Van der Horst and McDonald makes this aspect explicit:

Transformational Outcomes-Based Education is a collaborative, flexible, trans-disciplinary, outcomes-based schooling system which is oriented towards empowering learners (p.19).

This definition already pits OBE against the transmission mode of teaching and embraces liberatory qualities of empowerment, co-operative learning, a relevant and context-related curriculum, and praxis.

#### 2.4.3.2. Analysis of Transformational OBE:

Because of its flexibility, OBE gives teachers and learners the space to choose content and employ a wide variety of teaching methods. This sense of freedom, guided by the cross-curricular (critical) outcomes, will enable classroom participants to develop as balanced citizens, hence the concept “whole person development” of progressive education. The critical outcomes, rather than the content, become the guiding principles of the new curriculum. This underlines the aspect that Transformational OBE pursues the transformation of groups or individuals by motivating them to become involved contributors in the process affecting their own educational advancement and that of their peers.

Spady and Marshall (1991) claim that OBE can be said to be transformational if it has, at least, the following characteristics:

- Defined by outcomes
- Expanded in opportunity (it goes beyond traditional seat time as learning time)
- Based on performance outcomes success - what the learner should be able to know and do
- Aided by instructional coaching (learners receive learning guidance by means of feedback and explanations)
- Integrated in concepts (cross-curriculum approach to outcomes, learning areas)
- Based on culminating achievement of the desired learning outcomes
- Oriented to inclusive success (all can and must progress according to individual ability)
- Characterised by co-operative learning (working together such as in group discussion and projects)

#### 3.4.3.3. Link with liberatory education:

An analysis of these characteristics points to the link with liberatory education practice from the Freirean perspective. For example, (i) emphasis on outcomes, what the learners should be able to do, as opposed to depositing and banking of information, and (ii) co-operative learning. The OBE conception of outcomes suggests more than the acquisition of cognitive knowledge, and includes skills, affective and social aspects which are characteristic of Critical Pedagogy. A look at the definition of outcomes by Van der Horst and McDonald (1997:48) clarifies the link between OBE and liberatory education. Outcomes are:

...the result of learning processes and refer to knowledge, skills and attitudes and values. Learners should be able to demonstrate that they understand and should be able to apply the desired outcomes within a certain context...

Malan (1997:15-16) draws our attention to the importance of the relationship between the *process* (series of events, input, methodology) and *product* (outcome). She points out that process and product are interdependent in the following:

The end result (outcome) of the education process - an adult human being - would, directly or indirectly, be the composite result of the effective interaction of all the inputs, outcomes and mini-processes comprising education as a whole...the output (is never) final or complete. Each outcome, once attained, becomes the starting point for a new process in which learners strive to demonstrate competence in progressively more complex tasks.

The emphasis on the relationship is useful but may be lost as teachers often focus very narrowly on the lesson on hand and on outcomes. This link (between process and product), nonetheless, shows the transformational nature of OBE system and its relation to Critical Pedagogy and the Freirean conception of continuous reflection and action (praxis). Indeed this makes explicit the shift away from the traditional teaching that focused on the *product* without laying much emphasis on the *process*.

Some critics (see Kraak 1999, Jansen 1999a, 1999b), however, argue that Curriculum 2005/OBE enshrines both technicist and critical dimensions. Their main point of concern is the “dominance of Unit Standards methodology which underpins current interpretation of OBET” (Kraak 1999: 22). They argue that there is tension or contradiction in OBET discourse in that there is “confusion in the interplay between the dominant and subordinate policy discourses” in OBE. The dominant discourse is critical/populist, while the subordinate discourse of unit standards is behavioristic and technicist (Kraak 1999, Jansen 1997b).

My view is that what these critics see as technicist is essential if proper control of education is to be achieved in South Africa in the short term. The historical context of education in South Africa (see introduction and chapter one) characterised by an eroded culture of teaching and learning, poorly trained teachers, racial inequalities and suspicions of beneficiaries of apartheid education (see Jansen 1997b) necessitates this dimension and, in my opinion, forms the basis for accountability by practitioners.

Van der Horst and McDonald (1997) aptly point out that the so-called technicist dimension of Curriculum 2005/OBE gives politicians, and policy makers, some level of control over the outcomes of the education system. This aspect highlights the need to be accountable, and the possibilities OBE offers in this regard to government and other stakeholders for the vast sums of money invested in education.

#### **2.4.3.4. Conclusion:**

OBE, as it is policy in South Africa today, will force teachers to teach differently. This will, however, require relevant quality training which conscientises the teacher to liberatory education philosophy and develops the right attitude. The next few years

will, thus, indicate whether, in practice, Curriculum 2005/OBE will be liberatory/critical or technicist.

## **2.5. Theoretical background to ESL teaching as it informs this study:**

### **2.5.1. Introduction:**

Theories of English Second Language (ESL) teaching are based on broader psychological learning theories. ESL teaching theories also inform approaches and methods that teachers adopt in ESL teaching practice. This has resulted in a complexity of methodologies in this field; the complexity that Askes (no date: 8) regards as 'a language teaching revolution' which she correctly indicates, 'will influence second language teaching'.

Celce-Murcia, Dornyei and Thurrell (1997:142) also acknowledge this realisation by pointing to the continual change in second language teaching methodologies over time:

L2 teaching methods and approaches tend to undergo a natural process of cyclical development: A method or approach is first proposed (often as a counter-reaction to an earlier method or approach), then accepted, applied, and eventually criticized.

This situation impresses on one to look at the practice of ESL teaching against the backdrop of this 'language teaching revolution'.

### **2.5.2. Historical account of ESL teaching approaches:**

An overview of language teaching theory reflects two main approaches. Askes (no date) distinguishes between the direct approach, which concerns the direct teaching of grammar and uses traditional methods, and the indirect approach which has a bias towards communicative or functional methods of teaching. Linguistic competence is argued to develop incidentally rather than consciously through direct formal instruction.

The fluctuating pattern that describes the history of language teaching methodology in the past few decades (Kilfoil and Van der Walt 1989; Celce-Murcia 1991; Harmer 1991; Askes, no date; Brown 1994) points to the various paradigms that influence our beliefs about learning, and second language learning in particular.

Skinner's (1957) Verbal Behaviour set the whole "revolution" going by acknowledging the Psychological movement, Behaviourism, of the 1940's and 1950's in language learning. Behaviourists believed that learning occurs by "operant conditioning", the process which works by stimulus-response-reinforcement pattern. Knowledge is outside human consciousness and learning occurs by positively or negatively conditioning human behaviour to a particular stimulus. Learning is therefore a non-mental response to stimuli. In language learning, they contest, 'our performance as language learners is largely the result of such positive (or negative) reinforcement' (Harmer 1991: 32). This approach heralded audio-lingual methods.

The 1960's saw the vehement criticism of the behaviourist position after the work of Chomsky (1959). Chomsky argued in favour of the mentalist/constructivist position by affirming that language learners are naturally equipped with a Language Acquisition Device (LAD) in their brains. The LAD enables learners to construct rules which control the language or structures. According to Chomsky, language is not a form of behaviour (Harmer *ibid*: 33), because behaviourists can never account for why a language learner is able to produce forms (that follow grammatical rules) he/she has never heard before. For example, a young child will overgeneralise the '-ed' past tense rule in English and say 'I *catched* the thief' or 'We *runned* to school'.

In the early 1970's recognition was made of the factors outside the language learner. Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) observed that language is a social tool based on 'utterances'. The utterance is observed as having literal and functional levels of meaning. This appears to have been the realisation that knowing the structure of the language (linguistic competence) does not necessarily entail knowing how to use the language (communicative competence). I think this enhanced debate on the crucial tension between formal instruction/direct approach versus non-formal/indirect approach to language teaching. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) drew on the Sinclair and Coulthard contributions, although it could also be linked to Hymes' (1974) "rules of appropriateness beyond grammar" concept<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> CLT resulted from a number of theoretical and research developments linked to Chomsky's notion of

An assessment of CLT points to its having traces of non-constructivist, constructivist and functional elements. A salient constructivist element is the notion that language rules are acquired through exposure rather than being taught. Thus learners are able to generate their own language rules as pointed out above. However, teachers may adopt a drill style characteristic of the non-constructivist position to enhance the learning of such language rules. Indeed Harmer (*ibid*: 86-87) indicates the need for the teacher to 'model the phrases' and conduct a teacher-student (T-S) drill until 'the students have shown that they can handle these phrases to some extent'. Simulation of situations of language use becomes an essential aspect for such 'phrases' or expressions to engender speech appropriacy by learners. Lampen (1985:5), in an attempt to advocate CLT use in the ESL classrooms claims that teaching 'loose sentences to illustrate a certain structure is useless unless the sentences are related and made appropriate to a known situation'. Thus, the simulation of context becomes the basis of the CLT.

One cannot but conclude that the 'communicative' element in CLT does not refer to authentic communication, in the Freirean sense, where learning is taken as a real life process. Language learning becomes a simulated activity. The functional dimension in language teaching seems to be the dominant element in CLT, unlike the grammar teaching that characterised the earlier approaches. This can be traced to Krashen's (1981) non-interface stance on the acquisition-learning theory whereby he states that language learning does not lead to acquisition. This perspective does not see the importance of formal grammar teaching. However theorists like McLaughlin (in Ellis, 1985) challenged the non-interface theory and, based on research conducted, argue that learning does, in fact, lead to acquisition. This debate has led to linguists observing that it is important to teach grammar as well as use grammatical forms in appropriate situations. Kilfoil and Van der Walt (1989: 12), however, suggest that 'the purpose of English second language should not be to learn to communicate, but to learn *while* communicating'. I think this is a good contribution as it will authenticate ESL activities.

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competence, Hymes' rules of use (appropriateness) and Sinclair and Coulthard's utterance (discourse analysis). These were reinterpreted by applied linguists (e.g. Canale and Swain) to develop "communicative competence". In language teaching, this was developed into CLT.

From the late 1980's through the 1990's ESL teachers have come to realise that no single method is able to help them address all the challenges of language teaching. Celce-Murcia, Dornyei and Thurrell (1997: 148) acknowledge this development:

Instead of following the current “best” method, teachers have learnt to be ‘cautiously eclectic in making enlightened choices of teaching practices’.

Celce-Murcia, Dornyei and Thurrell (*ibid*) quote researchers like Long who in 1991 observed that ‘the method disappears in the reality of the language classroom’. Kumaravadivelu is also quoted by the same authors from a 1994 observation that ‘the development of language teaching theory has arrived at a post-method condition’ and thus suggests ESL teachers should adopt “macro strategies for L2”. The concept of “principled pragmatism” suggested by Kumaravadivelu (*ibid*) clarifies the “post-method” condition as no advocacy for *laissez-faire*. Post-method is by no means a “no-method” condition.

Ellis (1991), Long (1993), Fotos (1994) and Mohammed (1995) advocated the position that formal instruction contributes to the acquisition of language forms. Fotos (1994: 210) sees the role of Grammar Consciousness-Raising (GC-R) as an attempt to ‘call *learner attention* to grammatical features, thereby facilitating subsequent *learner noticing* of the features in *communicative input*’ (my italics).

This paradigm therefore sees interplay between conscious learning of grammar and unconscious acquisition process. However, it is cautious about the degree of emphasis on error correction by suggesting a ‘laid-back’ attitude to errors implicit in “learner attention” and “learner noticing”.

### 2.5.3. Locating the study within the ESL teaching theory:

My position regarding ESL teaching is grounded on the “post-method” condition of the Grammar Consciousness–Raising approach, and thus embraces an eclectic (integrative) approach to ESL teaching practice. However, I have adapted this approach to the Freirean popular education methodology (discussed earlier) because I consider education, including language teaching, as a praxis. On this score language teaching should not be seen as a neutral, simulative activity, but a socio-political

process which, through reflection and action (praxis) plays a critical, socio-constructive role in the lives of the learners (including teachers).

Bernstein (1972), Freire (1972), Shor & Freire (1987), Fairclough (1989), Lakoff (1992), Peirce (1994) and Pennycook (1994) are but some of the researchers who have acknowledged the socio-political role of language in their various studies.

Peirce (1994) makes the point that second language acquisition theorists have not adequately explored how inequitable relations of power limit the opportunities of L2 learners. I thus contend that ESL teaching should not, as it is outside critical pedagogy, only be limited to the attainment of the “Sprachgefühl”, a concept used by Corder (in Rutherford & Smith, 1988) to mean intuition for language appropriacy, but extend to the transformational role of language through praxis. ESL teaching should recognise that ESL learners do not only use language for communication, ‘but are constantly organising and re-organising a sense of who they are and how they relate to the social world’ (Peirce, 1994:17). This is clearly indicative of the socio-political nature of language. Drawing from a study she made of ESL women learners in Canada, Peirce (*ibid*: 25) asserts that our conception of ESL competence should include, for instance, ‘an awareness of how to challenge and transform social practices of marginalisation’. This is a crucial element of Critical Pedagogy.

It is my contention that such socio-political aspirations cannot be addressed by the limited teaching methodologies that embrace a neutral stance on education, and language learning in particular. The eclectic ESL paradigm on which this study has been grounded cannot address these issues if employed outside a critical pedagogy such as the Freirean popular education philosophy. Language teaching should, following this premise, be based on real texts, authentic language and real issues that have an influence on the socio-political lives of ESL learners so that they are able to transform their lives. Simulated language and contexts fall short of addressing this challenge.

It is for this reason that in this study I have considered the use of media as a resource in ESL teaching. In the next section I will discuss the rationale of the media text in the study.

## 2.6. The media text in this study:

### 2.6.1. Introduction:

It has been the line of argument in this study that educational practice is influenced by the wider socio-political context. I argue that educational practice should, therefore, resonate with the country's developments so that students, as an important part of the citizenry, should be able to make a meaningful contribution to their societies. This thus makes a logical demand on teachers to use authentic, relevant curriculum content, liberating methodology that offers opportunity for critical interaction; and, most importantly, practices that would have impact on the learners. This point has also been sufficiently made by Freire (*ibid*), and Rogers (in Davidoff and Van den Berg, *ibid*).

### 2.6.2. The Rationale for print media in ESL:

Media texts have been considered appropriate teaching materials, especially when one considers the influence that media has in our daily lives. In fact the media rules our lives. Indeed the UNESCO Declaration on Media Education issued in 1982 (in Prinsloo and Criticos 1991: 295) states that 'we live in a world where media are omnipresent'. It is the domineering aspect of media that makes media texts good resources for relevance, stimulation and authenticity, and offers opportunity for learners to be able to "resist" and be critical to its messages. This will contribute towards closing the "disturbingly wide" gap between the educational experiences offered by most educational systems and the real world in which people live (UNESCO 1982).

Ferguson (1991a: 24) also underscores the "resonant" potentiality of media texts by observing that 'we cannot separate off Media Education from the rest of what goes on in our education system - nor from what goes on in our society'.

The authenticity of media texts includes language which, unlike "textbook language", is not mediated. Media texts are not constructed with a specific level, grade or class of a reader (say, English Grade 10 ESL Standard Grade) as target receiver. Media language reflects the use of language in the wider society. Ferguson (1991b: 77)

observes that media texts use and are part of the discourses of society which shape our view of the world. He argues that ‘these discourses will often find their way into the mass media’.

Having suggested the aspect of authenticity and relevance of language and issues, I have to point out that the ‘reality’ presented (in fact, re-presented) by the media should be construed in the perspective of Freire’s (1972) conception of “subjective reality” because, as Masterman (1988: 15) puts it, ‘the media mediate’:

They [the media] are liberatingly, representations or symbolic, or sign-systems which we must read, understand and act upon.

The above assertion underlines the resourcefulness of media texts in stimulating ‘praxis’, an element of Critical Pedagogy that encourages students to transform their societies. Media Education therefore endorses the socio-constructive paradigm embraced in popular education methodology which perceives knowledge as expressing the way in which people have chosen to make sense of the reality with which they are presented (McKay and Romm *ibid*: 71). Ferguson (1991a: 20) suggests subjective reality presented by media texts by observing that ‘media education is an endless enquiry into the way we make sense of the world and the way others make sense of the world for us’.

This argument therefore appeals for genuine, rigorous critical engagement with media texts. Prinsloo (1993: 5) indicates this need for developing the critical faculties of learners by pointing out that ‘the role attached to Media Education is to develop and nurture the critical abilities of learners, to nurture autonomous thinkers who approach information not as transparent, but as constructions that are selective and partial’. I recognise that the demands made by critical investigative media education rather than the inoculatory and aesthetic media education (see Masterman, 1988) dovetail English Language Teaching as located within the framework of popular education methodology. It consequently becomes difficult, and unnecessary, to attempt to separate Media Education and English Language Teaching. Moore (1991:181) notes that ‘the aims of much English teaching overlap with those of Media Education’.

I argue that, following the authenticity of media texts, the English teacher can be unfettered from the prescribed (interim core) syllabus which is often restrictive, unstimulating and irrelevant to the wider social context of students and teachers. The idea of using media texts in the classroom is motivated by the premise that the teacher, together with the students, should select media texts relevant to their language teaching-learning needs, relevant themes, interest and accessibility. Reporting on their teaching through media to adults in Brazil, Ferreira and Ferreira (1997) state that we have to develop with our learners our own activities, our own curriculum, in our own reality.

Robinson and Mentoor (1991: 218) indicate how disempowered teachers (and learners!) are in our education system:

We are aware of the disempowerment of teachers within the South African educational hierarchy ... within a system of educational control, with its inspections, standardised syllabi, overloaded timetables and prepackaged textbooks.

The remark by Robinson and Mentor, above, essentially reminds us that opportunities for using the media texts (or whatever progressive resource) can be circumvented by traditional schools (see Bennett and Rogers: tables 2 and 3 respectively) and teachers. The attempt by teachers who may want to use their “own curriculum” might be stymied as they (the teachers) would want to be “productive” in the eyes of the communities they serve. In our communities, productivity is still measured by tests, exams and particularly grade 12 results.<sup>2</sup> Education Ministry spokesman, Bheki Khumalo (as quoted by Pretorius in *Sunday Times* September 26 1999), says ‘matric results are the barometer of the education system’s performance’. My view is that this attitude stifles freedom, creativity and potential for critical reflection and action. Schwach *et al* (1992:122) observe that in similar situations there should essentially be a shift of paradigm:

...in the current socio-political context of public education including fixation with quantified measurement of student achievement ... [and] the concerns of

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<sup>2</sup> OBE is presumed to make teachers freer to create their own “curriculum”, as it is not based on principles of tests and exams. In a seminar on Review of Curriculum 2005 organised by the Department of Education (22 Jan. 2000, CSIR, Pretoria) Spady said the existing matric exam system must change, otherwise the current practices and attitudes won’t change.

parents and citizens over the quality of public education.

If there is no change of paradigm, the textbook and transmission mechanical modes of teaching will, willy-nilly, be the tools which teachers will, as a matter of fact, embrace as mere expansions of the syllabus topics (Criticos 1991: 224). Nevertheless, teachers need to be really committed, and see the reason for teaching in a progressive way, using progressive materials. There should be conscientization of teachers in this regard.

The underlying philosophy of Curriculum 2005 / OBE, discussed in 2.4. above necessitates the use of media texts in language teaching. The fact that, for the first time, the South African curriculum highlights media literacy and information literacy explains the need to consider the use of media texts in our schools. A link between this aspect and Curriculum 2005 / OBE is made explicit by the critical/cross-curricular outcomes outlined in 2.4. especially the one that indicates: “learners should be able to collect, analyse, organise and critically evaluate information”. The learning area outcomes or specific outcomes (SO’s) that directly relate to the place of media in the new education practice are (I) SO4 in *Language Literacy and Communication (LLC)*: “access, process and use information from a variety of sources and situations” and SO5 in *Arts and Culture (AC)*: “experience and analyse the role of the mass media in popular culture and its impact on multiple forms of communication and expression in the arts”.

### 2.6.3. Conclusion:

In this chapter I discussed how classroom teaching practice is influenced by the teacher’s view of knowledge and how he/she locates him/herself in the various paradigms of epistemology and methodology. The teacher’s practice, or methodology, is also influenced by the socio-political situation which impacts on him/her through the education system.

I located myself and this study in the constructivist epistemological position, which in turn influenced my ESL teaching methodology. My personal philosophy on Education is that education needs to go beyond the classroom and enable students to contribute meaningfully in their wider societies. This socio-constructivist position on education

is well-articulated in the Freirean popular education methodology which I outlined. A brief overview of ESL teaching approaches and theories revealed that ESL theories have not embraced the issue of praxis in ESL teaching. I therefore adopted the eclectic approach to language teaching, and adapted it to popular education methodology so that ESL teaching becomes praxis. Praxis hinges on real issues. It is this challenge of praxis that has provided the rationale for using print media texts in the teaching of ESL. This has been the theoretical background informing this study.

Recognising changes in the education provision in South Africa and the implementation of OBE and Curriculum 2005 with its clear liberatory aspects, I believe that it is a proper and educationally sound undertaking to explore the use of print media in the teaching of ESL. My understanding of OBE and its similarities with the Freirean liberatory pedagogy, especially with regard to epistemology, educational conceptions and attitudes, provides the rationale for doing this exploration by Action Research. I am, however, aware of the technicist dimension in OBE, a point discussed earlier on.

In the next chapter I will discuss Action Research, the research methodology used in this study.

## CHAPTER THREE : METHODOLOGY

### 3.1. Introduction:

Research, or educational practice, in various ways reflects the researcher's perspective on ontological and epistemological issues, that is, their views about reality and construction of knowledge (Mckay and Romm 1992, Hinchey 1998, Dison 1998). I have alluded to this aspect in chapter two.

### 3.2. Research paradigms:

The understanding of research in terms of the above aspect has led many people to describe research according to paradigms. The term "paradigm" was coined by Thomas Kuhn to refer to different types of scientific enquiry (USWE 1997a, Dison 1998). However, it is now used to embrace attitudes, values, beliefs, procedures and techniques to research practices (Guba 1990, USWE 1997a). Guba and Lincoln (1994: 107) define a paradigm as:

...a set of *basic beliefs* (or metaphysics) that deals with ultimates or first principles. It represents a *worldview* that defines, for its holder, the nature of the "world", the individual's place in it, and a range of possible relationships to that world and its parts...

Recognition of "paradigms" as 'based upon different sets of assumptions about the nature of society, the ways in which society should be investigated, and the kinds of knowledge that it is possible to acquire about the world' (USWE 1997a: 19) suggests that a paradigm guides or accounts for why and how particular research is done. A paradigm influences one's understanding of reality and knowledge. Thus a paradigm guides or explains where one stands in one's conceptualisation of the world.

Dison (1998: 8) believes that 'in doing research one needs to be aware of what paradigm/s one is being guided by, so that one is conscious of how one's beliefs influence how one frames the research, how one goes about doing it and how one interprets the findings.' In addition, I am of the view that the type of research question, aims and context of research can influence one's positioning within a particular paradigm. Guba and Lincoln (1994: 112) point out that these beliefs have 'important consequences for the practical conduct of inquiry, as well as for the interpretation of findings ...'. A paradigm is neither a methodology nor a collection of methods. In other words, what ties particular research to a paradigm is not simply the

methodology or methods used, but the researcher's 'beliefs, attitudes or values about reality (ontology) or epistemology (knowledge construction). Lincoln and Guba (1989:158) aptly point that 'it is not the methods themselves which are tied to particular paradigms but the way those methods are used.' In Guba and Lincoln's (1994) perspective, therefore, 'both qualitative and quantitative methods may be used appropriately with any research paradigm'.

Boud and Griffin (1987: 9) acknowledge that, for instance, the qualitative paradigm 'is suitable for exploring *only some kinds of questions*' (my emphasis). This idea points to the suggestion I have made that paradigmatic positioning by a researcher depends on the 'research question, the aim and context.' Research paradigms can be related to two main positions (as influenced by one's understanding of reality and knowledge). Mouton (1987: 2) notes that 'it has become traditional to distinguish between two main paradigms or schools of philosophical reflection on the nature of the social sciences: positivism and anti-positivism.'

### 3.3. Relating this research to paradigms:

Positivists or methodological naturalists in the social sciences posit that research should take the model of the natural sciences whereby social behaviour is explained 'through knowledge of universally valid causes' (Mouton *ibid*) and thus the cause and effect understanding of knowledge or behaviour was introduced to the social sciences. To engage in such research knowledge or behaviour has to be reduced to 'observable and measurable' entities. Guba and Lincoln (1994) refer to this aspect as "context stripping". This stems from the notion that 'reality' is external, or separate from human beings and can only be accessed through methods of experts (natural scientists) who do not interfere nor taint the 'facts' (McKay & Romm 1992, Hinchey 1998).

In positivist research practice, then, human values have to be systematically subtracted or controlled so that 'the observable actions and measurable indicators of human behaviour become the object of social research (Mouton 1987:3). Thus positivist research, through control of variables, neutrality and scientific distancing, 'produces technical information in the form of laws or theories to explain observable social behaviour' (USWE 1997a: 19).

According to this position, therefore, knowledge is not socially constructed, and human beings have nothing to contribute to the process of knowledge construction. Knowledge, positivists claim, is not constructed, but it is 'out there' waiting to be discovered. Thus empirical research, solely employing experimentation, sampling, observation, measurements and figures explains this "truth" or reality; hence an approach to research that is grounded in the positivist view is often called quantitative approach because it quantifies behaviour through small units and measurements.

Although Dison (1998:8-9) does not think a paradigm should be used in a prescriptive way to stipulate exactly how one goes about doing the research, I have found that my research question, the objectives and the context of the study are incompatible with the fundamentalist view of research characteristic of positivists, especially that positivism 'constitutes the basis both of behaviourism and what Blumer has called-variable analysis' (Mouton 1987: 4). Mouton (*ibid*: 5) quotes David Welsh as claiming that 'the attempt to encapsulate the social world in terms of overt behaviour of its members misses the precise character of that world, namely its intrinsic meaningfulness.' This sentiment expresses Freire's conception of subjective reality, a philosophy that rejects the idea of "the world without men [*sic*]" (see chapter two). This element locates Freire within the critical and a social constructivist paradigm. Guba and Lincoln (*ibid*) offer valuable input on the characteristics of various paradigms.

I consider educational practice as a process involving complete persons (teachers and learners) who have values, beliefs, attitudes, minds and experiences, so that it becomes unjustifiable for me to reduce this complex issue (human behaviour) to the mere "observable" and "measurable". I value the 'intrinsic meaningfulness' of a social world as presented in the classroom or school situation. As indicated in chapter two, I consider education as praxis; and regard teaching and research methodologies that do not involve critical reflection and action by classroom participants as falling short of addressing the purpose of education. This objective, in the context of my study, can be addressed by a paradigm that acknowledges the importance of my, and the learners', values because I believe knowledge and human interests are interwoven.

This consideration underpins the critical, socio-constructivist paradigm, which recognises that knowledge is mediated and is transformational.

My belief is that the 'positivistic approach to education research and development often results in the ignoring of students' ideas, experiences and mini-theories, as well as the teacher's own classroom experiences and expertise' (Wals 1990). I have espoused, for this study, the notion expressed by Jones (1996) that the most important parts of research are, in fact subjective and have little to do with elaborate quantitative analyses. I am consequently agreeable to the assertion by Marks (1993, p.380) in Jones (1996:2) that:

The most significant challenge to an old and entrenched view that science is the aloof, objective collection of facts involves recognizing that *people* are the ones doing science - with their own motivations, ambitions, viewpoints, prejudices and personalities.

The acknowledgement of values and prejudices in research, however, should not be mistaken to promote opinionism or subjectivism (see chapter two). I believe that objectivity exists not as an absolute condition to which humans react, but as an accomplished aspect of human lived experience. My view is thus contrary to the notion that perceives reality as "out there", "untainted" or "value-free". My position is that reality is constructed by humans. Opinions alone, as Jones (1996:3) asserts, are not acceptable. This view is compatible with Freire's distinction between 'subjectivity and subjectivism', objectivity and objectivism' (Freire1972).

I think this portrayal of objectivity suggests that rigorous scrutiny of data should be crucial to the critical paradigm. Jones (*ibid*) consequently suggests that 'the dichotomy between objective and subjective is misleading and obscuring of research practices' (51). Although a researcher may locate himself or herself in the anti-positivist or critical paradigm, he or she has to maintain discipline, accountability and rigour, so that the research does not merely become a rendition of opinion. Popekewitz (1990: 47) declares that continual cross-examinations and rigorous scrutiny of data are the hallmarks of critical paradigm.

I thus do not see this research as *for them* (the community of scholars) but also *for us* (me, the class teacher and the learners) and *for me* (my personal motivation), to borrow from Reason and Marshall in Boud and Griffin (1987: 112). The positivist perspective of research is that it is done *for them*, hence its suspension of human values and interest. I have done this research because I was interested in the question of using print media texts in ESL teaching (apart from the fact that this study is for degree purposes). On this account I positioned myself within the critical paradigm where qualitative approach became attractive to the study. The various orientations within this paradigm, like ethnography and Freireism, allow the researcher to contribute to knowledge construction.

The various orientations within the critical paradigm emphasise a particular aspect of research or 'scientific' enquiry. My view is that a critical researcher should move across the various orientations within the paradigm to adequately address the point of emphasis taken by his or her research question. In this study I have employed some aspects of ethnography (field notes), interpretations of learners' actions in relation to their circumstances (hermeneutics), interrogated issues relating to the socio-political world of the participants (marxist and post-structural) in an attempt to act or bring about change to the situation under study (participatory/emancipatory). The activities concerned real issues that were meant to enable the participants to transform their wider socio-political situation.

The fact that I did not use quantitative methods in this study should not suggest that I reject their use in this paradigm, instead they should be construed as not being compatible with what I wanted to do at the school – my research goals, that is. The purpose of the study was not to prove any educational theory or aspect nor claim to 'construct grand generalisations in order to control and predict' (USWE 1997a:25), but, collaboratively with the teacher and the learners, to learn, understand and improve ESL practice (teaching and learning) and hopefully enable ourselves to transform the wider social situation. I therefore align myself to the claim that:

When critical researchers reject the underlying assumptions of positivism it is often misunderstood as a rejection of empirical methods and technical knowledge... empirical methods are not necessarily positivistic' (USWE 1997a: 22).

For this research, I felt I had to locate myself within a paradigm that considers that education involves complete humans with ideas, attitudes, experiences and values. Carr and Kemmis (1986: 60) observe that ‘educational situations have their educational character because people act in them’. Appreciation of education as a meaningful subjective practice appealed to the kind of research I wanted to do. I thus needed to work with the learners and teachers as “subjects” or people who have ideas, in their social context, in order that I could learn, understand and improve the situation. I contend that for research to achieve concrete transformation of real educational situations, it is essential to transcend the research and practice roles (or poles), and thus link theory and practice, researcher and practitioners (Carr and Kemmis 1986, USWE 1997b, Greenwood and Levin 1998).

I consequently identified with the orientation of Action Research or Practitioner Research to undertake this research, because I believe critical education science, as Carr and Kemmis (*ibid*: 160) correctly say:

...cannot be divorced from practical realities of education in particular schools and classrooms, nor from the political reality that schools themselves are... expressions of the relationship between education and society.

This idea is the basis of Freirean critical pedagogy and critical research paradigm (Freire 1972, Shor and Freire 1987, Guba 1990, Walker 1993, Lincoln and Guba 1994). Action Research appealed to me as an orientation that could be usable to carry out such research.

### **3.4. Action research:**

#### **3.4.1. Introduction:**

Action research is seen as an attempt to link the action (of the teacher) with reflection (or ‘researching’) that action. The link between the action and the research is that they are both done by the same person, that is, the teacher (Davidoff and Van den Berg, undated: 28). Action research is appropriate to the context of this study, because through it I hoped I could bring about innovation or have an influence on the teaching of ESL by using print media, through a different teaching method (co-operative learning) within the framework of liberatory pedagogy whereby education practice is

geared to transforming the wider socio-political reality. This is in tune with the recognition of education and research as praxis (Freire 1972, Dison 1998, USWE 1997a). The link between education and the wider social life is a crucial part of the dominant agenda of Curriculum 2005/OBE (in Chapter two, as discussed).

#### 3.4.2. Definition of action research:

Davidoff and Van den Berg (28) define action research as a way of trying out ideas in action, understanding those actions, and then attempting to make some improvements or changes in the classroom or setting. They add that the changes are meant to make the classroom experience a more meaningful one 'for all those involved in it.' McKernan (1991:6) describes practitioner research or action research as 'a form of self-reflective problem solving which enables practitioners to better understand and solve pressing problems in social settings'. Greenwood and Levin (1998:6) define Action Research as:

...a form of research that generates knowledge claims for the express purpose of taking action to promote social change and social analysis ...to increase the ability of the involved community ... to control their own destinies more effectively and to keep improving their capacity to do so.

Fay (1977) in Carr and Kemmis (1986:157) sees Action Research as a practice within the critical paradigm and argues that it 'arises out of the problems of everyday life and is constructed with an eye towards solving them.' Consideration of the above descriptions of action research or practitioner research points to some characteristics of this kind of research:

- (I) reflection
- (II) transformation/change/improvement
- (III) participation
- (IV) involvement

It is implicit from these descriptions that action research is not about a particular method, but an attitude or commitment to a vexing social situation, practice or action and change, improvement or transformation.

Action research does not 'prescribe' the methodology or methods of enquiry, although it has recently been associated with qualitative methods (Carr and Kemmis 1986).

The 'founder' of Action Research, Kurt Lewin (1952) in Carr and Kemmis (1986: 163) in fact argued that action research 'would have to include laboratory and field experiments in social change.'

Greenwood and Levin (1998: 7) explicitly point out that action researchers accept no 'a priori limits on the kinds of social research techniques they use ... formal quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods all are appropriate to differing situations.' USWE (1997a: 22) also observe that 'the critical research paradigm recognises and uses empirical, interpretive and critical research methods.'

These views are in line with my argument that the type of question and context of research guide the researcher's choice of methods of enquiry. Davidoff and Van den Berg (28) acknowledge this by asserting that 'there are many ways of looking at Action Research, different people tend to emphasise different aspects of the Action Research process.' In my view the essential element of action research is the opportunity for reflection, transformation, participation and involvement.

#### 3.4.3. **The nature of action research:**

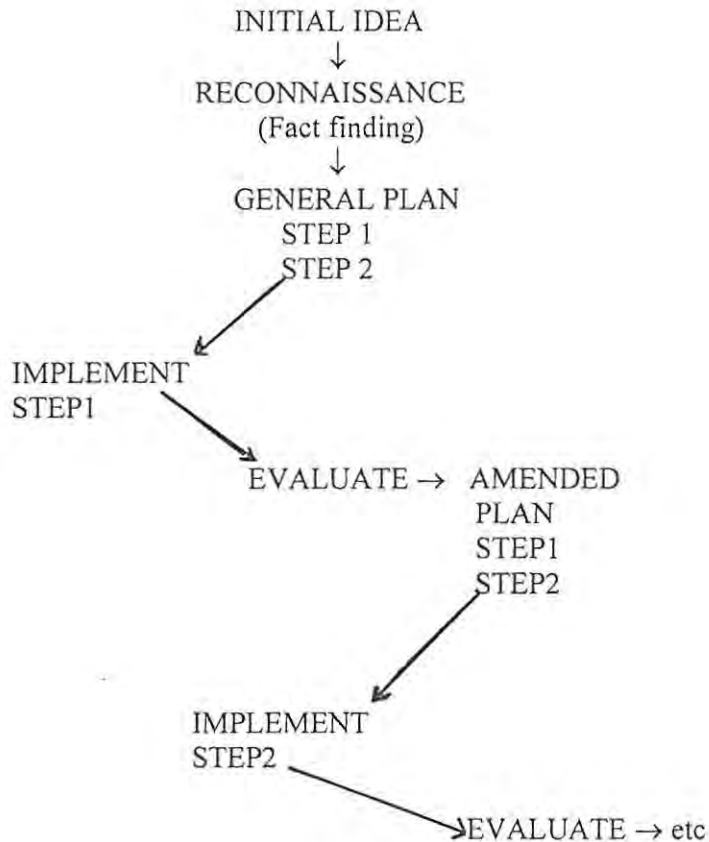
The action research cycle: Action Research is characterised by its mode of research cycle as initially suggested by Lewin (1946). Lewin described the action research cycle as constituted by various steps:

- (I) Fact-finding (reconnaissance): study, analysis or conceptualisation of problems in the target research situation
- (II) Planning: strategizing for the programme of action
- (III) Implementation (action): execution of the strategies
- (IV) Observation: experiencing the programme in action, and recording of this
- (V) Reflection (Evaluation): more fact-finding, study or reflection , usually leading to the repetition of the process
- (VI) Repetition of cycle: depending on the outcome of the first programme, repetition of the cycle of activities or spirals thereof.

Thus according to Lewin (see McNiff 1988, Elliot 1991, Harper 1997) action research becomes a spiral of steps or cycles, with each cycle having stages: fact-finding,

planning, action, observation and reflection, which may proceed to re-planning, action, observation, reflection, and so on.

Below is a representation of Kurt Lewin's model of research as interpreted by Kemmis (1980) in Elliot (1991:70):



(figure 1. Kurt Lewin's action research model)

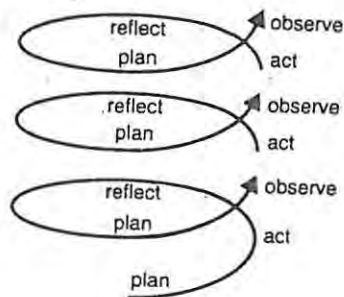
It is this dimension of spirals and their repetition that offers opportunities for communities 'inquirers committed to learning about and understanding the problems and effects of their own strategic action, and the improvement of this strategic action in practice' (Carr and Kemmis *ibid*: 164).

Although there is general consensus among action researchers on Lewin's model as the basis for action research, the application of this model, as it is, in various situations has brought further issues to light. Elliot (*ibid*: 70) points out that although

the model is ‘an excellent basis for starting to think about what action research involves’ it may, however, give an impression to its users that various stages are fixed. He suggests that there should be a sense of flexibility with regard to these, and suggests:

- The general idea should be allowed to shift
- Reconnaissance should involve analysis as well as fact-finding and should constantly recur in the spiral of activities, rather than occur only at the beginning.
- Implementation of an action step is not always easy, and one should not proceed to evaluate the effects of an action until one has monitored the extent to which it has been implemented. See figure 2 below:

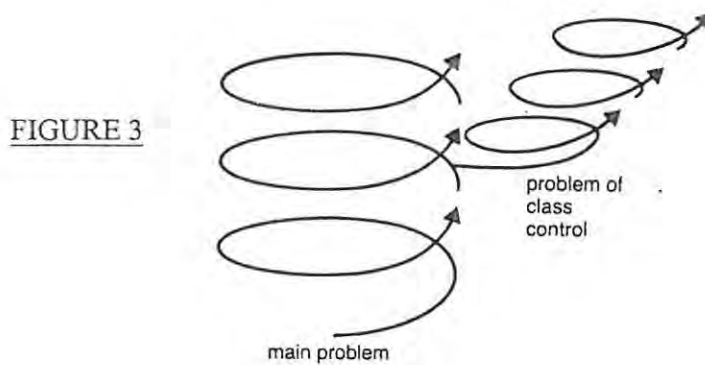
FIGURE 2



Lewin’s model, in addition, does not highlight the need in education practice to address more than one problem at the same time. According to Kemmis and Elliot (in McNiff 1988) the model needs to be upgraded to allow other spirals to branch from the main spiral. If this view is followed a teacher may thus be able to address an idea without ignoring other important issues or problems which arise in the real classroom. In my action research project I found these concerns arising (see chapters four and five). For instance:

- I found it difficult to draw boundaries between stages and cycles, e.g. I could not stop reconnaissance at any point. I kept learning about the situation at the school until my last day there. (A point made by Elliot above).
- The original idea I had prepared to try out (i.e. critical development with a learner noticing strategy of language learning) raised the co-operative learning problem etc. as pointed out by Kemmis and Elliot (in McNiff *ibid*).

The following diagram illustrates the ideas put forward by Kemmis and Elliot:



#### 3.4.4. Types of Action Research:

Three types of action research have been identified: (i) technical (ii) practical (iii) emancipatory. The various types of action research emphasise different aspects. I think action research orientations guide the researcher depending on his or her paradigm and view of knowledge. Walker (1990) and Harper (1997) discuss the action research types. Technical action research is 'positivist' in that it sees knowledge as belonging to the experts. In this thinking, the outside researcher introduces predetermined action programmes to an institution and expects teachers to implement it in an attempt to improve the situation. Practical action research recognises the teachers and learners as researchers with the aim of teachers' self-development and learners' improvement. The attempt is thus on the improvement of the teaching-learning situation at the school. Emancipatory action research goes further to make educational practice contribute towards change in the wider society. As Grundy (1987) suggests, this type of research promotes change through critical consciousness, which is exhibited through political as well as practical action. I found it unnecessary to encase my study within a particular action research type because

there are overlaps of elements of all three action research types in the research. My overarching principle and intent, however, has been emancipatory, though I was aware of the possible challenges. For instance, Harper (1994) found that the context of the institution where the research is undertaken may compromise one's emancipatory ambition. Dison (1998) also acknowledged this aspect in her study.

#### 3.4.5. Action Research in my study:

The context of my research influenced my locating this research within action research. I recognised the fact that as I am attached to the District Office as a subject advisor this could be a problem; that I was coming to the situation of research from a position of power, and also that the whole practice of "inspection" at schools has become problematic and sensitive (Walker 1993).

I decided to employ action research because I wanted to become part of the setting and work as an "insider" at the school. In this instance, given the problematic scenario in the schools especially between teachers and agents from higher levels in the education bureaucracy, I felt action research would give me the opportunity to teach, rather than observe the teacher. I think this cleared the suspicions as I believe it placed me in a position of co-participant in the classroom, and reduced the aura of an "outsider expert". This however depended on the planning (reconnaissance) stage of the action research. It is at this stage that relationships are established, the process negotiated and suspicions and mistrusts are cleared (Davidoff and Van den Berg undated, Walker 1990, Harper 1994). This is discussed in chapter five.

I was motivated to reach out to the school and participate in the classroom activities because I take the position that 'we can only truly do research *with* persons if we engage with them as persons, as co-subjects and thus co-researchers which gives meaning to participatory research (Reason 1994: 10). Meulenberg-Buskens (1997) also stresses the importance of participatory research. Through action research, I was able to avoid the "veranda style" of ethnography (Mouton 1987) whereby I could have selected and called the learners to the District office. I wanted to be part of the situation.

My reflection on the lessons and other activities in the classroom included discussions, informal conversations and interviews with the class teacher and learners. I am satisfied that my actions were guided and informed by collaborative inputs towards improved teaching and learning of English as a Second Language. Although we could not always agree on issues, I saw this as a strong point in action research, and thus formed part of learning and reflection (Walker 1993).

### **3.5. Methods used in the study:**

I used participant observation techniques in class, and kept a researcher' diary and recorded field notes as I related with learners and the teachers at the school. Heshusius (1994) regards participant-observation as a catalyst for kinship and ethics and thus strongly advocates the idea of "participatory consciousness". This aspect is believed to counter the anxiety for researchers caused by attempts to be objective and separating knower from known.

Observation schedules were also used to collect data. The teacher and an academic friend were asked to independently observe the lessons and complete the schedules (see Appendices LOS I, LOS II, LOBS: 61-73). I must indicate that the 'observers' were free to participate in the classroom activities, and often gave valuable input, facilitated dialogue in the groups and helped in clarifying concepts (for example translation to/from Xitsonga). They were sometimes given a slot during the lesson to present an activity. Their involvement made their presence in the classroom meaningful rather than distracting. This made them part of the research process. I feel that had they cut themselves off from the activities they would have become 'spectral' (Zimmerman and Wieder, in Bell 1987). Ferreira (1987:126) quotes Bruyn's (1962) observation that understanding of the 'inner perspective of actors can only be achieved by actively participating in the subjects' world and gaining insight by means of introspection.'

A video camera was used to record all but one lesson, which was only audio-taped. During the reconnaissance stage I asked the learners how they felt about the possibility of they being video-recorded during lessons, and they were very excited about it. Probyn (1998) refers to claims by Cazden (1986) and Foster (1996) that video taping may be disadvantageous in terms of greater obtrusiveness and likelihood

of reactivity. Foster (1996) is quoted (in Probyn) as suggesting that such negative aspects can be countered by spending time to allow subjects to become accustomed to the equipment. Although I did not “pilot” this, I do not believe the learners were negatively affected by this. Simpson and Tuson (1995) detail advantages of video recording. I found the videotapes useful in the sense that I was able to view and re-view the lesson processes. The other observers also found the tapes useful especially when we discussed and reflected on the lessons. Videotapes have as their strongest point the obvious fact that they capture both verbal and non-verbal aspects of the lesson.

I used an audio-recorder during the interviews with the learners, teachers and the principal. Unstructured, conversational interviews were, in one-on-one mode, used with the principal and the teachers. Learners were interviewed through focus group interviews. All the interviews were conducted in a very conversational manner, because I wanted the interviewees to relax, and hoped for their honest opinions on issues. My interview cards therefore mainly contained key words which were to guide my interview. Questions were developed from these key concepts. Burgess’ (in Mason 1996: 38) reference to such interviews as “conversations with a purpose” is, in my opinion, appropriate. The interviews were transcribed (see Appendices: pp. 1-60). Sacks (1984: 26) as quoted by Perakyla in Silverman (1997: 203) observes that interview transcriptions are advantageous because:

[I] could get my hands on it and I could study it again and again, and also, consequentially, because others could look at what I had studied and make of it what they could, if, for example, they wanted to be able to disagree with me.

In our collaborative research the transcribed interviews became a valuable tool especially when we had to engage in reflection.

Learner profile questionnaires (Appendix 4A) and “student writings” were also used to collect and elicit data from the learners. The profile questionnaires (mainly probing the learners’ background and personal information) were given out during the reconnaissance stage of the first cycle. I also used authentic “student writings” in the form of small autobiographies which I asked them to compile. This proved useful as data given in the profiles was significantly augmented. I noted this aspect in the

researcher's diary (R.D). Learners were again asked to write authentic reports to the principal in their evaluation of cycle two. These also boosted the amount of data gathered from the learner questionnaires (evaluation reports) given at the end of cycle two. The questionnaires (evaluation reports) were given at the end of each of the two cycles to elicit qualitative data about what the learners' impressions, ideas and suggestions were after each series of lessons (cycle). Thus their suggestions after the first cycle influenced our planning for the second cycle. I need to mention that the profiles and questionnaires were completed and returned by all the learners involved in the study: it was not a sample.

### 3.6. Validity in the research:

The issues of reliability and validity are crucial to research as they concern verifying or falsifying a priori hypothesis (Guba and Lincoln 1994). However, in qualitative research it becomes difficult to subject human activity to universal norms that would verify an act. It is easily applicable to scientific research where variables are at all costs controlled and the phenomenon under study measured. The issues of reliability and validity unavoidably provoke consideration of the contentious issue of objectivity. I have already discussed my position on this aspect in relation to qualitative research. Perakyla quotes Kirk and Miller (1986: 11) and Silverman (1993) in Silverman (1997: 201) as pointing out that the issues of reliability and validity are important, because in them the objectivity of research is at stake.

Jones (1996: 19) observes that reliability 'means that, given similar circumstances, they [observations] must be repeatable. Others must be able to verify that what we claim to have seen is not a figment of an overactive imagination.' The validity of critical research, however, rests much on the impact the research has on a *particular* situation and the trustworthiness and authenticity of data generated in the research. Generalisation of research findings is not the crux of critical and constructivist research paradigms. But awareness of these issues in qualitative research suggests that researchers should be responsible, honest, accountable and transparent. Probyn (1998) adds explicitness and consistency to the requirements. This is obviously a positive aspect, and in my research I took cognisance of it.

However, for action research, the reliability and validity of research rests much on the impact the research makes on the situation. After all in action research, the research is “for us”. Greenwood and Levin (1998: 76) put this emphasis clearly:

The credibility and validity of Action Research is measured according to whether actions that arise from it solve problems (workability) and increase participants’ control over their situation.

I thus employed the “triangulation strategy” of Denzin (from Ferreira in Mouton 1987). Triangulation, as defined by USWE (1997b: 97) is used to describe:

...a way of checking and clarifying the interpretation they [researchers] have made of their data. [It] involves the use of at least three data sources... this is done to get multiple perspectives on the same events and to check tentative working hypotheses.

According to Denzin (1978) triangulation may embrace the following dimensions:

- multiple data sources : the researcher accesses more than one source of data
- multiple methods: using different tools/techniques in the observation/ generation/interpretation of data. Methods complement each other.
- multiple perspectives: data is viewed and re-viewed from various perspectives

I have integrated these strategies in the research. Data was generated from the classroom observations, the learners, teachers and the principal. I triangulated my observations by observational schedules from two participant observers. The videotapes and interview transcriptions were helpful in the sense that we would re-view them during reflections especially when we could not agree on an aspect. The learners, teachers, the principal and an academic friend were interviewed in order to get multiple perspectives on the situation or aspect of the lessons.

I used several methods or techniques to generate data. Interviews (principal, two teachers and learners), a video recorder, an audio tape recorder, students’ writings (autobiographies), a researcher’s diary/field notes and questionnaires were used.

Lynch (1996: 67) suggests techniques for naturalistic validity. I will cite a few of those that were applied in the research:

- Prolonged engagement: immersion in the setting, establishing rapport, trust, and understanding of program participants
- Persistent observation: identification of the most relevant elements
- Peer debriefing



- Reactivity: documenting the changes in what is being observed that are due to the presence of the researcher or evaluator, as well as the changes that occur in the researcher or evaluators as a result of being in the setting
- Member checks: checking the developing evaluation findings with the members of the evaluation setting
- Triangulation: gathering, reconciling, and explaining of data from several sources and/or from different data-gathering techniques
- Multiple perspective negotiation: arriving at evaluation conclusions as a result of a consensus among persons from different perspectives in relation to the program

I see these issues and concerns about validity as principles in qualitative research that guide researchers against drifting away to sheer “opinionism” or subjectivism, and is commensurable to the Freirean notion of “objective subjectivity” and “rigour” in critical research. Positivist researchers will probably see this perspective as problematic; a point that confirms the accord between research process and the researcher’s ontological and epistemological positions.

Like Dison (1998: 19) I have hoped to “let the object speak” by including transcripts of the interviews and print media texts used in the lessons and kept in safe custody all the videotapes of the lessons so that an interested reader ‘can make her [*sic*] own interpretations of the data if she [*sic*] chooses.’ I therefore attempted to transcribe the interviews as the interviewees originally spoke.

### 3.7. Ethical concerns:

I was cautious of the ethical issues during the study and was guided by Jones’ (1996) observation of two values likely to conflict with research on human behaviour:

- (i) you should never harm another person, and
- (ii) each individual has the right to privacy.

I recognised, before going to the school, that I was going to the research field as an outsider and therefore had to negotiate my way into the school and the classroom. I was cautious not to allow my power-position as a District official to guarantee my entry into the school. Thus during my reconnaissance I made sure that the principal, the teacher and the learners consented to my participation in their classroom. This I did by openly expressing my research agenda which, I hope, ensured that I got ‘informed consent’ (Jones 1996:35). Informed consent, Jones argues, enlists the co-operation of participants while at the same time alleviating any anxieties about what they are letting themselves in for.

I respected the confidentiality of the individuals by avoiding gossiping. When a participant shared sensitive information with me, I ensured that it remained confidential. For instance, one teacher was consistently critical of many practices at the school, and was not regarded well by almost all staff members. This really helped, because he later appeared to be one teacher who could be transparent about issues at the school. Before the interview I asked him not to mention names of his colleagues. I have thus used pseudonyms to protect the identity of the schools, the teachers and principals.

The learners were also respected in the way I talked to them, did things with them and also asked their opinions whenever I wanted to do anything that might involve them. For example, I did not force them to attend my lessons.

In my activities with the learners I was always cautious not to expose nor criticise any teacher, especially since I was coming into the school with a relatively different approach to teaching. Although I was determined to “transform” their ways of learning, particularly with co-operative learning, I was careful not give the impression that teachers using the teacher-centred method were ignorant or bad. From a critical point of view, I was content with the belief that if the project were a success it would impact on the learners as suggested by Lynch’s (*ibid*) “reactivity” technique and USWE’s (1997b: 102) “outcome validity”.

I wanted to position myself not as a taker or mere researcher. I thus, whenever I could, participated in the activities of the school and attended their functions and made financial contributions (for instance: farewell parties, condolences, get-well cards for hospitalised staff members). I asked the principal to regard me as one of the teachers and never to treat me as a “guest” nor give me any preferential treatment. I assured him that I was prepared to offer my services to the school if, and when, I could.

### 3.8. Summary:

In this chapter I described the methodology that I used in the research, by giving the rationale for the research and the paradigm/s within which I located myself and the study, and the research methods and techniques used to generate data. This, I hope, will put into perspective the descriptions and discussions of my implementation in the next two chapters. I will discuss the reconnaissance stage and the teaching of the first cycle in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER FOUR: RECONNAISSANCE AND PLANNING PHASES

### 4.1. Introduction:

In this chapter I discuss the reconnaissance and planning phases of the first cycle of my action research. The chapter will comprise two sections, as in Lewin's model discussed in chapter three: 4.1. Reconnaissance or Fact-finding and 4.2. Planning or Preparation to teach the first cycle.

### 4.2. Reconnaissance:

This phase entailed finding out about my research site, and understanding the context of my research question.

#### 4.2.1. Pilot lesson:

I had a pilot lesson as part of my understanding the context of the research question (see Yin 1994: 74) because I realised the need to understand the applicability of my ESL teaching theory (as discussed in chapter two) in a semi-rural black school. I had already decided not to do the study with a grade 12 class, because I was concerned that teachers in such situations focus on "preparing" for external examinations. I didn't want my project to complicate their situation or to prejudice mine.

I selected a school which I often visited in my official subject advisory role, because I had established good relations with the principal and other English teachers. An appointment was set for Tuesday 16 February 1999 for the "double period" totalling 70 minutes with the grade 11's: **Mr. Koma's** (the principal's) English class.

My lesson design included a newspaper article which I hoped would be of interest, relevance and linguistic value to the learners. The learning activity would be set out for the attainment of the following outcomes:

- Communicating in English
- Helping learners notice language items in use
- Vocabulary building in context
- Critical reflection

The teaching method used was co-operative learning in which the learners were divided into groups of five and given a copy of the newspaper article. They were first asked to read the article silently for content (the message) and the identification of difficult words. I asked individual learners to read parts of the article out loud for the whole class, and I read after them to ensure that new words were correctly pronounced. Critical questions were prepared for learners to discuss in their groups, and report to the whole class. Reference was then made to language issues like tense, voice, pronouns and reported speech, in context.

From the experience of this lesson I learnt a number of things which influenced my approach to my action research. The learning points were:

- The teacher: I would have to be cautious with the class teacher with whom I would do my action research. The fact that the class teacher in my pilot mini-study was the headmaster was problematic because he only spent approximately 20 minutes of the entire 70 minutes in my lesson as he had to attend to “pressing” administrative matters. For my action research I needed a teacher who would be motivated, confident and committed to the project. Above all he or she should be eager to learn with me.

The teacher’s comments that ‘the learners are weak, they won’t make it’ (R.D) suggested that as teachers we often underestimate the potential of learners, and thus do not engage them in activities that extend their intellectual abilities, let alone their critical reflection. The Vygotskyian Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) concept highlights this aspect. According to Vygotsky learning activities should be designed in such a way that they are *right at the edge of learners’ current understanding* (Alfrey and David 1996).

- The school and discipline: The school should have a reasonable sense of discipline. I was already aware of the general context of many ex-DET (Black) schools as discussed in the Introduction and Chapter One of this study. In the pilot school, learners were milling around the school without going to the

classrooms, some were in class without a teacher, and thirty-five of the seventy learners who should have been in my class were absent.

- The learners' response to co-operative learning was poor. There was a great sense of individualism, and no teamwork was evident in the groups. Learners would enthusiastically want to give me "correct" answers as individuals. However, the fact that the lesson was based on a contemporary, popular Shangaan musician excited them so much. I even told **Mr. Koma** about this when he said he was 'really surprised' by their participation. In my research diary I have noted that a learner, who said he was the Learners' Representative Council president, followed me to the principal's office and expressed the wish that I come for more lessons. Sadly, I decided not to go back, except in my normal subject advisory role with the teachers.
- The Resources: I was satisfied that my premise about resources, especially media texts, was confirmed. The premise was that learning should entail issues that are relevant to learners lived experiences. Media texts have been found to be authentic, interesting and relevant. This aspect was discussed in chapter two.
- Language aspects: I noticed the potential for grammatical aspects and vocabulary items being taught in context through learner noticing within the critical framework. Learner-noticing entails learners' ability to notice aspects of grammar or grammatical errors without there being a concerted effort by the teacher to teach grammar.
- Reading: Most learners' reading ability was poor. Reading to them was a mere mechanical exercise that involved sheer sounding of words without understanding. I realised that in my action research, I needed to be more resolute, systematic and focused in the teaching of reading.
- Time allocation: When the siren wailed I still needed more time to teach other things that I had wanted to cover. I realised at this stage that I should arrange

for “double periods” in the school where my action research would be conducted. The method needs considerable time for a teacher to maximally use the text.

Cognisant of these learning points, I decided to look for another school.

#### 4.2.2. **Gaining access to the school:**

I approached the principal of PDM Secondary school which is fortunately situated just one kilometre away from the District Office, and asked for his permission to do research at his school with an English class teacher. The principal readily agreed and assured me that there would not be any problem as his school was “very good”.

I suggested to him that a formal request be made to the School Governing Body (SGB), Staff and the Learners’ Representative Council (LRC). He, however, assured me that it was not necessary for me to do so, as he would inform them himself. This worried me as it suggested a certain type of leadership style.

I was determined to negotiate with the learners and the class teacher, at least, rather than leave it to the authority of the principal to ensure genuine consent from my co-participants. I was inspired by the observation that in this type of research ‘it is necessary to set up a situation in which the participants are willing to share in the focus of the study’ (Maykut and Morehouse 1994: 71). Consequently I arranged to meet TO (the class teacher) and outlined my research objectives. He volunteered support, and promised to inform the learners about my intention. I met the learners for the first time on 26 April 1999 and, as observed in the research diary and field notes (Appendix FN II), they were excited about it.

#### 4.2.3. **The School:**

##### 4.2.3.1. **Background:**

The school is fairly new. It is a junior secondary school with grades 8,9 and 10. It was started in 1992/3 out of the need in the township to alleviate overcrowding in a local high school. **Mr. Khosa**, the present principal, is the third in the school’s history. The highlights of the school are that they participated and did well in the Science Olympiad for two consecutive years: 1994-1995 (see Appendix AP: 1).

#### 4.2.3.2. Physical environment:

The school is not far from the District Office, and a few hundred metres from two high schools, effectively becoming a feeder to these schools. Two boards welcome a “visitor” to the school premises. One has the name of the school written on it, while another is eye-catching: “Dumping Prohibited”. The school grounds are full of bushy vegetation. The board and the overgrown grounds already had me thinking about the attitude of the community and parents to the school.

#### 4.2.3.3: Classroom accommodation:

There are only two blocks of four classrooms each. One of these eight classrooms was used for many purposes, although the principal saw it as a ‘staff room and office’ (AP: 3). But I could see that it was also a storeroom and printing or computer room. The siren was operated from that room. Movement was almost impossible in the staff room. The remaining classes were used to house about 560 learners, an average of 80 learners per classroom. In practice, however, as the principal says ‘in extreme cases we do have classes, classes that can accommodate up to eighty, ninety pupils because parents insist that their children should be admitted in this institution’ (AP: 3).

There are two shady trees near the “staff room” which are used interchangeably as extra classrooms and a parking area for teachers and visitors. One tree has a chalkboard “permanently” stuck or nailed on it. There is a small broken piece of chalkboard that is moved from the other tree to the “staff room” at appropriate times.

There is no library, laboratory or computer room. However, **Mr.Khosa** is determined to introduce ‘more practical subjects...and start with Computer Studies...and include electronics and practical Agriculture’ (AP: 3). The present subject streams are the Sciences (Maths, Physical Science and Biology), the General subjects (History and Geography) and the Commercial stream (Accounting, Economics and Business Economics). All learners do English, Afrikaans and Xitsonga.

I identified several key areas which I felt could be crucial to the context of my research; and interviewed the principal (Appendix AP), the English teacher (see TO I and FN I) and an Afrikaans teacher (TH). I tape-recorded and then transcribed the

interviews. A focus group interview with the learners was conducted but not recorded. An academic friend, however, took field notes (FN II). Throughout my fact-finding phase I kept the responses in consideration when I made observations. My observations were entered in my researcher's diary.

The issues or key areas focused on were:

- Language Policy at the School
- Teaching Philosophy and method
- Staff Relations
- Teaching/Learning resources or the use of textbooks
- Work Ethic and Discipline
- Economic Background and Parental Involvement

I triangulated data generated through my observations with that gathered from the principal, the English teacher, the Afrikaans teacher and the learners to ensure validity.

#### 4.2.3.4. Language policy at the school:

There appears to be an unwritten policy that English is the medium of instruction or language of learning and teaching (LOLT). However my observation was that Xitsonga, which is the mother tongue of almost all the learners and the teachers, is the dominant language in class, the staff room and the surroundings. A great deal of code-switching is practised. All the learners do Xitsonga, Afrikaans and English as subjects.

The following remarks by the principal attest to this observation I made:

Though it is not written down, we deliberated on it with teachers and they decided that our language of, eh, instruction should be English...it's not something that is written down as I say, but eh, we, we have a that unspoken agreement...it's not easy to enforce that in the classroom (AP: 5).

The Afrikaans teacher said he would 'like to believe...we agreed that English should be the medium of instruction. But... I don't think people are sticking to that' (see TH: 33). He said that very few teachers used English in the staff room.

TO confirmed the unwritten status of the policy by indicating that (TO I: 19):

At some stage we once grappled with this issue...although we didn't come to ... conclusion...we didn't precisely have written documents with regard to our school policy.

He continues to say that many teachers would say they teach in English whereas in fact they use the mother tongue and that 'learners would say that, you know, this teacher teaches us in the vernacular'(TO I: 19).

He adds that:

...many teachers are, are more of ...vernacular; they are saying, of course, that perhaps he would start the first five or ten minutes of his lesson, lesson in English, and suddenly it's, it's like it comes naturally that the teacher will be turn to ... mother tongue or vernacular.

The conclusion that I draw is that as in many other schools (Vinjevold 1999) the issue of language policy has not been given proper attention. TH observed that '...a few kids are able to speak ...in English and it goes to a point where teachers only concentrated on those few kids that seem to pick up'(TH:36). This was useful to me in my understanding of the context.

#### **4.2.3.5. Teaching philosophy and method:**

The school has no clear policy regarding educational philosophy or teaching methodology. Individual teachers use whatever method they are comfortable with as long as the teacher completes the syllabus. Given the kind of teacher training most teachers have had (see Chapter One) and the content-based education followed in secondary school, this is not surprising. But one teacher who was trained at a progressive institution which followed the OBE approach (even before it became official policy) taught slightly differently, and I was able to notice the difference between the way he taught and how other teachers did. I observed teachers always carrying textbooks, chalk and dusters to class. Sometimes they would only have a piece of chalk.

My interviews with the principal and the Afrikaans teacher helped in the triangulation of the data. The principal's comment that they 'leave it to each individual teacher to

decide how he or she teaches' (AP: 6) confirmed my observations. The principal is not familiar with the new education philosophy of Curriculum 2005/OBE:

My understanding of [OBE] is very limited more especially [as] I am an older teacher; I haven't listened (to) or seen OBE practically anywhere...I got that general feeling that everybody has when a new thing comes into existence; you view it with suspicion (AP: 6).

The stance of the principal was understandable. This struck me as a District official because it showed that the Department was not doing enough in terms of in-service programmes for the teachers.

Although he was somewhat suspicious, he thought OBE 'would be a, a good system if implemented correctly.' His understanding of group-work points to a potentially positive attitude to OBE.

Although the principal regards "group work" positively he makes no effort to encourage the teachers to practise it. TH (see TH: 30-33) describes the teachers' transmissive teaching approach thus: 'you only feed kids with things that they are going to reproduce whenever you set a test for them.' He observes that the learners have got so used to transmissive teaching and rote learning that they find it difficult to adapt to new approaches. The following are some of the reasons he gives:

- 'when you come with your own style they'll quickly resent it, and, it's a new thing....'
- 'Learners resent...when you like them to come up with things, to think critically...'
- 'They have been placed and it's hard for them to come out, I think, they've been trained...'
- 'These kids have got to a point where they are lazy, I think kids would enjoy a teacher coming in and shouting at them and telling them whatever and just getting them to sit down and be quiet and listen and copy notes of what you are saying...'

The above explanation by TH, the principal's attitude and my observations unlocked my perception of the teaching situation I was preparing myself for. I knew that critical reflection was part of the teaching approach that I would use and already started thinking about the challenges facing me.

#### 4.2.3.6. **The use of materials:**

The principal's observation (AP: 3) that 'most of the children come from disadvantaged background, it's not easy for them to get books' suggested to me that the textbook is perceived as the only resource to be used in the classroom. TH (see TH: 36) points out that other than the occasional use of 'what I'd term traditional teaching aids...like... periodic table ... protractors in Mathematics...'. He adds that (TH: 37) 'almost...all the teachers use...the textbooks... most of them have textbooks when they go to classes'.

In my focus group interview with the learners, the learners indicated that 'others teach [them] what is in the textbook...' (FN I: 55). TO (see FN I: 55) also affirms this: 'Their approach is more textbook based, they take their exercises from textbooks'.

These observations gave me the idea that my research context was a textbook-dominated milieu characterised by transmission teaching. I was determined to use media texts as an alternative to the existing practice.

#### 4.2.3.7. **Discipline and commitment:**

I realised that for my teaching approach to succeed, a situation of discipline and commitment on the part of both teachers and learners was essential. Given the challenge that the learners had been 'placed and it's hard for them to come out' (TH: 35) of the transmission teaching mode, I felt it appropriate to find out how motivated and disciplined the teachers were. This would enhance my understanding of the research context.

My observation has been that the school reflects the general historical aspects of Black South African schools (see Chapter One), characterised by suspicions between the Departmental officials and the teachers, the school management and the teachers, and defiance of norms e.g. written lesson preparations, time registers, supervision of teachers' work and class attendance. Many Black schools still experience such problems as teachers have not completely outgrown the spirit of resistance and defiance that characterised the pre-1994 education politics.

In the “staff room” I observed that the teachers would engage in conversations on various topics covering, for example, politics, sport and general issues (in R.D). TH (in TH: 30) observed that ‘there’s a lack of commitment in some...teachers’. He adds that they are not motivated to work and thus they ‘would enjoy to stay in the staff room rather than go to class’ (TH: 32). He concludes that this attitude has negative influences on the learners, because ‘kids get used to a teacher...if teachers don’t attend classes then kids won’t come to class’. TO, as a site steward of his teacher union (see FN II: 58) advises members of his organisation to attend classes when they sit in the staff room.

It is difficult to position the principal’s management style given the complex, and dangerous, situation many Black schools are in. The principal claims that his ‘management style is a mixture of both *laissez-faire*, and a sprinkling of a...little bit of autocracy is sometimes necessary, but it’s basically *laissez-faire*’ (AP: 9).

It is for historical reasons (as discussed in chapter one) that it is hard for schools to be organised, and that principals are in a difficult position to bring about discipline. The principal (AP: 8) says:

I cannot prescribe what...methods should be introduced to stop teachers...who are not honouring their periods.

He attributes this to the fact that ‘there is still resistance from some teachers maintaining that they wouldn’t like to get their work inspected’ (AP: 7). I really think that the crux of this matter lies in his observation that:

We are at the mercy of teacher organisations because if a teacher comes late and you decide to take a particular action...you end up picking up problems with that person (AP: 11).

Situations such as this stifle and curtail the principal’s power to enforce ‘the house rules’ (AP: 8). TH (in TH: 33) observes that the principal finds himself in a position where he cannot exercise his duties, and everything goes into ‘*laissez-faire*’:

I think... there's ...over-exercising of powers, of SADTU powers...he is placed in a corner where he...doesn't have much power because...there are people that are using...SADTU powers...wrongly.

TH captures this mood as follows: 'the management and the teachers seem to run on two parallel lines...and nobody wants to compromise' (TH: 34).

#### 4.2.3.8. Social background and parental involvement:

During the first two weeks I noticed that there was a substantial number of learners who commuted from the nearby villages to this township-based school. I know that generally people who reside in the villages are relatively poor compared to those in the townships. Many township residents are teachers, policemen/women, nurses, doctors, clerks and other professionals. Many villagers are farm workers and, at worst, unemployed. The principal confirmed this in the interview, and this impacts negatively on education:

But we do have students coming from surrounding villages... We don't experience very negative problems with pupils coming from [the township schools], we however do have students who... come from neighbouring villages who sometimes find it very difficult to cope with our program here at school (AP: 2).

This aspect underlines the socio-political nature of education (as discussed in chapter two) and highlights the need to consider the influence of social forces on the school.

The principal puts it succinctly (AP: 1-2):

We are unable to cope with quite a number of things that are environmental factors beyond which we have no control; like ... most of the students that we receive from other neighbouring schools sometimes prove to have been neglected in certain aspects to mention first one... a situation where... a child is unable to write properly, to copy things correctly on the board which gives us an impression that the standard in other schools might be slightly lower than we expect...

TH has also noticed the impact of these social factors in the classroom (TH: 36):

What might be happening it's because most of these kids that can speak English or have a better command of English it's because of the ...

involvement of their parents and those ... that's parents are not really involved and they cannot easily pick up on their own... they're just left; left in the dark.

The principal acknowledged the belief that social background influences education by pointing out that:

We also have a problem there because most children come from disadvantaged background, it's not easy for them to get books they so much need in order to improve their reading skills (AP: 3).

#### 4.2.3.9. Inter-personal relations at the school:

The school has a divided staff in terms of teacher organisations such as SADTU and PEU. However, they agree on a number of social issues, for example, on farewell functions, condolences, memorial services and well-wishing cards. There are temporarily-appointed teachers and volunteer teachers. I noted this in the R.D:

I was amazed to notice that some of the teachers are volunteer teachers, and are as committed as those who are appointed and paid. What impressed me was that the learners (or parents) were obliged to pay R5 each per month for their remuneration.

The Afrikaans teacher (see TH: 34), as pointed out earlier, feels there is no mutual understanding between the management and the teachers. At face value, an observer may be impressed by the "physical" togetherness of the teachers in the staff room with all the conversations going on, but one needs to get "inside" for a reasonable period to realise how far apart, emotionally, the teachers are. A great deal of such problems, therefore, became clear to me after a number of weeks at the school.

My interview with the principal, TH and TO did, of course, indicate that "all might not be well" as suggested by the following remark by the principal:

The strength of the school is that there's a very strong bonding among educators (*pause*)...it is true that there might be educators who...are not (*pause*) pulling on the same strengths with others but ...we've a greater number of educators who do co-operate (in AP: 1).

Despite the staff relations and attitudes at the school, the principal is positive and builds on this aspect to make a constructive contribution to the school. His sense of optimism is implicit in his observation that they:

...do have some instances where there would be misunderstandings among teachers but they've never really created problems...they've always been problems that could be contained within the school environment (AP: 4).

However, some staff members are negatively affected by the situation. TH, for example, points to the 'resentment' he gets from some teachers and relates this to the division in the staff:

There's bad relationship amongst all the teachers in the staff room, there, there are groups I think, I've realised that the staff room is divided into groups (TH: 31).

According to TH, the bad relations interfere with performance and 'that really affects the organisation of the school' (TH: 33). The negative impact resulting from bad staff relations is evident in the following sentiment expressed by (TH: 38):

What I can say is that there's something wrong because, whatever you try to do somebody tries to pull you back...*(pause)* um, and I don't know whether that's out of jealousy or that is out of...

#### 4.2.3.10. **Summary:**

In this section of the chapter I discussed the context of the school in which the research was done. I will now discuss a few aspects that, I hope, will be useful in the understanding of the English Teacher (TO).

### 4.2.4. **The English teacher:**

#### 4.2.4.1. **Introduction:**

Data on TO was generated from observations that I entered in my research diary, unrecorded personal interview (see FN I), recorded personal interview (TO I), learners' comments (see FN II), the Afrikaans teacher (TH) and the principal (AP).

#### 4.2.4.2. Education background:

TO is a well-qualified teacher. He has undergone university training and studied Fundamental Pedagogics (see Introduction and Chapter One). He holds a B.A. (Honours) degree in English with a strong literature orientation which has influenced his teaching, hence his comment (TO I: 16):

It was more based on theory...of practical criticism and it was more literature-laden than language-based...I was introduced to practical criticism and poetry... and 'cause now I started to develop an interest in, in poetry.

He started teaching at the school in 1995 and 'happened to be a tutor when [he] was doing...honours degree' (TO I: 16). However, he was no longer interested in teaching and was doing a human resource management course in 1999, because he did not 'see future in teaching' (FN I).

#### 4.2.4.3. Motivation:

TO impresses as a very confident teacher and is highly proficient in English. My diary entry on the first day I met him confirms this observations: 'A confident and articulate teacher rises...he is a junior secondary school teacher'. My academic friend also confirmed this.

The principal also captures this point by indicating that TO is 'very sure of himself' (AP: 7). He continues to rightly say that TO 'is highly energetic, he reads a lot, he is always trying to get better ways of carrying out his duty...he is the one who is trying to motivate the other teachers...'(AP: 6).

This aspect indicates how motivated TO is, even though he is also 'disillusioned' with teaching. Nonetheless his sense of confidence, as the principal says, makes him a motivating influence on the other teachers and learners as well. The learners find inspiration from him and positively regard him as different from other teachers, hence: 'TO is great...he encourages [us] to come on Saturday and Sunday. He says time wasted is never regained' (FN I: 56).

Owing to his self-confidence he allows learners to evaluate him, as he says, so that he can develop. I think this aspect offers him the opportunity to reflect on his practice.

My experience is that very few teachers allow learners to “assess” them. I have noted TO’s openness to learners in this regard in (FN I: 56):

He allows learners to evaluate him. e.g. ‘What problems do I cause?  
Don’t put your name, what do I do you don’t like?’

He is active in teacher union and community radio station work, and has got the confidence of the principal. The principal has no problem with him attending to these activities, hence:

I have no ill-feelings when he goes away because I know his students are always abreast of the syllabus (AP: 7).

The fact that he readily gave me access to his class for the purpose of research seems to underscore this attribute about him. His positive attitude and openness made it possible for this research to be done.

#### 4.2.4.4. **The English teacher’s view of education and ESL teaching:**

TO believes that ‘OBE is more flexible, gives him latitude to explore, learners “make self discovery” and it makes him to be innovative and creative’ (FN II: 58). His understanding of education as “self-discovery” is evidenced in his usual practice of giving learners assignments which force them to search for information, albeit raw facts. In the research diary I have noted the event when he showed me an assignment sheet that required learners to search for general information from neighbours, parents, libraries during the Easter school holidays. This was also confirmed in the field notes (FN II: 57):

When it comes to assignments learners were told not to ask parents only, but other people also...search for information in the area and get different ideas. “He does not spoon feed us”.

TO’s standpoint on language teaching echoes the basic principles of OBE. He believes teachers and learners should be innovative and creative in terms of the learning materials they use in the classroom. He believes materials other than the textbooks should be used so that they could be relevant to the learners’ experiences. He raised this viewpoint in the teachers’ meeting and I noted this in the research diary:

He asks me why don't teachers get that right to select the literature books of their choice. He says there are good, relevant African writers' books which can be meaningful to the learners rather than what they are reading now.

He has thus found that 'textbooks were too prescriptive, syllabus based and ...quite impractical' (FN I: 55). He adds that language use should be functional and relevant to personal experience. He holds the belief that language teaching should be about giving learners opportunities to 'experiment with the language rather than conscious grammar teaching as grammar doesn't make learners to speak English' (TO I: 17-18). His view about language seems to have been influenced by his teacher training where he 'felt more aligned to communicative approach than any other method...' (TO I: 17). He is consequently unequivocal in his attitude to grammar teaching (*ibid*):

My attitude to the teaching of grammar...it's, of course negative...I'm not actually one who espouses to the ... teaching of grammar.

His argument is that grammar instruction does not improve our learners' ability to use language correctly. He stresses the point that people who are exposed to grammar instruction 'still commit some grave mistakes' (TO I: 18). His description of his own teaching approach, however, suggests that he does teach grammar as a corrective activity. He identifies errors that learners make and then corrects them, as evidenced in (TO I: 18):

If there would be like a concord mistake or some other things...then we would in that instance maybe deal with, with grammar that ja here it should have been, like, this ...but we never go deeper into looking at grammar *per se*.

Although 'he speaks so strongly against the teaching of grammar in language classes, I have, however, noticed some inconsistencies in what TO claims or believes in, and what he practices in class. For instance, the learners' indication in my first meeting with them that they had had a grammar lesson with TO 'today about preposition' (FN II: 57). Although the learners don't have grammar textbooks, 'he comes with his own textbook' (FN II: 57). The 1998 end-of-year paper set for the learners by TO in grade 9 shows no trace of the communicative approach and does not include aspects such as

relevance, applicability and creativity. It is a memory-based, traditional grammar kind of question paper (see Appendix 8).

Although he appears to be passionate about OBE and understands it, his classroom practice is mainly teacher-fronted. The learners (in FN I: 56) say that in his classes he is 'in front, they are in rows'. In my observations of his lessons I found that his teaching style proves to be transmissive and offered little opportunity for co-operative work or learners' self-discovery. His sense of wanting to go an extra mile to get 'relevant' learning support materials was never realised during my presence at the school. For instance in his grade 9 lesson that I observed on Thursday, 13 May 1999, I noticed that: 'desks are in rows...he does not have any preparation nor any support material' (R.D). On the same day I made the following entry in my research diary: 'I look at the questions and notice that they are low-order, memory questions'. In another lesson, on Monday 24 May 1999, I observed that his practice is mainly anchored on the transmission mode of teaching.

The conclusion I made about TO is that it is hard to sum him up. He is enigmatic in that there remain gaps between what he says and what, or how, he does it. I have, nevertheless, noticed that he has to a certain degree exposed the learners to media. As TH observes 'he sort of attempted to, to, distribute all the magazines to all the kids in the school' (TH: 37). The learners confirmed this role by indicating that (FN II: 56) 'he brings newspapers to them, reads to them and they have to tell him what is happening'.

This exposure, though not intensive, was useful to my research in that I found the learners to be somewhat familiar with what media is. The fact that he had established an Editorial Committee (see FN I: 55 and FN III: 59-60) contributed to my easy introduction of the print media in the ESL teaching.

#### **4.2.5. The Learners:**

##### **4.2.5.1. Introduction:**

As part of the fact-finding phase, I felt it necessary to have some understanding of the learners I was going to teach. Data about the learners was generated through a learner

profile questionnaire (see Appendix 4A), written work (autobiography) and interviews (learners, teachers and principal).

The learner profile questionnaire (Appendix 4A) prompted data about the learners' (i) family background, (ii) English proficiency and attitude to English, (iii) view of education and life, and (iv) exposure to books and media forms. Data was therefore analysed according to these themes, and triangulated with my observations (R.D), field notes (FN I, FN II, FN III), autobiographies, and interviews from teachers and the principal.

#### 4.2.5.2. Family background:

Generally the learners in my class were from relatively good family backgrounds. Their families seemed to be stable. From the thirty questionnaires received only two learners stayed with their grandmothers, six with their mothers only, while the rest lived with both parents.

In the majority of families either or both parents were professionals. The professions included nursing and teaching. Other occupations included relatively good jobs like driving, supervision (brick-laying company), money distribution, clerks, police, cashiers and factory hands.

Some learners (**Ndzalama**, **Nyiko** and **Ganunu**) who were impressively fluent in English had parents who were both teachers. Others who were fluent had parents in other occupations. For example, **Sagwafi's** father was an administrative clerk and her mother worked for a telecommunication company. **Amanda** and **Shikombiso** each had one of their parents who was a teacher. **Solani** stayed with her grandmother who was a Doctor (in Education). Most of them stayed in the township.

A few learners came from the surrounding villages. Contrary to the impression given by the principal about the profile of parents from the surrounding villages, the "rural" learners in my class were generally from families where parents held relatively good jobs and mostly were professional. Perhaps that is the reason why they could afford to pay for their transport. Two "weak" learners struck my attention, and they were friends: **Lucia** and **Andzani**. I discovered that they came from two neighbouring

villages. Their language proficiency was poor. **Lucia**'s father was a labourer in a government department, and her mother was an assistant in a medical surgery.

**Andzani**'s father was a clerk in a "tribal authority" while her mother is unemployed.

#### 4.2.5.3. Learners' English proficiency and attitude to English:

The learners had varying abilities with regard to English language competence. There were about ten learners who were very fluent, the majority who were moderate, and a few who were weak. TO (in TO I: 21) observed that 'some are actually...fast learners maybe because of their backgrounds or maybe because of the schools they've been exposed to'. TH (see TH: 36) observed that a 'few kids are able to speak English' and attributes this to the participation of their parents. The principal also related the learners' background to their performance. He said they '[had] students coming from surrounding villages...who sometimes [found] it difficult to cope with our program here at school' (AP: 2-3). He added that for these learners 'it's not easy...to get books they so much need in order to improve their reading skills' (AP: 3). TO viewed the scenario as follows (FN II: 58):

There are learners who have serious problems as they can't read. They did not get grounding at the schools they came from.

The following extracts from learners' writing (in the writers' original words) show the variation in language competence:

- every Monday up to Friday I go to school, when I was at school I listening my teacher. When the school out I go home (**Andzani, autobiography**)
- at 1995 I started at N'wahuzana Junior secondary school. at 1999 I started at PDM secondary school untile now. When In finished matric I was go to university. When Im finished at university I love to works at Bank. and get married. and three children. (**Lucia, autobiography**)
- My weakness is getting angry very quickly but I am working on that now and willing to overcome it. My strength is having to help people with problems that they come across in life. I like the way I am. (**Solani, autobiography**)

- I like being with friends and always in a good mood, and I like people who do things openly without any shadow of doubt. But I dislike pretenders, gossip mongers and gossip scandals one other thing I hate is woman and child abuse. (**Sagwati**, *autobiography*)

Notwithstanding the case of **Lucia** and **Andzani**, the language proficiency of the learners in my class was relatively good. I made this observation in my research entry and referred to this point in my interview with the principal (AP: 9) that 'some learners especially in grade 10B, impressed me as very, very competent in the use of English...'. TO also acknowledges the diversity of learners in this regard by his realisation of 'three categories' of learners in terms of their English language competence.

The attitude of the learners to English is overwhelmingly positive. They are all eager to learn English. They view English language competence in terms of prestige, status, utility and success in life. Thus, on the whole, motivation is instrumental as evidenced in the following responses from the questionnaire (in the writers' original words):

- I enjoy English very much because is the only subject which you can communicate with when you don't her or his language. I like English very much. (**Shikhombiso**)
- I do enjoy learning English because it's great fun and it is an enternational language, almost known all over the world. (**Solani**)
- You can't go anywhere without English (**Meckson**)
- ...it is the best way to communicate with people from another country and is the only language that is known mostly (**Ndzalama**)
- I want to speak the language fluently. Like does thing regard their selves as whites. (**Meriam**)

I have made a point in my research diary that it seemed to them English that made one a different, better person.

#### 4.2.5.4. Learners' view of education and life:

The learners see schooling in terms of status and a good future. Education, according to them, is an instrument or “key” to a successful life. The learners aspire to “special” careers which they do not know about, but they are convinced they are good, well-paying “jobs”. The focus group interview (FG I), learner profile questionnaire (4A) and autobiographies point to this.

The following responses are a range from the focus group interview (Appendix FG I):

P3: When I grow up I want to be accountant.

DL: What is an accountant?

P3: (*pause*) ...hmn, I don't know really.

P4: ...when I complete my matric I want to go to a university to study my, my psychiatrist.

...

DL: What is a psychiatrist? ...(*pause*)

P4: (*pause*) I don't know, and, eh...I hear people say there's a psychiatrist, but I think it's a good job.

...

P5: ...when I, I pass matric I want to go to university, to study my chartered accountant.

...

D.L: What is it about?

P5: I don't know really, but I have my, um, career book. Hmn.

...

P7: I want to be, eh, accountant?

D.L: Okay...

P7: and I want to... have some lots of money and a big house.

D.L: Okay...so, what is an accountant?

P7: (*pause*) I think (*laughs*) hhh, is dealing with the computer.

These “prestigious” top careers and their desire for material success are also mentioned in the questionnaires in response to item 9 in (4A):

- Education is going to unlock burglar doors and ordinary doors for me (**Sagwati**).
- To learn and to have a good future, knowing something in life (**Cathrine**).
- To learn and become what I always dream of (**Phoebe**).
- So that someday I would be somebody important in life. I wanna be able to relay on myself (**Zanelle**).
- To be someone special in life (**Ndzalama**)
- To get great job earn big money, I want to be someone reach (**Donnel**)

These statements indicate a range of the learners' views about education. I think the learners' pragmatic view indicates how well motivated they are to attend school.

In the "autobiographies" similar interests or views were expressed (in writers' original words):

- I want to be come or I dream of becoming a business woman and I want to become a thesbian (actress).
- I want to have better future. I want to have good education, I good work, home and family.
- When I finish my studies I want to go to tertiary to do B.Com because I always dreamed of becoming a Bank Manager or a chartered accountant.
- When I grow up I want to be a singer. I think I am a talented boy and I will famous like other singers and in life or education I want to be an accountant. I think is a great job I would experience when I work. I think I will like

#### 4.2.5.5. Exposure to media and opportunities to speak English:

In the main the learners had a fair exposure to radio, television, magazines and newspapers. Most of the learners only "read" newspapers because their parents wanted them to. However, they just leaf through for "soft" news like entertainment or TV guides. I think they were not introduced to the practice of meaningful, critical reading of newspapers or magazines for hard news (see FN III).

They are not exposed to English in their surroundings, as the township is a predominantly Xitsonga-speaking environment. From the questionnaires it could be established that the learners' main opportunity to speak English is at home. In response to item 11 (in 4A) the following range of opinions was established:

- at home (**Carol**)
- when I'm at home with my papa (**Angel**)
- Yes I do at home (**Ndzalama**)
- At home with my neighbour (**Donnel**)
- Home (**Amanda**)
- At home (**Zanelle**)
- Yes, at home or when I go to Gravelotte (**Phoebe**)
- Mostly at school but we also speak at home but not always (**Solani**)

I think this range of responses indicate the role that the home plays in these learners' English language development. The environment offers no opportunity in this regard. In Phoebe's case, for instance, she has to wait for holidays to have opportunities to speak English outside the classroom, "in Gravelotte". The responses attest to the principal's claim that they:

...also tried to indicate to the students as well as the parents there is no magic in learning a particular language. If a person doesn't practise speaking there is no way in which the person can just read and be able to speak (AP: 12)

I have already pointed out the Afrikaans teacher's view that parents who are actively involved in their children's work contribute to the improvement of their English language proficiency.

#### 4.2.5.6. **Summary:**

So far, in this chapter, I have discussed how the fact-finding phase of my action research was manifested and, thus, established the context of my research question. The interpersonal relations, classroom accommodation, the teaching approach, the motivation and English language competence are some of the issues that influenced the planning of the teaching in the first cycle.

The crucial issue that I established during the pilot lesson at GGB High School and the reconnaissance at the PDM junior secondary school is the poor reading ability and grammatical limitations of the learners. These are some of the points that influenced my planning and preparation for implementation.

I will discuss the planning phase in the next section of this chapter.

### 4.3. The Planning Phase

#### 4.3.1. Introduction:

In my planning of the implementation phase of the first cycle, I considered several key issues that I learned from the pilot lesson at GGB High School and the fact-finding phase at the PDM junior secondary school.

My realisation during the reconnaissance phase that the school had electricity and a photocopier (something uncommon in many rural black schools) influenced my planning especially with data collection tools that I used, e.g. the video camera and audio-recorder. Although I was prepared to make my own photocopies, the fact that the school had a photocopier of its own reassured me.

#### 4.3.2. Generating themes from the learners' reality:

The Planning phase started with generation of themes from issues and concerns of the learners on Monday 7 June 1999. The idea was to pose 'problems from student experience for class inquiry' (Shor 1992: 2). A "brainstorming" session was thus had with the Grade 10B class during which the learners were prompted into raising their real life concerns, experiences and issues that "touched" them. TO noted them down as they were raised. These themes were to direct my selection of print media texts for use in the classes. Shor (1992: 3) defines a generative theme as 'an issue generated from the problems of their [learners'] own experiences'. This has been the basis of my theory, a crucial element of critical pedagogy where critical reflection, relevance, problem posing and praxis are determinant qualities.

The range of issues or themes generated from this session included: violence, unemployment/poverty, sexuality, careers, education, sports and entertainment.

#### 4.3.3. Addressing the class size problem:

Considering that I would spend limited time with the learners, I discussed with TO the fact that there were too many learners for my research purposes. It would require a longer period of time for me to be able to realise the impact of my teaching. TO suggested that I continue with the learners doing the commercial subjects, resulting in the reduction of the class size from seventy to thirty learners. TO promised that he would use my materials and the same approach I would be following in my research,

with the other group of learners during his English lessons. We discussed this arrangement with the principal.

I noticed that the “top” learners I had identified during the reconnaissance were going to be in my class. **Solani, Sagwati, Ndzalama, Amanda, Zanelle** are some of the “very good” learners. I noticed that they had created a culture of competition amongst themselves. I realised that some of the “weak” learners were also in the class. I especially noticed that **Andzani** and **Lucia** were also in the commercial stream. I was satisfied with this rather balanced class. I made this observation in the R.D:

TO gives me the list of the commercial stream learners, the class I was going to teach. I discuss the learners with him and we agree that it was a balanced class. I tell TO that I was afraid the Commercial group would just be a group of stars.

#### **4.3.4. Implementation date and school timetable:**

TO and I agreed that I could start my lessons during the week beginning 7 June 1999. The half-yearly examinations were scheduled for the period 8 June 1999 to 21 June 1999. Examination sessions were scheduled for the duration 8H00 to 10H00 every morning. According to my planning, I would meet my learners at 10H20 for an hour during this exam week.

TO suggested that after the examinations I would use his “double periods” as he had been allocated ‘three double periods’ that year (see FN II: 2).

#### **4.3.5. Introducing learners to newspapers and magazines:**

Although the learners were said to be “familiar” with some newspapers as a result of the efforts of TO’s (see FN I and FN II) and their family backgrounds, I was unsure whether they knew the various sections of the print media, and the basic media terminology. The learners’ knowledge of these aspects was to be the basis for my teaching. I was motivated to have a session whereby the learners could be introduced to newspapers and magazines in a focused, systematic way after observing the following inconsistencies or dubious claims by the learners during the reconnaissance phase (see Appendix FN III):

- ‘One learner buys the *Sowetan* on Saturday. (*Sowetan* is a daily newspaper).
- ‘Vukosi buys *Drum* magazine every Thursday. (*Drum* is a monthly publication).

The fact that some learners are not motivated to read newspapers suggested that I should not take it for granted that because they had access to newspapers, they read them. The following points came out in my meeting with the learners, as recorded in my field notes (FN III):

- ‘Carol reads a newspaper when father comes from Johannesburg’.
- ‘Meriam buys *City Press* once a month’.
- ‘Monica...is forced by her parents...But she just refers to TV Guide...’

I thus decided to base my first lesson on introduction of basic concepts and various media genres.

#### 4.3.6. Making arrangements for a video camera, stationery and newspapers:

A colleague in the District Office is a professional cameraman. He agreed to assist in the video-recording of the lessons. Arrangements regarding times and dates were made with him.

It was easy for me for to get relevant articles relating to the generative themes developed from the “learners’ experiences”, as discussed earlier on. I gathered articles on school violence and sexuality from the *Sowetan* and *The Star* (see 5A- G). I decided to focus on the theme of school violence in the first cycle. The second lesson was prepared on the basis of the article from the *Sowetan* (see Appendix 5B).

I bought thirty A3 size (A4 folded) soft-cover files to use as learner portfolios. The photocopies of articles and written tasks would be safely kept in this file. The vocabulary books were made by folding a few A4 size pages into A5 booklets. I hoped that learners would write “new” words and their meanings during the project. Pens were also found for the learners.

#### 4.3.7. Developing a teaching strategy for the project:

Before the pilot lesson and the reconnaissance phase of my action research, I did not think reading would be a crucial aspect of my teaching. As discussed in Chapter Two, the major focus of the teaching was communicative language teaching and low-key grammar instruction through “learner-noticing” strategy within the framework of critical pedagogy. But during the pilot lesson with the grade 11’s at GGB high school, I made this entry in my research diary:

I am shocked by their poor reading ability and decide that for this project to succeed, reading should be one of the areas strongly focused on.

The same was realised at the PDM junior secondary school, as noted in my diary entry of Wednesday, 28 April 1999:

Their reading ability is very poor and belies their conversation. It is almost impossible to get meaning from what they read. Their reading is just a mechanical exercise.

The principal, TO and TH also confirmed this position (see AP, TH and FN I). On account of this realisation, I developed a teaching strategy that would blend critical and meaningful reading with co-operative learning, an important feature of Critical Pedagogy. Zimmet (1987: 123) asserts that teaching learners to read critically ‘requires more than assigning mechanical exercises in reading skills. It involves a total change of attitude toward reading’. As if echoing the point I made in Chapter two, where I stressed that I see education as a praxis, Zimmet (p.123) maintains that in learning to read learners ‘would have to realize that their skills and their knowledge of life were important.’

This assertion locates the teaching of reading within the framework of Critical Pedagogy. It is further stressed by Zimmet’s linking of her practice to co-operative learning as suggested by her view that learners, in this situation could overcome reading difficulties ‘by learning to work with and help each other’ (128).

Freire and Macedo (1987: 145) point out that the traditional literacy approach ‘ignores the interrelationship between the socio-political structures of a society and the act of

reading'. In teaching reading, learners should be provided with the opportunity 'to use their own reality as a basis of literacy' (151). I found this point linking well with my theory of teaching and education. My intent to use the print media text rather than prescribed language or grammar textbooks resonates with this assertion by Freire and Macedo. This approach to reading requires practitioners to move away from practices that emphasise the 'mechanical skills while divorcing reading from its ideological and historical contexts' (156).

Against this backdrop, I prepared my teaching strategy in line with the "PASSSS" strategy suggested by Centre for Cognitive Development (1995: 1) as it acknowledges critical thinking in the teaching of reading. It entails the following steps: (I) Purpose (find), (ii) Activate (background knowledge), (iii) Survey (or skim), (iv) Study Read, (v) Summarise, (v) Synthesise.

Since the PASSSS strategy does not seem to have a clear critical element, I related it to the "CRS-Strategy" suggested by Dowhower (1999: 672-676). In this strategy reading is interactive, and goes through three phases (pre-reading, active reading and post reading). In these stages details are also sought by the readers to capture the "what, why, how and when" of the text. I found this model (see Appendix 9) relevant to my views on teaching and thus it formed the basis of my lesson preparations. As pointed out earlier, this approach to the teaching of reading was framed within the theory of critical pedagogy.

#### **4.4. Conclusion:**

In this chapter I gave an account of how I came to know the background and reality of the school and the various role players I interacted with during the research process. The second section of the chapter gave an overview of how, on the basis of knowing the reality of the school, I planned the implementation of my learning activities in the first cycle.

In the next chapter I will discuss the implementation stage of the first cycle, reflections on it, planning for the second cycle and its implementation

## CHAPTER FIVE: REFLECTIONS ON CYCLE ONE AND TWO

### 5.1. Introduction:

In this chapter I discuss the findings or observations from the two cycles of my action research. The chapter thus comprises two sections: 5.2. Findings from cycle one and 5.3. Findings from cycle two.

### 5.2. Findings from cycle one:

#### 5.2.1. Background:

As alluded to in the foregoing chapter (chapter four) the teaching of lessons in this cycle was done against the backdrop of observations made during the reconnaissance phase of the school. I have referred, amongst other aspects during the fact-finding phase, to the teaching milieu at the school as textbook-dominated and characterised by transmission teaching and rote learning. This was not in tune with my approach to ESL teaching as expounded in chapter two.

I was, however, encouraged by the realisation that TO had already made attempts at introducing newspapers to the learners (see FN I and FN III). The positive attitude of both the principal (see AP: 12-14) and the English teacher (see TO I: 21) was also reassuring.

In the first lesson, on Monday 7 June 1999, a general overview of, and introduction to, media was given. I brought a range of magazines and newspapers covering national, regional and local types, as well as daily and weekly publications. A sheet containing a compilation of various newspaper and magazine titles (see Appendix 5A) was used during the exercise.

The following concepts were identified and discussed:

- Readership/audience
- Sections of newspaper: editorial/commentary, weather, sports, education, fashion, TV guide, health etc
- Terminology: media, article, journalist, reporter, newsworthy, story, publish

- Different types of media: print media (e.g. newspapers, magazines, newsletters) and electronic media (radio, television, computer etc)

Subsequent lessons were based on newspaper articles (Appendices 5B, 5C, 5D). The lessons were structured and taught according to the teaching strategy discussed in chapter 4 to address various issues including: reading, language learning and critical reflection.

Data was generated through lesson observation schedules (see Appendices LOS I and LOS II) completed by two observers. Observations made by the two observers were consolidated (see LOBS). The observations were triangulated with my observations, learners' questionnaires (see Appendix 4B.1), learners' interviews (see FG I and FG II), an interview with TO (see TO I) and field notes (see FN I, FN II and FN III).

From the data generated throughout the cycle, the following themes emerged, which form the basis for analysis and reflection in this chapter:

- (i) Authenticity
- (ii) Language learning
- (iii) Reading
- (iv) Teaching/learning approach
- (v) School ethos
- (vi) The role of the media text

There is, however, an overlapping of these issues, as aspects relating to one theme have been found to impact on or influence the others. This will become evident in my discussion.

### 5.2.2. **Authenticity:**

I realised, during this cycle of lessons the authentic element of the media texts was in various ways beneficial to learning. This was especially so in that aspects that sprung from the texts generated issues that the learners could relate to. As a result of this the lessons or discussions stimulated a great deal of interest and motivation. I think this,

to a certain extent, prompted learners' responsiveness and participation. It also raised their awareness of the real world of media, especially print media.

I think the aspect of relevance was realised due to the fact that the selection of the texts was influenced by the Freirean process of "theme generation" I conducted during the planning phase of the action research (see chapter four). According to this practice themes upon which lessons are based need to be generated from the learners real life concerns.

In my first lesson on 07 June 1999, we studied newspapers that the learners could have access to, because they see them sold in shops, read in taxis, and sometimes at school by teachers, etc. My co-observers made the observation that the 'lesson [is based] on particular newspapers that exist in communities' (LOBS: 64). They continue to say that 'the material was authentic and stimulated great participation. All the exercises stimulated good responses' (*ibid*).

Our second lesson on 09 June 1999 was based on the article, "Pupils praised for not avenging deaths" (see Appendix 5B). The story in the article was about an incident that happened at their nearby high school. Regarding this lesson TO observed that 'the incident in the article happened in their surroundings and the lesson was thus contextualised and relevant' (LOBS: 65). John (LOBS: 65) says the article 'was well-chosen, interesting...[and] relevant to [their] own experiences and raised many moral questions'. In the light of this, the learners were, for instance, able to give the following range of responses on the question of what they had learnt from the article (the responses are in the learners' own words):

- **Ganunu:** Never let anger control you because when you do. You will do something that you will regret after you have done it for example if someone says something bad to you...just leave that person even if people think you are stupid. If you ...[don't] you will beat or kill the person and when you are in jail you regret...you will see when it is late when you are already judged...
- **Charmaine:** I have learn that we must control our anger while visiting other schools or when there are visitors at your school. If you have a problem solve it at home don't solve it by killing other people or hurting others. We must learn not to carry lethal weapons everywhere we go.

- **Cathrine:** I have learned that to aveng is not a good thing. You as a person must try to control yourself. And that listen to yourself when you talk or do something bad...what I have learned is that killing a person is not good and that to aveng or reveng sometimes it does not help and that being a person you must try to hold yourself.
- **Monica:** I learnt that people must respect. themselves .and they most respect the people they don't know or whom there visited to...sometimes too dangerous because you will end up beeing in trouble. of hurting some people or killing them and the results will be painfull...
- **Tintswalo:** I think the story teach us that if somebody has done something wrong to you, you do not have to avenge or revenge. You have to forgive him/her...
- **Sagwati:** Friends are the only people who will get you in danger and in this situation they will leave you dying or arrested. Every day is a very important day it might be a good day or a bad day. Take care of yourselves be careful of what you do everytime Cause you will end up being in a dark cave which has entrance and no exit.
- **Andzani:** I have learn that if other pupil from other school visited our school we must leave with them. And I must show them the peaceful which I have learn to our teacher. I must take them as our sisters and brothers.
- **Solani:** This kind of a incident is very dangerous this must never happen to our school.
- **Ndzalama:** When people do bad things for us we must let bygones be bygones. When we visit other school we must let sleeping dogs lie. We are not visiting to cause havoc but visiting to make friends.

From the learners' responses it is evident that they were able to relate to the story and make a practical connection to their own lives. Thus learning becomes concretised. It is not usual for teachers, especially in transmission teaching schools where factual information is regarded as more important than critical reflection, to raise such questions with moral implications. It was therefore encouraging that the learners expressed such interesting views stimulated by the newspaper text.

The two observers felt that the article, on account of its authenticity, 'stimulated interest' and thus 'afforded a great deal of opportunity for discussion' (LOBS: 65). This stimulated their (the learners') critical thinking because they could question some of the issues. By so doing they challenged the "printed word". As TO observed:

[They] could question some of the issues reported in the story. For example, that the person who has been reported to be a policeman is actually a learner (LOBS: 66).

They raised this point in response to the statement in the third paragraph of the article that 'an Orlando pupil, Tsitso Mlambo and Oupa Mabuza, a Tzaneen policeman, were injured in the incident'. The learners argued that they knew Oupa Mabuza. He was a student at the local high school, and not a Tzaneen policeman.

We also noted the resourcefulness of the media texts in the subsequent lessons and texts. In the lesson on 15 June 1999 an article, "Just who is responsible" (Appendix 5C) was studied. The article raises issues of school violence, and questions why "few political parties have put these issues on the election agenda". It canvasses views of influential people in the community on this issue.

We observed that 'the authentic article stimulated a fierce debate' (LOBS: 69) especially on the issue of who should own guns. The emotionally-charged debate was sparked by the second paragraph of Holla Kgasago's column (in the article) whereby he states that:

Only people who really need guns should have them. The youth don't always understand the main purpose of weapons so the fact that they have access to them is very dangerous.

The class was divided on this issue. Those who disagreed made the point that if guns were meant to defend or protect, the youths also needed them for protection. However, those who agreed with Holla Kgasago stressed: 'those who live by the gun will die by the gun. So you must not have guns!'. I think this participation or debate became possible because the issue raised by the article was not fictitious, and that learners could relate to it. The learners experienced violence in their surroundings, homes and school. In response to my question on examples of 'bad activities' (see LOBS: 69), violence was suggested by the learners' mention of 'imitation of Yizo Yizo' as one of the bad activities. "Yizo Yizo" is a TV drama that portrayed horrendous violence at schools shown on SABC-TV during the first few months of 1999.

The authentic nature of the text created opportunities for learners to use their experiences and prior knowledge, which is a good example of learners constructing their own knowledge: a confirmation of the constructivist view on knowledge and learning (see chapter two). This stimulated interest and debate. For example, we noted that although the article 'was condensed...there was a lot of information added by the learners and the teacher, which was not in the article' (LOBS: 70). For example I discovered that most learners knew Sam Phororo in real life, and this stimulated a lot of interest in the learners. In a related lesson based on the same article on 21 June 1999 this observation was made:

Learners, mostly girls, already identified with Sam Phororo, ex-Mr. South Africa. When I assigned them other columns they would "fight" for his (Sam's) column (LOBS: 70).

The idea of relating the learning activity to learners' real life experiences was also realised with the task given at the end of the lesson on 15 June 1999. The task set for them was to look for election posters and analyse what the manifestos of various political parties might be. This task linked to what was going on in the environment at that time. It was just after the general elections were held on 2 June 1999. The street poles were still covered with a proliferation of political party posters, and everybody was still talking about the elections. This concretised the concept of manifesto as used by Mosiana Motselisi in the first paragraph of her column (in the article), as the task was based on something that the learners experienced and was current.

The following are examples of what the learners came up with during the lesson on 21 June 1999 (the examples are in the learners' own words):

- **Angel:**
  1. National Party (N.P)  
No mercy for criminals
  2. Socialist Political Party (SOPA)  
Black people first
  3. Democratic Party (D.P)  
The guts to fight back.
  4. African National Congress (A.N.C)  
Fighting freedom for better life for all
  5. United Democratic Movement (UDM)  
Do what is best for South Africa.

- **Shikombiso:**
  1. Manifestoes of DP  
Lets get South Africa working
  2. Manifestoes NP  
They is mercy for criminals
  3. Manifestoes of ANC  
Lets fight together and bring a change
  4. Manifestoes of SOPA  
Black people first

- **Ndzalama:** (own invistigation)

#### A.N.C Manifestoes

President Mandela & several top A.N.C staff at Qwaqwa  
President mandela himself promised that everyone's basic needs  
would be met. He said that A.N.C was anxious about the pace of delivery. He  
also pointed to the number of houses are built and electrified in the past five  
years.

#### Promises

To strive to insure that their (peopl's) basic needs are met.  
To abandon dectrine of apartheid. Bring peace.  
Free education and lot of jobs.

#### DP

The DP President Tonny Lione promised that water will be in  
every big little or even in the middle of no where.

#### UDM leader Bantu Holomisa

Bantu Holomisa promised the following  
give people jobs  
free education  
Double their salaries  
Security all over the place  
to reduce the crime.

#### A.C.D.

The A.C.D. promised that peace will be filled in our lives.  
Working together to fight against apartheid. deal will family metters.

The article used for the lesson on 23 June 1999, "Recent cases of school violence"  
(Appendix 5D) linked well with the others because 'opinions on the article [were]  
based on their experiences, prior knowledge and predictions or assumptions leading to  
emergence of argument on racism' (LOBS: 72). The article comprises snippets of

cases of school violence reported from various areas in the country. The issues raised in the various snippets were relevant to the learners especially as they were about school violence ‘which is more related to what they grapple with in an everyday situation’ (LOBS: 72). The “argument on racism” resulted as a response to the case of Vryburg High School (in the first snippet of the article). Although the report does not mention “racism” nor that Andrew is Black and Christoff is white, the learners had a lot of information about this case. The case was highly sensationalised in the South African media at that time. Racism is a common experience for South Africans (see introduction and chapter one) and therefore the text was relevant to the learners’ life-world. These aspects made the lessons based on this article vibrant. This was mainly because, as TO asserts, ‘the material was authentic and also stimulating’ (LOBS: 72). On this basis the material, ‘afforded the facilitator the chance to pose all the questions’ (*ibid*).

The learners’ responses in the questionnaire (Appendix 4B.1) point to the resourcefulness brought about by the authenticity of the media texts. It became clear that the lessons stimulated interest immensely, and also that the learners could relate to the texts.

In response to item 2 of the questionnaire, “what aspects of the lessons did you enjoy? (if any)”, all the learners indicated that they enjoyed all the lessons.

The following are examples of the learners’ responses to item 2 (of Appendix 4B.1):

- **Emelda:** Everything...I enjoy everything in such a way which is surprising...
- **Phoebe:** Every lesson.
- **Zanelle:** Enjoyed the introduction to electronic and print media. The one on headlines and caption, and also the different sections of a newspaper.
- **Bongani:** Everything, reading the articles.
- **Solani:** I enjoyed all of them, they all were fun! fun! ...especially working with groups.

In response to item 3 (of appendix 4B.1) “what aspects did you not enjoy? If any” learners felt none of the lessons was not enjoyed. Only one learner pointed to ‘the one on tenses. I didn’t enjoy it because I don’t understand what is really going on. I also find it boring’ (**Zanelle**). She refers to the only grammar lesson I had on 11 June 1999 (see LOBS: 68). It is the only lesson that was not based on any media text. I think her views in this regard in fact show the usefulness of the authentic text because of the context they provide. My experience is that decontextualised grammar lessons are found to be “boring”. This aspect was discussed in chapter two.

The following are just examples of how the learners responded (again, in their own words):

- **Charmaine:** none.
- **Angel:** Every lesson was cool.
- **Monica:** no.
- **Bongani:** N/A
- **Emelda:** non

All the learners indicated that the media texts were useful to their learning. The range of reasons they gave point to the issues of interest, relevance and general knowledge. My view is that these aspects hinge on the authentic quality of the texts. This was noted in the learners’ responses to item 5 (4B.1) “During these lessons, we used material from print media. Do you feel this aided your learning? ...Give reasons...”

Their responses included the following examples (in the learners’ original writing):

- **Ndzalama:** Because we were learning with things that we can see...
- **Brenda:** We can learn something that we see and have happened in our land.
- **Cathrine:** Now I’m interested in reading newspapers everyweek if I manag to pay
- **Shikombiso:** I learn to see some pictures so it helps...and I enjoy...It also increase my knowledge
- **Sagwati:** It helped me a lot because I read newspapers and did not know the importance of print media.

- **Amanda:** Because I learned how to read the newspaper...
- **Monica:** Because in school there some of leans the fight

The above responses give an impression that the learners found learning through the media texts enjoyable and helpful, and that they could relate their learning to real life situations like “reading newspaper”, “increase my knowledge” and ‘something that we can see and have happened in our land’. Similar views were expressed by the learners in a focus group interview after the first cycle (see FG II: 41-43):

- **Sagwati:** we’ll read newspapers to know what is happening around the world, so the media is a good thing.
- **Ntsako:** ...we are learning with articles, like, know how, um, different people express things.
- **Sagwati:** Ja. It helps us... to see the importance of print media. We did not have any ... any interest in print media we had interested electronic media only. So it helps us to see the importance of print media.
- **Ntsako:** ...we read about violence in schools and then if, okay if...for instance we experience those kind of...violence, we can, like, know how to solve them...

TO also recognised the element of relevance in his observation that:

The response [of the learners]...thus far has been positive...in the sense that... the articles...do not actually leave learners...isolated from issues that are happening in the country or in the society at large... the articles actually keep learners on track of what...things are happening around...  
(TO I: 21)

These views do in fact confirm the impressions of the learners suggested by their responses earlier. My conclusion is that the lessons stimulated interest and were mostly relevant as they exposed the learners to real world issues like reading newspapers. This was echoed by the class teacher (TO I: 21-22):

Most of them [the learners]...have been saying to me that [the project]...it’s interesting, it’s fun and...they’d love to... go through... media because to them, some of them are saying because they don’t have newspapers at home but they learn through the, the articles from media, they ... turn to, to have this information, you know, through learning as though it’s part of them.

TO's realisation that the learners responded to the learning activities based on the texts 'as though it's part of them' attests to the impact of the authentic dimension that print media texts may bring to the learning experience. This aptly attunes to the idea of praxis, a salient characteristic of liberatory education (see chapter two).

**Conclusion:**

The authentic dimension of media texts is a stimulating aspect in this approach to language teaching. I have realised that it is the central point upon which other themes that emerged during the cycle depended. The next theme I will discuss is the teaching method.

**5.2.3. The teaching method:**

The teaching style used in the various lessons was based on the notion of co-operation, dialogue and critical reflection that characterises Freirean liberatory teaching (see chapter two). To maximize these aspects media texts were found to be appropriate as their authentic nature prompted dialogue and interest. Critical reflection is stimulated when the learning activities are anchored on materials that learners can relate to.

My belief is that co-operative learning and meaningful dialogue and critical reflection cannot be effected in a transmission teaching approach. I thus decided to employ the co-operative learning approach whereby learners would work together on tasks given to them. The learning would entail critical reading of texts and contextual learning and usage of language in a co-operative manner.

However, it emerged during the teaching phase of this cycle that the learners were not used to learning in a co-operative way. However, TO (see TO I: 20) says in his teaching he [divided] them into groups and ... even [has] a list of learners who have been divided into groups. He further says he 'promotes individualism... looked within the context of ...interdependence [and] learning together communally...[and] co-operatively'. I have already referred to the idea that there appears to be a discrepancy between what TO says and what he does (see chapter four). The teaching methodology thus became a crucial theme in this cycle as it determined how I as the teacher would facilitate the process.

Our first lesson on 07 July 1999 was more about giving an introduction to and/or overview of media. Questions set for discussion in groups were not helpful in assessing how used the learners were to co-operative learning. The following tasks posed questions:

- (i) Identify the types of newspapers, e.g. daily, weekly or local, regional, national.
- (ii) Discuss in groups the importance of reading newspapers or magazines.
- (iii) How can we have access to newspapers if we don't have money to purchase them.

TO (in LOBS: 64) rightly observed that although some good application questions were asked more critical questions should be asked.

I think my approach in this lesson was not rigorous and sufficiently focused on observation of the nature of co-operative learning. Although the learners were involved, and participated, I observed that learners were not co-operative although they were in groups. During this lesson my co-observers were seated at the back of the class, and later I discovered they 'noted' in their observation schedules (see LOBS: 64) that the learners were involved in co-operative learning. Almost every group wanted to be the first in reporting their ideas after discussing.

John (see LOBS: 64) made the observation that the learners are used to co-operative learning and adapted easily and willingly.

During our "conferencing" after the lesson I raised the issue that I doubted that the learners were engaged in co-operative learning. My impression was that individuals would be quick to report their opinions to the general class without necessarily giving the views of the whole group. Perhaps that is why John (*ibid*) made another observation that the discussions were 'dominated by a few, but [the teacher was] careful to involve others'.

We thus agreed that the two observers should be free to move around the groups to see what actually happened in particular groups. We also asked the video camera

operator to focus on particular groups so that the actual discussion process within groups could be captured.

In the second lesson taught on 09 June 1999 where the article “Pupils praised...” (Appendix 5B) was used, improvement in terms of learners’ participation was observed. The learners could relate more to the text and thus it became easier for me to involve them. As John (LOBS: 65) indicates, the ready relevance [offered by]...the nature of the story...affords a great deal of opportunity for discussion. I was thus able to effect excellent use of questioning which moved from low level to application and evaluation (LOBS: 65). Through this method the learners were able to use their experiences or prior knowledge. TO (in LOBS: 65) also observed that learners could help one another when errors [were] committed. Nevertheless, we noted some problems regarding the learners’ role in this way of teaching. John (LOBS: 66) observed that a number of learners were still passive both in the general class and in groups. In our conferencing we noted that we still needed to work on the learners’ adjustment to co-operative learning after we had noticed that the good learners responded well to this method – how should we encourage/include the less able?

Through this method, however, I noticed that the learners could be challenged to engage in critical reflection of issues. Examples of their critical responses to questions were given in 5.2.2. The following responses were given to this speculative question: What could be the feelings of the killers?

- People are having nightmares.
- People are regretting that they killed people.
- People are regretting because they are in jail.

These responses show critical reflection, and were arrived at through appropriate probing questions. TO felt we still needed to develop this aspect when he noted that ‘the learners were limited by what is in the story i.e. they don’t go beyond the story’ (in LOBS: 66).

Through the problem posing strategy in the liberatory teaching method, however, the learners were led to think about the question: “What have I learnt from the story?”. Insightful responses were generated from the learners. Examples of these have been given in the discussion of authenticity (see 5.2.2 above).

The lesson on 10 June 1999 was teaching language aspects like passive/active voices in the context of the article (Appendix 5B). John (in LOBS: 67) made the point that the “lesson [was] geared towards co-operative work: It was realised that the learners still struggled to engage in co-operative learning activities more especially the point that ‘they don’t really discuss, they just make point’ (*ibid*). There was still evidence of the good learners dominating. I thus agreed with my co-observers that I should still try to involve the whole class.

We decided that in my teaching I should go to the groups and facilitate through posing questions to some of those learners who would be passive, and assist the groups where there were problems. I needed to be careful still, not to dominate the groups nor provide the answers. Learners needed to be comfortable with my presence. I also needed to know the learners better, hence the observation by one of the observers that we are not as aware of the true ability of the whole class as we should be (LOBS: 67). Co-operative learning goes with responsibility and discipline on the part of the learners. This became a challenge as the learners might decide to do irrelevant, playful things when unnoticed. My observers (LOBS: 67) were concerned that I should ‘try to stop the laughter,’ and also that I shouldn’t ‘overdo the group discussion but get them to do writing’ (*ibid*). I think that is a way of getting them seriously engaged, and making them realise that learning in a co-operative way is not a mere “talk shop”. The written tasks enable learners to consolidate their ideas.

Although we felt improvement in co-operative learning was essential the next lesson taught on 11 June 1999 was taught in a transmission mode. Based on the reflections on the teaching of the active/passive voices and the parts of speech in the previous lesson where ‘it was clear that they had not done it’ (LOBS: 67) I decided to teach them the grammar rules. This was not based on any particular text, so the grammar rules were taught out of context. I was motivated that this was a way of giving the learners “tools” to use when the communicative language activities were done. As

TO (LOBS: 68) observed: 'Focus on grammar should be more contextually based' and that 'this lesson promotes more of grammatical aspects which appear isolated from general language'.

It became clear therefore that 'there was less participation of learners, probably because the teacher had control of the lesson' (LOBS: 68). I understand why **Zanelle** (see 5.2.2) found it 'boring'. Despite this point and the fact that 'it was less facilitative that some learners looked inattentive' (see LOBS: 68) it became clear in subsequent lessons and learners' comments in the interview (FG II) and questionnaire (Appendix 4.B.1) that the grammar lesson was useful to them.

In the lessons that followed and were taught on 15 and 21 June 1999 the learners responded better to the problem posing strategy. In groups they were able to "predict" the story after reading the headline and sub-line. As TO and John (in LOBS: 69) pointed out, in the predictive stage learners came up with: the article is about problems at schools, such as violence and the culture of learning and teaching. Through problem posing they could relate their prediction to their own school situation, as evidenced by their responses to questions like: Is there a culture of learning and teaching at PDM School? I think, as discussed in 5.2.2, the learners' ability to meaningfully engage with the text was stimulated by the text's accessibility brought about by its authenticity, interest and relevance. My questions therefore became varied and covered a range: low/high and open/closed (LOBS: 69).

The facilitative nature of the lesson made it possible for learners to exchange ideas through groups (*ibid*).

The take away task where learners were to go about looking at election posters (as discussed in 5.2.2) as a problem- posing and situated teaching strategy of liberatory teaching helped the learners reinforce the concept of manifesto and relate their learning to their own situations.

The teaching strategy gave the learners an opportunity to challenge issues and critically reflect. For example, this became evident during the debate on who might or might not own a gun (see 5.2.2). This led to the realisation that "fame" and

“notoriety” were subjective (see LOBS: 70). It is rare for learners to make such (self) discovery in transmission teaching situation. The relevance of issues raised in the authentic text led to learners debating about these words prompted by the comments by a group of learners that Sam Phororo was “famous”.

In the lesson taught on 21 June 1999 the two observers were to focus on dynamics within groups because we had already identified “responsibility” and “dominance” within groups as problems (as discussed earlier). There was a marked improvement in terms of co-operation within groups as exemplified by the following observations from one group (LOBS: 71):

In one group a learner offered to draw column, another gave help: counted how many columns. Other also offered advice. Another took over to write questions on columns. One took role of single. Another asked questions. Is this a valid argument? Another says yes – gave argument, wrote down columns.

However, the following problems were identified (LOBS: 71):

- (i) Learners still showed no interest in other groups reports. One has to keep getting them to be attentive.
- (ii) Groups belonging settled... Same group of learners sit together.
- (iii) Domination: In another group, **Nyiko** dominated and almost singularly did the task. When he left the two girls found it difficult to relate to what he had written.

We decided to address this problem by giving the learners language tasks to work in pairs rather than groups. We felt they were not ready to handle the challenges of working in larger groups, especially dominance and group dynamics. The problem of groups getting “settled” was related to TO’s having a list of learners (see TO I: 20). This gave us problems during the first few lessons. The following are examples of such problems (LOBS: 71):

- **Amanda** very upset with being grouped with strangers.
- **Zanelle** is also angry that she has been grouped with “weak ones”.

- **Angel** is really embarrassed to be removed from “his” group, and join the “bright” group of girls.

In my interview with the learners (see FG II) many of them pointed to such group dynamics, although they indicated that they liked being taught in this way. **Sagwati** (FG II: 46) for instance says ‘the way you’re helping us is good... the only problem is ...working with new people, sometimes, bring us, gives us problem’. **Ntsako** (*ibid*) says ‘we should, like, stick together’. **Angel** (FG II: 47) says ‘I think we must stick together because... if we know each other ...we can help each other so well ...you go to other groups ... You do not understand ... and you take time to understand them...’

My view at this stage was that the learners were still used to the transmission teaching style where the teacher takes the centre stage and becomes the sole instructor or conductor of the teaching/learning situation. In my interview with the learners it became clear to me that I as the teacher was expected to be the sole arbitrator and judge of the discussion processes. Perhaps this explained why the learners would not show any interest in what other groups were saying.

**Bongani** (FG II: 49) for instance was confident that ‘it is good to work individually because when ...we don’t understand we’ll call you as we regard you as our master’. He also feels that although the advantage of working in groups is that members of the group may encourage each other he is adamant that working individually is crucial because ‘when you sit ... at the exam room, you’ll be alone ... like when you’re going for interview, you’d be alone’. My co-observers (LOBS: 73) made this conclusion after the lesson taught on 23 June 1999: ‘They are not used to valuing the discussion mate’s point of view. The teacher’s point of view is cherished’.

Although this kind of attitude still remained, I noticed a considerable improvement on the part of the learners to learn this way. From the questionnaire (Appendix 4.B.1) given at the end of the cycle **all** the learners felt that learning in this way was helpful. The following examples show the kind of attitude and points the learners expressed in their responses:

- **Cathrine:** I like working in that way I understand more than when you do it alone.
- **Bongani:** I think we are benefitting a lot. Because we learn to come with our own ideas not to be schoolfeeded. I enjoy the lessons very much.
- **Jacobean:** Is good because we could be able to share ideas from any person from the group that we are having, and even to work in a low number it is good because we able to share ideas so easily.
- **Sagwati:** Learning in groups is good because we help each other, but the problem is today I work with this group then tomorrow that group so to me it is the only problem.

Our observation in the lesson taught on 23 June 1999 pointed to “impressive” reflection of their written tasks done in pairs. For instance, John (LOBS: 73) made this observation during a class exercise on 23 June 1999:

First worked independently, then opportunity to check with neighbour. There was some interaction, checking and challenging one another, then wrote.

However we noted that dominance still remained a challenge to be faced even in situations where the learners worked in pairs. As noted by John in (LOBS: 73) that ‘with the pairs there still seems to be dominance by individual members. I found the interaction better in the smaller groupings’.

**Conclusion:** It was noted in this section that co-operation, sound relations and responsibility among peers are crucial to liberatory teaching. Although the learners showed improvement and a positive attitude towards learning in this way these crucial aspects and dominance appeared to be the main problems. For instance my co-observers have concluded that ‘obviously learners are not used to listening and taking responsibility’. They also suggested to me (the teacher) that my role should also be consciously extended to monitoring and encouraging positive group dynamics. Fortunately John had as early as after the third lesson on 10 June 1999 concluded that co-operative learning needs to be taught – especially skills. Skills in co-operative

learning include taking responsibility, respecting other people's point of view and trust (see 5.3.2 below).

These observations and reflections formed the basis of my planning on this theme in the second cycle. The next theme I will discuss is language learning.

#### 5.2.4. Language Learning:

##### 5.2.4.1. Introduction:

Language learning, as a theme, developed upon consideration of how learners read with understanding, develop vocabulary, communicate and develop grammatical competence.

##### 5.2.4.2. Reading:

The reading strategy for the lessons, as adapted from Dowhower (1998) and discussed earlier in chapter four, provided opportunities for meaningful reading as most difficult words would first be identified, sounded correctly and explained in the pre-reading stage. The learners would then make entries in their vocabulary booklets. This exercise boosted both their vocabulary and meaningful reading ability, more so because 'they hardly read newspapers' (LOBS: 64).

The vocabulary book, as John (see LOBS: 64) observed during my first lesson on 7 July 1999, 'leads to explanation and emphasis'. For example in my introductory lesson on 7 July 1999 learners were able to make entries like media, article, headline, journalist which proved to be useful in the subsequent lessons. Words like commended, retaliate, incident, avenge were recorded from the article "Pupils praised..." (Appendix 5B) in lesson 2 on 9 June 1999. The next article (Appendix 5C) was a source of such vocabulary items as disillusion, stakeholders, manifesto, ultimately and censorship. Learners made the following entries from another article (Appendix 5D) allegedly, initially, assault, grievous, intimidate berserk, loitering, brawl.

I noticed that most learners, during the pre-reading stage, would actually get the meaning of these "difficult" words from the context of the story. After my confirmation, they would easily make entries to their vocabulary booklets. For

example, **Solani** could after reading the article tell that “incident” in paragraph 3 of Appendix 5C meant “happening”. **Sagwati** said “censorship” in the last paragraph of Tshidi Molefe’s column (in Appendix 5C) meant “control”. Although they could not get the meaning of “manifesto” (in appendix 5C) right, after my explanation and the task that followed (as discussed in 5.2.2), they internalised the concept. I think this could also be related to the authenticity and teaching style as discussed earlier.

The learners also found the texts to be useful in this regard. For instance, **Bongani** (FG II: 41) says ‘media is good, where we use ... some articles, we can find ...some difficult terms... and solve it, and we are going to benefit... for our vocabulary ...we can now know those ...difficult words’.

**Ganunu** (FG II: 43) echoes the point by indicating that: ‘if you read the newspaper and there is a word you don’t understand, if you read... you’ll ...understand the word ...you don’t have to check in the dictionary’. **TO** (LOBS: 65) also made the observation that most of the meanings were extracted from context. Learners were able to contextualise most of the meaning. As early as the third lesson on 10 June 1999, **John** (LOBS: 67) could observe this vocabulary enrichment and noted: ‘a number of difficult words, but identified and explained e.g. condolences, commended, retaliating, tremendous, incident’.

The learners appeared to have really appreciated the way in which the media texts extended their vocabulary. In response to items 4,5 and 6 of the questionnaire (Appendix 4.B.1) the learners pointed to how the media texts and vocabulary booklets helped them. The following are examples of their responses (in their own words):

- **Bongani:** because at the media they don’t write simple language. So at that I’m improving my vocabulary ... now I know many terms.
- **Phoebe:** ... it got many words that I don’t know so from it I have many words that I didn’t know, from now on I’m going to use them.
- **Ganunu:** I learned words which I didn’t not know their meaning before.
- **Amanda:** Some words that I did not know that now I can read them and write and now I know the mean of that word.

- **Shikombiso:** I have (benefitted from vocabulary booklet) because in our ordinary class we don't have this books so I enjoy it very much.
- **Ntsako:** Sometimes I use the words that are in it (the vocabulary booklet).
- **Nico:** Because I have more difficulty word in my vocabulary.
- **Sagwati:** Yes. There wee terms which I used to come across and did not know the meanings but the vocabulary book helped me.

The above examples indicate how much the learners read into what teachers seldom consider serious. **Amanda's** response, for instance, points to the value of pronunciation (read them) and spelling (write them).

I also made sure that whenever I got the opportunity I used the vocabulary items in my learning activities for all the learners to internalise the words. TO (LOBS: 65) observed this practice and noted that the 'teacher has the style of using the words (vocabulary) in context throughout the lesson'. For example I would say "I commend **Lucia** for reading so well".

From this structured approach to reading with comprehension (LOBS: 65) learners could read better than during the reconnaissance phase (see chapter four). The two co-observers (LOBS: 66) made the point that 'the reading approach worked well – indeed it was essential otherwise there would have been less understanding and involvement'.

I realised that through this reading approach learners are able to follow the teacher (model pronunciation) or other learners selected to read out. Silent reading is also encouraged. For example, in the lesson taught on 15 June 1999 (see LOBS: 69) during the first five minutes 'the learners [were] encouraged to look at (read) heading and sub-heading silently'. The overall impression of the observers (see LOBS: 69) regarding reading was that reading was not silent, so other learners could follow what and how others were reading. During the lesson on 21 June 1999 my co-observers (LOBS: 70) noted that: 'Learners had to read silently the assigned columns, underline difficult words. The teacher read the passage out loud'.

In the lesson taught on 23 June 1999 (LOBS: 72) it was observed that between 10-30 minutes of the lesson 'learners read silently, individually'. Between 40 and 60 minutes I read the passage and got the learners to read afterwards'. I think that in this way silent reading and reading out processes are integrated in the sense that they were allowed to read (and also) read after the facilitator' (LOBS: 72).

I think the approach also enhanced understanding more especially in the pre-reading stage. **Bongani** (FG II: 41-42) says in the lessons they 'can learn the ... headings ... or the topic, of the article before we read the passages. We can first understand the heading...so that we can understand the passage very well'.

Reading in this case becomes meaningful, and is related to their lived experiences. **Ntsako** (FG II: 42) points that 'we read about violence in schools ...if for instance we experience those... we can know how to solve them 'cause we... read it and we know about it...'

**Angel** (FG II: 43) says the whole exercise 'teach [es] us about how to read newspapers and magazines well'. The above examples indicate just how the learners attached meaning and value to reading. This made it different to a situation where reading becomes mechanical. This point was discussed in chapter four.

Owing to this approach and the authentic element of the media texts, I am convinced that reading became enjoyable. In their response to item 2 of the questionnaire (see Appendix 4.B.1) most learners explicitly pointed out that they enjoyed reading. I have already referred to the potential of media texts to generate interest in chapter two.

#### 5.2.4.3. Grammar and Communication:

In chapter two I discussed my view on language teaching, whereby I propounded low-key grammar instruction embedded within a communicative framework. Learner noticing of incidents of grammatical aspects during the communicative activity was expounded. Given the impressive oral communication skills of the learners (see FN I: 55), and the fact that TO (see TO I: 17-18) gave the impression that he taught more or less like I planned to teach, I was assured that my language teaching approach would proceed smoothly. However, in my third lesson taught on 10 June 1999 I noticed that

the learners found it difficult to “notice” various grammatical aspects like present/past tenses, direct/indirect speech and active/passive voice in the article (Appendix 5B).

The text was resourceful in that it provided opportunities for learners to “analyse”, “notice and discover” (Angelil-Carter, *et al* 1998: vii) the uses of various tenses, the shifts from active to passive voice and various uses of direct and indirect forms. This was noticed when they were divided into groups to do the following tasks:

1. Transform paragraph 1 to the present tense.
2. Transform paragraph 2 from passive to active voice.

I want to point out that transforming paragraphs is not “noticing”, but an exercise that may enhance the learners’ “noticing” of these aspects. Although ‘there was good degree of communication’ (LOBS: 67) I realised that the learners lacked the basic grammatical tools to be able to ‘notice’ the grammatical aspects as suggested by my language teaching strategy. There was not a single group of learners that got the tasks right. The following are examples of their works:

**Task 1:**

- Pupils of Orlando West High School in Soweto were commend today for not retaliating before two of their schoolmates were stab to death in Nkowankowa, Northern Province, at the weekend.

**Task 2:**

- When a visit to the Bankuna High School turned ugly Vusi Mlambo (20) and Boitswarelo Nobengula (18) were killed.
- Vusi Mlambo (20) and Boitswarelo Nobengula (18) are killed when a visit to the Bankuna High School turn ugly.

From this lesson’s activities I observed that the learners could not differentiate between **simple past and past participle** forms of verbs, **concord** and passive/active voices. There was confusion between transforming the tenses and voices. This is clear from the example above. This observation was also made by the other observers (LOBS: 67) who pointed out that I ‘introduced the passive/active voice, and it was clear that they had not done it. Also the past participle’. It became evident that I had to explain the various aspects in my lesson. This affected my teaching method where in my transmission teaching only few learners could respond to my questions. My co-

observers (LOBS: 67) made the following remark: 'still try involve the whole class and not only language competent ones'.

Upon reflection, I realised that for me to effectively get on with my language teaching strategy I needed to give the learners a grounding lesson in grammar where the tenses, parts of speech, and concord would be consciously taught. I felt knowledge of these aspects was essential for any sentence transformation activity especially the reported speech and active/passive voices. The media texts are rich in the usage of these.

A structural grammar lesson not based on any media text was thus taught on 11 June 1999. In this lesson that lasted about one and a half hours, I taught the basic parts of speech. A simple sentence would be given and divided into the **subject, verb and object**. Concord between subject and verb would be illustrated. The various auxiliary verbs were introduced and concord in this regard re-emphasised. The past/present tenses of the auxiliary verbs were indicated before the transformation of active/passive voice was illustrated. Learners were given a table of verb forms indicating present, past and past participle forms (see Appendix 8). Contractions were also taught where auxiliary verbs could be contracted to other parts of speech.

Although this lesson was contrary to my teaching approach as expounded in chapter two, I nevertheless found it helpful, as it formed the basis for my subsequent, language lessons. TO (LOBS: 68) also observed 'David taught the parts of speech (subject, verb and noun) to lay foundation for understanding of passive/active sentence transformation'.

However, this lesson did not seem to arouse the learners' interest. I think this was because it was out of context. TO (LOBS: 68) made the point that 'the lesson promotes more of grammatical aspects which appear isolated from general language. Focus on grammar should be more contextually based'. He also observed (*ibid*) that 'there was less participation of learners, probably because the teacher had control of the lesson'.

The following is a rough summary of the lesson:

Parts of speech	Explanation of passivization		
1. Subject	SVO		
2. Verb	Active (Police) (arrest) (criminal) Passive (object) + helping word + (verb + (concord + tense) in the + by (subject) p/p		
3. Object			
e.g. <u>The policemen</u> <u>arrested</u> a <u>suspect</u> (active)			
subject        verb        object			
A suspect was arrested by the policemen. (passive)			
<u>The policemen</u> <u>were chasing</u> <u>two suspects</u> . (active)			
Two suspects were being chased by the policemen. (passive)			
<b>Table 4:</b> Auxiliary verbs showing concord and tenses:			
I	am	was	will – would
We	are	were	shall – should
It			
She			
He	is	was	may – might
You	are	were	can – could
They			
.....			
<b>Contractions</b>			
There's – There is			
Don't – Do not			
We'd – We would			
Won't – Will not			
I'm – I am			
Haven't – Have not			
Isn't – is not		Aren't – are not	

The learners were given tasks to do in their groups. Although they couldn't get them right at first, after my intervention, they were successful. The following are examples of how they responded to various tasks assigned to various groups:

- (i) Police have confirmed the matter (*into passive*)
- **Monica:** The matter is confirmed by the policemen.
  - **Emelda:** The matter has confirmed by police.
  - **Ndzalama:** The matter is confirmed by the policemen.
  - **Beverly:** The matter has confirmed by police.
- (ii) Mr Isaiah Baloyi thanked the pupils. (*into passive*).
- **Ndzalama:** The pupil thanked Mr. Isaiah Baloyi.
  - **Monica:** The pupil are thanked by Mr Isaiah Baloyi.
- (iii) Mrs Krassoi sent condolences (*into passive*).
- **Ndzalama:** Condolences is sent by Mrs Krassoi.
  - **Monica:** Condolences is sent by Mrs Krassoi.
- (iv) Vusi will be buried tomorrow (*into active*).
- **Ndzalama:** Tomorrow they bury Vusi.
  - **Monica:** Tomorrow they will bury Vusi.
- (v) Mrs Krassoi words *in the reported speech*: she said...
- “if the results at Orlando West are good at the end of this year, it will prove that these two boys did not die in vain”.
- **Sagwati:** “She said that if the results at Orlando West are good at the end of this year, it will prove that these two boys did not die in vain”.

The above samples indicate a few problems resulting from tenses, concord and past participle (see **Sagwati**'s sentence). Reflection on these learning points formed the basis of my subsequent lessons.

The article “Just who is responsible?” (Appendix 5C) provided a good resource where direct speech was used (columns by various community leaders) and potential for transformation into the past tense. I have already pointed at how this article generated interest and debate because of its authenticity. I think this offered opportunity for communication in the groups and class as a whole. TO (LOBS: 70) observed that ‘due to the interest the article generated, learners were not aware that they were engaged in language use’.

The grammatical aspects in this article were looked at on 21 June 1999 where punctuation and especially quotation marks were identified (see headline). This served as a good introduction to direct and indirect speech in context. At the end of lesson the learners were given various tasks (depending on columns assigned them) to work in pairs.

**Tasks:** change the first two paragraphs of your column into reported speech: (1) he/she says ... (2) he/she said ...

The performance of the learners showed a great deal of improvement. I think the learners used the tools (especially the table: Appendix 8) to do the exercises.

The following are examples of the learners' written responses, in their own words, to do the tasks:

- **Nyiko and Ntsako:** She said that only people who really needed guns should have them. The youth **don't** always understand the main **purposed** of weapons so the fact that they had access to them was very dangerous.
- **Shikombiso and Phoebe:** she says children and teachers are on their own with no one to protect them. So far the government have lagged behind in protection their children from violence. The government **shall** look at hiring security for "hot spot" schools. Another thing is revision.
- **Meriam and Catherine:** he says that he think parents need to get themselves more involved in their children's education and know what is happening in their children's lives because ordinary people are disillusion with politicians and don't believe politicians can necessarily do anything about, say, violence in schools.
- **Solani and Ndzalama:** Tshediso said that basically he thought parents needed to get themselves more involved in their childrens education and know what was happening in their children's lives because ordinary people were disillusioned with politicians and did not believe politicians could necessary **did** anything about **said**, violence in schools.
- **Charmaine and Monica:**
  - (i) he said that he thought parents needed to get themselves more involved in their children's education and **knew** what was happening in their children's lives, because ordinary people were disillusioned with politicians and **don't** believe politicians **can** necessarily do anything about, say violence in schools.

- (ii) He said the only time **we** ever **see** the politicians, **it seemed**, was when there was an election. No doubt the next time **we'll** see them after this would be in 2004.

A review of these tasks indicates the problem areas that the learners had with regard to reporting with the past reporting verb "said" where learners appeared confused about the incidence of the past participle. For instance, the learners seem to be generalising on the applicability of transformational rules. For example, **Meriam** and **Catherine** change "disillusioned" to "are disillusion" because of the present tense reporting verb "says". They appear to confuse the past tense with the past participle. **Solani** and **Ndzalama** have 'could necessarily **did** anything about **said**...', **Charmaine** and **Monica** change "know" to "knew", **Shikombiso** and **Phoebe** change 'the government should' to 'the government **shall**' because of the present tense reporting verb 'says', **Nyiko** and **Ntsako** write 'the main **purposed** of'.

The various errors committed were pointed out through written comments on their task sheets, and explained in class. The class discussion included viewing the sentence transformations critically: for example why particular forms of speech are used in certain situations or texts. The learners were asked to do the same tasks individually. All learners got their written tasks correct, and these were put in their portfolios.

Upon reflecting on this development, grammar was indirectly 'referred' to in the next lesson taught on 23 June 1999 where the article "recent cases of school violence" (Appendix 5D) was used. Language learning here was predominantly communicative where the learners were able to engage in interesting debate both in their groups and general class. The "Vryburg High School" column generated a lot of interest and discussion (see 5.2.3).

Regarding grammar, learners were led to 'notice' the tense (past tense) in which the various columns were written and the abundance of the passive forms. For example:

#### 1. Past Tense:

- Andrew Babeile allegedly **stabbed** (Vryburg story).
- A pupil (18) at Hazyview High School...allegedly **slapped** classmates and **intimidated** ... the pupil **went** berserk... (Hazyview High School)
- Bullies **assaulted** Renae Naick... (Impala Crescent Primary School).

2. The passive (the past tense form was embedded and continued):

- Babeile... was initially charged ... has now been charged ... (Vryburg).
- ... after he was apparently found loitering ( Hazyview).
- Onas Hlungwani...was stabbed (Giyani School).
- Andries Werth... was allegedly shot... he has been charged... (Townview High School).
- She was dragged by the hair ... She was also bitten by an army of ants (Impala Crescent).
- Thabisang Lower Primary School Principal... was gunned down.

No written task was given, but in groups the learners were able to notice these occurrences of the passive forms. The verb form sheet (Appendix 8) was useful in this regard as learners kept referring to it during their group work sessions. The verb form “bitten” was referred to when emphasis was given on the difference between past tense and past/participle forms of verbs. We also discussed why certain forms of grammar, especially the passive voice, are used in media texts.

#### 5.2.4.4. Conclusion:

The media texts were useful in the respect of language learning because they provided opportunities to teach various aspects of the language. The fact that learners confront authentic, real life issues stimulates them into communication in the target language without that conscious effort. I think it boosts their confidence. Their responses in the questionnaire (Appendix 4.B.1) point to this. For example, **Ganunu**'s response to item 5 (of Appendix 4.B.1) is: 'now I can speak English than before'. **Shikombiso**, in response to item 4 (of Appendix 4.B.1), says 'I really enjoy speaking English with my classmates', and **Ndzalama** says she learnt 'to be confident when I speak and my opinions are always correct'.

**Shikombiso** (FG II: 43) says 'I really enjoy speaking English...in this lesson, because my time is not used to speaking English everywhere but now I'm starting to like...'. Although TO is apprehensive about the conscious teaching of grammar (I shared this view to a greater extent), I found that the learners appreciated grammar teaching (in this context), and based on the lessons, I found it very useful to their language development. In response to item 4 (of Appendix 4.B.1) all learners gave a positive response to the grammar aspects.

These responses, in the learners' original words, are examples of what they say they have learnt:

- **Emelda:** "I have learn the past and present tense and changing paragraph from passive to active form. And to change into reported speech.
- **Charmaine:** "Past tense, present tense, past participle and direct and indirect speech".
- **Sagwati:** "My English improved a lot, I learnt active and passive voice, reported speech".
- **Solani:** "A lot: passive and active voice, direct and indirect, past tense, present tense, vocabulary etc.

In the focus group interview after the first cycle, this sense of appreciation emerged. It is amazing that even aspects that teachers take for granted are cherished by the learners. **Bongani** (FG II: 43) says he learnt that 'there are verbs like... **Is** changes to **was**, **can** changes to **could**, **will** changes to **would** ...' and **Shikombiso** (FG II: 43) says he learnt 'about ... contraction... I didn't really understand those, but now I do'. **Ntsako** (FG II: 43-44) points out that she 'was not good in changing the... sentence to passive, active, direct, past, futures... But now I'm a little bit aware of those ...I think it's great, very much'.

#### 5.2.5. School ethos:

During this cycle I observed that this approach to language teaching makes certain demands from the school where the teacher practises. The most influential of these were time allocation and discipline. Such factors do impact on the learning activities.

My two co-observers noted this throughout the cycle. Even though I kept on reflecting on these factors I could not succeed. For example in my first lesson on 7 June 1999 (LOBS: 64) observed that 'there was too much in one lesson', John's comments (*ibid*) emphasise the point: 'timing has been a crucial factor: At the end of a long day, back to one hour lesson'. I could not teach the grammatical aspects during my second lesson (09 June 1999) 'because of time constraints' (see LOBS: 65). Because of the school practice of exams John (*ibid*) describes as 'unfortunate that lesson came so late in the day after exams'. The observers (LOBS: 68) feel these issues of time 'affect interest and stimulation', especially when the lesson is too long.

Learning in a co-operative way also demands learners to be responsible in terms of class attendance and seriousness about their activities and the school ethos to be mindful and respectful of the classroom activities. For example during my lesson on 21 June 1999 TO and John (LOBS: 71) observed that ‘the learners were very restless – we only started at 11h30, and by that time they had been milling around aimlessly. Difficult to get them settled’.

In the next lesson on 23 June 1999 we had ‘three interruptions: someone wanting **Sagwati**, the Vice-Principal wanting **Nyiko** and TO receiving a call (see LOBS: 73). I noted that the learners are not used to taking responsibility for their learning. Perhaps they are used to the teacher being “in charge” of the lesson. The following observations (see LOBS: 73) point to this:

There is so much intermittent talking, doing other things not connected to the lesson... obviously not used to listening and taking responsibility. They are used to getting up or leaving without permission. They throw articles from one desk to another. Continuous noise outside distracting...

#### 5.2.6. **Conclusion:**

Upon consideration of the above aspects I realised that for more effective teaching in this approach, I needed to conscientise the learners to learning in a co-operative way, where responsibility is an essential element of the learning process. I knew that co-operative learning was going to be a pivotal theme in the next cycle. I therefore decided to teach the skills of co-operative learning, and observe the learners’ conduct in this respect.

### 5.3. **Findings from cycle two:**

#### 5.3.1. **Introduction:**

Although I realised that for the purpose of this half-thesis it would be adequate to end with the first cycle, I felt that it was not in the spirit of action research to end without indicating how I intervened in the situation and learned from the findings of that intervention. I will thus give a brief discussion of reflections in cycle two.

The second cycle comprised a visit to a newspaper company, *Letaba Herald*, and five lessons. The first lesson was based on the teaching of co-operative learning skills, where the cartoon “team work” (Appendix 5E) was used, two lessons based on the article “Girl (14) has teacher’s baby” (Appendix 5F) and the last two lessons based on the article “Girl with baby wins right to go back to class” (Appendix 5G).

The selection of the articles was influenced by the generative theme, sexuality, as discussed in the reconnaissance (see chapter four). The cartoon (Appendix 5E) was selected for its appropriateness as a support material for the conscious teaching of co-operative learning skills. The teaching of these skills was an intervention strategy on the findings from cycle one regarding the learners’ problems in learning in this way (see 5.2.3. above). The cartoon was also a very good resource in the facilitation of learners’ graphic literacy.

Data was generated from learners’ questionnaire (Appendix 4.B.2), learners’ focus group interview (Appendix FG III), second interview with the English teacher (Appendix TO II), learners’ written work (in portfolios), video tapes and learners’ assessment forms (Appendices 6A and 6B).

The value and purpose of learners’ assessment forms can be seen from different perspectives. Although they have been important methodological tools for generating data in this research, they afford learners the opportunity to participate in their own assessment and to take responsibility for their learning as partners in the teaching situation.

Though co-operative learning was identified as a focal theme for this cycle, it became evident that other themes like authenticity and language learning were also developed. For the purpose of this half-thesis I will only discuss the teaching method in relation to language teaching as a theme.

### 5.3.2. The teaching method:

In cycle one, it was observed that the learners were not used to being taught in a co-operative way. In this cycle I deliberately taught the skills of co-operative learning, because it is an essential element of liberatory learning and Curriculum 2005/OBE.

It was observed in the first cycle that though the learners could be grouped, and get talking, the dynamics of the groups and the quality of the discussions did not lead to meaningful learning. Wilmot and Euvrard (undated: 16) assert that ‘co-operative learning is more than simply putting learners in groups and telling them to get on with some or other task’.

The research tools mentioned in 5.3.1 above were used to evaluate this aspect (co-operative learning) as a teaching method in this cycle. I used the cartoon, “Teamwork” (Appendix 5E) in the first lesson of this cycle to teach co-operative learning skills, and to get the learners to appreciate this way of learning. Besides my own observations and observations from TO and John, I used self-assessment and group assessment forms (Appendices 6A and 6B) to find out how the learners got on in their groups. The learners’ questionnaire (Appendix 4.B.2), focus group (FG III) and interview with the teacher (TO II) were used to evaluate this aspect: co-operative learning.

Other outcomes of the lesson were that (i) learners were to be able to engage in critical reflection, (ii) interpretation of the cartoon, as well as (iii) communication. The learners (in groups) were given this task: **Look at the cartoon and discuss with your group mates what the message of the cartoon might be.**

The cartoon engendered great excitement and helped the learners to appreciate the essence of teamwork. From the group reports the learners were able to recognise the horses’ dilemma. They (the learners) gave satisfactory interpretation: the horses or donkeys were not able to ‘eat the food’ if they went separate ways (first three layers) until they came together and discussed their problem (fourth level). Then in the fourth and fifth levels they were able to tackle the problem and ‘eat all the food by going to eat together’.

The following are a few examples of inputs that came from the groups:

- Selfishness does not pay
- Teamwork brings solution

- We must negotiate to solve problems
- Competition leads to hatred

On the basis of these contributions I introduced basic principles of co-operative work (see Wilmot & Euvrard, undated: 4-10). I was aware of the point that co-operative learning is not the same as group work. In co-operative learning learners work together to enhance each other's learning (Johnson, Johnson & Smith, 1991). Wilmot and Euvrard (p.12) assert that 'as social beings we learn through our interactions with others'. Against this background, the following points were discussed in the general class:

- Good relations
- Co-operation and no competition
- Respect for one another
- Trust and love in the groups
- Don't be individualistic and selfish
- Responsibility for work by all individuals within the group

I also pointed to shared roles within the group and discussed the roles with the learners. The idea of shared roles was discussed in the light of cooperative learning theory briefly discussed above. The following are notes from the discussion:

- Facilitator = to make sure everybody has his/her turn, maintains order, stimulates participation
- Scribe = write down the points raised by the group members
- Time-keeper = reminds members on time allocated, time remaining etc
- Reporter = the one who reports on the views/discussions of the group

At the end of this lesson I asked the learners to look back at their activities in cycle one and say whether they were co-operative or not. Some learners said they had not been 'co-operating'.

After the lesson on "Teamwork" I noticed a marked improvement on the part of the learners in working in a co-operative way. Learners contributed to their group activities and took responsibilities. Even the weaker ones appeared to gain confidence while the brighter ones could listen to their group mates.

Grammar and communication were “taught” co-operatively in the sense that they were based on discussions that emanated from critical questions that were posed as problems for the learners. I think participation was stimulated by the relevance and authenticity of the issues raised by the texts (see 5.2.3). We observed that fierce debates ensued in some of the groups during discussions. For example, when they made their group reports about:

- (i) whether teachers should have love affairs with pupils, based on “Girl (14) has ‘teacher’s baby’ ” (Appendix 5F).
- (ii) whether pregnant girls should be allowed at school, based on “Girl with baby wins right to go back to class” (Appendix 5G).

The following are examples, in the learners’ own words, of group reports made in response to (i) above:

- It is not right for teachers to have affairs with school girls. School girls at our age (like fourteen year old) do not know what love is, they take it as an enjoyment, they or we are too young. Having an affair with a man at my father’s age is rubbish.
- They just want to use us. They pretend as if they love us.
- Most of the time teachers force student to have affairs. We call that child abuse.
- Even the government don’t approve that we are not here to have affairs but we are here to be educated.
- Most of the time they promise to give them money we want them to know money can’t buy love.

I observed that debates could be sustained in English albeit the learners often committed grammatical errors. TO (in TO II: 23) observed that the ‘learners should be given a chance to express themselves even if they flout grammar rules or grammatical conventions’.

I was, however, able to lead them to noticing incidents of grammar and gave them tasks through which they transformed paragraphs to direct or indirect speech, active or passive voices and present/past forms.

For example, the passive and past tense forms were noticed in the second paragraph of the “Girl (14) ...” article (Appendix 5F):

-The girl was forced to drop out...it was discovered that she was pregnant.

The quotation marks in paragraph 4 of the article reinforced the aspects of direct speech and punctuation. A co-operative learning activity was given to the learners (in groups) whereby they had to transform this paragraph and paragraph 5 to reported speech using the present and past reporting verbs.

From these tasks we (TO and I) observed that although there was improvement in the learners' co-operative learning skills and the way they handled the transformation of the sentences, as in cycle one, they seemed confused about verb forms when reporting verbs either in present or past tense. The following is an example of a transformation made by one group:

- The social worker says that another girl who is sexually abuse by the same teacher refuses to open a case against him, although her family knows everything about their affair (paragraph 4 of Appendix 5F).

An analysis of this sentence shows the confusion of the past tense form with the past participle. This is evidenced by the learners' change of the past participle "was abused" to "is abuse". This aspect was discussed in cycle one, and attributed to generalisation of a grammatical rule (see 5.2.4). The same practice was observed in a submission by another group:

- The social worker says that her grandmother report the case to the police, but when the police want a statement from the victim she refuse to co-operate (paragraph 5).

The learners would also fail to transform the past tense forms of the verbs of the original (direct) speaker to the past participle when the reporting verb is in the past. This is an example from one group:

- The social worker said that another girl who was sexually abused by the same teacher refused to open a case against him, although her family knew everything about their affair (see paragraph 5).

Drawing from our experience or observations in cycle one regarding the learners' group dynamics I felt that I (as the teacher) had to play a more supportive role by encouraging the learners to work cooperatively. I also helped them focus on the exercises rather than *hope* that the groups would ultimately get the transformation right.

In our lesson on 17 August 1999, TO and I spent time discussing with individual members of the groups on how to do the transformations. We intervened by re-emphasising the following principles:

- The forms of the verbs and adverbs (e.g. now, today) of the original speaker do not change when the reporting verb is in the present (e.g. the social worker says...).
- When the reporting verb is in the past (e.g. the social worker said...) the forms of the verbs of the original speaker change to the past; if already in the past, they change to the past participle. Certain adverbs also change forms. The following illustration was given:

**Table 5:**

May > might	today > that day
Can > could	tonight > that night
Must > had to	tomorrow > the following day
Was > had been	yesterday > the previous day
Were > had been	next week > the following week
Report > reported	this > that
Reported > had reported	

- **Zanelle:** The social worker says that another girl who was sexually abused by the same teacher refused to open a case against, although her family knew everything about the affair.
- **Amanda:** The social worker said that that teacher had been abusing girls at the school.
- **Carol:** The social worker said that another girl who had been sexually abused by the same teacher had refused to open a case

against him, although her family had known everything about their affair.

In the lesson that followed, based on the article “Girl with baby wins right to go back to class” (Appendix 5G) the learners worked in groups, pairs and also as individuals. A few sentences were given for the learners to transform to reported speech using the present and past reporting verbs. We observed that their performance had improved. The following are examples:

- **Lucia:** She says that the policy is the soul of the successful running of this school and the good reputation it has enjoyed in the community over the years.
- **Lucia:** She said that the policy was the soul of the successful running of that school and the good reputation it had enjoyed in the community over the years.

The learners were thus monitored and supported, working in groups, pairs and as individuals even when discussing critical questions. For example, in one group the learners were able to give the following inputs in response to the critical question: why the social worker did not wish to be named (paragraph 4 of the “Girl (14)...” article):

- **Bongani:** Because she was afraid of the teacher.
- **Sagwati:** She did not want to be known because the newspaper is read by many people.
- **Ntsako:** She did not want people to hate her.

In another group, the learners came up with the following contributions in response to the critical question: why the abused girls refused to open cases against the teacher or to co-operate with the police (in paragraphs 5 and 6):

- **Shikombiso:** Because they thought the teacher will make them fail.
- **Angel:** Other people will laugh at them.
- **Emelda:** They were afraid to go to the police station or to go to the court and speak to the magistrate.

I learnt, in this cycle, that the learners’ attitudes and involvement in their learning activities played a significant role in their learning. Co-operative learning style appeared to have contributed a great deal to their sense of responsibility, confidence, freedom and enjoyment in the learning activities. I think this resulted from the

constant support and monitoring by myself especially in this cycle. This was a conscious intervention resulting from the observations we made in the first cycle especially with regard to the learners' lack of discipline, responsibility (also see discussion on school ethos) and unwillingness to work with others.

An analysis of the learners' comments in their portfolios, the questionnaire (Appendix 4.B.2) and the interview (FG III) points to this observation. All the learners indicated that they have learnt to work with others, and that they enjoyed learning in a co-operative way. The following are some of the comments made:

- **Phoebe:** I enjoyed attending this course, it was fun while we were at class, working as a group sharing ideas. I think we were even free during the course (*from portfolio*).
- **Ntsako:** I think group work is greate because you get to know the way people think and you get to know people very well. I think it is good because he [David] give everyone a chance to express his/her feelings (*portfolio*).
- **Shikombiso:** I was not use to work as a one group and I was used to work as an individualistic. But as the time went on David wrote some few points about co-operative learning and I took them to reconsideration and they helped me a lot like trusting each other, respecting, loving and no competition (*portfolio*).

The learners expressed similar views in the last interview conducted on 30 August 1999 (see FG III). The following are examples:

- **Sagwati:** Co-operative learning increased my intellect, because I didn't master the listening skills I just communicated to, I just wanted people to always look at me, I just wanted to speak...But I didn't want another person to speak and I listen to him, I just wanted to dominate, ja, it increased my listening skills.
- **Solani:** It has been helpful like we get the chance to share ideas with some people and get to know what other people are thinking...we like to co-operate and respect...But we normally did not do, like we we were selfish at first...we didn't want to work with other people, I wanted to do my own thing. Ja, but now I'm different, I developed that great interest of working with people.
- **Angel:** I also think that at first I was selfish, but now I'm not, because I worked with a lot of people.
- **Bongani:** I changed...now I really like to work with group, working with another people because they taught me how to listen to one another...I think it taught me to work with people whether they or I'm angry or happy, so it taught me to adapt.

All the learners' responses in the questionnaire administered at the end of cycle two (Appendix 4.B.2) point to the impact that co-operative learning had on them. The popular education aspect that recognises learners as partners in the teaching situation (discussed in chapter two) has been realised through this teaching approach which is one of the basic features of liberatory teaching. One of the learners' responses in the questionnaire was:

- I think the approach he [David] used was very good, you let us to have point of views while teaching. In other words I can say he was teaching us and we were helping him. I really love it (**Ndzalama**, *questionnaire*)

This observation was also made by TO (II: 26) in the last interview in August 1999:

It was sort of a wake-up call in the sense that one should not always go to the classroom as a person who is going to deposit knowledge to the learners who have to, like, respond or be receptive to these facts but one should allow learners also to, to participate actively in terms of airing their views...because after all, in the teaching and learning process, they are the ones who should actively learn...although an educator also is learning in the process.

The following are a few examples of the responses made by the learners in the last interview (FG III) regarding the co-operative learning style:

- **Amanda:** It help to other people who are low learners...I learn to...try to answer even I know the answer was wrong I would tell the wrong answer but I was try.
- **Tintswalo:** In Business Economics, now I like to discuss and work in group ...
- **Zanelle:** I've also learnt to be co-operative and I now have more discipline than I did before. I am no longer individualistic. I am able to work with others in term of helping each other out.
- **Shikombiso:** I am not selfish anymore. I allow people to help me and I help me ...I am not afraid to work with many people anymore. I can even stand up in front of many people.

The comments by the learners in the interview, portfolio and the questionnaire indicate how co-operative learning, as a teaching method, made the learning process fun, and instilled a sense of involvement, responsibility and discipline on the learners. It has had an impact of wider social significance, which is an element of praxis (see chapter two) in that learners became more open and respected other people's views.

TO (II: 25) also observed that the learners have learnt 'the significance of working as a group; that's number one...learning is something that is communal'.

The most important realisation was their developed consciousness of themselves as fellow participants, partners, in the teaching situation; the point made by **Ndzalama** and TO. Most critical, I think, it is the realisation that the skills of co-operative learning need to be taught. Quite often teachers who try out this teaching/learning style do not realise that this has to be consciously developed.

It has been evident that co-operative learning does not suggest that the teacher's role in the teaching situation is reduced. In fact, I learned from this experience that the teacher should be involved even more, so that he/she could be abreast of the dynamics of the classroom, give support and direction during the learning activities. However this needs total commitment, passion, interest in the learners' potential and activities. Lewin (November 2000 pers. comm.) adds that it also involves skill by the teacher. In this light TO made the points to indicate the impact that the project, especially the co-operative learning factor, has had on him as a teacher:

My observations...are...being patient with the learners, because it is true that as teachers at times we'd want to rush through our, our syllabuses... patience is one of the hallmarks of ...success in terms of language teaching.  
(TO II: 23)

In introducing, um, co-operative learning it made other learners to also make their inputs; and...that in itself at least helped...in making the voice of those who are, say, trampled upon, you know, to be heard (TO II: 25).

### 5.3.3. Conclusion:

In this cycle the skills of co-operative learning were taught. This was an intervention strategy following observations made in cycle one. Due to this intervention we noticed a great improvement on the part of the learners in co-operating, communicating and critiquing texts and general issues arising in class.

I will give a general conclusion of the whole chapter in the next section.

#### 5.4. General conclusion:

In this chapter I discussed the two cycles of my action research. It is through this type of research that I was able to try out certain forms of teaching practice (like using media texts and co-operative learning) and also learn from the teaching process as a teacher.

Through this experience I saw clearly the link between both the practice of teaching and research. I define research in this context as the process of gathering information, trying out ideas by putting them into practice, reflecting on that practice and reformulating the ideas. In this sense knowledge is constructed.

I think this observation has especial relevance to South Africa, today, where education is being transformed. Transformation in education calls for teachers to adapt to new teaching methodologies that require creativity and innovation.

This research has shown me the power of the concept, “teacher as researcher” which could lead to greater professionalism of the teacher and informed practice. I will argue in the next chapter, the conclusion, the essence of this aspect in educator development: in both PRESET and INSET programmes.

## CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

### 6.1. Introduction:

This research project has been a pleasant exploratory journey in the area of English Language teaching in the second language environment. It has been a wonderful learning experience for me, first as a teacher, and then as a researcher. I do not want to make any significant claim that it was a perfect research project the findings of which will automatically apply to all second language teaching situations.

True to my research paradigm, the purpose of this research was to explore and learn from this particular educational site, namely the PDM Junior Secondary School. I feel that it is important that I highlight what I consider as the limitations of this research, before I give a commentary on the findings (conclusion) and recommendations.

### 6.2. Limitations:

The major limitation of this project was that it was done as a half-thesis, and that it was done for degree purposes. This implied that as a researcher I was constantly mindful of the deadlines (time-frames) and formal expectations with which the research had to conform. Consequently this put pressure on me so that the flow of the process and the freedom of the experiences were to a certain degree curtailed.

Although I negotiated my way into the school and ultimately got accepted by the teacher and the learners (see chapter 4), the reality that I was an “outsider-researcher”, to a certain extent, influenced the project negatively. The project was initially not seen as part of the school curriculum by the English teacher and the learners. It was perceived as a “media project” rather than an integral part of the English syllabus. Even in my interview with the learners (see Appendices FG I, FG II, FG III) and the English teacher (see Appendices TO I, TO II) our work is referred to as “the media”. In fact the teacher refers to it as “Media Studies”. The learners actually saw it as a “fun thing”.

The fact that the research was done just before the half-yearly examinations was problematic because the learners were caught between this research and their examination preparations.

Linked to the foregoing point was the fact that only part of the grade 10 class (see chapter 4), was selected for this project. I think this aspect substantiated the negative impression that the project was not important to them in terms of tests and examinations. There could be no way in which a “significant test or examination” could be given to half the learners of the same class.

The general timetable, school organisation and ethos made it difficult for teachers and learners to participate fully. The fact that only the English teacher was involved in the research resulted in the media articles not being fully exploited. I believe that some of the skills gained by the learners in the project could have been more harnessed if other teachers were involved. TO (II: 27) even raised this point when in the first interview I asked him about the possibility of using the print media articles in the whole school:

I think in term in terms of ... changing the period system...[because] we are not only learning language...we focused on other issues, like I...cited the question of earthquakes; we will be learning the concepts of volcano and earthquakes that are embroiled in...language , so I think...Science, Maths, Biology...everything will be...encapsulated in language...teaching.

The timetable was structured in such a way that time was allocated in 35-minutes periods per subject each day. This affected the way I taught because I always spent more than one hour on my lessons.

The lack of a library at the school (see chapter 4) impacted negatively on the selection of materials. This resulted in a situation where learners did not have the opportunity to play a role in the selection of articles. Although I involved them in the Freirean “theme generation” process (see chapter 4), I strongly feel that involving the learners in the selection of articles would have enhanced their role and responsibility as partners in the learning process. In chapter two, it was argued that Critical Pedagogy acknowledges the role of the learners in curriculum development and material selection.

In terms of theoretical issues, I think a more detailed discussion on reading theory, group work practices and questioning techniques would have strengthened the thesis. This was evident during the actual teaching stage of the research (see chapter five) where the need to pose challenging questions, getting learners to work co-operatively and reading strategies constantly arose. I nevertheless take these limitations of theory as challenges that have to be taken up in further research projects to enhance enquiry in educational practices. It is an element of Action Research for practitioners to keep on reflecting about their practices. The research has made me reflect more on these limitations and actually helped me consider a lot of questions that may be explored further. For example: (i) the place of Critical Language Awareness in Critical Pedagogy (ii) the challenge that the multilingual policy in South Africa raises to the historically established hegemony of English in the English classroom.

I need to point out, however, that as time went by we were able to create situations where most of these limitations were turned around and used as positive elements.

### **6.3. Conclusions from the research:**

#### **6.3.1. Research methodology issues:**

Through this research I learnt that although it is important for the researcher to know his or her paradigm, it might not be useful to restrict oneself to a particular paradigm or set of methods. In doing this kind of research it may be necessary for a qualitative researcher to employ quantitative techniques in certain circumstances. As pointed out in chapter two it is important, however, to note that the methodology is influential to the researcher's work. In fact the methodology and outcomes do influence and complement each other.

The context of the research setting, especially the socio-political reality of the learners, the teachers and the general school milieu, has a bearing on this kind of research. The qualitative research paradigm was appropriate for my research as I realised that understanding individual learners' reality was essential to the research process.

As action research involves continuous learning and reflection it is most relevant to teachers as it develops skills which teachers need to employ in their daily classroom and curricular lives as suggested by its cycles and spirals. The concept of life-long learning embraced by Curriculum 2005 and OBE makes such demands on teachers.

For example, in this study it only emerged during the actual teaching stage that co-operative learning and critical reading were major issues of the research. It was only after the completion of the research that I came across a critical reading model suggested by Cummins (2001: 66). I found this model compatible with the Freirean liberatory teaching as it includes “personal”, “critical” and “creative” phases which I found to be ‘essential if we are to speak of knowledge generation or transformative pedagogy rather than just transmission of information’ (66).

It has been learnt in this research that action research spirals and cycles are not fixed entities either in time or duration. For example I found it difficult to determine where or when the first cycle should end, and where or when the second cycle should start. In fact a researcher can address more than one problem in one cycle. The researcher indeed keeps reflecting throughout the research cycle or cycles. This point was discussed in chapter three (also see McNiff 1988). I did not, for instance, wait until the reflection stages of my cycles to start reflecting on my experiences and data. In cycle two I focused not only on co-operative learning, but also on issues such as grammar and communication, critical reflection and authenticity.

Collaborative action research necessitates acceptance of the researcher by the staff generally, learners and, to a certain extent, the parents. This is understood against the requirement that collaborative action research should have an impact on the teacher and learners as co-researchers. In my research TO and the learners expressed the view that the project impacted on them. I think this would not have been realised if there were not a spirit of trust, acceptance and collaboration.

### **6.3.2. The language teaching methodology issues:**

I have learnt that in the real classroom situation, teachers must be flexible in the use of teaching methods. They should thus break free from the bondage of set methodology and be responsive to the dynamics of the classroom. It has been

observed in this research that I had to move from communicative language teaching to structural or traditional grammar teaching methods and back. I used co-operative learning skills and individual learning strategies, from working in pairs to working in small groups etc. The dynamics and challenges arising from the classroom practices seem to demand this ability to adapt methodologically. This realisation makes a good case for flexibility and openness on the part of the teacher. It also means that the teacher has to be confident in his or her ability in the language and subject matter. The “no-method condition” (see chapter two) seems to be an appropriate approach to language teaching. O’Neill (1991:303) aptly points out that ‘good teaching is characterised by a variety of styles to promote learning’. The teacher also needs to have been exposed to these and feel confident to use them.

The essence of teaching, therefore, is not the method as such, but the attainment of goals or outcomes, which is the crucial element of Curriculum 2005 and OBE. However, I submit that understanding one’s teaching approach and methodology does play a role in the course of one’s attainment of such outcomes. I have discussed the interdependence of methodology and outcomes in 6.3.1. above.

It is crucial that in our teaching, we should consider learning as a social act or praxis. This therefore suggests that in language teaching we should engage in methodologies that allow learners to relate classroom experiences with their lived socio-political lives outside the classroom. The use of authentic texts and relevant themes that relate to the learners’ real life-worlds make language learning meaningful and exciting. Freire and Macedo (1987: 29) make the assertion that ‘reading does not consist merely of decoding the written word or language; rather, it is preceded by and intertwined with knowledge of the world’. The use of authentic texts also contributes to motivation and liveliness of the lesson. I think this also enhances opportunities for critical reflection. In chapter two, I made the point that it is this challenge of praxis that has provided the rationale for using print media texts in ESL teaching.

Co-operative learning is not merely giving learners tasks and leaving them in groups with the hope that they will learn. It is more about the learners’ attitude, discipline, responsibility and motivation to learn. It is probably most importantly their skills to work in a co-operative way where opportunities for critical reflection are created. In

fact, the teacher should teach them these skills explicitly. In co-operative learning the teacher should know each learner's strengths and weaknesses; and have the ability to facilitate good learning. Understanding the dynamics of the classroom may compel a flexible teacher to shift from individual work to pair work, from pair work to group work or vice versa, to maximise the learning potential of the learners. The ability to respond effectively to such dynamics is a skill that poses challenges and suggests certain expectations from the teacher.

### 6.3.3. The role of the teacher:

My experiences from this research point to the reality that the teacher remains a significant and pivotal factor in the learning situation.

Learner-centredness and OBE do not suggest a reduction of the teacher's role in the learning situation. In fact, the teacher is expected to play a more crucial and wider role in terms of knowing the individual learners, co-operating, supporting, monitoring, learning and continually researching his or her own practice. The teacher's role extends beyond mere transmission of content from "pre-packaged" textbooks to creating, selecting and even developing his or her own materials relevant to the situation.

It is essential for teachers to understand the underlying philosophies of various teaching styles and be up to date with developments in their respective learning areas so that they can effectively respond to challenges of the classroom. This necessitates continuous development of, and research by, teachers. Hence the need for action research skills.

In liberatory teaching, teachers have the duty to make classroom experiences and practices relevant to the learners' lived world. This is a critical aspect of *praxis*, a basic feature of progressive teaching. This thus presupposes the teacher's ability to select or develop materials or even use the existing materials in a progressive way. The use of print media texts is one such avenue that the teacher may explore. This should entail the use of teaching methods that acknowledge the involvement and active participation of the learners. This view is captured by Hinchey (1998: 51) in her observation that:

If students are not somehow personally engaged in a task that holds some relevance or interest for them, they are not likely to be able to construct a personal understanding of information.

#### 6.4. **Recommendations:**

The various points made in the conclusion relate to teaching method, the learning or teaching materials and praxis. The comments that I have made regarding these points, I think, presume the existence of a well-trained, motivated and committed teacher who can respond positively to these challenges and demands. It is a sad reality that in South Africa the majority of teachers have not had good and adequate training (see Introduction and chapter one). As Hartshorne (1986) predicted, post-apartheid education needs post-apartheid teachers.

I therefore recommend that:

PRESET and INSET programmes be strengthened in a manner that would empower teachers to respond to such challenges pointed out above. Teachers should be researchers of their own practice. Thus teacher development programmes should train teachers in the skills of research, materials development and critical reflection. These programmes should emphasise much more time to be spent on practice in the classroom, and thus directly integrate theory and practice.

Teacher development should entail self-development. It should not be understood as an activity by an outsider expert done to the teacher at some stage or other. Instead the teacher should take the initiative and responsibility for his or her own development. The Department of Education has acknowledged this view in terms of its programme for teacher appraisal (see ELRC, no date).

Schools need to be equipped with basic resources to enable a creative teacher to develop teaching/learning materials. I know that the situation in most rural and semi-rural schools is such that there is a lack of basic resources and poorly-trained teachers who have no skills to develop their own materials, and teach in a progressive way. In such situations teachers should be continually supported through textbooks and advice

as effective teacher development systems and services are made available to them. Potenza and Monyokolo (1999: 243) quote Kromberg (1993) emphasising the centrality of textbooks 'in educationally deprived contexts where the educators and learners have less capacity or confidence to venture beyond the safe boundaries of the printed word'.

Teacher development should enable teachers to use alternative materials like print media texts. Besides being significant in terms of relevance and authenticity, the print media texts can be used to confront situations where there is lack of resources. I have found print media texts to be a cheap resource (also see *Sowetan Education*, Friday 9 March 2001). James (1998 pers. comm.) observes that it is easier for people to throw or give away newspapers than textbooks.

Teachers need to be encouraged to work together as co-operation and integration of learning programmes by teachers of various learning areas is essential for liberatory teaching. Curriculum 2005 and OBE addresses this aspect by the principles of "macro and meso planning". For example, the idea of media across the curriculum would be useful in the case of this research where the media texts would be fully exploited. I have made the point in 6.2. above that the skills the learners gained in the project could have been more developed had there been complementary working relations among teachers in this respect. The school organisation and ethos should thus be conducive to this.

The situation in most schools needs to be improved if liberatory teaching is to succeed. It has been learnt in this research that liberatory teaching is premised on intrinsic motivation, responsibility and commitment by both teachers and learners.

The Department of Education or relevant curriculum planning institutions should leave room for individual schools and teachers to select or develop their own materials relevant to their own situations. This should, however, be accompanied by clearly spelt out guidelines. In situations where there is a need for textbooks, these should be supplied.

There should be vigorous monitoring of teaching and assessment processes and mechanisms to ensure quality in education practice. Perhaps effective national and provincial bodies responsible for assessment and quality assurance should be formed. In this regard there should be a change of attitude and mindset regarding examinations, especially for grade 12. Where communities judge education on the basis of examination results alone (see Introduction) there is the danger of near-total disregard for creativity and innovation by classroom participants as teachers would be urged to teach for examination results rather than genuine pedagogic reasons. Continuous assessment is a requirement for Critical Pedagogy and OBE. This aspect has been discussed in chapter two.

I would like to re-emphasise that the use of print media texts in a liberatory teaching situation requires creativity, innovation, commitment and, most importantly, skill by the teacher as an agent.

I therefore I want to agree with the postulation by Potenza and Monyokolo (1999: 237) that 'given the poor quality of teacher training in this country, intensive teacher development is a priority if we are to develop the calibre of teachers required by OBE'. The same view is captured in *Sowetan Education* (March 9 2001, p.1):

With the introduction of outcome-based education, one of the major tasks facing the Government is to provide the teachers with the skills needed to implement the new system.

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# **APPENDICES**

**Action Research: Exploring the use of print media as a  
resource in the teaching of English as a Second Language.**

M.A. (ESL) Thesis submitted to  
Rhodes University (Grahamstown)

**Matome David Letsoalo**

12 March 2001

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## INTERVIEW WITH THE PRINCIPAL

10/06/99

1. D: Hm, morning Mr. Khosa, I want to ask you about the, the school. Can you tell me about the history of the school?
2. Principal: Hm, the school started sometimes in 1992/93, when, eh, a need arose that, that a high school, that is, BBR high school had to be divided into two sections, the junior section and the secondary section. And the s- the school was formed at the time it was called BBR Junior Secondary School, as time went by they decided to change the name of the school to PDM Secondary school. That is how the school came into existence.
3. D: Can you tell me about the earlier principals, your predecessors, that is?
4. Prin: The first principal who formed the school was Mr. Dan Shiloana who is the present principal of HHD. And eh, later on eh Mr eh Nashu DM was appointed as the principal, I later on joined him as a Deputy Principal of the school.
5. D: When were you first the eh, principal of the school?
6. Prin: I have been appointed the principal of this school in 1998... August – all along I was eh just eh acting principal in my capacity as deputy principal of this school.
7. D: Can you tell us the highlights of this school?
8. Prin: Well it's not an easy eh question to answer, but eh, we participated in eh Science Olympiad, where on two consecutive years our school managed to produce eh a number that was much higher than eh other schools in our are. We managed to produce eh six students who qualified to get a bursary to go and attend at eh I.K and Giyani high and from eh these schools who got reports that eh the students were doing very well.
9. D: When was that?
10. Prin: I am not very certain about the years eh, I need to go through the records. But, eh, it happened eh just before 1994 and think in 1994.
11. D: Can you tell us eh the ... the strengths and / or weaknesses of the school eh, and coupled with that tell us how the school is regarded by the community?
12. Prin: Well, eh the the strength of the school is that eh there's a very strong bonding among eh educators (*pause*) that is eh one thing that makes things run very easy for us ... it is true that there might be educators who ... are not eh (*pause*) pulling on the same strengths with others but ... we've a greater number of educators co-operating trying their best to see that eh everything that is initiated is carried out to the full; but we don't have eh weaknesses in that we, are, we we we

however do have eh students whose record perhaps is not very clear who come from neighbouring villages who sometimes find it very difficult to cope with our program here at school.

19.D: Can you tell us about your classroom accommodation and relating this to your learner environment?

20.Prin: Eh, we have eh a school comprising of eight classrooms one of which has been converted into staff room and an office. We accommodate our students in the remaining seven classrooms. Throughout the year the average per class has been hovering above sixty per classroom in extreme cases we don't have eh classes classes that can accommodate up to eighty, ninety pupils because parents insist that their children should be admitted in this institution.

21.D: And then, how do you describe your workload?

22.Prin: Eh, I would describe our workload as slightly above average but eh because of eh subject-, different subject needs, there are some individual teachers who find themselves slightly overloaded than others, because the needs for individual subjects differ. But eh the workload is more or less slightly above average.

23.D: You mentioned something about the students who can not write and suppose there are those who can't read also. Hm, do you have a library, here?

24.Prin: We don't have a library. It is out of the interest of the individual teacher to encourage children to read but eh we also have a problem there because most of the children, eh, come from eh, disadvantaged background it's not easy for them to get books they so much need in order to improve their reading skills.

25.D: Can you tell me about your curriculum, that is subjects offered and your future plans in terms of curriculum needs?

26.Prin: Currently we, we have, eh three subjects streams. We have the science stream, which comprises of eh languages and sciences, Maths, Physical Science and Biology. We have eh the general stream, which comprises of languages, History and Geography and the commercial stream, which comprises languages and commercial subjects: Accounting, Economics and Business Economics. We have been operating like that throughout or since the school started but it has been our intention to move away from some of our streams because we realised that the students don't benefit much by pursuing such streams. Our intention is to introduce more practical subjects, because we realise most of our students would benefit from such practical subjects besides we see that some of the students will drop out before they even reach matric and we have decided to start with Computer Studies and in the near future we might even include electronics and practical Agriculture.

- 27.D: Still talking about that, what is the training and / or qualifications of your teachers?
- 28.For ... eh, electronic' subjects we don't have teachers who have qualified for that, as well as Computer Studies including the practical Agriculture that we would like to introduce in the near future. We've a teacher who is highly qualified in that.
- 29.D: Generally speaking how qualified would you say your teachers are?
- 30.Prin: We got teachers who have a, eh ... (*pause*) degrees in the subjects that they teach but eh we still have others who, eh, eh, just have the teachers diplomas. But I would say most teachers are busy studying to improve their qualifications. At this level I'll believe the teachers that we have at school are highly qualified to teach at this institution, at this level.
- 31.D: Still talking about the teachers can you tell me about relationships at school amongst staff members, and the teachers belonging to unions and their involvement in community structures?
- 32.Prin: Hm, I'd say the involvement in community structures is fairly well. The teachers that we have are people who are active either in churches or other, eh, community projects. Though not all of them are involved, there are those who prefer to, eh to be involved in just eh activities than have no bearing to community projects. But there are those who are highly involved. But with regard to the relationships amongst themselves I'd say it's quite normal. But, eh we do have some instances where there would be misunderstandings amongst teachers but they've never really created problems, they've always been problems that could be contained within the school environment. Well, with the relationship between the teachers and myself as the headmaster I can say the relationship is quite well. I get very good support from all the teachers if there could be other things that happen they are normal things that could happen in any situation.
- 33.D: And, eh, how involvement is your parents – the parents to the learners and also their economic background?
- 34.Prin: At first we struggled to get most parents to be involved, there are parents who are concerned about the welfare of their children; and the relationship of such parents with the school is very good, but we do have, eh, parents who sometimes because of their backgrounds who were not very supportive who were just dumping their kids to the teachers so that the teachers must just see what to do with the children. As time went by that type of perception is gradually changing; for this year the support from parents has been very good, though, eh, the parents still don't want to be fully involved in being elected into eh positions for management purposes, there are parents who would say

we do not want to be in those positions we can give you all the support you need whichever way without serving in the committees and so on. The perception is changing, more parents are now eh attending meetings and parents would not turn up.

- 35.D: On the economic background of parents, generally speaking?
- 36.Prin: Well, um, our children come from, um, backgrounds that can be clearly categorised into three. There are parents who can be regarded as parents who earn a little more, and there's a group who are in the majority of parents who earn very, eh, or let me just say, the middle class, they are in the majority, and we have got, eh, after that group a group of eh children who mere depends on their pension, eh, um, pension from grandmothers, some who don't have any assistance at all.
- 37.D: On your school policy, um, can you tell me about any policy regarding language; the language of communication at the school, language of learning i.e. in classroom and the question of language across the curriculum?
- 38.Prin: Um, though this is not written down, we deliberated on it with teachers and they decided that our language of, eh, instruction should be English for reasons that are obvious in that most of the subjects they have to do are written in English and it would be to the children's interest that English be regarded as the medium of instruction at on institution and also medium of instruction in all other subjects.
- 39.D: And amongst staff members which language, announcement of results, discussions, in the staff room, staff meetings, which language have you agreed on?
- 40.Prin: Um, in staff meetings we conduct our discussions in English, um, we are from different backgrounds and to be accommodating, English, um, is that language, eh, um, which knows no boundary. So, we we do have instances where we do in our communicate in our different languages. I – it's not something that is written down as I say, but eh we, we have a that unspoken agreement, eh, to, to, to conduct our discussions in English. When announcements are made sometimes they are done in English and sometimes we also include eh, vernacular; maybe to emphasise a certain aspect.
- 41.D: What are you doing to make sure that teachers teach through English? Um, and that when they communicate, say in the classroom even in the staff room they speak in English?
- 42.Prin: In the staff room it is not, eh, enforced; the teachers practically on their own they can communicate in English or any language that they like, the only time when it is binding is when we have our formal meetings so it is not, is not easy to enforce that in the classroom they should be teaching everything in English. But I think they have an

- obligation in that they are not going to set their papers in vernacular. But they are going to set in English, that is what forces them to teach in English.
- 43.D: Do you, do you have a specified teaching method at the school for all the teachers, do you leave it to individual teachers to decide how he or she teaches?
- 44.Prin: We, eh, leave it to each individual teacher to decide how he or she teaches, but sometimes when we review how we approach certain things there are proposals that are sometimes accepted by the teachers when they are presented.
- 45.D: What are your views OBE or Outcomes Based Education? What is your understanding there?
- 46.Prin: My understanding of this topic is very limited more especially I'm an old teacher; I, I haven't listened or seen OBE, eh, practically anywhere and yy- you know I got that general feeling that everybody has when a new thing comes into existence; you view it with suspicion, but from what I hear from people and some cuttings that I sometimes, eh, see in newspapers I, I think it would be a, a good system if implemented correctly.
- 47.D: What is your view about group works in the classroom?
- 48.Prin: Group work is, eh, very good in most cases that's an easier way of even reaching children who'd otherwise not eh participate or that is an easier way of eh even carrying on board children who are slow because if they interact in a group sometimes that student gets free to communicate, eh, with peers which would otherwise not be the case if, eh, the other, eh, method is used.
- 49.D: Do you sometimes have some staff seminars or staff debates or subjects meetings?
- 50.Prin: Subject meetings we, we do have, but with, eh, staff debates, they're quite informal, they only arise when some, someone initiates, they they just happen spontaneously. I wouldn't say it's something that we do formally.
- 51.D: I want to get your opinions about the teacher I'm going to work with, TO, on personal note as well as on professional note.
- 52.Prin: On, um, on the professional level TO is eh highly energetic, he reads a lot, he is very critical, he is always eh trying to get better ways of carrying out his duty and I believe he is the one who is trying to motivate the other teachers to improve on their methods. He always speaks out when he discovers something new. And on the social or personal level I find him to be a very interesting person to, to be with because he is always focused on progress. A- as a person he has his own eh shortcomings but on the whole he is a very fine person to to work with.

- 53.D: I've noted he's very interesting and working hard. But, eh, what do you think are those shortcomings that you could easily describe?
- 54.Prin: He-he's a shortcomings, um, the way I see him is that, um, he-e-e (*pause*) gets irritated very easily ... more especially if a person, ugh, does or says something that is not based on fact. He is very argumentative and he prefers to have an argument on something until he understands. If he fails to understand what the other person's point of view is, he sometimes gets angry because he is a person of, um, I would say he's very very sure of himself.
- 55.D: I have noticed quite often that TO is not, eh, present in the school due to other commitments outside the school. What is your view about that?
- 56.Prin: Eh, of late he has been in a number of projects, I, I, I wouldn't say he is absent on most eh occasions, it was it's just his involvement in these projects that demanded his presence on a few or a number of days at a go; but eh, TO is highly involved in, eh, community activities, it is not just that he is interested in running away from school to attend his personal activities. When he is, eh, at work he covers very large ground. I have no ill-feelings when he goes away because I know his students are always abreast of, eh, the syllabus.
- 57.D: Do you often, or do you check his work in terms of preparations, daily preparations and work programmes; monthly or yearly work programmes?
- 58.Prin: We, we are in the process of trying to get, eh, that process back on track. You'll agree with me that the issue of preparations being checked by other teachers was something that was totally rejected by certain teacher formations. It is only now that that issue has been discussed fully and up till now there is still resistance from some teachers maintaining that they wouldn't like to get their work inspected. But here at school there is, eh, general consensus or agreement that eh such preparations should, should be done and should be inspected. So, I, I'd say I haven't checked his work only because I, I do not want to; but in most cases he, he presents to me what he intends doing and, eh, he actually gets me involved in letting me see what, eh, the outcome of his, eh, eh his work with students are.
- 59.D: Okay ... (*pause*) so, what is your personal opinion about, eh, teachers who don't prepare their work in terms of written preparations; written work programmes?
- 60.Prin: From, ugh, from a practical point it is something that is not, eh, eh, ugh, good when a teacher doesn't do preparations; like if you take for example, if that teacher should fall ill or should be away from school, if, if some eh someone is appointed to take over from that teacher it becomes very eh problematic. Besides, it-it's always good

- that a person should have a plan of action, so that you know exactly in which direction you are going and how you'll be able to carry out your plan, so without any preparation I don't see teachers succeeding very much in doing what they have to do.
- 61.D: And what do you think, um, like, teachers who don't honour their classes and who, um, usually don't attend school? What do you think should be done?
- 62.Prin: Yeah, I'm, I'm not very certain what, what should be done; but eh I believe in conscientizing a person; I, I believe that if a person is conscious that it's the child's life that is at stake, that any time that has been allocated to teaching should be used, eh, fruitfully, and that, eh, a person should not really, eh, ugh, ugh, sorry, the person should not really want to, to be dogged around, to, to do his work. I feel it's something that should not be encouraged at all. I cannot prescribe what, eh, methods should be introduced to stop teachers, eh, who are not honouring, eh, their periods.
- 63.D: How do you see your role as principal or headmaster of the school?
- 64.Prin: Eh, I, I personally see my role as a teacher first, in that eh I'd like teachers to view me as a teacher, no much different from what they are, and I'd like to see them doing exactly what they have to do. And I think as a principal I have the role to spell out what is expected of the teachers and I think as partners who must manage the the school they must also indicate what they expect from me as eh principal. So together we can all have inputs on how the school should should be run, what should be done, the do's and the don'ts and eh all the house rules should should be spelled not only by the principal or the department, but I think by all the teachers.
- 65.D: Ugh-m, as a leader of the school what are your goals?
- 66.Prin: My, eh, my personal goals as a leader is to make this school one of the best schools in the province, (*pause*) or in in South Africa I would say, by way of getting students to ... to perform. I I personally, eh, believe education is not something that can only be reflected by, eh, results but I believe education should be eh, externally visible. A person who is well educated should be able to stand out in in in a group and you could even without subjecting to testing. So that is what I believe this school should become.
- 67.D: What are you doing to achieve this?
- 68.Prin: Well, eh, there a quite a number of things that we we we do amongst others is to ... try and motivate teachers to try and let them see we can't keep on doing things that was done in the past without verifying whether these things will will be of help to to the students or not; like, eh, for instance, discouraging teachers from, eh (*pause*) engaging in activities that would not benefit students in any way; like

letting children stand out of class when they are late or sending children out of class when they've misbehaved ... I I think we have debates on such topics and I am pleased that eh the teachers begin to see things in the same light. We also engage in activities like, we we involve our children in activities like drama, readathons are activities we do annually; We'd like, eh, these students to participate fully, and, eh, even contribute and even in the case of drama they also contribute in the types of plays that they should, eh be engaged in, and in the case of readathons they have to stand on that particular big day and read, eh, articles from newspapers or books of their own choice. I I believe those are some of the activities that we do to try and achieve that goal.

69.D: How do you maintain discipline at the school?

70.Prin: Eh, discipline is a collective eh, thing, in that eh we've got LRC in place, eh, that eh assists in eh in maintaining discipline. We've got teachers and as principal I, I monitor that all the things that we have been spelled out by the students, by provincial education's policy and all the things that are included in the South African Schools Act that are eh not supposed to be done by both teachers and students, we communicate that message to all the people involved, and jointly we try to to implement all those things that have been out lined in those things that I have mentioned.

71.D: As a manager of this school, how do, how can you describe your management style?

72.Prin: Ahh, I'd say my management style is a mixture of both a *laissez-faire*; and eh, a sprinkling of a, (*pause*) I'd say a little bit of autocracy is sometimes necessary, but it's basically, eh, *laissez faire*.

73.D: Do you think it is important to adopt that attitude?

74.Prin: I, I personally believe you allow people to have a breathing space more especially in educational matters; you-you, you are not alone, you do not own the school, the school belongs to the people. So, if you allow teachers to take part in the, in the administration some of the things, eh, are sorted out much easier; but there are certain eh aspects where, as a manager, you need to be eh autocratic because if you democratise everything, then, there is a tendency by teachers to take advantage, when eh everything is very lax.

75.D: Can one say there is, there is an element of fear, to come, to take a lead as a, the manager of the school?

76.Prin: I, I, I do not have, um that fear, when decisions have to be carried as, and say there are certain decisions that, um, have to be taken by the manager of the school with eh the management committee, even if the decision might be eh unpleasant to the teachers, if it is necessary that that decision should be taken, has to be taken; I I

don't feel intimidated. I, I, I have a good working relationship with um the teachers so that any misunderstanding is easily, um, cleared even if the decision has been an individual decision that I have taken, I can always explain to them why the decision has been taken.

77.D: so, you've got a management committee; how is it constituted?

78.Prin: The management committee comprise of, eh, the head of department, and, um, senior teachers; by senior teachers here I mean teachers who have been merited and they are getting remunerated for for that; they, they assist with management.

79.D: Teachers, here, have impressed me as professional. They're always working and committed. How do you motivate them?

80.Prin: Well, eh, the motivation stems not only from, eh, the principal as a head, it stems also from them, eh, they are self-motivated because before we start with our programmes for the year we, we sit and discuss and spell out what our *modus operandi* should be ... and because that is not something that has been given to them, it is something they have created, unlike if you, you come and spell out what they should do, they think they have not had a share in the creation of that kind of, eh, *modus operandi*, but here in our case we spell out who is going to do what and how everything is going to be done jointly as, um, as a staff. I believe that is what, eh motivates them, eh much more and I cannot hide the fact that I support all the teachers in all the activities. I think that also gives them motivation; there is no project which any teacher can do where if there are problems I'd not be involved, I'm always involved and whatever they do if they succeed it is made known to other members of staff. We ,we encourage one another in that way.

81.D: If a teacher applies for a post at your school ... what do you look for in that teacher?

82.Prin: Hmn, firstly, I believe, um, that we will agree as eh teachers what our, our needs are. And the teachers will indicate what is expected from such a person. And because I am engaged in, um, training these teachers to develop as senior teachers as time goes on I allow them to, to sit and structure the questionnaire, I only intervene to assist them where questions are not properly structured, but, eh, the senior teachers together with members of teacher formations sit around and spell out what they expect from such a teacher and when we have finalised everything it's then that we can put up our advertisement and in in that teacher if the teacher comes, he will face a panel that will comprise of, eh, teachers from teacher formations, members of, um, the management; not necessarily eh the principal.

- 83.D: But, if you had your way, you surely have personal preferences as such about a teacher, personally what are you looking for in a teacher who you believe should join your... your staff?
- 84.I, I, I personally would like to have, um, a person who is, um, open-minded, who would not take anything lying down because it becomes very difficult if you have, um, teachers, who, who, who are apathetic, who, who would just agree with everything as long as it is said by the principal. I, I, I would actually like to work with, um, a person who is, um, assertive, who would not be afraid to indicate that, um, I am wrong if, um, I have done something wrong. I, I, I'd look for a teacher who, um, is assertive, um, who knows, um, what is needed in a school, or in, in the subject for which he has to be appointed.
- 85.Hmn, let me say ... ask this question: Do you have a time register?
- 86.We do have a, a time register, but, um, the teachers, um-um, um, since stopped signing it, not, not, not that, um, the time register is not there; but that there is that influence of, um, eh, teacher organisations who'd say no it's not necessary this, why sign it when the principal can see you are present everyday. Eh, so there's, um, generally that feeling among teachers that it's time-consuming to, to have a time-book, because we don't have a problem at school of teachers absenting themselves unnecessarily or coming late unnecessarily, but there are others who have a problem with keeping time.
- 87.D: So, how do you think this could be resolved?
- 88.Prin: If, perhaps, teacher organisations encourage their members to be on time, it, it, we, we, we are at the mercy of teacher organisations because if a teacher comes late and you decide to take a particular action; you ... you end up picking up problems with that person. But it is something that I feel; I'm, I'm personally very time-conscious, I come to school very early and leave very late. So, I am not pleased with teachers who are coming very late. I personally would prefer to try and motivate those teachers who are late-comers, encourage them to observe time.
- 89.D: Hmn, let us part this, um, idea about teachers, let me ask you about your policy regarding tests and assignments.
- 90.Prin: We, hm, we, we have individual subject, um, policies. But as I have said it, it is not easy to monitor this because that culture of non-preparation has been prevalent for very long, for a, for a very long time, we need to tackle this issue ... um, carefully. We have currently tried to set up, um, subject committees; at, um, circuit level and our teachers are participating in some, um, of those committees. Our, our intention was just to try and formulate subject policies that would be common to all the schools and eventually move on to write common examinations which, which will encourage teachers to cover the same

- ground irrespective of the school where they come from. So, at, um, school level, those subject committees have not been properly formulated, there are, um, subjects that have policies that are well-formulated, but in other subjects those policies are non-, um, existent.
- 91.D: Hm, do those subjects include English, those subjects that don't have that policy?
- 92.Prin: English does have a policy, and with, with, with regards to tests we have agreed that we'd have eh common tests every, um, quarter, where we would even, um, bring out progress reports which will be, um, such progress are discussed with, um, the, the parents. But on, um, every, um, I mean, on a monthly basis, each individual subject, um, eh, has to get a date on which, um, a class test is written, that has not, um, since, been, um, properly controlled, but, eh, the general, eh, approach is that every month a test is written even if the progress is not out, but every quarter a test is written, and a progress report is compiled which is discussed with the parent.
- 93.D: Some of the learners, especially in grade 10 B, have impressed me as very very competent in the use of English; what do you ascribe this to?
- 94.Prin: I, I, I, I would ascribe that to the effort of, um, um, the English teachers in particular, and to (*pause*) um, the cultural organiser who (*pause*) ... involved these students in activities such as drama, where drama and debates where these children have an opportunity to test their ability on the language but we also tried to indicate to, to the students as well as to the parents that there is no magic in, um, learning a particular language. If a person doesn't practice speaking there is no way in which the person can just read and be able to speak; so we encourage, um, our students to speak the language as much as they can.
- 95.D: I'm trying ... I'm trying this project on media, or the use of media, print media in the English teaching classroom; um, what, what are the chances of you implementing a broader media programme in, in the school?
- 96.Prin: Eh, I, I, I think the chances are very great, besides the, the English teacher is co-ordinating that and our, our, our students have really enjoyed themselves in that programme where they, um, were allocated positions that existed in the media and they had to go out and look for information and come and report to, to, to the class, because they do it on their own and because they have to impress in the class, I find it very exci-exciting and I still believe that, um, the use of media in English teaching would be a very great help to the students.
- 97.D: Let us turn to the use of newspapers in particular, do you see a newspaper as an important educational tool?

98. Prin: I see a newspaper as very important, more especially, in a newspaper you get people who have written articles, using different styles, different approaches, and, besides, with our local newspapers, *Sowetan*, and, um, *City ... City Press* there are educational, um, materials that are included with these newspapers. If our students get used to reading these newspapers they will benefit because most of these articles are written, um, with the student in mind, so the language that is used is within reach of these, um, students.
99. D: Okay, hm, can you tell me how effective your SGB is, can you share with us your experiences, problems encountered if ever, eh, with the SGB?
100. Prin: Well, um, our SGB is always present when, um, they are needed to attend to meetings; they initiate some of the things that have to be, to be done. It has not been easy because our former School Governing Body comprised mainly of teachers from other schools, and, parents who were working very far, who, who could not be with us when, when meetings were held. But, but, eh recently we have put in place, or the parents put in place parents who are always available, but I still feel there is a lot of training that still needs to be done, and I still feel that the period, um, that the School Governing Body has to serve in a school is rather too short because there is no continuity; by the time that a parent whose child is at our school ... (pause) by, by the time that parent gets used to doing what he has to do the kid has passed and that parent no longer qualifies to be a member of the School Governing Body; and it is very difficult to come by parents who have been trained eh, who have benefited from the training provided by the government. So, the, the problems experienced are basically those problems that you sometimes have to go on with a meeting even if you do not form a quorum; if you have to take urgent decisions you sometimes have to take them without the chairperson and only inform him of the decisions you have taken, later on. So, I, I, I find this system of school governance to be very good, but, eh, sometimes it can cause very serious delays, even on very simple matters. You might find that it becomes very difficult for you to carry on with something because you are waiting for the chairperson to come and give his approval. But I think if it is altered in a particular way to, to suit the situation; then it is a very good system, for ... um, school governance.
101. D: Perhaps in conclusion, what, what do you think the, the teachers view this programme which I am busy with, like?
102. Prin: Well, um, I, I cannot really say how they see this programme because ... um, they keep a distance, but, eh, from how I know them, I know that once TO, who is the English teacher is involved in

something, they, they know that, um, it, it, it's something that will, um, benefit the children, even if they do not know what is it that is being discussed, but, um, I think they view what is being done in very positive light.

103. D: Thank you very much for, for your time, we'll try tt-, um, to try to cover other issues next time.

104. Prin: Thank you.

105. D: Alright.

1<sup>st</sup> Interview with TO (The English Teacher)

DL: Hm, TO, I would like you to tell me about your English Language background.

TO: Eeeh, English language background ... are you saying where it doth started, or where I started having interest?

DL: In terms of your eh training or how; what led you to having eh... eh, such convincing language competence?

TO: O-okay, I, I think eh, my, my, my interest... started in high school, um, when I was doing Std 6 ... eh, maybe that could be attributable to the teacher who was teaching us English. So, it started from high school and eh when I passed my matric eh, I went to the university I felt that whatever I shall be pursuing, English should be one of the courses that I should be studying.

DL: How do... you describe the way the teacher you, you, you, you so much admire taught you?

TO: Mmm, well, eh in a, in a, in a sense you know the teacher was not actually that very close to us, eh, but, eh we heard from our brothers and sisters that he was a good teacher and eh we like went to school with this idea that there was this teacher who was very good at English and eh when we were introduced to him that he will be the one who will be teaching us we were so fascinated but in most instances he would not be, not coming to the class and eh, when he came to the class, well we enjoyed the lessons but eh he was more like a teacher who was eh I would say bragging with the language, you know, eh he was... more showy in his language but you know, as, as, as African if one may be politically correct now as African as he, have eh such a eh convincing command of the language and from that eh we like started to develop an interest in the language.

DL: Hmn, did you understand him, though, when he was bragging with the language?

TO: At, at times he would just be talking to people who were, like, just fascinated even though we, we couldn't understand what he was saying eh but eh we were so inquisitive and eh, we used to ask and developed our own, like vocabulary books. You know, eh, but you, you know, so everyday it's like he would bring new terms, vocabularies, expressions like that, hmn.

DL: You surely picked that up from, from him; do, did that get transferred to your teaching?

TO: Ja... hmn, that actually transferred to my teaching, eh, 'cause one holds the belief that eh you, you, you, you have to bring in something, you know, new to the learners, but that should be something that actually

relates to, to, to their experiences but actually learners should be actually like exposed things that, that are new ...

DL: Would you... like, explain how he taught you in class?

TO: Eeh...

DL: the, the method, that is.

TO: He, he, he was a grammarian in a, in a sense, he would eh, subject us under rigorous grammatical structures where he would say eh ... tell us that there are twelve tenses in English and would give us a sentence in a simple present and we'll have to eh translate that into the past, future tenses... and all that. One sentence will be, you know, translated into all those tenses. Now he, he was much more eh, eh a grammar, a grammar fan.

DL: Hmn, about your training as a language teacher? Tell me about your training.

TO: Hmn, with, with, with the training it's like eh I, I, I never had... a chance of like ... poetry, but I learned novels and, like, plays. When I went to the university, eh, in my first year I was introduced to Practical Criticism and poetry; that actually fascinated, fascinated me, eh 'cause now I started to develop an interest in, in poetry where so much could be expressed in very condensed manner and that actually allowed one to, to, to be critical and to discuss his or her perception; I think in, in a sense my, my, my training at the university was, was like we were just left for our own de... to our own devices to just explore and find things much more by ourselves than you know being refrained from ex-experimenting, eh, with the language.

DL: About, eh, language eh *per se*, did you have a language component in your university training?

TO: Eeh, the, the, the language component; we were introduced to that at course 3 level; hmn the, the there was not a conscious effort to, to teach us like grammar or language. It, it was more based on theory and theory of practical criticism and it was more literature-laden than language-based, but from course 3 we were, again one, one was introduced to, to, to the grammar...and language aspects and further when one was pursuing an honours degree we were like eh, reintroduced to, eh grammar.

DL: And, eh you, you, you trained also professionally as a teacher.

TO: Yes, I did. Eh, ja when one was doing English Methodology that's where also one was conscientised to, to language aspects and also eh, trained into understanding, you know, the person with whom you are communicating eh that that in itself actually made one to be aware that eh you know (*cough*) language is not just (*cough*) there to be used for one to, to, to display his, his linguistic proficiency or skills but it's there as a communicative tool and eh you should always eh have a choice of diction

that would land itself to the person with whom you are talking. So, I think in, in, in langue- in language eh methodology or teaching that actually helped in, in trying to, to see the significance of the language.

DL: Wh- when you were still a student at the university what other aspects relating to teaching did you engage yourself in?

TO: Hm, I, I happened to be a, a tutor when I was doing my honours degree. Eh, ... that, I think, it helped because eh that's where one was you know, exposed to, to these people eh doing different courses; like we'd have students coming from faculty of law, faculty of sciences and all, all these other faculties where English was done just as an ancillary course but that was necessary to their, to their ... core eh (*pause*)

DL: curriculum.

TO: curriculum. So, that actually helped one to, to understand that language is so broad that... you'd have to understand the register that is used in different eh professions... that, um, law has its own legal jargon or parlance, and science has got its own... you know, that actually helped one like sort of to, to broaden his, his understanding of language and how language can be used as a powerful tool to persuade people to, to do things even those that they don't want to do.

DL: What sort of language methods or methodologies do you think you were exposed to in your training as a language teacher? to? We were given like all the methods; we were... (*pause*) taught the grammar

TO: Eh, the, the, the methods that we were exposed -translation method, communicative approach, eh ...(*pause*) but eh one was more like in favour of the communicative method after looking at this grammar-translation method and all these methods which we were exposed to ...Hmn for, for, for the reason that eh (*pause*) language basically its, it's, it's more for communication, although there is non-verbal communication but I, I, I felt more aligned to communicative approach than any other method we were exposed to.

DL: Hm, your understanding of communicative approach; what do you think it entails?

TO: Hmn, the communicative eh has as its one of its premises that eh people should be able to, to explore with the language without, you know, eh conscious intervention or being limited that as people begin to explore, experience with the language, language would, would, would gradually become part of their, their ... language eh, eh ...(*pause*) capacity, you know. So, in a sense my understanding of communicative approach is that eh, um, people should be let to experience or experiment with the language.

DL: Your attitude to the teaching of grammar?

TO: My attitude to the teaching of grammar...um...it's...it's, of course n-nn...negative, you know. Eh, (*pause*) eh because, um, unless if you

are...you want to train, you know, linguists you know who would like to go deeper into the, the linguistic aspects and terminology of the language, you know, showing how the language functions, you know eh, I, I, I, I'm not actually one who ah ah espouse to the grammar, grammar like translation method or grammar...ah, the teaching of grammar.

DL: Eh, according to the syllabus you've got some poems to teach, novels or even plays to teach; eh in addition to language, how much language teaching do you do during your school activities?

TO: Hmn, well, I think in, in, in whatever I'm engaged in all the aspects you have mentioned I think I...I teach language in, in the sense that because we're using the language to learn literature, to learn poetry eh the language its is being used, you know, throughout, eh but it's just that our, our main focus is not much more on looking at the grammar aspects. We do talk about you know, grammar aspects eh but we never go deeper into like, the technicalities, ja, if there would be like a concord mistake or some other things; and fortunately some of these mistakes which are there are even picked up by learners that this does not make sense you know, I think it will make sense when it, and you'd find that, like, they, they are, like, bringing one to the aspect of grammar, you know, then we would in that instance maybe deal with, with grammar that ja here it should have been, like, this you know and all that but we never go deeper into looking at grammar *per se*.

DL: Surely, that can be picked by brighter students. How do you deal with those who are not able to pick that one up?

TO: Ja, well, eh those other students who pick it up are ones at that moment ww- who'd be forced to, to look at that which students have picked and try to bring in eh the, the, the grammar aspect, you know, eh explaining perhaps why maybe there is a discord, why maybe the sentence structure it's not, um, like making sense, going to the punctuations and all that. Eh, it, it's like it's, it's not something that one would sit down and say today I'm going to, to offer a lesson on, on, on this grammatical aspect...eh, I find, you know, taking much of, of the time and eh, when I look at, you know, it's...it's...the benefits thereof, I, I, I find that people who are, are also perhaps exposed to grammar aspects still commit (*pause*) some grave (*word inaudible*) mistakes, eh than perhaps people who just experimenting with the language and talking, and eh you know, than to me I don't think, like if I were to go deeper into grammar I would I would help people to be communicatively competent eh but perhaps I would be conscientising students to, to be more conscious about eh, eh, identifying errors that when one speaks like this no it's shouldn't be like but as to whether those who are good at picking up errors would be fluent or competent I have my reservations.

DL: And eh, before I can talk to you about language issues in your own classroom, I would like to ask you about the school language policy; is there any written or agreed-upon school language policy?

TO: At some stage we once grappled with this issue of eh language policies, school language policy, although we didn't come to eh... (pause) conclusion in terms of what should be our language policies because eh there were those people who, who felt that, you know, hm, the three languages, English, Afrikaans and, and, and Xitsonga eh should be... eh should be taught, you know, as to which should be the language policy we, we, we had serious debate about that and we did not finally come to what is... actually our school policy. And that issue is still hanging right now... we, we, we don't precisely have written document with regard to our school policy.

DL: In other words, one can use either of the three languages, eh, at school, eh, for whatever reason?

TO: Ja, eh in principle it, it, it's like that although eh, one has, has, has made it his responsibility if not an obligation for the learners with whom I'm in touch that, they should use English not only in the classroom but even eh outside the classroom eh that would actually help them even in understanding a... other subjects which are, are mainly offered in, in English.

DL: So, you teach exclusively in English?

TO: Ja, I, I, I teach exclusively in English, although some, sometimes I do explain concepts in, in moth- mother tongue more especially I want ...I really that they don't understand, eh, I simply revert to mother tongue to explain the concept, so as to, to help them have a, say, perhaps eh, eh, eh a concept, a comprehension of the concept maybe under discussion.

DL: How do teachers of other subjects, say in Biology, History, and so on, teach? Do they use English or do they use mother tongue?

TO: I made a personal survey, eh, asking learners, hm, as to whether teachers are using English in the subjects, and eh I also asked some teachers whether they use English. Now I, I took the, the reasons or statements that were given by the teachers, eh, vis-à-vis statements that were given by the learners and only to find that there were disparities; some teachers would personally say to me that they are using English whereas the statement or the evidence from the learners is saying that that they are not using English, eh, and, and some learnn-, and, and not that I believe learners more than teachers, but some learners would say that, you know, this teacher teaches us in vernacular.

DL: So, many teachers teach in vernacular?

TO: Ja, many teachers are, are more of... vernacular; they are saying, of course, that perhaps he would start the first five or ten minutes of his

lesson, lesson in English, and suddenly it's, it's like it comes naturally that the teacher will be tune to, to, to mother tongue or vernac.

DL: Okay, I can see that most of your classes are like crammed up with desks. Um, how'd, how do you teach them when they are so overcrowded?

TO: Hmn, I've, I've, I've been trying to explore different eh, e, eh, techniques, you know, sometimes when I ... it depends on what am I teaching that day. Eh, I sometimes divide them into groups for instance if there is an issue that they have to discuss in groups. Sometimes I divide them into rows if I come up with maybe a topic, eh, where they, they'd have to eh discuss and take positions, I'll di- I will divide them into like rows. But I, I'm more of... (pause) person who favours co-operative, co-operative learning where learners have to share and, and not actually learners exposing, you know, themselves how much they know. I, I, I do promote, you know, individualism but that should be looked within the context of, you know, inter-dependence that learning together, communally, co-operatively so ... I... that's actually what helps me sometimes to, to, to teach where I divide them into groups and I have even a list of learners who have been divided into groups.

So, you have permanent groups?

TO: Ja, I have, I have permanent groups although one, one doesn't stack, stick, I mean, to those groups; sometimes the situation in the classroom warrants that, you know, they, they do not, like, be in their groups. Eh, so there is a flexibility, but the groups are there on paper that these people are divided into groups, in, in assignment writing, of course, they'll be writing their work in groups but where sometimes we are discussing the topic that actually emerged maybe from magazine or print media we will, like, sometimes allow them to, to be together and, and they discuss.

DL: So, you say you sometimes use the articles from magazines or print media?

TO: Ja, I do, mostly I, I, I use, I use actually print media in teaching the language.

DL: Tell me how do you go about it?

TO: Hmn... (pause), well, eh... when I, I, I read newspapers or magazines (*cringing noise as the door is being opened*) and I find a story that eh to me it's it's appealing 'cause well I read extensively, I'd go maybe to a classroom and ask them whether they've perhaps they've seen eh an article in the magazine or they've heard about something and if they say we have heard about that sometimes I'd just try to find out from them how much do they know... um, as to whether they read that or they heard other people and eh, if maybe I realise that there's an interest I would bring maybe the issue or sometimes I go with the publication or an article

and we start exploring on that and looking at ,eh, we will be looking at language and even the issue itself and how that actually relates to us; eh as, as teachers and students, and as well as citizens in our community.

DL: Group work. Tell me about your understanding of group work in classroom language teaching.

TO: Ja, hm with, with group work I, I've noticed that eh lea- learners develop at a very different pace some actually are, are, are fast learners maybe because of their backgrounds or maybe because of the schools that they've been exposed to... I don't know, now with, with group work to me it, it helps me sometimes for other learners to, to pick up those that are slow and at the same time I've, I've, I've noticed and acknowledged that group work also has, you know, the negative sides that sometimes those who are, are very good will, will trample upon those who are not perhaps are, are not as good eh, but I, although there are those negatives I favour more group work because I, I, I believe that, eh, there are more advantages than disadvantages in group work.

DL: Hmn, you've been with, with me the, the past few days trying this issue of teaching through a media article, print media article; how do you think, um, the response of the learners is to the project?

TO: I think eh the response eh thus far has been positive. Eh, in the, in the sense that the, the articles, hm, do not actually leave learners, like, eh, isolated from issues that are happening in the country or in the society at large... so, (*pause*) the articles actually keep learners on track of what, what, what things are happening around and it also eh gives them, like, an understanding of, of, of broader issues in, in, in the society... Eh, to, to me I think teaching through the media it's, it's, it's one of the best or invaluable methods that some teachers, you know, could ever, ever find.

DL: Hmn, um, looking at the situation at your school, what do you think the chances are for a broader media project to be implemented to the school; not only that small group that I'm busy with. Eh, looking at, like, issue of the co-operation of the principal and many other aspects. What chances do you think are there for, for media project to be adopted at the whole school broadly?

TO: Ja, I, I, I think eh this, this could help a lot and eh looking at our principal as a person more responsive and accommodative in terms of things that will always benefit the learners. Eh, and now looking at how the learners; 'cause sometimes outside this project I, I do talk to them and I ask them as to whether do they find it interesting or fun and eh, most of them fortunately have been saying to me that it's, it's interesting, it's fun and eh, they'd love to, you know, go through, you know, media because to them, some of them are saying because they don't have newspapers at home but they learn through the, the articles from media, they, they turn to, to have this information, you know, through learning as though it's

part of them; so in a way to them it exposes them to broader things and to be knowledgeable about things; so, if, if eh, we could eh get an opportunity to set up eh a media project I, I think that it, it'd improve eh many learners', you know, eh situation in more especially the learning activity in the learning area we are busy with.

DL: TO, thanks very much I'll keep talking to you about this.

TO: Okay, no, you're welcome.

## 2<sup>nd</sup> interview with TO (The English teacher)

DL: TO, I want you to comment or give comment about your feelings or views about language teaching, um, more especially regarding the use of media in English language teaching. I'd like you to focus on your feelings or views before this project with you at the school with grade 10 learners, during the, the project and also after, that is, after I completed this research project. So, you would you give your views about language teaching, what you felt about it before this project?

TO: Hmm, um, my, my impressions about language teaching, um, have always been teaching language for the learners to become communicative; without much focus on grammar, 'cause what one has noticed over the years that one has taught is that, eh, learners, if you keep on intervening they are unlikely to respond next time when you ask them questions. So, eh, I always believe learners should be given a chance to express themselves even if they flout grammar rules or grammatical conventions. And, eh, secondly, with regard to the teaching of, of, of language through the use of media I think it's, it's something that is much more good or appropriate because things that are captured in the media are things that are actually related to, to their lives um, because with, with, with, with the reports on the newspapers are things that generally occur. And if learners are taught about things that are happening on their everyday life they, they get interested rather than, you know, teach them on something that is unrelated to their daily life experiences. So, I, I, I think personally that the use of media, particularly newspapers, in teaching language, um, is much more beneficial. Eh, on, on coming to, to introduce the project where a focus was much more on, on, on media research usage for language development or improvement, I felt that could not have come at a better time. It generated a lot of interest and I think the learners although in the beginning did not actually know what was going on and, um, well some of them the, when, um, in your fact-finding mission you asked them as to whether they read newspapers or they liked reading newspapers some well confessed that they are not using newspapers and when they were asked why eh some said, well, they don't get newspapers, they don't have an interest at reading newspapers, but during the, the process (*noise*) the, the lessons were, were focused on newspapers. They got to read the stories about themselves, about people of their same age somewhere else involved in violence and all that. They got interested and, um, I think it stimulated a lot of interest and, um, they, they, they now, one can say that, now they have developed interest and, um, I think that's a better way of teaching language

DL: What can you say about what you have observed in language in teaching during this process?

TO: Hmm, my observations, eh, are on (*pause*) one: being patient with the learners, because it is true that as teachers at times we'd want to rush through our, our syllabuses why, because we are pressed for time, eh, what one has observed is that there's no use in actually rushing through the syllabus when most of the aspects that the learners have to go through are not given sufficient time. Eh, one would say that, um, patience is one of the hallmarks of, of, of success in, in terms of language teaching. And, eh also that, um, learners should not be left to learn on their own, they should know that there are others who are there who could help them, more especially their mates. That, they should work in groups, and that if they don't know something or they don't understand they should always ask their, their friend, you know, and, um, that in itself could make learning more, more fun.

DL: Hmm, you know, when, when, we started we never felt that we could teach grammar *per se* but then in some instances we found we had to consciously intervene. What do you think about that scenario where we had to consciously teach grammar?

TO: Ja, I feel that we, we had to intervene. Perhaps it was maybe... eh, that there was, there was a need for, for you to intervene because, um, you felt there was that gap that they could not, actually eh, say notice the concord, or their communication was, was, was primarily in- inappropriate; so there was a need for, for you to intervene in, in grammar, teaching them aspects of grammar, but that should be much more related to their everyday, um, lives or their, their, their situation, rather than taking eh units of grammar and teach them which are completely irrelevant to, to their daily lives. I think it should be much more related to their daily lives, in other words take their life experiences, things they do and use grammar in that instance.

DL: Hmm, I completed the session, um, last week on Thursday, um, what is your feeling now about this program

TO: Hmm, one, one, one feels that, um, he has to take up the project forward although there are some constraints with regard to, to the number of learners in a class, because if one looks at the number of learners who were involved in this project they were relatively smaller to the number of learners who are currently in class, and in terms of arranging them in terms of groups, and also, eh, in teaching the kind of methodology or approach of learning as a group, um, it would be something that will be good but eh, the, the, the material conditions now are such that it would be quite difficult, eh, although one is actually positive that with the help of the learners who are there that could be easily facilitated and perhaps there, there would still be, um, (pause) you know, channelled into the whole mainstream of getting to know and understand the importance or the significance of co-operative learning.

DL: Any... (pause) do you have any views or comments you can make about those learners that were not actually part of, of the group. What is their view?

TO: Their, their reaction was, was, was negative; in the sense, that, that, eh, it created an impression that they were marginalised in the whole learning process; eh, and they felt that perhaps they, they themselves were not good enough to be involved in, in the project; so it, it created the, the, the situation of, of "them and us", and they look at those learners with some kind of envy, if not resentment, but I was able to sit down with them and explain to them why we, we had to embark on that kind of project, that we could not have involved everyone but we had to get a group and see as to whether the project can work so that we can cascade that kind of project to the whole, whole learners and if it's, it's something that is going to be beneficial for all, we did that not because we wanted to hurt them.

DL: Hmm, what do you think, um, about this project in terms of its being useful to, to, to everybody particularly at the school, more especially the, the learners? What has been the impact of this programme to... the learners?

TO: Hmm, I think this project should be taken up by even teachers, who are not involved in language teaching only even in other learning areas. When one now looks at, for instance, the recent devastating earthquakes that took place in Turkey, eh, that could be of historical or geographical interest, it's something that happened in Turkey, eh, ... in the sense that, perhaps, the Geography of Turkey is different from ours, and people die there and that it's something that could happen in South Africa. So, if they read about that they'll be learning language, they'll be also learning about the Geography, or the politics, or, you know, the History of that country and perhaps what could have, have led to that natural disaster; so I think in reading the newspaper or using media research to learn language it's, it's, it's, it's quite, it's quite fundamental,

and if other teachers could also use newspapers to teach their lessons it could, it could help a lot.

DL: In particular what, what do you think, um, the learners in that group have learnt?

TO: I think the learners... have, have, have the significance of working as a group; that's number one. That learning is not an individual or selfish activity; learning is something that is communal, you, you, you have to co-operate and come as a group, and forge ideas, and also learn to agree to disagree and know that your ideas are not final, um, you can be challenged and finally come to some common understanding and have one idea that perhaps you can, you can advance or put forward. So, I think that in itself has, has, has, has made learners to also learn that it is not good to be selfish, that learning is a sharing kind of activity... collaborative, ja.

DL: Did you notice, um, any difference in terms of participation, eh, by the learners; that is when the method of co-operative learning was used versus, um, individual learners system (*expression inaudible*)?

TO: Certainly, there is... difference, or there was a difference, um, in that, there are those learners who are always reading and quick to, to answer or to want to answer all the questions. And, eh, those learners were obviously overshadowing, um, those learners who are still withdrawn or resigned to themselves. Eh, but in introducing, um, co-operative learning it made other learners to also make their inputs; and eh that, that in itself at least helped um, in making the voice of those who are, say, trampled upon, you know, to be heard. Eh... I think in, in, in, in, in, in that instance it, it, it helped. But, I think there is a lot also to be done in terms of, um, helping those learners who are still resigned or who feel that their, their ideas are not worthy to be, to be put forward you know, eh, they still need to be, to be, to be encouraged to make their contributions and know that it is not a sin to, to make a contribution even if their ideas could be regarded weird, but for as long as they make their contribution.

DL: I told you about two learners... who I described, in quotes, as having shortcomings, you even cited their names. Hm, as far as you know them, um, even before I came to the school and after I came, did you notice any difference?

TO: Jaa, hm, fortunately, um, between the learners, one was also, um, partaking in our project, um, that we run on Saturday. The parents suggested that she could improve, because they also noticed that she, she lacks, um, a lot with regard to, to language; not only language even in terms of morale and confidence...

D: Hm, what's her name, by the way?

TO: Andzani, Andzani... so, I think, I think having involved her in the project, it, it has helped 'cause, although it might be taking a long time for her to come out, but certainly one is positive that she'd soon overcome those weaknesses, she, she only needs to be encouraged, only needs to be supported, and know that, um, she would, she would, she would finally do it.

D: The place of mother-tongue in the programme; how did you find it? Because at some stages we, we used, um, um, mother tongue and also interpreted certain difficult concepts in the mother tongue, what do, what do you think about that?

O: Initially I had been very much sceptical about the use of mother tongue in language teaching, particularly English teaching. I felt that it was, um, self-defeating to use mother-tongue. Now I've got a completely different opinion... that the use of mother tongue does help in explaining some of the concepts that are difficult and that, eh, some of the learners do have inputs to contribute but because they are not allowed to communicate in their mother tongue they just reserve their, their inputs. So that, um, if one could, um, try to strike sort of, um, delicate balance between the use of mother tongue as well as, um, Eng- Engñ- English teaching... allow them, but

minimally, you know, to sometimes contribute in the mother tongue I think that would, would help because some, of course, they have (*pause*) they have marvelous ideas, but because they are not allowed to use their mother tongue they (*something inaudible*) jaa, sit back.

D: Generally, as, as, as a teacher, um, what impact did this programme have on you?

O: Hm, it, it has had a tremendous impact on me, eh, one; I think in (*pause*) paying special attention, you know, to all the learners but also looking at those who have got, um, serious difficulties, um, with regard to one, communication in general because there are those who can, can, can, can hardly, um, communicate in English in the sense that they do have ideas but because there is this use of English they are restrained like we said before. Um, and one, actually was saying to himself that how can one best cover those students who have ideas but they are unable to come forward, and, eh, secondly I think it has helped me with regard to being patient with the learners, eh, not rushing things because, eh, I've got the syllabus to complete but one to be meticulously focusing on those aspects until one is, um, virtually satisfied that even if I did not cover the whole thing but the learners have (*pause*) grasped relatively most of the aspects that they had to touch. So, I think in terms of patience it was an eye-opener. And also the importance, of course, of using, um, media, particularly print media, newspapers, as well as magazines, to bring stories that are of interest to the learners to learn about things that, you know, they have interest in rather than (*pause*) one as a teacher to just come with things that one believes that it would be of interest to the learners. Um, I think on, on that score it has had a very, very, very, very tremendous impact on me.

DL: In terms of teaching methodology?

TO: I think also in terms of teaching methodology eh, it has, it has, it was, it was sort of a wake-up call in the sense that one should not always go to the classroom as a person who is going to deposit knowledge to the learners who have to, like, respond or receptive to these facts but one should allow learners, also to, to participate actively in terms of also airing their views and (*pause*) acknowledging that, you know, learners should be, sometimes, differ with you and they've got their own perceptions of things... that sometimes you got to let the ball rolling and allow students to be actively involved because after all, in the teaching and learning process, they are the ones who should actively learn or be much more involved in learning than, eh, an educator; although an educator also is learning in the process, but I think the learners should be the ones who are taking the process of learning... um, forward.

DL: Regarding communication and sharing ideas, working co-operatively, since I, since I started with the programme up until I finished it, did you notice any improvement or lack of improvement?

TO: I think there, there has been an improvement; the... in the sense that whilst the project was running, um, one would also, well, go to the class and um, give them some work to do; more especially essays type of activity; I can tell you there is a marked difference between the learners who were involved in the project and those who were not involved in the project. If you look at, um, topics that, um, involve a critical thinking, like I recently gave them an essay; the significance of, of women, eh, which coincided with the celebration of women's day, to women rights (*things inaudible*) in South Africa, so when one looks at their essays one could see that there is a difference in terms of, of their language, although there is this that one noticed that the manner in which they communicate is also translated into the manner in which they write, such that to them there is no difference between, um, spoken language and, and, and, and written and written, and written language. The way they

DL: speak when they would say "eikchwalee" (*actually*) they will, they will use that, you know, without regard as to where to use it and how to use it. So, that's one thing one actually noticed.

DL: Hm, I noticed that when we, we engaged in this, we, we, we couldn't actually fit into a period, say a 30 minute slot or even a double period, um, if you were to embark on this kind of project what do, what do you learn, what is the learning point here?

TO: Can you come again?

DL: When we engaged in this programme, I, I noticed that we had problems with the timetable, and I was considering that if we were to embark on this project at school, um, what, what lessons do you think you could have learnt out of this project that, eh, you don't seem to, when you engage in this programme you don't seem to be... able to fit into a particular period of 30 minutes or so?

TO: Hm, okay, ja, I think, um, that, that in itself will call for the, the overhaul of, of periods in school if this, um, pilot project, is to be implemented, um, it, it, it requires lot of time and as I've indicated that it also requires one to be, to be patient, it's not something that could actually be done in 30 minutes, more especially if we look at most of the activities that have to be, um, learnt co-operatively, where there should be um, collaborative effort than different in learners, I think there, there should be, um, a drastic overhaul of the periods, if this is to be, um, implemented:

DL: Hm, wha- wha- what do you suggest there in terms of overhauling the periods?

TO: I think in terms of, um, (*pause*) changing the period system, it will be to allocate more time on language teaching and communication, eh, of course, at the expense of, of, of other subjects; because in, in, in, in communication, we are not only learning language, eh, well, we focused on other issues, like I, I, I, I cited the question of volcano, you know, or earthquakes; we will be learning the concepts of volcano and earthquakes that are embroiled in, in, in language, so I think, um, science, maths, Biology... everything will be, will be encapsulated in language, language, language teaching.

DL: What you are suggesting is that, eh, we should have, um, media across the curriculum, where the aspect of language will be cutting across.

TO: Jaa, sure.

DL: Okay, so, to your staff, is there anything you have picked up from them with regard to our project, be it positive or even negative. What, what can you say about the reaction of the fellow staff members um, regarding the, the media project (*things inaudible*)?

TO: Jaa, eh, well, I, I, can say that, um, they were, for instance, maybe two sects um, among, among the staff. One would be those, of course, who were impatient enough to see what will come out of this and, eh, sometimes as we discuss in staff room about the, the project and also showing them ss- the books and essays that they've written, some also confess that they, they don't think they would, um, put ideas the way the students have put, like there was one essay that I gave them on What is an African to them. I tell you, the ideas or views that they advanced in that essay one felt as though that perhaps there were other people who were helping them because they could put their ideas on what an African is to them and, eh, I think in that respect some, some, some teachers acknowledged that what we were involved in that project, it was something that, um, was very beneficial.

DL: Hm, I want you to conclude, if you like, by giving me, generally, your views about, um, media... media at school, the use of media at school and the feasibility thereof.

TO: Ja, I think, um, the, the introduction of media across the curriculum, um, could go a long way, you know, towards minimising ignorance amongst our learners, as well as educators, because generally there is this, eh (*pause*) trend what I what to call it a trend of not wanting to read, but wanting to be told or hear by other people; not actually taking an effort in getting information by themselves but wanting to look or you know, hear, you could, could see we've got this culture of people who like watching television today, and, eh, people who'd like to listen to what other people are saying rather than make an effort in trying to get information for themselves. I think the introduction of, of, of, of print media, in particular, without undermining, of course, electronic media, will help in bringing back the culture of trying to search information by oneself and also critically interrogate the information. Eh, I think that will help, it will help a lot...

## Interview with TH (The Afrikaans Teacher)

1. D: TH, can you tell me about your training as a teacher?
2. TH: Exactly, in my training as a teacher?
3. D: Yes
4. TH: What, what, What aspects would you like to find out?
5. D: Where you trained and the programmes you've been through?
6. TH: Okay I trained at Giyani College of Education situated in Giyani. Okay I did what they they they call a ... arts, that was Physical education and drama. I also did ...um...Afrikaans as one of the majors and I also did History and English for a period of two 2 years. Which implied that I can teach History from grade 8 to grade, eh, grade 10 and English also from grade 8 to grade 10. And eh, my training was eh really fun.
7. D: Hum...tell me about your experience in teaching?
8. TH: Eh, my experience in teaching I'd say its, it was ...it didn't seem new to me as it started off easily (*something inaudible*) and eh I didn't, I didn't have any problems, but I'm starting to have problems now but in the past I didn't have any problems, it's only now that I'm starting to have problems.
9. D: Hum, can you elaborate on the problems?
10. TH: The problems have to do with the resentment that I get from some of...of my, some of the members. I once had this problem when I was still at Khanyisa but they were not like they are today. At Khanyisa it was just about one person who resented what, resented what I had to present we, we did almost the same ...(*disturbing noise*)...
11. D: ...your experience, like, in terms of the years you spent teaching.
12. TH: Ja, I, I started, I started teaching at Khanyisa even before I completed my studies; I started teaching at Khanyisa when I still doing my third year, third year at the college eh, I was appointment um ...identified by some of the lecturers who were there, who are now in New Zealand, so they identified me as one the peop\_, one of the people who who of they think, who they thought in fact would be able to, to establish um a new depart, a new physical education department in, at Khanyisa, and then I was appointed, and I went to Khanyisa and I came up with all the eh relevant things that were supposed to be done by, by the department that was established for the grade 8 students at Khanyisa and um I work, I worked there for 2 yrs that ... during my third year and fourth year.
13. D: What is Khanyisa?

- 14.TH: Khanyisa is just an, is just one of the independent schools in, what is commonly as a private schools in South Africa. So it's just a name, so Khanyisa means, it's just, um, is a Zulu name.
- 15.D: And eh, when did you complete your studies?
- 16.TH: Um ... 1997, end of 1997.
- 17.D: What happened after that?
- 18.TH: After that I, I ... couldn't get any job, that, that's because eh I of the budget cuttings, eh, the reducing of the budget by the government that made eh I had to be retrenched in a way, or I couldn't get any job at Khanyisa because of that, and I then went, I went home and stayed for about eh two weeks and I got a job with an NGO situated in Tzaneen. Eh, it's a commi... eh, its social, a community development eh, eh, eh, NGO, so, eh... what we did was eh social consultants, the type of thing we werē doing – social consultants.
- 19.D: And when did you join PDM Junior Secondary School?
- 20.TH: Ja, eh, beginning of April this year.
- 21.D: You mentioned something about eh resentment, can you generally tell me, the, about the attitude of teachers to their own work at the school?
- 22.TH: Ja, eh, I think there's, there's lack of commitment in some, in some of the teachers that are, that are ... I got views if not the opinion these are these are what I've observed, it's there's lack of commitment to most of the work that they do and I'm feeling or whatever I see, or let me say people are still doing what they did in their first years or maybe years um not to exaggerate but um, that that just how I feel, I, I've realised some of, most of the work that they do it's still what I would term eh 'in the old days' um, eh I'd put it.
- 23.D: What, what is your view of 'new ways' of teaching?
- 24.TH: I find then interesting, and I've tried I've, I've tried, I mean, I've experimented with some of the kids and most of the kids find eh find find that interesting and and it's a new thing and it suits their age.
- 25.D: Hmn, OBE, what do you understand by OBE? Can you explain OBE to me?
- 26.TH: Ja, it's, um, with OBE well, I, I attended quite a number of workshops eh, concerning OBE, and ironically when I was still at, at Giyani College. I would say we did OBE even before it was constitutionalized or introduced even though it was not yet known we were doing OBE. I've realised with OBE, what I like about OBE it's you don't teach kids to reproduce what you have taught them, eh in a way don't teach them ... you ... you don ... you give them things to memorise so they could reproduce them, but you ... rather help them to, to, to implement things they, to use their own ideas what we, what what what's actually done is... you show kids ways and they've to

- come up with means of getting to, to the destination that you've given them
- 27.D: Hmn, what is the teaching methodology that most teachers use here?
- 28.TH: Ja, I don't know what to call it, I don't know what to call it, but what I've realised is that eh you only feed kids with things that they are going to reproduce whenever you set a test for them.
- 29.D: Can you tell me about general classroom organisation, eh in the, in the classroom have, un, like whether there's group work or there's a teacher – talk?
- 30.TH: Ja, I have a feeling people are are dwelling to the problem we have of overcrowding, eh, failing to come up or just eh, using that as an eh as a reason for failing to come up with ideas of getting kids, of, of, of getting all the kids involved in whatever they're doing in class, because um I, I'm able to get all the kids in, um, eh in the class to get involved in whatever I'm doing to make sure that they all participate ignoring the fact that the class is overcrowded. I believe people should just come up with ways, I mean, wherever, wherever, you have a problem you need to come up with, with, with um ways of eh solving such a problem rather than to only dwell in what, what you have and say um with 'our classes are overcrowded we cannot do group-work or anything like that.'
- 31.D: You're saying learning, teachers or teachers here don't want to do group work?
- 32.TH: Um, I wouldn't like to say that but what I've observed, um, that's my feeling.
- 33.D: Hum, what do you think the the, the attitude of teachers amongst themselves is like? What is the interpersonal relationship amongst staff members at the school?
- 34.TH: Ja, I have a feeling; I will use this word in quotes "bad" there's bad, there's bad relationship amongst all the teachers in the staff room there there are groups I think, I've realised that the staff room is divided into groups of, um those that um ... look like they know, they know much and those that eh are just eh... there, the who are just there to do their job and they tend to ignore anything, whatever comes whatever comes, they tend to ignore that as if they can't see what is happening and we have ... eh... some people who are eh... term, termed "management people" they don't take part in whatever eh, in fact, it works like they are not part of the staff even though they are part of the staff. So, there are about five or six groups of people in the staff room, but um in quotes yea I've already mentioned I think the there's bad relations amongst members of the staff, staff members, ja.

- 35.D: How do you, How do you see the principal as a leader at the schools?
- 36.TH: Ja, eh (*pause*), what I can say is that I've been here two months now if, if not a month, ye I have realised that he do tries to he do try to, to get everybody involved it's that he, he's, he's gotta be, he... of him, people are not that eager to work or ... (*pause*) I don't know I don't know how to put it but that's what I've realised people are just prepared to come in and teach and go home that's what, that's what they can do.
- 37.D: Can you comment about school attendance by both teachers and learners?
- 38.TH: Ja, eh, in my observation I've realised that eh... I think whatever, whatever happens in class is it's, it's because of ... o ... of teachers' involvement. If, if teachers don't attend classes then kids won't come to classes. I have realised that eh, some teachers would enjoy to stay in the staff room rather than go to class, that's what I've observed. And, I think that creates a problem with the kids, I mean, eh, kids get used to a teacher who does come to classes and they know, may you do it eh um, you end up having a sort of, a sort of a system where don't go to classes every Tuesday the kids will, will easily pick that up and eh and they will not come to class Tuesdays or also
- 39.D: Hum, what does the principal do to, to overcome this; or is he aware of it?
- 40.TH: Ja, he, he has on, on several occasions eh try to to tell people that they should go to classes, eh, eh, for the two months that I've been here; I've seen him doing that, and I've heard of him doing that, and I've even heard it from some of the kids who who'd come to to to him to tell him that eh eh teacher so and so hasn't managed to come to class today, eh, what would have happened and what might have happened, also, I've even heard eh him telling kids that they should go and call the teachers who were supposed to be in, in eh in that particular class that that then doesn't have the teacher. I've seen him and I've heard of ... of it I've seen him do it, ja.
- 41.D: Time register. Do you have time register?
- 42.TH: Etch, what is it you mean by time register?
- 43.D: Mm, (*pause*) a book or register where you indicate um you sign in that you have reported and then you sign out when you are leaving, everyday.
- 44.TH: No we don't have that, we don't have that.
- 45.D: What is done at school to maintain discipline, eh, ... at the level of teachers and pupils?
- 46.TH: Ja, um, I haven't seen mu - ch ... now, I haven't seen much, I simply took over part of discipline concerning ... eh students, I mean,

eh the kids, the learners. I didn't have anybody's... um support or maybe to say anybody's um request eh for me to go and do that. I simply took over and, eh, and I've been doing it eh for the last, for last three weeks. I've tried to just to maintain discipline from the kids' side, and them, eh, and I wouldn't like to get involved with the teachers.

47.D: In terms of preparations, Hm, do teachers prepare? In your observation.

48.TH: Um; I don't know but I have a feeling that's not done because I was surprised by some of the questions which I was asked when when I was being interviewed; it was said "some teachers don't believe in preparations", so I, I sort of get a feeling that that also happens here. I don't think they do, that's why in the beginning I told I have a feeling people, people are using their old preparations sti -- they are still using their old preparations it's, like, I mean he's still teaching the same thing; why should he change the preparation that he had last year because he's still teaching the same things, eh, the same subject, the same chapter and whatever, so I think some teachers would not prepare and um I think even if you go there now and see who has prepared you'll see that nobody has prepared.

49.D: And the question of programmes. Do you think teachers have got year programmes?

50.TH: I don't think so. I don't think so.

51.D: And what does the principal do about this?

52.TH: I think, um... (*pause*) there's over -- exercising of powers, of SADTU powers that's what I've realised, there era people in here who are over -- exercise, who are over -- exercising SADTU -- SADTU powers. He doesn't have, he is placed in a corner where he, he doesn't have much power because, eh -- of people that are SADTU members, that's, ah, that's what I, I've realised, it's, there are people that are using, eh, SADTU powers, I mean, eh, wrongly.

53.D: Hum, tell me about your impression of the general organisation of the school.

54.TH: Ja, the ge, Okay, the general organisation of the school. I think, I think it's good, it, the only the only thing making it participation of, participation of people who are supposed to ensure that um it stays it is or or the the goals are really achieved, I think people who are supposed to do that are the teachers. I have a feeling ... (*pause*), I think I can take back to to the relationship in the staff. I mean that, that really affect the organisation of the school.

55.D: Hm, how do you see the role of the so-called management people in the staff?

- 56.TH: Ja, they've got a good role, but the problem, the problem, um, that, is that, eh I don't know who created the problem; but is, it's there seem to, there seem to, the, the, the management and the the teachers seem to run on two parallel lines and, and nobody wants to nobody wants to compromise.
- 57.D: Hm, Um, it could be, like, I've, I've said this before, but I want to find out from you, generally how do you think the teachers in this school teach?
- 58.TH: Ja, what I think, um, through my observation, I've went through some of the things, some of the question papers that some of the people have set and some of the things that people are presenting and through my presentation in class, how how the kids react to what I come up with...new things that I come up with, um, I have realised that... it looks like um some of us, eh, are not eh, what I'd say in my opinion up to the standard of OBE at the moment. They are still teaching in the old way; because if you go in a class; like I have a class of Afrikaans kids, um I started coming up with new lessons for them this year trying to, trying to implement OBE in my own understanding just come up with lessons and I came across resentment from the kids who said no that's not how we're supposed to be taught, this is how we are supposed to be taught, and it took me about 3 weeks to get them convinced that that was the correct way and it got easy, when eh, eh, one of one of the staff members took over and did almost the same thing that I was doing it was not like we sat down and spoke about it. I only, I only noticed it after some time that that we, we were doing almost the same thing and we set our our test for half - year, I've realised that we almost set the the the paper was almost the same thing only on different languages eh, to put that, almost the so ... I have a feeling; because kids would then get used to a system of teaching that um they've been taught by their teachers; when you come with your own style they'll quickly resent it, and, it's a new thing...
- 59.D: In particular, in, in your new ways of doing things, in particular can you refer to an aspect which the learners would resent to?
- 60.TH: Ja, the learners, um, resent as as way you like them to, way you like to, I mean, when you like them to come up with things, to think critically, like I would use pictures and somebody would come up with eh, let's say eh you teach them prepositions, um, you list all the prepositions that you want you want them to do, and them come up with an essay and erase all the prepositions I would like them to fit the prepositions back rather than just give them sentences and say what is missing here, here and there and like that. But what I do it's I give them , I give them an essay and I erase all the words that I want

- them to to put them. to put back. But, tt ... like, let's say in Afrikaans um, I don't go to, t - to to a position where I say, I ask kids to to give me answers um like I give them notes and I would like them to to um reproduce those notes. What I do it's I get them to think of things it's what, what I want them to do it's to reproduce what they can think, not what I have taught them. Not basically what I have taught them, my teaching would be um to help them think um beyond their expectation or beyond their limits. That's what I do.
- 61.D: So ... as result critical thinking in other words.
- 62.TH: Ja, that's what. I ... they were too lazy, I think, um, they they too lazy, and that's, they they've been placed and it's hard for them to come out, I think, they've been trained to be lazy; that's my feeling.
- 63.D: HHmm, still on how teachers teach, hm what sort of projects or resources, eh, do the teachers eh use or have at the school to facilitate learning?
- 64.TH: Ja, the only time I saw eh, something being done it was for, I think it was science when I saw beakers and whatever stuff they use for experiments, that was the only time I saw anything new; or anything foreign to what I've seen in the staff room.
- 65.D: Hm, what is the reaction of the learners to the way in which they are taught, not your, your way of teaching you've, you've indicated that to me. but to the way in which they are taught?
- 66.TH: I think they are, I have already mentioned that these kids have got to a point where they are lazy, I think kids would enjoy a teacher coming in and shouting at them and telling them whatever and just eh getting them to sit down and be quiet and listen and copy notes of of what you're saying I think kids would enjoy that they would just sit down and ... (*pause*) and not have any problem.
- 67.D: Hmn, the language policy at the school. Do you think there's a language policy?
- 68.TH: Um, eh, I don't understand your question, what ...
- 69.D: Language ... like agreeing on which languages to use at the school? Um, well, the language of learning, the language you ude in the staff room, the language of communication, and so on, and so on.
- 70.TH: Ja, I would like to believe that's um that that, I mean, we agreed that English should be the medium of instruction. But, um ... it's... I don't think people are sticking to that. I don't think people are sticking to that and I, I've realised, I once heard that when, when teachers tried, tried in the staff room to speak English when they, they sort of committed mistakes and mispronounced some of the words they were laughed at by some s- by their colleagues.
- 71.D: So, in other, in other words teachers don't use English in the staff room?

- 72.TH: Very few.
- 73.D: And then, in the classrooms? What's, um, eh language of learning?
- 74.TH: Ja, it's um, in my... I mean, when-, some- something that I've experienced is that even grade 10 kids who are supposed to be seniors of the school sometimes when you speak English there are words that they cannot understand and very simple, eh, in my own understanding, would be simple words for them to understand, tis, they don't seem to pick that up and they are doing grade 10 and they've been to, um, and they've been to grade 6 here, I mean, grade 8 and 9 here, and I've realised that they seem to be struggling ... with some of the instructions that we give them.
- 75.D: Let's be general now. Generally speaking, um, teachers at PDM Junior Secondary School use which language for teaching?
- 76.TH: Um-eh, for teaching, I'd say um, 60% English and 40% Tšonga, Xitsonga.
- 77.D: Hmm, the English language competence of learners; how do you rate it?
- 78.TH: Ja, it's, it's ver few kids are able to speak Eng- in English, ... are very few; and it goes to a point, um, I've, I've realised that it goes to a point where teachers only concentrated on those few kids that seem to pick up, and when, when I, I, I tried to investigate what, what would have happened, what might be happening it's because most of these kids that's can, can, can speak English or have a better command of English it's because of the participation of their parents or because of the involvement of the their parents and those that, those that's parents are not really involved and they cannot easily pick up on their own ... um they're just left, left in the dark.
- 79.D: eh, um, you indicated something like using pictures. Um, when teachers go to class, what sort of materials do they use?
- 80.TH: Jaa ... I've always-s-seen ffew what I'd term t-traditional teaching aids... like, eh, periodic table, e-e, eh protectors- protractors in mathematics and, e-eh, and glass beakers, those what I'll call and eh, um traditional eh teaching eh material, that's what I see ... eh ... so far.
- 81.D: What are other teachers using for other content subjects, even languages?
- 82.TH: Okay, I've, I've heard of English department once, eh, they've used eh (*something inaudible*) for teaching, and eh I've seen them using pictures for teaching, and I've seen them using magazines... that's that's I've only seen that from the English department, I haven't seen, um, the other departments.
- 83.D: When you said the English department, you mean all the teachers teaching English use um all those things you indicated?

- 84.TH: Not exactly, not exactly, um, I think I've seen only one teacher having- having the material and um, what he did with, um, okay, when, when I speak, um, concerning magazines. I, I think he he managed, e, he sort of attempted to, to, distri-bute all the the magazines to all the kids in the in the school to to everybody but he did not manage and even, he, he even, um, went into other people's classes because he only teaches in one, in one grade so I saw him going around with all the magazines I think he was trying to get all the kids to have magazines, and with pictures I think it's only him; hmn, just him who did that, I don't think other people did that.
- 85.D: On these magazines, did he just distribute them to the learners so that they could read them?
- 86.TH: Ja, he first distributed the, the magazines. I helped him to distribute the magazines and then later, I think he used the magazines for for the, most of the lessons he had after distribution and then I also think he used it for for his half-year examination ... paper.
- 87.D: And, eh, how often was this magazine used? Or was it a one-off thing?
- 88.TH: I think, eh, the magazine was used eh for for most of his lessons that followed, after he distributed them, and I think, because when I look at um his his his question paper, I typed the question paper, I typed his question paper, I think he ... (*pause*) most, ... I'd say 80% of of his test came out of that magazine.
- 89.D: Which grade is that ?
- 90.TH: Grade ten ... and for grade 9 , I think about 70% came out of that magazine.
- 91.D: From the same teacher?
- 92.TH: From the s- not from the same teacher? ... (*pause*) from another teacher.
- 93.D: Um, on the question of , um, the use of the textbook, how many teachers use the textbook?
- 94.TH: Uumn; I never ... really wanted to, to, to check on that; but what I can say it's... almost all people use, all the teachers use magaz- use, um, the textbooks. Um, ... (*pause*) because I mean that's what I've seen, I've seen them going to classes, um, most of them have textbooks when they go to classes.
- 95.D: Okay, and eh, on the question of using materials such as eh magazines, um, newspapers, and, and the like what are ... the chances at the school for, for, for teachers to use, language teachers more especially, to use these materials in language teaching?
- 96.TH: Um. I think (*pause*) I think um the principal is, is not, I don't think he's, he, he really has um that much control on, on, on people such materials, I don't think he objects to that. What he told me when

I got here, is that I was free... to, to implement whatever I think would be, would help the kids; even though he'd come in and censor and see if, if that is that is up to the standard. He'd partly come in and, and see if I am doing the correct thing, but I'm free... to implement whatever way as long as the kids would learn something. So, I don't think he objects to that, I think everybody is free to, to implement whatever they think (*pause*) is relevant.

97.D: In, in conclusion TH, um, can you summarily (*pause*) give your honest view, um, of the school situation here?

98.TH: Ja...aa! (*pause*) well ... (*pause*) I – I don't know if, um, I'll be wrong because um, I only thought, I'd be wrong, I don't know but what I can say is that um, there's something wrong with this school, there's something wrong, um I think it has to do with the, the in the s... in the staff room, there's something wrong because, whatever you try to do somebody tries to pull you back... (*pause*) um and, I don't know whether that is out of jealousy or that is out of ... (*pause*) I don't know what that is out of but there's something wrong in the staff room. It's um ... (*pause*) I don't know who came who came first in the school, I think the principal, the principal came late to the school, when he got here some of the teachers were already here. And I think that might have, that's where the problem might have emanated, where he is not really accepted, and eh ... some of the staff members and ... um also like some of s – s some of the staff members and s, people would... and some of people who would just sit at the staff room and when they see this problem they never take part in, um, trying to solve the problem, they just simply sit back. And I'm sorry to say this, but I think (*pause*) ... SADTU powers are being over – overused over-exercised. That's, that's something that I – I've realised it's ... that's, that's also where the problem comes from it's ... they tend to use SADTU powers in, in a wrong way.

99.D: Henry thanks very much I'll keep, um, talking to you about these issues.

100. TH: Okay, thank you.

FOCUS GROUP 1

- DL: *(something inaudible)* and I'd ask you to speak out loud because we're going to talk about a very interesting topic, and I think you'll be interested there as well ...  
*(pause)* hmh, I'll firstly ask each one of you to tell us who-o you are; and where you come from...tell us about youreself. Would you like to start? What's your name...yea!
- P1: Ughm...*(something inaudible)*
- DL: ...just sit down, you don't have to...but speak out loud, please.
- P1: I am Patrick Mkhabela, I stay at Khujwana village.
- D.L: Okay.
- P1; When I grow up I want to be a pilot.
- DL: When you groww... up,
- P1: Ja,
- DL: You want to be a pilot.
- P1: Ja.
- DL: Okay...*(pause)* is that, ... okay.
- P2: I'm Steve Thuketane ...come from Mohlaba ...
- DL: Can you speak out loud, please!
- P2: Steve Thuketane, come from Mohlaba village.
- DL: Okay.
- P2: When I, I pass my, my, my, my, my study I want to be a- a- policeman.
- DL: You want to be a policeman?
- P2: Yes.
- DL: Good! You?
- P3: I'm Ganunu Tshuketane...
- DL: Who?
- P3: Ganunu Tshuketane
- DL: Ganunu?
- P3: Yes.
- DL: Alright.
- P3: I'm from Nkowankowa, section B ...
- DL: Okay.
- P3: When I grow up I want to be accountant.
- DL: You want to be an accountant?
- P3: Yes.
- DL: What is an accountant?
- P3: *(pause)* ...hmh, I don't know really.
- DL: You don't know really...
- P3: Yea.
- DL: Okay.
- P4: I'm Grace Selepe, from Nkowankowa, when I complete my matric I want to go to a university to study my, my psychiatrist.
- DL: You want to study your... psychiatrist?
- P4: Hmh.
- DL: What is psychiatrist? ...*(pause)*
- P4: *(pause)* I don't know, and, eh... I hear people say there's a psychiatrist, but I think it's a good job.
- DL: Okay *(pause)* good! Hmh!

P5: Beverly Mashele ...I'm coming fromm- Nkowankowa ...when I, when I, I pass matric I want to go to university, to study my chartered accountant.

DL: You want to study your chartered accountant ...

P5: Jaa.

DL: What is it about?

P5: I don't know, really, but I have my, um, career book. Hmm.

DL: Okay...and you?

P6: I'm Auther Khataza from...I stay at Nkowankowa township but it's not my home I come from Dann-i village, when I grow up I want to be a policeman, I want to help community about crime.

DL: Mnn-Hmm! What is crime?

P6: (pause) Hmm (pause)

DL: What do, do you think, um, policemen do, policemen and women do...in their work...(pause) you don't know? ...(pause) okay, it's alright, don't worry, and then, you?

P7: Ug-hm, I'm Carol Hlongwane, when I grow up I want to be, eh, accountant...

DL: Okay...

P7: and I want to...have some lots of money and a big house.

DL: Okay...so, what is an accountant?

P7: (pause) I think (laughs) hhh, is dealing with the computer.

DL: Okay...it's about computers...

P7: Yes.

DL:Hmm...

P8: I'm Allynard Tjale, I stay at Nkowankowa Section A, I'm 18 years old, when I grow up I want to be a traffic cop...

DL: Okay!

P8: Ja...you know, in our community there are those who drive car without the licence, and drink and drive, so, thus why I like that job.

DL: What is a cop?

P8: Traffic cop.

DL: What is a traffic cop?

P8: Um, you deal with, um, car, maybe, let's take, um, there are, there are, an accident, and you go there, and see what's going on, and take the statement to the police.

DL: Okay...oh, I see...good! Now, now I know who you are. And, um, I want us to talk, you don't have to, to be afraid, just say your say and, um, give us your ideas. I want you to discuss about the use of corporal punishment at school...Um, whether you feel it should be used or it shouldn't be used. By the way, is it used here?

P's: (pause) ye-es.

DL: Yes? (*things inaudible from the group*) okay. What do you think about it? (pause) You want to say something...

## FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW WITH THE LEARNERS

24 June 1999

DL: Um, I'm going to ask you about your impressions um, on the media programme that you've been through. It has been, um, a series of English lessons and, um, I want to find out what your impressions are.

Feel free, be honest and tell me what your impressions ... wha, wha, what are your feelings or what are your views about, um, learning English, um, through the material that you've used, um, during this, um, time...*(pause)*  
Who would like to start?

Bongani: Mm, I'll break the ice.

DL: Good.

Bongani: Umm, eh, I think this ... media is good, where we use, eeh, some articles, we can find, um, difficult terms in the -ee- articles and solve it, and we are going to benefit, um, for our, vocabulary... we can know those *(pause)* um, difficult words.

DL: Okay, Bongani says, eh, it has been useful in the sense of helping him know the terminology. What, what, what, do, um, other people say?

Sagwati: I think it helps, it helps us a lot because the English we are learning, we are learning, eh, we are learning English so that we can be able to read. And then, um, during the media we are having, eh, newspapers 'cause *(pause)* eh, we'll read newspapers to know what is happening around the world, so the media is a good thing.

DL: Hm, you don't have to agree with, with each, but ... have your views also. Who wants to say something? You can come again if you want. Yes, eh, Ntsako.

Ntsako: I think it's great 'cause, like, we, come, eh wee, we are learning with articles, like, know how um different people express things. Unlike newspapers, a person who writes newspaper and a person who write, who writes magazines have different views and, like, know, *kore* how are they written, how they express things, and we-e ... we know *kore* how ... magazine is divided into this kind of, um, part and nu-newspaper, ja, I think it's great.

DL: She's saying, eh, she has been able to know the various ways of writing that, um, the various parts of, eh, ... and, um, eh, maga-magazines and of, um, newspapers. Um, is there something else that people want to say?

Bongani: Hmn...*(pause)*

DL: Yes...

Bongani: Hm, I think we cann-nn learn the the headings...*(pause)* or the topic, of the article before we read the passages. We can first understand the heading...

DL: Right

Bongani: so that we can understand the passage very well.

DL: Okay, alright, what you say is when we do this media programme we are able to first understand the heading before we get into the passage so that we can know it very well.

Bongani: Hm –eeh, because before we-e discuss about the passages here, here, at the, um, media lessons, we we first, um, discuss the heading, that's why I say so.

DL: Okay... (*pause*) other people are quiet, why? You want to say something again, um, Gift?

Sagwati: Ja, it does, it helps us, um, to see the importance of print media. We did not have any interested, in interest, any interest in print media we had interested in electronic media only. So it helps us to see the importance of print media.

DL: Okay, what what do you feel, yourself?

Shikombiso: Ja, I think this print media, eh, when we read some of the newspapers we find that, um, there are some schools which experience some kind of problems; so um we we try to come with solu-solutions and, I ss, I think it helps us, ja.

DL: So, Shikombiso feels it has helped him to understand the problems which other schools are facing, in as far as violence is concerned; are you talking about violence?

Shikombiso: Ja, ja.

DL: Okay.

Shikombiso: Ja.

(*pause*)

DL: You want... anyone to say something? Ganunu, you want to say something, don't, feel free (*pause*) don't, don't be shy (*pause*).

Ganunu: Hmmm ...

DL: Yes, go ahead.

Ntsako: (*something inaudible*) print media, 'cause like we read about violence in schools and then if, okay if if for instance we experience those kind of, um, violence, we can, like, know how to solve them 'cause we ww, we already... read it and we know about it, unlike, um, this, um, when, like, the B-Bankuna and the the fight, we know *kore* how can we solve it now 'cause they once did experience it, eh, experienced it. And it's, it's great 'cause, it's, um, it teach us *kore* how to do things

DL: Okay.

Ntsako: like, in the, in the right way.

DL: Angel and Ganunu have not spoken. Don't you have any views about this media programme? (*pause*)

Angel: Hmn, hmn (*pause*) I think it also teach aba- teach us about how to read nn-newspapers and magazines well.

DL: Okay. Teaches how to read newspapers and magazines well. Okay, that's fine, okay ... do you feel so, also?

Ganunu: If you read the newspaper and there is a word you don't understand, if you read... ffo the newspaper, you'll fa-a, um, you'll understand the word

DL: Okay

Ganunu: you don't have to check in the dictionary.

DL: Okay, because the newspaper helps you understand the word.

Ganunu: Yes.

DL: Alright! Solani! What do you think? (*pause*) ...nothing?  
And then tell me about eh language itself. Eh, how, how much English do you think you have learnt in the, in the media, and try to explain that. You want to start, Gift?

Sagwati: It seems I've learnt a lot because we did not know how to change passive to active, and um, now I can try, I know a little bit, and then there are words we did not know the meaning and now I know their meaning.

DL: Okay. You said something about the passive and the active (*pause*), can you tell me, us more about them?

Sagwati: 'cause, hmm, aa-aa (*pause*)

Shikombiso: Yeah.

DL: Language wise; because she-she says, um, she was able to-to know something about the active and the passive, changing them, transforming them. How do you other people feel about that? (*pause*) What have you learnt in as far as English is concerned – during the media.

Bongani: Hm-hm, ugh,ugh, during the ... media lesson I learnt about ugh-ugh, eh, taking indirect speech to direct speech, um, I learnt that, um, there are, there are verbs like (*pause*) like, is, changes to was and ww, can, changes to could and will changes to would, like that.

DL: Language wise, ha-ha- how did the media help you learn the language, how much language did you learn?

Shikombiso: Ja, I learn, yesterday, um, we learn about eh, co- con- consis- contraction, ja. I didn't really understand those, but now I do. And I really enjoy speaking English in this, in this lesson, because my time is not, is not used to speak English everywhere but now I'm starting to like English very much.

DL: How do other people feel? (*pause*) Yes, Ntsako!

Ntsako: I feel great with the, um, we feel great, when it comes to the difficult words 'cause like, now I know *kore* what's the meaning of this, and when I talk to someone I really use those words, like, um, lot of words I really use them and like, I was not good in changing the-the

sentences to passive, active, direct, past, futures like that but now I'm a little bit aware of those, um, those, um, tense, um, i-ja, I think it's great, very much.

DL: Any other thing about language? Yes, yes, you want to say something?

(*pause*)

Le- let us talk about, um, the idea of, um, eh, the way in which you were taught; can you tell me, how have you been taught before, in in terms of, like we were teaching you by grouping you. You remember? You were not, like, sitting in rows, facing the chalkboard, and then, um, we teaching you. Um, eh, like that. We were grouping you and you had to share ideas, and come up with common understandings. Tell me about how you were, how you were taught before? (*pause*) Solani, you must come in here, how were you taught before? How-how, how have you been taught at your various levels of school? (*pause*) Umn, yes.

Sagwati: It's, um, we were taught, like, we were sitting on the rows and the teacher did not stand in front, we were sharing ideas with the teacher, the whole class was sharing ideas with the teacher. I think there's a little bit difference with how you were teaching us.

DL: Okay...

Ntsako: And we were working as individuals, and, like, writing the class work alone, um, giving, giving the books away and like that, doing the corrections, um, a-alone and, but now I, I think it's great 'cause we share our views with someone else working with pairs is great 'cause I, like, I was, I was not that open, but, if, like, I work with Shikombiso I become aware of things (*something inaudible*) ...

Bongani: Hmn- eh, I think (*pause*) ... we are learning, like, they were spoon-feeding us, now we can, we can discuss and come with our own views ...

(*pause*)

Shikombiso: Eh, I think the way you are teaching us is, um, great-great because sometimes you gave, you give us eh newspapers and we, we see th- these passages, so I think it's great the way you're teaching us.

DL: Hm, I'm talking about, like, when you were working in groups how, like, I want to know how were you taught before and how can you compare it to the way you have been taught?

Shikombiso: Okay, um, the last time at the classes we we are taught, um, (*pause*) they don't, um-ah, I can say they don't give us so, like, um, newspaper, we, we are having our textbook but here we are sharing ideas and working like pairs or groups.

Solani: I want to disagree with Bongani the- they were not, like, spoon-feeding us, they often gave us assignments and homework tasks ... of things, but they did not spoon-feed us.

DL: Okay... and, eh, I'm talking about eh the class situation, how, how, how have you been, like, taught ... whe-when do you meet in groups, so, um, um, I'm interested in that... when you do your assignment it's like you, you are on your own, isn't it?

Three or more: Jaa!

Sagwati: But the teacher allowed us to ask our friends... if we did not know the answer, we have, we have the right to ask our friends, and we did the assignment at home, we searched the information and finally found it.

DL: Okay. I, I see ...(*inaudible*) okay,

Ntsako: Okay, according to you Sagwati, but, okay, just because we are not in the same class but in our class they actually didn't allow us to, like, go and ask our friends, like, we'll, like, learn alone, 'cause you came, alone most of the teachers say that you were born alone you're also gotta work alone then, we're, like, as individuals, you'll do your work if you, you got it wrong you'll do your own correction, those kind of stuff.

DL: Um, what do you feel about that?

Sagwati: Okay, as she says that we're not in the same class, but we are allowed to ask our parents, eh, if we are given a homework, you can't just write the homework alone if you don't know the answers, you must, eh, ask your, your neighbours if there's a neighbour who is a teacher he or she could help you and if there is, eh your, your paren- one of your parents is a teacher or he has, he or she has knowledge she could help you some day. You have to, you have to ask them 'cause the teacher is not there.

DL: Okay, and -eh, in class, per- p, um, perhaps, um, like, how is your teaching going. I'm not, like, focusing on this year alone. Hmn, generally in your schooling; you know what I mean. I'm not saying, um, in in in English only this year, generally at how you've been brought up, how you've been brought up, how you've been taught?

Sagwati: I don't remember when I was at primary...

DL: Say, last year and the year before last. Ever since you came to PDM...

Sagwati: Ja, when I was in Std 7, it was just like how we are taught 'cause Mr. Machava gave us a chance to ... he could say who volunteer to come and teach us in front, then we share ideas, and the and then, if sometimes I'm wrong they'll correct me and I'll correct them. Ja, he would sit at the back and listen to us teaching each other.

DL: Okay, you...(*pause ...cell-phone rings*) tell me about the arrangement because, like, we would every time come here and battle,

trying to group you, and the next morning we'd find the desks arranged back in rows. So, I ... I'm interested in that. How often are you grouped like this? You are not grouped, you're always, like, in rows, or do you sometimes get, um, grouped?

Sagwati: Sometimes, we get grouped, like when a teacher comes he use, we have to make some discussions he group us into groups of six, four or five.

DL: Okay.

Bongani: Or, or, they say this row will work up with some heading or this row they'll do another heading and this row; they divide us with rows.

DL: Okay. That is, that is great (*pause*). About, um, ... group work, the way we were doing things, not the way you were doing before, ..., um, what are your views about it?

Sagwati: I think, eh, the groups, the way, eh, the way you're helping us is good, but, (*pause*) when, the prob, the only problem is (*pause*) today I'll be with this group, and tomorrow; with another group and, I think ... working with new people, sometimes, bring us, gives us a problem, 'cause we'll have to start from the beginning, then, for example, today I'm working with Charmaine, Monica and Solani, we are doing this article, then tomorrow we are going to do the same article, but I'm goi-, I'm going to it -it with another group, I think it is the only problem.

DL: Hmn... (*pause*) other people? Your views about this kind of group work! (*pause*) Yes.

Ntsako: Umn, yea, I agree with Sagwati, 'cause, like, if, like, today I'm with Sagwati and tomorrow I'm with a-another person, it's, like, I'm, I'm, like, wasting my time, 'cause, like, the other person gotta have to know how I speak or how I do my things while Sagwati knows how I do my things and she, like, she she knows me very well, and if maybe, like, I, um, I got a bad way of writing and shh-sh, she rrr-really copes with it and she knows it but, I, ummm, this thing of, like, today I'm sitting with another person (*something inaudible*) I, I don't think it's a great idea, should, like, maybe, par-, maybe, like, um, divide us (*something inaudible*) use it with this one, and, umn, even though sometimes we make each other upset, but we should, like, stick together, 'cause that's life is all about upsetting each other.

DL: Hmn... okay; what do you think, Ganunu, about this?

Ganunu: I think it's great, because we help each other, where there's a word that you don't understand

DL: Hmn...

Ganunu: We-e discuss it, and, until we, we know what does it mean.

DL: Okay... (*pause*) about the idea of always belonging to to one group; do you feel the same; that you should always stick with the same people throughout?

Angel: Yes.

DL: Solani?

Solani: E-e-ah, I, I, I don't think so because 'cause, like, eh if you stick to the same people you don't know whether you understand the work or they're, like, telling you what to do and these kind of stuff, so you must, like, try many people and talk to lots o- different people, like, um, when wee-e, even today (*things inaudible*) you won't be with those people for a long time so you must learn to ... to work with many people, so that even if you change, um, places, you don't get frustrated.

DL: What do you think? You want to say something, Angel?

Angel: I think (*pause*) what Ntsako said I think it's good...

D. Hmm...

Angel: I think we must stick together because, um, if we know each other, each other we can ... help, um, we can help each other so well and, if, if, everyday we change into, you go to other groups, um, you do not understand, um, those people, and you have to take time to know them, and if you stick, if I stay with Ntsako, Ganunu, Jakobean, I, I know them and (*laughter*) I don't have a problem.

DL: I know that the other day you with Solani and....

Solani: Ntsako...

DL and Zanele and Ndzalama....you were free then?

Angel: That was ... long time ago. (*big laughter from whole group*)

DL: But you didn't enjoy it, eh?

Angel: I did enjoy it.

DL: I saw it.

Ntsako: (*laughter*) I wanted to say that he wasn't, he wasn't free 'cause, he wasn't used to us, to us. I think the idea of, like, sticking together is great 'cause, like I get to know peo-, that person very well and I know *kore* what is his or her problem.

DL: I think about, um, Solani's point, I think it's very good.

(*A few learners*): Ja-aah!

DL: ...because, if you like, getting used to same group you ugh-ugh- your challenges in life, you don't, you're not sure that tomorrow you'll meet the same person and then if you're stranded you, you're ... what do you think about that?

Sagwati: I think shh, um what she said is true, 'cause, um, everyday is a learning day, you learn this from these people and learn this from other people; so it is true, um, I don't agree with her.

DL: Hum, but it is true, but you don't agree with the truth....(*laughter*)

Sagwati: Ja, it's a fact, but I don't agree with her. 'cause, um, here we are in class, I know that Ntsako will be coming tomorrow and if shh-e does not come I work with, um, my partner 'cause, um, we are four, then, if Ntsako does not come I work with the the other two, then....I will get

used to that, if she said, what she said is a fact but I din- I disagree with her.

Solani: Okay, meaning that when-um they all don't come to school you've gong to stay alone, like you're dependent on them, if they are not we're, you-you, like, stay alone. If they are here, it's everything is cool.

(*Some voices*) Hmm.

DL: Is that so? (*few laugh*)

DL: then is not, it's not going to be group work again, (*pause*) because on that particular day when three of your group mates are not there it means that you are going to be on your own.

Sagwati: they, they would be not not there, and I don't have a right to go stay with another group, we'll be fine and no longer be four, so I have to stay alone...

DL: Y-Hmm....really?

Sagwati: 'cause we'll be in short of three.

DL: Bongani, you want to come....

Bongani: Um, I think we must work individually, because we are not depending on each other, we must do our work, everyone must do he-her or his work.

DL: In other words, the grou-, you don't like group work.

Bongani: Ja-aa, I don't like group work...

DL: You don't like sharing ideas...

Bongani: and, group work, it makes noise (*laughter from others*) because they, um, the others are not copying, they are just sitting, um, like Jakobiina, when a person is not copying he wou-ll (*laughter*) he will make noise at you and say "copy here, copy!"

DL: Okay

Bongani: and, he is spending time.

DL: okay

Solani: I think the idea of, um, pointing fingers is wrong, like, say that, eh, if a person doesn't eh, like participate, w'd-eh, if, eh that the part, to participate, to participate, and like, when you work in groups you share ideas, then, like, when somebody knows something that you don't know and you can, like, help each other...

DL: okay....

Solani: when compiling information...like that.

DL: okay, you wanted to say something.

Ntsako: I forgot.

DL: Alright (*noise/laughter from the group*) You forgot, eh, Ntsako....

Shikombiso: ja, but I think we must, um, no-, we must-not-work with a new group everyday because we know the others people attitude, um, so I think we must-change everyday.

Ntsako: For for its very hard, its very hard to get to know other peo- other people, like, today I'm with you and then tomorrow I got, like, learn somebody's life again, like, knowing *kore* what does he mean when he says this, and that and that... it's it's hard, I think we should, like, stick together. It's either we stick together or we work as individuals.

DL: Okay.

Sagwati: Well some students, um ...individual, I think it will be a problem because some people, um do not master skills: writing skills, talking skills. So I think, eh, we must work with them, but always work with one group 'cause, like, today I was sitting with a new group. Then it was difficult for me because they are laughing-when I say something they laugh (*laughter from the group*) they are not used to my language.

DL: Okay.

Bongani: Ja, that's why when you speak to them they laugh, they are spoiled, when they are in another group they don't copy they just sit and do their laughing, so I think, the, we must work one by one. (*laughter from the group*)

DL: Okay (*Laughter continues*).

Bongani: Ja, one by one (*laughter continues*) because when – when we don't have, um, when you don't understand you'll ask you as we regard you as our master, we'll say "ey, master, I hav-I have a problem here" and you'll help him or her.

DL: Okay.

Ntsako: When you're as individual is great, but Bongani, I think, we should, like, wor-*kkk* with *gg*roups 'cause, like, if I don't know something I'll ask somebody else, but if, I'm working alone I gotta have to save my pride won't let me ask this one, I gotta, like, go to the other row to ask somebody else, I think we should work as a group and stick together.

DL: Okay.

Solani: The saying goes, eh, pride goes before fall, if you don't work alone, like...

DL: Sorry... sorry... Solani,....

Solani: before fall

DL: Alright

Solani: Eh, if you work alone, like, you say that I can do anything, if you don't, if you fail to do something then, like, you going to be-ee afraid to ask somebody else, then, like you're going to fail on the thing the thing you wanted to do.

DL: You mean it is important to share ideas.

Solani: Hmmm.

Solani: Its like, um, its good to to to be successful, but it's even much better to show the success.

DL: Oh, good.

Ntsako: Um, 'cause being suc-ss- successful is all about having people at your back who encourage... and like that.

*(some voices)* Hmm

DL: Okay, *(little pause)*, okay Bongani.

Bongani: Ja, they ee-ee, I don't change, they will encourage you but, um sometimes when you sit, um, at the exam room, you'll be alone and you must, umm... *(laughter from the group)* ...and, um, people out there, they say when you w-, when you want to do things, do alone, like, um, when you're going for interview you, you'd be alone.

DL: I'm talking about when you are supposed to learn, when you go to the exam room, are you with the teacher *(pause)*?

Bongani: No

DL: So, it's about learning, but when you are going to write exams you'll be on your own.

*(tape interrupted... end)*

APPENDIX FG III

THIRD INTERVIEW WITH LEARNERS (FG III)

30 08/99

D.L: I want to ask you, what are your impressions about using newspapers in the English classrooms? (*pause*) Anyone can start, even in Xitsonga you can talk. You want to start, Gift?

Sagwati: In Xitsonga?

D.L: Where necessary, yes.

Sagwati: It is impressive because we learn many things, it's we are not learning something that comes from nowhere. we're learning something that's happening around our area. According to my understanding it's impressive.

D.L: You wanted to say something?

Solani: It's a good idea because when you do the thing with a newspaper it's like, we're going to read more newspapers in future so it helps us to understand the language through newspaper ...so we get to improve in grammar and get used to the language used and also it makes our views wider because we get to know things that are happening around our country.

D.L: You want to say something...this is Andzani, eh, you are...Lucia, Lucia, hmh (*pause*) Tell me what you think about newspapers (*pause*) Anything!

Lucia: Even in Xitsonga

D.L: Ja, it's fine.

Lucia: (*pause*) I don't know!

D.L: Jaa, say it in Xitsonga...anything about the media.

Lucia: In Xitsonga?

D.L: Jaa.

Lucia: Hmh, (*translation*) media is good because they taught us to read, I was not interested in reading newspaper, but, in the media classes we were taught to read newspapers and books. There were words I didn't know or understand, now I understand them.

D.L: Okay. So...

Lucia: Hmh.

D.L: Andzani?

Andzani: (*translation*) Through newspapers we were able to talk about topics like pregnancy. We don't normally get this in our books. I was not used to reading newspapers. But now I read (them)...

D.L: Do you buy newspapers?

Andzani: No.

D.L: Angel? Speak.

Angel: I learn a lot of things like things I didn't know like when I read the newspaper I first look at the heading and I know what's happening in the story.

D.L: So, you look at the headline.

...

D.L: Yes. Sagwati

Sagwati: It improved our learning skills, it improved our language, and it improved our interest in media.

D.L: Interest...okay, ever since we started, would you say your interest in newspapers has improved?

Solani: It has changed my skills like reading newspapers like, when I get newspaper I just want to read it.

D.L: I'm interested in the way we were doing things. What is the most striking thing you can comment on? Hm, what is the most remarkable thing that you can comment on? Something that has been outstanding, stood out of everything, that you can comment on.

Solani: Like co-operative learning. It has been helpful like we get the chance to share ideas with some people and get to know what other people are thinking and their style of thinking, and all those kind of stuff. So, it helped us a lot; um, co-operative learning ... we like to co-operate and respect and all those kind of stuff...but we, we normally did not do, like we were selfish at first; working with a person like, like me I didn't want to work with other people, I wanted to do my own thing. Ja, but, now I'm different, I developed that great interest of working with people.

D.L: I think that's true. I think that's been my observation. And what can you; what can you say about co-operative learning (*pause*) the way in which you were working together with other people. Do you think it's a good idea or you want to work alone or you want to work with other people?

Lucia (*translation*): I want to work alone, I didn't know how to work with others, and when I have a problem I can go and ask other people.

D.L: So you want to work alone, and when you have problems you'll ask others. So you want people only when you have problems, when you are happy you don't want them. Okay!

Sagwati: Co-operative learning increased my intellect, because I didn't have I didn't master the listening skills I just communicated to, I just wanted people to always look at me, I just wanted to speak, eh, English, but I didn't want another person to speak and I listen to him, I just wanted to dominate, ja, then it increased my listening skills.

D.L: Angel? Your comments about this.

Angel: I also think that at first I was selfish, but now I'm not, because I worked with a lot of people.

D.L: Ntsako, you want to say something; be honest.

Ntsako: I was not used to working with other people but now I can understand different people.

D.L: Bongani, about that? I still haven't forgotten the interview...after the first cycle...I still know your views about...

Bongani: I changed to...now I really like to work with group, working with another people because they taught me how to listen to one another...I think it taught me to work with people whether they or I'm angry or happy, so it taught me to adapt, *wa swi bona* (you see)...

...

D.L: What Solani said, I must actually comment about it, it's actually what I've observed ever since we worked together. At first people were, wanted to be on their own and compete about marks. Remember that? And also to show that "I can talk much", and all those. But now as time went on I could see, started to know the skills of working together. I think she has just captured that.

D.L: I've got this question. Are you aware that when I gave you homework or tasks I didn't mark them and give marks, say 10 out of 10, 2 out of 10...Do you have anything to say about that?

Ntsako: Jaa, I think if you give marks, it will encourage you. If say I got 4 out of 10, next time I try to get 5...

D.L: Okay, Solani.

Solani: I want to disagree. The way you were doing it was good; because as we were working with newspapers and sharing views... I think because in the understanding of things are not the same, they differ like when I give another answer, she gives another answer and she thinks she is more like, more right more correct, but the way in which we think is not the same, like, ja, I think the way you did things was, um, great, ja, like you even, when, if you see something that was not that much correct, you'd go individually and say you shouldn't have done this way or that way, not say you got zero...

D.L: Yes, Bongani

Bongani: I wanted to say we are not the same. If someone get zero another get 10, he will think he is stupid; why should I get zero? And so on...

Sagwati: I'm on both sides. The way you did it was good because we did in groups not according to our own individual understanding. It would be encouraging if I got 5 out of 20 and next time I will get 15 out of 20.

Andzani (*translation*): I think when I get 5 out of 20 another one get 15 out of 20 I will admire him and strive hard to get 15.

Lucia (*translation*): If I get 1 out of 20 I will try to read or study hard to be like that person.

D.L: Say everyday you get 1 out of 20. What do you say about that?

Sagwati: I will go and ask from my friends. Sometimes it's because you don't pay attention when somebody teaches. Ja, but if I pay a lot of attention I will go and ask somebody who is good.

...

D.L: The way you say you want marks given suggests that there is someone who is going to give marks; the person who knows everything. You have wonderful ideas which perhaps seen differently could be correct. The teacher should not be seen to know everything.

Solani: If the teacher gives you 1 out of 20 he is like telling the whole class that you got 1 out of 20, instead of telling you where you went wrong...if you get 1 out of 20 and someone asks you how many marks you got, you're gonna be embarrassed by the mark, but if the teacher comes to you and says you should have done it this way or that way, the next time you are going to try...

...

Bongani: I think if you write a test and the teacher comes to the front and says "Eh, Bongani, you got 2 out of 200", that will make you get out of the school, and drop out.

D.L: Okay.

Sagwati: I think it depends on the type of person you are. Sometimes students write the work to impress the teacher, then some other students write tests for their own sake... like I write to get knowledge, but some think to impress the teachers. Like when I'm given a homework on Friday I will spend the whole weekend not doing it...then Monday morning at school I will start doing the work; I'm doing it for the teacher not myself...

Bongani: Let's take the teacher comes to the class and says you got 5 out of 20 and people are always laughing at you; even if you improve, you'll drop out of the school.

Ntsako: They'll think there's something wrong with you...but most of the teachers still believe in marks.

D.L: Angel, now you must have an idea?

Angel: I'm on both sides. It's good (to have marks) it will make you improve if you are clever and serious with work. Bad in this way: if you, if some people just do things without thinking...

D.L: Okay.

...

D.L: Let me give you this example. One day, during the exams, towards the end of the last term, you had an English test, when I came to class for the media project, TO had just given you your scripts back, you... almost everybody jumping "haa-haa, I got this, I got this" and then those who didn't get eh fair, fair marks were sad. You remember that day? I think In English you got the top mark. Am I right?

Sagwati: Yes.

D.L: What do you think? What if you get 90% and there is someone who get 5% or 10%; what would you do?

Solani: I will try to help that student, put myself in his or her shoes...

## APPENDIX FN I

### FIELD NOTES I

26/04/99

Today is the first official visit to DPM school. I have an appointment with the English teacher. I give him the code: TO. My academic friend, John Lewin, is with me, and promises to help me with observations at the school so that we could make some sort of "triangulation".

We meet TO at about 10h15 and John offers to jot down the notes as I make personal interview with the teacher. I decide not to tape record the interview, as it is my first 'official' day with him, and hoped to avoid unnecessary tension.

- TO is doing Masters Diploma in Human Resource management at RAU. Does not see future in teaching. He was full of energy but found the reality at school had a gap.
  - Has Honours (English) from the University of the North. With his academic background he had expected intellectual debate from colleagues and learners. But his colleagues are not prepared to consider issues. He feels they are apathetic.
  - He finds the content materials or textbooks not to be challenging.
  - "We do not have grammar textbooks", he says. He says he no longer uses textbooks, but uses newspapers and magazines. He began this in 1997 and it seems to be a better approach. Textbooks were too prescriptive, syllabus-based and the series was too technical and quite impractical. Grammar doesn't make learners to speak English. He doesn't teach grammar.
  - There has been relative improvement as compared with grammar approach/method. Learners now participated immensely; in terms of language development, they are able to communicate even if they are not fluent. Language use as functional and relates to personal experience.
  - They come up with own topics, he is not the sole initiator of topics. Topics like teenage pregnancy, initiation schools, or whether euthanasia should be allowed etc.
  - What he does to ensure language competence: Has a number of committees editorial, political, cultural, drama and creative writing. They collect information and submit to a desk or head of desk and they write one report, and they submit to editor's desk. On Fridays they give reports. Editor's desk has three members who have files.
  - When they give reports he takes back seat. He looks at presentation style, grammar, language and writes notes. He observes and thereafter makes comments. Later he takes the reports and make corrections.
  - At which point does he consciously intervene: He makes a list of typical mistakes, they discuss and correct one another. When he marks books he marks 20 books and tries to identify typical mistakes, and then goes to class to thrash out the problem. "I don't teach grammar lesson but a language lesson", he says.
  - Other teachers? Their approach is more textbook based. They take their exercises from textbooks. He has not discussed this approach with them as he says he does not want to impose his authority. However they checked one another's work.
- There is openness

- How different is he from other teachers: The teachers are lazy. T.O. is great. He will teach you as an individual. He encourages them to come on Saturday and Sunday. He says time wasted is never regained. When teachers come to class they give you examples from textbooks, T.O. gives you many examples. He encourages the to read magazines and to get information. He shares with them information he gets from radio, TV and newspapers. He shares his own experiences. He encourages them to watch news, know anything about their country.
- Newspapers to class: He brings newspapers to them, he reads to them. "And you have to tell him what is happening".
- He talked about desks- process, compile one report. Tell which information is important. They correct language: nobody is perfect. They make sure everything is correct. No school newspaper yet.
- How they learn: The teacher in front, they are in rows. He doesn't only stand in front, also goes around the rows. He sometimes sits down, we discuss, he corrects. We tell whole class. TO is already up to date, he is always-prepared.
- He allows learners to evaluate him. E.g. "What problems do I cause? Don't put your name, what do I do you don't like?"
- They even have debates, drama: learning is not about reading a book only. They must be able to listen to someone talking. There is no perfect English. We are given chance to express our views.
- Skills: reading, writing, listening, speaking.
- He taught them to have paper and pencil handy to write difficult words.
- We have three books: vocabulary book e.g. words like 'phobia', literature /poems and class tasks (homework).
- He tests general questions
- He teaches them real things, "we were taught past tense"
- He comes to class with a textbook. Other teachers don't care they say "I am living in a large house, we eating; what are you doing?"
- He encourages them to go to him for help. Others teach learners what is in the textbook, not general things, not important for us to learn. He doesn't want everyone to be quiet.
- "In Std 5 I had the idea that teachers stand in front and spoon feed. In real life search for information, no one has all the information". Spoon fed = easy come easy go
- "He doesn't only teach us about Std 8 work, he teaches us other works- actuary-insurance company

## FIELD NOTES II

26/04/99

At 11h20 TO asks an Afrikaans teacher (I give him the code TH) to call eight learners from Grade 10 B. The class has two subject streams: the general and Commercial. I tell T.O. that the learners that they should be picked randomly. A look at the class shows mini chaotic situation: TH is battling to turn some learners back. I think they are excited by the presence of John- a white person at their school? At last, we see TH wins. Three guys and five girls come over. They are smiling lovely faces. They are excited. I also get excited. A good start to the research!

We start with introductions. TH introduces us to the learners, and the learners take turns to introduce themselves. John and I are struck by the confidence and fluency of the learners. The guys are older than the girls. Ages for boys (18, 18, 20) and the girls (15, 14, 15, 14, 13).

I realise (and John later agreed) that the girls are more fluent than the guys. Solani, Nzalama, Sagwati (Gift), Amanda and Zanelle were girls.

Again John explains why we are at the school, and tells them that I was going to do research with them at their school for about three months. He tells them that I, together with TO, am going to teach them English. I tell them that I am going to ask them a few questions and they agree. Again, John offers to take down notes as I interview them. No tape-recording at this stage. The interview is conversational.

- How do they learn: Have fun so that they can learn English. Get time to act like teachers, and ask fellow students. Important to search for information, without teachers telling us to find information; ask our parents, easier to find. Teachers are great. Learners take important role in classroom.
- How does the teacher correct: when they punctuate incorrectly, not in a harsh way. T.O. is humble, encourages them to do things. He tells them to search for information in newspapers, *Sowetan*, if they don't understand the story they come to tell the class. It is not only about reading books, listening to music is also important. In a lesson he brings different kind of music: they identify the music, message of ballad, kwaito. Thus English music in an English class.
- Assignment: when it comes to assignments learners were told not to ask parents only, but other people also, search for information in the area and get different ideas. "He does not spoon feed us".
- In poetry he tells them there is no right or wrong answers, it is interpretation. He gives them poems to go and study at home, and they'll be expected to come and tell whole class about the poem.
- "We don't have a textbook. We do use textbooks in a group". Poetry Quest helps their language and vocabulary. Teaches about culture, use dictionary in the classroom.
- Grammar Lesson: Today about preposition; when and where used. Examples in the lesson given in a good way.
- Does he have lesson preparation: Does have grammar lessons. He comes with his own textbook. He makes sure everyone understands.
- 'I am not perfect but I try to learn. "if you don't want to learn you will be nothing in this world" he motivates me'.

- Preparations made from things he reads everyday; like newspapers and magazines. If he finds interesting material he brings to class for learners' word power.
- He says he loves poetry, and he does not stick to 'prescribed poetry. He uses grade 12 poems even. Content can be for both lower and higher grades.
- He says he doesn't use poetry to teach language except to let learners to extract meaning from poetry. He says that is language in literary writing.
- Timetable: Used to have seven 35 minutes- periods per week. He complained to the principal as a 35 minutes period was not enough. This year the timetable has changed for five periods: one 35 minutes period and three double-period (70 minutes per period). Other teachers were affected, but they were happy.
- Problem noticed: there are learners who have serious problems as they can't read. They did not get grounding at the schools they came from . In grade 10 B 80% are able to read English without problems, while 40% read with comprehension.
- He has a Saturday school with reading and listening as objectives. It is voluntary. 45 learners attend.
- OBE: He says his understanding of OBE is that you have to acknowledge that learners progress at different paces. "They develop cognitively at different paces", he says. You have to ask yourself why do you teach them, or is it just because you are expected to? He says he finds OBE more flexible, gives him latitude to explore, learners "make self-discovery" and it makes him to be innovative and creative.
- Teacher training: Because he is from a poor family he had to register for B.A. at the University of the North hoping to get a bursary from former Gazankulu government. Courses registered were: English, Anthropology, Geography and Psychology. Then did H.E.D. with English and Geography teaching methodology. Later did English 9Honours).
- His high school English teacher encouraged them to communicate in English: he gave them novels and extra books, and engendered a culture of reading. He taught them from Std 6 to Std 10.
- Interest: PRO of Greater Tzaneen Radio Initiative. He is a voluntary media convenor, Ritavi Branch of SADTU.
- About the school: Finds the school and management style most flexible, open and transparent. Can hardly think of a time when management did not consult. They do things jointly, if there is dissatisfaction they know channels. They come to him as site steward. They have discussions in the staff meetings and talk over problems. Interpersonal relationships are not 100% right as you do find personality clashes.
- There is a lack of intellectual debate at school. Teachers don't read nor buy books. He does not have "a bosom friend". After school I remain behind.
- Work ethic: He calls members of SADTU- they like to sit in the staff room – to order. They complain about salaries. He feels dissatisfaction is not from salaries: "I subscribe to the theory x and y of Mac Gregor", he says. Some teachers are lazy.

## APPENDIX FN III

### FIELD NOTES III

Meeting with Grade 10 B learners: commercial stream.

This is about half the grade 10 B class. The learners follow the commercial subjects stream. TO has suggested that for my research purpose I could teach this group. In this meeting introduce what my project entails. During the discussions TO took notes.

Focus: newspapers/print media

Duration: approximately three months

Learners pledged that they would commit themselves until the end of the activity. John Leyin and David will be working with the learners with regard to print media. The learners were told that they would be captured on video. They are excited about appearing on video.

David tells them they should in the end be able to produce their own newsletter/newspaper. The learners will visit a newspaper company to see the whole process of news production: how stories are collected and compiled into a newspaper. A learner poses a question: "What are the benefits of this project?" Answer: The project is part of their daily learning, learn English, make them aware of the media and also see how the newspapers are compiled.

Materials: folders and vocabulary booklets to be given to the learners.

Many learners don't read newspaper. Some of those who say they read newspaper say they read them on Sundays.

Types of newspapers they know:

\**Sportsday* and *Sunday Times*

\*One learner buys the *Sowetan* on Saturday

\*Glenmah buys a newspaper on Mondays

\**City Press* on Sunday.

\*Carol reads newspaper when father comes from Johannesburg.

\*Catherine buys *Drum* and *You* magazine for herself.

\*Meriam buys *City Press* once a month.

\*Vukosi buys *Drum* magazine every Thursday.

\*Emeldah does not read a newspaper.

\*Monica reads newspaper (*Sowetan*) everyday because she is forced by her parents to do so. She just refers to the TV guide.

\*Ganunu reads *Letaba Herald*, *City Press*, *Sowetan* (from Monday to Thursday).

\*Solani buys a newspaper only when there is a story that relates to her surroundings: only something that she heard to get more news on what happened.

\*Steve does not read newspaper: he does not have access to newspapers.

\*Golden also does not read newspapers: he does not give a reason why.

\*Fikile does not read newspapers.

\*Phoebe reads newspaper when her brother is back from Giyani School during holidays.

- \*Cry's father only buys Afrikaans newspaper, *Beeld*.
- \*Nkateko does not have money to spend on newspaper, but on food.
- \*Amanda reads newspaper that her mother buys.
- \*Angel reads *City Press* on Sunday.
- \*Bongani reads *City Press* only on Sunday.
- \*Jacobean reads newspaper occasionally: *Sunday Times* and *Sowetan*.

In the newspaper they read the following sections:

Music: 14 learners

Educational: 1 (Ndzalama)

Careers/Job section: 1 (Sagwati) She reads this section because brothers and sisters are not employed but educated.

Only 5 learners consult dictionaries when they read newspapers/magazines.

Learners say they use dictionaries in class particularly during English periods.

LESSON OBSERVATION (1)

Teacher	Learner
1st 5 Minutes	
5 - 10	
10 - 20	
20 - 30	
30 - 40	
40 - 60	

LEARNING ACTIVITY OBSERVATION SCHEDULE

Facilitator.....Grade:.....Duration of lesson

Date:.....No. of learners.....

Learning area:.....Learning activity no.:.....

1 PREPARATION:	YES	NO	REMARKS
Was preparation thorough?			
Were outcomes clearly identified?			
Was the learning activity appropriate to outcomes?			
Is there a definite link between this lesson and the previous and the following one?			
Was the lesson relevant to learner s needs and interests? (contextualised)			
<b>2. MATERIALS/RESOURCES</b>			
Did it promote language?			
Was authentic material used			
Did it stimulate interest			
Was the language of the materials appropriate to learners level?			
<b>3. METHODOLOGY:</b>			
Was a range of questions asked (low to high, open to closed)			
Was the approach facilitative?			
Were the language problems effectively handled (identified, constructively handled, time for practice, problems contextualised)			
Were the activities systematically structured?			

3. METHODOLOGY (CONTINUED) Was reading systematically developed?			
Was critical thinking promoted and developed?			
CO-OPERATIVE LEARNING Was the task related to outcomes? Was the task worthwhile and stimulating? Was the task well prepared? Was facilitation effective? Was there full learner participation?			
4. ASSESSMENT Was there ongoing assessment			

G i v e e x a m p l e s  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....

Was assessment appropriate for outcomes?

Give examples .....  
 .....

5. APPLICATION Was this authentic?			
Was it worthwhile?			

6. GENERAL REMARKS  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....

7. LEARNING POINTS  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....

8. NAME OF OBSERVER \_\_\_\_\_

**LESSON OBSERVATIONS: CYCLE ONE****Date: 07 July 1999**

- An overview was given. Lesson based on particular newspapers that exist in communities.
- The material was authentic and stimulated great participation. All the exercises stimulated good responses.
- Some good application questions were asked. But more critical questions should be asked.
- Did not spend much time on one group – non-interventionist (TO). Good technique: did not interfere.
- There was substantial participation (TO).
- There was too much in one lesson: one had to superfluously run over the issue, but an overview was achieved.
- TO: The learners were involved in co-operative learning. Almost every group wanted to be the first in reporting their ideas after discussing.
- John: Vocabulary book: leads to explanation and emphasis.
- Reading was not identified as an outcome. Learners “leafed” through the newspapers to identify various sections:

**General Remarks**

TO: The lesson was an extension beyond what the learners know. The lesson gave the learners broad overview of the print media. Thorough examples like identifying columns of the newspaper, appreciating and valuing their prior knowledge. There was more emphasis on vocabulary related to the lesson. Nothing was taken for granted. He was not interfering with the learners, he allowed learners to talk freely.

John: Learners are used to co-operative learning and adapted to exercises easily and willingly. Timing has been a crucial factor: At the end of a long day, back to one hour lesson. Dominated by a few; but careful to involve others. They have obviously had some background on newspapers, but there was some extension. Made sure they understand all concepts. You can develop some ideas as they emerge by getting them to talk around them. They hardly read newspapers – when relevant they buy. Some do buy magazines.

**Questions Raised for Discussion**

- Is it important to read newspapers or magazines?
- How can we have access to newspapers if we don't have money?

- The Thabo Mbeki election poster on our street poles and shop windows. Who does it serve?

DATE : 09 June 1999

- The lesson follows on the previous one but focused on article reading to establish understanding.

TO: - The incident in the article happened in their surrounding and the lesson was thus contextualised and relevant.

John: - The article was well-chosen, interesting and led to discussion of many difficult words in the article. Article relevant to own experiences and raised many moral questions. The outcomes of reading, communication and critical reflection were achieved, the grammatical aspect not done because of time constraints.

TO: It focuses more on vocabulary and comprehension the authenticity of the material: Learners could relate easily to the story.

John: Ready relevance because of the nature of the story and location – the story is based on an incident that occurred in their location. It afforded a great deal of opportunity for discussion.

TO: The article stimulated interest, because it happened in the learners' locale/surrounding.

John: The relevance of the story stimulated interest.  
There were many difficult words, but these were identified, discussed and clarified.

TO: Language appropriateness of materials: Most of the meanings were extracted from context. Learners were able to contextualise most of the meanings.  
Questions were based on the content/story.

John: Excellent use of questioning which moved from low level to application and evaluative. Many opportunities for group discussion. David facilitated learning.

TO: Learners could help one another when errors are committed particularly in reading and pronunciations. The emphasis was on establishing understanding and vocabulary enrichment.

Reading was highly pursued.

John: Language: will happen tomorrow – ran out of time. Used a structured approach to reading with comprehension.

### Critical Thinking

TO: If more could be pursued in this aspect. The lesson was content based.  
David was facilitative and non-interventionist. Participative, much better than yesterday.

John: Learner participation: This need to be worked on. There was continuous assessment – getting feedback all the time and responding to this.

TO: Vocabulary items written on board and explained. Learners then made entries to their vocabulary booklets. Teacher has the style of using the words (vocabulary) in context throughout the lesson. He commended the learners who read.

### General Remarks

John: Group very much more involved today. I think they responded very well to topic, activities and vocab. I am still worried about the fact that a number of learners were still passive both in the general class and in groups. It was good you timed your lesson better and did not try to cover everything as planned.

### Learning Points

- The good learners responded well to this method – How do we encourage/include less able – this is a challenge.
- The reading approach worked well – indeed it was essential otherwise there would have been less understanding and involvement.

TO: The lesson was well – suited to the learners. They could relate to the story because it happened in their surrounding. It also induced interests and could question some of the issues reported in the story. For example, that the person who has been reported to be a policeman is actually a learner.

### Learning Points

- Learners' experiences: To value the prior knowledge. To allow learners to unlock or crack meaning by themselves. To commend them in their attempt for learning.

TO: Commentary

- More vocabulary – laden: Perhaps to crack an understanding of the story. I do not remember any aspect of language picked up.
- Establishing the comprehension or understanding of the learners.
- Learners wanted to explain exactly what is in the story. Learners limited by what is in the story, i.e. they don't go beyond the story: poor critical engagement.

Critical question/ problem posing: Which religion is promoted? (Christianity/ Bible)  
Speculative: What could be the feelings of the killers?

- People are having nightmares
- People are regretting that they killed innocent people.
- People are regretting because they are in jail.

### Written Task ( Homework)

- What I have learnt from the story?

10 June 1999

5-10 Minutes: Started with getting learners to read what they had learned. David picked out phrases like "Let bygones be bygones", "Let sleeping dogs lie" Learners explained correctly. He got them to explain concepts like "teenagers". Then asked a volunteer to read from paragraph 6.

John: It was an extension of yesterday's lesson. It was good to see that you had modified it.

- Lesson geared towards co-operative work. It linked well with the previous lesson.
- Language learning: There was good degree of discussion. The lesson most relevant to class.
- A number of difficult words, but identified and explained.  
e.g. condolences, commended, retaliating, tremendous, incident

Questioning: Some good critical questions were asked. The approach was facilitative although I feel you are overdoing the emphasis of co-operative learning.

Language Issue: You introduced the passive/active voice, and it was clear that they had not done it. Also the past participle.

Reading: The major work was done yesterday.

Critical Thinking/questioning: Some interesting questions asked at beginning they had to evaluate and think.

Co-operative Learning: I believe the class is not used to this as we at first assumed.

#### General Remarks

- i. Unfortunate that lesson came so late in the day after exam.
- ii. I still believe we are not as aware of the true ability of the whole class as we should be.
- iii. Co-operative learning needs to be taught – especially skills.
- iv. To reinforce certain concepts such as "condolences" we should use the functional English approach.
- v. Still try to involve the whole class and not only language competent ones.

30-40 Minutes: Language

The tense of paragraph 1. Groups discuss transformation of paragraph 1 to present tense.

Task on active/pass. Past/Present sentence transformations.

Groups to transform paragraph 2 from passive to active.

Explains the active and passive voice.

#### Important Points to Remember

- They could not give examples of giving condolences. They don't really discuss, they just make point. Perhaps give a role play.

- Try to stop laughter
- They don't understand the relationship between cause and effect.
- Don't overdo the group discussion – get them to do writing.

11 June 1999

TO: - Few learners have done yesterday's task, perhaps as a result of the pressure of exam.

- Learners appeared tired.
- David taught the parts of speech (subject, verb and noun) to lay foundation for understanding of passive/active sentence transformations.
- Some of the learners were participating, but few looked inattentive although one cannot divorce other aspects of language, one feels that more emphasis should be on the parts of speech.
- There was less participation of learners, probably because the teacher had control of the lesson.
- One has always been sceptical whether grammatical aspects or items will improve their communication skills or proficiency. Language should be spontaneous.
- Learners are somewhat having basic principles of grammar. It needs to be consolidated or enhanced.
- Focus on grammar should be more contextually based.
- The lesson promotes more of grammatical aspects which appear isolated from general language.
- I am not certain whether it stimulated interest.
- The language of the materials was appropriate to the learners' level.
- The lesson was relatively less facilitative.

#### General Remarks

- I'm not sure whether it was stimulating.
- Grammar teaching tends to focus on one aspect for a long time. As a result there is a problem of concentration and attention.
- It also affects interest and stimulation- the lesson was too long.

#### Learning Points

- The lesson emphasises language/grammar rules.
- However, one is sceptical whether teaching learners grammar rules will ensure their communicative flow or to be aware of grammatical errors.

15 June 1999

0-5 Minutes

- The learners encouraged to look at (read) heading and sub-heading silently observing punctuation marks: "Just who is responsible".
- TO: 5-10 Minutes: Asked learners to face down the article and discuss in groups, i.e. co-operative learning, what the article will be about: prediction
- In the prediction stage learners came up with: the article is about problems at schools e.g. violence, culture of learning and teaching etc.
- Questioning/praxis: Relevant question by teacher: Is there a culture of teaching and learning at PDM School?
- 10-20 Minutes: Teacher asked: Examples of bad activities at school? Learners: fighting, smoking/drug addiction, imitation of Yizo Yizo, lack of culture of learning  
Teacher: What is the role of Tshediso in the community? Learners: journalist, searching for info, working for news company  
Teacher: Role of Mosiana Motselisi? Learners: X-Ray technician  
Teacher: Holla Kgasago? Learners: Sales Assisatnt.
- 20-30 Minutes: Vocabulary items learnt:
  - (0) stakeholders: who are stakeholders at the schools? Learners: children parents, teachers, school governing bodies. Who are stakeholders in your family? Learners: parents and children
  - (i) x-ray: what is an x-ray? TO helped explain and said it's a machine that gives out picture of broken and dislocated bones.
  - (ii) technician: TO also explained this.
  - (iii) manifesto: what is a manifesto? Learners tried from context and were assisted: a list of goals, objectives and aims of parties.
  - (iv) disillusioned: a few learners gave "lose hope" after reading and made sense from context.
  - (v) implement: Solani is able to get it from context and gives "introduce"
  - (vi) famous / notorious: a little problematic for learners. TO and David help in clarifying the words.
- The authentic news article stimulated a fierce debate. The appropriateness of the language used in the material: Learners found no difficulty in unlocking the meaning.
- The questions covered a range: Low/High and open/closed.
- Through groups they were able to exchange ideas, this was made possible by the fact that it was facilitative.
- Language problems/issues: Some learners would correct their mate – ready to help and quick to point errors by themselves.
- Reading was not silent, so other learners could follow what and how other were reading.

- In response to David's question, learners mentioned the following activities at schools: \* fighting and smoking ( addiction ) \* imitation of "Yizo Yizo" \* The way " Yizo Yizo" affected the culture of learning and teaching.
- Vocabulary: famous/notorious, disillusioned, stakeholders, X-ray, manifesto, implement.
- The article made reference to a number of careers. This created opportunity to talk about these.

T.O: There is a need for vocational guidance.

Take Away Task: Learners to go about looking at election posters of various political parties in the displayed in the township and write out the manifestoes of the various parties.

### General Remarks

- The article was condensed (there was little in the article) but offered a great deal of opportunity for language and general learning. It produced much debate. There was a lot of information added by the learners and the teacher, which was not in the article.
- Critical thinking: The article provoked critical thinking of the learners, for example, the issue of who should own a gun, fame versus notoriety (It was realized that fame and notoriety were subjective. Examples of "successful robbers" versus models like ex-Mr. South Africa.

TO: A debate ensued on who should own a gun, and why? Due to the interest the article generated, learners were not aware that they were engaged in language use.

TO: Learning Points:

Improvement on vocabulary and critical thinking. Encouragement of intuitive and speculative skills. There is a link of articles, for instance, the one on "Yizo Yizo" (distributed by TO before this research), "Pupils praised for not avenging deaths", "Just who is responsible" and school violence.

21 June 1999

- 24 learners: 6 groups of four learners
- Each group assigned two columns from the article "Just who is responsible".
- Learners had to read silently the assigned columns, underline difficult words
- Teacher read the passage out loud

Observations:

- Learners, mostly girls, already identified with Sam Phororo, ex- Mr. South Africa, when I assigned them other columns they would "fight" for his (Sam's) column.

- In one group a learner offered to draw columns, another gave help: counted how many columns.
- Others also offered advice. Another took over to write questions on columns.
- One took role of scribe. Another asked questions: Is this a valid argument? Another said yes – gave argument, wrote down concerns.
- The learners were very restless – we only started at 11h30, and by that time they had been milling around aimlessly. Difficult to get them settled. Encouraging because there were eight more learners than in the last lesson.
- Learners still showed no interest in other groups' reports. One has to keep getting them to be attentive.
- Today for the first time we wrote down their responses on the chalkboard. This brought difference, it seemed to encourage them to participate. It seems they felt being taken seriously. We also mediated the reasons they advanced.
- Groups becoming settled, that is, same group of learners sit together: there should not be pattern.
- Vocabulary items have been learnt.
- At a particular point (approximately 12h30) about six learners just stood up wanting to leave.
- In another group, Nyiko dominated and almost singularly did the task. When he left the two girls found it difficult to relate to what he had written. Amanda very upset with being grouped with "strangers", she complains that she has been removed from "her group". Zanelle is also angry that she has been grouped with "weak ones". She behaves in an awkward manner to the other learners. Angel is really embarrassed to be removed from "his" group, and join the "bright" group of girls (Solani, Tintswalo, Ndzalama).
- Learners showed that they comprehended the task at hand.

23 June 1999

20 learners present.

0-5 Minutes: Teacher: gave feedback and further discussions on (yesterday's) language task (Reported Speech). He says.../ He said...

Learners given their marked written tasks, and same pairs asked to reflect on them, and discuss based on the teacher's marking.

5-10 Minutes: Introduced the lesson, explained the process, handed out a new article "Recent cases of school violence". Asked learners to focus on the headline: what is the article about? (prediction). Is there a word you don't understand? Attended to groups. Wrote down the word "recent". Wrote up answers.

Learners read headline; asked to discuss in groups. A learner answered, "violence". Other answers: fighting, bullying. A learner says bullying means "making yourself a boss".

10-30 Minutes: Teacher: what are examples of violence? Learners give responses. Teacher responds to answers. Says let us read silently, underline strange words so that we can get their meanings. Reminds learners to have vocabulary booklets next to them. Learners read silently, individually. They take a little time to focus; eventually read.

30-40 Minutes: Explained the meanings and encouraged further responses. Learners came up with unknown words, e.g. grievous, loitering, beserk, allegedly, intent, intimidate, slapped, brawl, apparently

40-60 Minutes: Read the passage and got the learners to read afterwards. Critical question: Asked the question as to whether this incident (at Vryburg High School) could happen at their school. Learners respond, and mention that at Vryburg the problem was caused by apartheid.

Learners read in sequence. Each pair is assigned a column from the article for in-depth study. Focus on:

- Problem posing: (i) motives (Why did it happen?)  
(ii) Who do you blame?  
(iii) Solution (What can be done to solve this problem?)

#### Observations

(i) Vocabulary enrichment in the lesson: e.g. intent- aim/purpose (a learner got it after a few seconds of reading/ from context, racism & prejudice, brawl & fighting, Difference: counselling/ cancelling: guidance & scratching respectively.

Army of ants> collective noun noticed

(ii) Learners gave their opinions on the article, stimulated by the questioning for the tasks. Learners' opinions on the article based on their experiences, prior knowledge and predictions or assumptions leading to emergence of argument on racism.

(iii) Learners allowed to read. Learners read after the facilitator. There was emphasis on reading.

TO: Relevance of materials: Exactly, the article relates to school violence, which is more related to what they grapple with in an everyday situation. Materials promoted language learning because learners could understand and debate. The material was authentic and also stimulating. Language of the materials was appropriate to learners' level. The learners could understand or follow the stories with less difficulty.

The article afforded the facilitator the chance to pose all the questions.

Teaching approach was facilitative: the division of learners into pairs or groups helps a lot.

Handling of language problems: I am not quite sure: it is an area which has to be given as much attention as reading.

John: Impression of the situation: Difficult to be assertive in this climate:

- Three interruptions: someone wanting Sagwati, vice-principal wanting Nyiko and TO receiving a call
- I believe the learners want this kind of tuition, don't be afraid to be more assertive.
- Observing pair work exercise: First worked independently, then opportunity to check with neighbour; there was some interaction: checking and challenging one another, then wrote.
- Discipline and responsibility: There is so much intermittent talking, doing other things not connected to the lesson. They need to be brought to focus. Obviously not used to listening and taking responsibility. They are used to getting up or leaving without permission. They throw articles from one desk to another. Continuous noise outside distracting. Concentration span limited: they seem to be easily distracted and have to be encouraged to focus often.
- Using of pairs: an intermediate step from transmission teaching to learner involvement. Learners seem to enjoy individual attention: when you go to specific pair they respond well and enthusiastically. I think this gives them recognition, which I feel they crave. They are not used to valuing the discussion mate's point of view. The teacher's opinion and point of view are cherished. It thus became a good idea to take in the written work, firstly to show that you are serious and secondly to identify any problems.
- Adaptability/flexibility: With the pairs there still seems to be dominance by individual members. I found the interaction better in the smaller groupings. To overcome the above problem, it might be a good idea to get each learner to complete the exercise after discussion. However, we need to ensure that discussion has taken place.

LEARNER PROFILE

1. Name:..... 2. Age:.....
  
3. Mother Tongue:..... 4. Other languages spoken.  
(i).....  
(ii).....  
(iii).....
  
5. Number of siblings (brothers + sisters).....
  
6. Who takes care of you? (i.e. father, mother, grandmother, sibling, etc.).....
  
7. Occupation of Father:.....  
Mother:.....
  
8. Who pays for your schooling?.....
  
9. Why do you come to school?.....  
.....  
.....
  
10. What do you want to do when you leave school?  
(i) After matric.....  
(ii) In five years time.....
  
11. Apart from school, do you ever speak English? YES NO  
If yes, where?.....  
If no, why?.....
  
12. What do you read regularly? i.e. almost on daily basis  
(i) Newspapers Which .....  
(ii) Magazines Which .....  
(iii) Books  
Name the last book that you read.....
  
13. How much time per day do you spend listening to the radio?  
What programmes.....

How much time per day do you spent watching TV:

What programmes.....

14. Do you play any sports? YES NO  
Which .....

15. Over week ends, how do you spend your leisure time?  
.....  
.....  
.....

16. Do you enjoy/do not enjoy learning English? YES NO

Give reasons for your  
answers.....  
.....  
.....

17. Did you watch/did not watch Yizo Yizo  
because.....  
.....  
.....

18. As a young person in South Africa I look forward to the  
future/do not look forward to the future  
because.....  
.....

19. If I won R50,000 in a competition I would  
.....  
.....

20. What type of dwelling do you reside in at present?  
Formal house YES NO Informal house YES NO  
Does it have Electricity YES NO  
Taps inside dwelling YES NO  
Inside toilet YES NO

LEARNERS EVALUATION

CYCLE 1. JUNE 1999

THEME: VIOLENCE IN SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS

Please complete the following questions as honestly and fully as possible, i.e. tell us how you really feel.

Name:..... Gender: Male..... Female.....

1. How many of the lessons did you miss?

2. What aspects of the lessons did you enjoy? (If any)

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

3. What aspects did you not enjoy? (If any)

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

4. As far as English (language) is concerned, what did you learn in these lessons?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

5. During these lessons, we used material from the print media. Do you feel that this aided your learning? Yes ..... No

Give reasons for your response:

.....  
.....  
.....

6. Have you benefitted from keeping your vocabulary booklet? If so, why/how

.....  
.....

7. If these lessons we divide you into groups so that you could share ideas and work together, what are your views on learning in this way?

.....  
.....  
.....

8. We are now planning the next cycle, what would you like us to include or concentrate <sup>on</sup>?

.....  
.....  
.....

9. Do you think such lessons should continue or be introduced to all learners at school?

Yes..... No.....

Give reasons: .....

.....  
.....  
.....

10. Any other comment you would like to make?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

LEARNERS'S EVALUATION  
AUGUST 1999

ENGLISH : PRINT MEDIA PROJECT

Think back over the lessons you had with David and give your ideas on the following.

1. What has been your main impression of these lessons.

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

2. What would you say you have learned from these lessons.?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

3. Have you been able to use the knowledge / skills gained in this programme in other subjects? if yes give examples.

.....  
.....  
.....

4. Do you think you have changed in any way as a result of these lessons. ( give examples)

.....  
.....  
.....

5. Have any of your attitudes/values changed as a result of these lessons - if so, how?

.....  
.....  
.....

6. Have you developed any new skills? - if so which?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

7. Which of the articles did you find most relevant ? Why ?

.....  
.....  
.....

8. Before the lessons this term I taught you the skills of co-operative learning ( group work), do you feel this helped to make your group work a better learning experience - give examples.

.....  
.....  
.....

9. What are your views on working co-operatively ( in groups)

.....  
.....  
.....

10. I think the approach used by David is good / is not good because ( delete one)

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

11. As far as English ( language) is concerned, what did you learn in these lessons?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

12. During these lessons we used a number of articles from newspapers. What do you think of this approach.?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

13. If someone asks you if the method is a good form of learning what would you say.?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

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# Drive to root out school crime

By Khathu Mamaila

**P**OLICE in Thohoyandou have joined forces with the education department in a massive campaign to eradicate crime in schools.

Sergeant Thivhulawi Netshituni is the man behind the campaign and he wants schools to be gun-free zones. He has already addressed more than 30 schools in the area.

Netshituni said yesterday that the campaign was launched a few weeks ago after reports that violent incidents such as rape and the pointing of

firearms were on the increase in schools because pupils were imitating actors in the controversial television series *Yizo Yizo*.

"We received a number of complaints from principals that pupils were coming to school armed. Some were said to be sneaking out during school hours to drink alcohol and take drugs.

"Some of the pupils openly threatened their teachers and refused to be punished, while others formed gangs. They assaulted other pupils and girls were allegedly abducted and raped.

"When we received the complaints, we felt that we should not just arrest the

suspects but we should address the root cause of the problem by empowering these youths with knowledge. It would not have helped anybody to jail pupils who are supposed to be in class," said Netshituni.

In consultation with the education department, police organised a function at Thohoyandou Stadium last week where *Yizo Yizo* stars addressed the pupils, urging them to concentrate on their studies.

He said the pupils responded to the messages positively. The situation in schools had improved dramatically since then.

Education spokesman Mr Bernard Matsane said the department supported the campaign because it was aimed at restoring the culture of learning and teaching.

He noted that it would be incorrect to blame *Yizo Yizo* for the collapse of discipline in schools.

"Public schools have been experiencing problems since the mid-'80s.

"What this television drama has done is to expose the problems in schools to parents who did not want to play any role in the education of their children," said Matsane.

He confirmed that there had been

allegations of bad behaviour by some pupils in the Far North region.

The visit by *Yizo Yizo* actors had helped to show pupils that the actors were "completely different people in real life".

"What was good about the function was that pupils were able to see that the actors are normal people with careers and they encouraged others to study so that they could pursue their dream professions," said Matsane.

He said the campaign would continue because it was vital in normalising education in schools in the province.

## Pupils praised for not avenging deaths

By Siphwe Mpye

**P**UPILS of Orlando West High School in Soweto were commended yesterday for not retaliating after two of their schoolmates were stabbed to death in Nkowankowa, Northern Province, at the weekend.

Vusi Mlambo (20) and Boitswarelo Nobengula (18) were killed when a visit to the Bankuna High School turned ugly.

A fight broke out between the Soweto pupils and local youths. An Orlando pupil, Tsitso Mlambo, and Oupa Mabuza, a Tzaneen policeman, were injured in the incident.

Police have confirmed that a suspect was arrested for the murders.

Speaking at a moving memorial service at the Soweto school

terday, Mr Isiah Baloyi, a teacher, thanked the pupils for not retaliating. "It is not that you are cowards but you know that everything is up to the Lord."

Baloyi's words were echoed by a parent, Mrs Lydia Kubheka, who said the pupils showed "a tremendous amount of discipline" by heeding teachers' pleas not to avenge the killing of their friends.

Mrs Joan Krassoi, a representative of the Gauteng department of education, sent her condolences to the families of the deceased and challenged the pupils to commit themselves to their schoolwork.

"If the results at Orlando West are good at the end of this year, it will prove that these two boys did not die in vain. Make a difference and move the country forward," J. M. M. said.

Orlando West principal Mr SK Ntlanane comforted the bereaved families with a few words from the Bible, imploring everyone to pray because "we do not know the time (of our death)".

Several teachers and friends spoke fondly of the slain boys amid the sorrowful weeping of friends and parents.

One girl had to be escorted from the service.

Tsitso, who was visibly traumatised by the deaths, could not speak to *Sowetan*.

Ms Nomsa Mlambo described her son Vusi as an "obedient boy". She was grateful to the teachers who organised the memorial service which "soothed my broken heart".

Vusi will be buried tomorrow in Estcourt, KwaZulu-Natal, and Boitswarelo, Northern Province.

Sowetan  
Friday 4th June

APPENDIX 5.B.

# Just who is responsible?

Principals, teachers and pupils fall victim to the Yizo-Yizo culture all too often – and violence in the school ground is eroding the culture of teaching and learning. Yet few political parties have put these issues on the election agenda.

what should be done in schools – and who is responsible, the Government or the community?



**▲ Shaun Benater** is a first-time voter. He is a 16-year-old pupil at Jo'burg's King David High.

I don't think the Government is doing enough. It's quite a pressing situation when you think about it, and it doesn't give young people much hope for their future.

Maybe the authorities could think about using the same methods they do in the US where there are metal detectors at entrances and pupils are searched for weapons.

We don't want a situation like what happened in Colorado, and it could happen if nothing is done to stop school violence here.

We definitely need more control because violence in some schools has a lot to do with the fact that there are too many guns, and they are too easily available.

**▲ Tshediso Motsitsi** is a Daveyton resident and journalist who works for a soccer magazine.

Basically I think parents need to get themselves more involved in their children's education and know what is happening in their children's lives, because ordinary people are disillusioned with politicians and don't believe politicians can necessarily do anything about, say, violence in schools.

The only time we ever see the politicians, it seems, is when there's an election. No doubt the next time we'll see them after this will be in 2004.

All stakeholders – children, parents, teachers, the school governing-body and the government should be bonding together.

**▲ Mosiana Motselisi** is an x-ray technician at a Johannesburg hospital. She lives in Randburg.

Violence in schools is a difficult one when it comes to political parties. There's not much they can do and most manifestoes don't say much about schools.

Political parties can get involved indirectly through their youth leaders and use them to go to schools and meet the SRCs to find out what the problems are and try to show students that you don't need to commit crime. They need to remind them that they are the leaders of tomorrow.

Students must also be responsible for themselves and parents must participate more. They need to involve themselves in the whole situation.

**▲ Holla Kgasago** is a Johannesburg sales assistant who lives in Orlando West, Soweto.

Parents have got to be more involved and the Government would need to implement more protective laws, like making more effort to control guns.

Only people who really need guns should have them. The youth don't always understand the main purpose of weapons so the fact that they have access to them is very dangerous.

It would also make a difference to have more security at schools. Ultimately, it is mainly the community's responsibility to make more of an effort to stop violence in schools. We need to support youth leaders. They should be in schools to talk to children.

**▲ Ronald Smith** worked in exports and imports until he retired. He lives in Jo'burg.

Unemployment must be tackled, because a lot of the hostilities you have in schools are caused by people in their late teens and early twenties – youngsters with no jobs who use other children to do crime and make money.

But in the end, I'm not sure that it is only the Government's job to stem the violence. I'm not sure even a new government is going to do anything.

The community should do more. Why not have a kind of neighbourhood watch where people living near schools get involved in security and teachers have a list of people who they can call when there is trouble?

**▲ Sam Phororo** is an ex-Mr South Africa who runs his Jo'burg event-management firm.

It isn't only the Government's responsibility but also that of the parents, the communities and the teachers. Parents should be the people to guide kids.

They should be more involved with their children and know where they are all the time. At home parents should get more involved. If a TV programme has an age restriction they must enforce it.

Parents, with teachers, should have workshops with children. Schools should have strict security. The Government should look at gun control. It should also increase salaries of police, who have an important role to play in this security.

**▲ Tshidi Molefe** is a trained junior primary school teacher living in Boksburg.

As a black person living in the townships, the violence in the schools here is a worrying issue. The schools here have no security.

Children and teachers are on their own with no one to protect them. So far, the Government has lagged behind in protecting our children from violence. The Government should look at hiring security for "hot spot" schools. Another thing is television.

I think that many programmes being screened promote violence. Children are learning by what they are seeing on the television. There should be some sort of censorship to protect them.

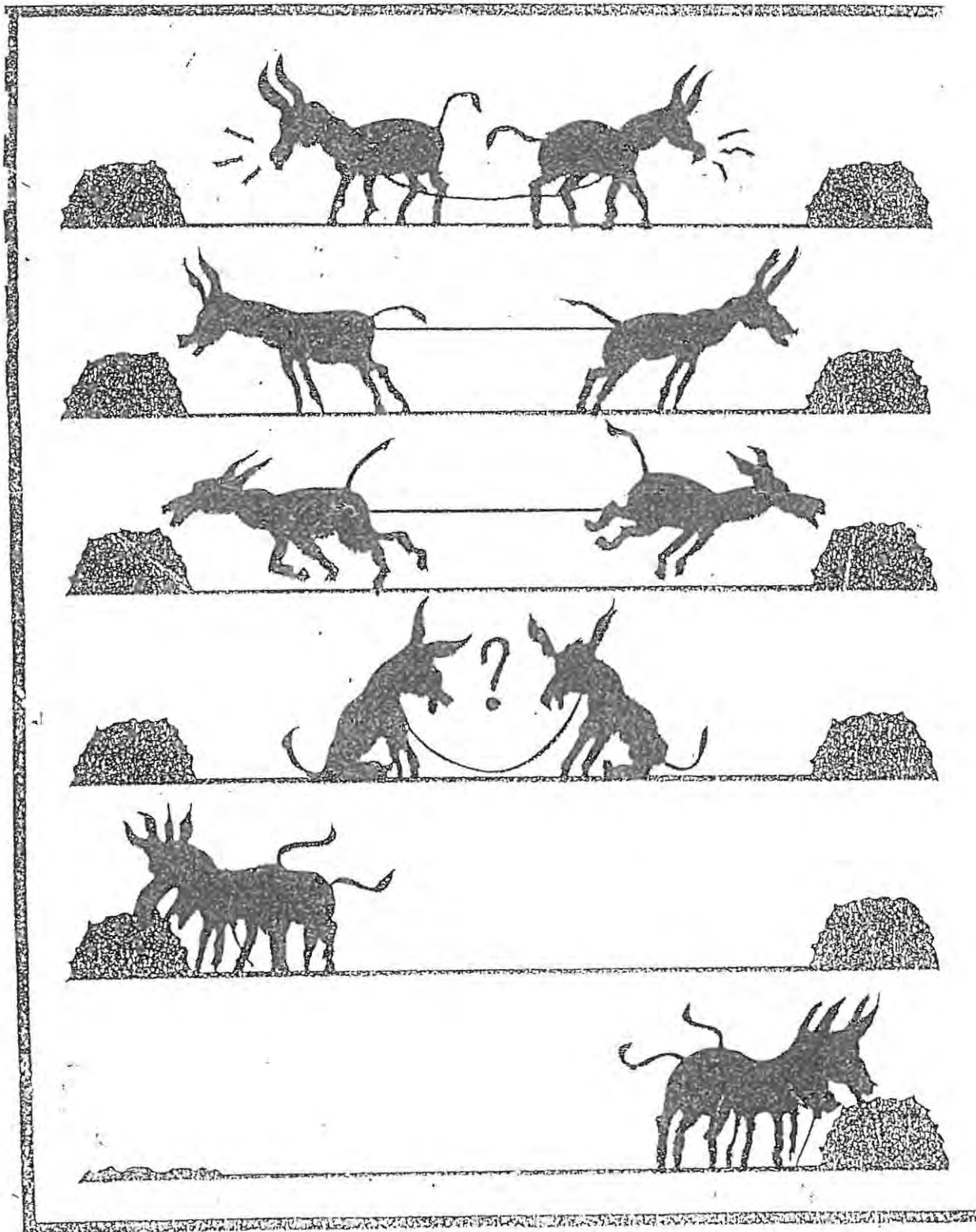
The Star  
Friday May 7 1999.

## Recent cases of school violence

- Vryburg High School grade nine pupil Andrew Babelie allegedly stabbed matric pupil Christoff Erasmus with a pair of scissors in February. Babelie, who was initially charged with assault with intent to do grievous bodily harm, has now been charged with attempted murder.
- A pupil (18) at Hazyview High School in Mpumalanga allegedly slapped classmates and intimidated teachers before attacking the deputy principal with a broom and then a pick axe. The pupil went berserk after he was apparently found loitering and asked to return to class.
- Onas Hlungwani, a pupil at a rural school in Giyani, in the Northern Province, was stabbed during a playground brawl. The 16-year-old attacker was charged with murder.
- Andreas Werth, a teacher at Townview High School in Krugersdorp, was allegedly shot by 18-year-old Justice Mahafha in front of a class of grade eight pupils. He has been charged with murder.
- Bullies assaulted Renae Naick, a grade 2 pupil at Impala Crescent Primary School in Lenasia. She was dragged by the hair into a house where she was repeatedly kicked by a group of 11 pupils. She was also bitten by an army of ants which was thrown on her.
- Thabisang Lower Primary School principal Gwendolina Thandi Jele (55) was gunned down outside the school's Orlando West, Soweto, office.

# TEAMWORK

*AN EDITORIAL WITHOUT WORDS*



# Plan to trim civil service staff

By Makhudu Sefara

**P**UBLIC Service and Administration Minister Gerald Fraser-Moleketi announced yesterday the establishment of a 10-member committee that would review conditions of service for public servants in Northern Province.

Fraser-Moleketi said the team, led by Mr Corrie Smith, chief director in the Department of Public Service and Administration, would help the Government establish how many redundant civil servants there were in the province.

The team, to comprise several provincial directors and consultants appointed by the national department, would then advise the Government on ways to rid itself of such redundant employees.

Addressing a news conference in Pietersburg yesterday, Fraser-Moleketi made clear her intentions to "right-size" the public service and indicated that the Government would outsource some of its non-core functions and lay off a considerable number of employees.

"It is crucial to create a lean and efficient service," she said.

She pointed out, however, that workers would not be released into an economically hostile environment as they would outsource some of the Government's non-core functions.

Those to be laid off would be urged to open companies that would tender for such outsourced Government functions.

It is expected that thousands of civil servants would be retrenched

following the review by the task team, which starts its work in the province tomorrow. The expected retrenchments would add to the more than 2 000 civil servants, aged over 60, who would be laid off at the end of this month.

Premier Ngoako Ramatlhodi said the imminent reduction of the bloated civil service was aimed at expediting service delivery. Ramatlhodi said his discussions with the minister on an integrated implementation programme (of retrenchments) were fruitful.

Northern Province government spokesman, Mr Jack Mokobi, said each department had already started identifying functions that could be outsourced. This would then help reduce the number of civil servants and the wage bill.

## Call for govt efficiency

By Khathu Mamalla

THE government cannot continue to operate like an inefficient businessman paying people who are not productive, Northern Province MEC for Agriculture Dr Aaron Motsoaledi said this week.

Addressing his senior managers in Pietersburg, Motsoaledi said the government "has to change in order to adapt to the changing environment".

He said change was painful but necessary. During transformation, some jobs would have to be shed.

"In the past people were employed by this department just to alleviate poverty. There are cases of old ladies who were employed to dig trenches in the morning, only to fill

them up in the afternoon.

"We want our development arm, the Agricultural and Rural Development Corporation, to produce black commercial farmers within the next five years.

"We want these farmers to create employment for hundreds of people," said Motsoaledi.

"In the past, commercial farming was synonymous with white farmers while subsistence farming equalled black farmers."

Some of the so-called emerging farmers had been emerging for the past 10 years.

He said the department would put projects into private hands so that the government could stop pumping money into projects that could not sustain themselves.

There were projects that had collapsed but the government continued to pay workers who were not working but attached to them.

A team of experts had been commissioned to draw up a new curriculum for the two agricultural colleges in the province.

"These colleges were created during the apartheid era and they were never meant to produce farmers but people who could be deployed in rural areas to train villagers in subsistence farming.

"Most graduates from these colleges cannot be employed and cannot become commercial farmers.

"We want this situation to change and produce people who can run farms on a viable and sustainable commercial basis," said Motsoaledi.

## Girl (14) has 'teacher's baby'

By Khathu Mamalla

A 14-YEAR-OLD primary school-girl of Nwazekudzeku village, near Giyani, who was allegedly made pregnant by her class teacher has had a baby.

The girl was forced to drop out of school early this year after it was discovered that she was pregnant.

The 28-year-old teacher has been arrested and his case is pending, police spokesman Inspector Moatshe Ngoepe confirmed yesterday.

A social worker, who did not

wish to be named, said had it not been for the intervention of the social workers, the teacher would still be free.

"This teacher has been abusing girls at the school," the social worker said. "Another girl who was sexually abused by the same teacher refused to open a case against him, although her family knew everything about their affair.

"Her grandmother reported the case to the police, but when the police wanted a statement from the victim she refused to cooperate. The

case had to be withdrawn. The girl confessed to her family only after the case was withdrawn."

The social worker said cases of child abuse by teachers were common in rural areas. The girls were given money by their teachers and in turn they would submit to sexual abuse.

Ngoepe confirmed that the local child protection unit was investigating several cases of sexual abuse of schoolgirls by their teachers. He urged communities to report all cases to the police.

## Girl with baby wins right to go back to class

By Tefo MOTHIBELI  
Education Reporter

A challenge to the spirit of the constitution played itself out on the grounds of Reasoma Secondary School in Soweto yesterday.

At the centre of the drama is a Grade 12 pupil who fell pregnant and, according to the school's policy, has to stay at home for a year, even though she has had her baby.

The pupil, instead of complying with the rules, refused to be sent home and has taken the matter up with Gauteng's education department, which ordered that she be reinstated because her suspension violates her right to education.

The Bill of Rights also prohibits discrimination on the grounds of pregnancy.

However, the decision to reinstate the girl was not well received by her schoolmates, who protested yesterday against the instruction and refused to attend classes.

They argued it was important that the school policy be applied to everyone without fear or favour.

A part of the school's policy, which was drafted by representatives of parents, teachers and pupils, states unequivocally: "Any learner who falls pregnant or renders another pregnant shall forfeit the remaining academic year. The said learner's readmission during the next academic year is assured."

This declaration forms part of the rules which have been used in the running of the school for the past five years.

Over the years, girls who fell pregnant, and the boys responsible, knew what lay in store for them and duly obliged.

"This policy is the soul of the successful running of this school and the good reputation it has enjoyed in the community over the years," said Grade 11 pupil Bheki Tshabalala (18).

Tshabalala, a representative of pupils on the school governing body, said that if the rules were waived in this case it would be unfair to those to whom it had been applied.

"At the moment there are other pregnant girls from the school who are at home because they understand the rules. What is so special about this instance?" he asked.

Tshabalala said that if the Government insisted on the reinstatement of the girl, that would run against the wishes of the majority on how they wanted their school to be administered.

"There is no way we are going to allow pregnant girls to sit in our classes. This is not a maternity ward but a school. They are trying to break down discipline which has been the trademark of this school," he added.

A girl who had to stay at home after she fell pregnant in 1995 said it would be unfair if the rules were waived in this case.

"We all know what the policy says because we were party to its making. I served my punishment - why can't she?"

"Those rules have made this school into what it is, and it would be sad if they were to be changed because of this incident," she said.

The pupils' representative council president, Mxolisi Tale, said that while they were concerned about the time they were losing by boycotting classes, they were not prepared to give in on their demand that the policy be implemented.

"We are fighting to protect the image of our school. We are very proud of it and we are not going to let anyone spoil its reputation. This is the best school around, and that is because of our policy," he said.

The school's principal, Smileth Ntutela, would only say of the events at the school: "We applied our policy and were overruled. I followed the district education co-ordinator's instruction that the girl be reinstated, and the other children are unhappy about it.

"I am deeply concerned about time that is being lost."

The Human Rights Commission's legal department

head, Mogam Moodliar, said the fact that the school had been enforcing the policy for some time did not necessarily make it right.

"The policy has to be consistent with the spirit of the constitution. Clearly the girl's rights have been violated here because the decision discriminates against her," he said.

Education MEC Mary Metcalfe said her department would attend to the issue urgently. "This matter has to be handled with sensitivity because it is of grave concern to our communities," she added.

*The Star*

May 13 1999.

## Self-assessment sheet

Name:  Date:

Activity:

What I did:

What I used:

What I learnt:

What I could do next:

*Christine Shingles, The John Beil Trust*

Session 6, Resource 3c

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# CURRICULUM 2005

## Self-assessment: co-operative work GROUP ASSESSMENT

Names: .....

Did our group:	YES	NO
LISTEN to each other?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
TALK about the task?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
CO-OPERATE?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
SUGGEST good ideas?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
ENCOURAGE each other?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

What went well? .....

.....

.....

What could we do better? .....

.....

.....

**Signed:** .....

*Christine Shingles, The John Bell Trust*

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QUESTION 1

FORM VERBS FROM THE WORDS UNDERLINED

e.g. He makes his muscles strong  
He strengthens his muscles

- 1.1 Mother made the dress longer
- 1.2 The teacher is going to make the story shorter
- 1.3 The boy makes the pencil sharp
- 1.4 Mr. Htine made the wall wide
- 1.5 This medicine will make the baby weak (10)

QUESTION 2

REPLACE THE WORDS IN BOLD LETTERS BY A SINGLE VERB.

Yawn, appetite, disclosed, contagious, resembles, reminded, introduce, neglected, hibernate.

- 2.1 Snakes spend the winter sleeping underground.
- 2.2 The case was postponed for a later date.
- 2.3 He told publicly all what he had had.
- 2.4 The girl opened his mouth wide as a result of sleepiness.
- 2.5 The disease is easily caught by touching an infected person. (10)

QUESTION 3

COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING DOUBLES

- (a) Children, teachers and parents are ..... and parcel of the school.
- (b) He looked .... and low for the book that sheilla had lost.
- (c) It rained .... and dogs for two consecutive days.
- (d) I warned the naught boy time and .... not to misbehave.
- (e) The principal thanked them one and .... for attending the meeting. (10)

QUESTION 4

GIVE THE MEANING OF THE FOLLOWING EXPRESSIONS

- 4.1 Let bygones be bygones
- 4.2 I'm all ears
- 4.3 Crocodile tears
- 4.4 To bear in mind
- 4.5 In a nutshell (10)

QUESTION 5

CHANGE THE BRACKETED VERBS INTO THE PAST AND PAST PERFECT TENSE.

- 5.1 I believe he (run) away from home because he (quarrel) with his parents.
- 5.2 The police (catch) the thief that (escaped) from prison.
- 5.3 I (feel) sorry for her because she (lose) all her money.
- 5.4 Peter (visit) a friend after he (give) the dog some food.
- 5.5 They (go) to the cinema after they (do) their work. (10)

QUESTION 6

REWRITE THE FOLLOWING SENTENCES BY FILLING IN HAS OR HAVE.

- 6.1 The scholars .... attended a school presentative council meeting.
- 6.2 The boy .... done a good job.
- 6.3 He .... left a parcel on the counter.
- 6.4 We .... brought all the necessary requirements for the school.
- 6.5 You ..... given back all the books needed. (5)

QUESTION 7

MAKE EACH OF THE FOLLOWING INDIRECT BY STARTING THEM WITH, SHE ASKED HER IF OR SHE SAID THAT.

- E.G Do you come from a respectable home.  
She asked her if she came from a respectable home.
- 7.1 Do you enjoy reading poems?
  - 7.2 I love interesting poems and plays.
  - 7.3 Have you seen people performing a play before?
  - 7.4 It is exciting to watch people perform a play
  - 7.5 Can you travel by train to Durban. (10)

QUESTION 8

REPLACE THE UNDERLINED WORDS BY A PRECISE SYNONYMS.

- 8.1 The man was reluctant to go to the meeting.
- 8.2 He permitted his scholars to leave the room
- 8.3 I was rescued by the people who are experts in swimming. (5)
- 8.4 He is obliged to do his work.
- 8.5 Sipho began to call him names.

QUESTION 9

GIVE THE ANTONYMS (OPPOSITES) OF THE UNDERLINED WORDS BY USING THE PREFIXES Dis-, un-, in-, ex-, in-, or in-

- 9.1 I do (not agree) with what he say about this matter.
- 9.2 The scholars are regular in school attendance.
- 9.3 All the assets such as houses, and plots cannot be moved, hence they are referred as movable property.
- 9.4 The story was believable
- 9.5 He did not have enough money for he was given sufficient funds. (5)

QUESTION 10

JOIN EACH OF THE FOLLOWING PAIRS BY USING THE WORD/WORDS PROVIDED IN BRACKETS.

- (a) Mother cooks vegetables. She wants us to be health (so that can)
  - (b) We listened to the news. We would know what is happening around the world (in order to)
  - (c) I stay at home. My friend will call (in case)
  - (d) The girl is crying. Her mother is knocked down by a car(whose)
  - (e) Tom lost his jersey. He bought it at Edgars (which) (5)
- 4/.....



Figure 1  
CSR's plan for strategic reading

