

ESTABLISHING CRITERIA TO EVALUATE READING PROGRAMMES INTENDED  
FOR INTERMEDIATE TO ADVANCED LEVEL ESL LEARNERS IN  
SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS.

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ABSTRACT

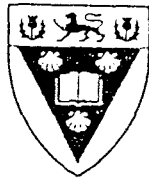
This study set out to formulate criteria for evaluating reading comprehension materials intended for ESL readers in high schools in South Africa. Such criteria may help teachers in selecting textbooks which have theoretically-informed reading programmes. It was first necessary, therefore, to isolate those points from reading comprehension theory that could be included in the criteria. Secondly, other checklists/criteria in ESL evaluation were examined to identify a framework within which to work.

In the first draft, questions to be included in the criteria/checklist were formulated using justification from reading comprehension theory. A focus group technique was then used to obtain preliminary feedback on the usability of the checklist. Suggestions from the focus group were used to revise the criteria. A final checklist was prepared which teachers could use as an instrument to evaluate reading comprehension programmes in language textbooks.

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CHATER ONE  
INTRODUCTION

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- 1.4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF RESEARCH
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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 AIMS

The study aims to:

- (a) Isolate those points from theory that can be included in criteria for evaluation of English as a second language (ESL) reading programmes as presented by various language textbooks in use in South Africa
- (b) Use these criteria to construct an instrument which will enable practising ESL teachers to evaluate ESL reading programme.

#### 1.2 ORIGINS AND CONTEXT OF RESEARCH

The motivation for this study is closely linked to the historical background of the education system in South Africa. In particular, the study's frame of reference is government-run schools in the former Republic of Transkei, now constituting the eastern region of the Eastern Cape.

Until 1995 when the White Paper on Education was published to introduce a democratic education system, government schools in Transkei were an extension of what has been known as Bantu Education (Nasson and Samuel 1990). The historical beginnings of Bantu Education or Black education may be placed in the passing of the Bantu Education Act of 1953 (Wilson and Ramphela 1989; Nasson and Samuel 1990). Through the passing of the Act

the White government of the day endorsed the apartheid philosophy of separate development in education and training systems. As a result, the State was determined to ensure that "the majority of the black children would receive a schooling that did not equip them for anything other than unskilled manual labour (Nasson and Samuel 1990: 20). To ensure that this was achieved, the ultimate control of funds and policy was retained by white governments (White Paper on Education and Training 1995; Wilson and Ramphela 1989).

Black schools in both the then Republic of South Africa and the former homelands (i.e. Transkei, Bophutatswana, Ciskei and Venda) were poorly funded. The implications were definitely negative. Both Nasson and Samuel (1990) and Wilson and Ramphela (1989) report that because of poor funding, there was an acute absence of resources such as school buildings, classrooms, desks, textbooks, libraries laboratories and teaching aids. To compound such an absence of vital educational resources was the presence in schools of large numbers of underqualified teachers (Wilson and Ramphela 1989).

The absence of provision of textbooks and the preponderance of underqualified teachers meant that the quality of education provided for the black child was abysmally low. Needless to say the implications of such an educational scenario for second language teaching were enormous. It is likely that if the ESL teachers were themselves poorly equipped and there were few textbooks to assist them, then their students would have limited

opportunities for learning. This was evidenced in studies done by Lanham (1986), Pienaar (1987), Perkins (1987), to name but a few, in which the reading skills of ESL learners were found to be below expected standards of competence.

Although there has been an increase in the number of qualified teachers from both the University and teacher training colleges in what was the Transkei, resources have not been greatly improved. Consequently, these teachers are confronted with overcrowded classrooms which make it impossible to attend to students individually, something crucial to language learning. The writer assumes that such teachers and those less qualified might be assisted by theoretically well-grounded language textbooks.

As a teacher of ESL, the writer has always been concerned by the low levels of reading comprehension displayed by some students she has taught at High School, Teacher Training College and presently at the University of Transkei. Throughout this time, the writer has been bothered by a number of questions, which include the following:

- (a) Is the language of the reading materials too difficult for the students?
- (b) Are the reading materials far-removed from the students' background knowledge?
- (c) Could their poor performance be a result of the way reading comprehension was taught in schools?
- (d) Are students simply poor readers?

The writer's observations regarding difficulties in reading experienced by ESL students are echoed by other researchers and practitioners - for instance, Pienaar (1987), with regard to high school students in Bophuthatswana; and Perkins (1987) with regard to first-year students at the University of Transkei, whose results revealed low levels of comprehension among black students.

Strevens (1977), writing on the teaching of reading points out that reading is regarded as a skill of great importance to the learner because

- (a) it provides him/her with access to a great quantity of further experience of the language

and:

- (b) it gives him/her a window on to the normal means of continuing his/her personal education.

If that be the case, then there is a need to teach students to become independent readers. This is a daunting task for a teacher who might not be familiar with current theories of reading to guide his/her teaching. Such a teacher could be helped by a language textbook that is theoretically well-informed about current trends in ESL reading comprehension. However, it might not be easy to tell whether a reading programme in a textbook reflects current trends or not. The problem is also compounded by the plethora of language textbooks that a teacher has to select from in a situation where he/she has the freedom

to do so. It would seem that teachers' guides accompanying textbooks may be one factor that may help teachers to select a textbook. However these are not available for all language textbooks.

### 1.3 RATIONALE OF STUDY

The choice of a textbook that teachers make will affect not only their teaching but also their students' learning. It is thus important that teachers make an informed choice. This is where the present study seeks to make a contribution. It is envisaged that the criteria formulated in this study will provide the teacher with a theoretically well-informed framework for the assessment of reading materials contained in language textbooks. Indeed as Murphy (1985) (in Alderson, 1985) puts it, the task of materials evaluation is one that all teachers should know how to carry out if language teaching is to develop, but this can only be possible if some guidelines are available to teachers.

### 1.4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF RESEARCH

In recent years reading has been described and defined from different disciplinary perspectives. Applied Linguistics, Psycholinguistics, Cognitive Psychology, Education and Literacy studies, Second Language Acquisition (SLA) research, Genre Analysis etc, have all contributed to our understanding of the nature of reading comprehension.

In an attempt to establish criteria which are as inclusive as possible, this study has included current trends that view

reading as a process (interactive models of reading), as well as those not accommodated by the interactive models and yet equally significant in developing sound reading abilities in ESL readers.

A discussion of the following theories - Interactive Models of Reading; Critical Language Awareness (CLA); Genre Analysis, and Cohesion Theory is made to highlight major tenets of each theory. These key elements are then summarized to form the basis of criteria to be formulated in this study.

#### 1.5 DESCRIPTION OF RESEARCH PROJECT

In an attempt to fulfil aims 2 and 3 (see AIMS) of this study, both theories on ESL reading comprehension and literature on materials/textbook evaluation in ESL were used to provide indicators for the formulation of the criteria. In other words, materials/textbook evaluation provided a framework within which to work, while key elements from theory formed the basis for questions to be included in the criteria.

The formulation of criteria took three phases. In the first phase, tentative questions were asked, and a statement of justification was made for each question - drawing from the theoretical perspectives which constituted the conceptual framework of this study. Secondly, the tentative criteria were tried out with a small group of teachers by the writer to establish the extent to which the questions were suitable for evaluating an ESL reading comprehension programme/materials. A focus group technique (Anderson, 1990) was then used in the third

phase to collect views and comments from teacher trainees for purposes of revising the criteria.

## 1.6 STRUCTURE OF THESIS

The remainder of this thesis has four chapters:

### Chapter 2: A Theoretical Framework for ESL Reading Comprehension

This chapter reviews some current theories/beliefs which have contributed to our understanding of the processes involved in ESL reading comprehension. These are dealt with in the section titled 'The Theory of how people develop reading comprehension.'

The chapter also reviews other equally significant theories - e.g Critical Language Awareness (CLA); Genre Analysis and the Cohesion Theory. Ideas from Krashen (1984) and Widdowson (1978) are also reviewed and included in the key theoretical elements that form the basis for formulation of criteria.

### Chapter 3: Establishing tentative criteria for Evaluation of an ESL Reading Programme.

This chapter begins by stating where the study can be placed in terms of evaluation in education generally, and ESL in particular. Futhermore, the chapter also contains the following:

- (a) tentative criteria are formulated using the key elements of theories reviewed in chapter 2
- (b) questions are rephrased and placed in a YES/NO grid; space is provided for comments
- (c) an information sheet on criteria is prepared for the benefit of those standard 8 teachers who might not be familiar with current theories of reading
- (d) the writer subjects the criteria to a preliminary testing to check whether they would work
- (e) writers' comments on the findings

#### Chapter 4: Testing and Revision of Criteria

This chapter presents views and comments of a focus group which was used to check whether the criteria would assist standard 8 teachers in evaluating textbooks. The collected views and comments formed the basis for revision of criteria. Furthermore, the chapter also contains the writing of a final draft of the criteria as they would be presented to a standard 8 teacher who would like to evaluate a reading programme presented in any of the various textbooks in use.

#### Chapter 5: Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

- The need for evaluation of textbooks is discussed as well as the need to train teachers to carry out evaluation of materials.

- Recommendations: (i) evaluation of materials be included in the curriculum at pre-service colleges (ii) In-Service teachers be oriented in materials' evaluation (iii) a 'dry' theoretical evaluation of a programme does not indicate its strength and weaknesses in the classroom - need to carry out empirical evaluation of reading programmes presented by language textbooks.

## CHAPTER TWO

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR ESL READING COMPREHENSION

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## CHAPTER 2

### A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR ESL READING COMPREHENSION

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter reviews various theories which have shed light on ESL reading comprehension in recent years. Until recently the teaching of reading in a foreign/second language has taken the skills/product approach in which comprehension of a text by a reader has meant the production of correct answers to a set of questions said to be testing mastery of sub-skills such as those suggested in the taxonomies of Barret (1968); Adams-Smith (1981); Davies and Widdowson (1974) to name but a few (see page 13). The question of "how" the reader arrives at those answers (the process) was not considered. Thus, this approach has viewed reading as a series of sub - skills which could be taught at different stages during the learning of a second/foreign language. The approach fails to offer any insight into how the reader comprehends text. It should, however, be mentioned that this mechanical approach to reading comprehension was influenced by the learning theories of the times - in particular 'behaviourism' which dominated the field of language learning from the 1940's to the 1960's. This theory regarded language learning as "habit formation". In contrast current theories and research view language learning and reading as interactive, cognitive processes. Going by current thought, this implies, therefore, that designing a reading programme, presently, calls for a much more interactive approach than earlier envisaged.

**Table 2.1 A taxonomy of micro-skills for reading**

1. Perception and Automatic Recognition Skills:
  - (a) recognize distinctive features, letters, parts of words, or whole words;
  - (b) discriminate between the similar orthographic patterns of different words;
  - (c) recognize synonymity, collocation, and other lexical/semantic relations between words (i.e. general-specific, part-whole, part-part, same semantic, etc.);
  - (d) chunk smaller units into larger single processing units;
  - (e) limit regressions to normal amounts used by native readers;
  - (f) read rapidly enough to have adequate information input to form or call up various schemata, scripts, plans, or goals;
  - (g) recognize different script and print styles;
  - (h) recognize orthographic cues (punctuation, capitalization, indentation);
  - (i) read charts, tables, graphs, maps, directories, etc.;
  - (j) find a specific item of information quickly.
2. Vocabulary:
  - (a) recognize vocabulary items similar to forms they know;
  - (b) guess the meanings of unknown items from context;
  - (c) guess the meanings of unknown items from derivational affixes;
  - (d) recognize variance of meanings in vocabulary items;
  - (e) guess meanings of vocabulary items that require cultural information to define.
3. Syntactic Skills:
 

recognize the various syntactic patterns of the language.
4. Cohesion:
 

recognize ellipsis, transition forms, reference, etc. (the range of cohesive devices, as in Halliday and Hasan 1976).
5. Coherence:
  - (a) recognize different word order patterns occurring for functional and stylistic purposes;
  - (b) detect topical words from less important ones;
  - (c) read rapidly over a text to determine the topic and its usefulness for reader's purpose;
  - (d) infer situations, goal, participants - local inferencing procedures from the text;
  - (e) use real world knowledge and experience to work out purposes, goals, settings, and procedures;
  - (f) predict outcomes;
  - (g) infer links and connections between groups of events/objects;
  - (h) detect coherence relations such as main idea, supporting detail, given information, new information, and basic cognitive relations such as cause and effect, time sequence, spatial sequence, condition, etc.;
  - (i) recognize larger logical rhetorical patterns such as definition, exemplification, classification, comparison and contrast.
6. Author's Stance:
  - (a) distinguish between literal and implied meaning;
  - (b) determine author's goals, intents, biases.
7. Application Skills:
  - (a) critique particular texts and compare them to other texts;
  - (b) synthesize and integrate material.

Source: W. Grabe (in Dubin, et al (1986)

Before a review of the various current theories is presented, a definition of reading as a process may serve to show how complex the issue is because reading can be defined and described in a variety of ways. This implies that designing a reading programme that is informed by recent theories about reading would be a formidable task since the nature of the reading process itself is elusive. Grabe (1986: 25-48) summarises some key points from different theorists who have attempted to define reading.

Reading has been defined as:

- a psycholinguistic guessing game; [which] involves an interaction between thought and language. Efficient reading (results) from skill in selecting the fewest, most productive cues necessary to produce guesses which are right the first time. (Goodman, 1967)
- an anticipatory, selective, purposeful and comprehending process. (Smith, 1982)
- a process of interpreting/understanding the text in terms of questions that the reader formulates about the text. That is readers find answers to the questions they pose. (Smith, 1982)
- a process of matching information in a text to internally activated information. Thus, reading is not information processing but rather information interpreting - what we understand from a text depends

in part on what we knew previously, as well as on how we allow the text to extend and refine our knowledge of the topic. Reading is the interaction of the text and the reader. (Widdowson, 1978; Carrell and Eisterhold, 1983)

- use of different levels of internal information as well as various types of information, all interacting simultaneously to allow optimal interpretation. The reader relies on perceptual processing, phonemic processing, and internal recall of many types (syntactic knowledge, lexical knowledge, story grammars, descriptive scripts, schematic arrangement and connecting of related sets of information, intentions of the text and of the reader, affective mechanisms, etc.)

(Van Dijk and Kintsch, 1983; Taylor and Taylor, 1983).

Such is the array of definitions or explanations of the reading process that finds its way into various current theories to be reviewed below. However, there are a number of important aspects that are common to all the above accounts; first, that reading comprehension is no longer thought of as merely a product but a process in which a reader interacts with the text; secondly, that meaning of text is not carried by the text but constructed by the reader during the reading process; thirdly, that the reader brings his or her own knowledge to the reading process. The

second and third aspects could be paraphrased as follows: that discourse understanding is not intrinsic in the semantics of words but depends upon pragmatic knowledge, or knowledge of how things normally work, rather than how they necessarily work (Sanford and Garrod, 1981:53).

The following section makes brief outlines of the major tenets of various theories which have informed our understanding of the reading process in general and ESL reading comprehension in particular.

## 2.2 THE THEORY OF HOW PEOPLE DEVELOP READING COMPREHENSION

This section presents different models of reading with a particular focus on schema theory and interactive models of reading as they relate to the reading processes of ESL readers. The appearance of interactive models can be divided into two phases: the earlier interactive models of Goodman (1967, 1971); Smith (1971); Rumelhart (1977) and Stanovich (1980) etc., which are models of reading in general, and the models of Carrell (1982); Eisterhold (1983); Eskey (1983) etc., whose foci are the reading processes of the ESL readers.

### 2.2.1 Interactive Models of Reading

#### 2.2.1 (i) The Psycholinguistic view of Reading - Top-down processing

Goodman's model (1967, 1971) and Smith's model (1971) are both psycholinguistic in their approach because they view reading as a process in which language and thought interact in the context of written language. According to Goodman's model, reading

comprehension must be consistent with language comprehension and general comprehension. The model also postulates that during the reading process, the reader constructs meaning from the text by sampling, predicting and guessing. Other theorists such as Rigg (1977) and Smith (1971; 1978; 1982) expanded on Goodman's 'guessing game' model and set the framework for ideas on top-down information processing in reading. Top-down information processing is one of the two modes of information processing readers engage in during the process of interpreting a text (Carrell and Eisterhold 1983; Samuels and Kamil 1988). This type of processing occurs when readers use prior knowledge to make predictions about data they will find in a text, based on prior experience or background knowledge, and then they check the text for confirmation or refutation of those predictions (Langhan 1990). In addition, Smith (1982) included the idea that comprehension was the process of "relating what one doesn't know or new information to what one already knows ... which is a 'theory of the world' ".

However, it should be noted that the psycholinguistic models focus on a proficient reader, reading in his/her first language. (Carrell and Clarke 1988). In other words they do not address the ESL reader in particular. It should also be noted that the type of interaction described by these models differs from the interaction discussed in the models below. The interaction here is that between thought (theory of the world) (Smith: 1978) and language (printed text). In the models to be discussed below there is an additional interaction, which is the interaction

between different levels of knowledge to be elaborated upon later. That is, the higher levels of knowledge and lower levels of knowledge (see Figure 2.1) are constantly interacting during the reading process. Insofar as the psycholinguistic models omit this interaction, the models can be regarded as 'top-down' models rather than truly interactive.

#### 2.2.1 (ii) Rumelhart's and Stanovich's Models

Rumelhart's (1977) and Stanovich's (1981) models propose that during the reading process there is a continuous interaction between the higher levels of knowledge which draw on syntactic and semantic knowledge and the lower levels which draw on orthographic and lexical knowledge (see Figure 2. 1). It is also suggested in Stanovich's model that the different stages do not simply interact but they also become compensatory when necessary. That is, a reader may rely heavily on either higher or lower levels during the reading process when there is a deficiency in one or the other.

According to the two models, comprehension of a text is a result of the simultaneous work of higher and lower levels of knowledge. Other interactive models (Taylor, 1983; La Berge and Samuel, 1977; Perfetti, 1986) also work within the same framework. They all suggest that both top or higher knowledge structures (such as background knowledge, topic of discourse, inferencing, etc.) and lower knowledge structures (such as vocabulary, syntactic pattern recognition, etc.) are basic to reading comprehension. The models also imply that there is a wide receptive vocabulary

that is rapidly, accurately and automatically accessed by the reader, a condition which may not always be true for a second language (L2) reader.

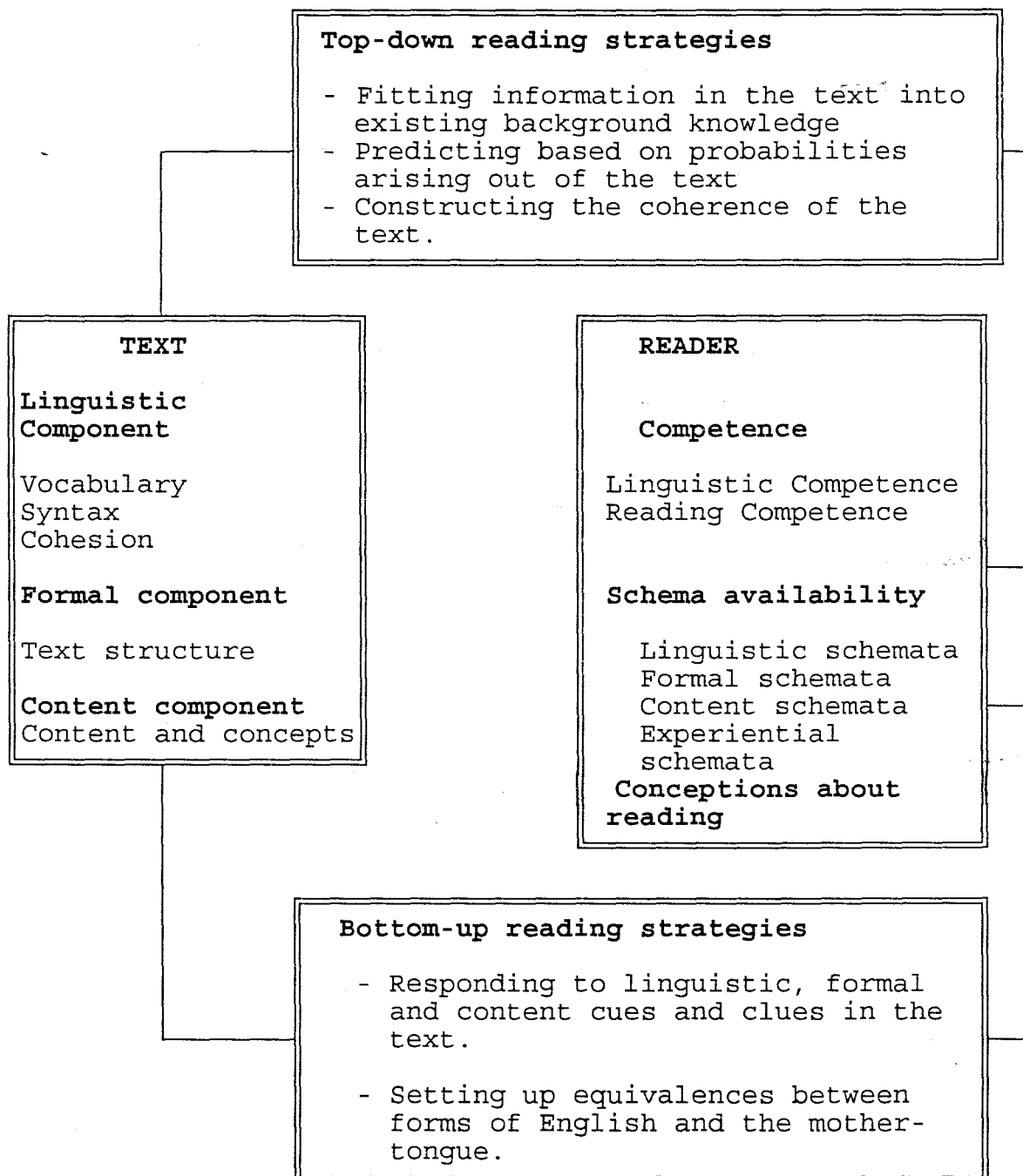


Figure 2.1 Components of the Interactive Models

Adopted from The Textbook as a source of difficulty in teaching and learning (Final Report of the Threshold 2 Project)

D.P. Langan Report ED - 21 1993.

2.2.1 (iii) Schemata, Schema Theory and ESL Reading Comprehensions

The origins of the Schema Theory can be traced as far back as 1932 when Bartlett (1932) discussed the notion of remembering. Over the years, the concept of schema has been widely discussed by various theorists who have defined schemata as:

... knowledge already stored in memory,  
[which] functions in the process of  
interpreting new information and allowing it  
to enter and become a part of the knowledge  
store ...

(Carrell 1988:37)

Schemata are said to be hierarchically organized, from most general at the top to most specific at the bottom; these represent the **higher** and **lower** levels of knowledge, respectively (Rumelhart, 1980; Adams and Collins, 1979). One of the higher levels of knowledge structures is background knowledge. It is argued that background knowledge plays an important role in reading comprehension since this is the knowledge the reader brings to the reading process to interact with the text at hand. This is the same knowledge Smith (1982) calls "theory of the world". The formalization of the role of background knowledge in reading comprehension is what is known as the Schema Theory. Other theories that work with the idea of schemata are Script Theory (Schank and Abelson, 1977) and Frame Theory (Minsky, 1975) cited in Dubin et. al. (1986); in which 'scripts' and 'frames'

may be regarded as cognitively equivalent to schemata.

According to the schema theory, during the reading process, the reader matches the information from the text with the information stored in the relevant schemata (Rumelhart and Ortony, 1977; Rumelhart, 1980 in Carrell, 1988:76). It is suggested that the more refined the array of schemata/scripts/frames at all levels of organization, the more likely it is for the reader to understand a text better. Consequently, efficient comprehension of a text implies that readers possess the ability to relate the text material to their own knowledge. This mapping of incoming information to already existing knowledge results in two basic modes of information processing called bottom-up and top-down processing (Samuels, 1983; Carrell, 1984; Silberstein, 1977 in Carrell and Eisterhold, 1988). Bottom-up processes rely heavily on the text for the construction of meaning, thus are termed 'data-driven'. Likewise top-down processes rely heavily on knowledge brought to the text so they are called 'concept-driven'.

The schema-theoretic view of reading thus assumes the following: that for the reader to engage in efficient interpretation of a text there must be (a) relevant schemata available and (b) the schemata must be activated.

- a) Schema availability - this implies that the reader possesses the relevant knowledge structures to utilize in the top-down processing of a text. If these are absent,

the reader cannot use them and thus comprehension suffers.

Carrell (1988) identifies two types of schemata necessary for comprehension:

- (1) Formal Schemata - this is background knowledge which deals with the formal, rhetorical organization of different types of texts.

It is argued that some background knowledge of how different text types are structured e.g. fables, stories, scientific texts, newspaper articles, poetry, etc. facilitates comprehension of such texts (Meyer, 1975; 1977; 1981; Carrell, 1984).

- (2) Content Schemata - this is background knowledge which is concerned with content area of the text (Carrell, 1983 b) e.g. the Cold War, the violence in South Africa, the Civil War in Angola, the economic embargo to Cuba, etc.

It is suggested that for readers to make sense of an article on any of the above topics, they must possess some knowledge on the subject matter or else they will not make much sense of the article. This assumption is supported by Sanford and Garrod (1981:80) who contend that:

... the message in a text is dependent on the reader bringing in additional knowledge in an attempt to come up with a coherent interpretation of the passage as a whole ...

- (b) Schema activation - it is argued that the possession of a schema is not by itself sufficient unless that schema is activated by the reader to assist in the interpretation of the text (Carrell 1988).

### 2.2.2 Problems Faced By An ESL Reader

There are two types of problems faced by ESL readers. These are associated with the notions of **top-down** and **bottom-up** processing (c.f. Figure 2.2). These two problems are discussed below.

#### 2.2.2 (i) Problems associated with top-down process

It is hypothesized from the schema - theoretic view of reading that ESL readers may fail to engage in meaningful interpretation of the text because they lack either content or formal schemata or fail to activate the relevant schemata. In either case the result is miscomprehension (Carrell, 1985).

Two reasons are suggested for the lack of content schemata. First it is argued that when a text is culturally specific, the ESL reader may have difficulty making sense of it if he/she comes from outside the author's culture.

A text could be culturally-specific if it describes or discusses customs, beliefs or events which are far removed from the L<sub>2</sub> reader's cultural experience or background. For example, if a text describes the ceremony of palm-wining in West Africa, the L<sub>2</sub> reader from Transkei might have problems making sense of the text because there is no such occasion in her/his culture. In

## Problems associated with Top-down & Bottom-up Processing

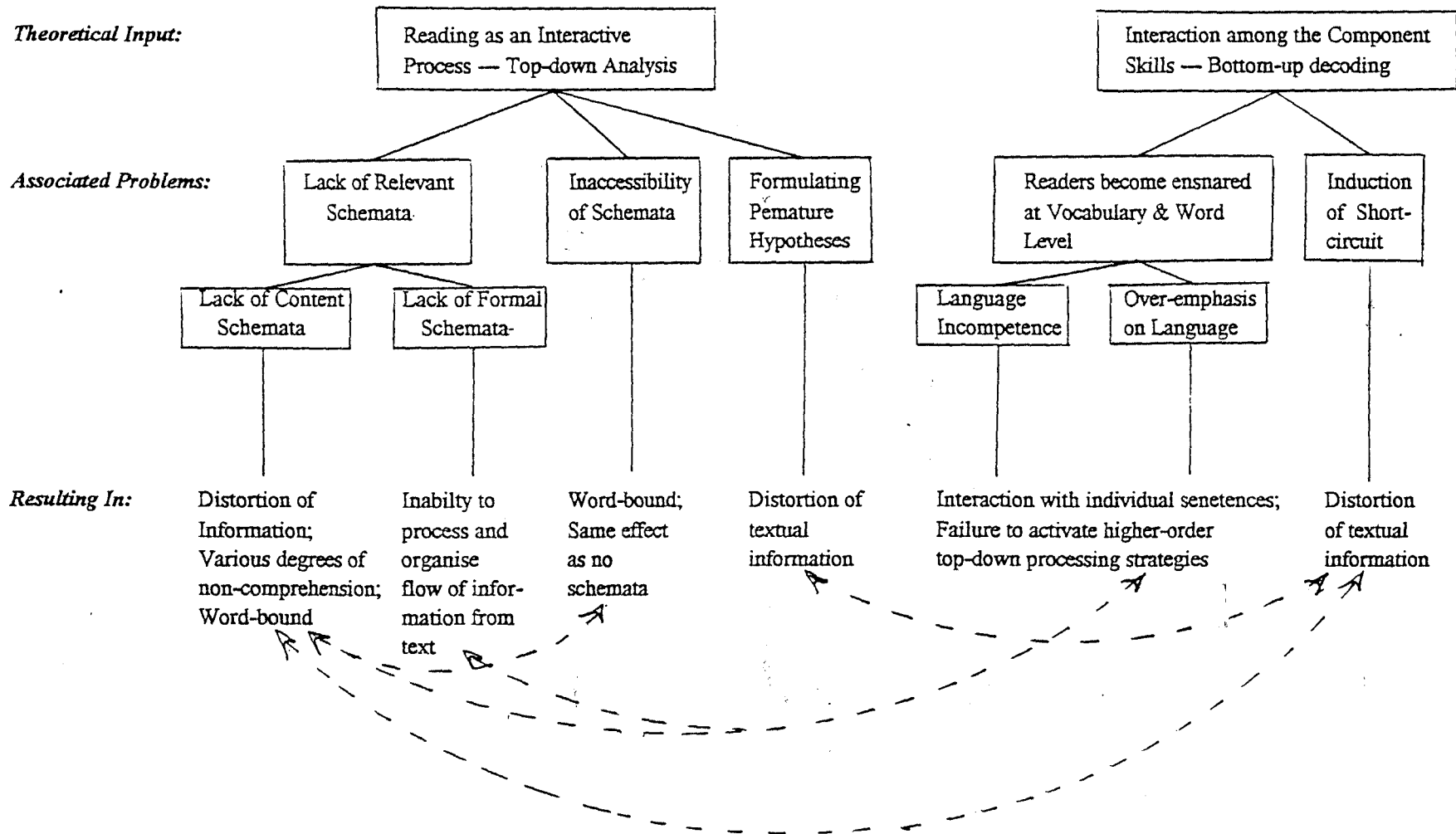


Figure 2.2

other words, he/she lacks the content schemata required for comprehending the text. This means that the schema presupposed by the author of the text is at variance with that of the reader.

Secondly, it is said that when the topic of the text is unfamiliar comprehension suffers. A topic is unfamiliar if the L<sub>2</sub> reader has not encountered it in the content subjects he/she has previously studied. For example, a text on optical illusions (a topic in physics) may cause comprehension problems for a student who has never done physics before. In concurrence with this view, a study by Alderson and Urquhart (1985) demonstrated that academic background can have an effect on reading comprehension. Studies by Steffenson and Joag-Dev (1979), Johnson (1981) and Carrell (1983) have shown that culturally familiar texts are more easily comprehended and recalled than those based on a less familiar, distant culture. Similarly Johnson (1982) and Alderson and Urquhart (1985) clearly demonstrated that the comprehension of the ESL reader is greatly improved if the topic is familiar. Likewise empirical evidence of the facilitating role of knowledge of rhetorical organisation of texts has been provided by studies done by Singer and Donlan (1982), Gordon (1980), Short (1982), Carrell (1984); Hinds (1983) and Conner (1984).

The second problem of failure to access an appropriate schema is attributed to two factors. First, that the text at hand is 'opaque' i.e it lacks sufficient textual cues to activate the schema (Carrell, 1988:105). For example, when the language of

the text is either too difficult because it is above the reader's language competence or when the language is simply obscure for the reader (see Appendix 1). This newspaper article, which the writer presented to her students doing a diploma at the University of Transkei, was found to be obscure principally for two reasons, namely, the use of figurative language - which the students could not easily decipher - and the unfamiliar theatrical connotations.

Secondly, failure to access an appropriate schema may be as a result of the reader's failure to bring the relevant schemata to bear (Anderson et al, 1977) in the top-down processing mode - i.e. when readers fail to use their background knowledge to understand a text. For example, the same students mentioned above found the text on religion difficult although it was on a familiar topic (see Appendix 2). Their failure to use their background knowledge was evident in their failure to score well in a Cloze test set on the passage. The Cloze test was administered as part of the normal continuous testing for the group. However, in addition to collecting marks for the group the writer intended to find out how the students would perform on such a test on a familiar topic like religion. The answers to the Cloze test are given in Appendix 2a, and a sample of the answers is presented in Appendix 2b. This information has been used here to support the point made by Anderson, et al (1977), Carrell (1983) and Murray (1985) that sometimes ESL readers fail to use their background knowledge to interact with the text.

Reporting on her South African experience, Murray writes:

... even when (students) do have the relevant background information, they frequently do not use it ...

(Murray 1985: 9)

#### 2.2.2 (ii) Problems associated with 'bottom-up' processes

The proponents of interactive models and schema theories consider "holding in the bottom" (i.e. making effective use of lower order knowledge structures) essential to reading comprehension. This implies that ESL readers require a reasonable grammatical and lexical base upon which to build (Alderson, 1984; Cooper, 1984; Berman, 1984; cited in Grabe et al, 1986). This grammatical and lexical base should be rapidly, accurately and automatically accessed during the reading process. However, studies conducted by Cohen et al (1980), Nuttall (1988) and Langan (1990) indicate that ESL readers may experience problems with lower-level skills. In the cases of Nuttall (1988) and Langan (1990), the studies clearly showed how textbooks used by black ESL readers in their content subjects were a major source of their reading problems since they were above their linguistic 'ceiling'. In such cases readers grapple with the text at sentential level instead of constructing meaning from the text as a coherent discourse. A deficiency in such a linguistic base may be addressed by direct instruction and extensive reading (Beck, 1981; in Grabe, et al, 1986).

Although this might be true, the nature of the linguistic base is not known (Alderson, 1984). Devine (1988) offers a way out of the problem. She suggests that a holistic and integrative language instruction could help equip the ESL reader with such a linguistic base. Such instruction would free readers from being text-bound and facilitate bidirectional processing of the text.

In summary what the interactive models and schema theory posit is a psychological account of discourse comprehension in which

... text comprehension becomes a question of the processes whereby language calls forth appropriate knowledge (of the reader), and how wording, stress and grammatical construction (of text) alter the specific knowledge brought to bear in any given case ...

(Sanford and Garrod, 1981: 80)

Such a position suggests that knowledge of the world and the process of comprehension are inextricably bound together although details of such a dependency are elusive because they are varied and complex (Sanford and Garrod, 1981).

### 2.3 OTHER CURRENT THEORIES ABOUT READING COMPREHENSION

From the discussion above, it is clear that schema theories and interactive models do not account for everything in reading comprehension. Thus in an attempt to establish more inclusive

criteria to assess a reading programme, the writer includes other current theories about reading comprehension that do not fall within the boundaries of the interactive or schema theory models, the rationale being that such beliefs have something to offer to ESL readers.

### 2.3.1 Reading and Critical Language Awareness

Proponents of Critical Language Awareness (CLA) (e.g. Clark et. al. 1988; Fairclough, 1990; Janks, 1991 etc.) have suggested that there is a relationship between language and power and in many cases language perpetuates the existing power relations between people. In the absence of a conscious awareness of the relationship between language and power, people tend to accept the power relations unquestioningly. CLA sets out to expose how language serves to put people in different positions. Language materials developed within this framework intend to make users become oppositional readers rather than passive readers who accept the positions dictated to them by the text (authors). Janks (1993), Orlek (1993), Newfield (1993) and Granville (1993) have produced materials intended to develop critical reading in readers.

The writer views it as important that a reading programme expose readers to critical reading. Most narrative prose such as sports and political commentaries, advertisements, poetry, history textbooks etc. would expose the reader to persuasive language and its effects. It can thus be hypothesized that CLA fostered in a reading comprehension class would be of great value in content

subjects such as History and Literature, where authors consciously or unconsciously are likely to use language to convince readers to accept their viewpoints unquestioningly.

### 2.3.2 Genre Analysis And Reading

Experimental research has shown that there is a positive, perhaps casual, relationship between reading and writing and reading and general language proficiency (Stotsky, 1983; Krashen, 1984). Discussing research on writing, Krashen (1984) concludes that there are some gains from reading which spill over to writing. He cites studies on writing by Heys (1962), De Vries (1970), which indicate that increased reading helps to improve writing skills of high school students. He argues that increased reading exposes the reader to a much larger and richer set of images of what a text can look like. This in turn makes readers aware of the reader-based prose which is likely to transfer to their own writing. Reader-based prose is characterized by its consideration of the reader's needs.

Furthermore, Krashen supports the hypothesis set by Flower and Hayes (1980) on writing competence, who note that

... good writers have a great deal of tacit knowledge of conventional or formal features of reader-based prose, that they are able to call upon, more options that can be used to organize and express ideas ...

(Flower and Hayes, 1981:28; cited in Krashen 1984)

Krashen is also in agreement with Smith (1983) who maintains that

the conventions of writing are acquired by reading:

... to learn how to write for newspaper; textbooks about them will not suffice. For magazines browse through magazines rather than through correspondence courses on magazine writing. To write poetry, read it ... (Krashen, 1984: 21).

The hypothesis that Krashen forms from this is that the ability to write well is a result of reading, that

... when enough reading is done, all the necessary grammatical structures and discourse for writing will automatically be presented to the writer in sufficient quantity ...

(Krashen, 1984:23)

If that be the case Krashen suggests that the teacher's responsibility is to provide access to reading, be it pleasure reading or sustained silent reading. This is interesting for the present study, because this means that access to reading language textbooks or other sources is essential for ESL learners. However, as Krashen cautions, it should be noted that reading is necessary but not sufficient for acquisition of writing competence; other factors play an equally important part but those are not part of the present study. What is of interest here is that there is a positive relationship between reading and writing.

It should be pointed out, however, that Krashen's suggestions may not be applicable for students described in Chapter 1. Such students may not have developed a certain "critical mass" of linguistic knowledge (particularly of sentence patterns, morphology and lexis) which has to be reached before reading can become a meaningful activity [see Appendix 7] for categories of knowledge crucial for reading. This has been demonstrated by studies conducted by Perkins (1987) and Langan (1990).

Furthermore recent studies in genre analysis seem to agree with Krashen's suggestions. Genre analysis is the study of how language is used within a particular context (Hayland: 1992). Genre theorists are interested in helping students acquire skills needed to effectively produce particular kinds of written discourse structure. Their goal is to help students become effective writers of different genres - narrative and expository but they consider exposure to reading materials that reflect various genres an essential aspect of acquiring knowledge of language conventions used in different genres. It should be noted that this is a very superficial representation of genre-analysis because genre-analysis deals with much more than has been mentioned here. Actually its underlying goals can be said to be both pedagogical and political, something beyond the scope of this study.

### 2.3.3 Halliday And Hasan's Cohesion Theory

If we refer to Figure 2.1 on the main components of the interactive models, we find that cohesion is included as one of the components of TEXT. However for a detailed explanation of

how cohesion relates to reading comprehension, one has to turn to the concept of cohesion as expounded by Halliday and Hasan (1976). According to Halliday and Hasan the concept of textual cohesion is a linguistic proposal which describes how a text hangs together:

Cohesion occurs where the INTERPRETATION of some element in the discourse is dependent on that of another. The one presupposes the other, in the sense that it cannot be effectively decoded except by recourse to it. When this happens, a relation of cohesion is set up, and the two elements, the presupposing and the presupposed, are thereby at least potentially integrated into a text.

(Halliday & Hasan, 1976:4)

The presupposed antecedent of a referential item may be present either in a text or in the real world (the reader's background knowledge). In either case, a reader must be able to follow a reference in a text to its antecedent and make the necessary links. This is both a schematic-theoretic view of cohesion, as well as a view held by Halliday and Hassan.

However, Halliday and Hasan (1976) go further and argue that cohesion refers to the linguistic means whereby a text is enabled to function as a single meaningful unit; hence they refer to the mechanisms which join parts of text together as cohesive ties/devices. These, it is argued help the reader stay on the right track while comprehending text. Cohesive ties are divided

into two broad categories, namely, grammatical and lexical. Grammatical devices include references, substitution, ellipsis and conjunctions; while lexical ones include the use of reiteration (including synonyms and hypernyms), and collocations.

References can be either exophoric or endophoric, with the former signalling reference to a context of situation outside a text and the later signalling reference within a text. Substitution refers to a process within the text where one item is replaced by another while on the other hand, ellipsis refers to "substitution by zero" i.e. the item is replaced by nothing (Halliday and Hasan, 1976; and Williams, 1985). Conjunctions as cohesive devices signal the way in which what is to follow is systematically connected to what has gone before. Halliday and Hassan classify them into four types viz. additive, adversative, causal and temporal conjunctions.

Expounding on lexical cohesion devices, Halliday and Hassan point out that reiteration is a form of lexical cohesion that involves the repetition of a lexical item which may come in the form of synonym, near synonym etc. Discussing collocation (Halliday and Hasan, 1976) point out that collocation is achieved through an association of lexical items that regularly co-occur; thus these may include synonyms, near-synonyms etc. or pairs of opposites of various kinds - complementaries (male - female), antonyms (love - hate), and converses (order - obey).

The picture that emerges from cohesion theory is that it would

be prudent to overtly help ESL readers recognize how cohesion is achieved in a text. Although this is debatable, some studies carried out to show the effect of cohesion on reading comprehension suggest that it is beneficial. A study by MacLean and Chapman (1989) investigated 'The processing of cohesion in fiction, and non-fiction by good and poor readers' in a secondary school. Reporting on their results they point out that the study suggests that cohesion and register are a vital part of instruction in reading development. They argue that secondary school students should be helped to acquire sensitivity towards quality texture which is realized by cohesion and register, in order to cope with the literacy demands of secondary school curricula.

Other researchers have also pointed out how cohesion can be problematic to ESL readers in particular. Lanham (1990) has found cohesion to rank particularly highly as a source of difficulty for young ESL readers - obscure lexical substitution and ellipsis are not easily deciphered by ESL readers. Young and Nuttall (1989) also observed a similar problem. Perera (1986) points out that conjunctions such as "similarly, therefore, nevertheless", etc. are at times not understood by readers who in turn cannot process the text as a discourse unit.

#### 2.3.4 Widdowson On Reading Texts For The Classroom

Widdowson (1978) offers suggestions on the type of texts to be included in a reading programme. One of his valuable suggestions is that such texts should reflect genuine instances of discourse

which carry a full range of communicative purposes, which are likely to trigger authentic responses from the reader. In other words, texts have to engage readers' interests and impress them as being in some way relevant to their concerns. This point is supported by Eskey (1986) who claims that reading comprehension is most likely to occur when students are reading what they want to read, or at least what they see some good reason to read. Krashen and Terrell (1983) also support the idea of reading texts being interesting and pitched at an appropriate level of linguistic difficulty.

Expanding on the idea of authenticity, Widdowson warns against the inclusion of questions immediately after the reading passage because in normal circumstances no-one is required to be submitted to an interrogation soon after having read something. He argues that questions included should aim at reflecting the communicative purpose of the text and encourage the development of the learner's reading ability. He thus suggests the inclusion of questions which elicit a natural non-verbal response such as following instructions; reading and interpreting formulae, graphs, tables, diagrams, maps, charts; etc. The ability to engage in non-verbal modes of communication is an integral part of effective reading.

The writer wishes to point out that the ESL reader at high school level in South African Schools is likely to meet such type of reading in the other content subjects such as Science, Mathematics and Home Economics. The ESL reading programme needs

therefore to prepare the student for this.

#### 2.4 KEY ELEMENTS OF THE THEORIES AND BELIEFS AND THEIR IMPLICATION FOR ESL READING COMPREHENSION

This section attempts to summarize key elements of the various theories that have been discussed in this chapter and how they relate to ESL reading. These key points will later form the basis of the criteria to be formulated. It should also be mentioned that the interactive models mentioned here are representative of many more which have not been discussed because of the scope of the study.

The summary is divided into (i) key elements from the interactive models and (ii) from other theorists.

##### 2.4 (i) From the Interactive Models

- (a) Although Goodman's psycholinguistic model is primarily concept-driven, it sheds light on the nature of some of the higher order knowledge structures. According to the model some of the structures needed to engage in the "guessing game" are predictions, sampling, inferencing and guessing. This implies that ESL readers would benefit greatly if they were encouraged to formulate predictions or make inferences etc. about the text. Through such tasks the ESL reader would engage in top-down processes. Trabasso et al (1977) expand on the idea of inferencing; they identify four types of inferencing namely lexical; spatio-temporal; extrapolative and evaluative inferencing; with the two last ones being higher in the order and therefore engaging the

reader in top-down processes.

(b) The role of background knowledge in ESL reading comprehension is at the centre of the schema theories. Three functions of schemata as identified by Anderson et al (1977) were:

- (i) Schemata provide the basis for 'filling the gaps' in the text - no message is ever completely explicit, and schemata permit a coherent interpretation through inferential elaboration;
- (ii) Schemata constrain a reader's interpretation of an ambiguous message in that if the reader's schemata differ from that presupposed by the author, the reader is likely to re-interpret the vague messages to fit in with his own schema; and
- (iii) Schemata help the reader to establish a correspondence between things known and those given in the text.

This would therefore imply that through language tasks such as previewing, pre-reading etc. readers should be seen to utilize their background knowledge which is one of the higher order knowledge structures. Such tasks would serve a dual function - that of checking the availability of background knowledge and activating appropriate background knowledge or schema. As previously mentioned the background knowledge would be either content/topic or formal/rhetorical organisation.

Furthermore such activities as previewing, role-play etc. would serve to act as "advance organizer" for texts which may be opaque because of either cultural bias or lack of shared knowledge between writer and reader or new vocabulary.

(c) Vocabulary development - has been cited as one way of equipping the ESL reader with a wide vocabulary which can be accessed during the reading process; such vocabulary would provide a linguistic base which would free the reader from text-boundness. This would however be taught in context in order not to lose sight of the task at hand, which is the construction of meaning from text. In addition, Eskey (1983) suggests that certain linguistic elements be taught in combination with vocabulary as they might co-occur in types of expository prose. The rationale for vocabulary development is that L<sub>2</sub> reading apparently requires a reasonable grammatical and lexical base upon which to build. (Anderson, 1984; Cooper, 1984; Berman, 1984). Through vocabulary development one of the lower order knowledge elements will be addressed in the ESL reading programme.

(d) The linguistic base can also be addressed if students are made to recognize such structures as ellipsis, cohesive/logical/transitional devices and anaphora or lexical devices. Although these are lower order elements, properly addressed they could also be used to engage the reader in top-down processes e.g. inferencing through

lexical devices (Trabasso et al, 1977).

- (e) No doubt the interactive models of reading offer significant insight into the reading process because they try to provide a balance between top-down processing and bottom-up processing of text. According to the models, it is essential that a reading programme engage the reader in utilizing both his/her higher and lower order knowledge elements. The above four points show how this can be done. It can thus be said that a reading programme that highlights integrative utilization of various elements (Figure 2.1) would be of benefit to ESL readers who as already mentioned, may experience reading problems associated with both types of knowledge.

#### 2.4 (ii) From Other Theorists

- (f) Krashen supports the idea of exposing readers to various types of texts because that raises readers' awareness of how texts are organized and this in turn would help them in their own writing. It should be noted that Krashen does not mean simply writing answers to questions set on the text but rather the composing of longer texts. The writer would like to suggest therefore that reading programmes link composing exercises to reading in order to develop reader-based prose in the ESL learner, something that the ESL learner has difficulty with.

- (g) Widdowson suggests that texts presented in a reading programme should elicit authentic responses from the reader otherwise the idea that discourse is coherent is distorted; it is only through such presentation that reading can be said to serve communicative purposes.

His suggestion on non-verbal responses ought to find its way into a reading programme because such responses demand that readers summarize and convert the verbal messages to graphic representation. This kind of training might help ESL learners in other content subjects which require them to interpret graphic presentations.

- (h) If language is intended to empower the learner, then CLA should find its way into ESL reading programmes. CLA would ensure the presence of critical reading into a reading programme. However the writer is aware of the fact that the theory is relatively new in the ESL field and may take time to find its way in ESL programmes. It should also be noted that the writer does not uncritically accept the theory but is searching for positive theoretical elements that might help change the way reading comprehension has been presented by textbooks purporting to teach ESL/EFL reading comprehension.

- (i) The Cohesion Theory offers some insight into an area which might cause problems for ESL readers (Carrell, 1982). The theory therefore support the inclusion of exercises on

cohesive devices in a reading programme intended for ESL readers. Actually this would be in line with Eskey's (1988) suggestion that recognition of the structure of the language of the text does contribute to the reader's reconstruction of meaning.

## 2.5 CONCLUSION

In an attempt to develop comprehensive criteria, the writer has looked at reading comprehension from two different perspectives. First, reading comprehension has been discussed as a process that readers engage in, in order to construct meaning from written discourse. This is presented in a discussion on models of reading. The second perspective is presented in the discussion on how reading as a skill can be related to other aspects of language learning. Thus, the key elements summarized from both view points will find their way into the criteria to be formulated in the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREEESTABLISHING CRITERIA TO EVALUATE ESL READING PROGRAMMES INTENDED FOR IN INTERMEDIATE TO ADVANCED LEVEL ESL LEARNERS IN SOUTH AFRICAN HIGH SCHOOLS**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

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### CHAPTER 3

#### ESTABLISHING CRITERIA TO EVALUATE ESL READING PROGRAMMES INTENDED FOR INTERMEDIATE TO ADVANCED LEVEL ESL LEARNERS IN SOUTH AFRICAN HIGH SCHOOLS

##### 3.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter attempts to establish criteria for evaluating ESL reading programmes intended for high schools in South Africa as presented by various language textbooks. The formation of such criteria is guided by literature on textbook/materials evaluation in the ESL field and by theory on ESL reading comprehension. The former provides a framework within which to work while the latter provides a base for questions to be included in the criteria.

This chapter is divided into the following sections:

- 3.1 A discussion of textbook/materials evaluation in ESL. This section intends to set the justification for the development of the instrument/criteria for evaluating ESL reading programmes, by highlighting the need for materials/textbook evaluation in ESL.
- 3.2 Formation of first draft criteria and justification for questions included, an attempt to transform theory into usable criteria.
- 3.3 Trying out the criteria by writer, on three textbooks in use in the high schools to check whether the questions are suitable for the purposes intended or not.

### 3.4 The writer comments after the try-out.

#### 3.1 WHY TEXTBOOK/MATERIALS EVALUATION IN ESL

It is common knowledge that the use of textbooks is an integral part of ESL learning/teaching because it is assumed that such published materials are to assist learners of English in improving their linguistic knowledge and/or communicative ability (Sheldon, 1987). In a bid to achieve the above aim, the market is flooded with ESL textbooks from which the ESL teacher has to choose. In the absence of any guidelines for selection of materials/textbooks, the ESL teacher is likely to choose a book on face-value, that is, by simply accepting claims made by the publishers. Given the fact that textbooks often claim too much for themselves, the teacher's choice may not be the most suitable for his/her learners' needs. In such a case, the textbook becomes something to be endured rather than a resource that is used effectively in the teaching of English as a second language. Sheldon (1987: 3) points out that the teacher's task is made more difficult because "the grading and selection of materials are rarely explained for the teacher's benefit"; and that "too often published materials simply fail to rest upon sound theoretical bases." Consequently, Brumfit's (1979) observation that "textbooks do not actually help teachers most of the time", holds true.

However, ESL teachers might be helped in their task if there were guidelines to help them steer through the masses of textbooks available. To this effect various attempts have been

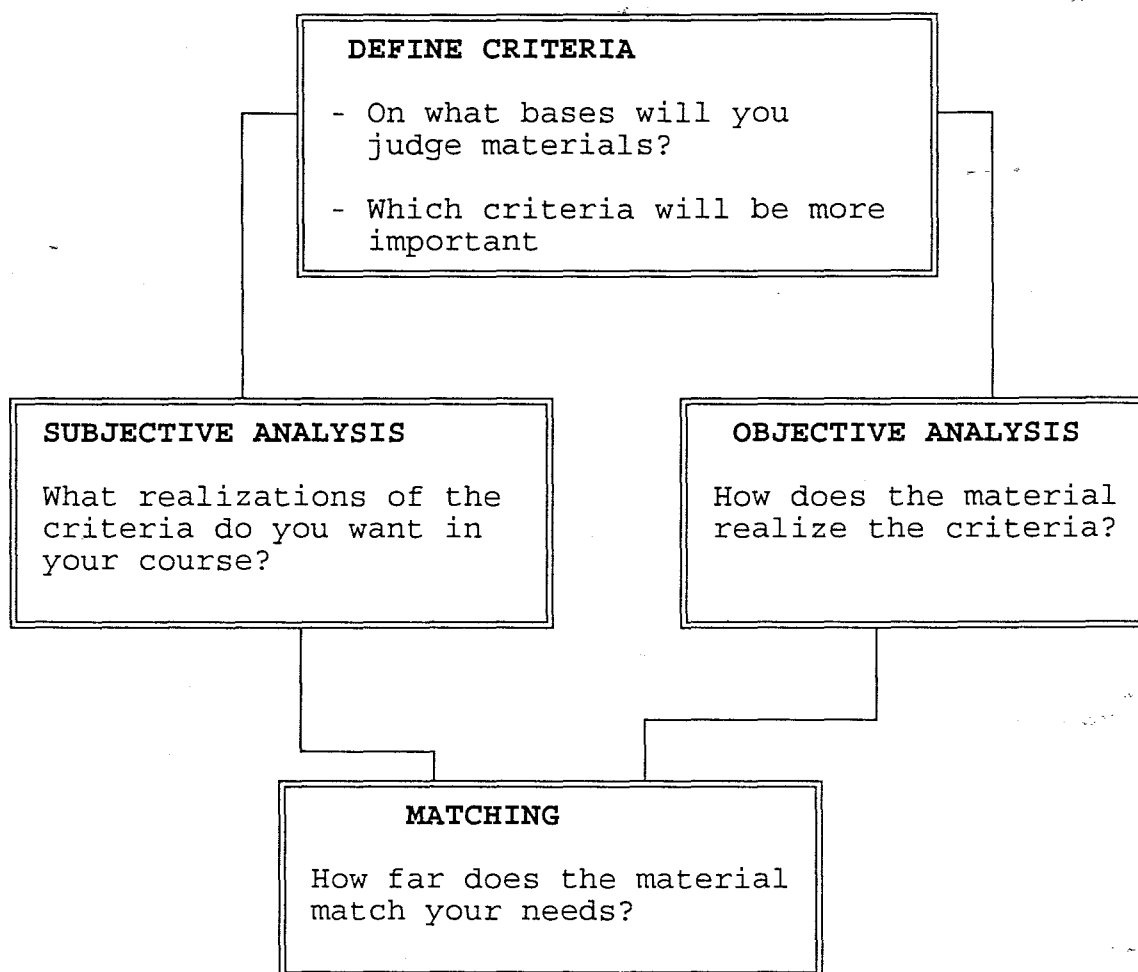
made but have not had as wide an audience as they deserve. It is these attempts that have provided this study with a framework for formulation of criteria (Harmer, 1983; Savignon, 1983; Williams, 1983; Sheldon, 1988; Kizilirmak, 1991) (Also see Appendices 5a-5e).

Some of the above-referenced criteria have been directed at evaluating language textbooks as whole units which intend to develop global ability in language learning. For more detailed criteria that provide an interactive, step-by-step teacher's guide for selection of textbook see Breen and Candlin (1979) and Hutchinson (1988).

A different set of criteria is also available. In contrast to the above set, the focus of this set is on specific aspects of language teaching - for example, Cunningsworth's (1989) criteria for analyzing and evaluating materials intended to teach "oral skills in English"; criteria for evaluating teachers' guides (Cunningsworth and Kusel, 1991); criteria for communicative methodology (Munby, 1978; Savignon, 1983; and Clarke, 1990). The existence of these criteria and several others in ESL indicates that there is need for evaluating different aspects of ESL materials/textbooks because evaluation will help teachers make "practical and informed textbook decisions" (Breen and Candlin, 1979). This assumption has guided the framework within which to work.

Four particular points have been central in the formulation of

the criteria, viz:



Adopted from: T. Hutchinson, "What is underneath: an interactive view of materials evaluation", in ELT Textbooks and Materials: Problems in Evaluation and Development.

In this study, the criteria to evaluate ESL reading comprehension materials have been defined in terms of current theories on ESL reading comprehension such as the Schema Theory as well as other language theories that have some bearing on reading comprehension - for example, Cohesion Theory. A discussion of these theories has been presented in the previous chapter. The questions

included in the criteria indicate what the writer would like to see in reading materials intended for ESL learners in high schools in South Africa. The trying out of the criteria by the writer and the testing of the criteria by the focus group in chapter 4 are meant to take care of the "objective analysis". The stage of 'matching' will be taken care of by teachers when they use the criteria to check whether the reading materials match their learners' needs.

Thus, given the above framework, two types of questions have been included in the criteria. The first type of questions intends to reveal the type of reading material included, such questions as:

- (a) Do materials relate to students' background knowledge?
- or
- (b) At face value are materials interesting?

These appear in the Section 3.2.

The second type of questions deals with language tasks accompanying reading comprehension materials/passages. Such questions intend to reveal the range of learning activity contained in the reading comprehension programme (Breen and Candlin, 1979). Examples of such questions are:

- (a) Are there any exercises that train students to recognize the different structure of expository writing, through visual displays such as tree

diagrams, tables, flowcharts, graphs, maps, etc.?

Such questions are aimed at revealing the extent to which the reading comprehension programme/materials involve the learners in various aspects of the reading process which facilitate reading comprehension (Carrell, 1983; Hinds, 1983a and b).

In summary, this section reveals why textbook/material evaluation is essential for ESL teachers and secondly it points out how literature on textbook evaluation has informed the formulation of the intended criteria for evaluating ESL reading comprehension materials.

### **3.2 FIRST DRAFT CRITERIA AND JUSTIFICATION FOR INCLUSION**

This section deals with formulation of questions to be included in the criteria which link theory to practice as suggested in section 2:4 (i) to (vi) in the previous chapter in which key elements of various theories were summarized. Each question in the section will be followed by a justification of its inclusion in the criteria.

#### **3.2.1 From Theory to Practice - Questions and Justification**

- (i) Does the programme train ESL readers to guess/predict the content of the text through questions/exercises/tasks at the beginning of the reading comprehension passage?

Goodman's (1967) psycholinguistic model describes reading as a psycholinguistic guessing game' in which the reader picks out the most productive cues in the text, and combines them with his/her linguistic background to make predictions about the text (Eskey, 1973; Saville Troike, 1973; Clarke and Silberstein, 1977). The predictions made can either be confirmed or abandoned as the reading process goes on. The importance of training readers to predict is that they read with anticipation and through the 'guessing game' the reader is actively involved in the reading process. The reader constructs meaning from the text through sampling the text, predicting and guessing. Training students to predict may also help them activate content schemata (Carrell, 1983). It has been argued that it is possible to develop the readers' powers of inference through systematic practice, or introducing questions which encourage them to anticipate the content of a text from its title, illustrations, etc. (Grellet, 1981). Some textbooks do provide such type of training but many more do not, and yet asking readers to predict is the first step to get them engaged in the reading. A number of language textbooks in use in the Transkei region do not cater for this type of training. In most cases in the section headed "Reading Comprehension", a passage is given and then a list of questions on the passage are asked (See Appendix 3 a

and b).

- (ii) Do the reading materials relate to the students' knowledge of the world? i.e. can readers say they know something about the topic of the reading passage?

The interactive models of reading and the schema theory posit that the reader's background knowledge is central in the construction of meaning from a text. Coady (1979:12) suggests that background knowledge will enable the student to comprehend at a reasonable rate even if the reading materials pose some syntactic difficulty. According to him the strong semantic input in the reader's background knowledge will compensate for the weak syntactic control. Other schema theorists also view background knowledge as so vital that they suggest that meaning understood from the text is really not actually in the text, per se, but in the reader, in the background or semantic knowledge of the reader (Eisten and Carrell, 1983; Eskey, 1986; Grabe and Dubin, 1986).

The importance of one's knowledge of the world is also supported by Brown and Yule (1983) when they point out that the reader's "knowledge of the world constrains his local interpretation" of a text. This "knowledge of the world" is said to be accumulated from an individual's experience of past events of similar kind

which equip him/her with "expectations, hypotheses, about what are likely to be relevant aspects of context" (Brown and Yulé, 1983: 61). It is from this assumption that it is claimed that reading materials that readers can identify with are likely to appeal to readers.

**(iii) Do the materials seem familiar in relation to the readers' cultural knowledge and the other subjects studied?**

The assumption here is that reading materials may be familiar because they relate to readers' cultural knowledge or because they have been encountered in other subject areas. It should also be pointed out that a distinction should be made between general background knowledge and cultural knowledge. The former refers to a general knowledge of the world at large, as highlighted in the previous justification, while the latter refers to a knowledge of customs/events/beliefs that are a part of a people or a culture that may not be familiar to other people - for example, the day of Halloween celebrated in the U.S.A. which is not familiar to South Africa.

The following studies carried out by various theorists, (Steffensen, Joag-dev, and Anderson 1979; Carrell 1981; and Johnson 1981) have shown that texts

with culturally familiar content are easily understood than syntactically and rhetorically equivalent texts based on a less familiar, more distant culture (Carrell 1988). Furthermore it is suggested that if the content of the reading texts can easily be traced to the other subjects being studied by students, they are likely to be easily understood. (Anderson and Urquhart, 1985).

(iv) **At face value are the materials interesting?**

Krashen and Terrell (1983: 134) argue that:

... interest in content may ... be the most important consideration in selecting appropriate texts because interest in content can outweigh difficulty in other areas, e.g. syntax, semantics and vocabulary ...

Eskey (1986) also cautions that reading comprehension is likely to suffer if the students do not see some good in reading the materials. This implies that reading passages in language textbooks for ESL readers should engage the readers' interest. However, selecting interesting texts may be the most difficult requirement to satisfy.

- (v) Does the programme train readers to use their background knowledge in constructing meaning from the text through pre-reading exercises/tasks of any form?

It is said the possession of a schema is in itself not sufficient unless it is activated (Carrell 1988). The background knowledge that the reader possesses must be activated if efficient interaction between linguistic knowledge and knowledge of the world is to result in meaningful comprehension. Hudson (1982) reported on the facilitating effects on comprehension of explicitly inducing content schemata through pre-reading activities. He reported that students practising a pre-reading task performed better than other students in his sample, essentially because their organizational schemata had been activated. The writer believes that this type of exercise could help ESL readers when confronted by "opaque" texts (Carrell, 1988). Texts may be "opaque" either because they are loaded with cultural assumptions or because the language is above the readers' level.

- (vi) Does the selection include the various rhetorical structures of discourse genres e.g. narratives - fables; stories; poetry etc.; expository - commentaries; scientific and technical texts etc.

Research with both L<sub>1</sub> speakers and ESL readers has provided empirical evidence that knowledge and use of text structure affects comprehension of narrative and expository prose (Carrell, 1988; Meyer, 1975 & 1979; Meyer and Freedle, 1984). It would therefore seem proper to expose ESL readers to various kinds of text-structure organization (rhetorical structure) so that they may acquire knowledge of formal schemata. The knowledge acquired may assist them in content subjects that rely heavily on different rhetorical structures. Several subjects may benefit from transfer of knowledge, e.g. sciences - in technical report writing; social sciences (such as History) in presentation of argument. It may also be argued that such exposure affords the reader the opportunity to develop the feel for reader-based prose (Krashen:1984).

- (vii) Are there any exercises that train students to recognize the different structures of expository writing, through visual displays such as tree diagrams, tables, flowcharts, graphs, maps etc? e.g. Appendix 4.

This question differs from (vi) above in the sense that this one looks at the range of learning activity offered while (vi) deals with type of materials included in the textbook. (See Section 3.1 for discussion).

The significance of exposing the ESL reader to expository writing has already been mentioned above. However the ESL reader may not be aware of the different forms expository writing can take - viz = collections and descriptions; cause - effect; problem - solution etc. unless he/she is made aware of this. Ostler and Kaplan (1982); Hinds (1983a and b); Carrell (1983); Calfee and Curley (1984) suggest that this may be taught overtly to ESL readers in order to facilitate their reading comprehension. Furthermore, Widdowson (1978) claims that such involvement would elicit authentic responses from readers, hence reading would be said to serve communicative purposes. The emphasis here is on the technique to expose the rhetorical

organisation of expository texts.

- (viii) **Are the reading materials linguistically accessible to the ESL reader at the level specified?**

Krashen (1984) suggests that reading/language materials should be pitched at (input +1). That is, the language of reading materials should be at the reader's level of competence or slightly above that or else the comprehension process would be adversely affected. How the (input +1) level is determined is a complex issue as well. Basically however what Krashen means is that the level of the input should not be at too low a level (or students will learn nothing new) nor should it be too high (or students will be frustrated).

- (ix) **Are there exercises/tasks that train the students to recognize different textual clues that assist in reading comprehension? e.g. lexical cohesion - use of pronouns and articles as linking words; cohesive/logical connectors e.g. conjunctions; ellipsis etc.**

Studies conducted among children who speak English as  $L_1$  and  $L_2$  seem to indicate that there

is a relationship between reading ability and ability to recognize cohesive devices in a text (Halliday and Hassan, 1976; Chapman, 1979). These studies indicate that mastery of various textual features is one of the central factors in fluent reading and reading comprehension. Furthermore Cohen et al (1979) argue that ESL speakers have trouble synthesizing information across sentences and paragraphs because they do not attend to conjunctive ties. Recognition of such linguistic/textual clues and ability to utilize them effectively in construction of meaning from text is an important part of what has been termed "holding in the bottom". Empirical evidence from various studies suggests that "holding in the bottom" enhances "bottom-up" decoding skills in L<sub>2</sub> readers.

- (x) Does the presentation of reading materials reflect a definite scheme for the expansion of vocabulary?

Although research has failed to establish a causal relationship between knowledge of word meanings and reading comprehension, some studies (Cziko, 1978; Clarke, 1979, 1980) suggest that inadequate second language competence (grammar and vocabulary) may hamper an L<sub>2</sub> reader's reading

comprehension. It would seem therefore that there is a need to develop the vocabulary of L<sub>2</sub> readers so that their reading comprehension is not adversely affected by limited vocabulary.

- (xi) Are there any composing exercises after the reading comprehension?

Krashen (1984) advocates that through reading, readers may acquire reader-based prose which is likely to transfer to their own writing. In order to encourage such transfer of skills, composing tasks could be set after reading comprehension passages.

- (xii) Are there any reading passages that engage students to read critically? E.g. political commentaries, advertisements, editorials etc.

CLA aims to expose the power of language embedded in any text, be it spoken or written. It is argued that speakers and writers use language consciously or unconsciously to persuade their listeners and readers to take a particular standpoint which is likely to be accepted uncritically unless listeners and readers are trained to examine the language of the text (Clark, et al

1989; Fairclough, 1990; Janks, 1991;).

It is argued by proponents of CLA that language can be used and is used to maintain and to challenge existing forms of power. This is not however obvious to all people. An awareness of how language is used to do so needs to be raised if people are to challenge the status quo. In an educational context it is argued that in order to raise such awareness in students, they should be exposed to reading materials that will engage them in critical reading as they are forced to make choices between alternatives. Such texts as advertisements; media and political commentaries; readers' columns; controversial historical column etc. offer a range of possible texts to be used in raising language awareness. Following such texts would be activities such as role-play; exercises that examine closely the language of texts etc. which will make the reader aware of the choice that people take in an attempt to present their viewpoints.

The following section converts the questions into an instrument for evaluating and selecting a textbook whose reading programme approximates current beliefs about reading. In addition to a YES/NO column for the questions, there is space

for comment. The purpose of the comments' column is two-fold. The first purpose is to enable the writer to collect comments from a sample of teachers which she will eventually use to revise the criteria. Secondly the column is intended to help target users reflect on reasons they use to selecting a particular textbook amongst those at their disposal.

3.2.2 See appendix 6a for some criteria for evaluating a reading comprehension programme in a language textbook.

The questions in the above first draft criteria have been re-phrased to avoid words that may be ambiguous and vague for a Std 8 teacher who might not be familiar with some ESL terminology, e.g. background knowledge is stated simply as knowledge of the world. The re-phrasing also brings in a touch of personal involvement where opinion questions are asked so that the teacher may feel that the exercise is of personal gain for him/her and/or his/her students. The criteria will also be accompanied with an "information sheet" that briefly states the purpose for which the criteria have been prepared and at the same time outlines some current ideas about reading comprehension.

### 3.3 INFORMATION SHEET ON CRITERIA

#### 3.3.1 Aim of Criteria

In our educational system, teachers are responsible for selecting language textbooks to be used in their classes. Your choice must be guided by some informed assumptions about reading comprehension in an ESL context. The questions in the criteria are therefore meant to help you make an informed choice.

#### 3.3.2 Some Current Ideas on Reading Comprehension

These criteria are specifically for selecting a textbook that will help you teach reading comprehension effectively so that your students may be able to read any written work with greater understanding.

Some current beliefs about reading comprehension are:

- (i) Reading passages in language textbooks should relate to students' background knowledge, i.e. general knowledge of the world.
- (ii) Reading passages are likely to be easily understood if they are closely tied to students' culture and other subjects studied at school.
- (iii) The language of the reading passages should not be too difficult for the students.
- (iv) Reading passages should be interesting to capture the

students' interest.

- (v) Students should be helped to use their background knowledge in trying to understand passages.
- (vi) Discussion of key concepts or words of culturally unfamiliar passages could assist students to understand the passage.
- (vii) Students should be trained to predict and infer content.
- (viii) Students should be exposed to different ways of organizing information. e.g. scientific writing, stories, commentaries, etc.
- (ix) For technical or other factual passages, exercises should include interpreting tables, graphs, completing diagrams etc. to show students how information is organized e.g. problem - solution; cause - effect etc.
- (x) Students' range of vocabulary should be expanded.
- (xi) Students should be shown how ideas are connected in a passage to assist them to understand the passage as a whole, e.g. showing how pronouns, etc., are used linking words.
- (xii) Students should be trained to recognize the power of persuasive language through passages such as political commentaries, advertisements, editorials etc. This would help in developing critical reading.
- (xiii) It is suggested that if the students become good readers, they may also become good writers.

Keep the above points in mind as you evaluate each language textbook.

### 3.4 A PRELIMINARY TRY-OUT OF THE CRITERIA BY THE WRITER

To check whether the criteria would work or not, the writer used them to evaluate three reading programmes presented in the following language textbooks: The choice to evaluate a standard 8 class textbook has been guided by the fact that standard 8 is the beginning of Senior Secondary School in South Africa, at which point the students begin to make tentative choices with regard to the streams (Sciences or Arts) in which they wish to pursue their education. Whatever stream they choose to follow, the students are expected to engage in extensive independent reading of textbooks in their respective content subjects. It is assumed that if the students' reading abilities are not fully developed at this level of education, they may encounter problems in comprehending the various texts they are required to read in content subjects. However, a theoretically-developed reading programme followed in an ESL class might help to counteract such problems.

<u>New Horizons</u>	Std 8	by D. Dawson
<u>Successful English</u>	Std 8	by D.H. Howe
<u>Let's Use English</u>	Std 8	by Sizi Mbhele; Rod Ellis and Brian Robinson

The exercise highlighted some problem areas:

- (i) that the exercise requires substantial amount of time, even to go through one textbook thoroughly.
- (ii) that it is not easy at the time to decide whether the answer to a question is YES or NO because a book may display more than one tendency.

The writer proceeded to check whether the above points would surface when she tried the criteria with the focus group.

### **3.5 CONCLUSION**

In an attempt to establish criteria to evaluate a reading programme in a ESL context in South Africa, the writer has made use of literature on textbook/materials evaluation as well as current beliefs on ESL reading. The next step in the study was the trying out of the criteria with some school teachers from schools around Umtata. A focus group technique was used for this purpose.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### TESTING AND REVISION OF CRITERIA

- 4.0 INTRODUCTION
- 4.1 FOCUS GROUP AS A MEANS FOR DATA COLLECTION AND REVISION OF CRITERIA
  - 4.1.1 BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE FOR FOCUS GROUP TECHNIQUE
  - 4.1.2 GROUP COMPOSITION AND DATA COLLECTION
- 4.2 PARTICIPANTS RESPONSES AND REVISION OF CRITERIA
  - 4.2.1 FOCUS GROUP RESPONSES TO:
    - (a) QUESTIONS IN THE CRITERIA
    - (b) THE INFORMATION SHEET
    - (c) EVALUATION IN ESL
    - (d) READING PROGRAMMES IN LANGUAGE TEXTBOOKS
  - 4.2.2 REVISED CRITERIA
- 4.3 CONCLUSION

## CHAPTER FOUR

### TRY-OUT AND REVISION OF CRITERIA BY FOCUS GROUP

#### 4.0 INTRODUCTION

The writer had initially intended to use In - Service teachers at Senior Secondary Schools to check whether the criteria formulated in the previous chapter were clear and usable. However, due to problems faced in getting In-Service teachers to form a focus group, the writer decided to use Pre-Service teachers (teacher - trainees from the college of Education where she worked). These are teacher-trainees in the final year of a three (3) year diploma course. One of their majors (teaching subject) is English and they have been out on practice teaching twice, in their first and second year. They thus have knowledge and experience (albeit slight) of teaching reading comprehension in the schools in the Transkei region.

#### 4.1 FOCUS GROUP AS A MEANS FOR DATA COLLECTION AND REVISION OF CRITERIA

##### 4.1.1 Background And Rationale For Focus Group Technique

A Focus Group as a research technique for data collection developed in response to some perceived shortcomings of interviews as data collection technique. For a long time interviews were used widely in educational research as a means of collecting data. Those who reacted against them felt that interviews did not lead to the true feelings of the respondents because they were overly dominated by the questions and the

interviewer.

Anderson (1990) defines a focus group as

...a group comprised of individuals with certain characteristics who focus discussions on a given issue or topic....

(Anderson, 1990:241)

In order to achieve synergy of the group, six to twelve people should form the focus group; such a number facilitates group dynamics. Participants are pre - screened by the researcher who wants to use the technique, in order to determine the required characteristic and then the participants are merely asked to join the group. Anderson (1990) suggests that for best results, participants in the focus group should be complete strangers at the time of forming the focus group i.e should have had nothing to do with each other prior to meeting for the focus group. This, Anderson (1990) suggests, allows for inhibitions and eliminates the possibility of participants agreeing with each other merely because they are colleagues. It is pointed out that intact groups which have evolved a life and personality of their own are rarely conducive to the focus group purpose.

In recent years the focus group technique has been put to many a use both in social and educational programmes because it allows for collection of qualitative data of the type which the interview does not provide, Morgan [1988]. This is because the

focus group provides an opportunity for participants to expand their perceptions by sharing and comparing, something not provided for in the interview technique, [Alder and Alder,1987; Morgan,1988; Anderson, 1990]. Furthermore the synergy of the group allows for depths and insights to be explored, thus the researcher is able to explore why certain views are being held without directly asking why those views are held.

The nature of the focus group makes it a useful technique in several situations. It is useful in a context where researchers aim at exhausting views on a particular issue or topic and when working with people who are comfortable with self - disclosure. It also becomes useful in programme development, planning and formative evaluation when researchers seek to determine needs for the programme or to test reactions (of targeted users) to possible programme offerings. Researchers may also use the technique when developing specific research questions and identifying issues for further research. The technique is also useful when other research methods have to be complemented. For example a focus group discussion might form part of a workshop; the latter is usually aimed at developing materials or people.

A number of points are crucial when using a focus group for data collection. First the skills of the group leader are important to ensure the smooth flow of the focus group discussion. He/She should remain unobtrusive and yet in control of the discussion. He/She should make sure that questions asked will enable him/her to collect qualitative information, Morgan [1988]. It is also

pointed out that the leader should not pass judgement on participants' responses throughout the discussion. In addition to that, it is advisable to record the discussion mechanically because of the intensity of the group discussion. Data analysis should follow immediately thereafter. This is intended to capture big ideas, concepts, keywords within the contexts in which they were expressed.

The writer decided to use the technique for two main reasons. First she wanted to find out how the participants would react to the tentative criteria because their responses would determine the extent of revision of the criteria. Secondly, because the discussion on the criteria touched on discussion of the ESL reading comprehension and the issue of evaluation in language teaching, this reflected (although indirectly) the participants' awareness of current beliefs on reading and evaluation, which in turn helped the writer to make some of the recommendations in the next chapter. Furthermore, the discussion also reflected areas of possible future research.

#### 4.1.2 Group Composition And Data Collection

[Alder and Alder, 1987; Morgan, 1988; Anderson 1990] advise that the researcher who wants to use the focus group technique must decide which people are in the best position to give the information required. Although I had initially considered that practising teachers would be in the best position to provide me with information on the criteria, I could not get the number of practising teachers I wanted at any one time. A number of

scheduled meetings were abandoned because there would be two to three teachers from a group of ten to twelve invited. In view of the problem experienced, I decided to use teacher trainees from the college of Education where I worked. The trainees are doing their final year of a three -year diploma course. Out of ten students asked to join the group, nine turned up. I am aware of the disadvantage of using an intact group as a focus group but the decision was taken as a last resort. Anderson (1990) warns against use of an intact group because the participants may see fit to agree with each other owing to peer pressure.

The programme for the focus group ran as follows:

- (i) Participants were thanked for joining the group
- (ii) Purpose of focus group was explained - i.e. to check whether criteria will work or not
- (iii) Participants were given time to read through the information sheet
- (iv) Each participant was asked to select two language textbooks, out of four, to evaluate the reading comprehension materials using the formulated criteria. The four textbooks were **Let's Use English** (Standard 8), **Advance with English** (Standard 8), **Successful English** (Standard 9) and **English Made Easy** (Standard 9).
- (v) Open-ended questions were asked to find out participants' views on both the criteria and information sheet. The participants were informed that there were no right and wrong answers. As such, they

were urged to be as critical and open-minded as possible in their observations and comments.

The following open-ended questions were asked:

(a) What do you think of the questions used to evaluate a reading programme in an ESL language textbook?

(b) What is your opinion of the information sheet which accompanies the criteria?

(c) What are your views about evaluation of teaching materials?

(d) What do you think of the reading comprehension programmes in the two textbooks you have just evaluated?

(vi) The discussion that followed the open-ended questions was tape - recorded and analyzed in order to discover the main points raised on each question. The answers formed a framework for revision of criteria. The next section outlines the main points.

#### 4.2 Participants' Responses And Revision of Criteria

This section presents a summary of the main points raised by the focus group which influenced the revision of the criteria. The summary corresponds with the open - ended questions listed in the previous section.

#### 4.2.1 Focus Group Responses to:

##### a) Questions in the Criteria

The general comment made about the questions was that the questions needed to be re - arranged to form a logical sequence. Thus, it was suggested that question 5 should follow question 1 (see criteria in Chapter 3) and question 6 should be question number three (3) etc. This comment was taken into consideration. Individual questions were considered in the light of whether they needed any rephrasing or not and also whether they could easily be answered with a YES or NO response.

A number of questions were accepted as being clear and needing no rephrasing, for those that posed problems in terms of terminology suggestions were made as to how they could be rephrased. For example, it was felt that the term 'linguistically accessible' could be rephrased to avoid the possibility of a target - user (teacher) getting discouraged by such terms which may not be very clear to the teacher. The question was thus rephrased as follows:

Question 3: Is the language of the reading materials at the (Ch. 3) level of the learner i.e not too easy or too difficult but difficult enough for the student to learn new language.

The concern with question 4 was how to determine what is interesting because what is interesting for one student may not be interesting for another. However, it was agreed that a

teacher who was aware of his/her students' needs and interests, would be able to say whether the reading passages would attract the learners' interest or not.

Discussion on question 5 centred on whether pre-reading exercises were necessary for all reading passages. This point was raised because some participants felt that for those passages that seemed relatively easy, pre-reading exercises were not a must. Some participants argued that pre-reading exercises may arouse the students' interest in the topic to be read thereafter. Six participants felt that such tasks would draw the reader's attention to the content of the passage. One interesting thing from the discussion on the question on prediction, was that some participants took prediction to mean foretelling the correct information to be found in the passage to be read. One participant pointed out that prediction meant testing one's ideas (hypotheses) which are either confirmed or refined or rejected after the passage has been read. Whilst on this same question, participants pointed out that the question could be subdivided into two questions, one on prediction and one on inference because those referred to two different skills.

In regard to question 8, the general feeling was that the question needed rephrasing because it was not easy (according to the participants) to tell what was fiction and what was non-fiction. The participants had a lengthy argument about what to them was meant by fiction and non-fiction. For five participants the word fiction meant something to do with magic

and witchcraft. They even gave examples of stories of witchcraft or magic from their areas, one participant offered an example:

Participant 1: Something would be fiction if you are told that your next door neighbour has turned into a goat because someone has bewitched him.

Participant 2: One cannot tell what is fiction because only the people of the area know what is fiction, e.g. a Xhosa cannot tell from a passage from West Africa whether the story is a fiction or not.

Needless to say such argument left the writer bewildered as she noticed that the trainees had a completely different schema of the word fiction. Eventually, it was decided that the question should read as follows:

Question 8: In your opinion does the range of passages include narratives (stories) and factual texts (those that are meant to inform)?

The rephrasing of the above question affected the structure of question 10 on figurative language. The question was re-written to read:

Are the students trained to recognize the general structure of stories and of the various structures of

factual passages? i.e. the way the content is presented, e.g. technical report.

The inclusion of this question was necessary to cater for the justification of including training in rhetorical organization.

Although question 11 on vocabulary was accepted as being important, it was pointed out that the difficulty lies in deciding whether the vocabulary of the student was expanded or not. However the group pointed out that Krashen's hypothesis - (input + 1) - should always be borne in mind when teaching reading comprehension.

b) The Information Sheet

There was general consensus that the information sheet was useful even on its own, without the criteria. This was because the group thought that the information sheet could be used to guide a teacher who is interested in developing his/her own teaching materials to teach ESL reading comprehension. It was also useful because it sheds light on some of the questions in the criteria.

Point number (vii) on the Information Sheet was rephrased to allow for the change made in the criteria, thus the point reads:

Students should be exposed to difficult ways of organizing information through narratives (stories) and expository (factual) passages.

c) Evaluation in ESL

The group was in agreement that evaluation of language textbooks was necessary in order to check whether:

- the textbooks reflected current theories
- the language was at the appropriate level
- the textbooks's teaching materials suited the ESL learners' needs and interest.

d) Reading programmes in two textbooks

Reading materials in the language textbooks Lets' Use English and Advance with English were used for the purpose of checking out the criteria as well as to check which programme reflected some of the current issues in ESL reading comprehension.

The group pointed out that to a great extent the reading programmes in the two books were presented in the form of a reading passage followed by questions on the passage - either comprehension or opinion questions. Such aspects as vocabulary expansion, cohesion etc were done as vocabulary sections titled Vocabulary Study or Language Use respectively and in most cases the exercises were not related to the reading passage. Thus, although most of the questions in the criteria were answered in the affirmative, this did not present a true picture of the reading comprehension programme as envisaged by the writer. A similar remark was made about the writing exercises. These, it was pointed out, were ... "divorced from the reading passages" as one of the participants put it.

One other point that came up clearly was that the group found it difficult to say whether the reading materials were interesting or not for ESL students in the 1990s in South Africa. However, the group indicated which passages were not interesting. It was pointed out that most of the reading passages in **Let's Use English**, Standard 8, were meant to inform either about historical figures or events or objects, etc. The group felt that this may not interest today's students greatly. A similar point was made about science fiction such as 'Star Wars' presented by **Advance with English**, Standard 8.

The same problems observed by the writer in the previous chapter concerning the amount of time taken to review the books, as well as the difficulty in giving decisive YES/NO answers were also echoed by the focus group. However, the time taken to review the books using these criteria may have appeared to be excessive, the writer feels that it is, nonetheless, a good time investment. Within the normal work routines, teachers will be receiving one book to review or evaluate between long intervals of time. It is, therefore, possible that the pressure for time which was experienced by the focus group which had to evaluate three textbooks in one sitting, may not actually arise in practice. On the whole, it is important to realise that the planning phase - which includes selection of relevant and appropriate teaching/learning resources, is a vital step in the effective delivery of high-quality education. It is, therefore, justifiable to spend productive time at the point of selecting appropriate reading materials, particularly for L<sub>2</sub> readers.

On the second comment, there should not be any major problems in arriving at YES or NO answers if the person making the evaluation is assessing one book at a time, and paying attention to one aspect as he/she goes through individual criteria.

#### 4.2.2 Revised Criteria

From the suggestions made by the focus group, the writer was able to revise the questions in the criteria. The following are the revised criteria as would be presented to a standard 8 teacher.

#### 4.3 **CONCLUSION**

This chapter set out to revise the tentative criteria formulated in the previous chapter. In order to do so, the focus group technique (Anderson, 1990) was used to collect pointers that would assist in the revision of the criteria. In addition to that the chapter outlined the importance of evaluating ESL teaching materials.

The criteria which are presented in this chapter have taken cognisance of the need for teachers to pay particular attention to the cultural specificity, and relevance of the material they use with L<sub>2</sub> learners. Furthermore, the importance of using familiar materials has also been highlighted. However, this does not disregard the importance of extending the learners' horizon or knowledge of the world. Reading materials on other cultures provide a window into those cultures and the importance for that cannot be overemphasized in the multi-cultural society that exists in South Africa.

CHAPTER 5SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONSTABLE OF CONTENTS

- 5.0 OVERVIEW
- 5.1 SUMMARY
- 5.2 WHY EVALUATE READING PROGRAMMES
- 5.3 IN DEFENCE OF TEXTBOOKS
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- 5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS
- 5.6 AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH
- 5.7 CONCLUDING REMARKS

## CHAPTER 5

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.0 OVERVIEW

This chapter presents a summary of the entire study in terms of research questions, literature review, methodology and major findings. Conclusions arising out of the study are drawn, as well as some recommendations pertinent to the research problem. Finally, the chapter offers some thoughts for further study.

#### 5.1 SUMMARY

The study set out to formulate criteria that might be used to evaluate a reading comprehension programme as presented by some language textbooks used in South African Schools. In an attempt to do so, it was necessary to first isolate those points from theory that the researcher regarded as essential for the teaching of ESL reading comprehension.

The study looked at reading as a process as presented by the interactive models of reading (Goodman, 1967; Smith, 1971; Carrell, 1988; Rumelhart, 1988). It also reviewed other aspects of the current literature about reading comprehension which are likely to be overlooked in composition of ESL reading comprehension programme. The main tenets of the various theories were then summarised and these formed the basis for the questions formulated for the criteria.

In order to formulate such a checklist, the writer referred to various checklists prepared by various language specialists. These provided the framework in which to work. In other words they provided indicators for the type of questions to be asked.

The first draft criteria were tried out to check whether they would work or not. The exercise involved a focus group from which the writer collected comments on the questions in the checklist (criteria) and the information sheet accompanying the checklist. The criteria were then revised. It is hoped that this revised checklist will be tried out, and found useful, by practising teachers as they evaluate ESL reading programmes and materials.

## 5.2 WHY EVALUATE READING PROGRAMMES?

In 1.2 the writer set out the origins and context of the study. Her concern was with the ESL learners whom she thought could be helped by teachers in the schools. And at the same time, the writer suggested that teachers needed to be helped to choose teaching materials that could help them teach reading comprehension effectively. Thus this section attempts to justify her view-point. Harrison and Gardener in Marland (1977) write

(Although) reading is the most heavily researched single area of the whole curriculum ... paradoxically, it remains a field in which... a great many teachers would claim to be almost wholly ignorant...

(Harrison and Gardner, in Marland, 1977:80)

The authors further point out that most secondary school teachers generally do not have training at all related to reading but nevertheless feel conscious that the ability to read fluently is the basis for most school learning and one of the surest predictors of academic attainment. Although the authors were writing about teachers in England, the writer believes that these sentiments would be expressed by some teachers in South Africa. Actually the study by McKellar (1991) supports the suggestions that teachers are almost "ignorant" of what teaching reading involves. McKellar points out that what the teachers observed in class was less than satisfactory. Major aspects of reading teaching was poorly handled by those teachers. Such concern has also been expressed by other researchers e.g Roeder, cited in Nameth (1975) who points out that at times graduate teachers are not fully prepared to handle reading teaching at the start of their teaching careers.

If the picture set above is anything to go by, then it becomes important that those teachers attempting to teach reading need to be assisted in their effort. For pre - service teachers the help should come from the colleges that prepare them to become teachers. For the in - service teachers reading programmes that are theoretically underpinned could assist, and these could be in language textbooks.

Evaluation of reading materials is also important because some ELT textbooks are inconsistent with the findings of research on ESL reading comprehension. However, it should be noted that the

task of evaluating a textbook can be tedious and frustrating as the writer discovered when she tried out the first draft criteria. A similar view was expressed by the focus group.

### 5.3 IN DEFENCE OF TEXTBOOKS

Much as the writer is aware of the limitations of language textbooks, she still feels that they have something to offer to teachers described in the previous section. O'Neill in Rossner and Bolitho (1990) points out some reasons why teachers might need to use textbooks in their teaching. First, textbooks offer frameworks within which teachers can work from, i.e. what a textbook offers could be viewed as a guide for the teacher to create. He points out that textbooks are used for the purpose of providing a core framework for the teaching/learning process. Secondly he argues that textbooks could act as a resource for those students who want to stay in touch with the language, if they make fullest possible use of the textbook i.e. students can refer back and forward in connection with what they have learnt or is to be learnt. Thirdly, O'Neill suggests that textbooks should be so designed that both teacher and the class can improvise and adopt the materials because no textbook can expect to appeal to all teachers and learners at the same level. Thus the textbook designer can suggest how the teacher can adapt the materials. In the example of reading comprehension materials, the author could suggest that the teacher and the class find their own newspaper articles and use them in the teaching of critical reading. In other words, work on reading comprehension may start with the textbook but end outside it. The fourth

reason advanced by O'Neill (1990) is that textbooks are cost - efficient compared to teacher - produced materials which may be bulky and costly if photocopying is involved for large numbers of students. Moreover, the danger with teacher - produced materials is that they may be poorly conceived because teachers are inexpertly floundering around to produce such materials. It should be noted however that not too much should be expected of teaching materials unless the whole teaching/learning situation is taken into account (Allwright, in Rossner and Bolitho, 1990).

#### 5.4 LIMITATIONS OF OF THE STUDY

If the study seems like an attempt to justify the use of a textbook in teaching reading comprehension, it is because in a very small way the textbook may offer something to the ESL teacher particularly to those who are not fully prepared for teaching reading as pointed out earlier on. It should be noted, however, that the study does not make any claims that the criteria formulated here are exhaustible or prescriptive, for that would be tantamount to claiming that there can be no other criteria to evaluate ESL reading programmes used in South Africa. Indeed no such claim can be made because the study has taken the form of personal reflection on a subject of interest for the writer and therefore the criteria reflect (at best) the writer's beliefs about reading comprehension. What the study offers is a set of questions that might be used in a 'dry' theoretical evaluation of teaching materials (Kroes & Walker 1988).

If the personal nature of the study is one limitation of this

study, equally crippling was the absence of in-service teachers in the focus group. The writer feels that she may have missed out on some interesting pointers from in-service teachers which could have been included in the revised criteria. This is not to say the pre-service teachers were found wanting; on the contrary, the writer found their contribution professional for their level. Several attempts had been made to have in-service teachers to form a focus group but each attempt failed. Teachers had been contacted individually at one time; another attempt was through a Deputy Principal of a school - both had failed. Personal engagements were given as reasons for not being able to join the group. The writer is inclined to think that the request was not seriously considered by the in-service teachers who might not see the need for such small scale research, since they have been teaching and seeing their students through examinations. Maybe one needs to work in conjunction with the Department of Education for such work to carry any weight. As already pointed out, the need for evaluating ESL materials cannot be overemphasized, and teachers need to be made aware of this.

#### 5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

If the absence of in-service teachers (although asked to join) possibly indicates their feelings towards evaluation of teaching materials, that such evaluation is not very necessary because textbooks have always been used in the schools and some students have passed and gone to colleges and universities. To the extent that this might be true, the writer recommends that issues of evaluating teaching/learning materials should be an integral part

of teacher training programmes. The need for evaluation was expressed by the focus group as mentioned in the previous chapter. If evaluation issues are handled at colleges the possibility is that the teacher trainees may take the idea of evaluation into the schools once they become fully fledged teachers.

Secondly, the writer suggests that English subject advisors in the Transkei region could organise workshops and inform in - service teachers about the need for evaluating language teaching/learning materials in the various textbooks. They could also stress that in schools such evaluation could be undertaken as team-work by the school's department of English.

Thirdly, the writer would also like to point out that the textbook **Let's Use English** has something to offer in the teaching of reading comprehension (despite its shortcomings) compared to other language textbooks. The textbook could be used as a framework for the teacher's work on reading comprehension.

Last but not least, the writer deems it vital that teacher training institutions embark on programmes that equip the teacher-to-be with skills to teach reading comprehension effectively. This is even more important in the post-apartheid era when students from all over the province/country are to write the same examination in English. This will put those ESL students who are poorly prepared in the language at a disadvantage.

## 5.6 AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

A "dry" theoretical evaluation of teaching materials as suggested by the study manages to highlight the theoretical underpinnings of the teaching materials but provides no indication as to how effective those materials would be when used in the classroom. Thus this study needs to be extended to an evaluation of 'materials - in - process' (Rea-Dickins et al 1992). This stage allows one to view the ways in which learners and teachers actually use and respond to materials thus providing indicators as to whether the materials are 'successful' or not.

The second way of extending this study is to lobby for classroom action research, (Kemmis and Carr, cited in Walker, 1990) in which the teachers themselves would assess the effectiveness of the teaching materials presented in the textbooks. This however may be problematic with teachers in black schools who have not had any training in action research. The need to train teachers to become researchers of their own practice could be addressed by in - service colleges. The two types of research would provide empirical evidence of the effectiveness of the teaching materials.

## 5.7 CONCLUDING REMARKS

Nowadays, one's reading ability has a significant influence on one's educational progress. It is, therefore, important that the learner be helped by his/her educators to acquire such facility. It is assumed that the teacher of reading who in many cases is the language teacher, carries the responsibility of seeing to

that. Strevens (1977) seems to support this view when he points out that

...in some senses, the task of teaching reading at the advanced stage is no longer a language task but is a contribution to the general education and intellectual development of the learner, since in his reading he is now dealing with ideas, as well as information, conveyed in written language...

(Strevens, 1977:116)

He further points out that at that level the learners should be able to identify the various functions of the written language which they are likely to encounter in the language classroom and beyond it. Consequently the task of a teacher of reading is to find and supply language materials that are sufficiently interesting to the learner to help him identify the gaps in his/her language experience and ensure that those are filled. The teacher should also 'lead the learner towards the limits of his personal language - learning ability' (Strevens 1977).

Although the above views hold true, the difficulty in compiling materials suitable for advanced reading cannot be overlooked. It is suggested that the materials need to be realistic, relevant, interesting, encouraging, challenging, compatible etc but how does a teacher determine that the teaching materials in textbooks possess these characteristics? That's when it becomes important for teachers to have instruments that can assist them to evaluate teaching materials.

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# Of life, love, age — and Fugard

APPENDIX 1

VALLEY SONG, latest in the awesome line of Athol Fugard's plays, tells the understated story of an old man's love of, and fears for, his grandchild.

A meditation on the bonds of youth and age, the play has the deceptive simplicity of a tale by Pauline Smith. And like Smith, Fugard has taken a small part of the Karoo — the hamlet of Nieu-Bethesda — and made it his special province.

In *Valley Song*, his characters are two dirt-poor and marginalised coloured bywooners: Abram "Buks" Jonker, an elderly war veteran devoted to his vegetable furrows (played by Fugard), and Veronica, his restless but dutiful 16-year-old granddaughter.

One of the great pleasures of this production is the performance of Esmeralda Bihl, who plays the part of Veronica. She positively shimmers with a special ardour, a restless energy and excitement that is barely contained by her loyalty and her love for the old man.

Bihl's interplay with Fugard's fuddled, querulous, yet strangely dignified old farmer is entrancing. And her self-made songs — rough hewn, impassioned, sweet — brim with all the impossible longing of her youth.

Old Buks Jonker is anxious to shield the dreamy, wayward young girl from temptations beyond the valley.

Veronica, just as anxiously, is determined to yield to those temptations, and become a singing star in faraway Johannesburg. But Buks is determined to stop her because he fears that history will repeat itself: desertion, failure and death have scarred his family before.

The tale is as old as the art of storytelling itself — youth's tussle with age, which ends in the inevitable victory of the young.

*Valley Song* also shows us Fugard, after three decades of playwriting, giving up the political in favour of the archetypal: in old age, and after so much principled and searing protest, there are universal human experiences he wishes to explore.

Freed from the impulse, or the need, to strain at the big political statement, Fugard's writing has a precision and sprightliness often missing in some of his other later plays. The subtle, insistent rhythms of life in the valley,

A mature Fugard ducks political statements in his latest offering, *Valley Song*. Instead he picks a theme as old as time itself, the victory of youth over age, says GUY WILLOUGHBY

Informing all human strivings, are powerfully evoked.

It is not easy to evoke such archetypal simplicities, especially to set them in post-apartheid South Africa, and that Fugard manages to do that without affectation or mawkishness is a considerable achievement.

Yet the political, in the sense of practical relations of power, will out — as it must in South Africa. Fugard both evokes and evades the political by introducing a kindly white stranger — himself, the playwright — who narrates the unfolding story, while also playing confidant to the other characters.

This device, interesting as it is, does not come off. Fugard as Fugard plays a sort of fairy godfather, benignly paternal, who drifts like a wraith in and out of the Jonkers' agonised lives.

He is too kind, too knowing, too avuncular for the play's own good.

The unexpected presence of this white landowner might have created a further point of conflict, between the dispossessed and their masters, that would have raised the ticklish issue of land rights in our new but strangely old South Africa.

Fugard the younger, who made anguished and hard-edged drama out of suffocating family bonds in *The Blood Knot* and *Hello and Goodbye*, would not have let that opportunity go.

The drama of generations is poignant and compelling; but the political drama of land rights, which would have interested Fugard a decade or so ago, does not go away. It is left as a problem for the future.

*Valley Song* is a work of delicacy and lyricism, a sustained burst of mature song that is every bit as charming as Veronica's ditties.

If at the end a troubling political dimension remains unresolved, the power of the tale and Bihl's lovely performance combine to create a moving dramatic experience.

□  
FUGARD  
AS  
FUGARD  
... in his  
latest  
play, *Athol  
Fugard  
doubles  
as Old  
Buks, the  
sprightly  
Veronica's  
granddad,  
and  
himself,  
as the  
players'  
confidant*  
□

QUESTION 3

Fill in the appropriate word in the blank spaces in the following passage :

The religions of the world, in spite of their many common elements, show equally deep-seated differences of belief and practice. Philosophers and theologians may agree upon the fundamentals of faith, but the ordinary man clings to his 1 in the conviction that they 2 sensible and right. The strict 3 may not eat pork, the 4 Hindu no beef; but the strict 5 may eat both - except perhaps on 6. The Brahmanic bull of Hindu 7 swings through the bazaar and 8 his fill; the European sees 9 him a wasteful concession to 10 prejudice, and thinks how much 11 he would be occupied in 12 a plough or converted into 13. The protest of the Hindu 14 groups of Northern India against 15 public ox - roasting proposed in 1937 16 celebrate the Coronation of their 17 in Great Britain must have 18 comic to many Englishmen. A 19 of beef-eating, plus a religion 20 imbued with symbolism of sacrifice and of communion through partaking of flesh and blood, finds it difficult to appreciate the sincerity of a faith which believes in bloodless offerings and in veneration of a sacred animal.

APPENDIX 2a    ANSWERS TO THE CLOZE TEST

QUESTION 1

- |      |           |                |      |                                      |
|------|-----------|----------------|------|--------------------------------------|
| 3.1  | taboos    | <i>beliefs</i> | 3.11 | better                               |
| 3.2  | are       |                | 3.12 | pulling                              |
| 3.3  | Muslim    |                | 3.13 | steaks / <i>Meat</i>                 |
| 3.4  | strict    |                | 3.14 | orthodox                             |
| 3.5  | Christian |                | 3.15 | the                                  |
| 3.6  | Fridays   |                | 3.16 | to                                   |
| 3.7  | India     |                | 3.17 | Majesties / <i>king</i>              |
| 3.8  | eats      |                | 3.18 | seemed / been                        |
| 3.9  | in        |                | 3.19 | tradition / <i>practice / custom</i> |
| 3.10 | religious |                | 3.20 | deeply                               |

APPENDIX 2b STUDENTS' ANSWERS TO CLOZE TEST

1. custom ✓

2. are ✓

3. religions ✓

4. religions ✓

5. different ✓

6. exceptions ✓

7. may ✓

8. in ✓

9. to ✓

10. there's ✓

11. will ✓

12. to ✓

13. religions ✓

14. are ✓

15. their ✓

16. to ✓

17. faith ✓

18. believe ✓

19. of ✓

1. Beliefs ✓

2. are ✓

3. people ✓

4. strict ✓

5. religions ✓

6. Celebrations ✓

7. can ✓

8. practice ✓

9. in ✓

10. this ✓

11. some ✓

12. such ✓

13. are ✓

14. religions ✓

15. the ✓

16. which ✓

17. faith ✓

18. their ✓

19. groups ✓

20. which ✓

1. beliefs ✓

2. were ✓

3. faith ✓

4. strict ✓

5. religious ✓

6. Sunday ✓

7. usually ✓

8. to ✓

9. in ✓

10. the ✓

11. it ✓

12. through ✓

13. Christian ✓

14. religion ✓

15. the ✓

16. to ✓

17. faith ✓

18. believe ✓

19. custom ✓

20. believe ✓

AP 20

20

## Reading comprehension

The passage below is taken from J.B. Peires's book *The House of Phalo: A History of the Xhosa People in the Days of their Independence*. This book was the first history of the Xhosa people to be written in over fifty years, and it draws from both oral as well as written sources of information.

This extract describes their preparations for war. While you are reading the passage, consider the following questions:

- What fighting skills did a Xhosa warrior have to practise?
- Were the Xhosa people eager to go to war?
- For what reasons would they go to war?

Among the Xhosa, every healthy adult male was also a warrior. As a boy, he would learn to fight with sticks, to thrust, to parry, to throw at passing birds. As he grew older, he would exchange his sticks for the different types of spear. Most important of these was the *intshuntshe*, or throwing spear, with its long shaft which quivered and vibrated when properly thrown thus adding to its power of penetration. It was not, however, possible to throw very accurately even from a distance of fifty yards, and so the warrior carried his spears in a bundle of seven or eight. The last spear was never thrown, but was retained in case the order '*Phakathi!*' (Get inside!) was given. Then the shaft of the spear might be broken off, or a special striking spear with a wickedly serrated edge might be produced. For defence, the warrior carried a long oval shield, covering perhaps two-thirds of the body.



The order '*Phakathi!*' was not given often. Young chiefs and their age-mates, newly emerged from the circumcision lodge, usually tried to mark their coming-of-age by a daring exploit. But this did not usually amount to much more than a cattle raid on one's neighbours or traditional rivals; as we have seen, it was one of the chief mechanisms whereby the Xhosa kingdom expanded. Raids and counter-raids were frequent, but wars were relatively rare. Official representatives (*amazakuzaku*) were sent on diplomatic missions to talk things over first. These would usually be important councillors, sons or junior brothers, but never

the chief himself. If the enemy seemed particularly dangerous or untrustworthy, women would be sent. A missionary who witnessed the protracted struggle between Hintsa and the Thembu king Ngubencuka wrote:

Between the period of receiving and avenging any wrong . . . days and weeks, and sometimes months, are spent in conferring upon all the different bearings of the case . . . Messengers are sent backward and forward, to ascertain why or wherefore such steps have been taken, or upon what grounds hostilities are contemplated.

Thus if a youthful raid led to loss of life, or if herdsmen clashed over the right to water their cattle at a particular river, or if a chief objected to the way his daughter was treated by her husband, this did not in itself lead to war. An unfortunate incident could always be smoothed over by the payment of compensation and the exchange of presents. Only when the insult was deliberate (as when Gcaleka's men tossed a corn-cob into a meeting at Rharhabe's Great Place) or when the payment was derisory (as when the Thembu presented Rharhabe with inadequate bride-wealth), or when the enemy overtly claimed sovereignty over the land (as when the Ngqosini chief, Gaba, hoisted the elephant's tail in Xhosa territory) did it become necessary to go to war. Hostilities were always preceded by a formal declaration.

Once war was declared, the king (or the chief, if the struggle was one between two chiefs of the same nation) ordered his followers to muster at the Great Place by sending personal messages to his subordinate chiefs. The people were alerted by the women who passed the *ixwili*, a sharp cry like that of a wild dog, from ridge to ridge. The men seized their weapons and set off for the Great Place without knowing why they were called. Any who stayed behind were liable to have their property confiscated. At the Great Place the warriors would eat of the specially-slaughtered cattle, and would dance and sing and learn the causes of the dispute. Here too they would be doctored and organised into battle order.

The Xhosa believed that magic affected every human activity but most particularly war. Every chief had his wardoctor (*ithola* or *igogo*). The very greatest, Nxele or Mlanjeni, defy generalisation — their methods were entirely their own. Others were rainmakers or the sons of wardoctors. The first task was to make the warriors fierce (*ukuhlupenza*) by giving them a medicine derived from fierce animals such as the poison of a snake or the gall of a bull. It was believed that the power of a wild animal passed to the man who killed it, and so great hunters wore the claw of a leopard, or a piece of lion-skin, or an ivory armlet where possible. After this, protective medicines were prepared. These were either swallowed or rubbed into incisions made in the body. The ingredients usually included the plumbago, used in peacetime for warding off thieves and lightning, and the pelargonium, otherwise used for dressing cuts and sores. And finally since charms could hardly benefit anybody tainted with evil, the warriors were purified by bathing in a river previously prepared with purifying medicines. The wardoctor might also impose further ritual prohibitions, for example on sexual intercourse, to keep the army pure.

Once the battle commenced, the army divided into three: a centre flanked by two wings (*amaphiko*) on either side. The basic tactic in Xhosa warfare was the attempt to outflank the enemy with the object of either encircling him or else capturing his cattle. There were many possible variations on this theme as the different divisions of the armies manoeuvred to gain position, to counteract the movements of the enemy and to lend support where required. Occasionally a brilliant new tactic would swing the victory. This was the case at the great battle of Amalinde. When Ngqika's army charged forward,

Answer the following questions:

- 1 Why did the warriors carry so many spears?
- 2 When they had thrown their spears, how did they continue to fight?
- 3 Why was the order, 'Phakathi!' not often given (line 21)?
- 4 Why did young chiefs raid their neighbours' cattle (line 23)?
- 5 Why were wars 'relatively rare' (lines 25-26)?
- 6 What advantage could be gained by sending women to an enemy who seemed dangerous or untrustworthy (lines 28-29)?
- 7 What is meant by the phrase, 'smoothed over' (line 38)?
- 8 Why might the 'corn-cob' (line 39) have been seen as sufficient reason to declare war?
- 9 What was a 'formal declaration' (line 44) in this context?
- 10 For what reasons would the people support their chief in war?
- 11 Why do you think that they believed that magic affected the outcome of war (line 53)?
- 12 How could the 'wardoctors' help the warriors?
- 13 What did they believe a lion-skin or ivory armlet would do for a warrior?
- 14 What sort of people were the charms believed to benefit (lines 63-64)?
- 15 What is meant by the word 'outflank' (line 68)?
- 16 Draw a diagram of the battle formation and tactics of the army.

### A Sweet Delusion

It was a summer morning in Adam's heart, and he saw Hetty in the sunshine: a sunshine without glare—with slanting rays that trembled between the delicate shadows of the leaves. He thought that when he put out his hand to her as they came out of church, that there was a touch of melancholy kindness in her face, such as he had not seen before, and he took it as a sign that she had some sympathy with his family trouble. Poor fellow! That touch of melancholy came from quite another source; but how was he to know?

It was impossible for Adam not to feel that what had happened in the previous week had brought the prospect of marriage nearer to him. He felt keenly the danger that some other man might step in and get possession of Hetty's heart and hand, while he himself was still in a position that made him shrink from asking her to accept him.

He had been too heavily burdened with other claims to provide a home for himself and Hetty—a home such as he could expect her to be content with after the comfort and plenty of the Farm. And there was Hetty, like a bright-cheeked apple hanging over the orchard wall, within sight of everybody, and everybody must long for her! To be sure, if she loved him very much, she would be content to wait for him; but did she love him? His hopes had never risen so high that he had dared to ask her.

Hetty felt that there was something soothing to her in Adam's timid yet manly tenderness; she wanted to be treated lovingly. She was not afraid that Adam would tease her with love-making and flattering speeches like her other admirers. He had always been very reserved to her. She could enjoy without fear the sense that this strong brave man loved her, and was near to her. It never occurred to her that Adam must suffer one day.

She was not the first woman that had behaved more gently to the man who loved her in vain, because she had herself begun to love another. It was a very old story; but Adam knew nothing about it, so he drank in the sweet delusion.

(Adapted from *Adam Bede*, by George Eliot)

### Questions

- (a) Explain in your own words, with reference to the text: 'It was a summer morning in his heart.'
- (b) Why were the rays 'slanting'?
- (c) What made Adam think that Hetty's 'melancholy' look was one of kindness and sympathy? How was he mistaken?
- (d) Why had Adam put off asking Hetty to marry him?
- (e) Why was Adam afraid that he might be too late?
- (f) Why didn't Hetty tell Adam that she did not love him?
- (g) In what way was Hetty inconsiderate or selfish?
- (h) What exactly was the 'sweet delusion' which Adam 'drank in'?

of the primate (including human) evolution, and neontology, the comparative biology of living primates, including population and molecular genetics, body shapes (morphology), and the extent to which behavior is biologically programmed.

Archeology is the systematic retrieval and analysis of the physical remains left behind by human beings, including both their skeletal and cultural remains. Both the classical civilizations and prehistoric groups, including our prehuman ancestors, are investigated.

Linguistics is the study of language across space and time. Historical linguistics attempts to trace the tree of linguistic evolution and to reconstruct ancestral language forms. Comparative (or structural) linguistics attempts to describe formally the basic elements of languages and the rules by which they are ordered into intelligible speech.

Cultural anthropology includes many different perspectives and specialized subdisciplines but is concerned primarily with describing the forms of social organization and the cultural systems of human groups. In technical usage, ethnography is the description of the social and cultural systems of one particular group, whereas ethnology is the comparison of such descriptions for the purpose of generalizing about the nature of all human groups.

(From D. E. Hunter and P. Whitten: *The Study of Anthropology* (Harper and Row, 1976))

## 2.5 Classification

### Exercise 1

*Specific aim:* To help the students to understand a text based on a classification.

*Skills involved:* Understanding relations between parts of a text.

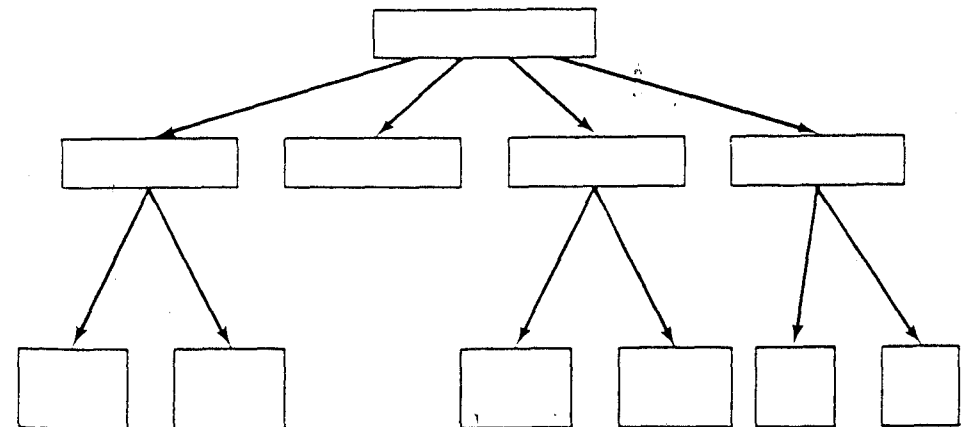
*Why?* It is important to encourage the students to draw tree diagrams to visualize the information contained in a text. It will help them to see at once the main points of the text and the relations between them. Obviously, tree diagrams are particularly well adapted to texts based on classifications.

Read the following passage and complete the tree diagram below with the words given underneath.

## Anthropology

We shall outline the four major subfields of anthropology that have emerged in the twentieth century: physical anthropology, archeology, linguistics and cultural anthropology.

Physical anthropology deals with human biology across space and time. It is divided into two areas: paleontology, the study of the fossil evidence



ethnology  
archeology  
structural linguistics  
physical anthropology  
neontology  
anthropology

historical linguistics  
cultural anthropology  
linguistics  
paleontology  
ethnography

Linguistic Materials	
Title	
Author(s)	
Publisher	
ISBN	
Components: SB/TB/WB/Tests/Cassettes/Videos/C.D.L./Other	
Level	
Length	Units
Target learners	Lessons sections
Target teachers	Hours
RAMSSE/EN/F	Poor ** Fair *** Good **** Excellent
Factor	Rating and comments
Rationale	
Availability	
User enjoyment	
Layout/graphics	
Accessibility	
Linkage	
Selection/grading	
Physical characteristics	
Appropriacy	
Authenticity	
Sufficiency	
Cultural bias	
Educational validity	
Stimulus practice/revision	
Flexibility	
Guidance	
Overall value for money	

Figure 1. Textbook evaluation sheet

dom to choose what he or she uses in class, would seem to be central to coping with 'gaps' via subsequent supplementation and adaptation. There are several key questions to ask ourselves about each feature:

- Why was this book written in the first place, and what gaps is it intended to fill?
- Are you given information about the Needs Analysis or classroom piloting that were undertaken?
- Are the objectives spelt out?

**Rationale**

- Is it easy to obtain sample copies and support material for inspection?
- Can you contact the publisher's representatives in case you want further information about the content, approach, or pedagogical detail of the book?

**Availability**

- Is there a clear specification of the target age range, culture, assumed background, probable learning preferences, and educational expectations?
- Are entry/exit language levels precisely defined, e.g. by reference to international 'standards' such as the EFLS, ACTFL, or Council of Europe scales, or by reference to local or country-specific examination requirements?
- In the case of an ESP textbook, what degree of specialist knowledge is assumed (of both learners and teacher)?

**User definition**

- Is there an optimum density and mix of text and graphical material on each page, or is the impression one of clutter?
- Are the artwork and typefaces functional? colourful? appealing?

**Layout/graphics**

- Is the material clearly organized?
- Can the student find his or her location in the material at any point, i.e. is it possible to have a clear view of the 'progress' made, and how much still needs to be covered?
- Are there indexes, vocabulary lists, section headings, and other methods of signposting the content that allow the student to use the material easily, especially for revision or self-study purposes?
- Is the learner (as opposed to the teacher) given clear advice about how the book and its contents could be most effectively exploited?

**Accessibility**

- Do the units and exercises connect in terms of theme, situation, topic, pattern of skill development, or grammatical/lexical 'progression'?
- Is the nature of such connection made obvious, for example by placing input texts and supporting exercises in close proximity?
- Does the textbook cohere both internally and externally (e.g. with other books in a series)?

**Linkage**

- Does the introduction, practice, and recycling of new linguistic items seem to be shallow/steep enough for your students?
- Is there a discernible system at work in the selection and grading of these items (e.g. on the basis of frequency counts, or on the basis of useful comparisons between the learner's mother tongue and English)?
- Is the linguistic inventory presented appropriate for your purposes, bearing in mind the L1 background(s) of your learners?

**Selection/grading**

- Physical characteristics**
- Is there space to write in the book?
  - Is the book robust? too large? too heavy?
  - Is the spine labelled?
  - Is it a book that could be used more than once, especially if it is marked by previous students?
- Appropriacy**
- Is the material substantial enough or interesting enough to hold the attention of learners?
  - Is it pitched at the right level of maturity and language, and (particularly in the case of ESP situations), at the right conceptual level?
  - Is it topical?
- Authenticity**
- Is the content obviously realistic, being taken from L1 material not initially intended for ELT purposes?
  - Do the tasks exploit language in a communicative or 'real-world' way?
  - If not, are the texts unacceptably simplified or artificial (for instance, in the use of whole-sentence dialogues)?
- Sufficiency**
- Is the book complete enough to stand on its own, or must the teacher produce a lot of ancillary bridging material to make it workable?
  - Can you teach the course using only the student's book, or must all the attendant aids (e.g. cassettes) be deployed?
- Cultural bias**
- Are different and appropriate religious and social environments catered for, both in terms of the topics/situations presented and of those left out?
  - Are students' expectations in regard to content, methodology, and format successfully accommodated?
  - If not, would the book be able to wean students away from their preconceived notions?
  - Is the author's sense of humour or philosophy obvious or appropriate?
  - Does the coursebook enshrine stereotyped, inaccurate, condescending or offensive images of gender, race, social class, or nationality?
  - Are accurate or 'sanitized' views of the USA or Britain presented; are uncomfortable social realities (e.g. unemployment, poverty, family breakdowns, racism) left out?
- Educational validity**
- Does the textbook take account of, and seem to be in tune with, broader educational concerns (e.g. the nature and role of learning skills, concept development in younger learners, the function of 'knowledge of the world', the exploitation of sensitive issues, the value of metaphor as a powerful cognitive learning device)?
- Stimulus/practice/revision**
- Is the course material interactive, and are there sufficient opportunities for the learner to use his or her English so that effective consolidation takes place?
  - Is the material likely to be retained/remembered by learners?
  - Is allowance made for revision, testing, and on-going evaluation/mark-ing of exercises and activities, especially in large-group situations; are ready-made achievement tests provided for the coursebook, or is test development left for the hardpressed teacher? Are 'self-checks' provided?
- Flexibility**
- Can the book accommodate the practical constraints with which you must deal, or are assumptions made about such things as the availability

- of audio-visual equipment, pictorial material, class size, and classroom geography; does the material make too many demands on teachers' preparation time and students' homework time?
- Can the material be exploited or modified as required by local circumstances, or is it too rigid in format, structure, and approach?
- Is there a full range of supplementary aids available?

- Guidance**
- Are the teacher's notes useful and explicit?
  - Has there been an inordinate delay between the publication of the student's and teacher's books which has meant that teachers have had to fend for themselves in exploiting the material?
  - Is there advice about how to supplement the coursebook, or to present the lessons in different ways?
  - Is there enough/too much 'hand-holding'?
  - Are tapescripts, answer keys, 'technical notes' (in the case of ESP textbooks), vocabulary lists, structural/functional inventories, and lesson summaries provided in the Teacher's Book?
  - Is allowance made for the perspectives, expectations, and preferences of non-native teachers of English?

- Overall value for money**
- Quite simply, is the coursebook cost-effective, easy to use, and successful in your teaching situation, in terms of time, labour, and money?
  - To what extent has it realized its stated objectives?

A CHECKLIST FOR  
TEXTBOOK COMPARISON

Organization

	Yes	No		
1. The materials include				
authentic prose texts.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
authentic dialogues (i.e., excerpts of conversations actually spoken by native speakers).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
texts written for the textbook.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
dialogues written for the textbook.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
vocabulary and grammar drills and exercises.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
activities for the application of grammar rules.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
activities for creative language use.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
activities for text interpretation.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
The materials also include				
workbooks and/or work sheets.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
learning objectives and content outline.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
teacher's guide.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
	Yes	No	Required	Optional
tests.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
slides.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
transparencies for an overhead projector.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Yes	No	Required	Optional
pictures and/or wall charts.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
tapes presenting texts from the book (e.g., dialogues, readings).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
tapes presenting texts for listening practice.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
tapes with grammar and pronuncia- tion exercises and repetition drills.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
			Yes	No
2. The sequence (of units, lessons, chapters) is divided into required and optional, basic and supple- mentary components.			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Themes, situations, content, etc., are justified and explained to the learners through introductions and summaries.			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
in the native language.			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
in the second language.			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
through footnotes in each section.			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
through visual contextual clues.			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
not at all.			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. The learners' books are illustrated				
with original photographs.			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
with technical drawings (diagrams, charts, tables).			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
with symbols.			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
with cartoons or comics.			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
with collages.			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
with simple line drawings.			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. The chapters, texts, exercises, and tasks are marked in such a way that the learners can recognize the nature of the task or learning activity by recurring symbols or titles.			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Yes	No
6. There are instructions in the textbook for individual work.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
for group work.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
for self-assessment.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Vocabulary lists are		
second language → native language.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
native language → second language.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
second language → second language.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
at the end of each section.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
in subject groups.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
alphabetical.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
glossed in the margin.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Grammar presentations are		
in both the second and native language.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
in the second language only.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
in the native language only.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
inductive.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
deductive.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
both inductive and deductive.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
interspersed throughout the units.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
in a separate section within each unit.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Content	Yes	No
9. The themes for each chapter are		
historical, geographical, or political.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
technical or scientific.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
literary.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
entertaining.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
stimulating and provocative.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
unrelated, selected to illustrate language functions, vocabulary, or points of grammar.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. The sequence of the themes reflects a definite scheme for the expansion of the learners' range of real-world experiences	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. The structural patterns of the second language are taught by means of		
systematic tasks and exercises.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
imitation and reproduction of dialogues.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
oral expression of opinions and viewpoints about information in the texts.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
pattern drills.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. Information (themes, topics, functions, and linguistic forms) is presented through (choose one)		
dialogues.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
prose texts.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
picture and dialogue combinations.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
picture and text combinations.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
picture and word and text collages.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**SAMPLE CHECKLIST FOR EVALUATION**

Title of textbook		Rating				
The textbook		4	3	2	1	0
<b>GENERAL</b>						
takes into account currently accepted methods of ESL/EFL teaching						
provides guidance in the presentation of language items						
allows for individual differences in home language background						
relates content to the learners' culture and environment						
<b>SPEECH</b>						
is based on a contrastive analysis of English and L1 sound systems						
expresses ways of demonstrating and practising speech items						
includes speech situations relevant to the pupils' background						
allows for variation in the accents of non-native speakers of English						
<b>GRAMMAR</b>						
stresses communicative competence in teaching structural items						
provides adequate models featuring the structures to be taught						
shows clearly the kinds of responses required in drills (e.g. substitution)						
selects structures with regard to differences between L1 and L2 cultures						
<b>VOCABULARY</b>						
selects vocabulary on the basis of frequency, functional load, etc.						
distinguishes between receptive and productive skills in vocabulary teaching						
presents vocabulary in appropriate contexts and situations						
focuses on problems of usage related to social background						
<b>READING</b>						
offers exercises for understanding of plain sense and implied meaning						
relates reading passages to the learners' background						
selects passages within the vocabulary range of the pupils						
selects passages reflecting a variety of styles of contemporary English						
<b>WRITING</b>						
relates written work to structures and vocabulary practised orally						
gives practice in controlled and guided composition in the early stages						
relates written work to the pupils' age, interests, and environment						
demonstrates techniques for handling aspects of composition teaching						
<b>TECHNICAL</b>						
is up-to-date in the technical aspects of textbook production and design						
shows quality in editing and publishing (cover, typeface, illustrations, etc.)						
is durable, and not too expensive						
has authenticity in language and style of writing						

The reading skills around which the course was designed have been adapted from John Munby's Communicative Syllabus Design (1978). They are as follows:

- Understanding basic grammatical structures.  
Deducting the meaning and use of unfamiliar lexical items.
- Recognizing indicators in discourse.
- Understanding relations within a sentence.
- Understanding cohesion between parts of a text through lexical cohesion devices.
- Understanding relations between the parts of a text through lexical cohesion devices.
- Identifying the main point or the important points in a piece of discourse.
- Distinguishing the main idea from supporting details.
- Extracting salient points for summary.
- Selecting relevant points for essays.
- Understanding explicitly stated information.
- Understanding information when not explicitly stated.
- Understanding conceptual meaning.
- Skimming.
- Scanning to locate specifically required information.
- Transcoding information to and from diagrammatic display.
- Basic reference skills.

The specific aim of the programme is to provide materials and instruction which will lead the students to work out for themselves what these skills entail.

APPENDIX 5e

VS	CRITERIA *	P		LCNC		BL	
		MS	VMP	MS	VMP	MS	VMP
5	1. Accept the current methods of teaching	3	15	2	10	3	15
5	2. Have authenticity of material	3	15	2	10	2	10
5	3. Integrate the four skills	3	15	2	10	2	10
5	4. Prepare the student for the real world	3	15	2	10	3	15
5	5. Fit in with the objectives	3	15	3	15	3	15
5	6. Communicative	2	10	2	10	2	10
5	7. Have an interesting motivating aspect	3	15	2	10	3	15
5	8. Meet the needs of the learners	3	15	2	10	3	15
5	9. Match the level of students	2	10	3	15	3	15
5	10. Provide variety	3	15	2	10	3	15
4	11. Bring out the learner's personality	2	8	1	4	3	12
4	12. Provide up-to-date contemporary material	3	12	3	12	3	12
4	13. Achieve the aims stated in the book	NC	NC	3	12	3	12
4	14. Have self-sufficiency	3	12	2	8	3	12
5	15. Provide comprehensible input	2	10	3	15		
5	16. Listen flexibly for a purpose	3	15	3	15		
5	17. Make the learner work in task-based activities	3	15	2	10		
5	18. Provide "pre" activities	1	5	2	10		
5	19. Provide "while" activities	3	15	2	10		
5	20. Provide "post" activities	1	5	2	10		
4	21. Provide short texts	3	12	2	8		
4	22. Provide samples of spoken English	NA	NA	NA	NA		

\* 1-14 General Criteria  
15-22 Listening Criteria

NC - NOT CITED  
NA - NOT APPLICABLE

Figure 2

S. KIZILIRMAK (1991)

APPENDIX 6a

SOME CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING A READING COMPREHENSION  
PROGRAMME IN A LANGUAGE TEXTBOOK

TITLE OF BOOK :

LEVEL :

DATE OF PUBLICATION :

DATE OF EVALUATION :

1. Do the reading passages relate to the students' knowledge of the world? i.e. can the reader say that he/she knows something about the topics of the passages?

COMMENT:

2. Does the content of reading passages seem familiar in relation to the student's culture and other school subjects studied?

COMMENT:

YES	NO

3. Are the reading passages linguistically accessible to the reader at that level? i.e. can the reader easily understand the language?

**COMMENT:**

4. In your opinion are the passages interesting?

**COMMENT:**

5. Are readers made to utilize their background knowledge through pre-reading exercises/activities of any kind?

**COMMENT:**

YES	NO

6. For those passages that sound culturally unfamiliar, is there any provision to assist the reader to understand them?  
What provision has been set?

**COMMENT:**

7. Are students encouraged to predict and infer the content of passages? i.e. to guess what would be stated in the passage and what has not been stated.

**COMMENT:**

8. In your opinion does the range of passages include both fiction and non-fiction passages?

**COMMENT:**

YES	NO

9. For some passages are students required to complete diagrams, flow-charts or read graphs, tables as a means of summarizing the main points of the passages?

**COMMENTS:**

10. For Fictional passages are students trained to recognize figurative language?

**COMMENT:**

11. In your opinion do you think the content of the various passages is likely to expand the readers' vocabulary?

**COMMENT:**

YES	NO

12. Are students trained to recognize words that link ideas in a passage? e.g. exercises that require them to identify conjunctions and pronouns that tie ideas together.

**COMMENT:**

13. Are the students trained to read critically in order to identify persuasive language used in reading passages?

**COMMENT:**

14. Are the reading comprehension passages of varying lengths - short and long ones?  
Are any composing exercises linked to reading passages?

**COMMENT:**

YES	NO

A CHECKLIST FOR EVALUATING A READING COMPREHENSION  
PROGRAMME IN AN ESL LANGUAGE TEXTBOOK

TITLE OF BOOK:  
LEVEL:  
DATE OF PUBLICATION:  
DATE OF EVALUATION:  
NAME OF TEACHER:

	YES	NO
<p>1. Do the reading passages relate to the student's knowledge of the world, culture and other subjects studied i.e can the readers say they know something about the topics of the passages?</p> <p><b>TEACHER'S COMMENT</b></p>		
<p>2. Are readers made to utilise their background knowledge through pre-reading exercises/activities of any kind?</p> <p><b>TEACHER'S COMMENT</b></p>		
<p>3. For those passages that seem culturally unfamiliar, is there any provision to assist the reader to understand them? NB in your comment note the provision set.</p> <p><b>TEACHER'S COMMENT</b></p>		

	YES	NO
<p>4. Are students encouraged to predict content of passages? (i.e to guess what would be stated in the passage).</p> <p><b>TEACHER'S COMMENT</b></p>		
<p>5. In your opinion does the range of passages include narratives (stories) and factual texts (those that are meant to inform)?</p> <p><b>TEACHER'S COMMENT</b></p>		
<p>6. In your opinion are passages interesting?</p> <p><b>TEACHER'S COMMENT</b></p>		
<p>7. Is the language of the reading materials at the level of the learner i.e not too easy or too difficult but difficult enough for the student to learn new language.</p> <p><b>TEACHER'S COMMENT</b></p>		

	YES	NO
<p>8. In your opinion do you think the content of the various passages is likely to expand the readers' vocabulary?</p> <p><b>TEACHER'S COMMENT</b></p>		
<p>9. Are students trained to read critically in order to identify persuasive language used in reading passages?</p> <p><b>TEACHER'S COMMENT</b></p>		
<p>10. Are students trained to recognize the general structure of stories and of the various structures of factual passages? (i.e. the way the content is presented, e.g. technical report or story).</p> <p><b>TEACHER'S COMMENT</b></p>		
<p>11. Are students encouraged to infer content that has not been stated in the passages?</p> <p><b>TEACHER'S COMMENT</b></p>		

	YES	NO
<p>12. Are students trained to recognize words that link ideas in a passage? e.g exercises that require them to identify conjunctions and pronouns that tie ideas together?</p> <p><b>TEACHER'S COMMENT</b></p>		
<p>13. For some passages are students required to complete diagrams, flow charts, read graphs or tables as a means of summarising the main points of the passages?</p> <p><b>TEACHER'S COMMENT</b></p>		
<p>14. Are writing exercises linked to reading passages?</p> <p><b>TEACHER'S COMMENT</b></p>		

# Appendix 7

## Categories of Knowledge Crucial to Reading

