AN ACCOUNT OF SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING IN A MULTI-STANDARD FARM SCHOOL CLASSROOM, UTILISING AN ETHNOGRAPHIC APPROACH

THESIS

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ABSTRACT

Multi-standard classrooms are a distinctive feature of many South African farm schools. This study adopts an ethnographic approach in order to explore how classroom life in one particular Eastern Cape multi-standard farm school classroom is shaped by a set of circumstances which influence the nature of teaching and learning in that classroom. The research focuses on the extent to which the difficulties associated with teaching a multi-standard class dictate the teacher's approach to lesson planning and style of teaching and how the resultant pattern of interaction influences language learning within a second language context. Data from a variety of sources, obtained primarily through classroom observations, interviews and questionnaires, is presented. Findings tend to indicate that the demands made on the teachers and pupils in terms of large, multi-standard classes, second language medium of instruction and lack of teaching aids, encourages the use of rote learning techniques which are not conducive to language learning. The pattern of interaction that predominates is a teacher-led series of questions and prompts followed by a chorus response from the pupils. This pattern tends to undermine the communicative aspects of language learning by reducing natural interaction and results in pupil passivity as language learners.

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PREFACE

I would like to thank the participants in this study for their willingness to be observed, interviewed and written about, and for their friendly acceptance of my frequent presence in the school.

—————————————————— CHAPTER 1 ——————————————————

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 AIMS OF THE RESEARCH

This research adopts an ethnographic approach to the data collection and to the presentation and analysis of data. It attempts to explore how classroom life in one particular Eastern Cape farm school classroom is shaped by an assortment of factors, and examines how the many factors combine to form a set of circumstances which influence the nature of teaching and learning of English as a second language[1], in that classroom.

1.2 ESTABLISHING A CONTEXT FOR THE RESEARCH

A significant number of South African children are reliant on rural farm schools for their education and many of these farm schools are characterised by problems of neglect, inadequately qualified teachers, lack of resources and overcrowding (Gaganakis & Crewe 1987; Gordon 1987). A distinctive feature of the farm school is the multi-standard classroom (Taitz 1985) where, typically, the shortage of classroom space and of teachers results in a range of age levels and standards in one classroom. Much has been written on the historical-political factors contributing to the establishment of farm schools in South Africa and these accounts detail the dismal conditions under which the farm schools operate (Gaganakis & Crewe 1987), yet little local research exists which addresses the impact that these conditions could have on teaching and learning within a second language context.

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[1] The term 'second language' is used to refer to any language that is learnt/taught/used, which is not the home language or native language of the child or teacher. It is acknowledged that English may be a 'third' or 'fourth' language to the pupils and teacher.

1.3 THE FOCUS OF THE RESEARCH

The general focus of this research falls on one Eastern Cape farm school, and a multi-standard classroom within this school. A pilot study undertaken in 1996 (Krause 1996) has highlighted some of the complexities within this particular farm school classroom. The multi-standard situation, distinctive patterns of interaction, and issues arising from a decision by the school to use English, a second language for the pupils and teachers, as medium of instruction, emerged as areas which could significantly influence the nature of teaching and learning in, and of, a second language. This research, therefore, focuses particularly on the extent to which the difficulties associated with teaching a multi-level class dictate the teacher's approach to lesson planning and style of teaching and how the resultant patterns of classroom interaction influence language learning.

1.4 STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

The present chapter provides an introduction to the research and outlines the aims, focus and context of the research. Chapter Two, which follows, presents the theoretical background to the research, where a broad overview of farm school education in South Africa is presented. An examination of classroom interaction in the multi-standard classroom, and a brief look at the language environment of the classroom and policy decisions relating to language use, follows. The chapter concludes with a mention of the proposed introduction of the new Outcomes Based Education curriculum. In Chapter Three the ethnographic methodology is presented, and procedures followed during the research process are outlined, including a discussion on interaction analysis frameworks used for the gathering and analysis of data. Data are presented and discussed in Chapter Four. The setting or context of the research is presented, participants are introduced, and the predominant themes that emerge from the analysis of data are discussed. The Conclusion is presented in Chapter Five and thereafter follow the References and Appendices.

———————————————————— CHAPTER 2 ——————————————

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter sets out to establish and discuss some of the theoretical issues pertinent to this study of a multi-standard farm school classroom in South Africa. It is appropriate to address the role that theory plays in this research since literature surveys have lent direction and structure to the field research, have guided observations and interactions and have provided a framework for the presentation and discussion of an analysis of the data generated.

I begin by locating the study within the broad context of the South African farm school. I move on to focus on a discussion of the multi-standard classroom phenomenon in these schools, and to consider the implications this has for teaching and learning opportunities in these classrooms. In order to address the issue of teaching and learning opportunities, I focus more specifically on classroom interaction studies as an approach to observation, and do so with a view to exploring how patterns of classroom interaction can influence second language learning.

2.2 THE FARM SCHOOL

2.2.1 THE ORIGIN AND HISTORY OF FARM SCHOOLS

The present farm school system came into being as a result of the Bantu Education Act of 1953. Prior to this, black children in white-designated rural areas received education through mission schools which were situated on white-owned farms. Hartshorne (1992:137) writes that the removal of control over these schools from the hands of, particularly, the English speaking missionaries was one of the "fundamental purposes of the apartheid ideology". The responsibility for these rural schools was taken out of the hands of the mission churches and placed directly with the owners of the farms on which the schools

were situated. Thus, write Gaganakis and Crewe (1987:3), "the education of nearly half a million black children in South Africa... [became] subject to the will of private individuals".

Despite the replacement of the Bantu Education Act of 1953 with the Education and Training Act of 1979, which saw the farm schools registered under the Department of Education and Training (DET), farm schools remained largely at the mercy of the farmer who not only had the power to close the school, but was also responsible for maintenance of the school building and, should he/she so choose, for interviewing and recommending teachers for DET approval and appointment, and for exercising control over pupil attendance by children not resident on the farm. Farm schools remained at the tail-end of the education concern, and a lack of adequate facilities and resources was the norm (Gaganakis & Crewe 1987).

It was not until the 1980's that any serious consideration was given to the reform or improvement of the farm school system. In 1980/81 a national investigation in education under the De Lange Committee resulted in the government appointment of an education task force and a recommendation that the farm school system receive a full investigation. As a result of investigations, an extensive statement on farm schools appeared in the Education White Paper of 1983 (Hartshorne 1992:140). In this paper, the government recognised the important contribution that farm schools make towards the education of a significant number of black pupils (typically, it is the farm labourers' children who attend farm schools, with the farmers' children usually attending either state or private schools in the nearest town), and acknowledged that since they would continue to fulfil such an important role, upgrading programmes would need to be implemented. In 1986 a task group report, *The Provision of Education for Black Pupils in Rural Areas*, was published. Here, finally, the problem of farm school ownership and control was addressed with a view to placing ownership in the hands of the State (op. cit.:141). However, to date, the question of ownership of farm schools has yet to be resolved. Although the physical school structures are situated on private land, the State remains responsible for the provision of education for the pupils. These schools still find themselves on the periphery of the education system. If,

as Mncwabe (1993:55), with reference to Black education generally, writes, "Blacks have been alienated from the education system by the historical neglect of their inferior, separate education..." how much more so does this apply to the farm schools? In addition to the general conditions which exist in ex-DET urban schools which are emerging from decades of neglect, lack of resources and poorly qualified teachers, the problems in farms schools are "exacerbated by the specific problems pertaining there: isolation and combined classes" (Taitz 1985:53).

2.2.2 FARM SCHOOLS AND THE CHANGES IN EDUCATION

Despite recent changes in education in South Africa, the farm schools still remain the 'orphans' of the education system. Now falling under the umbrella of the national Department of Education and Culture, farm schools find their day to day existence little altered by the reformation of the education system. The introduction of a Communicative Language Teaching oriented syllabus for English Second Language represents a change in approach to language learning, yet is seldom effectively implemented owing to lack of teacher training, time and resources. The proposed introduction of a new Outcomes Based Education curriculum is likely to encounter similar problems in successful implementation at farm school level. (These issues are discussed in more detail later in this chapter in sections 2.6 and 2.7.) Farm schools remain isolated, both in terms of physical distance and in terms of support and development. It is easy to see how the demands made on education in the urban areas can overshadow the needs of these rural communities; nevertheless, farm schools provide the sole source of formal education to significant numbers of children whose families live and work in the rural areas (Hartshorne 1992:140). It is crucial that the quality of schooling in these areas be upgraded.

Mncwabe (1993:200) comments that what is important in education in the end is what goes on in the classroom "...that is, policies, structures, administration, syllabuses are relevant only to the extent that they help to provide the most effective and creative environment for the teacher and learner, and the way they interact with each other". In the field of second

language acquisition, there is a need to explore how the conditions that exist in the classroom influence the quality and nature of language teaching and learning.

2.2.3 CONDITIONS IN FARM SCHOOLS

Gaganakis and Crewe (1987:14) wrote, some ten years ago, that despite "... attempts by the DET to upgrade farm schools... the actual conditions in such schools bear testimony to [a] heritage of neglect [and that] this neglect is most obvious in the lack of provision of schools and the paucity of facilities". Commonly-held perceptions about farm schools are that they are neglected, inefficient and provide an inferior quality of education (Gordon 1987:49). It could be argued that little or nothing has changed over the subsequent years.

Hartshorne (1992:142) writes that "much of the drop-out in farm schools, as well as the numbers that have to repeat standards, has little to do with what the children are receiving and everything to do with the physical space available in the schools. Promotion from one class to another is governed by the number of places in the higher classes". Furthermore, it has been repeatedly noted (Gaganakis & Crewe 1987; Gordon 1987; Hartshorne 1992) that socio-economic/socio-political factors of poverty, powerlessness, insecurity and alienation of the life of the rural labourers and their children has a significant impact on schooling. Such admissions are of central importance to the nature of this ethnographic study since, as Hartshorne observes: "it is impossible to understand or analyze rural education except in its social, economic and political context..." (1992:143).

In many schools the shortage of classrooms necessitates combined class teaching, where two or more classes are taught by one teacher in one classroom. This I have referred to as the multi-standard classroom, and I discuss this phenomenon in section 2.3, below.

2.3   THE MULTI-STANDARD CLASSROOM

2.3.1   WHAT IS A MULTI-STANDARD CLASSROOM?

As mentioned above, multi-standard or combined classes are a characteristic feature of farm schools in South Africa (Taitz 1985:39). Their existence arises from a shortage of classrooms and of teachers which necessitates combined class teaching where two or more classes are taught by one teacher in one classroom. In a South African context, the phenomenon has been referred to using differing terms, namely: combined classes; multi-grade or mixed grade and multi-level classrooms; none of which satisfactorily describe the situation. I have rejected the term "multi-level" since it could be understood to refer to the practice of streaming according to ability levels, likewise, the term "multi-grade" holds connotations of subjects taken on the higher grade, standard grade and lower grade. The commonly used term "combined classes" fails to explicitly account for the fact that the classes that are combined are actual standards and not merely a grouping of classes within a single standard level (e.g. std 7A, 7B and 7C), and that while the various standards co-exist in one classroom, they mostly function as separate standards and are not "combined" in the sense of forming a new unit, although, as Gaganakis and Crewe (1987:15) have noted, the "most common practice is to teach the classes as a group in subjects such as health and religious instruction, but separately (the teacher moving from one standard to the next) in subjects such as English and mathematics where content requires more careful grading". The term "multi-standard classes" provides a more appropriate and accurate description of the phenomenon and I will be using the term in this research[2].

The multi-standard classroom phenomenon is not unique to South African rural schools. However, the existence of multi-standard classes in other countries, most notably in the so called 'First World' countries, has been the result of a deliberate, preferred choice to move toward ungraded or non-graded classes (Daniel & Terry 1995), whereas in the case of many

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[2]   With the phasing in of the new curriculum, the use of the term "standard" is falling away in favour of the term "grade". However, at the time of this study, the school concerned was still divided according to standards rather than grades.

South African farm schools, the existence of multi-standard classes is a matter of necessity owing to a lack of resources. The primary difference between the two situations is that where a policy of grouping standards together in one classroom exists in a British or USA school for example, it is done with the intention to improve the quality of education for those pupils by exposing them to a non-graded classroom environment where they are free to progress at their own pace through the various subject syllabi (Appalachia Educational Lab. Sept. 1990; Daniel & Terry 1995). In the South African context the multi-standard classroom exists for other reasons. There are either too few teachers and classrooms to accommodate all the pupils in separate classes, or the pupil numbers are too low in a specific locality to make single-standard classes a viable option. The situation is further compounded by a lack or resources and often inadequate teacher training to cope with the situation.

Schools in other countries (typically the United States of America and the United Kingdom) that have multi-standard classrooms are still in the minority, however, since even in well resourced schools where teachers are trained in the implementation of multi-standard classes, there are practical difficulties involved, the most commonly cited problems being a shortage of class time, the time-consuming double planning and record keeping and the need for support and resources (Appalachia Educational Lab. Sept. 1990:14). These schools tend to exist because it is felt that the advantages to the pupils in terms of ungraded classes outweigh the difficulties. In these multi-standard classes pupils are encouraged to develop independent learning skills and peer tutoring is used as a teaching approach. The integration of the curriculum, rather than the traditional fragmented subject-period approach, is seen as being an advantage of this multi-standard approach (ibid.:16). In the South African context of the multi-standard classroom, similar problems, but seldom the advantages, are experienced.

2.3.2 WHAT IMPLICATIONS DOES THE MULTI-STANDARD CLASSROOM PHENOMENON HOLD FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING POSSIBILITIES?

Gaganakis and Crewe (1987:16) write:

> Combined class teaching in itself is not of overriding importance as far as educational achievement is concerned, though such a system requires considerable organisational abilities, resourcefulness, and stamina on the part of the teacher. It is when combined class teaching is associated with other factors widely prevalent in farm schools, such as poorly qualified staff, minimal materials, and inadequate facilities, that it has a decisive influence on the quality of education.

The pressures of preparing for a range of academic subject lessons, for two or more standards daily, are compounded by the teacher's need to juggle his/her time and attention between the various standards and individual pupils. The teacher must ensure pupils of one standard are kept occupied with classwork while he/she is busy with another standard. The manner in which the standards are physically divided into multi-standard classes, has a direct bearing on the teaching of the syllabuses. Often, since the syllabuses are graded, the same theme or topic can appear in standard 3, 4 and 5, for example, with only the level of difficulty and detail increasing in the higher standards (Taitz 1987:41-42). Where teachers resort to teaching the various standards together as one group, the situation is aggravated, especially when one considers that instruction is most often in a second language, as are the textbooks. The demands made on the teachers and pupils from large, multi-standard classes, second language medium of instruction and lack of teaching aids, encourage the use of rote learning techniques by teachers and pupils alike. Gordon (1987:72) comments that evaluation procedures support this pattern with the result that practice and rote learning, not understanding and insight, ensure success in tests and examinations.

Resulting from rote learning, drill-type teaching and learning strategies, certain patterns of interaction tend to develop which need to be examined in terms of their influence on teaching and learning generally, and, in terms of the focus of this study, on second language acquisition specifically. The topic of classroom interaction is discussed in more detail below.

2.4   CLASSROOM INTERACTION

2.4.1   WHAT IS CLASSROOM INTERACTION?

Firstly, we need to recognise the classroom as a social context, comprising teacher and pupils. In this context, teaching and learning are the central activities. Teaching is an activity which is structured in terms of certain assumptions about how teachers and learners are expected to interact in the classroom. These beliefs play a role in shaping the patterns of classroom interaction.

Malamah-Thomas (1987:6-7) comments that 'action' and 'reaction' are not tantamount to 'interaction' and that interaction presupposes participation and personal involvement. Interaction, therefore, refers to "the process of interpersonal communication... [which] involves the efforts of both the learner and the teacher" (Ellis 1990:96). Interaction is not restricted to communication only, but encompasses behaviour and movement within the classroom too. The quality of classroom interaction is thought to have a considerable influence on learning.

In general, classroom behaviour is strongly rule-governed with regular structures of turn-taking and regular or predictable narrative and interactive forms (Young 1992:92). Patterns of interaction may vary from classroom to classroom and within a class, from lesson to lesson, depending on the nature of the lesson and the teaching preferences of the teacher. Interaction patterns may be studied in terms of participation structures, for example: teacher to individual student, teacher to whole class, teacher-controlled activity, learner-directed activity; or in terms of interaction types such as drills, discussion, dialogue practice and language games (Byrne 1987:8-10). Wong-Fillmore (1985, cited in Richards & Lockhart 1994:113) suggests that the manner in which "classes are organised and how instructional events are structured determine to a large extent the nature of the language that students hear and use in the classroom".

2.4.2 ROLES AND ROLE-RELATIONSHIPS

An occupation, such as teaching, can hold expectations in terms of the perceived social role and status of a teacher. 'Role' and 'status' imply a set of power relationships and a set of rights, duties and obligations and social distance (Wright 1987:12) which influence how an individual behaves and how others behave toward him/her. Richards & Lockhart (1994:107) write that teaching is "an activity which is embedded within a set of culturally bound assumptions about teachers, learners and teaching. These assumptions reflect what the teacher's responsibility is believed to be, how learning is understood, and how students are expected to interact in the classroom".

Typically, schools and classrooms tend to adopt hierarchical role structures. The classroom climate, including seating arrangements, teacher-learner relationships, the types of learning tasks, inter-student communication and class involvement, is influenced by the roles taken by teachers and learners. Prabhu (1992:228) writes that there are roles assigned by custom to teachers and learners in the classroom. He lists ways in which ritualisation may take form, including, for example, standing up to show respect and not speaking unless asked to etc., which are typical patterns of classroom behaviour.

Since it would be impossible to adopt an ethnographic approach to this research without bearing the social aspects of the interaction in mind, this research will attempt to examine how perceived roles and status influence interaction in the classroom.

2.4.3 WHY STUDY CLASSROOM INTERACTION?

One of the central questions in second language acquisition (SLA) concerns the relationship between interaction and acquisition (Ellis 1992:17). Theories of SLA differ in the importance they attach to input, output and negotiation. Claims have been made for the importance of comprehensible input (Krashen, 1985) and for opportunities to negotiating meaning (Pica, Lincoln-Porter, Paninos, & Linnell.:1996). There have also been arguments in favour of comprehensible output (Swain:1985). Van Lier (1988:81) argues that language learning occurs in the context of social interaction, both in the classroom and outside it. In

terms of second language acquisition studies there is a need to assess whether the context, both in and out of the classroom, provides an acquisition-rich or an acquisition-poor environment. An acquisition-rich classroom is best characterised as one which provides both those experiences associated with communicating in natural discourse and those experiences derived from cognitive activities (formal teaching-learning activities) designed to raise the learner's consciousness about the formal properties of the second language and their function in language use (Ellis 1992:49).

If, as Ellis (1990:94) suggests, we view teaching as *interaction*, then we will be interested in the extent to which the different input and interactional features contribute to second language acquisition. The value in studying classroom interaction, therefore, is derived from assessing what input and interaction are provided, if any, and through studying the use of language in the classroom in order to see if, and how, learning comes about through the different ways of interacting in the classroom.

Research by Chick and Claude (1985), carried out in farm schools in the Valley Trust area in Natal, undertook to focus on interaction in the classrooms as a means of understanding which features of interaction are conducive to the learning of English and which are not. Their research provides a valuable source of reference to this study of an Eastern Cape farm school since their methodology of micro-analysis, complemented by ethnography, presents an similar approach to the ethnographic focus, with supplementary use of an interaction analysis framework, chosen for this research.

Chick and Claude (1985) found highly centralised interaction which was teacher-dominated and with most of the pupil responses taking the form of group chorusing. The study questions whether the cultural patterns of interaction are compatible with second language learning. Chick and Claude (1985:31) suggest that the chorusing response so typical of farm school interaction has a social function: "The pupils are required to provide mainly confirmative responses or responses which are repeating information on the blackboard or information which has been recycled again and again... Through chorusing the pupils are given opportunities to participate in ways which are not likely to occasion face loss".

Chick and Claude (op.cit.:32) hypothesise that pupils and teacher draw on a shared and implicit knowledge of the discourse conventions associated with their culture-specific interactional style. They comment further, that while the chorusing behaviour may well serve very useful social functions, it is not clear how well it serves academic functions (op. cit.:32).

However, Stodolsky (cited in Cazden 1988:51) observes that:

> Recitation techniques [have long been] criticised as teacher-dominated, boring and for emphasising lower order mental processes, yet thought should be given to the possible positive aspects of recitation... Children's attention is relatively high during recitations and a number of teacher purposes can be served in a recitation format. Particularly in a skill-oriented subject ... public practice, review, and checking work may facilitate learning as well as or better than, for example, seat-work sessions in which the teacher can only interact with a limited number of children..."

Cazden (1988:51) comments further, that "if we acknowledge the importance of fit between discourse structure and educational purposes, we have to ask why the lesson-recitation form is more common in some schools than others". This study, with its ethnographic approach, sets out to explore the interplay between the conditions in farm schools and the patterns of classroom interaction that occur, with a view to establishing how these might influence second language learning.

2.5   THE LANGUAGE ENVIRONMENT OF THE CLASSROOM

Cazden (1988:2) has described classroom discourse as a communication system particular to the classroom context. In this section I consider the ways in which language is used in the classroom environment. With regard to this research specifically, it is significant that the English used in the classroom is, for the majority of the pupils, the only source of exposure to the target language. It is important, therefore, to examine the sources and nature of language input in this second language environment in order to establish the richness of the classroom environment for second language learning. Related to input, I briefly discuss code-switching in the second language learning context. I conclude by

looking at the role that language-output and the negotiation of meaning plays in facilitating language acquisition/learning.

2.5.1 SOURCES OF INPUT

'Input' refers to the target language samples to which the learner is exposed. Teachers of second language learners tend to modify their language which results in a special type of discourse known as teacher talk. Krashen (1985, cited in Richards and Lockhart, 1994:184) suggests that this is how teachers provide learners with "comprehensible input" (input which is finely tuned to the learner's level of comprehension) which he sees as "the essential ingredient for second language acquisition". Teacher talk, therefore, is a form of simplified input which is well formed to ensure that the level of language used is tuned in to the learner's level. It is characterised by higher pitch, exaggerated intonation, careful enunciation, shorter sentences, frequent repetitions and questions, and control of behaviour and of talk itself (Cazden 1988:159).

Krashen (1982) makes a distinction between language *acquisition* and language *learning* and that language acquisition, a subconscious process of 'picking-up' a language, depends on sufficient comprehensible language input. In rural farm schools in South Africa, English input has been largely confined to the classroom situation. Frequently there is not sufficient input outside of the classroom for acquisition to occur and often the teacher's language serves as the only regular source of spoken input of the target language (Hartshorne 1992). The quality of the teacher's language, as a primary language model, therefore becomes a significant element in the language acquisition of second language learners. Textbooks are another source of language input. Where teachers rely heavily on set texts and exercises, the nature of the language of the textbook features significantly as a source of input.

Related to this research, it is important to establish the frequency and quality of target language input, bearing in mind that the pupils are not only learning English (the target language) as a subject, but are learning all their subjects through English medium instruction, which is a second language to pupils and teacher alike. Arising from the

difficulties experienced in teaching through the medium of a second language, teachers, in general, often make use of code-switching to facilitate the transfer of information, particularly where concepts such as 'condensation' and 'evaporation' for example, are introduced for the first time (Stubbs 1976:78). Code-switching can be seen to either enhance or detract from the quality and frequency of target language input, depending on the circumstances in which it is employed. The practice of code-switching is discussed in more detail below.

2.5.2 CODE-SWITCHING

Arnberg (1987:27) refers to code switching as the conscious and/or purposeful switching of two (or more) languages. It is more purposeful than a loose mixing of languages within sentences and is more extensive than merely borrowing terms or occasional words from another language. The use of code switching presupposes that participants in the exchange understand both/all languages used in the exchange.

In the Preamble to Interim Core Syllabus for English Second Language (1995) it is suggested that "... pupils' proficiency in their home language(s) should be acknowledged and [that] teachers should draw on this resource (also allowing pupils to code-switch) with a view to enhancing pupils' comprehension, clarification and acquisition of the target language."

In order to establish the value of code switching in the classroom, we need to establish when or where it is used and we need to determine what functions code switching serves in lessons. Gough (1995) makes a useful distinction between educational code-switching and code-switching in educational contexts. A case of the former would be using the L1 to clarify difficult concepts whereas the latter would be using the L1 for classroom management, for example.

Gough (ibid.) suggests that code switching in educational contexts, such as using the L1 for classroom management and instructions, deprives students of L2 input and should therefore

be discouraged. However, allowing the use of the L1 in second language learning can facilitate the transition to the target language through drawing upon initial literacies. Where code-switching is used as a resource or in a facilitative capacity it need not be detrimental to second language learning.

A number of reasons for code switching have been identified, including the following: where there is a lack of a vocabulary item in one of the languages, when certain concepts are easier to express in one of the languages or where certain words are simpler, more salient, or more accessible in one of the languages, in order to clarify misunderstandings, to emphasise a point and to express group solidarity (Arnberg 1987:27).

A distinction must be drawn between the use of English in an English language lesson and the use of English as medium of instruction in a content lesson. In subject lessons where English is used as medium of instruction, linguistic demands are made on pupils which are extrinsic to the subject being taught (Stubbs 1976:78). Under these circumstances, the use of code-switching can be facilitative and beneficial in promoting understanding of subject matter.

2.5.3   TEACHERS' QUESTIONS

Questions are a very important part of classroom discourse. Young (1992:90) notes that more than 80 years of classroom research has shown the persistence of questioning as a favourite teacher methodology;   that roughly 60% of all classroom talk comprises questions, and that nearly all are asked by teachers. Of teacher questions, many of them (possibly as many as 90%) require only recall of information. Young (1992) questions whether this pattern encourages self-reliant, independent thinkers or whether it stresses superficial judgement and memory above all else.

The significance of studying the questions teachers ask as part of classroom interaction in a second language context lies as much in their frequency, as in the opportunities they allow for pupils to respond. The general assumption underlying these studies of questioning

behaviour is that display questions (those which require simple recall-of-knowledge answers or drill-response answers) are less likely to contribute to an acquisition-rich environment than are referential questions (those which are information-seeking and therefore allow for extended open answers) (Ellis 1992:43). Since referential questions allow the learner more opportunity to take part in his/her own learning and are more compatible with a focus on meaning exchange, as opposed to form, they are more likely to result in extended learner responses. In their study, Long and Sato (1983; cited in Ellis 1992:43) found that English Second Language (ESL) teachers asked far more display than referential questions, and have come to the conclusion that ESL teachers continue to emphasise form over meaning and accuracy over communication.

Edwards & Mercer (1989:31) suggest that the type of questions teachers ask is mediated by many factors including the immediate practical difficulties of class size, teachers' implicit beliefs about how children learn and responsibilities of the teacher as a cultural agent. Classroom conditions prevalent in farm schools, with the multi-standard classroom and lack of resources, tend to encourage patterns of interaction and questioning where the teacher retains control over the participation rights and over the content and progression of the lesson.

2.5.4 THE ROLE OF OUTPUT OR PRODUCTION IN SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING

The output hypothesis claims that learners need the opportunity to produce language in order to develop native speaker levels of grammatical proficiency. Swain's *Comprehensible Output Hypothesis*, devised to complement Krashen's Input Hypothesis, argues that 'pushed language use' is needed to encourage learners to develop the necessary grammatical resources and opportunities to test hypotheses about language (Swain 1995 cited in Ellis 1992:45). Ellis (ibid.), however, suggests that no direct evidence exists to show that learner participation is crucial for successful second language acquisition, although it is accepted that learner participation contributes towards a richer acquisitional environment. Van Lier (1988:74), by contrast, suggests that language learning occurs in and through participation in speech events, that is, that talking to others, or making conversation, is essential.

Krashen's assertion that it is not production, but comprehension that aids development is of relevance. Ellis (1992:27) agrees, stating that language learning cannot be convincingly treated as a process of mechanical habit-formation.

In this respect Pica (1994:60) comments:

> When classroom drill and practice ask learners to perform in ways more relevant to the evaluation of their speaking skills than to their sharing of information and when they focus on isolated structures, sentences, or sounds, they do not appear to help learners become more resourceful in the ways suggested by Swain. However, when they provide an L2 model, drill and practice may be quite helpful, not for their production value, but for their role in providing useful input. Oddly, it may very well be for their input contributions, more so than their production value, that drill and practice can serve the L2 learner in positive ways.

The approach recommended by the Interim Core Syllabus for English Second Language (1995) is based on the principles informing communicative language teaching and is concerned with developing pupils' communicative competence. The approach "...assumes that some understanding of how language works is essential for all communication... [but that] this language knowledge and the ability to apply it should be developed in an integrated way, that is by showing pupils how language works in context and by encouraging them to apply what they have learnt in a variety of situations rather than by drilling discrete items" (op. cit.:8).

The pilot study (Krause 1996) carried out in the farm school under study suggests that distinct patterns of interaction operate which provide little opportunity for learner participation outside of the chorus-response pattern to display-type teacher questions. The input/output interaction is typically form-focused rather than meaning-focused.

2.5.5 NEGOTIATION OF MEANING

One approach to second language acquisition holds that acquisition occurs most efficiently when learners have plentiful opportunities to *negotiate meaning* whenever there is some

kind of communication difficulty (Pica et al:1996). Such negotiation, it is claimed, brings learners into contact with second language data which they are likely to attend to and so incorporate into their second language mental grammars (Ellis 1990:12).

Long (1983, cited in Ellis 1990:95) writes that "...input is made comprehensible as a result of modification to the interactional structure of conversations when communication problems arise". In this way, input can be made comprehensible by means of input simplifications, through the use of linguistic and extra-linguistic context and through modification of the interactional structure of conversation. The presence of these features indicates that there is a negotiation of meaning and active learning taking place.

Although almost any meaningful interaction is believed to promote opportunities for L2 learning, research has shown that, when learners modify their interaction through negotiation the opportunities for comprehension and thus intake of input are enhanced. Negotiation between learners takes place during the course of their interaction when either one signals with questions or comments that the other's preceding message has not been successfully conveyed. The other then responds, often by repeating or modifying the message (Pica et al 1996:61). Indications are that, generally, patterns of interaction typical of farm schools are not conducive to conversational interaction and negotiation of meaning.

2.6   LANGUAGE POLICY DECISIONS

The language policy for the education of black children under the DET, required that pupils entering Standard 3 (grade 5) were faced with a change in medium of instruction from mother tongue to one of the two, then, official languages, English or Afrikaans, both of which were second languages for the pupils (Hartshorne 1992:200). Although these languages were taught as subjects in the earlier standards, pupils were most often unable to speak or even understand either of the languages. Where the teacher's own ability in the second language was poor, the situation was that much more difficult. Pupils scarcely possessed a BICS (Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills) capability in their second language, yet were required to learn all subjects through the medium of this language which

was unfamiliar to them; their language proficiency falling far short of the CALP (Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency) necessary for coping with the language of the textbooks (Starfield 1994:177).

The problems experienced by black primary school pupils and their teachers with regard to the sudden transition to English as medium of instruction and learning in standard three, is an issue that was addressed by The Threshold Project (Macdonald 1990). Recommendations made on the basis of the research findings suggest that a gradual transition to English, rather that a sudden transition, is favoured. The "gradual transition" model involves the phasing-in of English with specific subjects over a number of years, and is preferable to a sudden or deep-end immersion in that it allows pupils to gradually master the difficult task of learning to learn through English and helps to "avoid the crisis of confidence associated with abrupt, total transfer to English" (Chick 1992:34). The researchers further recommend a transition from a communicative approach which focuses on developing a BICS (Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills) competency, to an approach which promotes CALP (Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency). Macdonald (1990, cited in Chick 1992:34) points out, however, that these recommendations have implications for curriculum development, methodology, materials design and teacher education.

The Interim Core Syllabus for English Second Language (1995) in South Africa stresses the Communicative Approach to English teaching, yet the demands made on pupils to grasp concepts and understand vocabulary of the other academic subjects, places the English language needs of pupils within a different context. In schools which opt for English as medium of instruction, the subject "English" has a critical role to play both in fostering the acquisition of a second language, and in providing the tools with which pupils approach *all* learning across the curriculum. It is vital, therefore, to ensure that the patterns of classroom interaction provide opportunities which facilitate the acquisition of the language of medium of instruction.

The present language policy as outlined by the education bill, allows learners to be educated in any one of the eleven official languages of South Africa, where this is practicable.

Nevertheless, schools, parents and pupils across the country continue to opt for English as medium of instruction (Chick 1992:31; Bot 1993:2) despite the fact that this is a second language for most of them, and that pupils and teachers alike are taxed by the demands of teaching and learning in a second language. Given that the predominant teaching styles observed in farm school studies (Gaganakis & Crewe 1987; Gordon 1987; Taitz 1985) are dominated by teacher-talk, coupled with a shortage of textbooks to go around, it is hardly surprising that pupils struggle. A decision not to use the first language (mother tongue) as medium of instruction will have far-reaching implications for the pupils and their success and continued presence in school.

2.7 OUTCOMES BASED EDUCATION

With effect from 1998 a new curriculum for South African education is to be phased in. The new curriculum will effect a shift in educational approach from the current content-based approach to an outcomes-based one. Outcomes-based Education (OBE) aims, *inter alia*, to promote active learners who take responsibility for their learning while the teacher assumes more of a facilitative role in overseeing both independent and groupwork pupil activities. OBE aims to promote critical thinking and reasoning and to integrate knowledge across the curriculum while introducing flexible time-frames which allow learners to work at their own pace (National Department of Education 1997:7). In order to achieve these aims teaching and learning processes will have to undergo change. "Teaching will become learner-centred, with emphasis on groupwork and developing the ability of people to think critically and research and analyse things for themselves" (op. cit.:9).

Significantly, the aims of OBE are compatible with the aims of intentional multi-standard or non-graded education as discussed earlier in this chapter. Both approaches encourage independent and active learning with enhanced pupil to pupil interaction and use of group work. In both instances, the teacher is encouraged to adopt learner-centred and facilitative approaches to teaching and a more flexible approach to the presentation of the various subjects rather than adopt a rigidly set subject-period approach. Both multi-standard

education and outcomes based education approaches, aim to generate a milieu which is accommodating of heterogeneous groups of pupils with different needs and abilities.

The successful implementation of the new curriculum will depend largely on the provision of supportive teacher training in the new approach, and will require the willingness of teachers and pupils to embrace the necessary changes. Given the inherent compatibility of the multi-standard education and OBE, teachers and pupils in multi-standard classes stand to benefit from this new orientation to teaching and learning.

2.8 SUMMARY

Central to this research is the setting or context. Ethnographic research is holistic by nature and its observations are contextualised. This review has attempted to establish briefly, the farm school history and the conditions currently experienced in these rural schools as part of this context. Language policy decisions and the planned introduction of the new outcomes-based curriculum have been discussed with a view to moving beyond the immediate or local setting of the farm school, in order to establish a broader context through looking at education policy and developments at a national level. This review has also suggested the need for focusing on classroom interaction as a means of establishing the nature of the teaching, learning and language experiences within the farm school classroom.

─────────────── CHAPTER 3 ───────────────

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. INTRODUCTION

This research adopts an ethnographic approach to inquiry and aims to describe, as fully as possible, the second language classroom environment in the chosen school, in order to attain a better understanding of how teachers and learners operate within that environment. The value of using an ethnographic approach for this study lies in its openness to the emic or native perspective which allows for the participants under study to validate the researcher's etic observations and descriptions, by providing insight into the cultural and social aspects underlying the patterns of interaction under inquiry. I intend, in this research, to move beyond a simplistic implementation of qualitative techniques of data gathering and into "thick description" and "cultural interpretation" (Geertz:1973) of the data generated. In so doing, I intend that the research should move beyond a purely descriptive case study, towards an holistic and culturally-embedded ethnographic account of the classroom under examination.

This chapter begins with an overview of Ethnography as a research approach. I move on to establish the boundaries of this study and I include a discussion on the stages and process followed. Thereafter, the data gathering techniques used in conducting the research are presented. I then discuss the analysis, interpretation and presentation of the data and examine the strengths and limitations of the ethnographic approach to research generally, and attempt to justify the use of this approach in terms of the multi-standard farm school classroom study undertaken. The chapter concludes with a brief look at some ethical considerations.

3.2.   ASPECTS OF ETHNOGRAPHY

3.2.1   WHAT IS ETHNOGRAPHY?

Watson-Gegeo (1988:576) defines ethnography as "the study of people's behaviour in naturally occurring, ongoing settings, with a focus on the cultural interpretation of behaviour." Wilcox (1982:458) writes that ethnography "is first and foremost a descriptive endeavour in which the researcher attempts accurately to describe and interpret the nature of social discourse among a group of people."

Johnson (1992:134), in accord with Watson-Gegeo and Wilcox (ibid.), writes that the purpose of ethnographic research is to describe and interpret the cultural behaviour of a group and adds that while ethnographic research may have characteristics in common with other qualitative research it is distinctive in that it has an anthropological grounding and a cultural emphasis which focuses on the group rather than on the individual.

Whereas Johnson's definition highlights the anthropological roots of ethnography with its traditional focus on the cultural system of a cultural group, Hornberger's definition (1994, cited in Cumming 1994:688-690), adopts a more contemporary stance which views a "group" as anything ranging from a community to a single classroom within a school, to an event or program, thus widening the possibilities for employing an ethnographic research approach:

> An ethnography ... of a community, a classroom, an event, a program ...
> seeks to describe the set of understandings and specific knowledge shared
> among participants that guide their behaviour in that specific context, that is,
> to describe the culture of that community, classroom, event, or program.

While ethnography has traditionally been thought of as the description of the culture of a whole community, Wilcox (1982:458) notes that "it has been and is equally applicable to the description of social discourses among any group of people among whom social relations are regulated by custom." The understanding here is that not only does a classroom have its own unique culture regulated by custom, but that it can, and should, also

be viewed in relation to the wider culture of the community or society in which it operates. The same applies to the event or program, which both operate within a cultural context.

Although there are as many definitions for ethnography as are books and articles addressing the topic, there remains a common core or focus to all the definitions, as the above definitions and discussion illustrate. This common core centres around the descriptive-interpretive task of ethnography and its cultural emphasis which focuses on the behaviour and interaction of the group. The ethnographer's goal is "to provide a description and an interpretive-explanatory account of what people do in a setting ... the outcomes of their interaction, and the way they understand what they are doing..." (Watson-Gegeo 1988:576).

3.2.2   CHARACTERISING PRINCIPLES OF ETHNOGRAPHY

There is no single characteristic of an ethnographic study or of the techniques it employs that makes it "ethnographic". Rather, a cumulative arrangement of various conditions or principles lends ethnographic research its distinctiveness. An overview of these principles is presented below:

* Ethnography focuses on the behaviour and cultural patterns of a group, rather than
  the individual since cultural behaviour is by definition, shared behaviour (Johnson
  1992:134; Watson-Gegeo 1988:577; Wilcox 1982:458).

* Ethnography is holistic and observations are contextualised, that is, aspects of
  culture or behaviour are described and explained in relation to the (cultural) system
  of which it is a part (Spindler 1982:6; Watson-Gegeo 1988:577).

* Observation is guided by an explicit theoretical framework (Johnson 1992:140;
  Spindler 1982:97), but though guided by theory, ethnographic observation and
  interpretation are not determined by it (Spindler 1982:6; Watson-Gegeo 1988:578).

* Ethnography is both process and product. The process is characterised by detailed
  and repetitive observation over a long period of time, and a variety of methods of

data gathering are used (triangulation) to increase validity. As a product, an ethnography provides a detailed description and interpretive analysis of interaction in a social setting. This has been termed "Thick Description" by Geertz (1973).

* Ethnography strives to uncover the emic or native view of reality. "A significant task of the ethnography is ... to make what is implicit and tacit ... explicit" (Spindler 1982:7).

* The Ethnographer attempts to disturb as little as possible the interactions he/she is observing, and must try not to predetermine responses by the type of questions he/she asks during interviews (Spindler 1982:7).

These characteristics are present to a greater or lesser extent in each particular ethnographic study, and as mentioned earlier, it is their combined or cumulative effect that results in a specifically ethnographic approach to research as opposed to other qualitative-type approaches.

3.2.3 ETHNOGRAPHY AS RESEARCH

Ethnography as a process (as opposed to the written product or genre) is one of several general research models used by social scientists to study human behaviour (Goetz & LeCompte 1984:4). As a research perspective and as a methodology, ethnography falls within the Interpretive research tradition. As an approach to research it is qualitative in nature rather than quantitative, although the ethnographer may draw upon quantitative techniques in the analysis and description of data. As Spindler (1987:43) points out, qualitative and quantitative data are not opposed, or in conflict, but should rather be seen as complementary.

Ethnographic research is not synonymous with Qualitative research. Rather, qualitative research is an "umbrella term" for many kinds of research approaches and techniques, including ethnography (Watson-Gegeo 1988:576). What makes ethnography distinct from other forms of qualitative research is its holistic and culturally contextualised analysis and

interpretation of data. In addition, ethnography "admits the subjective experiences of both investigator and participants into the research frame, thus providing a depth of understanding sometimes lacking in other approaches to research" (Goetz & LeCompte 1984:9).

As a method, ethnography includes the techniques of observation, participant-observation, interviewing, audio and video recordings, the collection of relevant documents and other written and non-written material, and any other techniques which seem appropriate for eliciting the data required (Watson-Gegeo 1988:583).

Lastly, it is appropriate to address the role that theory plays in ethnographic research. It is a misconception that researchers enter the research field uninformed and unguided by theory. There is always the concern that ethnography lacking theoretical clarity could represent little more than the impressionistic observations and preconceptualised interpretations of the researcher's own attitudes and perceptions of how he/she believes the world to be. Watson-Gegeo (1988:578-579) writes, that while ethnographic observation and interpretation are not determined by theory, theory is important for helping ethnographers decide what kinds of evidence are likely to be significant in answering research questions posed at the beginning of the study.

3.2.4   STAGES OF ETHNOGRAPHIC PROCESS

Watson-Gegeo (1988:584-585) outlines three basic stages through which the ethnography proceeds: the comprehensive stage, the topic-oriented stage and the hypothesis-oriented stage.

During the comprehensive stage, the researcher familiarises himself/herself with the theoretical aspects of the study, makes entry to the research field and engages in broad observations and loosely conducted interviews. Gearing & Epstein (1982:245) write that this early inquiry should proceed unhurriedly with repeated sessions of "loose looking-on"

where the observer "hangs around", allowing naturally occurring everyday activities to "wash over" him or her. The general purpose of this initial stage is to get oriented.

The second stage Watson-Gegeo (ibid.) identifies is the topic-oriented stage. During this stage the researcher must begin to narrow the focus of observations and interviews. Data is collected and transcribed, analysed and coded into categories evolving from repeatedly occurring instances of behaviour and emerging research questions.

The third stage is the hypothesis-oriented stage. During this stage hypotheses are generated and considered, based on data collected and the comprehensive analysis thereof. The interpretive facet of ethnography comes through and the final product or write-up draws heavily on illustrative and representative examples in which both data and theory are reflected and supported.

3.3   THE FIELDWORK - PROCEDURE AND PROCESS

3.3.1   ESTABLISHING THE RESEARCH SITE AND PLANNING VISITS

Several procedural decisions needed to be made, beginning with a choice of subject. There were several criteria influencing the choice of the school and classroom. Principally, I required a farm school in a rural setting where English is a second language for both teacher and pupils. Supporting factors in my decision to select this particular classroom were that both the school principal and the teacher concerned were welcoming and co-operative. Furthermore, the selected teacher was newly qualified which presented the opportunity to observe a qualified teacher at work so that I would not be studying a 'worst case scenario'. In addition, the chosen classroom is representative of the typical farm school classroom in its multi-standard grouping which features as a significant factor in this research. Finally, having earlier conducted a pilot study (Krause 1996) in this school, I was confident that the choice of the research site and of the subjects involved was suitable.

Although information was to be gathered from a variety of sources, the focus of this research fell on one particular classroom, the teacher responsible, and the Std 3, Std 4 and

Std 5 pupils who shared the classroom and teacher. I approached the principal of the school ("M") as well as the teacher whose class I was studying ("L"), and discussed the nature of the intended research and officially requested permission to conduct my research. During this meeting I liaised with L and established a schedule for visiting his classroom.

Ethnographies are typically longitudinal studies. Although this research is more a case of employing an ethnographic approach than it is a fully fledged ethnography, it was nevertheless important to schedule as many visits over as long a period as was feasible, given the scope and purpose of this research. I spent some time planning my visits to the school and trying to develop a plan of action so I would be able to fit in enough visits and still have time available to organise the data and attempt some form of analysis; bearing in mind that experienced ethnographers (Wolcott 1973) warn that at least twice as much time is required for the analysis as is spent on the data collection stage.

In the end I settled on spreading my visits throughout the first school term, a period of nine weeks. I initially planned to visit the school for the duration of the morning, between 09.00 to 12.00 on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. The reasoning behind this scheme was to allow a maximum number of visits on a sustained basis. A previous study (Krause 1996) highlighted the unsuitability of Mondays and Fridays since the teacher's and pupils' arrival and departure at school was erratic and determined by availability of transport, typically taxis. The mid-week arrangement worked well and I was able to observe both English subject lessons (my main focus) and other subject lessons on each visit.

3.3.2 VISITING THE RESEARCH SITE AND COLLECTING DATA

During the visits to the classroom, I positioned myself toward the back of the classroom and slightly to one side. From this vantage point I felt I was able to maximise on observing both teacher and pupil interactions while remaining unobtrusive. The periods of observation were used to collect the data by means of field notes, general descriptions of each lesson, notes on individual children and on the class as a whole and verbatim notes of teacher and pupil interactions and lessons.

A key feature of ethnography is that the ethnographer seldom relies on only one means of gathering information. Johnson (1992:146) talks of "multiple ways of finding out" or triangulation. Through adopting multiple approaches to inquiry, ethnography strives to account for, or at least acknowledge, the subjective experiences of both investigator and participants in the research frame. "The value of triangulation is that it reduces observer or interviewer bias and enhances the validity and reliability (accuracy) of the information" (op. cit.).

The ethnographer draws on several data collection techniques, incorporating observation (detailed, repetitive and sustained over a long period of time) and/or participant-observation; interviewing (usually informal or semi-formal); audio and video recordings; the collection of relevant documents (policy statements, class lists, journal entries etc.) and of other written and non-written material. The ethnographer may draw on other techniques (including quantitative measures) or instruments which are appropriate within the study.

In this study, data were gathered using varied techniques, in order to improve the validity and reliability of the study. Data were generated in the following ways: non-participant observation, audio-recordings of lessons and transcriptions thereof, the use of interaction analysis frameworks, interviewing, questionnaires, journals and the collection of documents and other relevant materials. Each method of data collection is discussed in more detail in section 3.3.4, below.

3.3.3 STRUCTURED AND UNSTRUCTURED APPROACHES TO THE OBSERVATION OF INTERACTION

Techniques for observing and evaluating teaching may be placed on a continuum ranging from relatively open, unstructured and unsystematic to the close, highly structured and systematic (Brown 1975:50).

The Valley Trust research approach (Chick & Claude 1985) entailed a micro-analysis of classroom discourse (structured and systematic) supplemented with ethnography (unstructured). In contrast, this research is rooted in an ethnographic approach with

supplementary microanalysis of interaction. Both approaches have value. The micro-analysis yields data of a selective nature in response to a research focus on a particular facet of interaction e.g. teacher questions. While ethnography is able to address similar aspects, the focus is more holistic and factors contributing to the establishment and maintenance of patterns of interaction are considered central to a description and analysis thereof.

What follows is a brief look at approaches to classroom research, looking specifically at ethnography and at interaction analysis.

3.3.3.1 AN UNSTRUCTURED APPROACH - ETHNOGRAPHY

Van Lier (1988:37) establishes some rationale in support of an ethnographic approach:

* our knowledge of classrooms is limited
* it is relevant and valuable to increase our knowledge of classrooms
* we can only do so by going into classrooms for data
* data must be interpreted in context of classroom
* context is not only cognitive and/or linguistic, but is essentially social.

Ethnographic classroom research, like interaction analysis, begins with description. But whereas interaction analysis is governed by pre-specified descriptive categories, ethnography allows and encourages the development of new categories through which the interaction can be understood and interpreted. "Starting with a wide angle of vision [the ethnographer] 'zooms' in and progressively focuses on those classroom features he considers to be most salient. Thus ethnographic research clearly dissociates itself from the *a priori* reductionism inherent in interaction analysis" (Bennet & McNamara 1979:161-2). Edwards & Mercer (1989) write that the ethnographic approach requires researchers to make detailed observations of what is said and done. The ethnographer must suspend his/her own 'common-sense' interpretations of what is going on and must attempt to elicit the participants' own interpretations of what they are doing, and why. These responses may be used as data. Classroom talk is thus analysed not for its linguistic structure, but for what

its content (what people talked about) and patterning (who talks to whom) may reveal about social order in this microcosm" (p.15).

To summarise, an ethnographic research approach to classroom interaction attempts to examine the interaction in terms of the broader socio-cultural context, and as a social phenomenon in itself. The approach strives to provide an holistic understanding and interpretation of the interaction and endeavours to uncover connections between how interaction takes place and how participant's circumstances, beliefs and understanding of the teaching-learning situation contribute to the patterns of interaction.

3.3.3.2 A STRUCTURED APPROACH - INTERACTION ANALYSIS SYSTEMS

Malamah-Thomas (1987:20) writes that the basis of the 'interaction analysis' tradition was established with Flanders' categories of description for classroom verbal behaviour in 1970 and has as its aim, to look at classroom language to see what it can reveal about the teaching and learning processes.

Interaction analysis characteristically "involves using an observation schedule to reduce the stream of classroom behaviour to small scale units suitable for tabulation or computation" (Bennet & McNamara 1979:158). Most interaction analysis systems ignore the context in which the data are collected and are usually concerned with overt behaviour, focusing on small bits of pre-determined action or behaviour, rather than on global concepts.

Since Flanders' original interaction analysis categories, numerous other interaction analysis systems have been devised. Two interaction analysis systems have been selected for use in this study, namely, Brown's Interaction Analysis System (BIAS) (Brown 1975) and Sinclair and Coulthard's Analysis of Discourse (Sinclair & Coulthard 1975). BIAS will be used, primarily, to generate quantitative data which will indicate what percentage of lesson time is taken by teacher's questions, pupil responses, teacher lectures etc. An adaptation of the Sinclair and Coulthard analysis framework will be used as a means to focus on the patterns of interaction in order to examine not only how much lesson time is taken by

teacher's questions, pupil responses etc. but to look more closely at what is actually said and the form-function relationships that are operating.

Below, each of these systems is briefly presented with a view to their use in conjunction with the ethnographic observation of the farm school classroom.

a)   BIAS - BROWN'S INTERACTION ANALYSIS SYSTEM

Brown's Interaction Analysis System (BIAS) provides an observational scheme for teacher-led whole class activities.   BIAS captures the general pattern of a lesson, and is 'unashamedly biased' towards verbal interaction of teacher and pupils, and displays patterns of interaction which occur in a lesson (Brown 1975).   This scheme will provide an adequate description of the *participation structures* of the interaction.   The scheme comprises seven main categories, which although simple and uncluttered, allow for the possibility to 'extend' the system by marking categories in a little more detail in terms of specific queries such as what types of questions are asked (higher order vs. lower order), as opposed to merely noting a teacher question or pupil question. The seven basic categories include: Teacher Lecture (TL); Teacher Question (TQ); Teacher Response (TR); Pupil Response (PR); Pupil Volunteer (PV); Silence (S) and Unclassifiable (X). A schedule is marked every three seconds with categories TQ, PR , TR etc. noted systematically as the lesson progresses.

BIAS is an uncomplicated observation device which yields a basic, primarily quantitative, supplementary source of data. It is anticipated that the nature of the data generated may prove too simplistic, however, and for this reason Sinclair & Coulthard's Analysis of Discourse system is presented.

b)   SINCLAIR AND COULTHARD'S ANALYSIS OF DISCOURSE

Working from the departure point that describing everything in blanket fashion is unfeasible and unproductive, Sinclair and Coulthard have, nevertheless, devised a system of analysis which is comprehensive and which avoids selecting pre-determined aspects of interaction

for attention. Their approach is valuable to this ethnographic study in that it focuses on the discourse of the classroom. This is significant since, as Van Lier (1988:47) has commented, classroom discourse is a central part of the social context.

Sinclair and Coulthard acknowledge that their system derives from data taken from teacher-centred classrooms. However, in view of the predominantly teacher-led patterns of interaction observed during the pilot study (Krause 1996), it is anticipated that this will not be particularly problematic in terms of this research. Unlike BIAS, which shows patterns of participation, but not what is actually said, Sinclair and Coulthard's approach allows for the retention of all the data with the advantage that one can review not only what percentage of the lesson was taken up by teacher-talk, for example; but what was actually said in addition to the form-function relationships that were operating (Cazden 1988:29; Sinclair & Coulthard 1975).

Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) note that one of the findings of their research is that well-planned lessons which progress in well-ordered steps to a conclusion are not necessarily successful. They claim that there are "techniques, almost always used unconsciously by the teacher, which provide children with strong clues to the answer required [and that] ... teachers usually take correct answers as an indication that pupils are following and understanding...". Through using Sinclair and Coulthard's analysis of discourse it is hoped to establish whether such 'clues' are used, and how they function, within the particular farm school classroom under study.

Sinclair and Coulthard have identified a typical 'exchange' in the classroom as consisting of an initiation by the teacher, followed by a response from the pupil, followed by feedback to the pupil's response from the teacher (1975:21). The three-part sequence of teacher initiation, student response, teacher evaluation or feedback, is the most common pattern of classroom discourse at all grade levels, and usually, the initiation is in question form. (Cazden 1988:30). The discourse is realised in terms of 'acts' which indicate the form and function taken by an utterance during an exchange.

In order to accommodate the patterns of exchange observed in the multi-grade classroom during the pilot study, it has been necessary to make some adaptations to Sinclair and Coulthard's original interaction analysis framework, as presented in the book *"Towards an Analysis of Discourse: The English used by Teachers and Pupils"* (Sinclair and Coulthard, 1975). This adapted analysis framework is presented in detail in Chapter Four, and accompanies an analysis and discussion of transcribed lesson extracts.

3.3.4 FIELD TECHNIQUES - DATA COLLECTION

3.3.4.1 NON-PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION AND AUDIO-RECORDING

From the outset I decided on non-participant observation. As I was interested in observing the interaction between teacher and pupils, there was no need for me to adopt a participant role. I had a tape recorder on hand to record samples of lessons and did so for one hour during each visit. While the focus of my observations remained the English subject lesson, I also observed and recorded other subject lessons where English was used as medium of instruction (e.g. Geography or General Science). The recordings of all lessons were later transcribed (transcriptions indicated features such as rising intonation indicating a question form and timed pauses between stretches of speech). These transcriptions were supplemented by additional notes and observations made during the lesson. Initially, my approach to observation was unstructured, in keeping with Watson-Gegeo's (1988) 'comprehensive stage' of ethnography, although towards the end of the study, I focused on patterns of interaction that I had noticed were prevalent. While observing, I noted the time spans of interactions and made copious notes in my observations book. I found it useful to divide the page, utilising a column on the right for additional observations, reminders to myself to refer to previously observed events, notes on possible questions I might wish to follow up on and also for keeping a track on my own experiences at the time, whether I was impressed, bored, uncomfortable etc. Perhaps more valuable were the Contact Summary Sheets I recorded after every visit. These sheets provided, in brief, the general aim of the visit, a summary of events and a section for questions I might wish follow up on or areas I felt needed more probing or focus. These Contact Sheets also provided a chronological overview of the study and the summaries proved a useful catalogue from which to locate

specific transcriptions, interviews and general sketches of "farm school life". Since vast amounts of data were generated during the visits, it was vital that I establish some system for organising the data collected so that it would be accessible later for analysis.

3.3.4.2 INTERVIEWING

Interviews in Ethnographic studies tend to be informal or semi-formal in nature, rather than formal and structured. Unstructured or informal interviewing and loosely structured, semi-formal interviewing allows the participant some control over the interview and allows for the possibility of information to be revealed which the researcher/interviewer may not have anticipated. A loosely structured, informal interview is more likely to lead to genuine interaction between researcher and participant (Hitchcock and Hughes 1995:159). This approach is also in keeping with the principle of ethnography of not leading the participants into predicted responses, thereby limiting the effects of ethnocentrism and of the researcher being guided by hidden agendas.

I interviewed the teacher, L, on three occasions, each interview lasting thirty to forty minutes. The first and second interviews were conducted early in the second week of the study, on the fifth and sixth visits to the school. The third interview was conducted approximately three weeks later on the tenth visit to the school. Interview conditions were not ideal. Interviews were conducted during break and in the classroom. There was much background noise picked up by the tape recorder, and the occasional interruption. I did not take notes and relied only on the recording for later transcription. Having interviewed L in a previous study we had already established some sense of rapport and given time to respond freely, L proved to be open in his responses. It was extremely difficult not to ask leading questions though, and inevitably a measure of these crept in to the interviews. When conscious of having asked a leading question I tried to elicit some expansion on L's answer.

I also interviewed a sample of the pupils. Approximately one third of the class were interviewed in a group interview (10 pupils). Pupils were chosen using a random selection

method, in order to improve the representativeness of the sample. The resultant sample comprised 6 boys and 4 girls and a spread of three Std 3, three Std 4 and four Std 5 pupils. The mean age of the sample was 14 years. The sample of pupils was interviewed on one occasion only, and the interview session was recorded. I opened the interview by explaining the purpose of the interview and I urged the pupils to respond honestly and freely, reassuring them that their privacy would be respected. Since the main objective of the interview was to obtain information and not to gauge the pupils' language competency in English, I made use of an interpreter to translate my questions into Xhosa (the mother tongue of the pupils) and to translate their responses back into English. The pupils were eager to please. However, this I believe resulted in a tendency whereby the pupils would provide answers to my questions that they thought I wanted to hear, rather than a more honest response. This I feel can be ascribed to a combination of a cultural deference to a perceived authority figure (adult/teacher-researcher) and the result of not having established a sense of rapport with the pupils beyond a polite acquaintance.

Finally, though not strictly interviews, I wish to acknowledge here, other sources of information obtained through casual conversation with parents and other officials or NGO representatives who were involved with the school. In addition, though not the teacher under observation, the principal acted as my "key informant" since she is naturally welcoming of any enquiries into her school and was interested in the study itself. She proved a valuable source of information concerning the school and its history and current activities.

3.3.4.3 QUESTIONNAIRES

Each pupil completed two questionnaires (Appendix A and B). The nature of the questionnaires was such that basic information relating to pupils' home circumstances, attitudes and opinions towards school and towards the English language was requested. It is important to note that although the questionnaires are in English, each question was explained to the pupils in Xhosa, by L, the teacher, and pupils were also given the option to answer in Xhosa if they wanted to. The pupils appeared to have no difficulties in answering

the first of the two questionnaires presented to them (Appendix A). Pupil Questionnaire-2 (Appendix B) was the more difficult of the two questionnaires, and the answers provided by the pupils tended to be short and without much elaboration. For this reason, many of the questions that were asked in Pupil Questionnaire-2 were raised again during the pupil interviews, since it was felt that it was important to pursue certain of the questions (e.g. items 12 and 13) further. A teachers' questionnaire (Appendix C) was completed by each of the three teachers at the school and requested information relating to attitudes, beliefs and role relationships. This information was sorted according to the categories selected for the analysis of the data and excerpts were used as supporting illustrations in the discussion of the analysis and findings.

3.3.4.4 JOURNALS

Though not strictly journals, pupils submitted, on my request, written accounts on a variety of topics. Not all pupils answered all the topics, which included such themes as the simple "my family", "my school" variety to more challenging topics such as "my role in my family and community: what it means to be a Xhosa boy/girl". I stressed that I was interested in content rather than correctness of form and encouraged pupils to use Xhosa when unable to express themselves adequately in English. The objective was to obtain information pertaining to the pupils' individual circumstances and not to sample their use of English. Accordingly, overly simplistic responses constrained by the use of a second language would serve little purpose. As with the data generated from the questionnaires, the information obtained through these written accounts was used to illustrate or support the presentation of the findings.

3.3.4.5 COLLECTING DOCUMENTS AND MATERIALS; AND ATTENDING MEETINGS

Ethnographic research relies on the gathering of information from a variety of sources, not only from the participants but from other materials of relevance too. I collected any documentation concerning farm schools generally, school records, teacher training materials, prescribed books, Departmental circulars, and so forth. These materials provided a source for the gathering of information that did not arise during interviews or observation

sessions. These materials were used to supplement the data gathered through other means, with a view to developing a more complete awareness and understanding of the various factors, restrictions, regulations etc. operating within the school and classroom, and how these related to the educational guidelines and provisions of the country generally.

I acquired copies of the English text books used and noted in particular all the chapters covered during my visits. I also acquired copies of Geography and General Science text books in order to cover the aspect of learning through the medium of English, a second language.

I attended a PTA meeting. The agenda was promising, especially since the Sakisizwe Inset Unit would be presenting a discussion on the use of English in the school and supporting programmes. Unfortunately most of the meeting was conducted in Xhosa and I had ample time in which to reflect upon, and appreciate how some of the younger pupils, only recently exposed to learning in English, must feel when confronted with an unfamiliar language. Despite having to discuss the content of the meeting with the principal later, the meeting proved valuable on two accounts. Firstly, I was introduced to several people who were potentially valuable sources of information and secondly, I observed a familiar pattern of interaction, one which I was used to seeing in the classroom context between teacher and pupils and which I witnessed this time between a guest speaker and the parents attending the meeting. This pattern of interaction was one where the speaker's rising intonation stimulated a group response from the audience, mostly an affirmation of a point raised, or a sentence completion. The co-operative dynamic of this pattern of interaction will be explored more fully during the analysis of the data and the discussion of the findings.

3.3.4.6 INTERACTION ANALYSIS FRAMEWORKS

In addition to observation and tape-recordings, I utilised Brown's Interaction Analysis System (BIAS), (Brown 1975), in order to generate quantitative data that would reflect what proportion of a lesson was taken by teacher questions to teacher lecture to pupil responses etc. During my visits to the classroom, I recorded and coded several lessons on a BIAS

time line display sheet. Five of these lessons were later selected and the data generated from these five lessons were converted into pie charts (Figures 6-10). The lessons were selected to represent lessons taken across all three standards and standard-combinations and to represent different lesson types (e.g. grammar, reading, comprehension). The simplicity of BIAS was appealing, yet it was its very simplicity that I later found limiting. As a means of generating a surface analysis, reduced to chart form, BIAS was adequate. However, the biggest disadvantage of using BIAS was that original data was "lost" in the marking of the schedule and on later reflection one can only state, for example, that a question was asked, but not what was asked and how it was asked. I found that the categories were not entirely suitable to my needs and I adapted the system by adding an extra category for choral/group class response. This was necessary since choral or group response featured strongly in the lessons I had been observing and it was important that I be able to record the frequency of this category of pupil response separate to that of individual pupil responses. I also needed to decide how to classify utterances in statement form which displayed a rise in intonation, thereby signalling a question. This was particularly problematic in that despite the rising intonation pattern resulting in a group or choral response, often no question was actually asked. For example: "What is the past tense of walk? The past tense of walk is ..." This first example poses a question and the rise in intonation calls for an answer in response, whereas in this second example: "A grocery list is very much important. A grocery list is very much ..." is more in line with a statement form, and the rising intonation calls for a response, but not necessarily an answer. Owing to these complications I decided to supplement the interaction analysis by employing Sinclair and Coulthard's interaction analysis framework (Sinclair and Coulthard 1975) on a sample of lessons (Tables 2-6) in order to more accurately classify, using original data, what was happening in terms of the interaction between teacher and pupils. Sinclair and Coulthard's approach to interactional analysis yielded a richer analysis. This will be discussed further in Chapter 4 where the findings and analysis of data are presented.

Quantitative measures such as the above interaction analysis frameworks were used with the aim of supporting and supplementing classroom observation and interviews. They have not formed the focus of the data collecting process, nor of the research project itself.

3.4 ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

Johnson (1992:146) cautions that the use of any or all of the data collection techniques available does not make a study ethnographic, neither does triangulation. The ethnographic quality unfolds through the ethnographic analysis of the data and descriptive-interpretive written account that results.

Analysis of data is an ongoing process in ethnographic research and the researcher is continually assessing the data and formulating questions which highlight areas for more focused observation. Nevertheless, there comes a time when the ethnographer must leave the field and turn the focus of the research to a comprehensive analysis of the data generated during the fieldwork stage.

Ethnographic analysis requires the developing of categories and concepts arising from the data itself. The researcher inductively locates patterns and relationships recurring in the data and uses these patterns to develop categories for further analysis (Hitchcock & Hughes 1995:97; Johnson 1992:149). Gherardi & Turner (1987, cited in Miles & Huberman 1994:91) summarise the process:

> You begin with a text, trying out coding categories on it, then moving to identify themes and trends, and then to testing hunches and findings, aiming first to delineate the "deep structure" and then to integrate the data into an explanatory framework ... as information is condensed, clustered, sorted and linked over time.

Part of the interpretive function of analysis involves noting regularities, patterns and causal flows and attempting explanations, grounded in the data, for these patterns. Without interpretation and the assigning of meaning, the ethnography fails to fulfil one of its distinguishing criteria by neglecting to make what is implicit, explicit and thus, through a failure to draw conclusions linked to theory, the ethnography fails "to transcend what has been termed the `merely descriptive' ..." (Goetz & LeCompte 1984:196).

3.5 THE ETHNOGRAPHIC PRODUCT

The result of a traditional ethnographic study is called an ethnography. However, often studies employing the ethnographic approach are conducted and there is some debate over their ethnographic status (Goetz & LeCompte 1984:17-18). The distinguishing quality between classical ethnography and what Goetz & LeCompte (ibid.) term "quasi-ethnography" is that the classical ethnography is characterised by the interpretive, conceptual, theoretical framework, and cultural-embeddedness of the ethnographic report.

Nevertheless, the ethnographic report is written in a descriptive style, conveying the finer detail of social discourse and the physical and socio-cultural setting of the research. Description is supported with extensive quotations and anecdotes from interviews, conversations, journals and other documentation. "The persuasive force of the ethnographic argument ... is sustained by the repeated interplay of concrete exemplification and discursive commentary (Atkinson 1990:103). The ethnographic report should show every indication of rigour in its attention to detailed description and interpretation substantiated by the data available. Wolcott (1975, cited in Goetz & LeCompte 1984:242-243) stresses the necessity of providing sufficient description and interpretation to give the readers enough raw material to assess independently the credibility of the conclusions drawn.

On discussing the genre of ethnography, Atkinson (1990:82) writes:

> It is highly characteristic of many ... such texts that they are extensively and densely illustrated with extracts from the author's field notes, stretches of talk (verbatim or reported) from informants, documents, and similar sources. These are used to furnish evidence and support for the author's argument. The use of such materials, and their interweaving into the ethnography are sometimes regarded as a methodological 'problem' or shortcomings by critics ... [yet their use] allows for multiple perspectives and voices in the text [which] provide concrete, vivid ... vicarious experience of the social world in question.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge the presence of the researcher in qualitative research. Unlike traditional quantitative research, the qualitative ethnographic report is written in the first person, thus reflecting the researcher's role as an instrument of data collection - as

observer, and his/her role in the analysis and interpretation of the data, and finally, acknowledging the researcher as author of the written report.

3.6 RECOGNISING THE STRENGTHS; ADDRESSING THE LIMITATIONS

Qualitative research, and ethnographic research in particular, although criticised in the past, are becoming more popular as the strengths of qualitative approaches to research are being recognised and acknowledged. Miles and Huberman (1994:10) list local groundedness, context embeddedness, the richness and holistic quality of the description and the inherent flexibility of qualitative approaches to research, as strengths. Particularly appropriate to ethnography, they write (ibid.):

> Qualitative data, with their emphasis on people's "lived experience", are fundamentally well suited for locating the meanings people place on the events, processes and structures of their lives ... and for connecting these meanings to the social world around them.

Qualitative research is often criticised, however, for its lack of scientific objectivity as measured against positivistic criteria. According to traditional positivistic research, the research process and product should be able to meet the criteria of validity, reliability and representativeness (Hitchcock & Hughes 1995:104-111). Below, I will discuss how ethnographic research does in fact address these criteria. However, we also need to question to what extent these criteria are appropriate measures for qualitative research generally, and ethnographic research specifically.

Validity is concerned with the extent to which the events researched have been accurately captured and presented. Ethnographic methodology addresses this criteria through triangulation. The ethnographer uses varied data collection techniques (observation, audio-recordings, interviews, document analysis etc.) and attempts to validate his/her observations of an interaction by obtaining the participants' understanding of the event for comparison and contrast with his/her own observations.

Reliability refers to the extent to which the study is replicable and questions the extent to which the observations made and interpretations drawn would be similar if made by another researcher. This criterion therefore addresses questions of bias and sources of error (Hitchcock & Hughes 1995:107). Ethnography, by its very nature, is involved with naturally occurring situations and the ethnographer refrains from manipulating variables. Ethnography accepts that situations change and that human nature is not regimented to the extent that similar enactments of a situation will ever be entirely the same as the originally observed event. Nevertheless, ethnography attempts to account for the criterion of reliability and to address observer objectivity by providing more detailed accounts of the researcher's experiences in the field and how the study was shaped and influenced by these experiences (Hitchcock & Hughes 1995:108; Wolcott 1973:15).

The third criterion for scientific rigour is that of representativeness. Representativeness is the degree to which the individuals or the situation researched are typical. One could argue that it is not an aim of ethnography to research what is typical, but to observe within a specific context to see what emerges. Nevertheless, ethnography attempts to address this criterion by taking care to establish the research field within a broader socio-cultural context. In addition, the researcher should make use of sampling techniques when needing to select individuals for interviewing and focused observation. To further enhance representativeness, the ethnographic report should ideally incorporate quotes and anecdotes that are both typical and atypical in order to present a balanced account of events.

3.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Cameron, Frazer, Harvey, Rampton, and Richardson (1992:11) write:

> Whether or not she believes it has an objective reality, the social researcher cannot take it for granted that she knows or recognises exactly what a social phenomenon or event is when she sees it ... The problems for social scientists who study culture and social groups not their own are even more acute. There are two main problems: the existence of differing and shifting conceptual frameworks, and the difficulty of translating from one to another ... We might be alive to the dangers of ethnocentrism, but in the end, can anything be done about it?

It is my belief that a researcher involved in an ethnographic study must be alert to the dangers of ethnocentrism, but that ultimately, the researcher is a socially located being with his/her own unique history and subjectivity and that this influences the research indelibly. For this reason, I have attempted to include my own experiences and insights as a researcher/observer in order to acknowledge, openly and honestly, my subjectivity in this study. I have also included many quotations and illustrations in my discussion so as to enhance the participants' experiences and understandings in relation to my analysis of the situations and events observed since being "... trustworthy as a qualitative researcher means ... that the processes of research are carried out fairly [and] that the products represent as closely as possible the experiences of people who are studied" (Ely, Anzul, Friedman, Garner, and McCormack Steinmetz 1991:93).

3.8   SUMMARY

The purpose of the research and the scope of the study define the limits of what can be expected from it. Ethnographic methodology relies on detailed and contextualised observation over a long period, and draws on a variety of methods of data gathering in order to present an holistic account of the setting under study. It is hoped that efforts made to gather data from a variety of sources and perspectives will capture, and accurately reflect, the spirit of the multi-standard classroom studied. The role of the ethnographic researcher extends beyond that of instrument for data collection and presentation of findings, however. The presence of his/her voice in the ethnography is unmistakable. Researchers cannot help being socially located persons. As Cameron et al. (1992:5) observe "...[w]e inevitably bring our biographies and our subjectivities to every stage of the research process, and this influences the questions we ask and the ways in which we try to find answers." The interweaving of the researcher's and others observations and accounts is characteristic of ethnography.

─────────────── **CHAPTER 4** ───────────────

4. PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF DATA

I begin by introducing the physical setting of the school and the classroom and move on to introduce and describe the participants in this study, namely, the pupils and their family circumstances, the teacher and the researcher. Thereafter follows a selection of excerpts taken from observations and sketches made during field visits. These are included with a view to providing some informal glimpses of classroom life. Three main themes emerged during the course of this study and these are presented under the following sub-headings: English as medium of instruction and the levels of pupil and teacher competence in English, the multi-standard situation, and a predominant pattern of interaction.

4.1 THE SETTING

4.1.1 THE SCHOOL

The school is like thousands of other farm schools across South Africa and reflects the grim neglect that black education has experienced in the past. This school is not as isolated as many other farm schools since it is situated within a few metres of a main road, along which taxis regularly travel. The school forms part of a rural settlement comprising a local farm store which has fallen into disuse, a petrol pump, a farmers' meeting hall and tennis courts, a police station and a smaller store which is utilised mostly by the local farm labourers and their families.

The school building is situated on privately owned farm land and comprises one structure which houses three classrooms of average size. Although the building's structure is sound, the classrooms are looking run-down and in need of general maintenance. The paint is flaking and the skirting is coming away from the wall; there are several broken windows and the floor is pitted concrete. There is no electricity and it is gloomy indoors. Even the school bell is badly chipped and cracked which seems sadly symbolic. The principal

informs me that neither the landowner/farmer, nor the Department of Education are eager to accept responsibility for the necessary repairs and upgrading.

Six toilets have been erected on the edge of the playground. The school grounds are reasonably large, but barren. The playing field is a hard-baked stretch of ground scattered with rocks and the remains of the wild grass struggling to survive under the combined onslaught of daily soccer games (using a tennis ball), sun and no water. M, the principal, has arranged for the "garden" to be cleared of weeds and grass for the new school year. The flower beds (a misnomer) comprise freshly weeded and raked dry red soil and a dotting of stunted aloes and are fringed with faded white-wash bricks. I find this faintly depressing. Surrounding the school are several mud huts which form part of the informal settlement that is developing around the hub of other facilities in the area (petrol, taxi stop, store). This school is staffed with one experienced teacher-principal and two newly qualified teachers. The teachers each have a single-room house on the grounds in which they stay during the week. Each of the teachers travels "home" for the weekends.
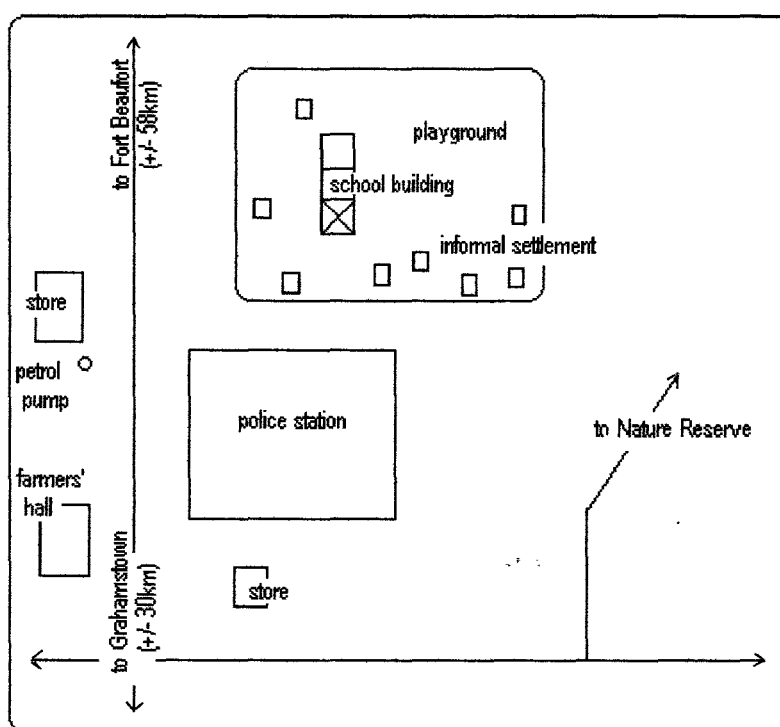
Figure 1 : A schematic representation of the location and immediate environs of the school.

Figure 1, above, provides a schematic representation (not to scale) of the location of the school and its immediate surroundings.

Owing to its proximity to Grahamstown, some 30km away, this school has received, and continues to receive, support and input from NGO and University programmes.

The school caters for Junior and Senior Primary classes. I asked the principal (M) how the school is divided into its various classes. I learnt that the groupings are sub-standards A and B together, Std 1 and 2 together and Std 3,4 and 5 together in a classroom. M said this division was dictated by numbers rather than ideal groupings and she appeared not to be happy with the division:

> The division there is wrong but because of the numbers ... this one's [referring to the teacher next door] sort of taking a higher grade and a lower grade [referring to Std 2 and Std 1 respectively] and which it ought not to happen like that and because of the numbers we had to do it ... I would prefer to say 2 and 3 or 4 and 5, like that, which is much more convenient for the teacher though they are all senior primary.
>
> (M:19-02-97)

As has been observed in other studies of farm schools, shortage of classroom space is typical and necessitates combined class teaching where two or more classes are taught by one teacher in one classroom. There is talk of development, however, and it is hoped that in the not too distant future, smaller farm schools in the area will merge with this school and that the teaching staff will be transferred across. This will result in more pupils per standard, but hopefully, only one standard per teacher. There are many practical and financial obstacles to be overcome but if these plans are realised, it will help to alleviate some of the problems, particularly those arising directly from the multi-standard situation, experienced currently in this school.

4.1.2   THE CLASSROOM

The multi-standard classroom under study comprises Std 3, Std 4 and Std 5 pupils. This classroom houses a total of thirty two pupils which is an average class size for both single-

standard and multi-standard classrooms. Figure 2, below, indicates the classroom arrangement with standard zones and seating.
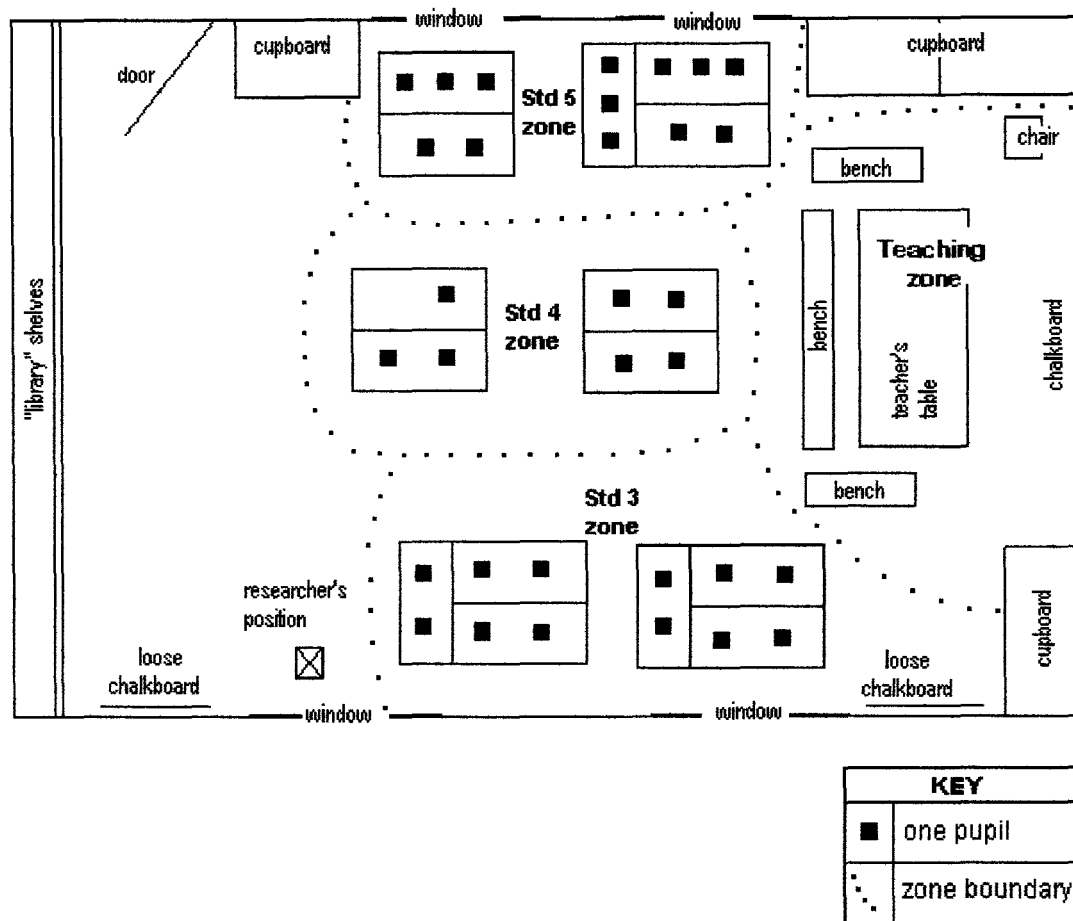
Figure 2 : The classroom and the arrangement of standard groups into zones.

L, the teacher, has divided his classroom into zones for the grouping of the different standards. The only time when I saw pupils move out of the designated standard zones was when they gathered around the teacher's table for a lesson. The area immediately in front of the chalkboard was used as the teaching zone. Generally, each standard is taught separately, although the Std 4's and 5's are frequently combined. The rotation of pupils in and out of the teaching zone, where lessons were mostly conducted, occurred smoothly and pupils did not appear disrupted by the frequent change-overs. As L commented: "In the same classroom ... with the different levels ... I think they're used to it, they've always had it. In the farm schools they've grown with it."

At the back of the classroom are shelves on which "library" books in English, Xhosa and Afrikaans are displayed. The books lie unused, forgotten it would seem, judging from the dust. During my visits these books were never used nor taken for reading. Since there is no electricity, L relied solely on the chalkboard, textbooks and occasionally posters, as teaching materials. L informed me that there are not enough textbooks for each pupil and they generally have to share two or three to a book. The readers are particularly scarce and I frequently observed groups of six or seven pupils clustering around a textbook. Much teaching time is lost through the lack of textbooks since L must write up exercises on the chalkboard. Pupils never take textbooks home for doing homework exercises.

Many of the desks are broken. The desks are the old-fashioned double-seater variety and the older boys and girls are too big to sit in them comfortably. The pupils seem to accept the lack of resources as normal. On one occasion a Std 3 boy had no place to sit around L's table since all the available benches were full. I watched as he crouched on his haunches at the end of a row and I thought he couldn't possibly spend the lesson like that. L noticed him, but did not intervene. Eventually the pupils "made a plan" and shifted up like sardines in a can. One boy directly in front of me ended up perching half on-half off the bench.

During the first several weeks of my visit, the walls remained bare except for old prestick and last year's geometry worksheets which hung untidily. The walls gradually filled up with road safety posters and mathematics worksheets at the term progressed. I noticed that the chalkboard needed resurfacing and as it was L had difficulty writing on its surface and the pupils struggled to read what he had written, particularly those sitting to the sides of the classroom.

4.1.3 THE PUPILS

The pupils, without exception, come from neighbouring farms and a nearby nature reserve. Their home language is Xhosa, with little or no exposure to English out of the school context, although 21 of the 32 pupils claim to use English out of school. Of these pupils, 10 report speaking English to their friends, and here it is worth noting that these friends are

also first language Xhosa speaking, so it is debatable to what extent English is spoken at length. Five pupils reported using English to speak to the storekeeper, 3 watch English television programmes and another 3 report using English in conversation with relatives. Only two pupils have ever been further than Grahamstown or Fort Beaufort (the two nearest towns).

Some of the pupils live within the informal settlement on the school grounds but they are in the minority. Most come from nearby farms and walk anything from 5km to 16km to get to school. Pupils from the nature reserve are transported to school in reserve transport. Not surprisingly, attendance is erratic and often dictated by the weather.

Table 1 below indicates the distribution of pupils over the different standards.

TABLE 1

	Boy	Girl	Total
Std 3	7	5	12
Std 4	3	4	7
Std 5	7	6	13
Total	17	15	32

In Std 3 there are twelve pupils, the youngest being 10 years old and the oldest being 15 years old. The average age of a Std 3 pupil in this class is 13 years. In the year of the study, this Std 3 group had one repeater, a 12 year old girl. Std 4 has a total of seven pupils with the oldest at 18 years of age and the youngest at 12 years. The average age of a Std 4 pupil in this class is 14 years. Two pupils are repeating Std 4, both girls aged 15 and 16 years old. There are thirteen Std 5's, the eldest being 17 years old and the youngest 12 years old. This Std 5 class has an average pupil age of 14 years old. There are no repeaters in this group.

4.1.4   THE FAMILY

The majority of the pupils come from typically rural home settings. Their fathers are mostly employed as labourers on the farms or as labourers or field rangers on the nature reserve, while a few of their mothers work as domestic helpers to the local farmers' households. Although most pupils live with their parents, a few stay with grandparents or other relatives. Pupils are generally expected to help with household chores after school and this leaves little time available for school work. Pupils report doing homework by candle or gas lamp since most of their homes are not electrified. Pupils invariably have elder and younger siblings. Many of the elder brothers are reportedly "soccer players" by occupation and the younger boys aspire to follow in their footsteps.

Both L, the teacher, and M, the principal, say that the PTA (Parent-Teacher Association) meetings are extremely poorly attended. When I asked if lack of transportation was causing the low attendance M said that it was more to do with disillusionment and a lack of tangible outcomes to issues discussed at school meetings. She explained that each time parents are told to wait since a decision has not been made and now they fail to attend meetings, saying that they will be given the same message again. Parents that do show an interest in their children's education by attending PTA meetings tend to rely on the school principal and teachers to steer committees and to raise issues for discussion:

> The parents must be involved ... we do have committees, but the committees are sitting there like babies ... they just say okay Mam, tell us, tell us what can we do and then we can just discuss and then they can just pick and choose.
>
> (M:19-02-97)

Additionally, those parents that do display concern over their children's' education are themselves poorly educated and are often unable to assist their children in any practical way.

4.1.5   THE TEACHER

This is L's third year of teaching and this farm school is his first appointment. L received his primary and secondary education in Cape Town and Grahamstown and completed a

Senior Primary Teachers' Diploma at Cape College, Fort Beaufort, specialising in languages, Geography and History.

L's own primary school education was uneventful and he attended a school which exercised firm discipline. L's family moved to Grahamstown in 1980 and L started secondary school. The 1980's was a turbulent time and political discontent manifested itself in student riots and boycotts. L commented on the breakdown of discipline and the effect on his schooling:

> I didn't realise at the time that that thing was bad ... because I enjoyed sitting in the classroom joking with the other kids, running around the school. But it has an effect on those who came from backgrounds whose parents were poorly educated. Then those kids, they are not disciplined themselves. You get dropouts, some of them, most of them are dropouts.
>
> (L:05-02-97)

His years at teacher training college were also characterised by political unrest, student sit-ins, riots and arrests. L attributes his successful schooling and tertiary education to the support and motivation offered by his grandparents. L was raised by his grandparents and his grandfather, a teacher, offered L a positive role-model and goals to aspire towards.

I asked L about how he was taught English at high school. Mostly English lessons were conducted in English and they relied heavily on the textbook. His only exposure to a first language speaker of English was a student teacher who taught for a few months and introduced language games to "break the shyness" and encourage pupils to speak. L says he would like to incorporate more games into his own teaching.

L finds the task of teaching multi-level classes daunting:

> I cannot say I'm happy here because it's a lot of work. To me, I'm new in this field, it's difficult. So I would like to move to a school where I can teach the subjects I was trained for ... sometimes I don't follow the timetable, because it's difficult ... The situation as I was taught by the lecturers, we were taught subjects which are specialist so I majored in Geography and History with Xhosa and English as languages.
>
> (L:05-02-97)

The principal agrees that it is difficult for a "new" teacher to manage. She mentions that L was not taught to cope with what she calls "grouping". L agrees and has indicated that he would prefer to teach in a "regular" senior primary school where he has to teach only his speciality subjects.

4.1.6 THE RESEARCHER

In his study The Man in the Principal's Office, Wolcott includes a section on what he has termed "The Personal Dimension" (1973:15-18). Here he makes an attempt to address how his role as researcher and as individual (the objective and the subjective) might have influenced the study in terms of what was observed, what was noticed, what he found interesting, acknowledging boredom, and so forth. Similarly, I have made an attempt to acknowledge my own influence in this research by locating myself socially and by recording my objective and subjective responses during the process of the research.

As a teacher and as an individual living in the area, I am familiar with the school and am known to the pupils. In adopting the role of researcher I was no less familiar and benefited from the fact that this school is used to seeing "outsiders" in their classes. The school benefits from input from upliftment programmes and receives both regular and sporadic visits from various groups throughout the year. On my entrance to the class, I was introduced and it was explained that I would be sitting in on a few lessons. My presence went virtually unnoticed, and I received only a few furtive glances.

L agreed to my presence in his class. At first he seemed a little stiff or uncomfortable, which was expected, but during later visits he appeared more relaxed and no longer paid much attention to my responses to lessons or to whether I was furiously writing away or sitting observing. On several occasions he approached me after a lesson to discuss some of the problems he was experiencing with certain pupils, and the lack of resources. He also drew me aside on three occasions during lessons to query the correctness of something he was teaching, such as a correct abbreviation or the structure of a business letter, for example, and I took this to be an indication of his acceptance of my presence in his class, in

addition to it being an acknowledgement of my input as a first language speaker of English. It was only after this initial settling-in phase that I conducted my first interviews with L.

Initially I was enthusiastic about my "new role" as researcher-observer. I noted down almost everything, ranging from my impressions of the school and the pupils to describing lessons and interaction between teacher and pupils, as an excerpt from my observations shows:

> I wish I had a camera to capture the atmosphere of this moment. L is sitting in front of the pupils, who have gathered around his desk. He is relaxed and in control. I think he is enjoying the attention. The pupils are listening while he explains the concept of displacement, using a simple experiment. The pupils appear riveted and I feel oddly satisfied by the scene.
>
> (3/15 : 04-02-97) [3]

However, as the weeks progressed, the charm of the situation began to wear off and the pattern of interaction that had initially excited me with its regularity became a tedious endurance through which I had to guard against inattentiveness as the excerpt below illustrates:

> It is hot and I find myself sleepy and inclined to be impatient. The repetitive, and what seems to me, mindless nature of these drills is beginning to irritate me. I find myself wanting to click my fingers and flick my hand along with the pupils so that I can answer these questions which are being asked five, six, seven times, just in order to stop them from being asked *again*.
>
> (12/15 : 06-03-97)

A vast and varied amount of data were generated owing to the nature of the ethnographic approach adopted. The most challenging task was the sifting and sorting of data in order to establish patterns or themes which could be used as a focus for further discussion. Ultimately, I chose to focus on how the extent to which the difficulties associated with teaching a multi-level class dictated the teacher's approach to lesson planning and style of teaching and how the resultant pattern of classroom interaction appeared to influence language learning.

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[3] Referencing technique used to indicate when data was obtained, e.g. this excerpt was recorded on the 4th February 1997, on visit no. 3 out of a total of 15 visits.

4.2   CLASSROOM CAMEOS

In keeping with ethnographic tradition, excerpts from observations and sketches made during field visits have been included here. They have been included with a view to providing some informal glimpses of everyday classroom life as observed by the researcher.

> It is my first day of observation and I have only just settled into my position. The teacher notes my presence and the maths lesson comes to an abrupt end. A curt instruction is issued and all the pupils in the room stand. In unison, pupils chant tonelessly: "A newly born calf is like an oven baked bread steaming under a cellophane cover ...". They are reciting a poem. Some pupils stand on one leg and swing the other, others raise their eyes to the ceiling with what seems to me an expressionless gaze, although this could be concentration. The activity is over before I have had time to fully comprehend what is happening and pupils return to their seats. Satisfied, the teacher turns to the chalkboard and begins a Geography lesson. Was this the English "lesson" for today?
>
> (1/15 : 29-01-97)

> Today is my second visit. On my arrival the class (standards 3, 4 and 5) are doing maths. Again, as on my first visit, the lesson comes to an abrupt end and the teacher signals to some pupils who then leave the room and return with two chairs. They arrange these chairs immediately in front of me and the teacher informs me that the pupils will conduct an interview for me. The chairs are so close to me; I feel part of the interview role play and I shuffle back a few inches. These are standard 5 pupils. The girl asks the boy some questions to which he responds. I can barely hear the girl and this is surprising since she sits less than a metre away. I guess at the questions on the basis of the answers given. She asks him about the animals that one can see in the nearby nature reserve. The interview lasts just less than three minutes and the pupils return to their desks, leaving the chairs in front of me. I feel uncomfortable since it appears that special "lessons" are being prepared for my benefit.
>
> (2/15 : 30-01-97)

Before I began with the field work, I visited the school, and L, the teacher whose class I was to study. I explained the nature of my research and explained in broad terms that I wanted to observe L and the pupils over a range of lessons, with specific interest in the teaching of English lessons. I explained that I was not an inspector but a student, and that L was not to alter his teaching programme for me. Despite this, it appeared that special English lessons were being presented for my benefit. The extracts above recall two separate instances where specially rehearsed shows were put on for my benefit. The first being a recitation of

a poem and the second, an oral dialogue/interview. Each "lesson" lasted only a few minutes. Fortunately, L soon became more comfortable with my presence in the class and the special presentations stopped.

The school buildings do not offer much protection from the summer heat, nor the cold of winter. During winter, the bare concrete floor, zinc roof, and broken window panes conspire to create a cold, dark and drafty classroom. During the summer months the opposite extremes are experienced. The sun bakes on the zinc roof and sauna-like conditions arise. Sometimes it gets so hot that by nine o'clock in the morning pupils are hot, sweaty and drowsy. These conditions are not ideal for concentrating on school work.

> February is hell here in the Fish River Valley. My clothes are clinging to me and it is only 9:15. It hasn't even begun to get hot yet. I see beads of perspiration dotting some foreheads. A group of boys move an empty box to their desk and use its flaps to fan themselves. The air feels dead and heavy. L is out taking a telephone call from the District Office and the class, left with no work - or so it seems since no one is doing any, are getting restless. An off-cool breeze moves past and I feel momentarily reprieved. I am sitting near a window; it helps. The classroom feels like a sauna. Some girls fan themselves with exercise books and with a sigh I release my clothes from my skin. This raises a shy smile from another hot girl. I feel a headache coming on.
>
> (3/15 : 04-02-97)

> It is hot again today. A girl is half asleep right under L's nose. He calls her by name and tells her she is fast asleep and then instructs her to go outside and get some air. She leaves quietly and only returns at the end of the lesson.
>
> (7/15 : 12-02-97)

> Much teaching time is taken by lack of textbooks since L must write up exercises on the chalkboard. The desk I am at is so sloped that my pad won't stay put without me holding it. My wrist feels strained at the angle I must write. I gave myself and the class a start when the backrest of the desk collapsed as I lent against it. Too embarrassed to laugh.
>
> (5/15 : 06-02-97)

> L is relaxed today and jokes about his magic abilities (he is performing science experiments). He says he is David Copperfield and I wonder how many of the pupils catch this joke. Even those with access to TV (run off a car battery usually) are unlikely to have watched David Copperfield shows. L then explains that it is not magic and that there is a scientific reason...

Today is overcast and decidedly cool. Quite pleasant after the hot weather
we've had.   (7/15 : 12-02-97)

Pupils don't seem to mind being wrong. They are mostly eager to answer
and will flick arms and click fingers even if they are not sure of the answer.
The harder and faster they click, the more confident they are of the answer.
If they don't really know the answer the hand hangs limp- wristed in the air
with only the occasional half-hearted click of the fingers. If they are wrong
they will sit and then their hand will come up again. There is a shy eagerness
to please and to answer questions. They will often laugh at their own wrong
answers, sometimes just producing a shy smile.
                                                              (8/15 : 18-02-97)

The teacher, L, will often repeat a question several times, despite the fact that there are
some pupils making a bid to answer, by means of a clicking of their fingers. L believes that
by delaying the request for an answer, the slower pupils are given a chance to think out the
answer and make a bid to answer, thereby extending participation to all class members. On
one occasion I observed L pose a question to the class. Most of the pupils put up their
hands and started clicking their fingers. L was then called from the classroom. The pupils
did not drop their hands, in fact, during his absence from the classroom several more pupils
put up their hands and started clicking fingers, despite the fact the L, the teacher, was not
there to acknowledge their participation.

L begins the lesson with a preliminary exercise where he drills the pattern "I
wish I had ..." and "He said that he wishes that ...". Siyabulela wished that
he had a car but L rejected this answer calling Siyabulela 'a parrot' since
someone else had already 'wished' for a car. Poor Siyabulela had to settle
for a bicycle!
                                                              (10/15 : 26-02-97)

4.3   THEMES, PATTERNS AND CATEGORIES

The focusing in and coding of observations and analysed data into categories, is a
characteristic feature of ethnography. Themes emerge and evolve from repeatedly
occurring instances of behaviour. Part of the interpretive function of ethnography is to note
the regularities, patterns and causal flows that emerge during the analysis of the data, and to
attempt explanations for these patterns or themes.

Presented below, are three such themes which have emerged as key features of this study. Illustrative excerpts and other data have been used in support of the discussion and interpretation of the findings.

4.3.1 ENGLISH AS MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION AND LEVELS OF PUPIL AND TEACHER COMPETENCE IN ENGLISH

The school has elected to use English as medium of instruction for all subjects from Std 2 onwards. The parents' opinions were consulted and the parent-committee asked only that the teachers be competent in the chosen language, as the principal reports:

> They said Mam, we are ignorant, we think that we do hear that there are three languages, that there's Afrikaans, there's Xhosa and there's English and then the choice must be ours and then they say ... we don't want to say that we don't want Afrikaans, we only want the language you can express yourselves to the children and the children can follow you clearly. Then we said okay what would you said if we choose English, because we can only express ourselves more better in English ...
>
> (Interview/M : 19-02-97)

The school's decision was to choose English as medium of instruction. This seemed to be guided by the teachers' preference for English, and the pervasive opinion amongst pupils and teachers alike that English is the language that will enhance employability and provide an avenue to continued education, as the following quotes taken from pupils' responses to questions asked in Pupil Questionnaire 1 (PQ-1), (Appendix A) tend to illustrate:

- Because English is easy for them to understand, they have difficulty in Afrikaans. Most of the terms are English terms ... we can help them to communicate with the outside world.

- Yes, I want learn English because I want understanding.

- My Father say everyday we must learning. He say because English is an important language in the world.

- I need English because I want to be a teacher.

- I need English because I want to find good job.

- English is very important.

- My family wants me to talk english, and english is very important in South Africa.

- It is important language overseas everyone speak English.

Not everyone feels this way however:

- I don't need to learn English because they no my longerge [language].

- I don't cope. I don't feel nothing.

- I don't like to learn english because it difficult. I don't anderstend bout like English.

- I try to spick English byt my did not want to spick english.

It appears that choosing Xhosa as medium of instruction was never considered seriously. The use of English as the only practical choice goes unquestioned. Supporting factors are: the perception of the need for English to gain employment, the fact that existing textbooks are in English and the difficulty of explaining certain terms and concepts in Xhosa.

It is clear that the pupils' English competency is poor and many pupils admitted that they felt they were not coping. The pupils generally list difficulty in understanding spoken English as their major problem:

- I'm kaind liseen beakos English a not andastand [I can't listen because English I not understand?]

- My problem in english when you talk to me I don't understand.

- My problem in english when you talk to me.

- I'm feel language English Difficult subject.

- I feel about learning all your subjects in English is difficult.

Data generated from pupil questionnaire items (Appendix A) relating to pupils' perceived competencies in speaking and understanding English revealed the following:
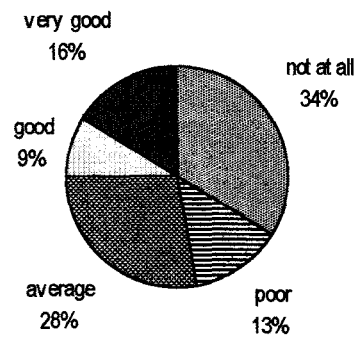
Figure 3

Pupil responses in % to the question "How well do you speak English?"
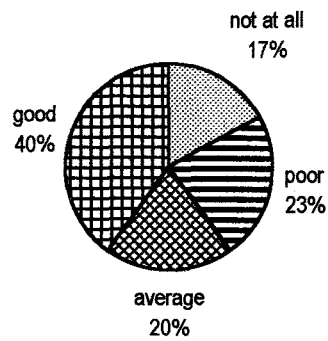
Figure 4

Pupil responses in % to the question "How well do you understand spoken English?"
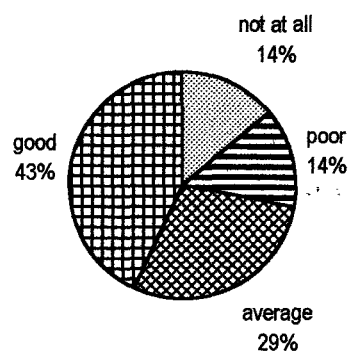
Figure 5

Pupil responses in % to the question "How well do you understand written English?"

In response to the question "How well do you speak English?", 34% of the pupils responded "not at all". A combined percentage of the "not at all" and "poor" categories reveals that 47% of the pupils rate their competency in spoken English as below average. Although 16% responded that their spoken English was "very good", this was not substantiated by any of my observations and conversations with pupils and is more likely a reflection of their self-confidence than a reflection on their actual competencies.

The question "How well do you understand spoken English?" revealed that 17% of the pupils felt that they were not able to understand at all, and a further 23% responded that they understood only poorly. These categories combined indicate that a significant 40% of the class feel they are unable to adequately understand spoken English. Given, then, that the lessons I observed were dominated by teacher-talk, in English, it is hardly surprising that pupils struggle.

The third question in this series asked "How well do you understand written English?", to which the majority of the class (72%) responded that they understood "average" to "good". Although it is reassuring that the majority feel competent to understand written English, it must be remembered that lessons in this classroom are dominated by spoken English and the situation is further compounded through a lack of textbooks to go around.

The decision to adopt English, rather than Xhosa, as medium of instruction has far-reaching implications for these pupils, as has already been outlined in section 2.6 earlier in this research. Their ability to cope in a language with which they have limited competencies at best, will not only affect their performance in English subject lessons, but will influence all learning and possibly their continued presence in school.

Based on pupils' written and verbal responses to my questions, and their apparent inability to contribute meaningfully in English towards the interaction in the classroom, it would appear that pupils scarcely possess a BICS (Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills) capability in English. Their English language proficiency falls far short of the CALP

(Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency) necessary for coping with the more advanced language of the textbooks, yet pupils are required to study all subjects through this medium.

The multi-level or multi-grade situation further compounds the difficulties. Not only are there three standards vying for the teacher's attention, but within each of these standards there are varying levels of competence. In L's class, the standard is taught as an homogenous whole and no pupil receives special attention. This could most likely be attributed to the pressures of dealing with three standards and three syllabi, each competing for teacher time.

The teacher, L, occasionally makes use of codeswitching to help explain new work or difficult terms such as "internal fertilisation" or "condensation". As L explains:

> They decided on English but we have been mixing English-Xhosa ... ah, they have difficulty understanding that language because of this multi-grade. We teach English then we shift to Xhosa. The pupils are bored with the listening ... If I was teaching only English they should have more English, they should have been taught more English. They did have it in the lower standards but it is difficult ... Also to teach more than eight subjects a day.

Pupils' spheres of social interaction are limited and pupils seldom use English outside of the classroom. What English they do hear out of the classroom is likely to be on the television, but very few of the pupils have access to this resource. L, therefore, remains their primary language model and as such, the type of English used by L becomes a significant element in the language acquisition of these pupils. L's English is generally good and he uses it fluently and with confidence and in this, the pupils are fortunate.

4.3.2 THE MULTI-STANDARD SITUATION

Multi-standard classrooms are a common feature of smaller rural and farm schools. However, L's teacher training did not prepare him for this. L finds it difficult to manage the lesson planning required for the three standards in his multi-level classroom. He admits to not drawing up lesson plans and even to not following the time table very closely.

The way we were taught, the teaching methods, some of them are useless now. First of all, the environment is very different because we were used to have an admission of about 15 kids so you can attend all those kids, their problems. The moment we were out the college gate to work we thought those things are going to happen. If you are teaching English you are going to [indistinct] so you can have time, you can have a lot of preparation in a particular subject so you can follow the timetables. You know your kids. The situation here is totally different. There are thirty, thirty four kids and all subjects and different standards. That's the problem.

(Interview/L : 05-02-97)

As described in section 4.1.2, L has arranged the class into standard zones. Pupils remain in these zones if the class is being taught as a unit or if they are not involved in a lesson and have classwork or exercises to complete. A grouping of benches around the teacher's table in front of the chalkboard forms the focus of the teaching zone. Pupils from a given standard will leave their standard zones and move to the teaching zone when they are being taught by L.

According to the timetable the periods are divided into 30 minute sessions and each of the languages (English, Afrikaans and Xhosa), Geography, History, General Science and Maths are to be taught every day. Other subjects like Religious Education and Health Education are taught twice a week. It is difficult for me to claim that the timetable followed during the weeks I observed L's classroom is "typical" since we had arranged that I would schedule my visits from nine o'clock in the morning until break time at eleven o'clock and L agreed to present at least one English lesson during those hours. My observations revealed no set patterns for grouping during English lessons since sometimes L would teach Std 3, 4 and 5 together and at other times he would teach each standard separately. Std 4 and 5 were frequently combined, whereas the Std 3's were always taught as a separate group, except for when all three standards were taught as a whole, which occurred only twice during the fifteen visits I made to the school. This pattern of grouping occurred across all subject lessons. The time devoted to a subject varied from day to day and I observed lessons where General Science was taught to Std 5's for 60 minutes while the rest of the class occupied themselves with calculator exercises. Likewise, an English lesson could last anything from 20 minutes to an hour. I tried to establish if L considered it necessary to teach an English

subject lesson each day since the pupils were using English throughout the day for other classwork. He told me that he taught English everyday and that English lessons were important for vocabulary building and for providing opportunities for practising speaking English. Ironically, pupils are not given much chance to practise English, both in English lessons and other subject lessons alike.

The difficulties associated with managing a multi-standard class influences L's ability to plan all of his lessons adequately. Insufficient time to devote to lesson preparation and a lack of varied resources for teaching English has resulted in L relying on the prescribed textbook and supplementary reader, to a large extent. This impacts strongly on the manner in which English is taught. There is a serious shortage of textbooks which requires pupils to share books, sometimes as many as five or six pupils to one book. This, coupled with the time-factor of having to fit in all subject lessons for three standards each day, has tended to result in teacher-led lessons which follow closely, if not verbatim, the lessons and lesson suggestions detailed in the prescribed language textbook, "New Day by Day". This tendency effectively dictates L's teaching style.

L has received teacher training in Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and he believes this to be the better approach to language teaching and learning. L says he tries to use CLT: "I am trying, but it is difficult because some of the kids they are shy and others in the other standards will laugh if they get something wrong". When I asked him how he would use CLT in his classes he responded:

> Most of the time we are doing oral. I get the children to read a book [out loud] or sometimes the stories in the Day by Day and we're using the pictures and get the child to say what they see. First of all we must say 'hat', 'boy', 'grass' or something like that. Then go to the next step, say picture number one, what do you see whereby we are going to use ... ah, say the past tense. In the picture we see a boy chopping a tree. Then we are going to correct this to say it happened in the past tense and say the boy was chopping the tree.
> (Interview/L : 26-02-97)

It appears that CLT is understood to mean the use of any "oral" expression of language whatever form this may take. The BIAS (Brown's Interaction Analysis System) findings over five English lessons, including different standards and lesson types (e.g. grammar, reading, comprehension) indicates that pupil speech occupies an average 24% of the lesson time. However, only 7% of this 24% is individual pupil response, the remaining 17% being choral response. The BIAS findings indicate that individual pupils are speaking, whether this be to ask or answer a question or if involved in discussion, for an average 7% of the lessons. What the BIAS analysis does not indicate, for which the Sinclair and Coulthard type analysis compensates, is that pupil talk during this period is solely a reply to a teacher question or a repetition of a teacher utterance. There is no meaningful conversation or spontaneous interaction on behalf of the pupils whatsoever. This, coupled with a total teacher talk of 60% (including TQ, TL and TR), tends to not reflect successful use of CLT in these classes.

Although the current syllabus for English Second Language stresses the Communicative Approach to English teaching, as outlined in section 2.6, demands are being made on pupils' language skills which extend beyond the conversational. Pupils are not only learning English as a second language, but are using English as a medium of instruction for further academic studies. Data generated during this study would tend to indicate that, generally, pupils are not coping adequately with either of the language demands (BICS or CALP) placed on them.

The standard-zone arrangement is conducive to small group work (the pupils naturally tend to group and work together, assisting one another), but small group work is not used, which is unfortunate since well-planned group work activities could be used to L's advantage, by enabling him to "teach" all three standards during the same period slot, thereby maximising the time available and releasing him from his centralised dispenser-of-information role to circulate amongst the groups, offering assistance and guidance.

4.3.3 PATTERNS OF INTERACTION

The most obvious and dominant feature of any lesson observed, as excerpts from Sinclair and Coulthard type analyses illustrate (Tables 2-6 presented later in this section), was the distinctive pattern of interaction where the teacher explains or narrates the content of a lesson, punctuated with questions and prompts directed to the class as a whole and occasionally toward an individual pupil. Most typically, questions are marked by a rise in intonation on the final syllable rather than by any question form (who, where, how, what, when...) and pupils' "answers" or responses are mostly choral imitations of the final string in the teacher's sentence, as the following excerpt from a combined Stds 3, 4 and 5 English lesson typically illustrates:

TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS:

L : teacher

SS : the pupils as a group i.e. the class

// : overlapping or simultaneous speech

LIST : (capitals) indicates choral or group response

list : (lowercase) indicates single speaker

~ : indicates rising intonation

... : indicates a pause of 1-3 seconds

		line
L:	If you are going to shop, if you are shopping, you must have what? //A grocery list	1
SS:	// A GROCERY LIST	2
L:	In order not to forget, a grocery list is very much important. A grocery...//	3
SS:	//LIST.	4
L:	A grocery list is very much...//important	5
SS:	// IMPORTANT	6
L:	You understand?	7
SS:	YES	8
L:	A grocery list is very much...//important	9
SS:	// IMPORTANT	10
L:	This is what? //A grocery list.	11
SS:	// A GROCERY LIST.	12
L:	What is this?	13
SS:	A GROCERY LIST	14
L:	What is this?	15
SS:	A GROCERY LIST	16
L:	This is a...//grocery list	17
SS:	// GROCERY LIST	18
L:	I want you to write for me your grocery list. Four items, not more.	19

(2/15 : 30-01-97)

A BIAS (Brown's Interaction Analysis System) analysis was done on five English lessons selected across all three standards and various lesson types (e.g. grammar, reading, comprehension) in order to ascertain what percentage of lesson time is taken by teacher questions (TQ), teacher lecture (TL), teacher response (TR), pupil response (PR), pupil chorus (C), and periods of silence (S). One of the original BIAS categories, for pupil's questions was omitted since there was not one incidence of a pupil asking a question of any sort. The figures below (Figures 6-10) indicate the average percentages of lesson time taken by teacher and pupils across the various categories. Figure 11 represents the average percentage over lessons 1 to 5 combined.

These charts show a regular pattern of teacher dominated interaction, which is not particularly unusual. What is of interest is the relatively high percentage of lesson time (an average of 16%) in which no one is speaking (category 'S'). These silences typically occur as lengthy pauses, up to eight to ten seconds at a stretch, which occur after a TQ or prompt. During these silences the pupils begin to raise their hands, as an indication that they are prepared to answer the question. The teacher does not immediately respond to these bids to answer, however, by nominating a pupil to respond. Rather, he continues to repeat the question with lengthy pauses in between in order to give those pupils who have not yet raised their hands a chance to think, and hopefully make a bid to answer the question. Even more significant to this classroom is the high incidence of chorus response (C) from pupils compared to individual pupil responses (PR). This finding is supported by the Sinclair and Coulthard analyses (Tables 2-6). The pattern of teacher-question and chorus-response, as discussed earlier, appears to be an entrenched pattern which controls the interaction within the classroom. The chorus-response pattern gives the appearance of being pupil-centred in that pupils are actively involved in talk for an average 25% of a lesson. However, the nature of the pupil contributions is largely restricted to imitation and regurgitation of teacher offered samples of language with little or no genuine interaction or negotiation of meaning. Furthermore, there is a high incidence of repetition, where the same response is repeated several times; sometimes as many as six or seven prompted repetitions at a stretch. These findings parallel with those generated by research by Chick and Claude, discussed in section 2.4.3.

	TQ	teacher question	
	TL	teacher lecture	K
	TR	teacher response	E
	PR	pupil response (individual)	Y
	C	pupil chorus	
	S	silence	
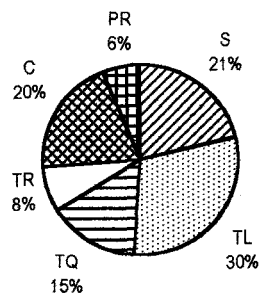
Figure 6
Indicating % lesson time taken by various interaction categories during lesson 1 on comprehension text exercise.
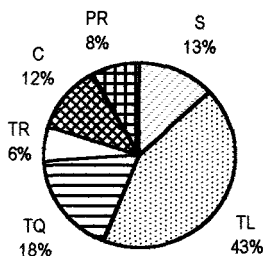
Figure 7
Indicating % lesson time taken by various interaction categories during lesson 2 on the reading of a story.
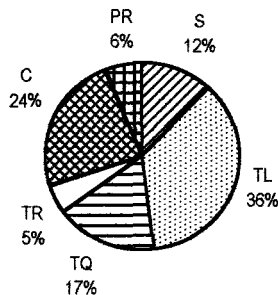
Figure 8
Indicating % lesson time taken by various interaction categories during lesson 3 on the reading of a story.
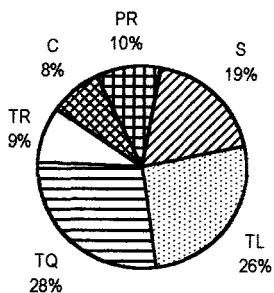
Figure 9
Indicating % lesson time taken by various interaction categories during lesson 4 on language / grammar excercises.

Figure 10
Indicating % lesson time taken by various interaction categories during lesson 5 on language / grammar exercises.
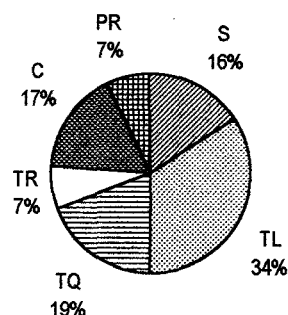
Figure 11
Indicating average % of lesson time
taken by various interaction categories
over lessons 1-5 combined.

The BIAS analysis reduces instances of interaction to categories and percentages and although these are useful as a starting point, the data, reduced in this manner, lacks the depth for a more probing analysis of the interaction between teacher and pupils and of the type of language being used. For this purpose, an adapted Sinclair and Coulthard type anaylsis framework was used on a sample of another five lessons. The lessons were selected so as to offer examples of interaction across a variety of lesson types and standards. Extracts from these lessons are presented in Tables 2-7, which follow shortly. In Table 2 an extract from a Std 3 English lesson on "Opposites" is presented. Table 3 features an extract from a Std 4 English lesson which is based on a comprehension passage. Table 5 presents an extract from a Std 5 English lesson with drill-type exercises. In Table 6, an extract from a Std 4 and 5 combined, English grammar lesson dealing with Adjectives and Adverbs is presented. Lastly, Table 7 shows an extract from an English lesson presented to Stds 3, 4 and 5 combined, and deals with the writing of an official letter. An analysis and discussion of these excerpts is presented below.

I was unable to apply the original Sinclair and Coutlhard analysis framework directly. Several adaptations in terms of the classes of acts and their form-function descriptions were necessary in order to tailor the analysis framework to the particular characteristics evident in a typical lesson within the multi-standard classroom under study. The original Sinclair and

Coulthard interaction analysis framework is discussed at length in the book "Towards an Analysis of Discourse: The English used by Teachers and Pupils" (Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975) and forms the basis of my analysis framework, which is presented below.

Difficulties were experienced in the coding of the exchanges and acts. Firstly, the original Sinclair and Coulthard Interaction Analysis Framework (1975) presented, on one hand, classes of acts for which I had no need, yet on the other hand, offered no act classes or categories for some of the types of act classifications I was detecting with regularity. For example, a category for chorus responses, in addition to individual pupil responses, was needed and I needed to distinguish between 'true' responses versus what I have termed "echos". Furthermore, I needed to establish when a rising intonation signalled a question or elicitation, or merely a prompt.

The following classes of acts, with accompanying descriptions, have been used in analysing lesson transcripts. Those marked with an asterisk (*) have been adapted from the original Sinclair & Coulthard classes of acts. Those marked with (#) are entirely new act classes created to accommodate discourse features not accounted for in the original Sinclair & Coulthard interaction analysis framework. Classes of Acts that are not marked resemble the original categories closely.

Class of Act	Symbol	Description of Form & Function
marker	m	Realised by 'well', 'okay', 'now' 'right' etc. Its function is to mark boundaries in the discourse.
silent stress	^	Realised by a pause, following a marker. Its function is to highlight the marker.
starter	s	Realised by a statement, question or command. Its function is to provide information about or direct attention towards an area to be discussed.
informative	i	Realised by a statement. Its function is to provide information and requires no response other than an acknowledgement of attention and understanding.

Class of Act	Symbol	Description of Form & Function
nomination	n	A nomination is used to call on an individual pupil to contribute to the lesson. It is realised by the use of a name or an indication such a 'yes', 'you' etc.
* elicitation	el	Realised by a question. Its function is to request a linguistic response.
* prompt	p	Realised by the use of 'mm', 'heh' etc. Typical indicators are a rise in intonation accompanied by a significant pause following the 'prompt'. Its function is to reinforce a directive or elicitation by suggesting that the teacher is expecting or demanding a response.
clue	cl	Its functions by providing additional information which helps the pupil to answer the elicitation.
cue	cue	Its function is to evoke an appropriate bid or response.
bid	b	Can be verbal "Sir..." or non verbal - raised hand, finger clicking. Its function is to signal willingness to contribute to the discourse.
reply	rep	Its function is to provide a linguistic response which is appropriate to the elicitation.
# reply	rep+	Choral or group answer/reply to an elicitation or a prompt.
# echo	echo	Realised by simultaneous completion of a sentence by teacher and pupils. Typically, it follows after a prompt. Its function is to indicate pupil attendance and participation.
acknowledge	ack	Realised by 'yes', 'okay' 'mm' etc. Its function is to show that the pupil's contribution has been heard and understood.
accept	acc	Realised by 'yes', 'no', 'good' or a repetition of the pupil's reply (with low fall intonation). Its function is to indicate that the teacher has heard or seen and that the pupil response was appropriate.

Class of Act	Symbol	Description of Form & Function
evaluate	e	Realised by statements and tag questions commenting on the quality of the reply, such as 'good', 'interesting', 'no' or repetition of the pupil's reply (with high fall intonation or rising tone)
comment	com	Realised by a statement or tag question and its function is to exemplify, expand, provide additional information.
meta-statement	ms	Realised by a statement which refers to some future time or activity when what is described will occur. Its function is to help pupils see the structure of the lesson, to see where they are going.
* directive	d	Realised by an imperative. Its function is to give an instruction which requires a reaction.
conclusion	con	Often marked by 'so' or 'then'. Its function is to summarise what the preceding section discourse was about.

TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS (used in addition to the Sinclair and Coulthard codes for classes of acts):

∅	no response to an elicitation or prompt is forthcoming
italics	simultaneous speech
CAPITALS	choral or group speech
——	an exchange boundary marker is indicated by a solid line. The function of an exchange boundary is to signal the beginning or end of a stage in the lesson.
——	a single line across the page signifies a teaching exchange (opening, answering, and possibly follow-up) which signals the individual steps by which the lesson progresses.
··········	a broken line between exchanges signifies that the second exchange is bound to the first (as with repetitions or re-initiations).
^^^^^	indicates the end of a selected excerpt and that the lesson continues beyond this excerpt.

TABLE 2

Extract from a Std 3 English lesson: "Opposites"

	Opening [TEACHER]	Act	Answering [PUPIL/S]	Act	Follow-up [TEACHER]	Act
line 1	First of all. FRAME	m				
2 3	There are some flowers in my garden FOCUS	s				
4 5	Heh?	p	THERE ARE SOME FLOWERS IN MY GARDEN.	rep+		
6 7	Heh?	p	THERE ARE SOME *FLOWERS IN MY GARDEN.*	rep+	*flowers in my garden*	ack
8 9	Again, again.	p	THERE ARE SOME FLOWERS IN MY GARDEN.	rep+		
10 11	Heh?	p	THERE ARE SOME FLOWERS IN MY GARDEN.	rep+		
12 13	Mm?	p	THERE ARE SOME FLOWERS IN MY GARDEN.	rep+		
14 15	There are some flowers in my... *garden*		*GARDEN*	echo		
16	The flowers are very pretty.	s				
17 18	They are very pretty, ne Pretty	com com	YES	rep+		
19	Are very...	p	PRETTY	rep+		
20	The flowers are very... *pretty*	p	*pretty*	echo		
21	The flowers are very... *pretty*	p	*pretty*	echo		
22 23	What do we say if the flowers are very pretty?	el	∅			
24	What do we say in Xhosa?	el	∅			
25 26	The flowers are very pretty... The flowers are very pretty...	com				
27 28	Huh? Pretty? Yes? ∧∧∧∧∧	p n	∅ "intle" YES	rep rep+	"intle" ne	acc

The lesson extract presented in Table 2 above, displays features of interaction that are typical of many lessons presented in this multi-standard classroom. L, the teacher, draws

the class's attention to the start of the lesson in line 1. L does not introduce the topic formally as being a lesson on "opposites"; instead he begins the lesson with a starter statement: "There are some flowers in my garden" (lines 2-3). This sentence is a focus point from which the lesson unfolds. Although the teacher is initiating an exchange, or rather, a series of exchanges, these are realised through prompts rather than elicitations. The only two elicitations that appear in this extract are found in lines 22 and 24. These elicitations take on a traditional question form. Notably, the teacher receives no response to these questions. With the exception of an individual pupil reply in line 28, all pupil responses are in chorus form (rep+). The total predominance of choral responses over individual pupil replies is an dominant feature of interaction in this, and other lessons. Macdonald, in a report on the Threshold Project (1990:134), comments that often the pupils don't have to be cued or prompted and that they repeat spontaneously the last word or structure which the teacher has just said. Pupils do not have to pay the teacher their full attention in this cycle of chanting. Macdonald writes that one of the most worrying aspects of the method, which she has dubbed "Rote Rhythm", is "...its capacity to mask the absence of comprehension" (op. cit.: 134). Indeed, throughout the extract of the lesson presented in Table 2, the teacher makes only one comprehension check and this is to enquire in lines 22-24 if pupils know the meaning of the word 'pretty' in Xhosa. The remainder of the interaction requires only that the pupils repeat sample sentences and respond to prompts made by the teacher. The sparseness of feedback offered by the teacher underscores the repetitiveness of the mimicry. From lines 4 to 15, the teacher prompts on six occasions and pupils respond chorally to each of these prompts. The focus of the exchange is the introductory statement: "There are flowers in my garden". The interaction amounts to little more than a drill in which pupils dutifully mouth the necessary words. There is no spontaneous language use or negotiation of meaning. Input from the teacher is limited to a repetition of the sample sentence and prompts in the form of 'heh' or 'mm'. Pupils' language production consists of a repetition of these sentences. Frequently, only the final word of the sentence is uttered as pupils complete the teacher's sentence (lines 19,20,21,33,34). The importance of the language environment of the classroom in terms of adequate input, and opportunities to negotiate meaning and to use language in a meaningful or purposeful manner, is outlined in section 2.5. The pattern of interaction that emerges

from the analysis of this extract does not appear to contribute significantly to enriching the language environment of the pupils.

TABLE 3

Extract from Std 4 English lesson: reading a story and answering comprehension-based questions

	Opening [TEACHER]	Act	Answering [PUPIL/S]	Act	Follow-up [TEACHER]	Act
line 1 2 3 4	[reading directly from text] An old tree was growing near the farm house	i	AN OLD TREE WAS GROWING NEAR THE FARM HOUSE	echo		
5 6 7 8	In the storm a branch broke off and fell to the ground	i	IN THE STORM A BRANCH BROKE OFF AND FELL TO THE GROUND	echo		
9 10 11 12	Mr Mlaza thought the tree was very dangerous	i	MR MLAZA THOUGHT THE TREE WAS VERY DANGEROUS	echo		
13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22	Portia read from "that afternoon..."	n d	That afternoon he and a workman sawed down the tree. It was a big tree and it took a long time to cut down. But after an hour it was laying ... lying on the ground.	rep	lying Good.	e acc
23 24	So that afternoon they cut down the tree.	i				
25	They cut down the tree, ne	com	YES	rep+		
26 27 28	Which was a big tree or a small tree? Yes? [indicates]	el n	∅ A big tree	rep		
29 30 31 32 33	Why do you say it was a big tree. Why?	el	Because it took a long time.	rep	Because it took a long time to cut.	acc
34	Let's read again. ∧∧∧∧∧	s				

The extract in Table 3, above, shows the first few minutes of an English lesson in which the teacher and pupils read a short story. The reading exercise is followed by a series of comprehension questions. This lesson was included in the selection because many of the lessons observed followed this read-recite pattern. The teacher, L, reads directly from the text (lines 1-2; 5-6; 9-10 etc.) and the pupils read-recite after the teacher (lines2-4; 6-8 etc.). There are not enough reading books for each pupil to have their own so pupils must share. On average five pupils cluster around a book. Apart from instances where an individual pupil is nominated to read aloud, pupils are expected to read the sentence that has been modelled by the teacher. Owing to the shortage of books though, it is probable that many pupils recite from short-term memory rather than read directly from the written text. It is questionable how much actual reading practice pupils get as a result of the shortage of books and the read-recite pattern that operates. The pupils' chorus reading responses have been coded as "echos" since they are repeating verbatim something the teacher has just said, even though they are not speaking simultaneously with the teacher. The teacher's reading has been coded as " i " although in this instance a response is required of the pupils, which is atypical of the information category. L frequently interrupts the reading to ask basic comprehension-check questions as is illustrated in lines 26-27 and 29-30. These checks act as signposts for the pupils in terms of assisting their comprehension of the story as it unfolds.

TABLE 4

Extract from Std 5 English lesson: Drill-type exercise

	Opening [TEACHER]	Act	Answering [PUPIL/S]	Act	Follow-up [TEACHER]	Act
line 1	I wonder why people eat food	s				
2 3	I wonder why people eat food ne	cue p	∅ YES	rep+		
4	I wonder why people eat food	cue	[clicking of fingers]	b		
5	I wonder why people eat food	cue	[clicking of fingers]	b		
6 7	I wonder why people eat food ne	cue p	YES	rep+	cont...	

	Opening [TEACHER]	Act	Answering [PUPIL/S]	Act	Follow-up [TEACHER]	Act
line 8	cont... I wonder why people eat food	cue	[clicking of fingers]	b		
9	I wonder why people eat food	cue	[clicking of fingers]	b		
10	I wonder why people eat food	cue	[clicking of fingers]	b		
11 12 13 14	Yes?	n	Because they are hungry	rep	Very good. Because they are hungry	acc
15 16	Sonke [all together]	d	BECAUSE THEY ARE HUNGRY	rep+		
17	I wonder why people buy cars	s				
18	I wonder why people buy cars	cue	∅			
19	I wonder why people buy cars	cue	∅			
20	Buy cars, ne.	p	YES	rep+		
21	I wonder why people buy cars	cue	∅			
22	What is your answer?	el	∅			
23	I wonder why people buy cars	cue				
24	I wonder why people buy cars	cue	[clicking of fingers]	b		
25	I wonder why people... *buy cars*	p	*... BUY CARS*	echo		
26	I wonder why people... *buy cars*	p	*... BUY CARS*	echo		
27 28 29	[nods at pupil]	n	Because they want to deliver their goods	rep	Because they want to deliver their goods	acc
30 31 32	Sonke [all together]	d	BECAUSE THEY WANT TO DELIVER THEIR GOODS	rep+		
33	Again	d	BECAUSE THEY WANT TO DELIVER THEIR GOODS	rep+		
34	Other reasons? I wonder why people buy cars ∧∧∧∧∧	el cue	∅			

In Table 4, I have presented a relatively lengthy extract of the Std 5 drill-type lesson for discussion. To shorten it would fail to show the extent of the repetition and dominance of the teacher in this lesson. The purpose of the lesson is to drill pupils in the use of two formulaic structures, namely: "I wonder why..." with the responding "Because..." although this pattern was not explicitly described or explained to the pupils at the outset of the lesson. This would tend to indicate that the class is familiar with the drill, since the lesson literally begins with the teacher's opening or starter statement: "I wonder why people eat food" to which an appropriate response is offered in line 11: "Because they are hungry". Much of the lesson is dominated by the teacher's repetitions of the topic sentences. In the first instance, the sentence "I wonder why people eat food" is repeated eight times between lines 1 and 10 and in the second instance, the sentence " I wonder why people buy cars" is also repeated eight times (lines 17-26). These extended repetitions, which are so typical of the interaction pattern in the classroom under study, have been noted by Macdonald (1990) and Chick and Claude (1985) in research conducted in other similar settings, as discussed earlier. The teacher's repetitions have been coded as "cues" since it appears that their function is to evoke an appropriate bid or response, which is what results as pupils "bid" to respond, as realised by a clicking of fingers. Despite an appropriate bid being made as early as line four, the teacher repeats his cue a further five times before nominating an individual pupil to respond. When asked about this, L, the teacher, explained that the repetition and delay gives some of the slower pupils a chance to think and then make a bid to answer. In this way, L believes that most of the pupils have an equal chance to participate in the lesson. The teacher's nomination of an individual pupil appears to be random and not linked to whether the pupil is 'bidding' to answer. For example, the nomination of the pupil at line 27 is not brought on by any indication from the pupil that he wishes to answer. However, an appropriate response is duly accepted by the teacher and the class is then directed to repeat the response in chorus form. This, L maintains, affords everyone the opportunity to practice speaking in English.

Another interesting feature that operates in this multi-standard classroom is evidenced in lines 2-3 and again in lines 19-20. The teacher presents the cue, for example, in line 2: "I wonder why people eat food". He then issues a prompt in the form of "ne" which is a tag

question, using an Afrikaans word, which in English roughly means, "Isn't that so?" Pupils respond to this prompt with a choral "yes". The form-function relationship operating here results in an exchange which has no real sense or meaning. Firstly, the teacher appears to be asking the class for an indication of agreement to his statement, yet this in itself is makes little sense since it is like asking the pupils "Do you agree that I wonder why people eat food?" When the class respond with a "yes" it is more an indication that they are attending or following the lesson than it is an affirmative answer in response to the question posed.

In Table 5 below, an extract from a Std 4 and 5 combined lesson on Adjectives and Adverbs is presented. Although L, the teacher, does not explicitly establish that the lesson is to focus on Adjectives and Adverbs, the lesson opens with a good focus or starter which draws pupils' attention (ll 2-4). L then goes on to establish, by means of a meta-statement (ll 5-6) that he will be using the word "quiet". However, because L does not establish the objective of the lesson the pupils are not initially aware that they are to manipulate sentences so that adjectives are used as adverbs. This confusion is illustrated at lines 13-15 when the teacher attempts to elicit an answer from a pupil. The pupil fails to respond so the teacher provides a little more information in lines 16-18. At this point, the appropriate response is provided by the teacher, which the pupils then dutifully repeat in chorus. The pupils, having realised what is expected of them, are able to respond appropriately as the rest of the lesson progresses, following the familiar pattern
already established.

TABLE 5

Extract from Std 4 and 5 combined English lesson: Adjectives and Adverbs

	Opening [TEACHER]	Act	Answering [PUPIL/S]	Act	Follow-up [TEACHER]	Act
line 1	So FRAME	m				
2	Listen. FOCUS	d				
3	My voice is quiet. My voice	s				
4	is quiet. [speaks softly]					
5	I am going to use this	ms				
6	word quiet, ne	p	YES	rep+		
7	This word...	p	QUIET	rep+		
8	Peter is quiet.	com				
9	Sonke	d	PETER IS QUIET	rep+		
10	Peter is... *quiet*	p	*QUIET*	echo		
11	Peter is ... quiet	p	∅			
12	Yes Booi	n				
13	What do you say? Peter spoke	el	∅			
14	quiet? Peter spoke quiet?					
15	Spoke...	p	∅			
16	We should have said	i				
17	something here. We should					
18	have said Peter spoke quietly,					
19	isn't it?	cue	YES	rep+		
20	Peter spoke... *quietly*	p	*QUIETLY*	echo		
21	Peter spoke... *quietly*	p	*QUIETLY*	echo		
22	ne	p	YES	rep+		
23	Peter spoke ... *quietly*	p	*QUIETLY*	rep+		
24	Mr Nazo is angry. FOCUS ∧∧∧∧∧∧	s				

TABLE 6

Extract from Std 3, 4 and 5 combined English lesson: "The Official Letter"

	Opening [TEACHER]	Act	Answering [PUPIL/S]	Act	Follow-up [TEACHER]	Act
line 1	This is a friendly letter	s				
2 3 4	What is the first thing you are going to do?	el	I'm going to write an address	rep		
5	What is the address?	el	Fort Brown School	rep		
6	Next thing?	el	P.O. Box	rep	P.O. Box 1	acc
7 8	Yes?	p	Grahamstown, 6140	rep	Grahamstown, 61... the code 6140.	acc
9	Yes, another thing?	el	12 February	rep	12 February 1945?	e
10			1997	rep	1997	acc
11	Then?	el	You skip a line	rep	Very good.	acc
12	You skip... *a line*	p	*LINE*	echo		
13 14 15	Then? Dear Sir	el i	∅ [indistinct]	rep	No, no. You are wrong.	e
16	Yes?	n	You skip a line	rep	You skip a line	acc
17 18	Then "phiri, phiri, phiri, phiri, blah, blah	i	[class laughs]			
19 20 21 22	Then you want to finish, what do you do?	el	Your friend	rep	Right. Your friend, Ncediswa, or whatever	acc
23	ne?	p	YES	rep+		
24	Now. FRAME ^	m				
25 26 27 28	There is a FOCUS difference between a friendly letter and an official letter.	i				
29 30 31 32 33	An official letter or a formal letter. There is a difference between a friendly letter and an official letter.	com com				
					cont...	

	Opening [TEACHER]	Act	Answering [PUPIL/S]	Act	Follow-up [TEACHER]	Act
line 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45	cont... You cannot treat the principal when you apply as your friend. You cannot say "Hi" or "your friend" because the principal doesn't know anything about you. Even what you say is different. You cannot "chat chat" about thank you for the letter or what you did on your holiday. This is a busy person. They don't have time to read three pages. You must state what you want. ∧∧∧∧∧	I				

Of all the lesson extracts presented above, this lesson on the teaching of "The Official Letter" is the one that most closely resembles the traditional lesson which displays interaction which follows the initiation-response-feedback (IRF) pattern, or in terms used by Sinclair and Coulthard, an opening is made by the teacher to which a pupil answers, which in turn is followed up by the teacher. This cyclic pattern is evidenced in the first half of the extract from line 1 to 22 where the teacher reviews the knowledge that pupils already possess on how to write a friendly letter. In the latter half of the extract presented in Table 6, the teacher introduces pupils to new information on how to write a formal or official letter.

The teacher follows another standard pattern of lecturing or extended information (" i ") giving which is appropriate to the needs of the pupils and the purpose of the lesson. Time is not wasted by having pupils guess at what is required of this new and unfamiliar format.

4.3.3.1 FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE MAINTENANCE OF PATTERNS OF INTERACTION

Since the prompt, repeat and chorus pattern of interaction or exchange is so pervasive it is important to question why this pattern occurs. There are several possible reasons for this, and most likely a combination of factors plays a role.

The pattern of exchange, which typically includes repetition of questions and choral responses, appears to serve functional needs. The chorusing serves at least two functions. Firstly, it allows a number of pupils to respond to the teacher's questions at the same time; giving everyone an opportunity to respond and to practice speaking English, thereby serving a time-saving function whilst maximising pupil's language output. Secondly, chorusing fulfils face-saving needs in that pupils who are not confident in using English are not singled out to speak alone. This corroborates similar findings in the research by Chick and Claude's (1975), discussed in section 2.6.

> I don't know actually why they like chorusing - its a sort of repetition. I think it gives even the one who didn't have the correct answer just to rub that which he was thinking ... It's encouraging them to talk and because it's a new language you can understand that when he talks he needs some help, or she needs some help.   (Interview, M : 19-02-97)

> It saves time to teach like that. (Interview, L : 26-02-97)

> ... there is not a lot of time, you never finish. I think chorusing's sort of much better. They repeat what was said. I'm sure it has to do with the method that was used... I think I've got a book here [reads from prescribed English textbook 'New Day by Day']... The teacher asks... the pupils answer... It stems from the method which is written down in the books because they say let the child repeat it, even say maybe the class.
>   (Interview, M : 19-02-97)

> It is very much important that a kid can be acquainted to those words. If we are saying: 'The boy is kicking the ball', everyone must say it. Some of the kids, they are scared to stand up and speak it alone. If it is in groups they are comfortable within the group, that is the purpose of that.
>   (Interview, L : 26-02-97)

> Because we help those who can't speak themselves. (Questionnaire-T1 : M)

> We repeat for the child who understands slowly. (Questionnaire-T1 : L)

> There are some that are too shy to answer for themselves and it helps to answer together because there are some who can't speak English properly.
> (Pupil interview-2 : 12-06-97. Translated from Xhosa.)

> The teacher would like them all to know the answer and they must all follow the answer that is why they must say it again. (Pupil Interview-2 : 12-06-97. Translated from Xhosa.)

> Because Xhosa is our home language we understand all the time, but in
> English sometimes we don't understand a word and we must say it together
> to practise (Pupil Interview-2 : 12-06-97. Translated from Xhosa.)

The repetition of questions, and the prompting are apparently used by L in order to allow pupils "time to think". Repetition of questions increases the amount of spoken English pupils hear similar to chorusing increasing the amount of oral practice or pupil output. However, one must consider the quality of this increased input and production and establish whether this serves to facilitate or enhance language learning in any way.

Although serving a perceived functional need the pattern is not necessarily conducive to promoting language learning. Often, pupils repeat a sentence as instructed while paying little attention to what they are actually saying and these repetitions become mindless chants as opposed to opportunities to practice speaking English. The mindless, thoughtless repetition is underscored when L drills an 'I wish...' sequence and boys and girls alike chant dutifully: "I want a dress. I wish I had a new dress". I recorded numerous examples which indicate that many of the pupils do not even hear the sample sentence accurately in the first instance and repeat it inaccurately. This is most noticeable when one refers to examples of written work. For example, one pupil wrote the following: "my antisa ness and my acalls a tichar" [my aunt is a nurse and my uncle is a teacher]. Such errors can be attributed to the shortage of textbooks for pupils to consult, coupled with the emphasis on spoken drill-type exercises. I asked L if he was not concerned that some of the pupils might be saying things wrongly and that he was unable to detect the problem because of the chorusing phenomenon. He informed me that he normally picks up on errors in pronunciation by isolating two or three pupils at a time to repeat a sentence. This I have seen him do and I have noticed on occasion that he has in fact detected and corrected an error. M on the other hand, tends to discourage chorusing in her own classes:

> I think the chorusing actually ought to be [indistinct] you say it one
> individually because really, they might be barking. Maybe the one who was
> wrong cannot even hear it properly. (Interview, M : 19-02-97)

I asked if this tendency to chorus was culturally influenced:

> Well I don't think its got something to do with culture, no not at all, because we don't chorus anything when we are speaking. I think it's being done through the old methods where children had to repeat because it's a new - its a foreign - it's a new language. They have to repeat until they can say it correctly. I think it's the Repetition Method.
>
> (Interview, M : 19-02-97)

Since L relies heavily on the prescribed series for English "New Day by Day" his teaching is probably influenced by the presentation of lesson units in the textbook and by the teaching guidelines offered in the accompanying Teacher's Guide. The strongly question-answer and drill-oriented lessons influence in turn, the language input to, and output from the pupils, and the patterns of interaction between teacher and pupils.

4.4   REFLECTING ON THE EXPERIENCE

Ethnographers have commented that an ethnographic study may be "finished", but that it is never complete. On reflecting on the time I spent collecting and analysing data I have come to see how true this is. Certainly, I am aware of some limitations and of aspects of the research, such as the pupil questionnaires, that I would perhaps approach differently were I to repeat the exercise.

As a research tool, I found the informal interview to be challenging. It takes time to establish the kind of rapport necessary to conduct a successful informal interview. I experienced some difficulties with eliciting information from the pupils. Their passivity and reticence I found in keeping with their "classroom personas". I sought written responses in order to overcome shyness but came to realise that, for many, their competency levels were too low for them to provide me with responses of any significance in terms of content. I benefited more from conducting group interviews (to overcome their reserve) and by making use of an interpreter and allowing responses to be made in Xhosa.

I found the collecting of data much simpler than the organising of it. Analysis is an immensely challenging task. Firstly, taped material of lessons and interviews needed to be

transcribed. All collected data was reviewed and I attempted to locate recurring patterns and to identify possible categories for analysis. The themes discussed above emerged most strongly and therefore served as structures around which to present the data, findings and discussion.

While sifting through the data and deciding on the best way to present the findings, I was faced with the difficulty of having to choose to include certain examples and data, while placing others to one side. This I have attempted to do thoroughly and honestly. Choices were made, however, and in so far as this is concerned, I acknowledge the "Personal Dimension" (Wolcott 1975), as discussed in sections 3.7 and 4.1.6.

Perhaps the greatest limitation in this study is that the cultural interpretation is weak. However, in order to adequately address the cultural aspects in true ethnographic style, it would require an extended and intensive study which is beyond the scope of this research.

—————————————————— CHAPTER 5 ——————————————————

5. CONCLUSION

It is apparent that the difficulties associated with teaching a multi-level class dictate the teacher's approach to lesson planning and style of teaching. Because the teacher finds it difficult to find time to plan effectively and then to find enough time during the school day to implement these lesson plans and fulfil his responsibility of teaching three standards, he tends to relt on the prescribed texts for English. These texts conveniently structure the syllabus into lesson units and provide exercises which pupils can complete unassisted. This effectively frees the teacher from having to plan his lessons and provides exercises which pupils can work on while the teacher is busy with another standard.

Although the teacher has come to rely on the textbook there are not enough textbooks available for each pupil in the class. This, coupled with the time-factor of having to fit in all subject lessons for three standards each day, has tended to result in strongly teacher-led lessons which follow closely, if not verbatim, the lessons and lesson suggestions detailed in the prescribed language textbook.

The overwhelmingly teacher-led pattern of interaction undermines communicative functions by reducing natural interaction. Pupils are assigned to a passive role as language learners. Their passivity is reinforced through the prompt-repeat pattern that requires only that they mimic the teacher's utterances. Although there appears to be a substantial percentage of pupil contributions made during a lesson, it is doubtful whether these contributions facilitate language acquisition or language learning to any degree. A closer examination of the type of pupil responses reveals that pupil responses tend to be single words or tail-ends of sentences as modelled by the teacher. Where pupil responses fall in the chorus or group category, the usefulness in terms of language learning is questionable. While there is an unthreatening safety in the group, pupils are not challenged to extend themselves in terms of their language output. They need only repeat after the teacher, or at worst, *appear* to be participating in the practice.

The demands made on the teachers and pupils in terms of large, multi-standard classes, second language medium of instruction and lack of teaching aids, encourages the use of rote learning techniques by teachers and pupils alike. Although there is a need for drill-type exercises in language learning, the predominance of these patterns in this multi-standard classroom is such that pupils are not afforded the opportunities needed to develop their skills as language users. Given that the emphasis of the syllabus for Second Language English presently tends towards Outcomes Based Education and Communicative Language approaches to teaching and learning, there is need for L, the teacher, to adopt a more facilitative approach to his teaching which will, in turn, encourage pupils to assume more responsibility for their own language development in terms of improving and increasing opportunities for co-operative learning and small group work. By creating an atmosphere that is conducive to authentic language exchange pupils will derive benefit not only from language input from both the teacher and fellow pupils, but they will begin to negotiate meaning in conversations which require that they become active learners and producers of language rather than passive enactors of a stale and repetitive prompt-chorus response pattern of interaction.

_____ **APPENDIX A** _____

PUPIL QUESTIONNAIRE - 1

1. Boy [_____]   Girl [_____]

2. Age [_____]   (how old are you?)

3. Std [_____]

4. How many brothers and sisters do you have and how old are each of them?

   ....

   ....

   ....

   ....

5. Where do you live?   ....

6. Do you live with your parents or with someone else e.g. grandparents?   ....

   ....

7. How do you get to school?   ....

   ....

8. Do you do homework. If "no" explain why not.   ....

   ....

   ....

   ....

9. What do you like about school?   ....

   ....

10. What don't you like about school? ....

    ....

11. When you finish Std 5 what will you do? (e.g. work, go to Std 6...) ....

....

....

12. Tell me about your family and your home ....

....

....

....

....

....

....

....

| 13. How well do you speak English ? | Not at all | Poor | Average | Good | Very good |

| 14. How well do you understand spoken English? | Not at all | Poor | Average | Good | Very good |

| 15. How well do you understand written English? | Not at all | Poor | Average | Good | Very good |

16. What **do** you enjoy (like) about learning English? ....

....

....

17. What **don't** you enjoy (like) about learning English? ....

....

....

18. What is the hardest thing for you about learning and speaking English? ....

....

....

19. Do you use English when you are not in school? If "yes" then explain (e.g. watch TV, speak to storekeeper, speak to friends etc.)

....

....

20. Can anyone else in your family speak and understand English? Who? ....

....

21. Tell me any 5 things you like ....

....

....

22. Tell me any 5 things you do not like ....

....

....

23. Choose one. Put a X in the block next to the sentence that shows how you feel:

☐ The "Day by Day" English book is a good book to learn English with.

☐ The "Day by Day" English book is a bad/poor book to learn English with.

Give a reason for your choice ....

....

....

24. How do you feel if you give the wrong answer to your teacher's questions in class? ... .

....

....

25. | I like | I do not like | to answer questions in class because ....

....

....

26. What do you do after school in the afternoons? ....

....

27. What do you do during school holidays? ....

....

28. What time do you get home from school in the afternoon? ....

29. What is a good teacher like? ....

....

....

30. What is the best way for a person to learn a new language? ....

....

....

31. If you were a teacher and you had to teach Xhosa speaking pupils to read, write and speak English, how would you teach your class?

....

....

....

....

....

....

32 If you could change anything in your school, what would you change? ....

....

....

....

THANK YOU

_____ **APPENDIX B** _____

PUPIL QUESTIONNAIRE - 2

1. What do you think your teacher expects of you as a student/learner?

....

....

....

....

....

2. What do you think "good education" is?

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....

....

3. What do people think are important qualities in a teacher in your culture? Number answers in order of importance 1 - 2 - 3 etc. Add in other items if not listed already. If you think an item is not at all important mark it with a zero '0'.

       excellent exam results from pupils

       well qualified

       good disciplinarian/strict

       gentle, caring attitudes towards pupils

       gets on well with colleagues

       always willing to take on extra work

       good reputation/private life

       good English language ability

       Other?

       ....

       ....

       ....

       ....

4. What do people think is important in a learner (pupil/student) in your culture? Number answers in order of importance 1 -2 -3 etc. Add in other items if not already listed. If you think an item is not at all important mark it with a zero '0'.

good at all subjects

well behaved

accepts authority

good at sports

good exam results

neat

respectful / respects others

has a broad field of interests

good at English language

quiet in class

asks questions

Other?

....

....

....

....

5. Does your age and your sex play a part in how your teacher treats you, and does it influence what they expect of you?

....

....

....

6. What do you think the ideal relationship between teachers and learners should be like?

....

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7. Are you required to show respect towards an adult and a teacher? How must you show your respect, how are you expected to act towards teachers and adults?

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8. How did you learn how to behave in class and how to show respect (e.g. at home, on T.V., in school)?

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9. Does your teacher teach the English language classes differently to how he teaches other subjects. If yes, what are the differences?

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10. In your culture, are there specific "rules" for behaving at school?

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11. Do you think that the way you are brought up in your family and community affects the way you behave in school and towards adults? Explain.

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12. You are in an English lesson. The teacher says something and you and the rest of the class repeat the end of the teacher's sentences. Why does this happen?

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13. You are in an English lesson. The teacher asks a question and the whole class answer together. Why do you do this?

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THANK YOU

—————————————————— APPENDIX C ——————————————————

TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE - 1

1. What do you think your learners expect of you as a teacher?

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2. What do you think "good education" constists of? Do you think your pupils share your views?

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3. What do people value in a teacher in your culture? Rank answers in order of importance 1 - 2 - 3 etc. Add in other items if not listed already. If you think an item is not at all important mark it with a zero '0'.

       excellent exam results from pupils

       well qualified

       good disciplinarian/strict

       gentle, caring attitudes towards pupils

       gets on well with colleagues

       always willing to take on extra work

       good reputation/private life

       good English language ability

       Other?

       ....

       ....

       ....

4. What do people value in a learner (pupil/student) in your culture? Rank answers in order of importance 1 -2 -3 etc. Add in other items if not already listed. If you think an item is not at all important mark it with a zero '0'.

    good at all subjects

    well behaved

    accepts authority

    good at sports

    good exam results

    neat

    respectful / respects others

    has a broad field of interests

    good at English language

    quiet in class

    asks questions

    Other?

    ....

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5. Does your age and your sex play a part in how pupils see you, how they behave, and what they expect of you?

....

....

....

....

6. What do you think the ideal relationship between teachers and learners should be like?

....

....

....

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7. Do you think there is a high or a low level of social distance between you and your pupils.
What makes you say this?

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8. How are your pupils required to acknowledge the social distance between you as and adult
and as a teacher and themselves (how are they expected to act towards you)?

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9. How do we form attitudes and beliefs, where do they come from (e.g. home, T.V. ,
school)?

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10. Do you think the English language classes are different in character from the general
science, geography or maths classes. If so, in what ways (what are the differences)?

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11. In your culture, are there specific "rules" for conducting various group activities e.g. public meetings, school lessons, sport etc.?

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12. Do you have a strong sense of your own culture? Does this influence you as a teacher? Is it important? Describe how you feel.

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13. You are a speaker at a PTA meeting. As you speak the parents/audience answer you or agree with you in a group chorus response. They also complete the end of your sentences as you speak and repeat the tail end of your sentence as you finish speaking. What are they doing? Why do they do it?

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14. As you teach, your pupils reply to your questions as a group. They also repeat the ends of your sentences as you speak. What are they doing and why do they do it?

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THANK YOU

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