

CHAPTER 4

English: language of hope, or broken dreams?

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Section A: Why English?

'Silence never won rights. They are not handed down from above, they are forced by pressure from below.' Roger Baldwin

'To have a voice implies not just that people can say things, but that they are heard.' Richard Ruiz (1990)

'Language is a social phenomenon enmeshed in relations of power and processes of social change.' Gary Anderson (1989)

In South Africa, and internationally, English is generally considered a language of access. But the question for the future in South Africa is: access to what and for whom? In any country, the use of language can be broadly divided into the following areas:

- Political: the language of government and administration, including health services and security forces.
- Legal: the language of the courts and of legal documents.
- Educational: the media of instruction.
- Science and technology: the language for access to international information.
- Trade and industry: the language of work places, trade unions, international and regional trade, local markets, domestic and farm services.
- Media: the language of the radio, TV, newspapers, magazines and advertisements.
- Social: the language of community or cultural activities and of religion, sport and leisure, family and friends

(Adapted from Passtoors, H. *Underlying language policy*, NECC, 1990.)

A glance at the above list shows that English is crucial in all areas relating to political or economic power in South

Africa. It is clear that if democratic participation in all aspects of the country's future is to become a reality for all citizens, English has a very large part to play. In addition, both the ANC and Azapo have pointed to the need for English as a way of communicating across tribal and racial barriers, inside and outside the country (Heugh, in Young, 1987).

But what hope is there for those who currently bear the weight of distorted power structures - the twelve to sixteen million people with little or no formal education, whose English language skills are minimal at best? Will they be able to make their voices heard?

The answer to this is complex. Many people question the need for literacy and English language skills. They point out that change in South Africa has been achieved by pressure 'from below', in other words, by those who are traditionally perceived as 'powerless'. This is undeniable. However, the struggle for democracy does not end with the transfer of power; this is only the beginning. Creating and maintaining a fundamentally democratic state requires an informed and critically conscious population. A policy of regional bilingualism may go a long way towards improving participation in the political arena, but will still exclude those who do not speak English from educational and economic advancement. What is clear is that a future government needs to pay serious attention to the English language and literacy needs of its people.

Officially, the term 'English literacy' is used in South Africa to mean the language and learning needs of those people who have between one and five years of formal schooling. Most of these people have some literacy in the language of instruction - usually their mother tongue, if they left school before Standard three. Some have also learnt a little English, either at school or in order to survive in their daily lives. However, the majority of these people were taught through rote learning and memorisation. They therefore have poor reading and writing skills, and little understanding of the purposes and possibilities of print.

Approximately nine million people in South Africa fall into this category. Functional literacy skills would enable them to 'function' better in society, in other words, to carry out their roles more efficiently. The question then arises: who defines their roles and in whose interests?

A different vision of literacy is embodied in the concept of 'critical' literacy. Here language and literacy become tools not only for describing the world, but for attempting to change it. Rather than passively absorbing prescribed forms of knowledge, learners are encouraged to question, analyse,

apply and articulate.

If English literacy is to be truly empowering, it must aim to equip people with the skills and knowledge they need to use English for their own purposes, and to play a creative role in building, shaping and maintaining a democratic society.

So far we have looked at the need for English in South Africa and particularly for English literacy as a key element of adult basic education. In Section B we consider the question of initial literacy in the mother tongue or in a second language, and the implications of this for South Africa's future language policy. A major theme throughout this chapter is the difference between functional and critical literacy.

Section B: Initial literacy

For most people, literacy means learning to read and write in their mother tongue. However, as with every other issue in the field of literacy, this statement opens up a host of debates.

The debate we are concerned with here involves the definition of mother tongue. The author of a comprehensive work on bilingualism has identified four different ways of defining the mother tongue:

Figure 4.1 Definitions of mother tongue.

Criterion	Definition of "mother tongue"	Discipline
origin	the language one learnt first (the language in which one established one's first lasting communication relationship)	sociology
competence	the language one knows best	linguistics
function	the language one uses most	sociolinguistics
attitudes	the language one identifies with (internal identification)	social psychology psychology of the individual
	the language one is identified as a native speaker of by other people (external identification)	social psychology sociology
(automacy) (world view)	(the language one counts in, thinks in, dreams in, writes a diary in, writes poetry in, etc.)	popular conceptions

Skutnabb-Kangas, T (1983) Bilingualism or not: the education of minorities, *Multilingual Matters* (7:18)

Skutnabb-Kangas points out that a person's mother tongue may change several times during his or her lifetime. Even more significant in the South African context, is her point that 'what is defined as one's mother tongue may also vary even at a single point in time depending on which one of the criteria is used.' (ibid,18) This is clearly true of many millions of South Africans.

Picture for example a woman born into a Sotho-speaking family near Tzaneen. Fifty years later she is working for an Afrikaans-speaking family in Cape Town, and moves in a circle of Afrikaans-speaking fellow workers. Is Sotho still her mother tongue or does she identify more with Afrikaans? Sotho is her language of origin and still the language she knows best, while Afrikaans is the language she uses most. The problem becomes more complex when she tries to become literate, as misguided administrators consistently enrol her in Xhosa literacy classes, reasoning that this is the closest thing to her 'mother tongue'.

Clearly then, although Unesco recommends that the mother tongue should be used for literacy, this is not as straightforward as it seems. Indeed, many second language speakers of English in South Africa today are quite justified in claiming English as their mother tongue.

What does this mean for learners and the provision of literacy in South Africa?

Despite the critical role of English in South Africa's future, communities must consider many related issues before they make a decision about the language of instruction. The first step is for literacy planners and providers to consult every community about its own perceptions of literacy and language needs. In addition, attitudes to languages and language varieties must be thoroughly canvassed. What is best in terms of learning theories may not be best in terms of political, social and economic needs, as defined by the communities themselves.

The second step is to interview learners enrolling in literacy or basic education classes and to evaluate their needs carefully. Most learners enrolling in literacy classes perceive English as crucial to their survival and a say in the country's future. Given this strong motivation, why then shouldn't they learn to read and write in English straight away?

The best way to acquire literacy skills is the subject of continuing debate, but one thing is certain: it is possible to become literate in a second language, but this is extremely difficult unless the person concerned is already reasonably fluent in that particular language. Studies in Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique, and experience in South Africa bear this out.

Why is becoming literate in a second language so difficult?

If you try to learn to read in a language you do not know well, then you are trying to learn two systems at once, both of which are extremely complex: a system of written symbols, and a system of expressing meaning in another language. Someone who learns to read his or her own language already knows how to use that language to express an almost endless range of meanings. Learning to read and write involves understanding how to map this familiar language on to a system of written symbols, in other words, how to obtain and express meaning through print.

But learning a second language is a different task: it involves learning how to express familiar meanings, either orally or in writing, using a whole new set of language forms or structures. Clearly, learners who cannot understand others or express themselves in a second language, will not be able to decipher the 'meaning' of texts written in this language.

In addition, learning a second language also involves learning how to choose the most appropriate form of that language for a particular context. For example, look at the following sentences:

Have you finished yet?
You don't seem to have finished yet.
This work is really urgent.
I don't have to remind you to finish before you go.
Would you mind finishing this before you go?
You should finish this before you go.

All these sentences carry the same basic message: 'I want you to finish this work.' However, which one a speaker chooses depends on who he or she is speaking to, the relationship between the speaker and the listener, and the situation in which the conversation takes place.

Similarly in letter writing, for example, the same message will be expressed in different ways according to the context. Look at these endings:

I would appreciate your reply by return of post;
and
Let me know when you can.

Learners who know almost nothing of the language cannot possibly adapt their language forms to suit their audience. Other strong arguments against attempting initial literacy in a second language concern:

The purpose of literacy

'Literacy can only be emancipatory and critical to the extent that it is conducted in the lan-

guage of the people. It is through the native language that students "name their world" and begin to establish a dialectical relationship with the dominant class in the process of transforming the social and political structures that imprison them in their "culture of silence". [...] Literacy conducted in the dominant language is alienating to students since it denies them the fundamental tools for reflection, critical thinking, and social interaction.' (Freire and Macedo, 1987:159)

This is evident in Freire's description of literacy learners in Guinea-Bissau taking a 'tiring walk' around generative words in Portuguese, the official language of the country but largely unknown to the people. 'They marched on from the first to the fifth (word); by the fifth, they had forgotten the third. They returned to the third and perceived that they had forgotten the first and second.' (ibid: 163)

Emotional or affective issues and motivation

The struggle to make sense of print in an unfamiliar language is extremely demanding and usually discouraging. If both print itself and the language used in printed texts are alien to learners, they will be unable to relate reading to anything in their own experience. They are then unlikely to feel the sense of connectedness that is crucial for successful reading.

Cognitive aspects

People learn best when they can build on what they already know, that is by moving from the known to the unknown. This is clearly not possible when learners are both illiterate and unfamiliar with the language of instruction - there is nothing 'known' on which to build.

Further, learning to read and write is a social process. It is a process of creating and exchanging meaning, and demands that learners be actively involved. If learners are trying to become literate in a second language, then their voices are stifled and their involvement is limited to copying off the blackboard or reciting aloud after the teacher. This in turn reduces literacy to a technical skill and denies the learners' creative potential.

Even more importantly, learners are not able to practise and develop their higher level cognitive skills, such as analysing, evaluating and synthesising, as they do not have the necessary language skills. In this way, the whole process of acquiring literacy becomes profoundly meaningless. It can

hardly be considered functional, let alone critical. How then can it help people to take their place in a democratic society?

'What would happen if the whole world became literate? Answer: not so very much, for the world is by and large structured in such a way that it is capable of absorbing the impact. But if the whole world consisted of literate, autonomous, critical, constructive people, capable of translating ideas into action, individually or collectively - the world would change.' (Galtung in Graff, 1979:322)

To illustrate the differences between acquiring literacy in a first or a second language, let's compare the literacy campaigns in Nicaragua and Mozambique.

A look at the Nicaraguan and Mozambican literacy campaigns

Nicaragua

As Nicaragua is commonly held up as a successful model of a literacy campaign, let's look briefly at the reasons for this success and then compare these with the campaign in Mozambique.

The most important factor in the success of the Nicaraguan Literacy Crusade was the momentum and excitement generated by the triumph of the socialist revolution. However, momentum and excitement alone are not enough. The second crucial factor was that 90 per cent of Nicaraguans have Spanish as their mother tongue. This meant that a single campaign in a single language could be run using a single set of materials. How much easier it would be to 'increase political awareness and a critical analysis of underdevelopment; to nurture attitudes and skills related to creativity, production, co-operation, discipline and analytical thinking...' (Cardenal and Miller, 1981:6), if everyone spoke the same language to begin with.

A lesser-known feature of this campaign was the exclusion of non-Spanish speaking citizens of Nicaragua whose literacy needs could not be met at the time. The reasons for this seem to have been geographical and political as well as linguistic. Most of these people lived on the less accessible Atlantic coast of Nicaragua and had not been involved to the same extent as other parts of the country in the struggle to overthrow the dictatorship. To them, the Sandinista victory was little more than a change of government, whereas to the rest of the country, it was the outcome of a bitter fight for democracy.

In addition, the people of the Atlantic coast were mother tongue speakers of Sumu, Miskitu, or English/Creole, and refused to accept Spanish literacy materials: 'If the classes were to be more than the learning of techniques, it was

clear to them that literacy in the mother tongue was necessary in the communities. [...] To make the revolution theirs, and not an external imposition, fluent discussion was essential.' (Archer and Costello, 1990:180-181)

However, these demands were initially rejected by the organisers of the literacy crusade. Although this was obviously a strategic decision which responded to overwhelming demands, it is indicative of the ease with which illiterate, rural, language-minority groups can be marginalised under any system of government.

Mozambique

In Mozambique, Portuguese was used as the language for literacy for both political and practical reasons. It was chosen as the official language to promote national unity across language barriers. Also, given the huge numbers of illiterate citizens (90 per cent), creating literacy materials in six different languages was beyond the resources of an impoverished and war-ravaged state.

However, the majority of Mozambicans had never had any contact with the Portuguese language nor any reason to use it. The result of attempting to learn literacy in this second language was, for most people, a return to fear and silence (Marshall, 1990:329). In addition, after an initial period of exciting innovation and experimentation, including the use of local languages in many literacy classes, what had been 'people's schools' came increasingly under centralised state control: '[...] pronouncements from the political leadership substituted a vital process of empowerment at the grassroots.' (Marshall, *ibid*:299) Marshall points out that what was intended as a pedagogy of questions became one of answers; passive learning and top-down transmission became the norm once again.

What are the implications for South Africa?

A glance at Table 4.2 shows the impossibility of launching a Nicaraguan-type campaign in South Africa. The sheer weight and variety of languages spoken rule this out.

Other options for combating mass illiteracy on a scale similar to that of South Africa are explored by Lind and Johnston (1986) in a detailed and critical analysis of attempts by third world countries to overcome huge illiteracy rates. These options include a series of campaigns aimed at different sectors of the population, and large-scale general literacy programmes run mainly by non-governmental organisations. Both these approaches are possible in South Africa but would inevitably mean that some groups of learners are given more importance than others. In addition, the need for

Figure 4.2 Selected comparative literacy statistics

Country	Population at independence/ liberation	Percent illiterate	Number illiterate	Languages spoken
Cuba	7.0 million	23.6%	1,652,000	1
Nicaragua	2.0 million	53%	1,060,000	90% Spanish
Mozambique	10.6 million	90%	9,540,000	6
South Africa	30 million	50%	15,000,000	16

(From Marshall, *ibid*, 1990; Schoon, 1990; and Wedepohl, 1984)

extensive co-ordination, motivation and resources may be beyond the scope of a government faced with massive reconstruction on all fronts.

Hard as it is to accept, it may well be that in South Africa literacy will be offered only on demand and not as a matter of course. It will then be up to community organisations and trade unions to make this demand. However, this does mean that those most in need of literacy skills, that is, the unemployed and unorganised people in rural areas and squatter camps, are likely to be left out once again. This may be where non-governmental organisations could have the greatest impact. In fact, in some ways the lack of a general literacy programme could be beneficial, allowing organisations to respond creatively to local needs, and avoiding the overly centralised and prescriptive model which characterised the later periods of adult education in independent Mozambique.

What should be done?

A partial answer for South Africa may be:

- To provide mother tongue literacy classes to establish initial literacy. Whatever method is chosen, literacy planners need to consider how to integrate the purely functional aspects of learning to read with principles of adult education, such as control over learning goals and learning processes, self-monitoring and self-evaluation, and critical and creative thinking.
- To accompany any mother tongue programme with a strong oral English component and possibly basic written English to try and meet learners' expressed needs. However, it is essential that these components are integrated into a process of discussion and reflection in the mother tongue. Without this process, they will degenerate into rote learning and the memorisation of simplistic dialogues and written formulas.

- Ideally, critical literacy skills should be developed from the beginning in mother tongue classes. Learners would then have a sound basis on which to continue their education through the medium of English. However, until mother tongue classes fulfill this need, the full responsibility will lie with English language planners and literacy providers.

At all times, teachers and course-writers need to be aware of their goal: is it to teach literacy skills as an end in themselves? Or is it to use literacy as a means through which learners can further develop their thinking skills and learning strategies? Which is more likely to contribute to the development of an informed, critical population?

Now, in the light of what we have said so far, let's look at the range of approaches to teaching English as a second language to adults which have been adopted in South Africa to date. To what extent can they be considered to promote functional or critical literacy?

Section C: Current approaches to teaching English as a second language to adults in South Africa

Introduction

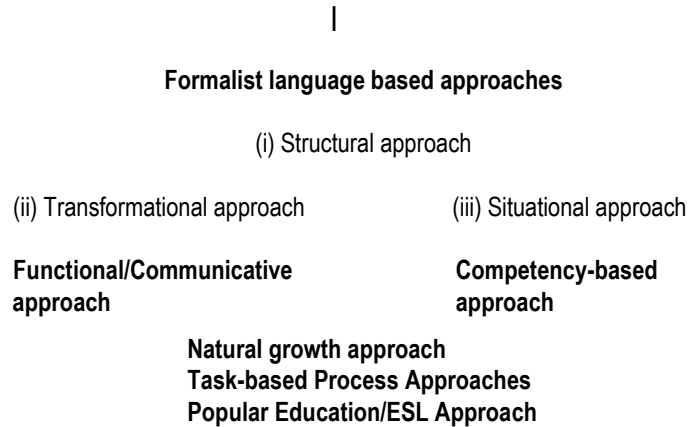
In chapter 2, we saw that teaching basic English as a second language (ESL) to adults is provided by a range of organisations in South Africa who have very different contexts, target audiences, goals and ideologies and whose approaches contrast markedly. The work of these organisations has evolved in particular historical circumstances, and the approaches that they have adopted mirror the ideologies, theories and methods to which the programme developers have been exposed and have chosen to pursue. The following selection of learner materials captures this diversity.

In this chapter the ESL approaches adopted by seven different literacy organisations in South Africa are described and analysed. These organisations are involved in both formal and non-formal provision, and include church-based organisations, the private sector, the government and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

The approaches adopted by these organisations are identified in relation to developments in the field of applied linguistics and language teaching. These developments are described with reference to six main approaches to language teaching this century. These approaches are shown in Figure 4.3 on the following page.

A critical examination of these six main approaches focuses on the following two key questions:

Figure 4.3 Six main approaches to language teaching.



- How do they view language?
- How do they view adult second language learning?

It is important to note that these approaches did not develop independently of one another. Common threads link many of them and suggest a more complex interrelationship. Furthermore, many of the notions underlying these approaches were not 20th century innovations.

virtually every contemporary 'innovation' in language teaching seems to have an antecedent somewhere back in the 2,500-year history of language pedagogy.' (Rutherford, 1987:30)

The seven South African organisations whose work will be examined in this chapter can be grouped into two broad sets:

- The first group comprises Operation Upgrade of Southern Africa, the Bureau of Literacy and Literature and the DET. These can be located within the 'formalist' tradition associated with the American school of linguistics from the 1930s onwards.
- The second group includes more recent work by relatively younger organisations, including Genmin, the Molteno Project, ELP (English Literacy Project), and USWE (Use, Speak and Write English) in Cape Town. These four organisations were influenced by the European functionalist or communicative tradition in vogue from the 1970s onwards. However, none of these organisations have adopted a pure approach. Molteno has combined ideas from formalist and functionalist approaches. Genmin's work was inspired by the European functionalist approach as well as by the competency-based approach which was gaining ground in the United States around

the same time. ELP favours popular education combined with communicative and natural growth ideas. Finally, USWE has integrated a popular education approach with aspects of natural growth and process approaches.

Each of the following six approaches is now described:

- Formalist approach
- Functional/communicative approach
 - Competency-based approach
- Natural growth approach
 - Task-based process approach
- Popular education and ESL approach

The description of each of these approaches includes illustrations from South African courses where appropriate. Each description is concluded with a summary of the main weaknesses and strengths of the approach, including the impact it has had, if any, on later developments in the field of applied linguistics and language teaching.

Formalist approach

Introduction

Formalist is a term used to describe a language or code-based approach to language teaching in evidence earlier this century. The three stands of formalist approaches described here are the structural, transformational and situational. Although language is of central concern to these three approaches, each one perceives language and language learning in a different way.

Structural approach

How was language viewed?

During the 1940's and the era of 'modern linguistics', linguists such as Bloomfield and Fries reacted to traditional grammar-based approaches and propagated a theory of language known as structural linguistics. This theory was strongly influenced by physical science and the pursuit of a more objective analysis of observable features of language. It was a theory of the spoken language rather than the written language; 'the speech is the language. The written record is but a secondary representation of the language.' (Fries, in Bell, 1981:92)

Language was defined as 'a system of speech sounds, arbitrarily assigned to the objects, states and concepts to which they referred, used for human communication.' (Bell, *ibid*:92) Speech sounds combine to make sentences, which are the main learning units. This theory was not concerned with how language expresses meaning as 'there was an embargo on the study of meaning.' (Bell, *ibid*:93) The

sentence was divided into the smallest possible observable surface parts, in a mechanical fashion. For example:

The-Germans-changed-money-at-the-bank.
(Bell, *ibid*:94)

This objective analysis of the surface features of the language did not recognise that sentences that look similar can differ in meaning, as illustrated by the following :

He was killed by midnight.
He was killed by the enemy.
(Bell, *ibid*:95)

Although we can say 'The enemy killed him', it does not make sense to say 'Midnight killed him'!

Behaviourist learning theory

During the early 1940s, structural linguists began to apply this theory to language teaching, using behaviourist learning theory which was prevalent at the time. Behaviourism characterised language learning as habit formation, or the unconscious 'over-learning' of language forms through meaningless, mechanical repetition based on stimulus-response, imitation, and reinforcement:

'... the teacher believed that inside the mind of every learner was one of Pavlov's dogs waiting for the correct stimulus to trigger off salivation, or rather, speech!' (Bell, *ibid*:96)

So oral techniques such as chorusing, language pattern drills, and pronunciation drills featured prominently.

'... we present a structure, drill it, practise it in context... then move to the next structure.' (Brumfit & Johnson, 1979:1)

Contrastive analysis was a procedure used to identify errors or 'bad habits' transferred from the mother tongue to the second language. These 'bad habits' were seen to interfere with the learning of a second language and had to be prevented or eradicated through drilling. The use of the learner's mother tongue, and explanations of how the language worked were discouraged in favour of rote learning methods.

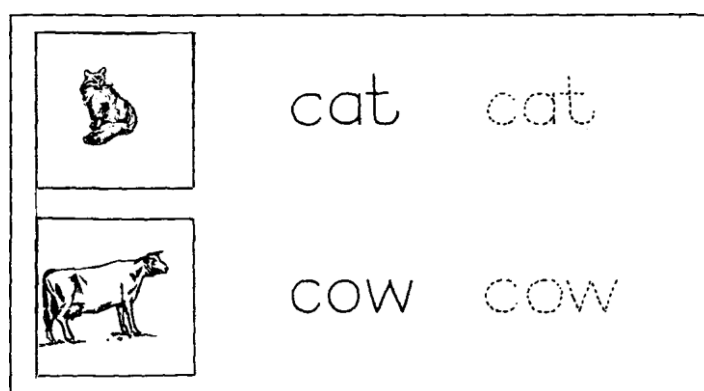
Operation Upgrade, BLL and the DET

As noted in Chapter 2, Operation Upgrade, and the BLL were two of the earliest literacy initiatives in South Africa. They were directly inspired by the work of Frank Laubach, 'the Apostle to the illiterates'. (D'Oliveira, 1983:7) The

Laubach approach linked literacy to evangelism: Laubach's motto, 'each one teach one and win one to Christ' still appears in Operation Upgrade publications. (D'Oliveira, 1983:29) The DET used Operation Upgrade courses until the 1980's when they began to develop their own.

Although Operation Upgrade, the BLL and the DET differ in many respects, their English courses for adults reflect similar underlying notions about language and how adults learn a second language. They offer a useful illustration of early formalist structural approaches to basic ESL for adults in this country.

Figure 4.4 DET Beginner's English and Xhosa Units 1



	s i l a
	s
	sana

The examples above show how similar materials and methods were used for teaching English and other languages. This suggests that little distinction was made between mother tongue literacy and *second* language learning.

In the approaches adopted by these three organisations, language was seen as a code comprising parts such as letters and sounds. These parts form whole words, phrases and sentences. The learning theory underlying all three approaches was behaviourism.

Operation Upgrade:


Operation Upgrade equated learning with habit formation:

English: language of hope, or broken dreams?

learners had to see and hear something at least five times until it became automatic. The learning process began with learning the name, sound, and shape of each letter of the alphabet, using pictures and key words on charts, (the 'picture-word association method'). Here is an extract illustrating this process:



Figure 4.5 Laubach, 1983, Book 1:3.

bird
b

B B
b b

The teacher points to each picture and says in English:
'This is a bird with a long neck and a round body. Say, bird.'

Student: 'Bird...'

'This letter looks like a bird with a long neck and a round body. Say, bird' etc.

(D'Oliveira, 1968:6)

For many learners who did not understand this long explanation, learning to read English was associated with meaningless, ritualistic incantations, and assumed a magical quality.

'This is the word bird. Read, bird.

Bird begins with the sound buh. Say, buh.

Again. Again. Again.'

(D'Oliveira, 1968:40)

Short follow-up stories repeated the same simple vocabulary in a controlled fashion, the argument being that 'interest must never be attempted at the expense of simplicity.

(Laubach and Laubach, in Strauch, 1978:87) The following story revolves around the word 'leg' and words with similar sounds:

Here is a leg.

Is it Mr Hunt's leg?

Yes, it is.

It is his leg.

It is one of his legs.

His leg is red with blood.

Yes, it is very red.

Is Mr Hunt sick?

Yes, I think Mr Hunt is sick.

I think Mr Hunt is very sick.

(Laubach, 1983 Book 2:8)

BLL:

The approach adopted by the BLL was also based on a similar theory of language. Reading was phonically-based, and learning to read meant being able to connect sounds to symbols on paper (or sounds to graphs). Therefore, reading aloud was strongly encouraged. The reading texts also contained carefully selected short words with particular sound patterns. In the following extract, T and 'oo' sounds were stressed, using words such as 'like, liking, likes'; and 'look, looking, cook, cooking, good, food':

Figure 4.6

Look at Sam!
He is looking at Betty.
Betty is cooking.
She likes to cook.
She can cook good food.
Sam likes his wife.
But he likes Betty* s food, too.

Is Sam Betty's wife?



(Helgesson, 1983:44)

Mixing grammatical structures was not deemed problematic, nor were the different structures explained. Instead it was believed that the learning of structures would become automatic through drilling.

'Structures are like language habits. In fact, learning a new language is like learning a new set of habits. One must get used to the structures, so that they come naturally.'

(BLL 1975:5)

DEI:

Similarly, the approach adopted by the DEI was structural, and language learning was equated with building a house.

'If one builds a house, one uses bricks; if one "builds" a language, one uses letters. If one builds a house, one needs very many bricks; if one "builds" a language, one needs only 26 letters. These letters are called the alphabet.'

(DET, no date:40)

In the following extract from a DET course book for adults, meaningless repetition through chorusing, pattern drills and substitution exercises are the order of the day.

Figure 4.7

Lesson 18

1 Revision of lesson 17.

- 1.1 Students read the story aloud in chorus.
- 1.2 Read question 4 aloud twice.
- 1.3 Read question 7 aloud twice.

2 Students close their books. The teacher reads the following aloud twice:

(b)	Every morning	wake up early.
(c)	Every morning	get up.
(d)	Every morning	make my bed.
(e)	Every morning	clean my shoes.
(f)	Every morning	wash my hands and face.
(g)	Every morning	get dressed.
(h)	Every morning	comb my hair.
(i)	Every morning	eat my breakfast.
(j)	Every morning	brush my teeth.
(k)	Every morning	take my bag.
(l)	Every morning	go to the bus stop.
(m)	Every morning	catch the bus.
		go to work.

3 Students repeat sentence by sentence in chorus. Books are still closed.

4 Students say the above sentences again, using *you*.

- (a) *Every morning you* wake up early.
- (b) *you* get up.
- (c) *you* make *your* bed.
- (d) *you*
- (e) *you*

(DET, 1988)

Weaknesses of formalist structural approaches

With the knowledge that we have today about language and about second language learning, the limitations of early structural approaches appear obvious in retrospect. Strauch's

observation regarding the Laubach method is pertinent to other structural approaches. She states that 'it is unfortunate that such a naive philosophy of learning was so innocently embraced.' (Strauch, 1978:86) She notes that in approaches where the skill of reading is equated with sounding out words rather than reading for meaning, the result is meaningless parroting whereby 'Oral reading often assumes a "broken record monotone".' (Strauch, *ibid*:89) She describes the Laubach stories as demotivating, 'trivial and pointless', lacking plot, context, and relevance for adults. (Strauch, *ibid*:89) A further criticism is that the Laubach method in particular is only suitable for use with languages which have a simple syllabic structure. Thus it is inappropriate for teaching a phonologically complex language such as English. According to Robert Laubach, son of Frank Laubach, this particular method was never intended for ESL teaching in South Africa. (Ledochowski, B., personal communication)

These examples of early teaching efforts of English literacy in South Africa reflect ideas prevalent at the time. Twenty five years later, approaches to adult ESL work worldwide have undergone dramatic changes. Yet, in certain quarters in South Africa we still find similar outdated approaches being used extensively. The fact that the theories of language and learning underlying these approaches have largely been discredited has not tempered the zeal with which they are being implemented.

Transformational approach

Theory of language

While structural/behaviourist approaches were being established in South Africa in the 1960s, in other parts of the world a new approach to language was beginning to emerge. In the late 1950s, another formalist language-based approach emerged to challenge structuralism. It was known as transformational-generative linguistics. In this approach, language theory shifted to a concern with meaning and with grammatical rules and syntax. At the same time, behaviourist learning theory began to be discredited in favour of cognitive, mentalist theory. Linguists at this time were influenced by Einstein's work on relativity, and by research into the process of childrens' first and second language acquisition. Transformationalists made four key assumptions about the nature of language:

- Language is a system which relates meanings to substance.
- Language is a mental phenomenon.
- Language is innate.

- Language is universal.

(Bell, *ibid*: 100)

Although there were a number of different schools of transformationalists, all their descriptions of language revolved around 'overtly-stated ordered rules by means of which we can manipulate symbols which, ultimately, through further rules, become sentences.' (Bell, *ibid*: 102) For instance, active sentences become passive sentences through the passivisation transformation shown as follows:

'John hit Mary' becomes 'Mary was hit by John'

X + Y + Z — Z + tense + Y + en + by + X

(Bell, 1981:106)

Unlike the structuralists, these rules and transformations were concerned with the deep structure of sentences, rather than the observable surface phenomena.

Cognitive, mentalist learning theory

The transformationalists' views of language learning were potentially revolutionary at the time. Lenneberg and Chomsky argued that learning is a cognitive, mentalist process, rather than the gradual accumulation of memorised entities. Or, as Smith states, learning is 'nothing but the endeavour to make sense.' (Smith, 1978:xi)

'... successful learning comes about only when what is to be learned can be meaningfully related to something that is already known. Learning ... must take place within some kind of familiar context or framework - an extension of the familiar to the unfamiliar.' (Rutherford, 1987:16)

For Chomsky, language learning exists as an independent mental faculty, and human beings are genetically endowed with a language acquisition device (LAD). He further postulates a set of universal principles applicable to all human languages. Such principles which are never violated by language learners constitute a 'universal grammar'. Exposed to language input, language learners use their cognitive abilities to relate meaning to the forms of the language being learnt. In other words, they attempt to make sense of the language by hypothesising, predicting, experimenting and learning from feedback. Their innate knowledge of universal grammar limits the scope of potential errors produced.

In opposition to the structuralist view, mistakes were viewed as evidence of this creative mental process. For

instance, children learning English as their mother tongue often produce these utterances:

'I goed to the shop', or 'I seed my friend.'

These are not the result of imitating parent language. Instead they are proof that children are attempting to communicate and to formulate rules about how the language works. Thus studies of the process of first and second language acquisition in children concluded that language learning is a cognitive developmental process; that children make rules about language in order to make sense of what they see and hear; that they go through roughly the same order in acquiring language; and that they will only learn what they are ready for.

Weaknesses and strengths of transformationalism

Chomsky's work has since been criticised as the 'garden of Eden' approach. (Hymes, in Brumfit and Johnson, 1979:4) Critics assert that he over emphasised language competence (our innate ability to make rules about a language); and that he ignored social and environmental influences on how we actually use language in real-life. In any case, the theory and the language of symbolic logic were too abstract for language teachers to understand. Although this theory was not intended to provide an approach to language teaching, language courses based on it were subsequently developed. However, for the reasons outlined above, transformationalism did not have a great impact upon teaching methods at this time. Instead, structural methods such as audiolingualism, the direct method, grammar-translation and audio-visual continued to flourish. Until the mid-1970s, language teaching was described as following 'the discrete point philosophy'. (Newmark 1983:49) This philosophy viewed language as a collection of discrete pre-selected grammar items and rules which learners memorised one by one.

In spite of these criticisms, Chomsky's contribution to language teaching was seminal. He renewed interest in the human intellect and in learning as a cognitive activity, thereby discrediting behaviourism. In more recent years his ideas have inspired research into aspects of psycholinguistics, including natural growth theory, as well as the notion of grammatical consciousness-raising. Therefore, unlike structural linguistics and behaviourism, Chomsky's work remains relevant today.

Situational approach Language learning theory

Further significant international developments in the 1960s took adult ESL work into new directions. Humanism and

theories of adult learning began to highlight the importance of designing courses around learners' needs. In language teaching, this was evident in the emergence of the situational approach - the third strand of formalist language-based approaches.

The situational approach was first developed to deal with the basic communication or 'survival' English needs of immigrants to Australia in the 1960s. Although it appeared innovative, the underlying notions were not entirely new and the language theory was reminiscent of structural approaches. Nevertheless, the situational approach deviated from structuralism in important ways.

The situational approach stressed the importance of context and learners' needs in language learning. Language was taught for relevant real-life situations such as 'at the post office' and 'shopping'. Dialogues and texts contained the language structures and the vocabulary which had a high probability of occurring in these situations. The situational approach was popular in both 'survival' and 'foreign language' teaching courses. An example from South Africa is found in recent materials published by the English Resource Unit (ERU).

Figure 4.8

Clermont Advice Office

Thabo: Good morning.
Ntombi: Good morning.
Thabo: How are you?
Ntombi: Ok.
How are you?
Thabo: I'm well thanks.
My name is Thabo Bhengu.
What's your first name?
Ntombi: My first name is Ntombi
Thabo: What's your surname?
Ntombi: My surname is Mkhwanazi.
Thabo: What's your address?



(ERU Learners'Book 1:1991)

Weaknesses and strengths of situational approaches

Although situational approaches attempted to be more relevant and adult-oriented, their theoretical basis remained structural and behaviourist. Language content was prescribed and dialogues were learnt 'by heart' through the drilling of sentence patterns and units of grammar and phonology. This limited the learners' ability to transfer learning strategies to other situations. The sequencing of situations, structures and vocabulary was also random and unsystematic. Thus the situational approach left learners unable to deal with real-life communication which deviated from the model situations, dialogues or texts provided.

Nevertheless, situational syllabuses aroused interest in pragmatics and provided a link between formalist and functionalist approaches. For this reason, they have been labelled 'pseudo-functional'. (Bell, 1981:143)

Functional/communicative approach

Introduction

The second main approach described in this chapter is known as the communicative or functional approach. This approach emerged from the functional movement or 'revolution' in language teaching in the mid-1970s, and is associated with applied linguists such as Halliday, Wilkins and Widdowson. It was based on new ideas around adult learning theory and the areas of semantics, pragmatics and sociolinguistics. The theoretical basis of the approach will be described, as well as the syllabus and methods associated with it. The approach will be illustrated with reference to the work of the Moltano Project in South Africa. Finally, some of the major weaknesses and strengths of the approach will be identified.

Adult learning theory

Functional approaches to ESL for adults were influenced by ideas from humanism (Carl Rogers), progressivism (Malcolm Knowles), and cognitive learning theory (Brundage and MacKeracher). These ideas gained prominence in the 1960s and 1970s, alongside increasing interest in the education of adults. Key features of adult learning that were identified included motivation, experience and learners' needs.

'... adult learners are profoundly influenced by past learning experiences, present concerns and future prospects.'
(Nunan, 1988:23)

For effective adult learning to take place, content should be relevant; it should build on learners' experiences and it should be presented in ways which promote learning,

reduce anxiety and enhance self-confidence. Thus learners' needs were an important consideration in devising programmes. These were gauged in terms of what learners required in order to function more fully in a particular context. This included lifelong or self-directed learning needs, such as acquiring skills to plan, manage and evaluate learning effectively. These skills enabled adults to cope with a rapidly changing world.

These ideas altered the focus of teaching from knowledge to skills acquisition. At the same time, learners' needs, wants, experience, knowledge, skills, motivation, and emotional and cognitive states had to be considered. As a result, learner/teacher roles came under the spotlight, and 'learner-centredness' became the buzzword. Curriculum designers and teachers were no longer seen as the unquestionable sources of knowledge, authority and decision-making. The teacher's role was re-defined as a 'facilitator' of learning who ensures a positive learning environment; who fosters learner participation and control; who is sensitive towards learners; and who ensures that content is accessible.

Language theory

The functional/communicative approach was influenced by adult learning theory and the three key notions: motivation, experience and needs. At the same time, this approach was a reaction to the formalist structural and transformational approaches that preceded it. Instead of being language-based, the functional approach was concerned with semantics and learners' needs, or what we use language for in real-life. Language was seen as a tool for purposeful, spontaneous, authentic, creative and unpredictable communication in particular contexts. The context determined to some extent what and how messages were transmitted and interpreted. Therefore, instead of starting from the structure of the language, the approach started from the language that learners needed in order to communicate in specified situations. The approach differed from the earlier situational approach in that it emphasised oral communication skills and the notion of 'communicative competence'.

'Communicative competence' was a term coined in the 1960s by Hymes, and came to signify possessing 'the underlying systems of knowledge and skill required for communication.' (Canale, 1983:5) The four knowledge systems underlying communicative competence are grammatical, sociolinguistic, discoursal and strategic. The three key skills or abilities needed to communicate in real-life are the expression, interpretation and negotiation of meaning.

'... speakers and hearers have to be able to interpret the meanings of others, express their own meanings, and

negotiate meanings between one another.'
(Breen, Candlin; and Waters, 1979:3)

The communicative revolution also heralded a new syllabus organised around communicative criteria. This was called the functional-notional syllabus.

The functional/notional syllabus

The functional-notional syllabus was organised around language functions and notions. These referred to what we use language for when we communicate, for example to perform the functions of greeting, persuading, disagreeing, and to indicate notions of time, space, etc. Syllabus designers began by ascertaining the communicative situations pertinent to learners' lives. They then identified the relevant communicative functions and notions and the simplest and most useful language structures and vocabulary.

The forerunner to this syllabus was the Council of Europe's Foreign Language Study in 1971. This was a continuing education programme for migrants in Europe, which used a credit assessment scheme based on five language levels:

- threshold;
- basic;
- general competency;
- advanced;
- professional.

These levels were based on Maslow's needs' hierarchy. Subsequently, many needs-based courses were devised, such as English for Special Purposes and functional or survival English courses. These reflected learner biographies, language abilities, and patterns of language use, plus social, academic, vocational or cultural needs.

Language learning and teaching theory

Given this new orientation towards learners' needs, language functions, and the notion of communicative competence, language teaching was now concerned with developing learners' communicative competence and meeting learners' communicative needs. The aim of teaching was to engage learners in 'communicating' rather than merely 'talking.' (Allwright, 1984:156) The following table highlights the differences between communicative methodology and audio-lingualism, a traditional structural method.

Audio-lingual method

- 1 Attends to structure and form more than meaning.
- 2 Demands memorisation of structure-based dialogues.
- 3 Language items may not be contextualised.
- 4 Language learning is acquiring "habits" i.e. structures, sounds or words, through drilling and "over-learning" of patterns. Errors must be prevented.
- 5 Linguistic competence including correct pronunciation are sought.
- 6 Grammatical explanation is avoided.
- 7 Communicative activities come after lengthy drills and exercises. Reading and writing wait until speech is mastered.
- 8 Using native language and translation (at early levels) is forbidden.
- 9 Varieties of language are recognised but not emphasised.
- 10 Sequencing of language units is determined by linguistic complexity.
- 11 The teacher controls learners and prevents them from doing anything that conflicts with the theory. She also specifies the language that they are to use.
- 12 Learners interact with the language system through machines or controlled materials. Motivation comes from interest in the structure of the language.

Functional-notional method

Meaning is paramount.

(Adapted from Finocchiaro and Brumfit, 1983:91-93)

Dialogues are based on communicative functions and are not normally memorised.

Context is a basic premise.

Language learning is learning to communicate effectively. Drilling is peripheral and language is created by the individual through trial and error.

Communicative competence and comprehensive pronunciation is sought.

Any device which helps learners is accepted.

Oral and written communicative activities (e.g. roleplay, dialogues, games, information-gap and problem-solving exercises) may happen from the start.

Native language and translation are used when necessary to help learners.

Linguistic variation is a central concept in materials and methodology.

Sequencing is determined by content, function or meaning which maintains interest.

The teacher is a facilitator who helps learners and motivates them to work with the language. The teacher cannot know in advance exactly what language learners will use.

Learners interact with people and other learners through pair or group work and their writings. Authentic materials are used (e.g. newspapers, timetables, maps). Motivation comes from interest in what is being communicated in the language.

The Molteno Project

The Molteno Project and Genmin courses incorporate some of the ideas associated with functional/communicative approaches. The Molteno project is currently developing a three-part course aimed at urban black workers with no knowledge of English. The course is an adaptation of The Molteno Project's course for children called *Bridge to English*. The adult version will remain structurally-based but will incorporate aspects of a functional/communicative approach by including communicative functions, tasks and games. Therefore they combine features of both structural and communicative approaches outlined above.

'The lessons proceed from being largely structurally based towards a more communicative approach ... with grammatical, phonological and lexical components forming the basic unit, and communicative functions being essentially the applications of this knowledge.' (Dace, quoted in Molteno, 1990b:9)

Part 1 of the course will consist of purely oral lessons with sight word exercises and revision sheets. Part 2 will consist of reading lessons which gradually introduce the phonic families. Part 3, *English for Life*, will contain lessons based on situations or topics pertinent to adults such as 'shopping', 'travelling', 'money and saving', 'telephone', and 'direction/maps'.

In Part 1 of the course, the lesson sequence moves from mechanical, to meaningful, to communicative. This process allows for 'the regular and efficient transfer of each new linguistic item into the pupil's communicative competence.' (Collet, quoted in Molteno, 1990b:3) Initially the teacher models the new structure while learners sit quietly and listen. This allows for a 'silent period'. Learners then practise the structure using 'modified drill exercises'. Practice also includes using a sentence-maker to demonstrate, for instance, how short questions and answers are formed in English, as follows:

This is Mary.

Is this Mary?

(Adapted from draft lesson 3-1 of The Molteno Project's adult version of *Bridge to English*.)

Approximately 100 high frequency words, taken from a British word list, will be available with a sentence-maker. After this practice, problem-solving tasks, writing tasks and games reinforce the new structures.

Accurate intonation and pronunciation of 'standard' English are also emphasised, and particular stress and rhythm problems associated with South African Black English are tackled, using prayers, poems, etc. The medium of communication and interaction in the classroom is English, although the teacher is encouraged to use quick short translations of key words when appropriate. In addition, some of the principles of the comprehension-based method known as Total Physical Response are used. (For instance, learners are required to act out commands given by the teacher in the classroom.)

Part 2 of the course emphasises reading based on phonics and the 'look and say' method. The phonics system is based on the use of diacritical marks which stress the regularity of English and 'leads to controlled and confident progress in reading English.' (Collet, in Molteno, 1990b: 1)

'The Molteno approach is ... to teach sound-symbol correspondences, and to show the differences between these and the sound-symbol correspondences of the mother tongue. This phonic approach combines the teaching of reading with the teaching of pronunciation, and uses special diacritical marks to distinguish between the vowel sounds of English.' (Johansen, in Molteno, 1990:2)

Diacritical marks indicate long vowel sounds as shown here:

'The men are going to the cart.' (Molteno, 1990c:7)

Although the Molteno Project recognises that teaching reading based on phonic families is restricting, stories are written using the structures and phonic families introduced in Part 1.

the choice of so-called 'relevant vocabulary' is limited by the gradual introduction of various phonic families.' (Molteno, 1990:8)

In the following draft story containing the phonic family 'bull, pull, push, put, bush', learners are invited to predict the ending:

'This is Mr Molefe's car. It is on the road. Mr Molefe is not driving his car. His car is broken. Two men drive past in a car. They stop the car. They ask Mr Molefe, "Can we help you?" Mr Molefe says, "Yes, please push the car." The two men are pushing the car. There is a bull in the road ..."

Follow-up written exercises reinforce the structures and phonic families. (Molteno pilot reading lesson 4.2)
The Molteno Project encourages teachers to complete

Parts 1 and 2 of the course before learners move to Part 3. Part 3 contains specific language practise, functional tasks such as form-filling and reading shop signs, dialogues, role-play, games, discovery and assessment tasks. The inclusion of numeracy and other skills and knowledge are subordinate to language learning goals, because 'to broaden the learning too much will handicap the learning of the language itself.' (Molteno, 1990b:9)

Weaknesses and strengths of functional approaches

Functional/communicative, needs-based, learner-centred approaches were considered revolutionary at the time of their introduction in the 1970s. However, they have since been heavily criticised, in particular, the functional-notional syllabus, the notion of learners' needs and second language learning theory.

The functional-notional syllabus was criticised for being ends-means oriented and based on narrow, objective, functional needs gauged in relation to the social, vocational or employment requirements of society. Teaching according to learners' needs avoided situating adult learning within a broader picture of power relations in society, and so obscured the role of other interest groups such as the programme providers, the funders and the teachers themselves. Therefore it was questionable to what extent learners actually determined what they learnt. Instead, needs-based courses could be seen to maintain the status quo by meeting learners' needs within a framework of requirements laid down by society or by particular interest groups.

Functional syllabuses have also been likened to structural syllabuses comprising 'an inventory of units, of items for accumulation and storage.' (Widdowson, in Richard-Amato, 1988:292) These syllabuses deny the personal, cognitive, creative use of language.

'... the selection of these functional items bore no evident relationship to any consideration of ... personal or culture-specific ideologies ... All learners ... would value identically ... in the same sequence and via the same linguistic forms. It is hard to imagine a greater travesty of language as a system for the exchange of meaning and value.' (Candlin, 1984:38)

There has also been some debate around whether ends-driven syllabuses promote or restrict the ability to transfer learning.

'... syllabuses which specify ends fulfil a training function and result in restricted competence.' (Widdowson, in Nunan, 1988:43)

The fact that learner training or the development of learning skills was not a priority in these syllabuses was further cause for scepticism.

The emphasis on sociolinguistics at the expense of psycholinguistics was evident in the criteria used to sequence language content, as well as the assumption that 'teaching equals learning', or that what learners are taught is what they actually learn.

Finally, the functional approach with its narrowly prescriptive, non-negotiable syllabus had the potential to be overly prescriptive and to engender rote learning and behaviourist techniques. In this process learner contributions in determining what and how they learnt were ignored and the teacher played a dominant role. Thus, some of the dangers inherent in the approach are reminiscent of those identified for structural and situational approaches. The crucial factor was the communicative methodology used.

'... needs-based courses will tend to result in formulaic phrasebook English, and will not develop in learners the ability to generate spontaneous, communicative language.' (Widdowson, in Nunan, 1988:45)

In spite of these weaknesses, the communicative revolution succeeded in dramatically shifting the goal of language teaching from one of helping learners to accumulate bits of grammar or rules, to one of developing general communicative competence. Thus adult ESL work witnessed a move from a subject or language-centred view, to a focus on the learner and on the development of the underlying skills and knowledge needed for effective real-life communication.

"The subject-centred view sees learning a language as essentially the mastering of a body of knowledge. The learner-centred view, on the other hand, tends to view language acquisition as a process of acquiring skills rather than a body of knowledge." (Nunan 1988:21)

While the functional approach was taking hold in Europe, in America, competency-based education was gaining popularity. This parallel trend will now be examined.

Competency-based approach (CB)

Introduction

'... the incorporation of insights from competency-based instruction into the ESL curriculum is perhaps the most important recent breakthrough in adult ESL.' (ERIC/CAL, 1983:1)

The competency-based approach to ESL for adults origi-

nated in the United States in the early 1970s. Like the functional approach, the CB approach emerged in reaction to formalist, structural approaches which were deemed inappropriate and ineffective for the needs of immigrants and refugees to the United States. The CB approach attempted to make ESL courses more relevant to the everyday lives and perceived needs of these target groups.

Language theory

The CB approach views language in terms of how it can be used to carry out everyday tasks. Thus, like the communicative approach, it is semantically rather than linguistically based and focuses on what learners can do with language rather than what they know about it. The approach is based on the notion of 'competencies', which emerged from the Adult Performance Level study (APL) undertaken by the Department of Adult Education of the USA Office of Education in 1971. A competency is defined as 'a task-oriented goal written in terms of behavioural objectives.' (ERIC/CAL, 1983:9) The APL study identified 65 specific skills or competencies which adults require in order to function successfully in everyday American life. These competencies relate to four skills: communication, computation, problem-solving and interpersonal relationships, and five areas of knowledge: occupations, consumer, health, government and law, and community resources. Examples of work-related competencies include:

- state previous occupation in simple terms;
- ask if the task is done properly;
- follow simple two-step instructions on the job;
- give simple excuses for lateness or absence.

(From Student Competency Checklist, US Department of Health and Human Services, in Brindley, 1989:117).

Language learning/teaching

Language learning and teaching principles underlying the CB approach are similar to those associated with the functional approach and include factors such as learner motivation and needs. Successful learning occurs when content is meaningful, relevant and useful in learners' lives. Context is also considered vital for language learning, and the teaching of items of grammar in isolation is avoided. Instead, language is taught as and when it is needed in order to perform a specific task or competency. The CB syllabus comprises competencies which are identified in relation to particular life skills and areas of knowledge. The instructor determines the sequencing of the syllabus. The CB syllabus also claims to be flexible in that competencies can be taught

at different levels. For instance, the competency 'making a request' can be realised at a basic level through the simple phrase "Matches please". At a higher level, the request is realised as "Do you have any matches? I need three boxes." (ERIC/CAL, 1983:12) An added advantage is that the same language may occur in different tasks so that reinforcement is fostered.

The CB approach does not advocate a particular methodology, but allows the instructor freedom of choice over how the competencies are tackled. This freedom enables the instructor to be eclectic and to adapt lessons to suit the needs, the pace, etc., of individual learners.

Genmin:

Genmin's *English for Adults* programme (EFA), is aimed at urban industrial workers. The programme design and content combines aspects of a functional approach and a CB approach. The programme comprises four English levels: survival; conversational; operational; and advanced. The programme aims to provide a bridge to further training and formal education. Although the approach claims to be based on no single methodology or theory of language learning or teaching, learning content is clearly organised around language functions and competencies. The sequence of defining the situation, the language function, the language structures and the vocabulary are illustrative of the functional approach, as shown here.

Situation: when will the students need to speak English?

Language functions: what will they want to say?

Language forms: which way is the easiest?

(General Introduction to EFA:3)

Course outlines are also worded in terms of both language functions and competencies as follows:

- answer 'wh' questions;
- provide personal information;
- give directions, time, etc.;
- understand signs;
- greet appropriately;
- complete forms.

(Genmin Language Training brochure)

The Genmin programme is competency-based in that it assesses learners according to specified behavioural objectives as listed here for the Operational course:

- understand simple statements, questions and answers addressed to him/her;
- be able to talk about his/her life and work;

- be able to obtain routine information on everyday matters;
- be able to sustain a conversation with a sympathetic speaker of English;
- understand work-related messages, notes, instructions, etc.;
- be able to convey simple information in writing.
(General Introduction to EFA:4)

Although the way in which the programme content is presented appears functional and competency-based, the methodology espoused is reminiscent of both structural and situational approaches (which we dealt with under the formalist approach). In a typical lesson, oral skills are emphasised with the use of written exercises to reinforce the language structures introduced orally.

'The presentation sections include spoken and written language; the functional practice ranges from tightly controlled exercises to freer role-play and games; there are written exercises and pattern drills for language forms; and there is considerable explanation of grammar and functional objectives.' (General Introduction to EFA:6)

In a typical lesson, learners start by listening to a taped dialogue and then reading aloud with the tape. This approach to reading is suggestive of structural or situational approaches in which reading is defined very narrowly as connecting sound to print. After the tape, learners then manipulate particular patterns through oral and written substitution-type drill exercises. These exercises consist of a series of unconnected, decontextualised sentences which learners have to respond to. For instance:

**"I work in a factory." Response: "So do I."
"I'm South African." Response: "So am I."
"I've got a radio." Response: "So have I."**

These kinds of exercises focus on manipulating forms rather than on communicating meaningfully and are likely to engender rote repetition. Finally, learners are asked to write a specified number of sentences related to the lesson topic. However, they are not asked to think about their purpose in writing or who the audience is, and once again this exercise appears mechanical and uncommunicative.

On the whole, although the course makes use of authentic materials and encourages teachers to use additional easy reading books, there is little significant development of reading and writing skills and the kinds of strategies that would enable learners to read and write meaningfully, critically and confidently. Therefore the programme is open to the kinds of criticisms levied at courses which adopt a communicative rhetoric, but which in reality are very traditional.

'Often writers of textbooks assume that it is enough if a few photographs or bits of newspaper extracts are interspersed among sets of traditional language teaching exercises, not integrated or interrelated with them, but merely serving as a kind of veneer of Englishness to what is still a traditional book of drills (Candlin and Edelhoff, in Nunan, 1988:101)

Weaknesses and strengths of competency-based approaches:

In South Africa today, increasing interest has been shown in the CB approach to ESL programmes for adults. (Cosatu, 1991) The approach is appealing for a number of reasons. Firstly, it presents learning in a meaningful way to teachers and learners by stipulating very clearly what will be learnt and taught in terms of behavioural outcomes. CB programmes appear systematic and well-organised, with materials neatly packaged into modules. This enables learners and teachers to follow a programme very systematically and avoids deviation. Assessment also appears easier to carry out as it is built into the performance of the competencies. This also offers the participants a greater sense of achievement in a learning process which is inherently organic, developmental and therefore difficult to assess.

However, there are also important disadvantages to the approach. Although it is relatively new and has not been extensively evaluated yet, criticisms to date have been made on ideological and linguistic grounds.

Ideological criticisms

- Who determines competencies, on what basis and for whose benefit, are crucial questions in a CB approach which often claims to have no socio-political bias. Yet in its application it has tended to emphasise passive, functional literacy, rather than active critical literacy, and to prepare learners for limited, subservient roles in society. (Auerbach, 1986:41)
- 'The competencies attempt to inculcate attitudes and values that will make refugees passive citizens who comply rather than complain, accept rather than resist, and apologise rather than disagree.' (Tollefson, in Brindley, 1989:115)
- The breaking up of complex phenomena into discrete parts leads to reductionism and restricts the development of critical thinking skills. Again this is seen to be a way of controlling learning and learners. (Auerbach, 1986:421)

Linguistic criticisms

- A CB approach to ESL emphasises ends rather than means and is concerned with the 'what' of the curriculum rather than the 'how'. This ignores the central importance of the learning/teaching process and of learner contributions as they interact with the content, with other learners, etc.
- The emphasis on learning defined as mastering particular behaviour contradicts the belief in language learning as an organic process of progressively approximating the target language. Ultimately, teaching according to behaviourally-based end products called competencies can stifle language learning and instead engender mechanical, rote learning.
- Competencies tend to be defined very narrowly and thus to separate language from thought and meaning. This inhibits the transfer of learning to other contexts: 'Syllabuses which specify ends fulfil a training function and result in restricted competence.' (Widdowson, in Nunan, 1988:43)
- CB ESL tends to ignore the development of broader language, cognitive and learning skills which provide a sound, flexible foundation for further learning.

In conclusion, a CB approach appears to offer a relatively cheap 'quick fix' solution to large-scale ABE provision in South Africa. It implies a less demanding role for teachers and trainers and therefore minimal investment in training. On the other hand, the severe criticisms leveled at the approach suggest a need for caution especially as it is still relatively new. Therefore further research and evaluation of the approach in practise is essential. Adopting such an approach in haste could have disastrous repercussions for the entire country.

While the American-inspired CB approach emphasises curriculum content, in Europe much research over the past decade has focused on the relationship between learning content, and the learning process or methodology. In this research the area of psycholinguistics has assumed importance, in particular learners' roles and contributions to the learning process. The natural growth approach and more recently the task-based approach have been significant outcomes.

Natural Growth Approach

Introduction

Growing interest in the psychological processes whereby people acquire a second language has developed alongside

a communicative approach. Theories of second language acquisition and a non-analytic, experiential or 'natural growth' approach have emerged. Much of this research was based on Chomsky's earlier work on children's first and second language acquisition, as well as work by Selinker and Corder.

Language theory

Research into second language acquisition posited that learners go through a systematic process of language development and hypothesis-testing similar to that of children acquiring their mother tongue. Analysis of learners' oral and written errors revealed systematic developmental stages that all learners go through, which are referred to as 'interlanguage', or a process of 'grammaticisation'. The language acquisition process involves the progressive elaboration of the interlanguage system of learners through the use of language processing strategies such as overgeneralisation simplification, and transfer from their mother tongue. Overgeneralisation in this case induced by teaching, is illustrated in the following examples: a learner having learnt that the prefix 'un' means 'not', as in unhappy, unemployed; then wrote; "I unalways go to Church". Similarly, having corrected the spelling 'ness' to 'nurse', a learner wrote about her sister called "Eggnurse" (Agnes). (Classroom research, USWE Cape Town)

Although research into learner language suggested that there may be sequences of acquisition of particular structures, the language learning process is not linear and cumulative, but has been likened to a flowering bud:

'The spontaneous growth of a grammar in the learner is organic. Everything is happening simultaneously. The growth is organic in the way that a flower develops out of a bud. You can't write a linear programme for the process of flowering ... You can look at the development of tense, of negation, of question forms, or anything you like, and you find that all these things are developing simultaneously. Any language programme is forced to define itself linearly, but it is not the way learning takes place.' (Corder, 1986:187)

Learners' internal syllabuses control their own linguistic development and acquisition of structures.

'The only linguistic control is exercised by the learners themselves who are described as following (unconsciously) patterns of natural growth. Thus they themselves provide the syllabus.' (Yalden, 1984:17)

Work on second language acquisition by Hatch, Ellis and Krashen, among others, has contributed to the formulation of various theories and models of second language acquisition. Krashen's theory was based on earlier work and was not new. However, it is the best known and has roused considerable controversy.

Krashen's second language acquisition theory:

Underlying Krashen's theory is the belief in a unitary language competence, or a single underlying language construct or mechanism. His theory comprises five main hypotheses.

Krashen's **first hypothesis** distinguishes between acquisition and learning as two independent ways of developing underlying competence in a second language. He states that language is acquired naturally, rather than consciously learnt.

'Language is best taught when it is being used to transmit messages, not when it is explicitly taught for conscious learning.' (Krashen and Terrell, 1983:55)

Krashen's **second hypothesis** states that grammar is acquired in a predictable sequence or a natural order, during natural communication. Evidence from second language morpheme and longitudinal studies appear to support this hypothesis, although it is inconclusive. Variables such as the ability to reflect upon language (metalinguistic knowledge), and formal instruction, may affect the order.

Krashen's **third hypothesis** states that learning can only support acquisition through the use of the 'monitor'. This is a self-repair device which invokes formal language rules in order to correct spoken or written inaccuracies during prepared, but not spontaneous communication.

His **fourth hypothesis** states that 'comprehensible input' must be available for natural acquisition to occur. This input is provided by the use of real-life objects (bus tickets, menus, calendars, etc.), and 'teacher talk' (similar to 'motherese' or 'caretaker' talk, which is characterised by prompts, repetition, simplification, etc.). For input to become 'intake', learners should focus on the message rather than on the form and they should be motivated to communicate. So input should be familiar, interesting, rich, plentiful, purposeful, and at 'i + 1' (meaning 'input plus 1', or just beyond the learner's current level).

Krashen's **final hypothesis** concerns the affective filter -

the belief that the learner must have a positive attitude towards learning if input is to become intake, and acquisition is to occur.

Krashen's theory stresses the experiential base for learning, and is embodied in the natural approach. Instead of a sequenced grammatical syllabus, a natural syllabus is non-analytic and experiential. It comprises linguistically-rich and varied communicative activities and topics, loosely based on learners' needs and interests.

Similar approaches have been adopted in Immersion Programmes in North America, whereby English is used as the language of instruction for a variety of content areas. In South Africa, natural growth ideas have influenced the work of ELP and USWE.

Weaknesses and strengths of natural growth ideas

The natural growth approach is based on the belief that children and adults acquire language in a similar way. However, critics of this approach point to basic cognitive differences between child and adult learning.

older second language learners are able to handle more complex ideas, are able to have more control over the input they receive, and are able to learn and apply rules which may aid in facilitating the acquisition process.' (Richard-Amato, 1988:22)

Specific criticisms of Krashen's theory relate to the three hypotheses: learning/acquisition, the monitor, and comprehensible input. Critics argue that learned knowledge can become acquired; that conscious language learning can affect the rate and success of second language acquisition; that formal language input can help learners to hypothesise about the language and deal with errors, and that interaction and negotiation in the classroom rather than merely providing comprehensible input can aid acquisition. The classroom can also be a safer and more conducive context for acquisition, rather than a natural environment. Others note that immersion programmes result in a greater tendency towards 'fossilisation' of non-standard language forms at particular interlanguage stages, which produces a pidgin-type English. This was attributed to the emphasis on fluency and the lack of attention to structure.

The main conclusion drawn from such observations was that there was room in ESL programmes for a combination of activities which focused on language as well as on meaning and fluency. This has led to renewed interest in the role of formal or conscious language instruction in the classroom: a concern taken up by advocates of grammatical conscious-

ness-raising and task-based learning. At the same time, natural growth ideas stressed the organic process of language acquisition, rather than the accumulation of language. This emphasis was further explored by advocates of process syllabuses who have devised task-based process approaches.

Task-based process approaches

Introduction

Task-based approaches comprise the fourth main language approach described here. These process approaches emerged in the 1980s and combined insights from sociolinguistics and psycholinguistics, that is from both communicative and natural growth approaches. Task-based approaches were also influenced by educational thinkers like Dewey and Stenhouse, as well as by Paulo Freire's literacy work in South America. In applied linguistics and language teaching, ideas around classroom interaction management, learner training and grammatical consciousness-raising directly inspired this focus on 'pedagogy in process'. The resultant task-based process approaches emphasised the learning/teaching process, the means-end syllabus, and the roles that learners and teachers play. The contributions made by research into classroom management, learner training and grammatical consciousness-raising will be briefly described, then three task-based process syllabuses, followed by a summary of their main weaknesses and strengths will be examined.

Classroom management

Allwright's research into classroom interaction revealed that classroom management is the shared responsibility and co-production of all the participants. Through classroom interaction, learners automatically become involved in managing their own learning.

'... classroom lessons are "socially-constructed events", no matter how strongly any one participant may dominate, nor how compliantly other participants may react... making a contribution to the management of classroom interaction does not require overt physical action ... and ... does not depend on speaking.' (Allwright, 1984:159)

Classroom interaction is characterised by compliance, directiveness, negotiation, or navigation (diverting lessons). Most learners either comply with the teacher's direction, or react and navigate because negotiation is too risky. The skills of managing aspects of turn, topic, task, tone and code in the classroom also affect the learning climate, learner

confidence and risk-taking, the learning opportunities generated, and the kind of guidance provided. Therefore, learners who articulate their needs, and who navigate, negotiate, demand certain tasks, guidance and practice, are better able to control learning input and eventual learning 'intake'.

In addition to these conclusions, Allwright also challenged a basic assumption about the syllabus - that 'planning equals teaching equals learning.' (Nunan, 1988:36) He argued that the real syllabus is the implemented syllabus, or the 'syllabus in action' in the classroom. In this syllabus everything that happens comprises learning input and potential 'intake'. Applied linguists took Allwright's ideas seriously as they were becoming interested in learner training, or in teaching learners how to learn.

Learner training

Learner training in language teaching refers to teaching learners how to learn more effectively. This includes learning how to learn in general, and learning how to learn language through developing the necessary skills, strategies and awareness. These ideas build on earlier work around adult lifelong, self-directed learning. Advocates of ESL learner training believe that:

'... to teach a language is not to teach a body of knowledge but to teach how to learn, or to teach learners how to become better managers of their own learning.'
(Rutherford, 1987:104)

Learner training advocates are interested in research into the learners' internal 'black box' and the processing and other strategies used to cope with learning and using a language. Research has revealed that learners employ conscious strategies to improve their ability to store, to retrieve and to use information, and therefore to learn language more effectively. Learners' strategies include:

- Communication strategies: paraphrasing, translating, gesturing.
- Cognitive strategies: inferring, memorising, self-monitoring-
- Metacognitive strategies: planning, managing and evaluating learning.

Learner training also includes the development of critical awareness about language and about learning.

'... together with the training in the use of strategies, the fostering of learner autonomy will require that learners become critically reflective of the conceptual context of their learning. They must be led to clarify, refine and expand their views of what language means and of what

language learning entails. They should also understand the purpose for which they need to learn a second language.' (Wenden, in Wenden and Rubin, 1987:12)

Closely associated with the development of language learning strategies and awareness-raising around language, is grammatical consciousness-raising.

Grammatical consciousness-raising (CR)

The central ideas underlying grammatical consciousness-raising date back to the Middle Ages. These ideas regained popularity this century through the work of Chomsky and natural growth theorists. CR challenges the view held by second language acquisition theorists that acquisition occurs naturally if learners are merely exposed to comprehensible input and are motivated to communicate. Proponents of CR claim that conscious learning has an important role to play in aiding language acquisition. They also believe that grammar and meaning are closely interrelated. CR, therefore, is defined as a pedagogic tool which encourages learners to discover for themselves how the grammar of a language works.

The following table compares traditional grammar teaching with CR:

Traditional grammar teaching	Grammatical CR
Assumes that:	
1 Language is made up of sets of discrete entities	Assumes that: Language is a network of inter-dependent systems
2 Learners come to the learning situation 'tabula rasa' (i.e. as empty vessels)	Learners bring to the learning situation an innate knowledge of 'universal grammar' and a grammar of their first language, together with processes and strategies for language learning
3 Language learning is the progressive accumulation of items such as sounds, vocabulary and grammatical structures.	The process of language learning is cognitive and organic. This entails moving from the familiar to the unfamiliar through a continual process of hypothesising, testing and revising.

How CR works

The tool known as CR is defined as 'the illumination of the learner's path from the known to the unknown.' (Rutherford, 1987:21) CR encourages learners to hypothesise, to make judgements and to discriminate as they explore the relationship between language structure and meaning. As a result, learners increase their grammatical accuracy. A practical example would be when learners ask themselves these kinds of questions about how language is used in a text:

'What is it that one does with this bit of grammar? What has to be done in order to have this block of information in position X? Why does one say or write it this way rather than that way?'

(Rutherford 1987:104)

A variety of CR pedagogical tasks exploit texts in order to increase learners' awareness about how grammar is linked to meaning. Using the following text, learners are encouraged to examine how 'a' and 'the' are used. In this case, 'a' and 'the' denote new and given information:

'According to a recent news report, more and more Americans are beginning to eat more grains. The report stated that Americans have become more conscious of their fat intake ...'

(extract from Keh, 1991:20)

Ultimately such CR tasks foster the principled and organic growth of grammatical capacity in learners, which in turn promotes second language acquisition.

Task-based process syllabuses

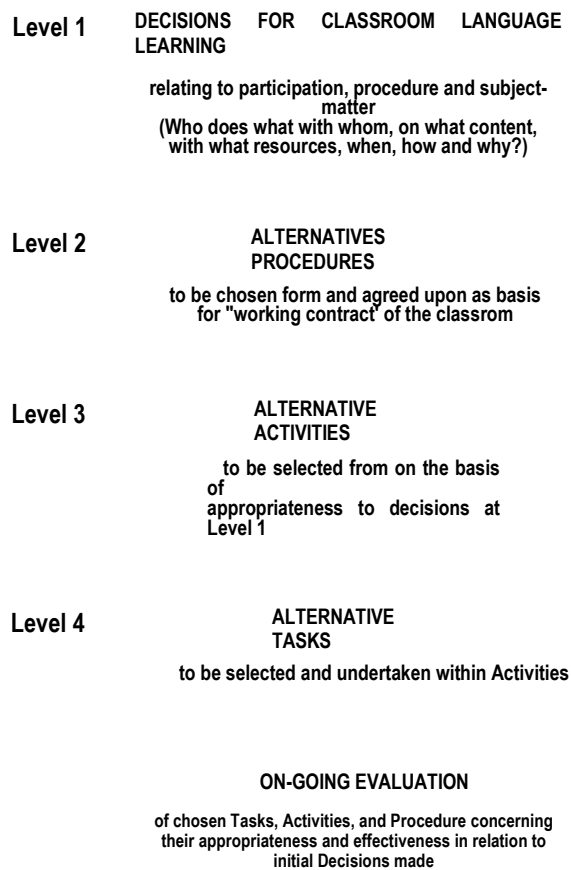
Task-based process syllabuses attempt to incorporate the latest developments in ESL, including natural growth ideas, learner training, classroom interaction research and grammatical consciousness-raising. They emphasise the syllabus as a process, which heralds a new paradigm in syllabus design. They also offer opportunities for formal language learning and natural language acquisition. Specific syllabus types that emerged include the task-based syllabus (Candlin), the process-based syllabus (Breen), and the negotiated syllabus (Nunan). These syllabuses share many basic assumptions:

- They are based on learners' needs and interests.
- They emphasise the learning/teaching process.
- They acknowledge the important contribution that learners make to the learning process and to syllabus development.

- They are organised around tasks which foster natural language acquisition through engaging learners in meaningful negotiation and problem-solving.
- They emphasise learner training through joint planning, decision-making and formative evaluation.

In task-based process syllabuses, methodology is of central concern as the approach links the development of language and language skills with the fostering of learning skills and strategies. The following process of syllabus design illustrates this concern with encouraging learners to participate in decisions about what to tackle, how, etc.

Figure 4.9



Main characteristics: Framework of questions requiring joint decisions in the classroom and an 'Index' or 'bank' of alternatives requiring agreed choices. Each level or element interrelates with the others - a higher level entailing those below it. Its actual use involves continual evaluation and, thereby, a cyclical process through the levels from 1 to 4 and from Level 4 back to Level 1 again.

(Breen, in Brumfit, 1984:57)

Tasks carried out in the classroom comprise the nitty-

gritty of these syllabuses. A task is defined as

'...a piece of classroom work which involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is principally focused on meaning rather than form.' (Nunan, 1989:10)

There are various types of tasks. These include pedagogic or learning tasks (for example, gap-filling or dictation), which serve as authentic communicative tasks (for example, letter-writing or form-filling). We also find accuracy or fluency-focused tasks, learner training tasks, and grammatical consciousness-raising tasks.

The use of communicative tasks can break down hierarchic barriers and alter classroom power relations.

'Drills and the like vest power in the teacher, while communicative tasks such as roleplays, problem-solving tasks and simulations give much more control to the learner.' (Nunan 1989:86)

Task syllabus designers provide task 'resource banks' of teaching materials for teachers to select from. The goal, input, actions, participant roles, outcomes and feedback for each task is indicated. Syllabus designers also attempt to sequence tasks in a cyclical fashion, so that core functions are refined each time they emerge during the learning process. However, the criteria for sequencing tasks remains hazy and the object of ongoing research. In reality, teachers and learners select and sequence tasks according to practical considerations. These include what appears most useful for learners at that point in time, what their needs and interests are, and to what extent learning from this task can be usefully transferred to other situations in learners' lives.

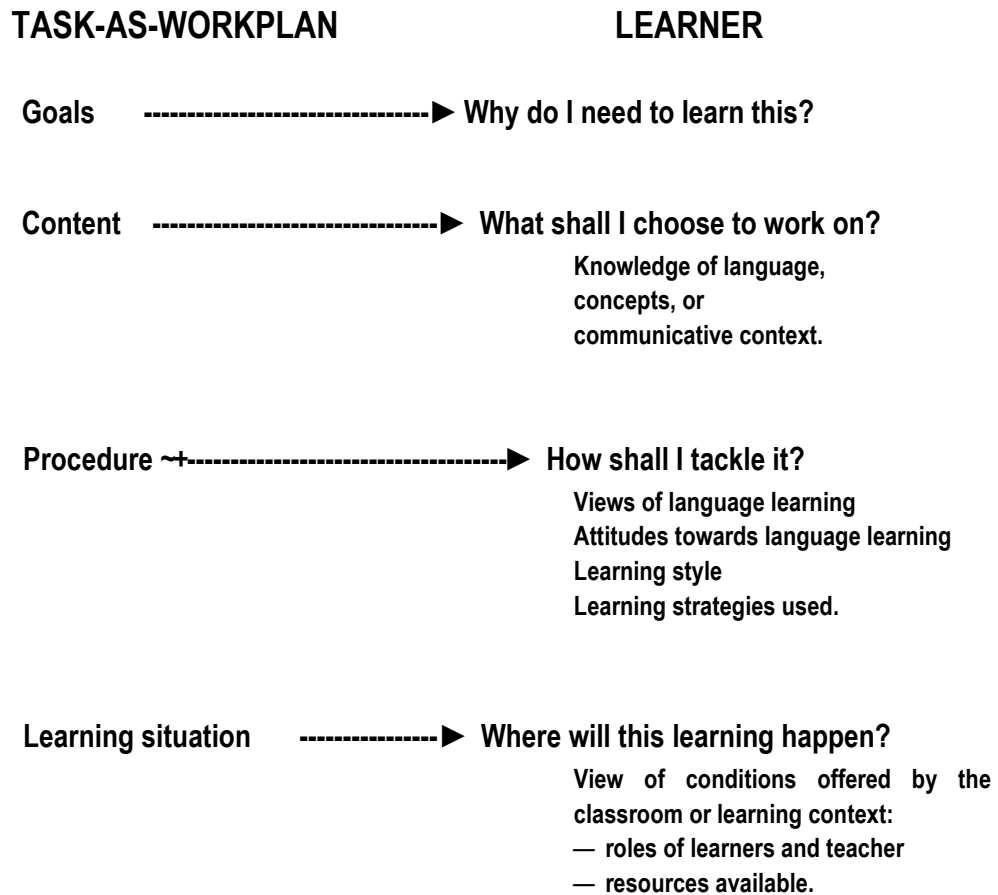
Tasks are also flexible workplans which offer potential learning content. They can be tackled in different ways to meet different goals and to cater for different learning paces, needs, styles, strategies, etc. However, as learners work on tasks, they reinterpret them and impose their preferred ways of working. This transforms them into 'tasks-in-process'.

'..a pre-designed task - the task-as-workplan - will be changed the moment the learner acts upon it.' (Breen, in Candlin & Murphy 1987:24)

Therefore, tasks are also 'the means to the development of classroom syllabuses.' (Candlin, 1987:5)

There is currently scant evidence of the development and implementation of process approaches to adult ESL work in South Africa (apart from the work of USWE Cape Town). Very few adult literacy organisations are research-oriented

Figure 4.10 Learners' reinterpretations during the task-in-process



(Adapted from Breen, in Candlin & Murphy, 1987:42)

and have the resources or the capacity to constantly revise and update their approaches in the light of new research in the field of applied linguistics and language teaching.

Weaknesses and strengths of a task-based process approach

A task-based process approach is pedagogically appealing. However, it has the following important limitations:
□ Teachers need to be highly skilled syllabus designers who are able to plan, select, design and sequence learning content according to agreed criteria. As we have seen, even world-renowned applied linguists are unsure about how to do these things!

- This approach requires plenty of rich learning resources at the teacher's disposal.
- Teachers need to be very well-trained to cope with a demanding role. They need to be confident, dedicated, creative, resourceful and able to respond appropriately to what happens during tasks-in-process. This places a great strain on teachers for whom English is a second language, and who themselves have had limited educational opportunities.
- The open-ended nature of the syllabus can lead to participants losing sight of their goals and achievements. This loss of focus and direction can engender frustration for all concerned.
- It is extremely difficult to assess and to accredit individually-planned process courses on a large scale.

The possibility of implementing a process approach on a large scale in South Africa appears remote. What this approach demands of teachers, trainers, syllabus designers and course-writers appears unrealistic given the need for mass literacy provision and the limited resources available for this.

In spite of these practical limitations, a task-based process approach is illuminating and has had a significant impact on language teaching around the world. It has challenged traditional notions of the syllabus as content, and has instead highlighted the importance of the learning/teaching process and of the role that learners play in syllabus development and in the whole learning endeavour. At the same time, through the use of tasks, the approach has attempted to combine natural language acquisition with conscious language learning, including grammatical consciousness-raising.

The move towards a process approach in ESL work was not unique. It was evident in many other educational spheres, including the literacy work of Paulo Freire from as early as the 1960s.

Popular education and ESL approach

Introduction

Popular adult education can be traced back to Paulo Freire's work in the 1960s in Brazil. Here Paulo Freire developed a problem-posing approach to first language literacy in his work with oppressed communities (See Chapter 3). In the 1970s, Freire's approach developed alongside the growth of mass-based popular movements in South America. The combined influence of Freire and the growth of popular movements inspired the worldwide popular education movement which began in the 1970s. At about this time, Freirean and

popular education ideas also began to influence ESL work.

In this section, popular education and how it was integrated into an ESL approach developed in the United States will be briefly examined. The work of ELP and USWE will then be outlined. These two organisations have both, in different ways, incorporated popular education ideas into their ESL work.

Popular education

Like Freire, adherents of popular education have opted to serve the interests of the urban and rural poor and oppressed. They are concerned with education which liberates rather than domesticates. Such education is a process rather than a body of knowledge which is deposited by the teacher in learners' minds. Education is both a process of renewal and a process for maintaining the status quo.' (Marshall, 1990) Popular education promotes social change through linking organised educational activities to popular action and movements working for socio-economic and structural changes in society. This is 'education for critical consciousness.' (Arnold et al, 1985:16)

'Popular education is both a theory and a practice of social action that is geared toward development of the capacity for organisation, communication and critical reflection on processes and social relationships by the most deprived sectors of the population.' (Marshall, 1990)

These are the main characteristics of popular education:

- Everyone teaches; everyone learns.
- It starts with the concrete experiences of the learners.
- It is a highly participatory collective effort.
- It is an ongoing process (not limited to a single workshop).
- It leads to action for change.
- It stresses the creation of new knowledge.
- It causes us to reflect on what we've done in order to improve what we are going to do.
- It strengthens the ability of people to organise themselves.
- It links local experiences to historical and global processes.
- It's fun!

(Adapted from Arnold et al, 1985:16)

This process of dialogue and critical thinking leads to action and empowerment as learners shape their own lives.

A literacy popular educator describes popular education like this:

'It's ... a question of people becoming conscious of their power in a particular moment of history ... Popular education is not separate from the historical process. It has to be linked with the history, economy and culture of a particular society.' (Domingos Chigarire, in Marshall, 1990, User's Guide: 1)

Popular education and ESL

Freire's problem-posing approach is never neutral, particularly where language is the focus.

'Any time that language is taught, a particular view of the world and of the person is also taught - through the content, the process, and the methods used, the relationships and feelings fostered.' (Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Culture:3)

The problem-posing approach has been incorporated into a basic ESL course for immigrants to the United States. It comprises three stages: listening, dialogue and action.

At the **listening stage**, key concerns or contradictions in people's lives are identified and then presented to the group in a concrete form, as a code. Codes come from the teacher or learners and can be verbal (for example, a roleplay, tape, or poem), or non-verbal (for example, a drawing, photograph, or text).

'A Freire approach to dialogue assumes students equally determine classroom interaction. As adults, they bring their concerns and personal agendas to class. These ... determine what's important to discuss.' (Wallerstein 1983a: 15)

Codes are not just visual aids: they are intended to generate heated discussion and to trigger critical thinking. After listening comes dialogue which determines subsequent learning.

'Curriculum (syllabus) is not a product (developed before the start of the program), but a process, which is constantly created through participant interaction.' (Wallerstein and Auerbach, 1987, Preface vii)

Uncovering learners' feelings about learning or their 'hidden voices', is also considered an important theme to reflect upon. During dialogue, the group's language needs emerge as the teacher observes, listens, diagnoses, and assesses learners' spoken and written English. In this way, the lan-

guage syllabus flows from praxis.

'The curriculum and language learning is in constant evolution as teachers fashion lessons by listening to their students' responses.'

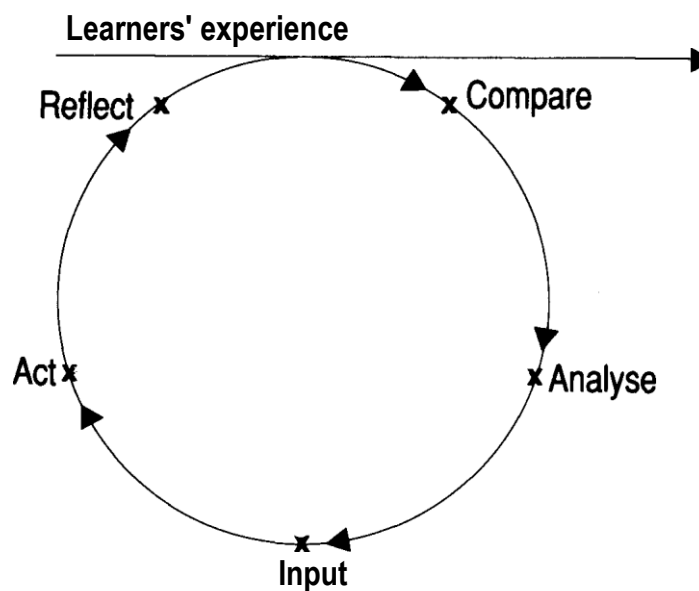
(Wallerstein 1983b:134)

During dialogue, learners also critically examine historical, economic, political, cultural, and social contexts, to identify the root causes of oppression, and to 'evaluate the forces that exert control on their lives.' (Wallerstein 1983a: 16)

'Critical thinking begins when people make the connections between their individual lives and social conditions. It ends one step beyond perception - towards the action people take to regain control over social structures detrimental to their lives.' (Wallerstein 1983a: 16)

Dialogue leads to action and the process of 'action-reflection-action', known as conscientisation.

Figure 4.11



Classroom evaluation linked to change is part of this process.

'As students exercise control within the classroom by choosing which issues are crucial, they will gain confidence to use English and to make changes in their lives outside of school.' (Wallerstein 1983a:15)

Popular education and ESL in South Africa

Examples of action in an ESL group include interviews, writing to newspapers, organising petitions, and setting up self-help projects.

Popular education appeals for 'building an alternative education approach in Third World countries that is more consistent with justice and freedom.' (Marshall, 1990:4) In South Africa in the 1970s, Freire's literacy teaching method was used by progressive adult literacy organisation for both mother tongue and ESL teaching. It was soon found to be unsatisfactory, particularly for teaching English as a second language. At the time, the difference between teaching literacy and language was unclear. However, some of the principles underlying the approach remained valid. Since then, some progressive adult literacy organisations in South Africa have tried to integrate these ideas into ESL work, in particular the English language Project (ELP) and Use, Speak and Write English (USWE).

ELP

In recent years, the English Literacy Project has developed a popular education bias in its ESL work with unionised workers. Prior to this, ELP produced a structural English course for workers in which pattern drills and taped dialogues, songs and pronunciation exercises featured prominently. ELP's interest in popular education is reflected in the Freirean discussions added to the accompanying Teacher's Notes.

ELP has since recognised the limitations of the structural approach whereby 'second language teachers were hung up on accuracy.' (interview with C. Steinberg, 1990) As a result, ELP has shifted from a language-based approach to a popular education approach. This has entailed the production of popular easy-reading materials for learners and the teaching of information-based and political lessons. ELP clearly acknowledges the political aims inherent in their work:

'It is important for us to become more explicit about the ideological component we want to get across, if we are to see our work as systematically leading people through a process of conscientisation and contributing to the transformation of our society.' (ELP, 1989:18)

Materials produced to date include learner stories, functional numeracy materials, popular information through the newspaper *Ukukhanya* (now called *Active Voice*), plus books on current events and history. (ELP 1990)

ELP describes their popular education lessons as follows:

'Classes have spent time writing freely about their lives and their problems. They have grappled with the political economy. They have discussed AIDS and other health problems. They have practised their numeracy skills. This content-oriented approach allowed for mixed level classes and short-term attendance far more than purely English language classes would have, and is more appropriate to a society in transition and struggle.' (ELP, 1989:17)

In these lessons, discussions take place in mother tongue and reading focuses on understanding unfamiliar English words in the texts. Learners are also encouraged to write freely. These writings are corrected so that they are basically communicative and comprehensible, although they may contain errors. Other than teaching reading vocabulary and free writing in English, little conscious language or skills development take place. Although not overtly stated, the assumption behind this approach is that learners will acquire language and develop skills naturally through discussion and reading and writing tasks which focus on communication and fluency rather than accuracy. The fact that discussions around pertinent issues usually happen in mother tongue obviously limits this process.

The pendulum swing that ELP has experienced from a language-based approach to popular education and an information-based approach, is the result of ELP's response to the broader struggle for equality, justice and democracy in South Africa. It may be that the demand from their learners for more ESL skills development will result in the devising of a more balanced language and popular education approach in future ELP work.

USWE (Cape Town)

The history of USWE's work in ESL is similarly characterised by changing emphases over time. Initially the founder of USWE pursued Freirean ideas. However, when the limitations of this approach for ESL work became apparent, USWE shifted its focus to applied linguistics and to researching adult learner-centred, needs-based approaches. Around this time USWE produced language workbooks for learners based on a communicative approach and the teaching of grammar linked to meaning. Other functional materials taught form-filling and the alphabetical order. (USWE, 1984, 1986) Increasing repression of progressive organisations in South Africa from 1985 onwards affected USWE's work and the production of materials which integrated popular education and ESL. Nevertheless, USWE continued to develop an approach which integrated learners' needs,

learner training and language development with popular education principles. The approach which emerged was described as 'learner-centred', 'process-oriented' and 'participatory'. In this approach, the syllabus was negotiated with each group at the start of the programme through discussions around learners' real-life needs. The result was a goal-based learning plan such as this one developed for community health workers in Cape Town:

Figure 4.12 Syllabus plan for Sacla Health Workers (1989).

Main long-term goals:

- Knowing about your health**
- Getting what you want from the system (doctors, hospitals etc.)**
- Discussing alternative health care systems**

Some possible short term goals:

- Able to - identify parts of the body**
 - Grammar: "My head..."**
 - ask for help
 - describe symptoms
 - Grammar: "I've got a..."**
 - other tenses e.g. Present Simple, Past tense, etc.**
 - express duration: for/since/etc.

D Vocabulary

- Knowing about common illnesses**
- Knowing where you can go, how much it will cost**
- Knowing your rights**

In other USWE groups in community-based nutrition and employment centres located in squatter areas, unemployed mothers have been learning about health, gender, making and selling mats, and running co-operatives.

The teachers' task was to analyse these topics into oral, reading, writing and other skills and knowledge such as health and numeracy, and then to search for appropriate materials. To assist teachers, USWE developed theme-based resource packs on the most popular topics. These included authentic materials such as newspapers, billboards, pamphlets, magazines and learners' writings, as well as worksheets on particular language skills and problems. Additional simplified materials were available for beginner groups. The teachers then adapted or devised communicative and learning tasks around these materials. Finally, the teachers drew up lesson plans with clear lesson goals and activities (sometimes with help from USWE teacher supporters).

Classroom tasks emphasised natural language acquisition as well as learner training. General learner training occurred through joint lesson and syllabus planning, negotiation, and

evaluation throughout the programme. Other language tasks revolved around issues pertinent to learners' lives. These integrated problem-posing and critical thinking with the development of language and learning skills. Examples included tasks around writing and editing skills; grammatical consciousness-raising about how language works; learning to challenge people through roleplays; learning how to predict when reading; learning how to detect bias in texts; learning to distinguish between fact and opinion; and exploring issues and their underlying causes. This focus on learner training in its broadest sense was seen to empower people for lifelong learning.

These tasks-in-process revealed more about learners' needs and priorities and about the effectiveness of teaching content and process. These indications provided direction for the next lesson. At appropriate stages during the programme, teachers and learners assessed progress by checking original syllabus plans and modifying them or drawing up a new one. This new plan reflected the changing needs and priorities of the groups.

In recent years, some of the limitations associated with this process approach to ESL have become apparent. Teachers have requested more structured syllabuses and materials; learners are interested in certification and the country has witnessed a growing demand for ABE provision on a larger scale. In response to these developments, USWE has embarked on a three-year integrated curriculum development project, described in Part 4.

Weaknesses and strengths of a popular education approach

Although the aims and the principles of popular education appear laudatory, critics have highlighted areas of contradiction. For instance, during problem-posing it is claimed that teachers do not impose their views, but allow learners to draw their own conclusions about root causes of problems and what action to take. Yet in practice teachers pose the problem, ask the questions, provide the information used for critical thinking and offer the analyses.

'I provide an analysis or an insight or a question or some information which matters at a key moment in the dialogue, but is not being generated by the students themselves.' (Shor, 1988:19)

The fact that teachers are somehow deemed to play a neutral role also contradicts the popular education assertion that no education is neutral. In reality, if teachers are in such a powerful position, it raises questions around abuse of power and the possibility of indoctrination.

A more general criticism of popular education worldwide has focused on its relative neglect of theories of language and literacy. The overwhelming emphasis on exploring ideas and looking critically at society has virtually ignored the role that language and literacy play in this process. Research in applied linguistics and related disciplines has not as yet had an impact upon popular education; with the result that mother tongue literacy, to a large extent, remains faithful to Freirean methods of the 1960s. In addition, very few people have attempted to integrate popular education with basic ESL teaching, with the exception of Wallerstein and Auerbach's work in the States (1987); and Arnold et al, in Canada (1984).

If, as is claimed, adult basic literacy and language skills are an integral part of popular education, then popular educators need to take heed of the exciting new directions that language and literacy work have taken in the past few decades. This is a crucial challenge for popular education in the future. Conversely, applied linguists and language teachers need to examine popular education principles and how these can be integrated into their work. This is already happening with the growing realisation that literacy and language education cannot be neutral, and that both the content and the process adopted imply ideological choices on the part of the providers. There is increasing evidence to suggest that applied linguists and language teachers are becoming more cognisant of the contribution that their work can make towards fostering greater awareness, leading to change in people's lives.

In Section C of this chapter, the theories of language and adult second language learning that underlie several approaches to basic ESL provision in South Africa today were examined. These approaches were located within developments generally in the field of applied linguistics and language teaching this century. The major strengths and weaknesses of these approaches have also been highlighted so that we can learn from these as we continue to develop new and better ways of empowering adult learners in South Africa.

Section D: Power through English - a way forward?

Power has been defined as 'the creation of possibilities where none existed before.' (Davies, 198?). However, we argue that unless learners first acquire a critical understanding of how these possibilities were denied them, they will not be able to gain power in this way. In addition to knowledge about power relations, learners also need information and skills with which to pursue strategies for change.

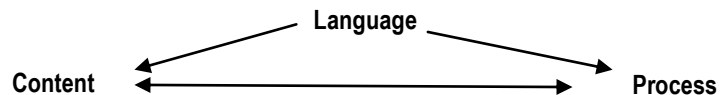
What does it mean to empower someone in a second language?

Nyberg (1981) writes: "The sense of self which one develops depends on whether one can even imagine long-term goals and whether one can develop skills to do the possible."

In this way, power can be seen to have two meanings: both to be able to do something and to have power to do something. (Compare, for example, *ukuba unakho ukwenza into* and *ukuba namandla okwenza into* in Xhosa.) A teacher cannot give power to her learners, but she can help them acquire the skills, knowledge and attitudes they need to be able to exercise power.

An empowering education needs to focus on both the content of learning and the process of learning, on what to teach and how to teach it. Where this education is taking place through a second language, the ability to use the language becomes of supreme importance. Clearly learners cannot become empowered through a participatory learning process if they lack the language skills to understand or take part in this process. Similarly, the most liberatory content will be lost to learners who do not have the language skills to extract meaning from and interact critically with this content.

Figure 4.13



For this reason any serious English literacy course needs to be based on sound second language learning principles. Anything less will lock learners into a cycle of half-glimpsed possibilities and repeated frustrations.

But there is still a further dimension to empowerment. What learners need are not just language skills but learning skills - skills which they can apply in any context to go on learning throughout their lives. In this way, learning English can be more than learning a language. It is a powerful vehicle for acquiring conceptual tools and learning strategies.

Goals for a basic education programme

All national education programmes are motivated to varying degrees by social, political, or economic goals. In Nicaragua and Mozambique, as we saw in Section B, the goals of the literacy campaigns were largely political. In South Africa,

COSATU's proposed *Adult Basic Education Project* (May 1991) is motivated by the urgent need for economic growth and for training skilled workers.

One option open to COSATU is to design linked skills courses which combine basic literacy and language skills with job specific skills at different levels. An alternative might be to provide a broad educational foundation which equips learners with the necessary skills to tackle further academic, vocational or technical training. Although the primary motivation for such a curriculum would be political and educational, this investment in human resources should ultimately benefit the economy and the country.

The model proposed here is motivated by a vision of participatory democracy and provides learners with a wide range of language, learning and conceptual skills which can be transferred to any number of learning contexts. A basic education programme that aims to equip people to participate fully and freely in a democratic society will need to focus on:

- Giving learners access to many kinds of information and knowledge.
- Developing concepts and language skills for interpreting and using this information confidently and critically.
- Developing a critical understanding of social, political and economic structures influencing learners' lives, and exploring strategies for change.
- General learning or metacognitive skills needed for participation in democratic processes, for example, planning, group negotiation and evaluation skills.
- Building self-confidence and assertiveness.

Where does the curriculum come from?

The curriculum for such a basic education programme draws on three main areas:

- Popular education.
- Adult education.
- Second language learning.

Principles drawn from popular education mean that:

- The content is drawn from issues and concerns that are of importance in learners' lives.
- Through a process of dialogue and critical reflection, learners acquire a deeper understanding of the connections between their own lives and broader structural changes.
- Learners are encouraged to explore alternatives and to

take action wherever possible. In a society in transition, learners can discuss and assess proposals for national reconstruction, and find ways of making their needs and opinions heard.

Principles of adult learning give us the following:

- Adults who value their own experience as a resource for further learning or whose experience is valued by others are better learners.
- Adults learn best when they are involved in developing their own goals for learning.
- Adults have already developed organised ways of focusing on, taking in, and processing information. These are referred to as cognitive, or learning styles.
- Adults learn best when the content is relevant to their past experience or present concerns and the learning process is relevant to their life experiences.
- Those adults who have learnt 'how to learn' are the most productive learners.

(Adapted from Brundage & MacKeracher, in Nunan, 1988a: 23)

Principles of second language learning include:

- Learning a language is learning how to communicate in that language in a variety of different contexts. This is also known as communicative competence.
- Grammar, vocabulary and other features of language are tools for learners to use in expressing themselves or in understanding others.
- Learning a language is a cognitive process, in other words, learning does not happen through imitation and repetition. Learners are active, forming their own ideas about how the language works, testing these ideas out, and then either accepting, rejecting or adapting them. This rule-governed system which learners create is called 'interlanguage' or 'language-learner language'.
- Receptive knowledge is greater than productive knowledge, that is, learners can understand and read more than they can say or write.

A challenge for all such programmes is to find a balance between national needs and community or individual needs. This would entail integrating all these principles into a syllabus flexible enough to accommodate the different needs of varying learning groups, and to allow learners to exercise control over what they learn and how they learn it. This

highlights the importance of methodology and teacher training.

So far we have identified the main principles to be incorporated into any basic English programme. Learners who have developed strong metacognitive skills can transfer these skills to any context: people who are able to define their own learning needs and goals, who can use reading and writing skills flexibly according to their purpose, and who can articulate what helps them to learn and why, are an asset to any community and any work-place.

Implications for mass provision of ABE content and process

In the curriculum model which is discussed here, content and process are seen as inseparable and mutually dependent. Each feeds into and draws from the other. Popular education principles form a useful organising framework,

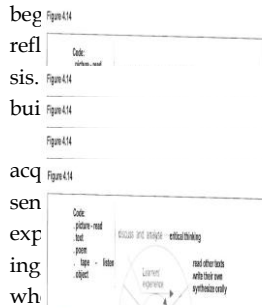
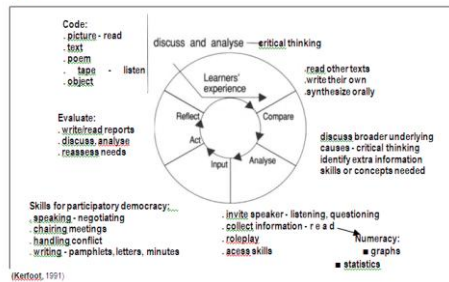


Figure 4.14

lives and experiences, then ack to them for critical analysis. Second language learning by framework.

ch stresses that learners do not ; and repeating meaningless ontext to understand and that listening, speaking, read-it separately, but are used out the chosen learning task.

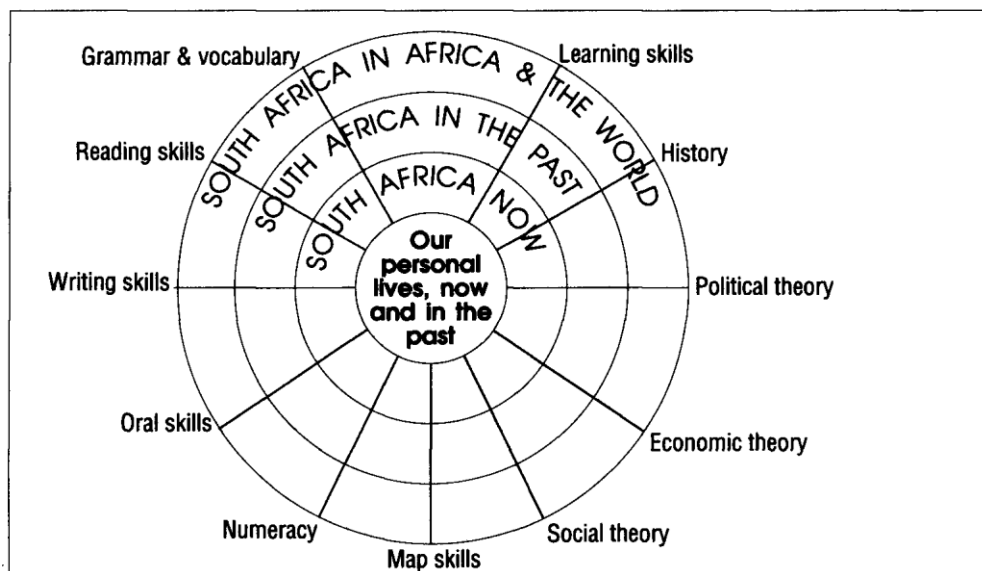


(Kefauver, 1991)

This broad curriculum framework can be used in various ways: either as a model for developing several separate courses, each linking a particular job skill with English language classes, or, as described below, as the basis for a broad educational syllabus which provides the necessary foundation for further academic, technical, or vocational training.

One attempt to put this model into practice is the proposed integrated curriculum which is currently being developed by USWE, in Cape Town. This three-year curriculum aims to take learners to the equivalent of a current Standard 4 school level. It tries to integrate popular education principles with ESL and the development of other skills and knowledge including learning skills, numeracy, map skills,, and basic economic, social and political theory. This learning takes place within a framework of four linked themes, with built-in optional tasks to cater for different learning groups. The basic curriculum design looks like this:

Figure 4.15 USWE Integrated curriculum outline.



This curriculum aims to develop an overall understanding of social reality along with generic conceptual, language and learning skills.

'It is a necessary feature of proper literacy that social practices of reading and writing bring words and worlds together around the pursuit of an ever enhanced understanding of the relationship between biography and structure.' (Lankshear, 1987:151)

Implementing such a curriculum on a nation-wide scale means that the following issues need to be addressed:

- The kind of materials to be provided.
- Teacher training.
- National standards or levels of proficiency.
- Assessment.
- Language policy.

We will look at each of these in turn:

Materials

Learner materials could be in the form of a series of learning modules or packages, covering a number of core themes which have emerged in many learning groups, for example, labour, land, health, and women's issues. These packages could contain some or all of the following:

- Goals for the unit to be discussed with the group, and lesson plans for teachers to adapt and modify.
- Codes and suggested questions for critical analysis.
- A variety of authentic texts for different reading levels and suggestions for activities based on these, some requiring greater knowledge of the language than others. Materials in this section can include maps, graphs, statistics, photographs, etc.
- A selection of background readings on each topic so that the teacher or an advanced learner can facilitate discussions more easily.
- Suggested questions for discussion and critical analysis.
- Suggestions for teaching classroom language so that learners can participate and make their opinions known.
- Self-evaluation sheets and lesson or module evaluation sheets.
- A selection of worksheets or learning tasks related to the theme and/or the readings. Tasks would be coded according to:
 - level of difficulty;
 - mode of learning (whole group, small groups, pairs, or individual);
 - type (listening, writing, etc. or a combination of these).

Most important of all, these materials would include questions which encourage learners to reflect on the learning process: What helps them to learn and why? Why did one strategy work better than another? What alternative ways are there of doing this?

Well-trained teachers can adapt and add to these packages to suit a wide variety of learner levels, learning styles,

and learning needs. As learning is seen as cyclic, each module will build on and extend the language and other skills acquired in previous ones.

The key here is to avoid a reversion to top-down methods of transmission, and the 'canonisation' of texts. One way to attempt this might be to make these learning packages interactive, or to build in space for learners to decide on their own goals and to produce their own texts (taping and transcribing, group or individual writing), as well as to include open-ended discussion questions, evaluation questions, and choices at every stage.

Teachers

Although this is far from ideal, the proposed three-year syllabus would provide step-by-step teaching plans and materials for inexperienced teachers. They could then follow the units from beginning to end with little or no support if necessary.

Ideally the initial year-long syllabus will form the basis for in-service teacher training (as is currently happening at USWE Cape Town). Initial training workshops cover the basics of teaching reading, writing, speaking and learning skills, as well as needs analysis, assessment and facilitation skills. Teachers come to workshops with questions or problems that emerge from their teaching. In this way, they develop a theory of learning and language through critical reflection on their practice. At the same time, teachers improve their own language skills and broaden their knowledge of key content areas.

After completing the first year, teachers will have the option of working with and supporting new teachers, and, at a later stage, of co-ordinating teacher support in local or regional initiatives. In-service training can be extended in years two and three to include more advanced language teaching and learner training, as well as syllabus design, and materials development. This will enable teachers to become more independent; to give their learners more control over what they learn and how they learn it, and to assist in developing localised curricula for groups whose needs may not be met by the national curriculum. This programme for teachers will also provide a much-needed career path for teachers of adult basic education.

Trainers

The integrated curriculum could also form the basis for developing teacher trainers. Detailed teaching notes around the curriculum as well as training and teacher support manuals could be used for trainer training courses. This would

enable trainers to support teachers in the field and alert them to key methodological principles. Regional research, development and training centres could work with trainers/teachers to adapt the core curriculum to regional or local contexts. Future materials development would grow out of this process, and could respond to regional or national development needs.

Standards

Alongside data drawn from existing syllabuses and field experience, core standards would need to be drawn up in consultation with economic planners, development advisers, unions and community organisations, as well as teachers, trainers and experts in applied linguistics and adult education. These would form the basis for establishing a system of national standards. More research for instance into entrance and exit points, levels and equivalencies with the formal education system would need to be carried out.

Assessment

A national accreditation unit is needed to assess a proposed curriculum and adapted syllabuses, so that learners receive meaningful certificates. This area needs careful research: What should be tested – functional or cognitive skills, fluency or accuracy, Who should test – national or regional bodies, teachers or learners themselves?

Language policy

What kind of English is acceptable? For example, in a multi-lingual group, is Tsotsitaal acceptable in discussions and other group activities? What about writing: is it possible that certain texts might have more impact if they are written in the language of the people? Should the teacher correct so-called 'black' forms of English, or only those that interfere with clear communication? How important is 'correct' pronunciation? Is it worth practising stress and intonation patterns, or will these change as more and more speakers of other languages put their stamp on English? In other words, it is important to consider what South African English will look like in the future.

Conclusion

How to link an adult basic education curriculum with job training and national goals of economic growth is currently the subject of much debate (COSATU, 1991). Should many separate courses be developed, each linking a particular skill

with English language? Or should a broad basic curriculum be offered to everyone, with specific job training or functional skills offered separately? In other words, should adult basic education provide the foundation for further training?

Whatever happens, if the people of South Africa are indeed to exercise 'people's power', they will need to make English their own. If they are to do this, a new government will need to back its commitment to democracy with substantial-economic resources. Without such resources, English will once again become the language of the elite, excluding the majority of South Africans from economic and political power.

The goals of the approach outlined here imply decentralised control and the freedom to respond creatively to community needs within the wider framework of economic reconstruction. This is in line with a vision of a future non-racial, united South Africa where 'the long-term development of a national consciousness [...] surpasses, but does not suppress, the cultural identity of any particular group within the nation.' (Benjamin, in NECC, 1990). The extent to which this vision is realised may well depend on the quality and quantity of English language provision.

Notes

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