Mediating Knowledge and Constituting Subjectivities in Distance Education Materials for Language Teachers in South Africa

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Volume II

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Descriptors attached to the term 'pedagogy'

Pages 1-2

Descriptors attached to the term 'pedagogy'

Radical pedagogy; pedagogy of the oppressed (Freire, 1968/1970); pedagogy for the opposition (Giroux, 1983); pedagogy of closure / open-ended pedagogies (Lusted, 1986); pedagogy of possibilities (Simon, 1987, 1992); border pedagogy (Giroux, 1988/1990); pedagogy of the unknowable (Ellsworth, 1989/1992); emancipatory pedagogy (Freire & Macedo,1987; Lather, 1992); pedagogy of domination (Nkomo, 1990); visible and invisible pedagogies (Bernstein, 1990); progressive pedagogy (Walkerdine, 1992); post-critical pedagogy (Lather, 1992; Green,1998); postmodern pedagogy (Green, 1993); feminist pedagogy (Gore, 1993); regimes of pedagogy (Gore, 1993); resolutory and non-resolutory pedagogy (Bensusan & Shalem, 1993); explicit pedagogy (Bernstein, 1996); competence and performance pedagogies (Bernstein, 1996; Moss, 2002); periphery pedagogies (Canagarajah, 1999); a pedagogy of appropriation (Canagarajah, 1999); pedagogy of multiliteracies (Cope & Kalantzis for the New London Group, 2000); defensive pedagogies (McNeil, 2000); pedagogy of substance (Shulman, 1989, 2004); pedagogies of difference (Green, 1998, Trifonas, 2003); pedagogy / ies of indifference (Lima, 2000; Lingard, 2006); backlash pedagogy (Gutierrez, Asato, Santos & Gotnada, 2002); pedagogy of hope (hooks, 2003; Lavia, 2006); decolonizing pedagogy (Tejeda et al, 2003); pedagogy of discomfort (Boler & Zembylas, 2003); the pedagogy of poverty (Haberman, 2003); pedagogies of reconnection (Comber & Kamler, 2004); turn-around pedagogies (Comber & Kamler, 2004), multimodal pedagogy (Stein, 2004); responsive pedagogy (Slonimsky & Shalem, 2004); poetics of pedagogy (Hugo & Muller, 2006); pedagogy of access (Rule, 2006); dialogic pedagogy (Rule, 2006); pedagogy of inquiry (Nicol, 2006); postcolonial pedagogy (Crowley & Matthews, 2006); fusion pedagogies (Millard, 2006); ambulatory pedagogy (Brenner & Andrew, 2006); productive pedagogies (Hayes et al, 2006; Christie, 2008); pedagogies of the same (Lingard, 2006); culturally relevant pedagogies (Seidl, 2007); vernacular pedagogies (Breen, 2007); nurturance pedagogy (Perumal, 2007); reconciliation pedagogy (Ferreira and Janks, 2007); human rights pedagogy (Robinson & Zinn, 2007); engaging pedagogy (Tinning, 2007); hip-hop pedagogy (Pennycook, 2007); modern pedagogy (Clarke, 2008); a pedagogy of compassion (Jansen, 2008); visual pedagogy (Adams, 2008); transformational pedagogy (Pennefather, 2008); capability pedagogies (Walker, 2008); empathy pedagogy (Maxwell, 2008); signature pedagogies (Lieberman and Pointer Mace, 2008); self-reflexive pedagogy (Luke, 2008); pedagogy as gift (Luke, 2008); pedagogy of compliance (Alexander, 2008); dichotomous pedagogies (Alexander, 2008); humanising pedagogy (Keet, Zinn & Porteous, 2009); post-conflict pedagogy (Jansen, 2009).

Appendix 2

Extracts from the NADEOSA Quality Criteria for Distance Education in South Africa (2005): Criterion 4 Course design; Criterion 5 Course Materials; Criterion 7 Learner Support

Pages 3-11

4. Course Design

The course curriculum is well-researched, with aims and learning outcomes appropriate to the level of study; content, teaching and learning and assessment methods facilitate the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes; there is an identified process of development and evaluation of courses.

Elements of the Criterion

Course planning

4.1 The course is designed with national needs as well as the needs of prospective learners and employers in mind.

4.2 The elements of the course (see 4.3 and 4.4 below) and the relationships between them are consciously planned.

4.3 For each course, there is a publicly accessible and learner-friendly description of the aims and learning outcomes; entry-level skills, knowledge and experience; credit rating and/or notional hours of learning; target learners; teaching and learning strategies; content outline; items in the learning package (including elements such as study guides, textbooks, tutorial letters, audiotapes and videotapes); assessment strategy; and a year plan containing key dates for learners.

4.4 Choice of media and technology is justified in the light of the aims of the course, required learning outcomes, learner needs, capacity to access and use the technologies, the physical features of the teaching sites and available facilities and services.

4.5 There is a stated language policy for the course which is based on the national language policy, language profiles of learners, career context and curriculum. The policy is implemented in course materials, assessment and learner support.

4.6 The list of courses offered by an educational provider is limited to a number that allows for quality investment in course design and development in the context of budgetary limitations. (Quality is defined by the criteria in this document).

Course curriculum

4.7 The amount and complexity of work required to complete the course merits the credits which it has been allocated. This also applies to the assessment for recognition of prior learning and experience.

4.8 Where a course is imported or exported, account is taken of the needs of local contexts, and, where necessary, the course is adapted accordingly (for example, by the inclusion of local case studies or a glossary of terms).

4.9 Content, teaching and learning strategies and assessment are carefully structured to facilitate the achievement of the learning outcomes.

4.10 Various forms of learner support are built into the design of the course.

4.11 Teaching, learning and assessment activities encourage critical thinking and independent learning.

4.12 The teaching and learning strategies of the course acknowledge learners' existing knowledge and experience, and provide opportunities for guided integration of new knowledge.

4.13 Where appropriate, experiential learning opportunities are designed into the course. There are suitable methods of recording and assessing this (such as portfolios, logbooks, project reports, learner interviews, or reports from the mentor).

Quality assurance

4.14 The educational provider requires relevant competence of authors, consultants, and others that are brought into the course design and development process.

4.15 The educational provider gives authors, consultants, and others involved in the course design and development process necessary guidance and training regarding aspects of distance education in order to assure quality in their work.

4.16 An appropriate infrastructure exists within the educational provider to administer the range of elements of the course efficiently.

4.17 There is a timetable for the regular revision and updating of courses.

5. Course Materials

The content, assessment, and teaching and learning approaches in the course materials support the aims and learning outcomes; the materials are accessibly presented; they teach in a coherent way that engages the learners; there is an identified process of development and evaluation of course materials.

Elements of the Criterion

Materials development planning

5.1 The development of course material is based on a project plan which describes, for example, finances and other resources, the delegation of responsibility among those involved, and an adequate time schedule for the work.

5.2 If existing course material is used for a particular course, its suitability is evaluated in terms of required learning outcomes, the appropriateness of the teaching and learning approach, and its relevance for the target learners.

5.3 If existing course material is used for a particular course, there is proper acknowledgement of the source of all quotations and no breach of local or international copyright laws.

5.4 While the provider holds copyright for course materials developed by employed or contracted staff, the individual author's intellectual property rights are also respected.

Quality course materials

5.5 Materials are developed and reviewed in terms of the following criteria:

- 5.5.1 There are clearly laid out aims and learning outcomes, and an explicit indication of study time (notional study hours per section of the material) which allow learners to adopt sensible study plans.
- 5.5.2 The content and teaching approach support learners in achieving the learning outcomes.
- 5.5.3 Learner-friendly introductions, linking and summarizing passages motivate the learners and provide coherence to the materials.
- 5.5.4 The content of the course is accurate, up-to-date, relevant to aims and outcomes, free of discrimination, and reflects awareness of the multilingual and multicultural reality of South African society.
- 5.5.5 The language level of the materials is appropriate for the target learners and the materials assist learners with the particular difficulties that learning-through-reading and learning at a distance require.
- 5.5.6 Care is taken to understand the contexts in which learners live and work, as well as their prior knowledge and experience. This knowledge is used in the design of the materials.

5.5.7 Active learning and teaching approaches are used to engage learners intellectually and practically, and cater for individual needs.

5.5.8 Content is presented in the form of an unfolding argument, rather than discrete bits of information that have no obvious connection.

5.5.9 The various elements of the course materials and different media are integrated, and the integration is clearly sign-posted.

5.5.10 The course materials are designed in an accessible way. Access devices (such as contents pages, headings), graphic presentation of information, and layout facilitate use by the target learners.

5.5.11 The overall technical quality of the materials facilitates learner use.

5.6 In web-based/online courses, the following additional criteria apply:

5.6.1 The service is speedy and reliable: it is easy to connect to the site, and the site loads quickly with a minimum number of crashed sessions.

5.6.2 Pages and text are designed for consistency, readability and attractiveness.

5.6.3 The site is easily navigable, has a sitemap with clearly marked links, and the different elements integrate seamlessly with each other.

5.6.4 The site is up-to-date, with minimum technical faults, and continuously under development.

5.6.5 The site clearly displays its institutional links and acknowledges sources of material used.

5.6.6 Support in the use of various functions on the site is provided both in the site itself and from external technical assistance.

5.6.7 The site encourages interactions with other learners as well as with the tutor/mentor.

Quality assurance

5.7 The materials development plan includes provision for evaluation during the developmental process in the form of critical commenting, developmental testing, or piloting.

5.8 The materials are periodically reviewed in the light of ongoing feedback from learners and tutors and advances in knowledge and research.

7. Learner Support

Learners are provided with a range of opportunities for real two-way communication through the use of various forms of technology for tutoring at a distance, contact tutoring, assignment tutoring, mentoring where appropriate, counselling (both remote and face-to-face), and the stimulation of peer support structures. The need of learners for physical facilities and study resources and participation in decision-making is also taken into account.

Elements of the Criterion

Academic support

7.1 Learners are encouraged to create and participate in 'communities of learning' in which the individual learner thinks and solves problems with others engaged in similar tasks. This is facilitated through a range of learner support mechanisms – peer support sessions, tutorials/contact sessions, teaching on assignments, support in the workplace (mentoring), email and Internet communications, for example.

7.2 Academic support is built into the design of the course materials.

7.3 Learners are carefully oriented to the teaching and learning methods on the programme, particularly if electronic learning methods are used.

7.4 Where appropriate, the development of competence in the use of information and communication technologies is built into the learning outcomes of the programme.

7.5 In selection of venues and times for contact sessions, travel time and expense for learners are considered. Care is taken to place suitable sites of learning close to where learners live/work.

7.6 Tutors are selected and trained for their crucial role in encouraging active engagement of each learner in the course/programme through:

- establishing and maintaining a supportive relationship with each learner in their group;
- mediating learning from the course materials;
- teaching on assignments by give constructive feedback.

7.7 Tutor training places particular emphasis on equipping tutors to analyze and assist learners with language and learning difficulties.

7.8 The tutor/learner ratio is sufficiently small to enable tutors to know their learners as individuals, be able to support them in their studies and monitor their progress.

7.9 There are sufficient contact sessions to ensure that the learners are able to achieve the outcomes of the course.

7.10 Contact sessions are integrated into the course design, rather than being an add-on extra.

7.11 The teaching and learning activities at contact sessions acknowledge learners' existing knowledge and experience, and provide opportunities for guided integration of the new knowledge and skills as contained in the course materials.

7.12 There are opportunities for individual academic support for learners either by telephone, by appointment, or online.

Counselling support

7.13 Learners have access to counselling for personal difficulties/advice related to their study before and during their course or programme, as well as after its completion.

Administrative support

7.14 Administrative staff are trained to be helpful, clear and consultative in the way they relate to and make arrangements for learners.

7.15 The obligations and responsibilities of learners and the educational provider are made clear at registration. It is clear what resources and equipment the provider will supply, and what the learner will have to supply personally.

7.16 Where possible, arrangements are made to meet learners' needs for physical facilities for study, tutorial, and resource space.

7.17 Learners have access to facilities (for example, libraries) and equipment that are necessary for their successful learning.

7.18 Learners are provided with technical support for educational technology hardware, software, and delivery system required in a programme.

Learning centres as part of learner support

7.19 Both academic and administrative functions of learning centres are taken care of in the way that learning centres are managed.

7.20 Learning centres, to the extent that they become fixed structures, and particularly fixed structures with technological equipment, are accessible to the broader community, rather than merely to a provider offering a formal programme.

Monitoring/quality assurance

7.21 Before each critical phase of a course/programme (for example, before the first assignment, contact session, examination), each learner is contacted and encouraged to participate.

7.22 Learner performance is monitored and learners at risk identified. Timeous educational intervention is provided for such learners.

7.23 Performance of tutors and attendance of both tutors and learners at contact sessions is monitored regularly. The work of mentors in supporting and assessing learners in the workplace is also monitored by the provider. Monitoring data is analysed and acted upon.

7.24 Feedback is sought from tutors/mentors as well as from learners for the review of courses and programmes.

7.25 Learner structures, such as learner/student representative councils and faculty associations, are established, recognized and empowered to represent learners on structures of institutional governance.

Appendix 3

Learners and Learning: front cover, table of contents, general introduction, Section Four of the *Learning Guide*, reading 15 in the *Reader*

Pages 12-84

SAIDE

Learners and Learning

Learning Guide

WRITERS
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WITH
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Merlyn van Voore
Lynne Slonimsky

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Contents

Introduction

Learners and Learning is the fourth module in a series of open learning materials designed for use in the initial and ongoing professional development of teachers. Nine modules – most of which will be *mixed media* modules and will include a Learning Guide, a Reader, and a videotape and/or audiotape – are being developed for the *Study of Education* series.

This module, dealing as it does with *learning*, the central 'business' of schools, is closely related to a number of other modules in the series:

- It provides the theoretical underpinnings of the learner-centred and interactive teaching methods taught through the two *practical teaching* modules – *Getting Practical* and *Using Media in Teaching*.
- It adds an important *individual learning* dimension to *Understanding Outcomes-based Education*, which explores the 'paradigm shift' within the South African education system to an outcomes-based educational philosophy.
- The *Curriculum* module, which examines how knowledge is understood and organized by educational planners and then renegotiated and used by teachers, draws on many of the theoretical concepts discussed in this module.

The Study of Education series

The *Study of Education* series – a project which is managed by the South African Institute for Distance Education (SAIDE) – emerged in the exciting times that preceded South Africa's first democratic elections in 1994. Teacher educators – who were being hailed as key to developing a democratic and globally competitive South African society – wanted to move from the authoritarian ethos of the old apartheid curricula, but found few texts available to support them in this shift. This project is a small attempt to fill this gap.

SAIDE was also concerned that the distance education debate in South Africa was driven by questions of cost-efficiency rather than educational quality. Given our dismal distance education history – mostly characterized by single-media and nastily didactic courses – this seemed a major deficiency. We felt that the production of critical and engaging distance education materials would serve to demonstrate how distance education could meet access needs cost-effectively while also providing quality education.

The project chose to develop these open learning texts in the area of educational theory. In an era when the teaching of *theory* is treated with suspicion, this might be regarded as a strange choice. We believed, however, that teachers who have to *change* the old system and *implement* the new curriculum, who have to help *build a democratic order* and not simply run the old system more efficiently, need an education which develops the ability to think, problem-solve, and make value judgements. But, like many educators, we had a distinct dislike for the abstract and decontextualized theory that characterized South African teacher education in the past. This series attempts to teach theory as a *valuable element of practice* which teachers can use to understand and improve their lives and practices as teachers.

Finally, the authors of the *Study of Education* series were determined to break with the 'top-down' curriculum development practices characteristic of our past in three important ways:

- we have actively recruited writers from a *range* of teacher education institutions;
- we have worked to establish a *collaborative and team approach* to module development;
- we have prioritized the *development* of writing and curriculum design skills in our writers.

We hope you enjoy working through this module. If you do, look out for the other modules in the series. They deal with issues as concrete as school organization and management *(Creating People-centred Schools)*, and teacher professionalism *(Being a*

Teacher), through to fascinating speculations on the changed roles which schools and teachers will play in Africa in the new millennium.

Acknowledgements

This module took a long time to develop. It began as a series of small 'brainstorming' meetings in Durban. The ideas from these meetings were organized into a writing proposal by Lynne Slonimsky and Jill Bradbury. The proposal then gathered dust for a while before Ian Moll and Gisela Winkler were asked to resuscitate it. This they did with enthusiasm, and with assistance from Jill and the other writers, Maggie Tshule and Merlyn van Voore, the module was finally completed.

Writing learning materials, unlike writing a novel or academic paper, is a team effort. Part of this effort is the feedback received from critical readers. Were the presented ideas valid and useful to teachers? Were the arguments clear and strong? Was the text written in an accessible and interactive style? A special thanks goes to Anita Craig (University of Stellenbosch), Lynette Faragher (Western Cape College of Education), Sandy Lazarus (University of the Western Cape), and Staf Sithole (Shoma Education Foundation) whose comments were invaluable in shaping the character and form of the module. A final but important member of the creative team is George Lekorotsoana who edited hours of interviews into an interesting and useful educational audiotape.

Behind the writers and critical readers is a team of people who made the whole process happen. We thank Mike Adendorff (simply for managing), Kerry Frizelle (for the work she put into finding the resources for the 'Durban task'), Joanne Hardman (for the transcript of her homology lesson), Mandla Maseko (for his recollections on learning and assistance with the audiotape), and SAIDE staff, in particular Jenny Louw and Thenji Mlabatheki, for their help in tracing resources.

Lastly, the writers would like to express their gratitude to the South African Institute for Distance Education (SAIDE) and the project funders, the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, for making it possible to produce this module.

John Gultig (series editor) and
Ian Moll (module co-ordinator)

SECTION ONE

About this module

What will you learn in this module?

Not surprisingly, *Learners and Learning* aims to develop your understanding of learning. It seeks to assist you, as a teacher, to be able to analyse learning, and in so doing, to reflect on what you can do to improve it.

We have divided the module into six sections. This first section:

- introduces the module;
- discusses how we'd like you to study;
- explains how we understand learning;
- begins to explore, at a simple level, how learning is initiated.

Sections Two to Six each pose, and provide tools for answering, a critical question about learning:

Section	Critical question about learning explored	
Section Two	**How do we, as teachers, enable learners to learn?**	This section explains how learners move from the known to the unknown.
Section Three	**How is school learning different from everyday learning?**	We explore how teachers can implement good school learning in classrooms.
Section Four	**What role do texts and literacy (reading and writing) play in learning?**	We argue that reading and writing are crucial to good school learning.
Section Five	**What role do teachers play in producing and improving learning?**	In this section we consider this question in detail.
Section Six	**How can teachers use different theories of learning to help them understand learning in their classrooms?**	We examine a number of different cognitive theories and consider the relationship between theory and practice.

If you want to find out more about this module's key ideas or thought structure, turn to page 18 of Section 1.4 and read 'The module's key themes'. You could also read each section's 'Introduction'.

At the end of each section we consider how the ideas about learning discussed relate to the South African debate about outcomes-based education.

Introduction

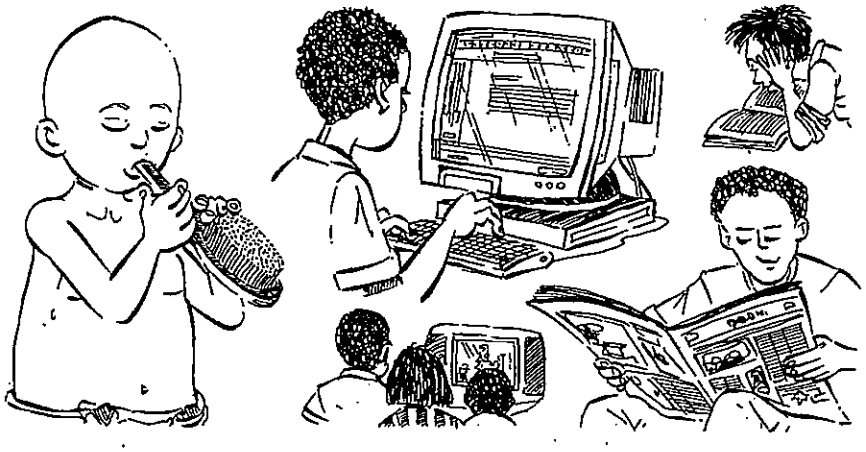
1.1

The problem with learning

It seems obvious that teachers should be interested in learning. Children go to school to learn; teachers go to school to teach them how to learn. The introduction of outcomes-based education has re-established the importance of learning by emphasizing *learner-centredness* and *lifelong learning*, and by highlighting the importance of creating a *culture of learning and teaching* in our schools.

But learning doesn't belong only in classrooms: learning new things is something that we all do, everywhere and throughout our lives. Long before children get to school they learn about the world by inquisitively exploring their immediate environments, responding to a multitude of colours and sounds, touching, grasping, and putting all kinds of things into their mouths. Perhaps most importantly of all, young children learn to talk, to communicate with others, and to know the world through the language of their mothers and others in their cultural context. As a result, children arrive on the first day of 'big' school with their heads already full of rich learning experiences.

This everyday learning – learning *outside* of the classroom – continues throughout our lives. Even as adults we continue to discover new things about our worlds – through the newspapers we read, the TV we watch, and in our interactions with others in the workplace and at home.



The process of learning seems so natural that we often forget to ask important questions about it.

None of us doubt that learning to understand the world is a central part of education, but because learning is such an ordinary and everyday thing, we sometimes take it for granted. We don't give a second thought to *how* the people around us are learning, or *why* they are able to remember all the new things they learn. The *process* of learning seems so natural that we forget to ask important questions about it; we often don't bother to learn about learning.

There is a danger in this oversight, particularly for teachers. Precisely because learning is so common and so natural, we need to think about it carefully and understand what it is, and why and how it happens. We need to understand why different kinds of learning are important in different contexts. More significantly, we need to understand why, and under what conditions, learning doesn't happen when we expected it to.

How to work with this module

1.2

The module's components

Learners and Learning consists of the following components:

- a Learning Guide;
- a Reader;
- an audiotape;
- a workbook.

Learning Guide

This Learning Guide operates as your 'teacher'. It will structure your learning, explain concepts, and direct you to other parts of the module at appropriate times. It is filled with activities that we strongly suggest you complete before proceeding to the next section.

Scan through the Guide now. Do so by reading the main contents page and then each section's contents page. This will give you an idea of what you will learn.

Reader

The Reader contains the edited writings of a range of expert theorists and practitioners which the Learning Guide refers you to at appropriate moments. Consider these readings as the written advice of experts who are able to give you guidance on specific issues. Treat their advice critically, however. Don't simply accept their opinions.

Scan through the Reader now. Do so by reading the main contents page and then each section's contents page. This will give you an idea of what you will learn.

Audiotape

The audiotape consists of interviews with learning experts, conversations with teachers, and recordings of excerpts from lessons.

Listen to the complete tape now. Don't be dismayed if you don't understand some of the discussion at this point. The Guide will advise you to listen to shorter segments of the tape again, later.

Workbook

We strongly advise you to purchase a workbook in which you can do all the activities and also make notes of any additional ideas you may have as you study. This workbook will act as a record of your thinking and development. We suggest that you buy a hardcover A4 book or a file for this purpose.

The importance of active learning

As you work through the Learning Guide, you will see that we advocate the idea that *new understandings depend on, and arise out of, action.* Because we firmly believe this, we have designed this Guide to include many activities that we hope you, as the teacher-learner, will complete. Like all good learning materials, the Guide will work best if you *engage systematically with the activities* that are set out for you here. If you don't do the activities, you will miss out on the most important part of the learning pathway we have developed for you.

You will recognise these activities by this kind of icon in the margin next to them. The recommended time you should spend on each activity is also included.

Reading and writing activities

Most of the activities in the Guide are *reading and writing activities.* It is important that you apply your mind to each one of them and answer the set questions in your workbook.

Follow the instructions given for each activity carefully. You may, for example, be asked to read an article from the Reader, to consider a set of issues raised in the Guide from a particular perspective, or to listen to a specific part of the audiotape. Follow these instructions but also write down any other comments or thoughts that come to mind as you do each activity. In particular, think of how you can apply the new ideas in your teaching.

The activities you are asked to do are designed primarily to help you to learn something new, or to acquire a new understanding about something. As with the readings, we will sometimes ask you to go back to an activity you have done in your workbook and revise it in the light of the new understandings you have developed. Don't skip this step; it is a vitally important part of the learning process.

An icon like this will appear in the margin when you need to stop reading and reflect on an issue.

Thinking activities

At various points in the Learning Guide, we ask you to *pause* and take some time to reflect on a particular issue. These thought pauses are designed to help you consolidate your understanding of a specific point before tackling the next section of the Guide. They deliberately try and slow you down!

One of the habits many of us develop through our involvement in a rote recall kind of learning is that we rush through things. Once we have read something, we believe we know it. This isn't true. While we may now recognize the idea, we probably don't really understand it in any detail. Work through this Guide slowly and thoughtfully. Reread and rethink. This is how we develop a depth of understanding and become able to use the ideas we learn.

Try to link the issue raised in each thought pause with what you have read, with what you have already learnt about learning, with your own previous experience, and so on. Think about the problem we have raised. You might want to jot down your ideas in your workbook so that you can be reminded of them at a later stage.

An icon like this will appear in the margin alongside all listening activities that require you to listen to the audiotape.

Listening activities

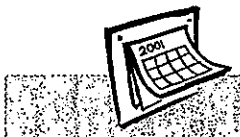
The audiotape contains interviews with South African experts in the field of learning, interviews with teachers, and short excerpts of teaching and learning experiences. The tape serves two key purposes:

- It provides learning variety in that it asks you to listen rather than read. It also dramatizes learning events so that the interactions between teachers and learners come alive. A learner who used a similar tape in another module said that it offered 'light entertainment' after the heavy reading he had done! This is a good response. Enjoy the tape.

- It illustrates or magnifies ideas presented in the Guide by providing you with examples of how teacher-experts use these ideas in *conversation*. Listen to how they construct arguments, or how they use a concept or idea to analyse an incident in a classroom.

We refer you to the audiotape at specific points in the text and have tried not to use excerpts that are more than about twelve minutes long. You may find it difficult to concentrate at first. Your listening skills will improve, however, if you use the questions in the activities to guide your listening, make notes while you listen, and listen to excerpts more than once. Feel free to listen to the tape ahead of time, but do so *again* when the Guide requests you to do so.

How much time should you spend studying?



This time management icon will help you to assess how well you are using your time. We have assumed that you will work with this Learning Guide over 20 weeks, spending 6 hours studying each week. Try and make sure you begin sections in the correct week.

It is impossible to estimate how long it will take hundreds of different kinds of learners to work through this module. We have written it so that an average, hard-working student who works consistently for six hours a week will finish this module in about twenty weeks (a university semester). In other words, you should set aside about 120 hours of time to study.

We expect that you will spend the 120 hours in the following way:

- Reading time: about sixty hours. This includes reading the Guide as well as readings in the Reader.
- Activity time: about forty hours. This includes the time it takes you to think about your readings, listen to your audiotape, and write your answers in your workbook.
- Assignment writing time: about twenty hours. This is the time you will spend writing the assignments you submit to your tutors.

As we have said, however, different learners learn in different ways and will take different lengths of time to complete this module. Be your own guide. Structure your learning so that it fits with your lifestyle. You could, for instance, complete this module:

- in ten weeks if you are a full-time student and can spend twelve hours a week on this module;
- in a year (or about forty weeks) if you are very busy and can only spend three hours a week studying.

Of course you could also complete this module in a couple of days if you ignore all the activities and simply read it from cover to cover. But this isn't studying and you will probably forget everything within days!

We also know that different students work at different speeds, so you may well find that you need more (or slightly less) than the 120 hours we have estimated it will take learners to complete this module. Again, assess your own capabilities and spend more time on the module if you feel you need to do so.

Different students learn in different ways and at different speeds. Assess your own capabilities and structure your learning to fit your lifestyle.

Assessing your learning

We have designed this module so that it models an outcomes-based assessment style. This means that the book promotes an assessment process that:

- is *continuous* and *formative*;
- assesses your ability to *relate ideas about learning* to *classroom realities and concerns*;
- contributes to your *intellectual development*.

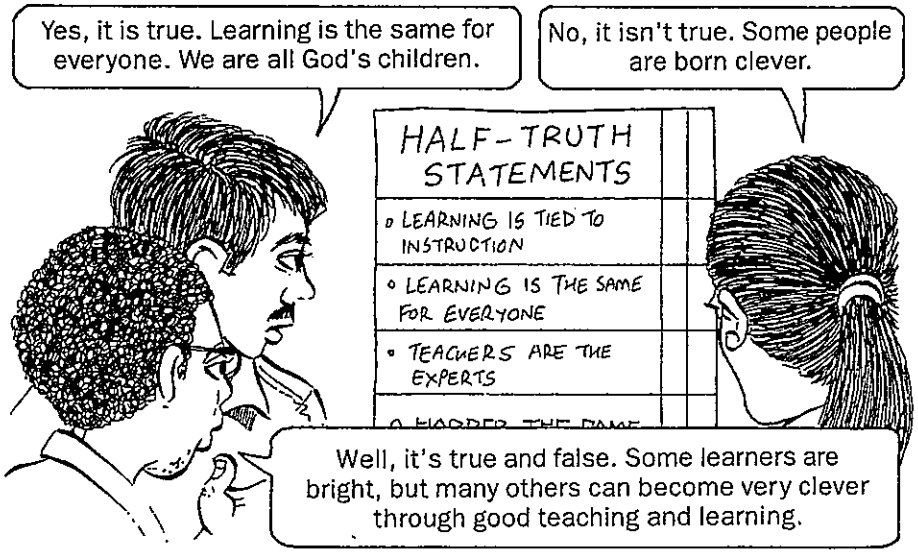
While your institution may still require you to write a final exam, we believe that your *own assessment* of your *consistent engagement* throughout the learning process is just as important as any final 'measurement' of your ability.

So far, this section has set out the different learning media which make up the module (a 'teaching' text, academic articles, and taped discussions which expand and reflect on the text) and has explained what it is that we expect you to do in order to acquire new understandings about learning. This explanation is descriptive in two ways. In one, more obvious sense, it describes all the important components of the module. In another, more abstract sense, it describes a conception of learning (and thus of assessment) that is important for you to understand:

- Firstly, the module as a whole is a *system* of knowledge about learning. Not only do the various sections and parts of each component (Learning Guide, Reader, and audiotape) build on one another; each whole component also builds on and clarifies the ideas in the other components. This means that as you work through the whole module, you are building relationships within and between the different texts.
- Secondly, the section assumes that you need to *do* things in order to learn. It sets out the kinds of *tasks* or *activities* that you need to engage in in order to come to know this system, that is, to learn about learning. You need to engage in action to start to learn something new, and you need to continue with such action in order to gain and consolidate new understandings.

At the beginning of Sections Two to Six, your first action will be to consider a number of *contentious statements about learning*. The aims of doing this are to:

- help you define what you already know about learning;
- establish what you think you may know (but which might be wrong);
- focus your thinking on the central issues of each section.



Spend time considering whether or not you agree with each of the statements, and for what reasons. As you read through them, make notes on your initial response to each (we will ask you to reassess these first respons-

1.3 Who wrote this module?

This module was written jointly by a team of authors. All of our 'voices' appear in each section in some way or another. There were many debates amongst members of the team as the manuscript took shape. We debated about matters of principle and theory as well as about what content and pedagogical strategies should go into a teaching-learning text of this kind. We criticized each other constantly which resulted in the rewriting of our text along the way. This happened many times!

There are still important differences amongst us, the writers, on many of the issues we cover in the module. We will probably pursue these in other kinds of debate in the future. We want you to do the same. Don't simply agree with us. Instead, read carefully, debate your points with other teacher-learners, and rethink issues. Be able to substantiate and argue your views, but always remain open to changing them.

In the end, though, we agreed enough to present the module to learners and readers as a *collective* product. The following are the members of the team and the sections of the text for which each took responsibility:

Gisela Winkler is a teacher and freelance author of educational materials based in the Western Cape. She is the primary author of Sections Three, Four, and Five. She also carried out an overwriting function for the whole module.

Ian Moll was a lecturer in the Department of Education at the University of the Witwatersrand, and subsequently a Director in the Gauteng Department of Education. He is currently studying child development in Geneva. He is the primary author of Sections One and Six, and of the OBE commentaries at the end of all sections.

Jill Bradbury is an educational psychologist from the University of Natal (Durban). She is currently the Programme Director of Academic Courses and Curriculum Development in the office of Community Outreach and Service Learning (COSL). She is the primary author of Section Two.

Maggie Tshule is on the lecturing staff of the Department of Speech Pathology and Audiology at the University of the Witwatersrand. She is a co-author of Sections Five and Six.

Merlyn van Voore was formerly a secondary school mathematics teacher and now works as an education and training consultant in Johannesburg. She contributed a number of the case studies of teaching and learning that appear in the text.

Lynne Slonimsky is on the lecturing staff of the Department of Education at the University of the Witwatersrand. She co-developed the original proposal and contributed extensive revisions of text to all the sections.

In the first learning task in the module (Activity 1 on page 12 of this section), we give you an opportunity to further understand this notion of half-truths.

es later). We have tried to formulate the statements so that they are neither obviously true nor false but rather represent half-truths about learning. This means that while they may offer important insights into learning, they tell only *part* of the story and can be misleading or incorrect in some important aspects.

At the end of Sections Two to Six, your last action will be to go back to the statements you considered at the beginning and think about them again in the light of what you have studied. When you do this, ask yourself:

- How have my views or understandings changed?
- Can I provide better reasons for why I agree or disagree with particular statements? If yes, what are these? If no, why not?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses, or the half-truth, of each statement?

These half-truth statements act as a special kind of *learning outcome*. They direct your attention to the key ideas in each section. By returning to them after studying a section, we are asking you to assess the degree to which your understanding of these key issues has changed. In other words, we are asking you to decide whether or not you achieved the desired learning outcome.

How does learning get started?

1.4

What are half-truths?

On page 45 in the Reader you will find an article by Dwyer in which he argues that a whole range of *common-sense statements about learning* made every day by teachers, are only half-truths. For example:

- He argues that the statement *'learning is a somewhat unnatural activity'* is true to the extent that learning requires hard work, but false in that it is something all children do simply because they grow and develop.
- He suggests that the statement *'learning is the same for everyone'* has some truth in it (because all children have a right to acquire the common body of knowledge that enables them to participate in a democratic society) but is false in another sense (because every child learns differently).

Most of the statements about learning at the beginning of each of this module's sections can be considered to be *half*-truths rather than entirely true or false. As a learner it is important that you, in each case, think about:

- in what ways they are true;
- in what ways they are false.

We hope that in the process of studying each section you will refine and change your initial understanding of the half-truth statements and find further knowledge and evidence to support particular positions.
Let's read the article by Dwyer to see what he can tell us about half-truths in learning.

You need about 45 minutes to do this activity. Read Dwyer carefully and more than once. Do Activity 1 alone first and discuss it with other teacher-learners when you have finished.

Activity 1

1 Glance through the table below. Then read the article by Dwyer on page 45 of your Reader entitled 'Some half-truths about learning'. Use the statements in the first column of the table to guide your reading.
2 When you have finished reading, and understand what Dwyer is arguing, draw a table similar to the one below in your workbook and complete it.

Statement about learning	What does Dwyer consider to be true about the statement?	What does Dwyer consider to be inaccurate or false about the statement?
Learning is the act of acquiring and retaining information.		
Learning is a somewhat unnatural activity.		
Learning is best undertaken in a structured, orderly manner.		
Learning is tied to instruction.		
Learning is the same for everyone.		
Teachers are the experts.		

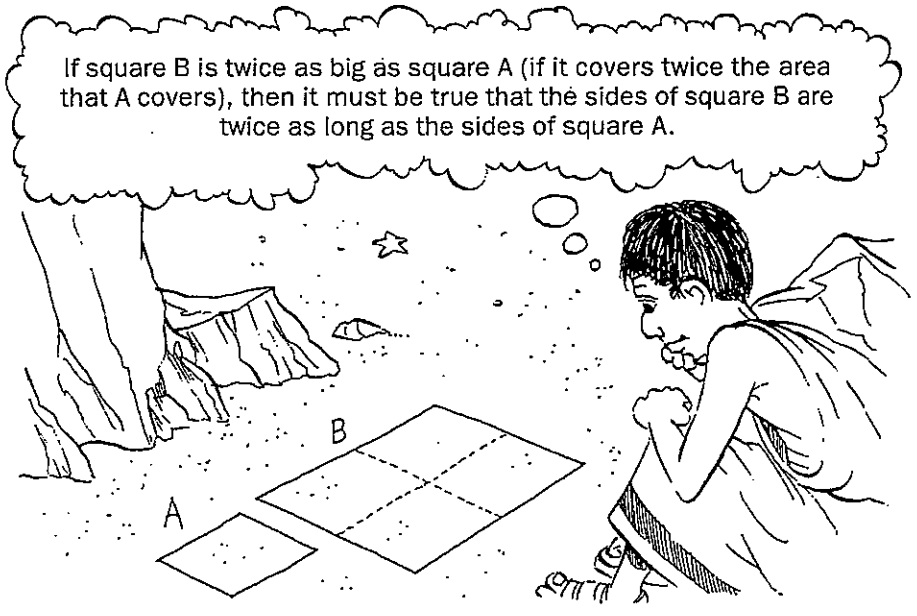
Starting to learn

We won't provide feedback on Activity 1 immediately. As you move through this module, you will work out what half-truths are and why they limit our understanding of learning through your own *action* by doing the half-truth activities regularly.

Let's continue by finding out how *believing that we know the truth* can stand in the way of real learning; of really finding the 'truth'.

An ancient story about learning

There is an ancient and famous story about a slave boy who believed that when you doubled the area of a square, it followed that you doubled the length of its sides. He thought to himself:



Stop. Think.

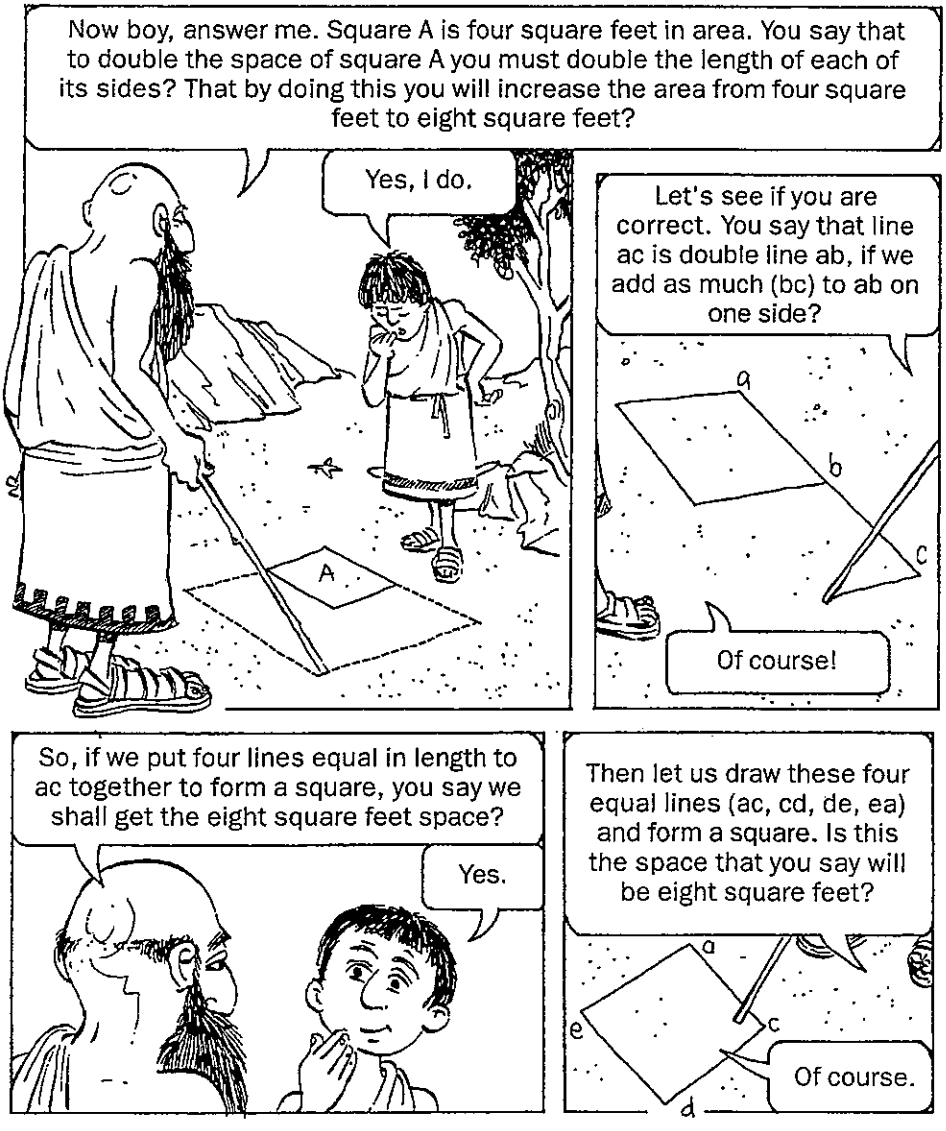
Read that again. Is this boy's logic correct? If not, what's wrong with his understanding of space? How would you, as a teacher, correct his thinking?

Take some time to reflect on the issue being raised here.

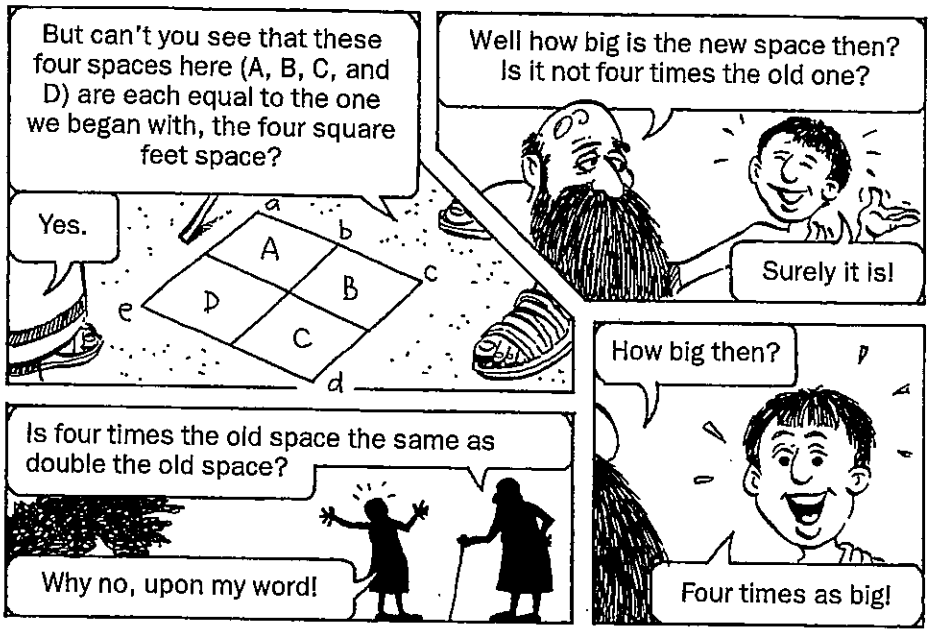
This reasoning seemed obvious to the boy. He couldn't see that he was wrong. In fact, as far as he was concerned, he was absolutely right, and stated the fact boldly and confidently. As his teacher said at the time, the boy did not know, but he *thought* that he knew. Because he *believed* he was right, he could not see that he was wrong.

In order to correct his thinking this teacher, the famous Greek philosopher Socrates, asked the boy a series of questions about the two squares. By doing this he led the boy to contradict himself. Suddenly, as he tried to answer the questions, the boy realized that his answers didn't make sense. He suddenly saw that he had been wrong all along. This is sometimes called an 'Aha!' experience. The boy realized that he had not understood and did not know after all, and he felt really uneasy. Socrates called this feeling 'perplexity'.

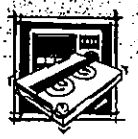
Let's look in on Socrates' teaching. Read through this cartoon.



This story/cartoon is adapted from Plato, 'The Meno' in *The Great Dialogues of Plato* (New York, Plume, 1956), pp. 45–46.



Spend about 25 minutes on this activity. Listen carefully. Stop the tape when the narrator says 'Part 1'. When you have finished the activity, consider discussing your ideas with other teachers before you continue reading.



Week 2 begins.

Activity 2

1 Take out your audiotape. Begin listening at the start of Side 1. After the introduction and a short musical interlude, there is a 'South-Africanized' version of the Socrates dialogue.
   - **a** First, listen carefully to the important points we make about how you should learn.
   - **b** Then, directly after the music, listen to the teaching dialogue between 'Socrates' and a 'learner'.

2 As you listen pay particular attention to the questions the teacher asks.
   - **a** What does the teacher do to help the learner to understand?
   - **b** What does this story teach us about teaching and learning?

What does Socrates teach us about learning?

At first, the boy *thought* that he knew how long the sides of square B were. He was satisfied and *complacent* in his state of ignorance: there was no reason for him to investigate further or to think more deeply. Socrates knew this, and asked him questions that broke his complacency by making him feel perplexed, confused, and uncertain. The boy began doubting his initial beliefs. He now knew that he did not know, and so began *searching for new understanding*. He was aware that he had misunderstood things and that he now had a problem to solve. He was no longer complacent.

Socrates believed that the learner was now much wiser than before, even though he did not yet grasp the correct *understanding* (he knew that the area was four times as large but did not yet understand *why*). Without his complacency, the boy was better off and much stronger as a learner. Now he would *want* to know, and would *search actively* for knowledge. As Socrates said, 'He will find out by seeking along with me, while I do nothing but ask questions.'

Socrates went on to help the boy discover *mental pathways* (new ways of thinking about the problem) he could use to learn about the relationship between the sides of a square and its area. He did this by asking him further questions about the lines and spaces of the square, and about diagonals that could be drawn in the square.

What role should learners play?

What you have just read is an example of a successful learning and teaching event, but the success is the result of the learner and the teacher being prepared to play particular roles. The boy – the learner – has to think about the problem *actively*:

- He guesses and by so doing reveals his understanding (or misunderstanding) of the problem.
- He makes mistakes and is prepared and encouraged to make mistakes.
- He then corrects them in the light of new information or feedback.
- He is prepared to listen to Socrates and learn from his teacher's understanding, which is different from his own.
- He realizes the contradictions between his existing knowledge and the formal knowledge that others – like Socrates – have of geometry.

By being prepared to enter the learning situation with this kind of attitude, the boy is able to actively come to know something that he did not know before.

What role should teachers play?

Much of this couldn't have happened, however, without a good teacher and good teaching. Let's have a look at the kind of role that Socrates – the teacher – plays. He *deliberately teaches* the boy new knowledge:

- He questions the boy and then identifies the mistakes that the boy is making.
- He is able to pinpoint what the boy needs to know and do in order to correct his mistakes *because he knows more about geometry than the boy.*
- He frames this new knowledge in a way that the boy can understand it and be challenged by it; he teaches well!
- He designs an *activity* which will allow the boy to engage in, and come to understand, the new knowledge and correct his own mistakes. He doesn't simply tell the boy why he is wrong.
- He *guides* and, where necessary, *provokes* the boy through this activity. This ensures that the learner is interested and engaged, and doesn't become too confused.

Another way of thinking about this famous event is to say that Socrates introduced the boy to a *system of thinking* (about geometry) and questioned him about the squares using the *language* and *conceptual tools of this discipline.*

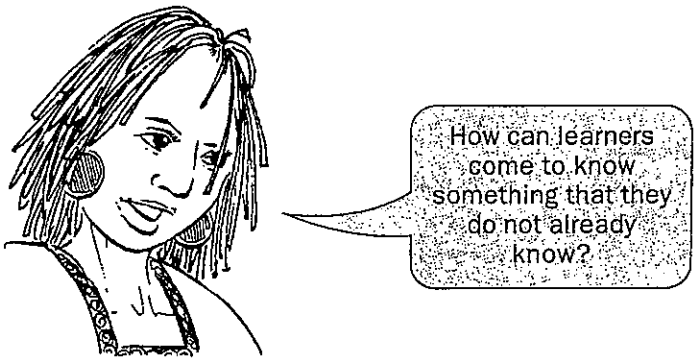
By answering the questions, the boy engaged in a new way of thinking about the square, and eventually completed the 'Aha!' experience. He arrived at a new understanding by participating with Socrates in the activity of questioning even that which seemed obvious. He learnt to see a problem in geometry differently and correctly, and in the end, he knew and understood the principle of how to calculate how much longer the sides of square B were than those of square A.

Most importantly, he would now be able to apply this understanding to new problems independently.

Don't worry if you are not absolutely sure what we mean by 'system of thinking', or 'conceptual tools of this discipline'. These ideas are central to this module and we will teach you more about them as we move through the sections.

The learning paradox

The most interesting question that this story of a boy learning geometry provokes, is one that has troubled psychologists and educators for a long time. It is a question that every teacher asks in some form or another about every learner, every day in a classroom:



Think carefully about the boy. In his initial state, he did not realize that his understanding was incorrect. He therefore *did not realize that he needed to learn* anything. He saw no need to learn, and *had no desire whatsoever to learn*. In fact, his misunderstanding, because it was so strongly and confidently held, probably acted as an obstacle to further learning. The fact that he 'knew' meant that he did not seek any further knowledge about the subject.

This problem is often called the *learning paradox* and is very important in teaching. The paradox suggests that:

- If we *know something*, then we don't look any further; we don't feel a need to see whether there is something more to know. In other words, we don't feel motivated to learn because we think we have already learnt.
- Yet, if we *don't know something*, we also don't feel motivated to learn! Why? Well, because we don't know what we need to know, or need to look for. We don't know that there is anything more to learn. And even if we did seek to learn, we would not know when we had found what we looking for (because we didn't know what it was when we started).

This may sound a little confusing at the moment. But this is the tricky problem that confronts teachers over and over again in their classrooms. We will come back to it again and again in this module.

How do teachers deal with this paradox?

The *learning* paradox also translates into a paradox of *teaching*:

By 'paradox' we mean a state of affairs that is at first glance contradictory, but which on closer examination reveals an underlying truth. The *learning paradox* is such a statement. Kierkegaard described it in this way in *Philosophical Fragments* (Princeton University Press, 1987): 'A person cannot possibly seek what he knows, and, just as impossibly, he cannot seek what he does not know, for what he knows, he cannot seek, since he knows it, and what he does not know he cannot seek, because, after all, he does not even know what he is supposed to seek.' Later, when you listen to your audiotape, you will hear a number of people refer to it.

The story of the boy learning geometry shows us very well what an understanding of this paradox can reveal about learning, particularly the kind of learning that happens at school.

Socrates had to find a way of getting the boy to understand that, in fact, he *did not know the answer* to the geometrical problem, although he *believed he did.* Then, he somehow had to provide the boy with the necessary learning resources for his understanding to change. In other words, he had to find a way of motivating the boy to move from the *known* to the *unknown.*

As the teacher, Socrates was responsible for ensuring that some kind of *activity* happened which would make it possible for the boy to learn something new. Sometimes learners encounter the unknown with confusion and puzzlement (perplexity) when they recognize that they do not understand it at all. Often, however, they may think that they do understand it – just as the boy thought that he understood the geometry of the area of a square.

In either case, the learner is *unable to use his or her previous understanding* in order to act in solving the problem:

- In the first case, the learner knows that his or her previous understanding is inadequate and doesn't know what to do.
- In the second case, the sense of understanding means that the learner will act inappropriately and be unable to solve the problem correctly.

This is the learning paradox – how can someone learn something new or different either if they feel totally lost, as if they know nothing at all, or if they feel certain that they understand things perfectly? This paradox cannot be resolved by focusing on *understanding* alone.

> *Rather, the key to learning lies in action.*

This is a very important principle for you to understand: in order for children to learn, they must engage in some kind of activity that provides pathways for them to move from the known to the unknown. In the Reader, you will find an article by Craig on page 85 entitled 'Education for all'. In it, Craig expresses this principle as follows:

> *'For someone to learn, she must first act, in order to discover the limits of her knowledge and the demands of the task, before she can be explicitly taught about the task and ways of engaging it appropriately and successfully.'*

In order for children to learn, they must engage in some kind of activity that provides pathways for them to move from the known to the unknown.

Two kinds of learning activity

How will the learner know what kind of action to engage in? There are two important sources of activity:

- The learner herself will spontaneously act to make sense of the world. People are naturally active, curious beings. Although these actions may sometimes be based on misunderstandings, new information from objects and events in the world in response to her actions may cause her to reflect on and change her understanding.
- A teacher or more experienced person may create opportunities for action that will take the individual beyond her own spontaneous activities and in the process, allow her to experience things in a new way.

Both of these sources of action are important for changing old understandings and learning new things. This module will explore both to explain how the *active construction of learning* is possible.

The module's key themes

The central themes that you will find running through the whole module arise from this discussion of the learning paradox. We proceed from the insight that activities involving both *self-generated action and engagement with the knowledge of others* are necessary for learning to occur. Throughout, we emphasize that learning is only possible through action.

Section	Key theme
Section Two	We discuss the spontaneous mental action by which people create connections between ideas using their previous knowledge to understand new information. We also explore the active strategies of guessing, questioning, and imagining as ways to move from the known to the unknown.
Section Three	We identify particular kinds of *unknown* that characterize the formal schooling context and demand new and different kinds of learning actions.
Section Four	We explore the important role of reading in learning. Through reading we gain access to the knowledge of others (and in particular, disciplinary knowledge) which is probably the most important function of school learning.
Section Five	We explain how teachers can guide and direct learners' actions to effect new understandings.
Section Six	We explore different ways that important theorists have explained the learning process.

Our understanding of learning

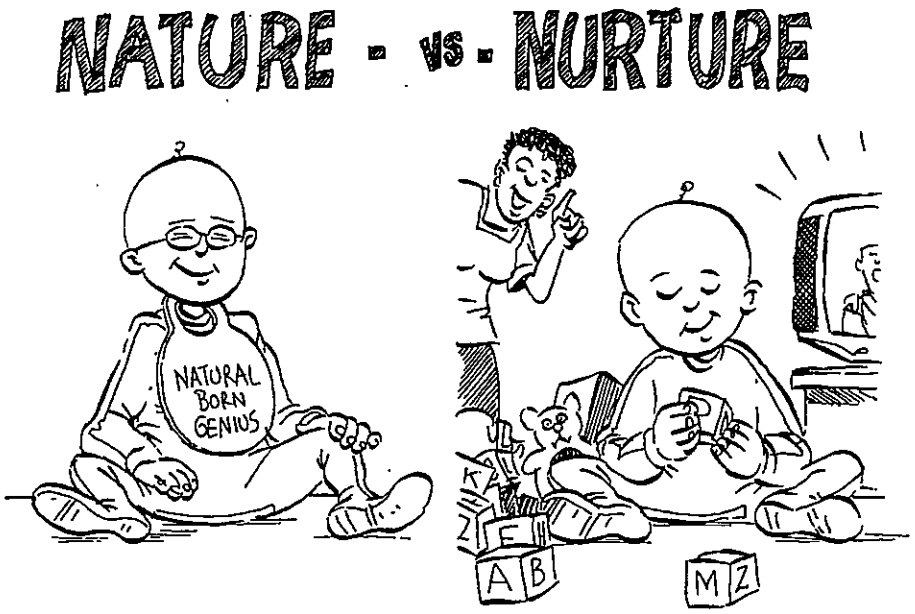
This module takes a broadly *constructivist* approach to teaching and learning. Earlier theories of learning tended to view learners as rather passive recipients of knowledge, but contemporary constructivist theories emphasize the active engagement of both learners and teachers. We revisit some of the earlier ideas in the module and redescribe them in theoretical terms. We also make suggestions as to how you as a teacher can use theories of learning.

These ideas about learning having to do with acts of understanding are contentious. Ideas about teaching and learning have changed a lot in the past fifty years. In the context of schools, there has been a shift from the idea that good teaching is like banking (depositing knowledge in the learner in the same way as money is deposited in the bank) to the idea that teaching and learning are active *processes* of making meaning.

The passive learner

If you spoke to education department officials and theorists of learning around the world before the 1950s, you would probably have been told that children learn by having knowledge *given* to them. They would have argued about *how* this knowledge is given. Some would have said that it is given to the learner 'from inside' by different kinds of intelligence and aptitudes that children inherit at birth. Others would have said that knowledge is given to the child by 'inputs from outside', by the influence that the environment has on children's upbringings. But they would not have argued very much about the 'fact' that knowledge is *given* to children.

The reason for this general level of agreement is that we are, to a greater or lesser extent, teachers, learners, and thinkers within the dominant spirit of our times. The debate about learning and teaching that raged up to the end of the 1950s tended to be formulated as the 'nature-nurture debate'.



'Nature': Knowledge is given to us from inside. Learning happens when the machine of our mind gets going, when we practise and perfect our innate talents.

'Nurture': Knowledge is given to us from outside. Learning happens when the environment impacts upon us and changes our conduct, when we accumulate experiences.

In education theory, the 'nature' perspective (the belief in the power of innate ideas to determine our learning) was in its time very influential in shaping the schooling system as we know it. The power of the intelligence testing movement is one example. Let's face it, we all find it very hard to shake off the belief that the people who did better than us at school were *born* with a higher IQ than us, no matter how much we are told that IQ tests are culturally and academically biased! As teachers, it is difficult to shake off the belief that some children are *born* more intelligent than others.

The 'nurture' perspective has also been extremely influential. One thing that it has produced is a very narrow focus on the *objectives* of the teaching-learning situation. It has led to a system of teaching where learning objectives (or outcomes) are defined beforehand, and where teachers teach towards the achievement of this final set of predetermined skills, knowledge, attitudes, and values by the end of a particular period of time. Behaviourists, for example, talk of the shaping of 'terminal behaviours' by the careful management of reinforcement systems. The teaching-learning process is recast as a series of technical events concerned with the way that environmental stimuli reinforce learning.

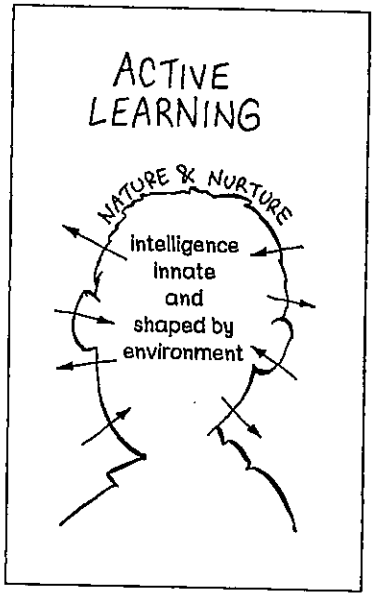
The common assumptions within the nature-nurture dispute have been very influential in education. Up to at least the middle of the twentieth century, teachers and education officials tended to share a view of the learners as *passive* or *static*. Whether knowledge came from inside or outside the child was not considered as important as the underlying idea that the *child passively received knowledge.*

The active learner

In the 1960s and 1970s, a revolution took place around the world in the way in which we think about teaching and learning. Its essence was a shift away from the idea that knowledge is simply *given* to children in favour of the idea that children *create* knowledge. No longer were children to be thought of as passive recipients of knowledge, but rather as *active construc-*

tors of their own knowledge through their interaction with the world and society around them. In order to construct knowledge learners must *both*:

- develop their own novel ways of knowing;
- acquire existing human knowledge (language, cultural wisdom, technical skills, school disciplines etc.).



In other words, learners *construct* (develop their own novel ways of knowing) and *reconstruct* (acquire existing human knowledge) knowledge in order to develop their own *systems of knowing*. The child-centred or learner-centred education movement came about as a result of this emphasis on the way that the learner constructs his or her own knowledge. This revolution in thinking about learning is known as the 'constructivist revolution', and it left the rigid, old nature-nurture debate behind.

Importantly, the concept of activity was central to this whole shift in understanding learning. In the school context, broadly speaking, constructivism came to emphasize the activity of both learners and teachers in the school as they constructed and reconstructed knowledge.

This shift in thinking does not mean that we should throw out all the ideas about learning or methods of teaching associated with the earlier theories. In fact, new ideas often build on older ideas. Think about a child constructing knowledge. The act of constructing new knowledge is an interaction between what is given by *nature* (inborn capacity) and what is given by *nurture* (experience). The learner creates new meanings out of this interaction. This module approaches learning with both imperatives – nature and nurture – in mind:

- In Section Two we set out to understand the immense *inborn capacity* (nature) of individuals to learn. We argue that all of us are *naturally* curious and acquire new understandings by acting on the world in peculiarly human ways. This is a powerful force for learning in the classroom.
- In Sections Three, Four, and Five we explore how schools, books, and teachers can make learning possible. Everything in the world – events, contexts, objects, and people – functions either to produce(nurture) or block learning.

However, learning should not be dissolved into *either* the inside *or* the outside of the learner. In this module we try to develop the principle of the *active construction* of learning out of both human nature and the world.

Outcomes-based education 1.5

Many people have argued that constructivism informs the learning and teaching approaches advocated with the introduction of outcomes-based education (OBE) in South Africa. We'd probably argue that this statement is a *half-truth*!

There is an emphasis on the learner-centred construction of knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes within OBE. A Department of Education document makes the link in the following way:

> *'One of the characteristics of transformational OBE in South Africa is that it is learner-centred. Learner-centred approaches place emphasis on constructivism. Each of us constructs our own meaning and learning about issues, problems, and topics.'*

This quotation is from Department of Education, *Curriculum 2005: Towards a Theoretical Framework* (Pretoria, 2000) p. 11.

We aren't as sure that there is *necessarily* a connection between constructivism and OBE. We also think that many of the advocates of OBE understand constructivism differently to us. But the debate about educational change in South Africa asks us to consider them together. In this module, we will do this.

At the end of each section we include a commentary on OBE and its implementation in South Africa. These discussions will highlight current debates about OBE, and explore it in relation to issues about learning covered in the section. Travel this journey with us. See whether you can work out which parts of the current half-truths in the debate about outcomes-based learning in South Africa are true and which are false!

We end Section One with audiotape 'visits' to a number of learning experts. Many of the ideas raised earlier about the nature of learning – like the learning paradox – are discussed.

You may find it difficult to concentrate throughout this long sixteen-minute excerpt. It is divided into three subsections: First, Ian Moll and Sandy Lazarus, who are both educational psychologists, talk about learning. Second, Gill Adler, a mathematics educator, distinguishes between two types of learning – content learning and conceptual learning. She uses mathematics examples to make her points. Finally, Ronny Miller, another educational psychologist, discusses the different types of learning and then explains why one type – conceptual learning – is so difficult. To improve your concentration, read the questions you have to answer *before* you begin listening. Make notes as you listen. Attempt to relate this conversation to ideas about learning raised earlier in this section. Spend at least 45 minutes on this activity. Listen to the tape at least twice.

Activity 3

1 Turn to Part 1 on your audiotape. First listen to the *entire* excerpt. Stop the tape when the narrator says 'Part 2'. Then rewind and listen to each of the three subsections *separately*.

2 Answer these questions when you have finished listening:

- **a** OBE advocates often argue that learning should be fun and relevant. Do Moll and Lazarus agree? In no more than ten lines, explain what they say about the nature of learning. (They may disagree with one another. If they do, note their differences.)
- **b** What are the crucial differences between school (formal) learning and everyday (experiential) learning, according to these speakers?
- **c** The speakers suggest that content learning and conceptual learning are two important parts of formal learning. What are these? How do they differ from one another?
- **d** Miller says that the idea that we can proceed from the known to the unknown, or from the familiar to the unfamiliar, isn't possible when teaching new conceptual knowledge. Why is this so? What does he suggest we do instead? (Note how his argument links back to the work we did on the learning paradox earlier.)
- **e** Write down one idea you have learnt in this section which you can apply in a classroom. Explain how you would use it.

1.6 Conclusion and key learning points

We develop national curriculums, ambitious corporate training programmes, complex schooling systems. We wish to cause learning, to take charge of it, direct it, accelerate it, demand it, or even simply stop getting in the way of it. ...

If we proceed without reflecting on our assumptions about the nature of learning, we run an increasing risk that our conceptions will have misleading ramifications. In a world that is becoming more complexly interconnected at an accelerating pace, concerns about learning are certainly justified. But perhaps more than learning itself, it is our conception of learning that needs urgent attention ...

This quotation is from E. Wenger, *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning and Identity* (Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 9.

Reassessing the half-truths

This is the point at which you should review what you have learnt (or not learnt) in this section. Begin by turning back to the half-truth activity on page 12. Dwyer argued that the following statements are half-truths about learning:

- Learning is the act of acquiring and retaining information.
- Learning is a somewhat unnatural activity.
- Learning is best undertaken in a structured, orderly manner.
- Learning is tied to instruction.
- Learning is the same for everyone.
- Teachers are the experts.

Now that you have learnt a whole lot more than you knew when you began this module, have your views about what is true and false about these statements changed?

Key learning points

- We all learn all the time; we are 'sense-making' machines.
- However, everyday (spontaneous) learning and school (formal) learning are different in important ways, and we need both.
- School learning requires that we break away from our concrete and familiar worlds. In order to do this we need to learn to think abstractly and conceptually.
- Learning isn't always fun. The best learning asks us to move out of our comfort zones – it is difficult, and it will cause some level of anxiety.
- One of the biggest hindrances to new learning is what we already know. Although this is sometimes a useful starting point for new learning, it can also block new understandings.
- In order to help learners 'unlearn' we need to create some conflict or contradiction in their thinking. We can't talk new ideas or understandings into people's heads; we can only provoke them through some form of action or activity.
- Conceptual learning is particularly difficult. Once one understands the *concept* of, for instance, a game, then the teaching of new *content*, like the rules of cricket, is relatively easy (one can link it back to the idea of a game). But if a learner has never played any kind of game and needs to learn this concept, then one can't draw on the familiar to teach it!
- Learning is paradoxical: those who *know* aren't challenged to learn further while those who *don't know* don't know that there is more to learn.

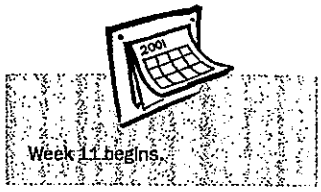
We will come back to many of these ideas, especially the last two, throughout the module but particularly in the next section.

SECTION FOUR

Text as a context for learning

Introduction 4.1

What will you learn in this section?



As you have discovered, everyday learning is very different from schooling. One of the features that distinguishes the two is the centrality of language as an instrument for school learning. Language allows learners to develop a more generalized and systematic understanding of the world.

We have discussed how teachers make deliberate and powerful interventions in learning and how these interventions assist learners to bridge the gap between what they know and what they still need to learn.

Texts are often used by teachers to evoke and scaffold learning. Texts organize and systematize knowledge and so play an important role in teaching learners to think in school-like ways. Because of this, reading is one of the most important language acts in school learning. We will see that at school a text is often the *context* for learning, and the use of school textbooks requires learners to be active and independent readers.

This section will explore the relationship between learners, text, and the world. We will find out how textbooks are written, how learners read, and how teachers can assist learners to read critically.

More half-truths to think through

Read through the following assumptions about reading and learning. As before, make notes about your agreements and disagreements with these half-truths.

These half-truth statements are quite tricky. They seem simple at first, but the more you think about them, the more complex the issues become!

Statement about learning	What is true about the statement?	What is inaccurate or false about the statement?
Reading is difficult and boring.		
All readers will understand the meaning of a text in exactly the same way.		
There is only one way to read.		
Textbooks should be read differently to storybooks.		
Children learn to love or hate reading because of their parents' attitudes to books.		
Reading is only useful for school learning.		
Learning through reading is just the same as learning through talking and listening.		

4.2 How do we enter the world of reading?

Have you ever noticed that many languages use similar words for 'reading', 'studying', or 'learning'? In Zulu, for example, the word '-funda' can mean all three:

- *reading* a book;
- *studying* at school;
- *learning* how to ride a bicycle.

Even in English, where separate words exist, our mental links between reading and school learning (studying) are so close that the words can be exchanged. Students are often described as '*reading* History' when they study at a university, or as '*studying* a book' when they read through a book.

Reading seems such an obvious and integrated part of school learning that we often forget to mention it. For example, in the previous section on school learning, only a very brief comment is made about the fact that school learning usually requires us to be literate. Yet there is no subject at school that does not involve reading, and there isn't a child who can succeed at school without learning to read.

So all teachers need to understand how the reading process works in order to make it a meaningful and rewarding activity for their learners. The purpose of this section is to help you to do that. We will:

- explore how learners can successfully enter the world of reading;
- look at the power of the written word in influencing the way we think.

Differences between the written and spoken word

Spend about 30 minutes on this activity. The extract comes from M. Donaldson, *Children's Minds* (London: Fontana, 1978), pp. 86–95.

Activity 31

1 Here are a few open-ended sentences about the spoken and the written word. Complete each sentence in any way you like.
   - **a** The written word mostly ...
   - **b** The spoken word only ...
   - **c** Without spoken words ...
   - **d** The written word can ...
   - **e** The biggest difference between spoken and written words is ...

2 Now read what Margaret Donaldson says about the differences between written and spoken language:

> *'As literate adults, we have become so accustomed to the written word that we seldom stop to think how dramatically it differs from the spoken one. The spoken word (unless it is recorded) exists for a brief moment as one element in a tangle of shifting events, [...] and then it fades. The written word endures. It is there on the page, distinct, lasting. We may return to it tomorrow. [...] We can pick it up and slip it into a pocket or briefcase. Once a child has begun to learn to read, he can bring his book home from school and read to his mother the same words which he read to his teacher in the classroom earlier in the day.*
>
> *So a child's first encounter with books provides him with much more favourable opportunities for becoming aware of language in its own right than his earlier encounters with the*

spoken word are likely to have done. Of course in some homes awareness of the spoken word is greatly encouraged. Some parents talk about words to their children, play word games with them and so on. But most talk only with words. [...]

For many children the earliest encounter with the written word is indirect, arising in the situation where a story is read aloud by an adult. This is already in a sense language freed from context; but the experience of hearing a story is not so likely to enhance awareness [of language] as the direct grappling with words on a page is. [...]

It turns out that those very features of the written word which encourage awareness of language may also encourage awareness of one's own thinking and thus be relevant to the development of intellectual self-control. This has important consequences for the development of the kinds of thinking which are characteristic of logic, mathematics, and the sciences.'

3 Answer the following questions:

- **a** What, according to Donaldson, is the most important difference between spoken and written language?
- **b** What do you think it means to become 'aware of language in its own right'?
- **c** What is the significance of the distinction between spoken and written language for learning? (In addition to the last paragraph of Donaldson's extract, it may also help you to look again at the discussion of discourse in Section Three on pages 85–93.)
- **d** Donaldson makes the strong claim that reading has 'important consequences for the development of kinds of thinking'. What do you think the relationship between reading and thinking is? Make some notes in your workbook. We will return to this question again at the end of the section.

Reading, like learning, begins with the mystery of the unknown.

What did we think?

Donaldson draws our attention to the fact that written words (as opposed to spoken ones) are made *permanent* on paper or in books. As a result, books take on a life of their own where experiences exist in and through language *alone*. Only by paying attention to the language can we begin to unravel the meaning of the written words.

Think, for instance, of those who can't read. For them the words on a page are simply dead little black marks. As a literate person you might have experienced similar feelings when looking at a sheet of music, or some scientific formula. Musicians hear music when they read the notes on a music sheet. A formula creates a whole world, a whole new concept, for the mathematician. But for us? These notations are just dead little black marks!

However, for those who can 'crack the code', each little mark will help to reveal the world within the book. In this sense, reading is a more active process than listening, and it relies on an understanding of an abstract code. Readers must be able to interpret letters and understand how these are formed into words and sentences.

Reading, like learning, begins with the mystery of the unknown. At first there is a huge gap between the world of the reader and the world of the book. At school these two worlds exist together in the same place, but they do not necessarily meet. Since written words are completely separated from our lives, we can look at them and not be part of the experience they present.

So how can we enter the world of reading?

What happens when we read a book?

Activity 32

1 Look carefully at this picture of a woman reading a book.

Reading is a complex, abstract process that happens in the mind.

2 Now read the statements below and decide for yourself if they are true or false. Mark the statements where you are unsure about what to think. We will return to this activity later and perhaps you will be able to make a decision then.

- **a** The woman is a good reader only if she carefully reads every word in the book.
- **b** She is a good reader if she can predict from her own experience what will happen next in the book.
- **c** The woman is not doing much while she is reading.
- **d** Once the woman knows the words, she should be able to understand everything in the book without much further effort.
- **e** When she reads she also has to think about what she is reading.
- **f** When she reads she thinks about other books she has read.

What does this woman need to know in order to read?

Remember that reading happens *in the mind;* it is an abstract process. When we read, we link the information on the page (written letters and words) with information 'in our heads' to make meaning of the potentially meaningless squiggles on the page.

This is a complex process. We need to activate and link a lot of different kinds of information before we can begin to make sense of the little black marks our eyes see on the page. What kinds of knowledge or information do we draw on when we read?

Knowledge of the written code

First, we need *knowledge about the written code.* We need to know how the letters on the page *represent particular sounds* and *how they combine* to communicate meaning in the form of words.

For example, we need to recognize that 'd' sounds like 'duh', and that if it is combined with 'o' and 'g' we have a word 'dog' that describes an animal many of us keep at home. (We should also know that if we reverse these letters – 'g' + 'o' + 'd' – we have a word that means something very different!)

Knowledge of the language

Second, we need *knowledge of the language* in which we read. Even if we can sound out words correctly, they will remain meaningless if we do not know the language of which they are a part.

So, for instance, our example of 'dog' is only meaningful for those who can speak English. Likewise, an isiZulu word like 'funda' is easy enough to *sound out* (although we would probably pronounce it with an English accent), but if we don't know isiZulu, we won't know what the word *means* even though we recognize all the letters.

In South Africa many students do a lot of their reading in English, which is their *second language*. This obviously creates additional barriers and difficulties in the reading process.

Becoming familiar with the language in *spoken* form is also important for the reading process as it enables us to develop an 'ear' for the language. This gives us a basis from which to guess the sounds and meanings of new, unfamiliar words encountered in text.

However, knowing the language in which we read doesn't only entail knowing English or Zulu or Spanish. It also involves becoming familiar with the terms and special discourse of the *learning area* in which we are reading. Many of us might be very fluent in English but unable to understand a scientific text because it uses specialist terminology and often uses common words differently from the way in which they are used in everyday language. You are *now* in the process of learning the language of *learning* as you read this module.

Knowledge of the rules of writing

Third, we need *knowledge about the rules of writing*. Even if we can *sound out* words and *know what they mean*, we must *relate the words to each other* in a meaningful way.

We must be able to link the words we read into a *larger network* or structure. The meaning of a text is not only about the parts but also, importantly, about the whole. The way in which words are combined in sentences, paragraphs, and perhaps sections with headings, develops a particular meaning.

Throughout this text we have emphasized the importance of understanding how different ideas link together to create a network of ideas or a concept. For example, at the simplest level, a sentence like 'The ball is in the net' tells us, firstly, about the relationship between the 'ball' and the 'net' (it is 'in' the net, not 'on' it or 'next to' it). But secondly, if we are soccer fans, then the relationship between the 'ball' and the 'net' takes on new significance. It means that a goal has been scored.

This is a simple way of moving into the next point. We also need to recognize the kind of text (or *genre*) that we are reading – a textbook, a story, a newspaper article etc. – in order to make meaning of a sentence or network of sentences. The sentence 'The ball is in the net' on the news or soccer pages of a newspaper means that a goal has been scored.

Equally though, we would read a textbook on soccer (or anything else) differently from a story or newspaper article on soccer. Different kinds of texts *need to be* read, and *are* read or interpreted, in different ways.

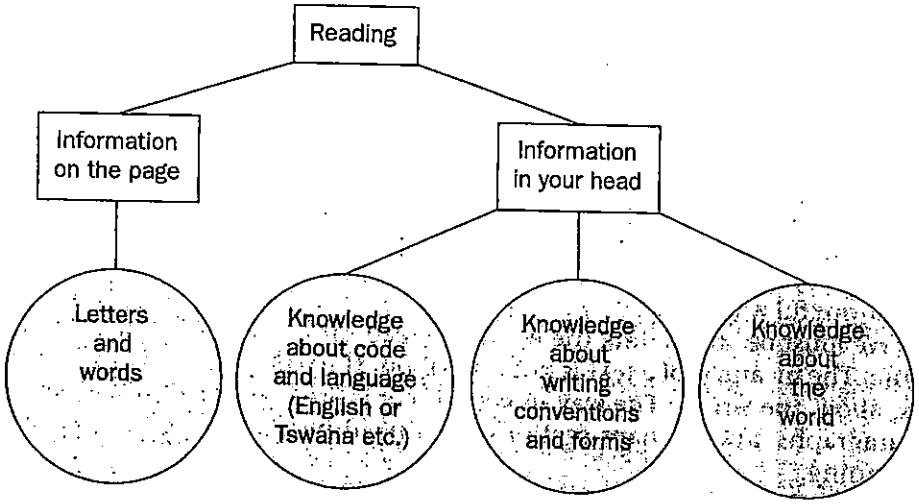
Knowledge of the world and how it works

Fourth, we need *knowledge of the world and how it works*. In written text, experiences exist in and through language *alone*, and so we need to make links *actively* between the *language of experience* and what we actually see, hear, and feel in the world.

For example, when we read about children waiting for a bus on a warm day, we will only 'live' the experience of that waiting if we can *imagine* the situation by drawing on our own experiences or what we already know. (As South Africans, we will probably imagine a hot, sweaty, possibly dusty wait. Canadians, on the other hand, may imagine a cold, snowy wait!)

To summarize

- Becoming a good reader means learning to 'crack the code'.
- In order to do this, we must know the alphabet and the language in which the text is written and recognize what kind of text it is. We should be able to tell if we are reading a story, a letter, or part of a textbook and what we can expect from each kind of writing. (What can you expect from a story that you cannot expect from a textbook?)
- Finally, we need knowledge of the world so that we can bring our own experiences to the text and make it come alive. The richer our own life experiences are, the more colourful and vibrant the world of books can become.



Towards a definition of reading.

Take some time to reflect on the issue being raised here.

Stop. Think.

Go back to Activity 32. We'd say that statements a), c), and d) in this activity are false or at least not entirely true. Use the above discussion of reading to explain how you think we'd justify why we think this.

How did we answer this?

The statement 'The woman is a good reader only if she carefully reads every word in the book' is based, we believe, on a half-truth. A good reader will read the individual words, but will also use previous knowledge and reading experiences to predict what will happen next. She will be aware of the network of knowledge that she can draw on to construct meaning from the text. She will make guesses where she meets words she does not know and work out the meaning from the context, rather than from the individual word.

The statement 'The woman is not doing much while she is reading' is false. As we found out earlier, reading is a complex activity of the mind that involves using many different skills all at once. Although the woman is sitting quietly, her mind is very active. She is relating the information on the page to her knowledge of the language, and of the world, and of previous books she might have read in order to make meaning of the text.

Knowing the words is only a small part of reading so a statement like 'Once the woman knows the words, she should be able to understand everything in the book at once' is also false. If the words do not link up with a meaningful experience, the woman can read the words off the page, but she might still not understand what the book is about.

Reading is an active process that can change from one sitting to the next. As the interconnections and links we make between words (and also between the text and our own lives and other texts that we have read) change, our understanding can become more layered and complex each time we reread a book.

What do we do when we read?

In Section Two we discovered that knowledge is a network of interconnected information and that the relationships between different facts are as important as the facts themselves. We also realized that we can only bridge the gap between the known and the unknown by using what we know to construct links for ourselves. This process enables us to guess, question, and imagine the unknown.

When we compare these insights to the discussion on reading above, we notice many similarities:

- First, reading is also about networking and making links between different kinds of knowledge we already have. The relationships between headings, sentences, or paragraphs are as important as the meaning of individual words.
- Second, when we read we also have to construct the as yet unknown meaning of the text by using what we already know about books and the world. Reading presents us with a particular case of moving from the known to the unknown.

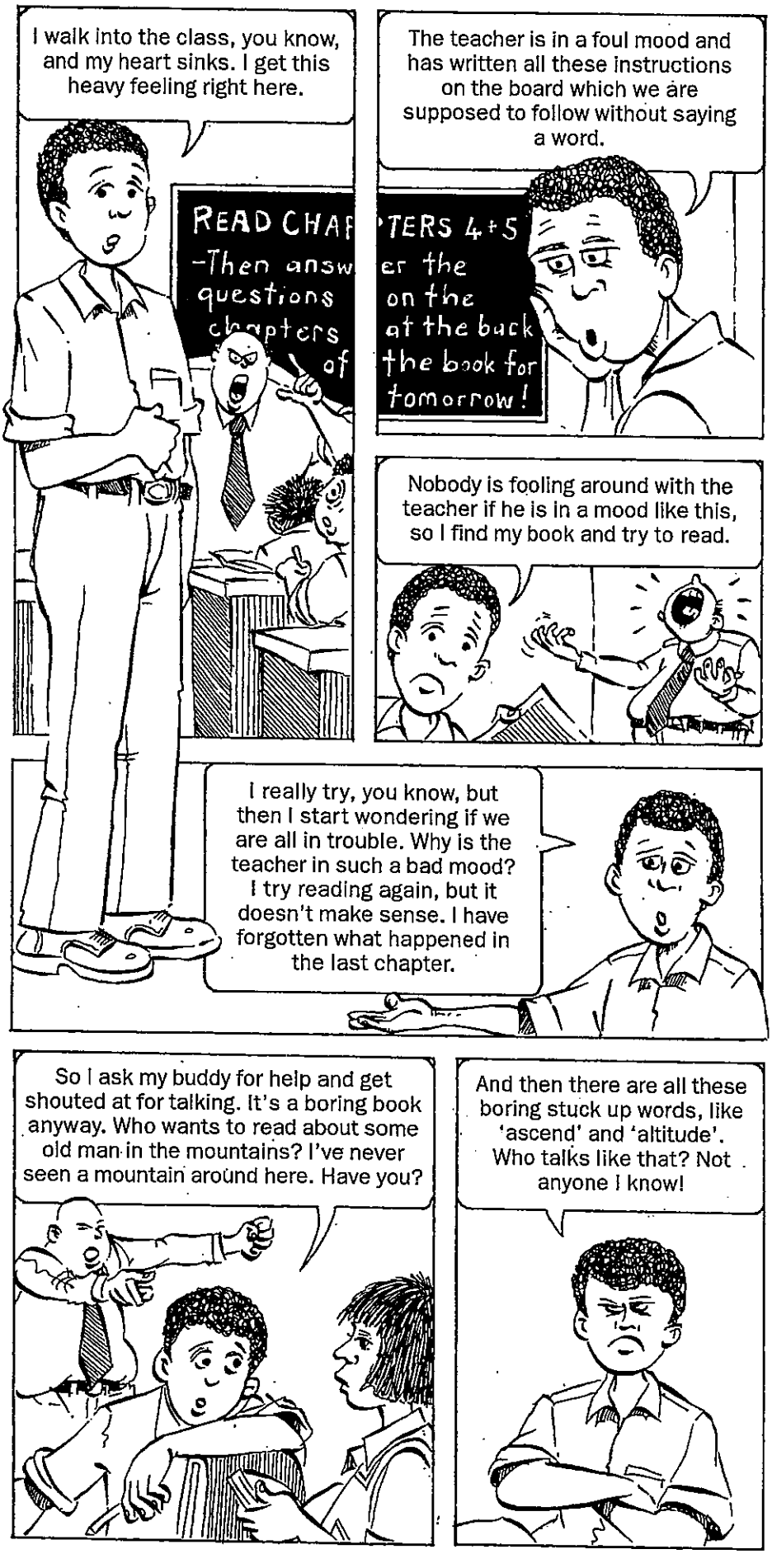
Reading is hard work and can be exhausting, especially if our experience of the world is very different to the world of the text we are reading about.

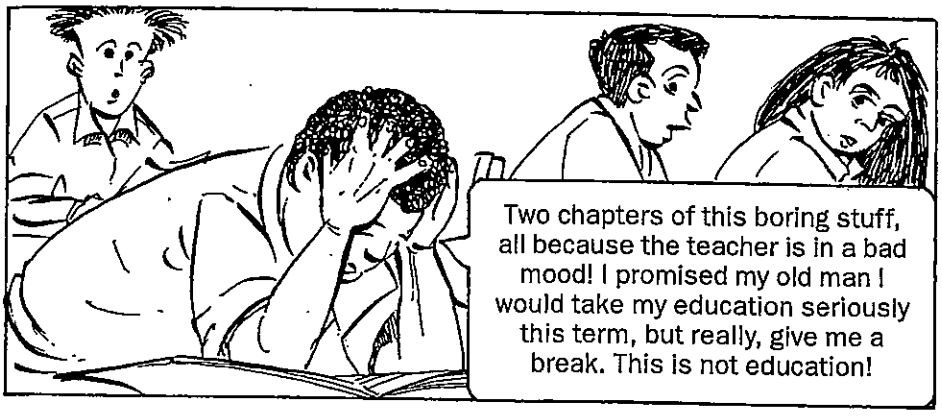
Why is reading so difficult?

Not all of us who read, however, *enjoy* the experience. Reading is hard work and can be exhausting, especially if our experience of the world is very different to the world of the text we are reading.

Look at the following comment by a fifteen-year-old learner, Mike. He describes what happened when he was supposed to read a book in class. As you read his story, try to identify at least two reasons why Mike is not interacting with the book he is supposed to be reading.

We have represented his thoughts as a cartoon strip on the next two pages.

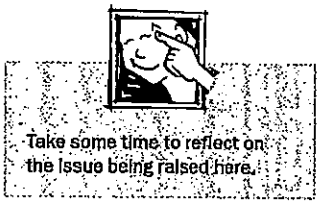

I walk into the class, you know, and my heart sinks. I get this heavy feeling right here.
READ CHAP
-Then answ
questions
chapters
of
The teacher is in a foul mood and has written all these instructions on the board which we are supposed to follow without saying a word.
TERS 4+5
er the
on the
at the back
the book for
tomorrow!
Nobody is fooling around with the teacher if he is in a mood like this, so I find my book and try to read.
I really try, you know, but then I start wondering if we are all in trouble. Why is the teacher in such a bad mood? I try reading again, but it doesn't make sense. I have forgotten what happened in the last chapter.
So I ask my buddy for help and get shouted at for talking. It's a boring book anyway. Who wants to read about some old man in the mountains? I've never seen a mountain around here. Have you?
And then there are all these boring stuck up words, like 'ascend' and 'altitude'. Who talks like that? Not anyone I know!



For many learners reading is a struggle.

Stop. Think.

- Think about your own experience of reading at school. Was it similar to Mike's experience? What was different?
- Did you ever experience reading as difficult, *but worthwhile*? If you answer yes, what made it worthwhile? If no, why do you think reading isn't worthwhile?



Why is Mike struggling to read?

Mike's difficulty is not that he is unable or unwilling to read, but that he is *not sure how to approach* the reading task:

- He is not ready to read his book because he can see *no real purpose* for the task. He doesn't feel like interacting with the text simply because the teacher is in a bad mood.
- He has *no motivation* for reading the book on his own because he doesn't enjoy it. He finds it irrelevant and difficult to follow.
- He also has *no strategy* for dealing with the difficult sections of the book or for remembering what happens from one chapter to the next.
- The topic *doesn't interest* him. He cannot relate it to his own life and so his attention wanders to the things that really matter to him.

Mike's story illustrates that *our attitude* to reading is very important for the reading process. When a person begins to read, be it for pleasure, for work, or at school, several factors influence how successful the interaction between the reader and the text will be. The quality of the reading experience in turn influences what will be understood and what will be remembered.

'Our attitude to reading is very important to the reading process.'

Important factors for a successful reading experience

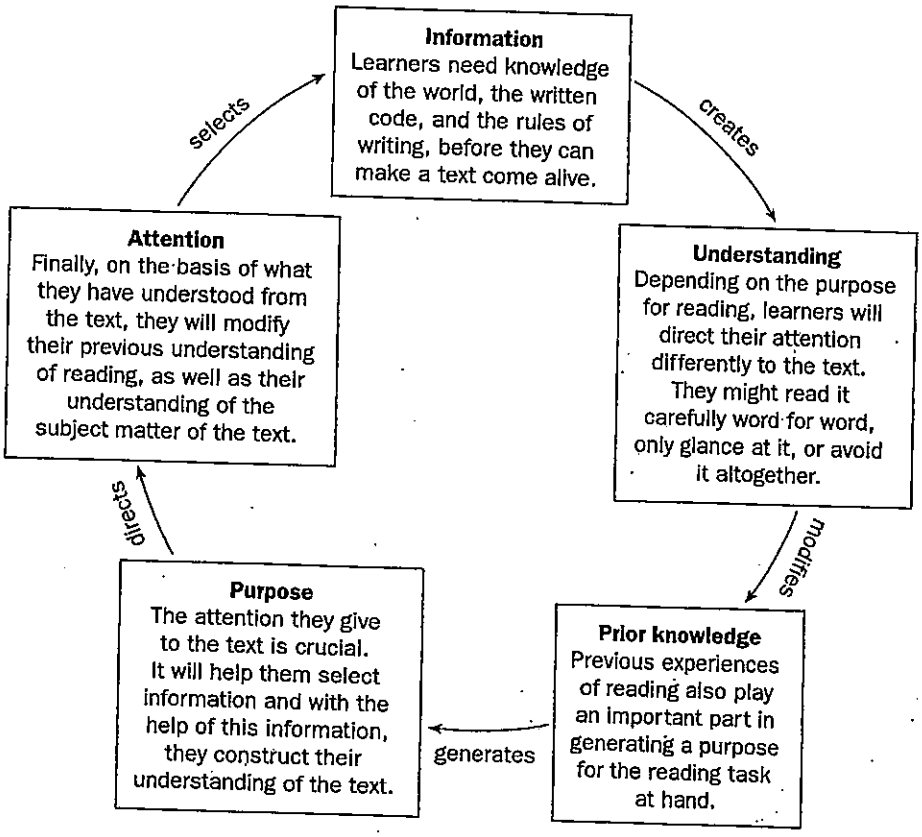
- If learners find a reading task *purposeful*, they will have high expectations from their interaction with the text. If the main purpose is simply to get through the reading to please the teacher, the task will seem meaningless from the start. One of the problems we face with new readers who have no prior experience (through family, for instance) of how reading can be useful, is to get them to believe that reading can serve a purpose.
- If learners are *interested* in a topic, they will remember what they read about it. This is closely linked to purpose but it is possible to have a purpose that motivates without arousing much interest (for example, having to fix your car despite having no interest in car mechanics).
- The *motivation* for reading will come from the purpose and the interest. But it can also be outside of the task. For example, a learner who wants to do well at school will read with great care, even if the topic is not very interesting.

Do you notice how similar the prerequisites for successful reading are to the prerequisites for successful learning? What does this tell you about the relationship between reading and learning?

- *Attention* is another powerful factor that can influence reading. If a learner's mind is on other things, it will be difficult to make sense of the reading even if the topic is interesting and the learner knows why it is important to read it (he or she has a purpose).
- A good reading *strategy* (like asking questions or predicting) can help learners to focus their interest and attention on the reading, even if it is difficult. This is an important way of overcoming distractions.
- Making meaningful *links* between the text and our existing knowledge will influence how successful the reading experience will be. (This is why we have tried to use familiar analogies in this text but, more importantly, why we have asked *you* to constantly relate ideas to your lives and practices as teachers.)

These factors, together with the knowledge we need to 'crack the code', determine our capacity for successful reading. They work together and influence how willingly learners, like Mike, will use books to help them learn. The relationship between the different factors is important because they all form part of a reading-learning cycle:

This diagram has been adapted from N. Marshall, 'The students: who are they and how do I reach them?' in D. Lapp, J. Flood, and N. Farnan (eds.), *Content area reading and learning*, p. 82.



The reading-learning cycle.

Spend about 30 minutes on this activity. Do it on your own first, then discuss your ideas with other teachers.

Activity 33

1 In the light of these factors, let us revisit Mike's reading experience and try to investigate why he found reading such a difficult experience. Copy the learning cycle down. Then go back to Mike's experience of reading and show at what points in the cycle the breakdown of Mike's learning occurred.

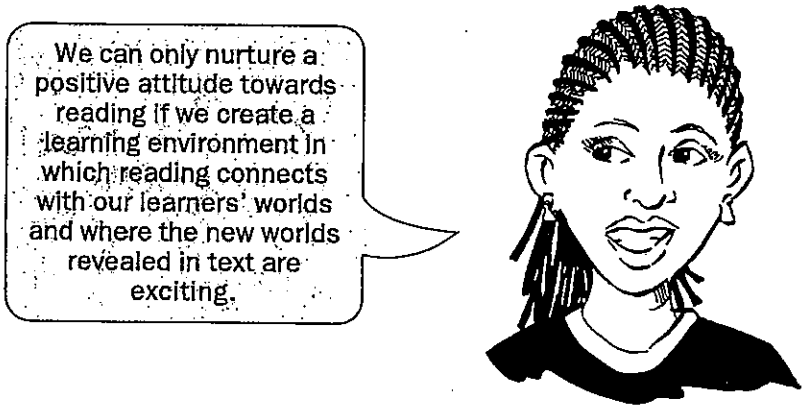
2 If Mike was in your class, how could you prevent this breakdown of learning?

What did we think?

We discussed earlier that reading is an *activity of the mind.*

By plotting Mike's reading experience on the learning cycle we can see clearly how involved the learner must be. The real breakdown in Mike's learning occurred at the point where he could not be bothered to read and so the gap between him and the text couldn't be bridged. He didn't read, so he didn't understand and didn't learn anything new.

Although, technically speaking, Mike is literate and at school, he isn't reading and he isn't learning. Reading has become a meaningless experience for him (as it is for many other South African learners). As teachers, we need to recognize that reading is inherently difficult (think about your own struggles with various texts – perhaps even this module text).



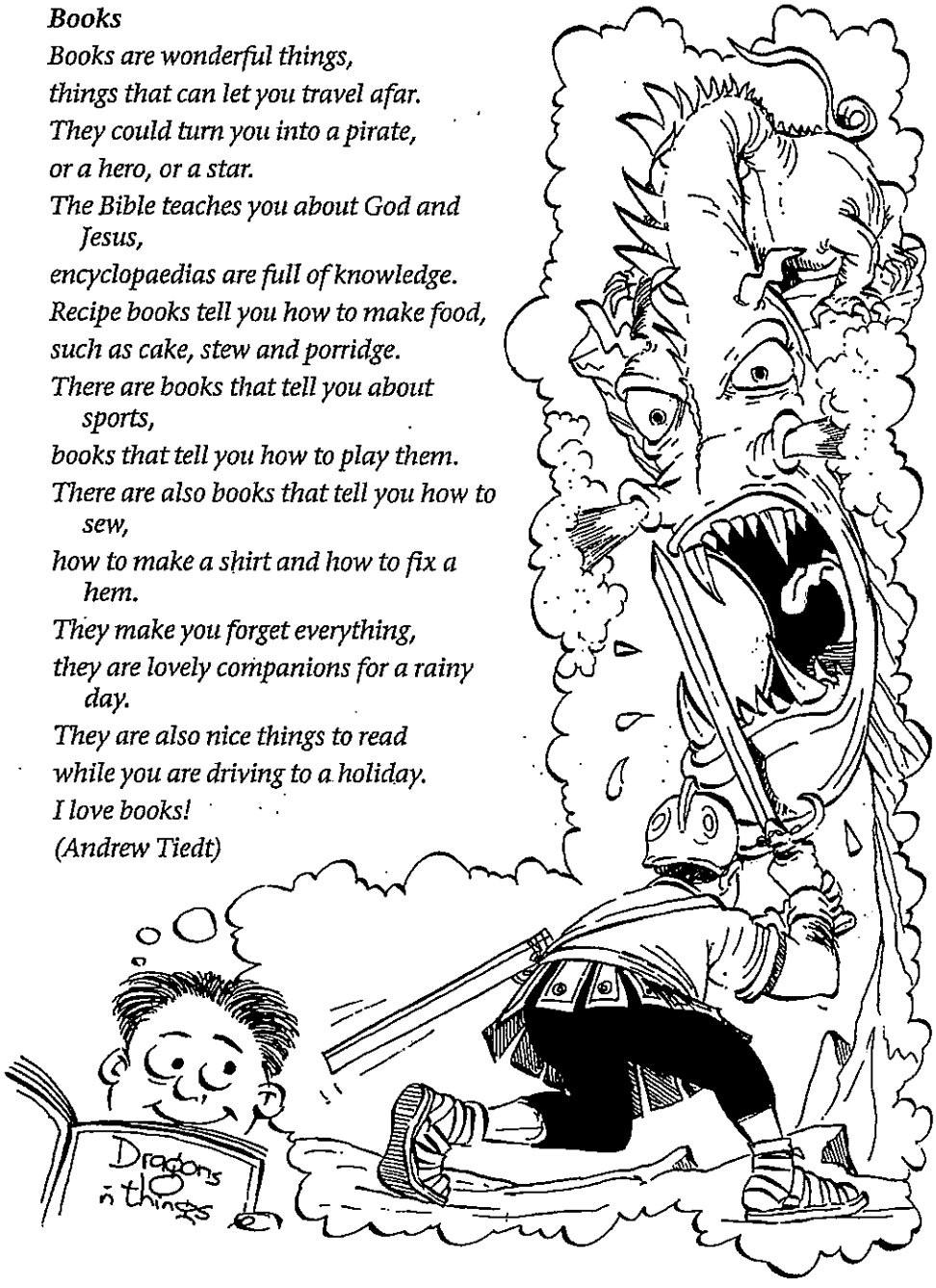
4.3 What makes reading a meaningful experience?

Not all learners approach a reading task with a positive attitude. Their interest, motivation, and skill will vary greatly, depending on their previous reading experiences. One factor, however, stands out as very important: *The attitudes towards reading which learners bring to the classroom will have an important influence on how and what they will read in future.*

With support and guidance, most learners can experience how the books they read at school will open a new and exciting world of ideas and transport them far beyond the limited world of their everyday experience. In Activity 34 you will be working with the following poem that demonstrates this idea. It was written by a ten-year-old school boy in Cape Town.

Books

Books are wonderful things,
things that can let you travel afar.
They could turn you into a pirate,
or a hero, or a star.
The Bible teaches you about God and Jesus,
encyclopaedias are full of knowledge.
Recipe books tell you how to make food,
such as cake, stew and porridge.
There are books that tell you about sports,
books that tell you how to play them.
There are also books that tell you how to sew,
how to make a shirt and how to fix a hem.
They make you forget everything,
they are lovely companions for a rainy day.
They are also nice things to read
while you are driving to a holiday.
I love books!
(Andrew Tiedt)

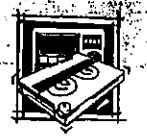


As teachers, we should never take reading for granted:

- When learners come to class with a negative attitude, we have to take their struggle with reading seriously and help them experience reading as a *meaningful* activity.
- When learners have had good reading experiences, it is our responsibility to make sure that the reading experiences we give them in class continue to strengthen their positive attitude towards the written word.

Activity 34

Spend about 30 minutes on this activity. First read the poem. Then listen to its spoken form on your audiotape. You will find it at the beginning of Part 4 of your tape. Listen to all of Part 4. In it you will hear Ian Moll explain why reading is important in school learning, and Yvonne Read give us some ideas about how we can teach people to read. Use these ideas to inform your answers to question 2. The poem is taken from the *Molo Songololo* magazine (Issue 86, July–August, 1994), p.16.



1 In his poem on page 124, Andrew describes many things that books can do for people who read them. Reread the poem. Pick out examples that will allow you to comment on his attitude to reading.
2 Now answer these questions:
   - **a** How does Andrew's attitude to books compare with Mike's?
   - **b** How could we go about generating or encouraging this love of books where it doesn't exist?
   - **c** How can we use this love of reading to teach that which is as yet unknown and beyond the learners' interest?
   - **d** Are there any differences between the written and spoken forms of this poem?

The 'magic' of books

Unlike Mike, Andrew has clearly experienced a supportive learning environment that helped him to enter the world of reading and learn from it. He has experienced books as useful and exciting things. Andrew understands how they can assist him to learn, and how they can simply bring joy.

The poem also illustrates that the 'magic' of books is an important factor that helps children to experience reading as a meaningful activity. For Andrew, books are like friends that can turn him into a pirate, or keep him company on a rainy day or on a long journey. In their book, *On Learning to Read*, Bettelheim and Zelan claim:

> *'What is required for a child to be eager to learn to read is not knowledge about reading's usefulness, but a fervent belief that being able to read will open to him a world of wonderful experiences, permit him to shed ignorance, understand the world, and become a master of his fate.'*

Activity 35

Spend about an hour on this activity. Read the extract on your own first, then meet with fellow learners and discuss Bettelheim and Zelan's ideas.

1 Turn to page 137 of the Reader, and read the extract by Bettelheim and Zelan called 'The magic of reading'. *Before* you read the extract, carefully think about your own experience of learning to read.
   - **a** What motivated you to learn to read?
   - **b** Did you experience reading as a magical thing?
   - **c** Who supported you? Where did you struggle?
   - **d** What was the attitude of your parents to reading?
2 Read the extract by Bettelheim and Zelan and make notes about the factors that motivate children to read.
3 Now use Bettelheim and Zelan's language or discourse to redescribe your experience in these more formal terms.

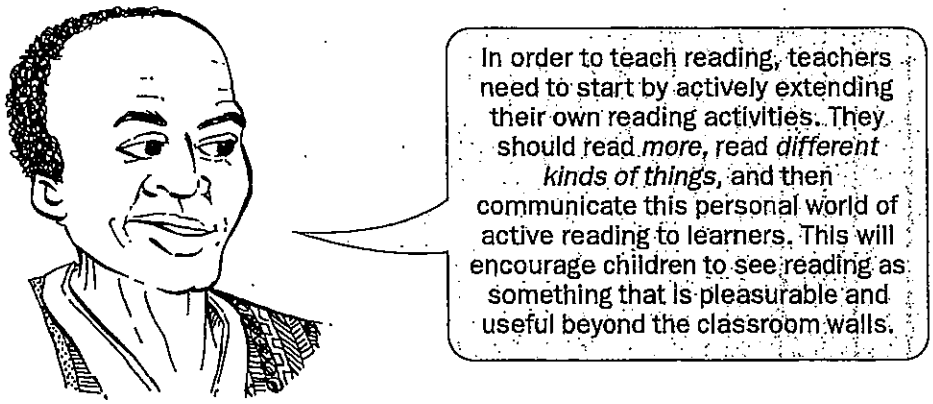
What did we think?

We have all had unique experiences in learning to read. You may remember a favourite book, or have a fond memory of a special relationship with a parent or teacher that centred on books, or recall a less pleasant experience of anxiety or boredom in your first classroom.

While we have all had *unique* experiences, we have also all had some *common* experiences of reading. As we suggested earlier, we only learn to read if reading seems purposeful and meaningful. Reading must give children the feeling that *new worlds are opening* before them. Only then can it be seen as the key to unlimited knowledge.

Bettelheim and Zelan argue that a positive attitude to reading grows out of a child's experience of *how adults enjoy books*. Children who have never shared the enjoyment of books with anyone will not believe that reading is important. In the end, it is the 'wish to penetrate [...] the important secrets adults possess' that helps children to persist in the struggle of learning to read. Without this desire, as Mike's experience so clearly shows, the act of reading seems meaningless from the start.

This has important implications for teaching reading in South Africa. Many learners come from homes which have no books, and where parents have been denied (by our history) the joy of literacy. So they enter schools with no model of reading as a joyful and meaningful activity. At school, they often encounter teachers who also don't read and don't see any point in reading. Many studies have pointed to the fact that teachers don't read enough and don't encourage reading in schools. So, both at home and at school, reading isn't 'modelled'.



Bettelheim and Zelan argue that the kind of encouragement teachers and parents often use with learners, namely that reading will help you get ahead in life, is a very weak persuasive tool. They say that 'usefulness' isn't something that motivates young learners. Instead, they suggest, we read (and children, in particular, read) because we are promised trips to magical lands. It is the fantasy that reading brings – the imaginative stories that books carry – that motivates us to read. This is what teachers need to communicate to learners, both in words and in actions.

Bettelheim has often been criticized for being too 'psychological' and 'magical' in his description of reading. For example, although he talks about the importance of reading parents, he does not elaborate the extent to which reading and writing are social activities beyond the rather private space of the family. The political and economic dynamics of the society we live in can have a powerful influence on our attitude to reading, on our opportunities for reading, and on the uses that we can make of reading in our everyday life.

What do you think?

Activity 36

1 Read this newspaper report on the first 'All Africa Conference on Children's Reading'. Do you recognize any of Bettelheim and Zelan's argument in this report?

Spend about 45 minutes on this activity.

FIRST ALL AFRICA CONFERENCE ON CHILDREN'S READING FINDS TEACHERS LACKING

Literacy lovers needed

Elinor Sisulu

'Kader Asmal was a Boer. He died in the Anglo-Boer War that took place in Bloemfontein in 1968.' Many teachers would guess that this horrendously inaccurate statement was the response of a primary school child. This level of ignorance would not even surprise some. After all, how many school children know that Kader Asmal is our minister of education, and that the Anglo-Boer War was fought 100 years ago? What should shock teachers is that this response came from a second-year library science student!

The Kader Asmal response was quoted by Dr Lulu Makhubela in her presentation to the All Africa Conference on Children's Reading held in Pretoria on August 6 to 9. At the conference, a leading Ugandan publisher, James Tumusiime, told of a school in Nigeria where a student, when asked who wrote *Macbeth*, replied 'I do not know, but it was not me!' The teacher and principal also did not know who wrote *Macbeth* but agreed that it was not their student!

Naturally these anecdotes evoked much laughter among the conference delegates, but there was an underlying grave concern that many teachers and librarians do not read enough to acquire basic general knowledge. If educators, who are expected to promote reading, do not read themselves, how can they teach children to love reading? This concern was echoed throughout the conference, which brought together teachers, teacher trainers, librarians, researchers, writers, publishers, literacy experts and policy makers from all over Africa and the world.

In his opening address to the conference, the first of its kind, Asmal said that millions of African children have been denied the right to basic education, of which literacy is the core. 'The lack of access to education robs these children of their chance to develop their natural abilities of reasoning, problem solving and creative thinking, and thus lift themselves out of poverty and ensure a better life for their own children.' Teacher-training programmes need to be upgraded so that teachers can take full advantage of the new curriculum and 'transform their classrooms into sites of genuine intellectual exploration and creativity.'

The importance of training teachers to teach children how to read was a key concern. Professor Onukaogu of the University of Ile-Ife in Nigeria bemoaned the fact that far too often teachers in Africa are ill-motivated and ill-equipped to teach reading. He argued that teachers in Africa are underpaid and neglected. 'Adequate facilities for teaching are not made available to them. They never had any pre-service training in reading and its teaching, and in-service training and workshops are not provided to enhance their competencies and self-esteem.'

Teachers also need to know more about the literature of their countries, and courses in children's literature should be included in the curricula of teacher training colleges. Onukaogu suggested national awards for the best reading teachers: 'If we respect the reading teachers, if we enhance their well-being, so will they respect and enhance the well-being of our children. If we ignore our reading teachers, we do so at our own peril.'

'Every teacher is a storyteller,' declared one of the delegates. The significance of storytelling and oral traditions was a recurring theme of the conference. Mzingizi Manzezulu, a subject adviser in the Western Cape Department of Education, demonstrated ways of using storytelling to teach science. Australian writer Mem Fox argued that when learning to read children need teachers who will tell stories and read aloud often, teachers who are passionate.

The conference showed that there is no shortage of people committed to achieving literacy for all in Africa and turning African children into independent, life-long readers.

2 The article asks, 'If educators, who are expected to promote reading, do not read themselves, how can they teach children to love reading?' and claims that '[...] often teachers in Africa are ill-motivated and ill-equipped to teach reading.' Discuss these views in terms of Bettelheim and Zelan's ideas about reading.

4.4 What kinds of reading support school learning?

The All Africa Conference on Children's Reading (Activity 36 on page 127) suggested that millions of African children have been denied the right to a basic education *of which literacy is the core.*

Literacy, however, is only the beginning of *school* reading. As learners progress through school, the act of reading should become more familiar to them. They should be able to enter the *world of text* with ease by the time they are in Grade 5 in order to use text books, reference books, and other reading material to help them succeed at school.

In South Africa, as in many parts of the world, this isn't happening. Learners are moving through school without ever becoming comfortable readers. If texts and reading are at the core of school learning, then this fact will impact negatively on all their learning. They will struggle to solve maths problems, they will struggle to read Human and Social Studies textbooks, they will struggle to develop arguments in problem-solving activities, and they will struggle to pass exams.

Why do teachers use textbooks?

As learners progress through school, learning and teaching become (and *must* become) more and more textbook and reading based. There are four assumptions that can explain why teachers increase the use of textbooks in the later years of school:

- Textbooks help teachers to teach.
- Learners use textbooks to learn course content.
- Textbooks present the content of a course correctly and coherently.
- Textbooks introduce learners to the discourse of academic learning.

'Literacy is only the beginning of school reading.'

You may immediately object to some of these assumptions, thinking, 'But textbooks are biased, or boring, or not related to life.' In some senses you will be correct, but this doesn't mean that we should reject the principle that textbooks are important in learning! Let's consider the four assumptions in more detail.

Textbooks help teachers to teach but must be used creatively

We'd agree with the first assumption, namely that textbooks are a very important resource for teachers. However, we'd also agree that textbooks are often used very uncreatively. Sometimes teachers simply use them to keep learners busy.

Textbooks are a very useful resource for teachers. They contain most of the critical content learners need to learn, and they are often well-structured and written accessibly. However, while they are a resource for the teacher, they cannot and should not be regarded as the teacher. Teachers need to use them creatively and soundly in their teaching.

Textbooks carry course content but can be inaccessible

This brings us to the second assumption. If learners can establish *meaningful* links to the textbook, they can use it to help them learn. Many learners in African and other developing countries have to use textbooks that are written in their second or third language. As a consequence, learners find it

difficult to read and understand these books. Identification with textbooks is often made even more difficult by the so-called 'euro-centrism' of many textbooks. Instead of teaching the required content by using African examples, textbooks may only use examples that are appropriate to the United States or Britain.

When learners cannot easily make sense of the language and structure of their textbooks, they rely on what they hear in, and remember from, class. Textbooks then become increasingly irrelevant to the learning process and may even present barriers, rather than bridges, for learning.

Textbooks should present the content of a course correctly and coherently

The third assumption is particularly problematic. Every textbook presents a *particular version of the information* that is available about a subject. In the past, for example, many South African history textbooks only presented a racist version of the development of our country and the rest of Africa. Although textbooks are being revised, the new books will also not be neutral and 'true'. They can't be.

Books are written by people, and all people *construct their own* version of the 'truth'; their own understanding of the world. That is perhaps why the new South African curriculum identifies the ability of learners to collect, analyse, organize, and critically evaluate information as a critical learning outcome. In the light of this outcome, textbooks, no matter how biased they are, can be used to introduce learners to the discourse of schooling. In other words, good teachers can still use poor and biased textbooks to develop in learners a critical attitude towards learning and towards texts of all kinds.

Textbooks introduce learners to the discourse of academic learning

The increased use of textbooks not only means that learners have to read *more* texts as they move from one grade to the next, but that they also have to learn to read *different kinds* of texts. As we suggested earlier, different text genres require different approaches to reading. (We read fictional stories differently to the way we read non-fiction texts designed for learning.)

Indeed, as learners progress through school, the activities of *reading and learning* become increasingly integrated to the point where very little learning occurs without reading. Even activities such as debating, group discussion, or conducting experiments rely on learners' reading abilities because all of these activities should be preceded by preparation through reading and followed up by reading.

Those learners who struggle with reading will increasingly also struggle in all other areas of the curriculum.

Different kinds of school reading

What kinds of reading do learners need to be able to do in order to succeed at school?

Activity 37

1 Look carefully at the diagram of 'the Road to Reading Pleasure' on the next page. Then answer the questions on page 131. The diagram is from G. Winkler, *All children can learn* (Cape Town, Francolin Publishers, 1999), p. 89.

As learners progress through school, reading and learning become increasingly integrated to the point where very little learning occurs without reading.

2 Now answer the following questions:
   a Which reading skills (other than basic literacy) are demanded by school learning across the curriculum?
   b According to the diagram, how can teachers help learners to acquire these skills and become confident readers?

Schooling is an activity centred on texts

At school the 'text' becomes the main context for learning. (Do you remember what the title of this section is?)

In Section Three we examined how schooling takes learning *beyond* the contexts of everyday life. We have also seen that books are important vehicles through which learners are transported beyond the contexts of everyday life. Books open up new *worlds* of knowledge and take people to places they cannot possibly go in reality.

We have also learnt that reading and writing assist in the cognitive development of learners who learn to become more disciplined and systematic in their thinking. At school, children *study written texts* ranging from highly formal discourse (such as a mathematics theorem) to texts that aim primarily to convey and evoke emotional responses (for example, the poem by ten-year-old Andrew on page 124, or the poem by R. D. Laing on page 42). Learners also *talk about texts*, whether these be books, worksheets, learning tasks, or their own writing.

The main point is this: almost all schooling can be characterized as *activity centred on texts*.

School reading is circular and reflexive rather than linear

The 'Road to Reading Pleasure' (Activity 37 on pages 129–131) shows how reading becomes an increasingly complex activity as learners move through school. As they get older and more experienced, they no longer read books only for the sake of following a story. Learning *through reading* entails an active process of *deconstructing parts of a text* and *reconstructing a new whole* for oneself from the text.

This kind of reading is not a *linear* process: it doesn't simply begin at the beginning and end at the end of the text. Instead, advanced reading is a much more *circular* and *reflexive* process. It involves starting at the beginning of a book (although not always), but instead of simply reading through it, we usually:

- skim the text quickly first, concentrating on the headings, and the beginnings and ends of paragraphs in order to get a general idea of what is in the text;
- use this information to decide whether we want to read the text, and where we will begin.

At times, our reading process may be directed at finding *specific information*. We might then only read a particular chapter, for instance. If we were reading for *deep understanding*, we would read and reread with careful attention to detail to ensure understanding. Sometimes we might also *memorize* the information we have read and understood. At other times we may be reading for *pleasure*, in which case we would begin at the beginning of a novel, for instance, and read quickly and without attention to detail until we get to the exciting conclusion.

School learners tend to spend more and more time reading as they progress, and teachers are thus able to rely more and more on reading to provide the *context* within which learning takes place. For example, we don't have to take learners to a river physically in order for them to understand about river pollution. We could, instead, get learners to read interesting and informative case studies and theoretical explanations of this

phenomenon in textbooks in order to create a context for learning. The advantage of this kind of context is that it isn't limited to your local river; we can present learners with examples of a whole variety of different kinds of rivers and of pollution from around the world.

School reading is done actively and independently

For this to happen, however, learners have to develop into *active and independent readers* who can make meaning from what they read.

Active readers use many different strategies to help them make meaning from a text. For example, they ask themselves questions before they read, while they read, and when they have finished reading. Active readers also monitor themselves as they read, taking on the role of being their own internal teachers, asking themselves 'Do I really know what this is all about?' As we said earlier, developing a clear understanding will often involve going back, rereading, and trying to link different parts of the text to each other by using the bit that one has understood to try and understand those bits that just don't make sense.

The structure that the author has imposed on the text will help in this process. It is particularly useful to pay attention to the ways in which the connections between ideas are marked and to note whether an idea follows on from or extends an earlier less complex idea or whether it is a new and perhaps contrasting position.

For instance, words like 'first', 'second' etc. indicate *a sequence*, while a word like 'however' suggests that the text will either provide an *alternative explanation* or a *qualification* to what has already been said.

We make sense of text; the meaning of a text doesn't simply reveal itself to us! The world of reading and the meaning of a text do not exist *unless we make them happen* ourselves. *Active engagement* will enable learners to read independently and with purpose and enjoyment. They won't need a teacher or parent to force them to read.

'Active, independent readers aren't born, they are made.'

Developing active and independent readers

But active and independent readers aren't born, *they are made*. And teachers play a very important role in making these readers!

The following exercise will illustrate one way in which Intermediate Phase teachers can develop young, active, and independent readers. The short story is taken from a Grade 6 text that was developed to encourage learners to be active readers. An eleven-year-old boy, Peter Mkhalipi, originally wrote this story. We have chosen to use it here in order to illustrate how teachers can encourage learners to use their own writing for learning.

Read through the story. Think about the effect the *questions in the text* have on your reading.

The giraffe and the rabbit

When Peter Mkhalipi was in Grade 6, he wrote a story about two friends. His story teaches us that a friend sometimes makes a mistake, but when this friend says he is sorry, it is time to forgive him.

What do you think will happen in Peter's story?

Once upon a time a giraffe was grazing in the veld. Suddenly a rabbit jumped out of the bush and greeted the giraffe. The rabbit and the giraffe became friends and they went to have a drink of water.

Who will make the mistake? The rabbit or the giraffe?

Just as the giraffe was bending over to drink, the rabbit pushed it. The

giraffe lost its balance and fell into the water. It went down the river shouting for help. The rabbit was laughing. Then he saw another giraffe and also pushed it into the river. Down the river the two giraffes went.

They were heading for a waterfall and the rabbit suddenly realized the danger. He realized his joke had gone wrong and he had to save them.

How did he try to save them?

He got a rope and threw it to the giraffes. They tied it around themselves. The rabbit then called the elephant and together they pulled and pulled until the giraffes were safely on shore.

The rabbit said he was sorry. The giraffes forgave him and they were friends again.

This story comes from G. Winkler, (Cape Town, Shuter & Shooter)

What effect did these questions have on our reading?

The insertion of questions into a text is an example of a teaching method called *Directed Reading and Thinking Activity* (DR-TA). The method consists of four steps.

Step 1: Guess

Insert questions that encourage the learners to *guess what will happen* in the story ('What do you think will happen?').

This will probably direct readers to actively *notice*, for instance, the *title* of the story because it is often from the title that our initial expectations develop. We learn from the title that this is a story about a relationship between animals. This creates a sense of anticipation and expectation in the reader. A question like this may also work to activate the learner's *network of knowledge about texts and about the world.* In this case, *if* we are familiar with fables (stories which use animals as the main characters but which are really about human personalities and relationships) we would expect the rabbit to play a trick. We would also expect the story to have a moral or a lesson for us.

Step 2: Predict

Insert questions throughout the text to encourage learners to *predict what will happen in the next section* of the story ('Who will make the mistake?' 'How did he try to save them?').

These questions are like bridges between the known part of the story (what has happened so far) and the unknown (what will happen next). They encourage the readers to use the information they have to imagine and predict what is still unknown. In this sense prediction becomes a core element of the meaning-making process involved in reading. Another effect of the questions is that they create a purpose for reading. We want to read the next part of the story to see if our prediction was correct or not.

Step 3: Read

Encourage readers to read the text. This procedure is made easier by all the directed thinking we have done about the story so far. The questions function to break up the text into manageable sections, so we only have to read a little bit before we can stop and think about it again. This ensures that ideas are understood and integrated.

Step 4: Revise

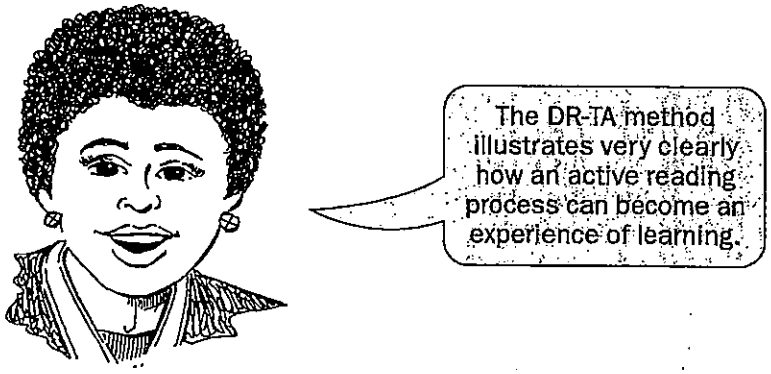
Pose a question at the end of the reading process to help learners confirm, revise, or elaborate their predictions. While learners are doing this they are constructing the meaning of the text. If they 'made a mistake' and predicted something that did not happen, we have created an opportunity for learning. Their mistakes make them revise and elaborate their existing understanding of stories and what they can expect from them.

Do you notice any elements of this strategy in the way in which this Learning Guide has been written? Although it is aimed at learners with a better level of literacy, is an academic rather than story text, and the writers didn't deliberately use this method, we do think that some of the assumptions about reading that underlie the DR-TA method are evident. DR-TA was developed by Stauffer in 1969. It has been around for a long time and has survived many changes in the educational world because it is a flexible method.

DR-TA's essential steps – *activating* and *discussing* what learners *already know*, and *predicting*, *reading*, and *discussing what happened* and *what was learnt* – can be approached in many ways. The method can also be used for many different kinds of texts and in different learning areas. It can be used in small groups or with a whole class.

You will already have recognized the use of questions, predictions or guesses, imagination, and interpreting mistakes as the central elements of learning, as discussed in Section Two. The power of the method, no matter how you use it, is that it closely follows the natural process of learning:

The method begins with what learners know (*equilibrium*) and they make predictions on the basis of that knowledge (*focus on the familiar rather than the unfamiliar – assimilation*). Once learners read the text and find that they *'made a mistake'* in their predictions, they experience a state of *disequilibrium*. They can no longer simply *assimilate* the information into their existing *schemata* and have to focus their attention on the unfamiliar aspects of the text. By doing that they extend their schemata to *accommodate* the unexpected information or turn of events. The process of accommodation means they re-establish a sense of equilibrium and have learnt something new.



When you worked through Peter's story about the giraffe and the rabbit, did you notice that 'understanding' did not occur as the end result of the 'mechanics' of reading? In other words, understanding is not something that happens only after learners have *finished* reading. Rather, reading for meaning or understanding formed part of the reading process itself from the very beginning of the story. This is why the DR-TA questions *in* the text can be such powerful supports for the reading process. By teaching learners to internalize the questioning process and to predict the development of the text *as they read it*, we can help them to learn through reading.

Activity 38

1. You have already studied the article by Dillon in the context of Section Two. If you turn to page 112 of the Reader, you will notice a section in the Dillon reading titled 'Reading and studying'. Read this carefully.
2. Answer these questions when you have finished reading:
   a. What different kinds of questions does Dillon suggest should be part of reading for learning?
   b. Describe these different kinds of questions as part of the DR-TA method.

Different levels of reading

Reading, clearly, isn't a matter of passively receiving ready-made understanding from books. All reading, right from the start, is a highly active process.

The kinds of texts that learners encounter in their later school years require several levels of interpretation or meaning. We have identified four levels, all of which combine to make meaning possible:

- literal comprehension;
- interpretation;
- critical reading;
- creative reading.

We will briefly explain what reading and thinking skills are required for each one.

Literal comprehension

The learner has to be able to *understand the meanings of words*, recognize the main idea, understand the sequence in which things are happening, and be able to recognize the cause-effect relationships in the text.

Interpretation

This involves going beyond the actual information presented in the text. Learners must be able to make *generalizations*, predict outcomes, and construct relationships between different ideas in the text. At the simplest level, the skill of interpretation may lead us to make a statement like this, 'The writer's strong belief in predetermined learning objectives and her faith in standardized tests, like IQ tests, suggest that she would describe herself as a behaviourist'. In other words, we use existing information to predict and generalize.

Critical reading

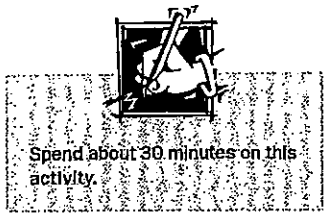
At this level the reader is expected to *make judgements* about the quality, value, or accuracy of the ideas in the text. This includes looking for bias or exaggeration in the way that the language is used. Critical reading may result in the following kind of statement being made, 'While the writer's description of learning is interesting, her suggestion that teachers are able to determine the outcomes of learning fly in the face of most contemporary research'. In other words, we assess the quality of an argument and come to a judgment about it.

Creative reading

This involves the reader using the text to *generate new ideas* or develop new insights about a topic. At this level of reading we understand the ideas, we are able to use them to predict and generalize, and we have opinions about their validity. In addition, we can also use the ideas as a basis for developing new ones. Creative reading may lead us to make the following kind of argument, 'Both Vygotsky and Piaget are correct, but neither can tell us ... (X). Our research shows that by factoring in the effects of ... (Y), we can ... (Z).' In other words, we use existing ideas to develop new ideas about learning, or about anything else we are studying.

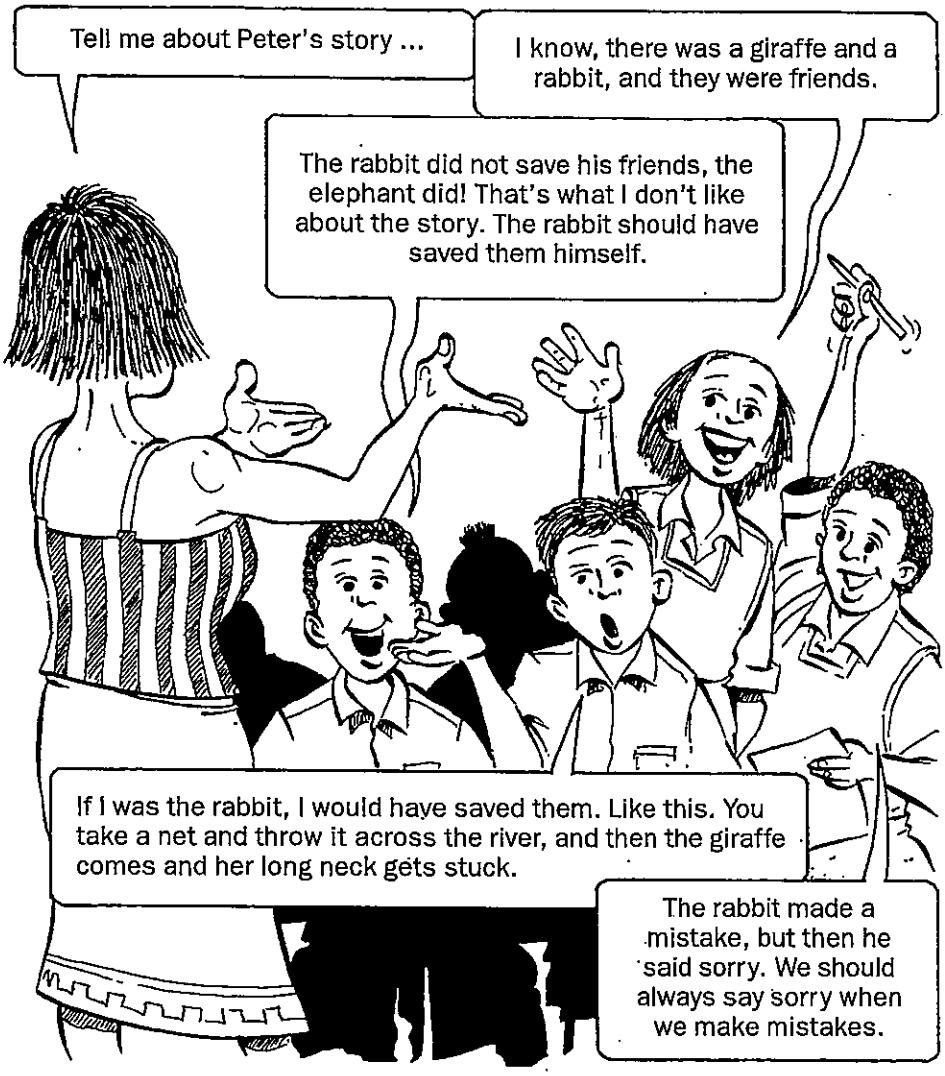
The full possibilities for meaning in reading can only be realized through working at all of these different levels. We know that books are meaningless unless they are read. The act of reading is the act of creating meaning. So the meaning of a book is not in the book itself. It is the result of an *interaction* between the reader and the text. Since meaning is dependent on the activity of the reader's mind, the nature of the reader's activity will influence the nature of the meaning that is created.

The following activity will allow you to explore this point.



Activity 39

1 Look at the following illustration carefully. All four learners are making statements about the story of the giraffe and the rabbit.



2 Can you identify the different levels of meaning in the children's responses to the story?
3 Which child do you think gives the 'correct' meaning of the story? Explain your answer.
4 Why do you think many teachers encourage learners to think that there is only one correct interpretation of a book?
5 If there is no meaning in the story as such, why should the children bother to read it?

What did we think?

The first learner reports on the *literal* content of the story while the second learner takes a more *critical* attitude. He identifies an issue in the story and makes a judgement about it. The third learner has a *creative* response. He thinks up new ways in which the animals could have been saved. The fourth learner *interprets* the story and looks for a moral or a lesson to be learnt from the story.

All four learners understand what is happening in the story, but they engage with the text in different ways and so come up with very different

responses. As a group, these children jointly construct the meaning of the story by each engaging at different levels. In order for the full meaning of the story to be developed, these levels are all important: without the literal meaning of what happens in the story, the more interpretative and critical responses would not be possible. And whereas a critical response is more important in relation to textbooks than perhaps to a story like this one, learners need to develop a critical approach not only to reading but also to all aspects of life and learning.

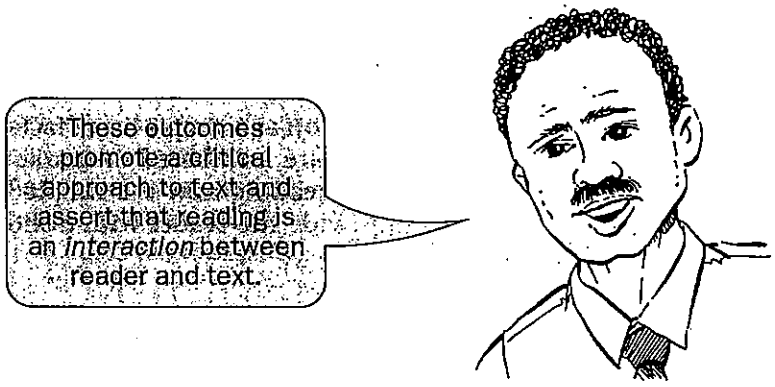
The levels of meaning that go beyond literal comprehension challenge many of our preconceived ideas about books:

- They raise doubts about whether it is enough, or even necessary, to teach reading through comprehension exercises.
- Because they show us that so much of a book's meaning lies in a learner's head, they suggest that teachers should not emphasize memorizing what's *in* a book.

The activity of the learner is now recognized as central. The outcomes that guide South Africa's new curriculum emphasize this active role for learners. For example, the specific outcomes for the Languages, Literacy, and Communication learning area encourage learners to:

- make and negotiate meaning and understanding;
- show critical awareness of language usage;
- respond to the aesthetic, affective, cultural, and social values in texts;
- access and use information from a variety of sources and situations;
- understand, know, and apply language structures and conventions in context;
- use language for learning;
- use appropriate communication strategies for specific purposes and situations.

Even though the National Curriculum Statements developed as part of the Curriculum 2005 Review process describe the LLC outcomes in a slightly different form and language, you will notice that they remain very similar to those above.



4.5 Learning to read better

Earlier we looked at how textbooks are used for learning. We agreed that they are important sources of information and that learners need them to succeed at school.

However, we also know that many teachers either don't use textbooks in their teaching or they use them ineffectively, and many learners simply learn them off by heart. As the content and the demands of their courses become more complex, many learners feel stressed and anxious about reading books or using libraries to help them study. Even though learners may *want* to learn, the difficulty of textbook language makes reading tiring and, sometimes, almost impossible.

We know that successful reading is about 'cracking the code'. Let's take a closer look at this code and find out how textbooks are written.

How textbooks are structured

In order to do this we will 'study' this Learning Guide and use examples from it to develop your understanding of the textbook code and the structure of text.

The information in textbooks is usually organized and presented in carefully-designed patterns. Alvermann has identified five kinds of text structures or organizing patterns found in most textbooks, no matter what the subject content of the book might be. They are:

- simple listings;
- sequences;
- comparisons;
- cause-effect patterns;
- problem solving.

We will briefly explain each pattern before we work with them in greater depth.

Simple listing

This involves the presentation of information as a simple list of facts, often in order of importance. Sometimes lists are numbered or marked with bullet points. For example, what you are reading now is a simple listing. The purpose of a simple listing is to provide the reader with a short and clear overview of important information.

Sequence

A sequence describes events that happened in a particular order. The sequence can be presented as a story line, a time line, or a 'before and after' situation. The teaching purpose of a sequence is to draw the attention of the reader to the process or change involved in an event. For example, Mike's description of his reading lesson on pages 120–121 is a sequence with a story line.

Compare and contrast

This kind of text concentrates on differences and similarities between two or more things. Look at, for example, Donaldson's discussion of the spoken and the written word on page 114. The purpose of writing and organizing a text in this way is to sharpen the reader's understanding and definition of ideas.

Cause and effect

Cause-effect patterns look at events and their causes or consequences. The information can be organized in two ways. One way is to describe an event and then identify the factors that caused it. Another possibility is to describe an event and then trace the effect it had. The discussion of the learning potential of the DR-TA method on pages 133–134, for example, uses this pattern. The teaching purpose behind this kind of text is to help the reader see links between different events and to find reasons for the way in which the links occur.

Problem-solution

This kind of text is similar to a cause-effect text, but concentrates specifically on problem-solution relationships between different ideas. Such a text should always clearly identify a problem that has to be solved. For example, our commentary after Activity 32 (pages 116–118) is structured like this and sets out to solve the problem 'Why are the above statements not true?' This kind of text is often used to encourage the reader to become a creative participant in finding a solution to a problem. Exercises and activities in textbooks are commonly written as problem-solution text.

These ideas are from D. E. Alvermann, *Content Reading and Literacy: Succeeding in Today's Diverse Classrooms* (Boston, Allyn & Bacon, 1998) p. 208.

You can see from the above examples that this Learning Guide uses more than one text structure. This is true of most textbooks in which you will find a combination of patterns, depending on the content or purpose of the different chapters or sections in the book.

We now want you to work with these text structures in some detail. By paying attention to the structure of a text, we can find clues to help us read and use textbooks meaningfully.

Work through the following activity on text patterns. Although it requires you to repeat a similar process each time, we encourage you to not skip any of the pattern exercises as each one establishes a *different kind of relationship* between ideas in the text. Once you have worked through the whole activity you will have deepened your understanding about the way textbooks work. You will also have *practised* a critical approach to reading text.

This is a long activity. It will take you at least 90 minutes to complete. Take a break after the first two exercises if you are feeling tired.

Here are words that signal a sequence or time order. Use them to guide you:
- first, second, third;
- next;
- initially;
- finally;
- before, after;
- when;
- now.

Here are words that signal a compare-and-contrast. Use them to guide you:
- on the other hand;
- like, unlike;
- however;
- less than, least;
- more than, most;
- other;
- differently, difference.

Activity 40

Sequence

1 Read our description of the DR-TA method again on pages 133–134 and then do the following:
   - **a** Underline words in the text that signal that this passage is using a sequence structure.
   - **b** As the text is sequencing events, you should be able to pick out the following information:
     - What is the first or initiating event?
     - What are the stages or steps?
     - How do they lead to one another?
     - What is the final outcome?
   - **c** Draw a diagram of the sequence.

Compare and contrast

2 Read the discussion by Taylor and Vinjevold in Section Three (page 82) and then do the following:
   - **a** Underline words in the text that signal that this passage is using a compare-and-contrast structure.
   - **b** If the text is comparing things, you should be able to pick out the following information:
     - What things are being compared?
     - How are they similar?

- How are they different?

c Summarize the information of this section in a table like the one below.

	reading readiness	active reading
motivation		
purpose		
questions		
attitude		
interest		
attention		

Cause and effect

3 Read our commentary on Activity 9 on pages 47–48.

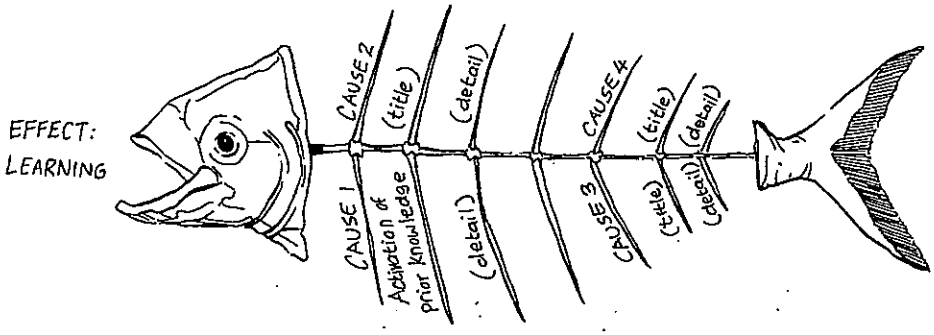
a Underline words in the text that signal its cause and effect structure.

b What are the causes of mistakes?

c What are the effects?

d Summarize the information from the passage in the diagram below.

Here are words that signal cause or effect. Use them to guide you:
- because;
- since;
- therefore;
- if ... then;
- as a result;
- consequently;
- nevertheless;
- thus.



Why text structures are important

At the beginning of this section we quoted an extract by Donaldson that described the nature of the written word. In the extract, she suggested that the written word requires us to become 'aware of language in its own right' because 'those very features of the written word which encourage awareness of language may also encourage awareness of one's own thinking and be relevant to the development of intellectual self-control'.

Dillon proposed a similar strategy by suggesting the use of 'questions about the self's process' while engaged in reading and studying.

Activity 40 required you to pay attention to signal words for particular text structures. In other words, following Donaldson's argument, you had to pay attention to a particular feature of the written word. The signal words, however, don't *only* point out (or signal) a certain kind of text. They *also* establish a relationship between the ideas in the text. Consequently they affect the way in which we think.

For example, by setting up learning as the *effect* of making a mistake, we are able to think about mistakes as the *cause* rather than the *absence* of learning. The cause-effect structure of the language has determined the structure of our thought.

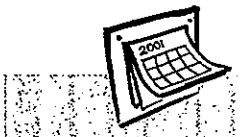
By understanding text structures we can begin to recognize the relationships between parts of a text and become aware of our own thinking while we read. This awareness is the essence of intellectual self-control and will help us to be active and independent readers, able to use a text effectively in service of learning and teaching.

Learning to study better

4.6

Earlier we observed that many people use the words 'reading', 'studying', and 'learning' as if they all mean the same thing. We found out that although text-related learning happens in both everyday life and at school, school learning in particular requires a lot of reading.

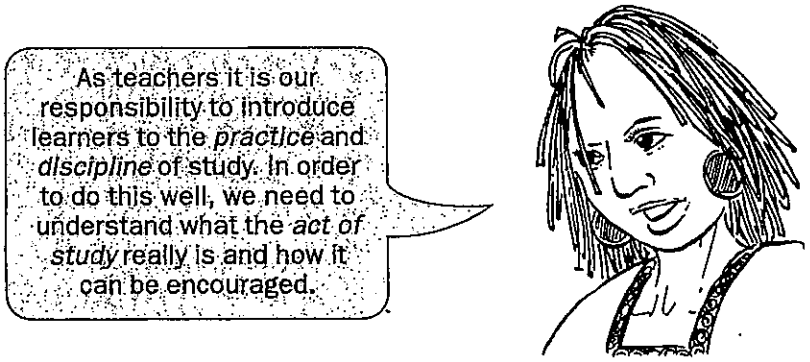
Later we discovered some similarities between reading as a meaning-making process and learning. We also learnt why reading is such a powerful tool for learning. Because it is so important to learning, we investigated different ways of reading and showed how reading-for-learning can only happen when we become aware of the nature of the written language and develop a critical attitude towards the text. As the famous writer and educator, Paulo Freire, explains:



Week 13 begins.

> *'Studying is a difficult task that requires a systematic and critical attitude and intellectual discipline acquired only through practice.'*

This phrase is from the article by Freire on page 133 in your Reader. Paulo Freire was a Brazilian educator who lived from 1921 to 1997. His ideas were very influential in South Africa, first in the radical Christian groups and the black consciousness movement and then in the development of people's education in the late 1980s.



In Activity 16 (Section Two, page 64) we thought about how learning is (and is not) like banking. Paulo Freire used this metaphor to capture the old idea that learners are passive recipients rather than active constructors of knowledge. In his book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, he made a distinction between *banking* education on the one hand, and *critical* or *dialogic* education on the other. He urged that educators should stop thinking of teaching and learning as being like depositing money in a bank, or depositing facts in the head of a learner, and rather think of it as an active, critical process which can emancipate learners.

In his article in the Reader, Freire takes this notion further in relation to the acts (one might say *activities* and stress that they are *active)* of reading and studying.

Activity 41

1. Turn to page 133 of the Reader and read 'The act of study' from Freire's book, *The Politics of Education.*
2. Compare 'banking education' to studying with a 'critical vision'. (A hint: use what you learnt about the compare-and-contrast text structure to answer this question.)
3. Would the DR-TA method of reading fit in with Freire's ideas about study? If so, explain how. If not, explain why you don't think so.
4. What does Freire say about the relationship between the learner and the world? In other words, what is the point of studying?

Spend about 90 minutes on this activity. Read carefully. Use the ideas about reading and text structures you have learnt to inform your reading. See whether any of Freire's ideas are useful to your own 'act' of study.

Why do we study?

Freire claims that the act of study is founded in a curious attitude towards the world. If learners are curious about the world, they will *want to understand* it and will use all kinds of resources to find out more about it.

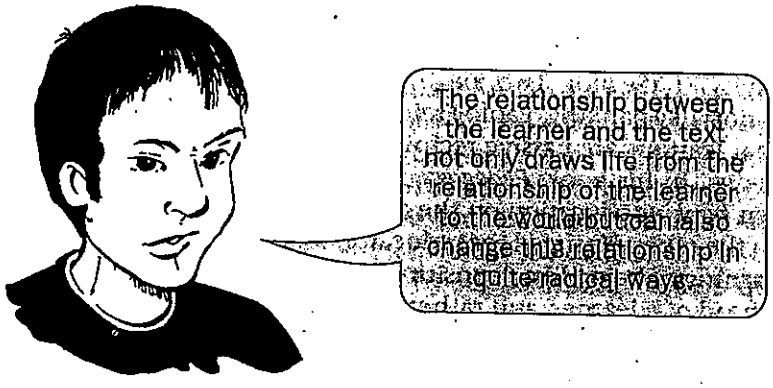
Reading and studying books are useful ways of finding out more information, but the information is not important on its own. It only becomes important if it is linked to real questions that emerge from our initial curiosity about the world. This is why he encourages us to take our own questions seriously, so that 'we as good readers [can] concentrate on analysing the text, looking for a connection between the main idea and our own interest'.

By using our own questions to guide us from the known to the unknown, we take on the role of the subject in the act of study. We are not studying in service of 'education' but are rather using education to develop our own thought. Studying is thus a way of making other people's thoughts our own by 'reinventing, re-creating, and rewriting' them in the light of the real questions we ask about our world. Therefore the 'one who studies should never stop being curious about other people and reality'.

In other words, Freire believes that the relationship between the learner and the *world* gives purpose and meaning to the relationship between the learner and the *text*. Freire's words are a great challenge to learners and teachers alike. He poses questions like:

- How do we stay curious about the world when so much of our time as learners is spent feeling bored and frustrated in class?
- How do we stay curious about the world when we spend years at school 'absorbing' other people's ideas about the world rather than actively and creatively interacting with our own?

But Freire doesn't argue that we give up learning about other people's ideas! Instead he says we cannot really study *unless* we actively make links between the texts we read and the context we live in.



One way to keep the curiosity of learners alive is to allow them to spend time at school talking with others about the questions and ideas that truly interest them, and to make these questions the basis of a disciplined study that involves both the spoken and the written word. To study and learn actively, we need to talk about and debate the insights that we gain in reading in relation to our own contexts.

In other words, we need to study the world and other people's words, but we need to do so actively and dialogically. We mustn't simply absorb these ideas uncritically, as a bank 'absorbs' money!

Freire allows us to understand how reading – the act of study – opens up new ways of understanding the world. It introduces the learner to the possibility of critical, and even radical, change.

This is why Freire argued that literacy, critical reading, and critical study are so important. Sometimes a text that may not initially *appear* to have much relevance or interest for learners' lives can offer significant new ways of describing, understanding, and explaining everyday events once it is understood.

For example, look back at the discussion of 'the University' on Robben Island in Section Three, pages 77–79. By reading books and talking about theoretical ideas written many years ago by people from other countries, the prisoners of Robben Island developed new political understandings and explanations of events within their own experience; understandings which they would not otherwise have gained.

Activity 42

1. Turn to the Reader and look at 'Developing communities of reading and learning' by Brown and Campione on page 154. Carefully read the section entitled 'Higher-order thinking skills in reading'.
2. What, according to the writers, is an 'intelligent novice'? What skills does an intelligent novice need?
3. Do you think these authors would agree with Freire's definition of the 'act of study'? Give reasons for your answer.
4. Think of your own teaching. What more would you have to do to develop your learners as intelligent novices?

4.7 Texts, reading, and OBE

As we said earlier, the new South African curriculum suggests that learners should, by the end of their schooling, be able to:

- make and negotiate meaning and understanding;
- show a critical awareness of language usage;
- respond to the aesthetic, affective, cultural, and social values in texts;
- access and use information from a variety of sources and situations;
- understand, know, and apply language structures and conventions in context;
- use language for learning;
- use appropriate communication strategies for specific purposes and situations.

These are the seven language outcomes listed in Department of Education, *Report of the Technical Committee to Assist the Department of Education in the Development of Standards* (Pretoria, 1997), pp. 28–41.

The role of reading in the new curriculum

Reading and writing are not explicitly mentioned in these seven outcome statements. This omission has become a hotly-debated issue amongst teachers. Have OBE and Curriculum 2005 somehow forgotten about reading and writing?

In the area of early literacy education, there has certainly been some hint of this. In 1998, the new outcomes-based curriculum was implemented in Grade 1 classrooms. In preparing teachers for the change, many official guideline documents were issued. They fleshed out the specific outcomes – about making and negotiating knowledge, about critical literacy, and about communication – into detailed guidelines for lesson planning.

As a result many teachers moved towards more constructivist and integrated forms of teaching. However, very few of these guideline documents called for the *deliberate* teaching of reading. Reading and writing were relegated to two amongst a myriad of skills learners had to attain rather than as *central processes* in learning. The assumption was that if learners were presented with tasks involving reading and writing, they would construct the skills of reading and writing for themselves. Proponents of this view argued that their reading would be better than before, because they would learn it spontaneously in the course of interesting activities and not be turned off by boring reading instruction.

The result was that some teachers started to believe that reading instruction would no longer be necessary, or even that it was 'banned' by the new curriculum. Here is an extreme example of this kind of thinking:

A delegation of worried principals from a cluster of junior primary schools in western Soweto posed the following to their District Director as an agenda item for a meeting in October 1997: 'the suspension of principals if we do not teach phonics/reading'. In the meeting they told their director that certain teachers, after attending a teachers' union seminar on OBE, had informed them that phonics and reading programmes were part of the legacy of apartheid education, and that the new curriculum would no longer contain them. Obviously disturbed, the principals sought official reassurance on the matter from the department.

Questions and debates about early reading in these terms have continued to trouble many teachers. In fact the confusion became so severe that by early 2000, the Department of Education found it necessary to intervene and assert (some might say reassert) its commitment to the fundamental importance of reading in the learning process.

The new Director-General argued the following:

> *'Reading, in its broadest sense, is key to the development and sustainability of our fledgling democracy. The notion that the outcomes ... do not promote, expect, or ensure that learners will be able to read and write is a "myth". The learning programme statement on literacy refers to a wider concept of literacy, including: language literacy, cultural literacy, visual literacy; media literacy; numerical literacy; and computer literacy.'*

This quotation is from a paper by Thami Mseleku, 'Reading and Thisano – Government's Vision for Reading in the 21st Century' presented to the *ERA Working Conference on Reading* (28–29 February 2000).

Why reading should be taught explicitly

Section Four has examined the central role of reading and writing in learning, in schools, and throughout contemporary society. It examined how written texts (books, journals, magazines, web sites etc.) provide the opportunity for learners to develop an awareness of language and a concomitant awareness of their own thinking. We saw the importance of teaching good reading foundations in children's earliest encounters with the written word, and we examined the ongoing importance of literacy development throughout the educational process. Reading takes us beyond our existing knowledge, and successful learners read more and more texts of ever-increasing complexity as they progress through school.

Our view is that reading and writing are *fundamental* to learning in educational contexts. Not only must the teaching of reading be improved, but the practice of reading and writing must appear *explicitly* as a critical learning outcome at all levels as OBE matures.

We would argue against the idea, found in much South African thinking and writing about OBE, that children will construct the skills of reading and writing spontaneously. Our view is that good, *explicit teaching* of reading is essential to the successful early acquisition of literacy. Here is a particular case of a young learner which illustrates this point well:

> *'In Grade 1, the teacher taught Ashok the alphabet. She made the students learn the sound of each letter for weeks. She made them write each letter.*
>
> *For the first two months, the chalkboard was covered with the alphabet. Children copied each letter several times. Ashok learnt all the letters. Teacher and children paid attention to the textbook which had a letter, word, and picture per page. Ashok learnt immediately the b of bird, the a of apple, and the t of table. He failed to understand when the teacher added "ird" to b for bird. The teacher did not have time to notice or understand Ashok's point of view.*
>
> *When Ashok went to Grade 2, he was asked to read a book. He said "b of bird", "a of apple", "t of table", reading letters off the page in this way. The teacher got annoyed with him and said, "Listen carefully to other children and read like them." Ashok listened, but he couldn't understand where he was making a mistake. He felt the others read just like him. Somehow he got through to Grade 3. Now he read by combining letters and vowel sounds. The teacher rarely asked him to read. Children sitting near him on the mat read the whole chapter. He didn't feel bad about it. He memorized a whole poem and during a revision of lessons in the last weeks of Grade 3, he read the poem without opening at the right page. He was happy but the teacher was angry. The differences between his and his teacher's points of view were becoming sharper.*
>
> *Grade 4 started. The first page of his new geography book, a new subject, said, "Our district is uneven and rocky ... its construction is*

This is adapted from a paper by M. M. Clay, 'How children learn to read: an international perspective' presented to the *All Africa Conference on Children's Reading* (Pretoria, August 1999).

like a plateau." Many children in the class had learnt to read fluently. They stood up and read, and then copied it into their notebooks. When Ashok tried to read slowly, the teacher would become impatient. The same situation existed during science lessons. In a month the teacher got so fed up with Ashok that she stopped saying anything to him. Ashok felt that the teacher didn't care any more. After the holidays, he didn't go back to school.'

Stop. Think.

Before you continue, think about this story. How does it illustrate the point that reading must be explicitly taught and isn't spontaneously learnt?

How does the story end? Well, Ashok dropped out of school because he couldn't learn how to read accurately for himself. In fact, as we saw, he constructed a 'reading' practice of his own which remained trapped in his *misunderstanding* of what the task entailed. (Do you remember the discussions on misunderstanding and making mistakes in Sections One and Two?) He dropped out because the teacher failed to teach him new ways of reading. She failed to provide him with a pathway from the known to the unknown that would allow him to learn from, and overcome, his mistakes.

Clay (the writer of this story) explains that the lesson to be learnt from Ashok's story is that:

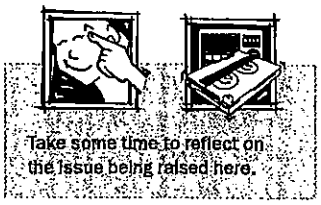
'if children are confused [about reading], then expert teaching is needed to pull them out of it. ... [the problem] will not sort itself out as the child gets older. On the contrary, the child will, willingly and with effort, build error upon error until there is a huge, seething ant-hill of error.'

Many teachers, we believe, are wrong when they say that children construct their own knowledge of reading in the course of outcomes-based activity. They underplay the crucial role of reading *instruction* and, by doing this, limit the learners' reading abilities for life. Reading is critical to good learning and like all learning requires teaching *and* an active learning attitude by learners to be successful. Removing either makes good learning impossible.

Conclusion and key learning points

4.8

Reassessing the half-truths



Stop. Listen. Think.

Relisten to Part 4 of your audiotape. Then go back to the half-truth statements at the beginning of this section on page 113 and decide if you still agree with your original responses:

- Have any statements changed their meaning for you? In what way?
- Can you now see some truth in statements you initially thought were incorrect?

Use what you have learnt in this section to develop your arguments both for and against these different positions on reading. Use the half-truths as a checklist to confirm what you now understand and what you are not yet certain about.

Key learning points

This section has investigated the relationship between learners, text, and the world.

We have argued that the links between the reader and the text are critical for the reading process, and that the knowledge the reader brings to the text is as important as the information on the page. We also saw that at school, textbooks are often the context for learning and that the use of school textbooks requires learners to be active and independent readers. We then took a closer look at the way in which textbooks are written, and explored how the structure of a text organizes and directs the way we read it.

We examined Freire's critical view of reading as dependent on our curiosity about the world and as a powerful force in changing our engagement with the world. Building on his ideas, we suggested that schools need to develop 'intelligent novices' who are able to take on the questions of the world.

Finally, we argued that teaching reading is an explicit and deliberate act. We suggested that the dangerous half-truth emerging in South Africa – that reading can be learnt spontaneously and therefore that teaching reading is outdated – could doom millions of learners to be poor readers for life.

Here is our summary of this section's key points:

- Reading is an activity of the mind requiring learners to 'crack the code' of the written text to generate meaning.
- Reading becomes meaningful when the reader can make links between his or her personal experience and the experience encoded in the text.
- Reading can be hard work and too many learners have a negative attitude towards it.
- Children are eager to learn to read when they believe that books are the key to a new world of experience.
- The attitude of adults towards reading influences the attitude of children towards books.
- Teachers need to read widely and actively themselves in order to establish a context of reading in the classroom.

'The act of study should not be measured by the number of pages read in one night or the number of books read in a semester. To study is not to consume ideas, but to create and recreate them.'

This quotation comes from P. Freire, *The Politics of Education* (Masachusetts, Bergin & Garvey, 1985).

- Learning through reading requires an active engagement at several different levels of meaning making.
- Different kinds of text require different approaches to reading, but all texts require active reading.
- Prediction and questioning are key reading skills.
- A critical approach to text is an essential skill for school learning.
- All books follow certain text patterns that establish specific relationships between different parts of the text.
- The structure of a text can influence the way we think about the ideas presented in the text.
- Teachers need to introduce learners to the 'discipline' of study and encourage them in its practice.
- The act of study is founded in a curious attitude towards the world.
- Reading can produce further curiosity and a critical attitude to the familiar world.
- The early skills of reading should be taught explicitly.

15

The magic of reading

Bruno Bettelheim and Karen Zelan

Notes

Bettelheim and Zelan criticize the reason many give for learning to read; namely that it makes us more useful citizens and workers. They don't deny that this is true, but develop a strong case as to why such an argument can never serve as a motivation for learning to read.

Instead, they argue, learners are motivated by the 'magic' of reading. They read because it 'promises' them an entry into an exciting fantasy world. The writers argue that we are all *originally* motivated by these kinds of 'irrational' desires.

The task of the teacher is to recognize this human fact and teach reading through books that evoke this 'magic'. They argue that school story books – primers – don't do this because they are designed to teach learners to *read only* – they aren't imaginative enough – and don't offer learners any 'magic'. Learners also see them as meaningless. They recognize that their only point is to teach them what a 'C' is, or how to pronounce 'C–A–T', and that they have no longer-term meaning.

Why it isn't useful to justify reading in terms of its usefulness

Reading

Being able to read well is of great practical use in our society and the world. Unfortunately, however, this is the main reason teachers give children when announcing that they must learn to read. Reading is taught in ways that not only completely obfuscate the art of literacy but also prevent the child from guessing that it could exist.

These edited extracts are from B. Bettelheim and K. Zelan, 'The magic of reading', Chapter 3 in On Learning to Read (London, Penguin, 1981).

Even teachers who themselves are committed to literacy stress reading's *practical* value when teaching beginners. In doing so they neglect the more elusive but much more important value literacy can have for one's life. Earnest teachers, anxious to secure a better economic life for their students, press them to apply themselves more assiduously to learning reading skills so that they will be able to 'get ahead in the world'.

But children are not strongly motivated by distant future rewards; they are not firmly convinced by this reason.

We must not be led astray by the fact that everybody claims to know that to be able to read is profitable. The fact that people give lip service to such knowledge does not mean it has become part of their outlook on life or that it gives direction to their behaviour. It can remain inoperative knowledge, which they file away in the far recesses of their minds and to which they pay no attention in their everyday lives.

Maybe this can be seen more clearly when considering the teaching of mathematics. Mastering basic mathematical skills is obviously useful; these skills are taught to all children. But despite this usefulness, most children drop their study of mathematics as soon as they have acquired the minimal smattering needed to get by. The reason is that with the emphasis on the practicality of the rudimentary computing skills, nothing in the way the children have been taught mathematics has made them aware of the fascinating world of numbers, or of how mathematics offers the key to a deeper understanding of the world.

Only the few who for some special reason have become sufficiently *entranced* to penetrate beyond its practical uses comprehend what mathematics is really all about. I do not know whether this higher and truer concept of mathematics is potentially available to everybody, but there is no doubt that it could be opened up to a much larger number of students, were it not stressed that mathematics' main merit rests in its practical application.

Reading is about opening up a world of imagination and joy

What is required for a child to be eager to learn to read is [...] a fervent belief that being able to read will open to him a world of wonderful experiences, permit him to shed his ignorance, understand the world, and become master of his fate. For it is *faith* that kindles one's imagination and gives one the strength to undertake the most difficult tasks, even though at the moment one does not quite understand how. Reading will provide one with all these marvellous opportunities.

We would teach reading very differently if we viewed it as the initiation of a novice into a new world of experience: the acquisition of an art that will unlock previously hidden secrets, open the door to gaining wisdom, and permit sharing in sublime poetic achievements. When learning to read is experienced [...] as the *only way* to be transported into an unknown world, the child's unconscious fascination with imaginary events and magic power will support his conscious efforts at decoding. It will give him strength to master the difficult task of learning to read and become a literate person.

Our thesis is that learning, particularly learning to read, must give the child the feeling that through it *new worlds will be opened to his mind and imagination.*

This would not be difficult if we taught reading differently. Seeing how a child is *lost to the world* and forgets all his worries when reading a *story that fascinates* him, shows how easily young children are captivated by books, provided they are the right ones. When we notice how a child lives in the *fantasy world* of this story even long after he has finished reading it, [provides clues as to how we should teach reading differently].

Literature in the form of religious and other myths was one of man's greatest achievements, since in them he explored for the first time the meaning of his existence and the order of the world. Thus literature began as *visions* of man, and was not created to serve *utilitarian* purposes.

All children are fascinated by visions, by magic, and by secret language, and the beginning of school is the age when the child is most desirous to partake of the secrets of adults.

Satisfaction of these desires was historically contained in religious texts, so children usually learnt to read well from such texts. Mastering reading not only permitted access to superior powers but was the instrument through which we received their messages – those of God in religious writings, and of superior minds in the writings of philosophers, poets, and scientists. When learning to read is experienced in this way, it involves not only the cognitive powers of the child's mind but also his imagination and his emotions. In short, all reaches of his personality.

Learning to read then appeals to the highest and the most primordial aspects of the mind, involving simultaneously id, ego, and superego; our whole personality.

How will the child experience reading?

So there are the two radically different ways in which reading (and the learning of it) can be experienced:

- either as something of great practical value, important if one wants to get ahead in life;

- or as the source of unlimited knowledge and the most moving aesthetic experiences.

Which of these two ways or in what combination of them the child will experience being taught reading, depends on the impressions he receives from his parents and the atmosphere of his home, and on how reading is taught to him in school. The image of literacy impressed on him by those who significantly shape his views of things during his most impressionable years is decisive. This is so because it is during these early years that a child's basic personality is forming, and he does not yet perceive matters on the basis of a rational and critical evaluation of their objective merits.

There is reason to believe that only those for whom reading was early endowed with some visionary qualities and magic meaning, become literate. Reading and what it can contribute to one's life is not something that pertains only to the ego and the conscious mind; it is also deeply rooted in the unconscious. Those who retain all through life a deep commitment to literacy harbour in their unconscious some residue of their earlier conviction that reading is an art permitting access to magic worlds, although very few of them are aware that they subconsciously believe this to be so.

Consciously, most of us take pride in our rationality, and are correctly convinced that more than anything else it is literacy that lifts us out of irrationality into rationality. That an earlier, childish idea of literacy's magic power may still be at work in us is suggested by what we experience when we are deeply affected by art, poetry, music, and literature, for then we feel touched by magic. It is an irrational attraction, but one that continues to move us throughout our entire lives.

The special fervour with which the astronomer engages in his scientific studies is imbued by remnants of the childish awe that overwhelmed him when first beholding the beauty or the immensity of the sky, if not also its eternity. While he does not look for the answers the astrologer sought – whose work was certainly a magic enterprise, but nevertheless the origin of astronomy – the astronomer still seeks to discover what created the universe, and how. Maybe in the development of the human mind from childhood to maturity, ontogeny parallels phylogeny in some measure or fashion. Magic belief in astrology slowly evolved into the science of astronomy, and alchemy into chemistry.

The good biologist as much as the good physician retains somewhere the feeling of wonder inspired by the miracle of life. However rationally the good physician proceeds when trying to relieve the physical and mental distress from which we suffer when we are sick, however much he relies in his work on his medical knowledge to help us, in our experience of him as a healer he must be tinged in some measure with the magical qualities with which past generations endowed the medicine man.

Note

Bettelheim and Zelan argue that however rational and scientific our thinking may be – as doctors, scientists, or astronomers – it all begins with a kind of childish awe. We are fascinated by the seeming magic of life; of birth, death, of the planets etc. From this we develop our more rational and scientific forms of thinking. But, say Bettelheim and Zelan, even the most scientific doctor (for instance) remains a little influenced by the 'magic' of the sangoma (or traditional healer). It is this deep human attachment to 'magic' and imagination that we need to tap into when we teach reading.

Why we must develop our emotions

The more our rational abilities weaken, the more powerfully our emotions can impinge on us and the more dominant magic thinking becomes. As the child enters school, he is at an age when his rationality is as yet poorly developed, and his *feelings dominate* his thinking. So when something is really important to him, he is apt to invest it with magic, and the more he does so, the more important it will become to him emotionally.

But if he fails to see some magic in what he is doing, he will be little interested in it.

If literature – irrespective of whether it is of a literary, philosophic, or scientific nature – had not been originally endowed with qualities that made it attractive to our *unconscious*, and if it did not still retain for us some of these qualities, we would not be fully committed to it, because an important part of our personality would remain uninvolved. For literature to affect us beyond what can be put easily into words, our response to it must continue to contain traces of the feelings and irrational ideas we projected into so many of our childhood experiences.

To the modern educator, who views learning to read as the acquisition of a particularly important cognitive skill, it may seem a far-fetched idea that this can be mastered well only if initially and for some time to come reading is experienced subconsciously by the child as a magic art, which potentially confers great and in some ways unknown power. Yet it is the child's wish to penetrate what he believes to be the important secrets adults possess that makes learning to read an exciting adventure to him – one so attractive that he is eager to expend the requisite concentration and energy on mastering it.

Here it might be worth remembering again that literature began as poetry, which was part of religion, as in invocations to the gods or rhymes to which magic properties were ascribed. Literature

originated in poetry recited and transmitted orally. It often served magic rather than ordinary, utilitarian purposes. Even when script became more common, much of the now recorded literature was still devoted to issues connected with religion – so much so that it could be said, and universally believed, that 'In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God.'

For millennia, writing and reading were arcane arts that conferred special powers and privileges. It required a long and difficult struggle before the average man was permitted to read the Scriptures, and printing began with the printing of Bibles and other religious texts. It was from the Good Book that children were taught to read, and only after man was permitted to read the Scriptures did education become universal.

Today, too, for literacy to be a really desirable goal for the young child, it must be endowed by him with magic meaning. Only then will it become fully attractive to his unconscious, which will consequently support the child's conscious efforts to master reading. Later, the irrational aspects of literacy can become safely reduced and the rational ones gain ascendancy. But if this divestment of magical connotations occurs too soon and too radically, reading will not be strongly invested emotionally.

It is not objective merit, but high parental valuation, that makes reading so attractive to the child. This appeal does not emanate from the rational and utilitarian purposes parents may satisfy through reading; rather, the child responds to the parents' emotional absorption in reading. What makes it attractive to him is that it seems to fascinate his parents. It is their secret knowledge that the child wants to be able to share. The more parental devotion to reading and the child's belief in its magic propensities coincide, the easier time a child will have in learning to read, and the more important and enjoyable reading will be to him.

Two ways of teaching reading

It is rare that we find a chance to compare the impact of two different methods of teaching reading. These two ways – one typical of our schools, and another where reading is being taught immediately from a difficult text but one which carried deepest meaning for the child [...] – were evident in the following experiment in Zdvo.

A boy was educated simultaneously at the local public school and at an orthodox Jewish school, or yeshiva, where children are taught reading directly from the Hebrew Bible and have to translate what they read into the vernacular, exactly the way it has been done for hundreds of years. At the yeshiva,

'none of the texts presented to young children are expurgated or bowdlerized. It is in fact forbidden by Jewish Law to abridge, expurgate, or for that matter even to skip over what might be considered controversial passages. Thus children even in the early primary years read unabashedly about the attempt of Potifer's wife to seduce Joseph, of the twins fathered by Judah upon a woman he thought to be a prostitute, and of the rape of Dinah by Schechem.

One day when his father wanted to demonstrate the child's ability to deal with sophisticated material, he asked this six-year-old boy to translate from the book of Genesis for a visitor in our home. The guest would call out chapter and verse, and after a pause to locate the passage, the young boy would provide a quite accurate translation in his own words.

Our amazed visitor asked if by chance he were not dealing with a bilingual edition, and if he were not stealing an occasional glance at the English. To my embarrassment, I found that I had indeed given him a volume replete with a literal English rendition of each line. I began offering assurance that the boy was not using any crutch, but was in fact reading only the Hebrew original. Groping for a quick proof of my contention, I asked Steven to look at the English text and to read it to me. Obediently, he focused his attention on the other side of the page, stumbled pathetically over the phonics, and with a grimace exclaimed, "I can't."' (Mendelsohn, 1973)

[...]

This example demonstrates how a child can read a difficult text in Hebrew, and translate this into English very well. But when the child is asked to read the simplified English summary, he can't do so. Bettelheim and Zelan argue that this shows that difficult originals which still contain 'magic' to interest the learner, are better teaching texts than simplified summaries that have lost this magic. This is why primers (simple school reading books) aren't good books to use in the teaching of reading.

Comparing the texts with which his son was taught in the two schools he attended, this father commented:

'I know of no parent who would open a primer today with any intention other than to discover what his child is reading.' [...]

The texts of the first grader in the yeshiva, on the other hand, are the identical readings explored daily by his parents and teachers. As a result of this perpetual and subtle set of reminders of the innate depth and potential of the subject matter he is pursuing, the phrases 'I have read' or 'I have already learnt' are never used, since finality is neither possible nor desirable.

Study is an ongoing process. The objective is to be continually involved with the text, not to outgrow it, because the material can never be fully mastered.

The boy, having been taught Hebrew for meaning and with complete disregard of whether some word by itself was easy or difficult, read it for meaning and was carried along by his understanding of it so that he could translate a difficult text. In public school he had been taught to decode laboriously simple

English words in meaningless sequences. Since what he was made to read there had nothing to awaken his interest, he could read only the words he had learnt in class. He knew that no adult could possibly be interested in what he was reading in public school, so he could not work up any interest in it either. Well aware that adults were as interested as he in what he was reading in Hebrew school, if not more so, he found learning to read there a challenge which he met to the best of his ability. The significance of the text of the Bible invites every reader to seek his own meaning in what is written. From the moment he learns to read, the child is impressed that his teacher reads the same book innumerable times and always finds some new meaning in it. This challenges the child to do the same, and suggests to him that whatever meaning he finds in it is legitimate for him. What the text conveyed – as much as his teacher's and parents' attitude towards it – put the boy just mentioned under its spell as soon as he began to learn to read. With it, reading and literature attained magic connotations.

By comparison with the truly unlimited and deeply engrossing vistas the Bible opens up to the child, as Mendelsohn says,

> *'the public school system employs various elementary reading series which for all their claims to linguistic and literary advancement, really amount to little more than an updated Dick and Jane. What vistas, indeed, are made available to the child who is asked to develop an interest in reading, not to mention literature, by learning to read: "Janet. Mark. Janet and Mark. Come, Mark, come Mark, come. Come here, Mark. Come here. Come here, Mark. Come and jump. Come and jump, jump, jump. Here I come, Janet. Here I come. Jump, jump, jump"? This is the entire text of the first seven pages of the updated Janet and Mark pre-primer, which continues in the same vein.'*

Pay attention to why the writers argue against the common school practice of developing simple readers (or primers) to teach young children reading. What do you think of their argument and the evidence they provide?

Because of its central importance, reading should be the paramount example of what education in the deepest sense is all about: a progress from irrationality to rationality, starting with the id's irrational purposes, which become gradually controlled by the ego and thus changed to meet in a rational manner the challenges of both external reality and the inner life.

If education equips students in this way, it enriches their personality and makes life more manageable and more worthwhile. But modern education – believing it can do away with the slow and tortuous development from irrationality to rationality – tends to deplete the ego of its natural resources and leave it weakened, subject to domination by an irrationality that has not been sufficiently transformed by the process of education.

Appendix 4

Language, Literacy and Communication: front cover, table of contents and full text of *Umthamo 2*

Pages 85-132

UNIVERSITY OF FORT HARE

Eastern Cape Education Department

Distance Education Project

Core Learning Areas Course

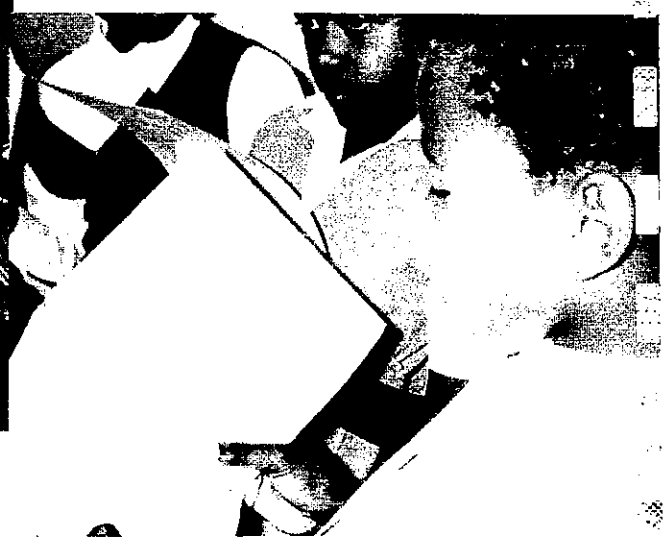
Language, Literacy and Communication

Umthamo 2

A Whole Language Approach

(Pilot Edition)

January 1999



CONTENTS

Umthamo 2

A Whole Language Approach

Introduction

In this umthamo, we are going to look at a way of teaching language which fits in with Outcomes Based Education (OBE). It is not such a 'new' way, but it may be new to some teachers, and to some primary schools in South Africa.

There are different approaches to teaching and learning. Many colleges of education tend to teach just one.

This approach to language learning and teaching does not divide language into different parts. It is about the links between ***all*** aspects of language. The ideas and activities in this umthamo combine a **whole language** approach with a **literature-based** approach to language teaching and learning.

Many people assume that the word 'literature' refers to stories, poems and plays that have been written down. But this is not true. It has been said that it is 'an accident' that we have come to think of literature in this way. *Literature* includes both the art of speaking, and the art of writing.

> *In 'civilised' countries we are inclined to associate literature with writing; but such an association is accidental ... Millions of people throughout Asia, Polynesia, Africa and even Europe, who practise the art of literature, have no knowledge of letters. Writing is unessential to either the composition, or the preservation, of literature. (Chadwick, NK 1939:77 quoted in Finnegan 1970:15-16)*

In this umthamo we are concerned with *oral literature*. We will ask you to collect samples of *oral literature*. You will use these iintsomi as a base for the *whole language* work that you do with your learners.

In high schools it has been the custom for some time to separate subjects. Sadly, this has filtered down into the primary school. So much so, that in some schools even aspects of one subject (or learning area) are divided into separate parts.

We suggest that this is unnatural. It is high time that we caught up with other parts of the world (our 'global village'), and adopted a whole language approach in our interactions with young learners.

At the face-to-face session **where this umthamo is introduced**, you will experience a 'whole language' approach yourself (see Unit 3). We believe this is important if you are to understand how this approach works, and if you are to see the value of working in this way.

For the **Key Activity** in this umthamo, we are going to ask you to try out a 'whole language' approach with your class. We think that this approach to language teaching will make your language lessons more meaningful and more interesting, for both you and for your pupils.

At the face-to-face session **where this umthamo is monitored**, you will have to report on your experiences carrying out Part 1 of the **Key Activity.** So you will need to make sure that you have completed Activity 7 *before* that face-to-face session.

At the face-to-face session **where this umthamo is concluded**, you will be expected to report on your experiences, and those of your learners, in Part 2 of the **Key Activity.**

Intended outcomes

When you have completed this umthamo you will

- **be more conscious of how your teaching approach in the classroom affects the way your children learn and *feel* about language**
- **have tried a 'whole language approach' in your class, and you will be able to compare this with the way you have been teaching language up to this point**
- **be able to design and provide tasks for your pupils that integrate listening, speaking, thinking, reading and writing**
- **have an understanding of the value of providing activities that require your pupils to access, process, use and share information from various sources**
- **have had opportunities to see the value of using culture based experiences such as iintsomi, at school.**

Zozo Figlan telling a story in 1992 at the Weekly Mail Storytellers' Market in Cape Town.

Unit 1 - The Role of Timetables in Primary Classrooms

Most primary school teachers in South Africa have been used to having a daily timetable. A timetable can help us to make sure that we make time to teach all the subjects in the curriculum. It can help us to ensure that we allow enough time for each area of the curriculum.

Before we do anything else, we would like you to think about your own class and your own school. Think about what you have to do from Monday to Friday with your class, and then do the next activity.

Activity 1 - Looking at Timetables

Take a piece of A4 paper and draw your class timetable. Put in all the subjects and periods that your class have. If you have a lesson or period devoted just to reading, please write that in. If you have a particular period for spelling, put that in, too. If you have a whole hour or more devoted to language, please show that. Please draw your timetable ***exactly*** as it is in your class.

Make sure that you print your name and the grade that you teach at the bottom of your timetable.

- Now look at the timetables below. Compare your own timetable with these. What do you notice?
- Which timetable is most similar to your own? In what ways?
- In what ways is your timetable different?

Sometimes we can guess the way a teacher *works* from things we see in her/his classroom. Do these timetables tell you anything about the style of teaching that goes on in each of these classes? What clues do you see? What helps you work out each teacher's way of working?

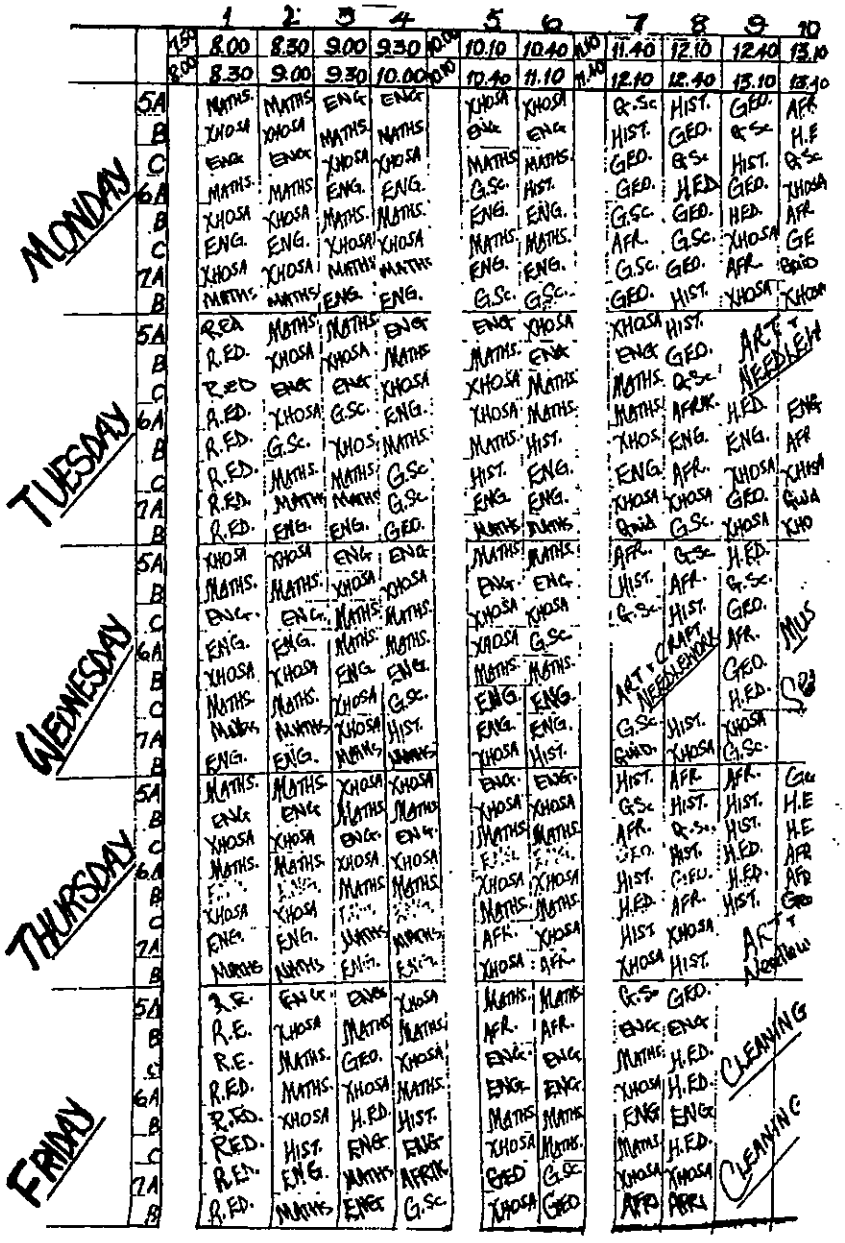
GRADE 1 TIME TABLE

TIME												
MINUTES	10	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30
MONDAY	ASSEMBLY AND DEVOT	LITERACY ENG	LITERACY ENG	NUMERACY	NUMERACY	NUMERACY	LONG BREAK	LITERACY XHOSA	LITERACY XHOSA	LITERACY XHOSA	LIFE SKILL	LIFE SKILL
TUESDAY		NUMERACY	NUMERACY	NUMERACY	LITERACY XHOSA	LITERACY XHOSA		LIFE SKILL	LIFE SKILL	LIFE SKILL	LITERACY ENG	LITERACY ENG
WEDNESDAY		LITERACY XHOSA	LITERACY XHOSA	LITERACY XHOSA	LIFE SKILL	LIFE SKILL		LITERACY ENG	LITERACY ENG	NUMERACY	NUMERACY	NUMERACY
THURSDAY		LIFE SKILL	LIFE SKILL	LITERACY ENG	LITERACY ENG	NUMERACY		NUMERACY	NUMERACY	LITERACY XHOSA	LITERACY XHOSA	LITERACY XHOSA
FRIDAY		LITERACY ENG	LITERACY ENG	NUMERACY	NUMERACY	NUMERACY		LITERACY XHOSA	LITERACY XHOSA	LITERACY XHOSA	LIFE SKILL	LIFE SKILL

This is a time-table from a Grade 4 class in 1998

Period	1	2	3	4	5	6		7	8	9	10
Time	8:00-8:30	8:30-9:00	9:00-9:30	9:30-10:00	10:00-10:30	10:30-11:00	11:00-11:30	11:30-12:00	12:00-12:30	12:30-13:00	13:00-13:30
Mon.	R Ed	Math	Math	Xhosa Oral C	Xhosa Writ C	Afrik		Eng Oral L	Eng Writ L	Art & Craft	Art & Craft
Tues	Math	Math	Eng Oral C	Eng Writ C	Xhosa Oral L	Xhosa Writ L		Geog	Geog	Afrik M T	Art & Craft
Wed	Math	Math	Hist	Hist	Phys	Ed		Eng Read	Eng Spell	Xhosa Read	Xhosa Spell
Thur	Math	Math	Xhosa Oral L	Xhosa Writ L	Gen Sci	Gen Sci		Eng Oral L	Eng Writ L	Gard-	ening
Fri	R Ed	Math	Math	Eng Rec	Eng Rec	Health		Xhosa Rec	Xhosa Rec	Afrik	Option Time

Grade 5, 6 & 7 Timetable



Now take another clean sheet of paper, and write the date and time. Then write down your thoughts and answers to the questions that we asked you above. (We have repeated them below.)

- Compare your own timetable with these timetables. What do you notice?
- Which timetable is most similar to your own? In what ways?
- In what ways is your timetable different?

Sometimes we can guess the way a teacher *works* from things we see in her/his classroom. Do these timetables tell you anything about the style of teaching that goes on in each of these classes? What clues do you see? What helps you work out each teacher's way of working?

When you have answered these questions, attach this sheet securely to the copy you have made of your timetable.

Now stop and think about the questions below:

- Do you think timetables are important in a primary school classroom? Why?
- Do you ever get frustrated with your timetable? Why?
- Why do you think it might be important to allow your learners to spend as long as they want or need on a particular task?
- How do you feel about the statement, "Children need to finish any task that they begin, before they start another one"?

Open your Journal, and write the date and time. Write down your thoughts in response to these questions. Make sure that you store your timetable, and your answers to the first set of questions, safely in your Concertina File.

You now have a copy of your present timetable, together with your comments, stored safely in your Concertina File. You have also written down how you feel about timetables in your Journal. If at any time during the year you decide to change your timetable, make sure that you put a copy of your changed timetable, together with your reasons for making changes, into your Concertina File, too.

Problematising Timetables

When we divide up each day into lessons or periods, we usually end up separating learning areas. We can even be so concerned that we cover all aspects of each learning area, that we even make special times for each separate part of a particular learning area. This can cause us to forget that the curriculum should be one whole. And "the whole, is more than the sum of the parts".

In the early 1990s, in Mitchell's Plain in the Western Cape, there were schools where there was subject teaching from Standard 2 (Grade 4) onwards. Language lessons were divided in such a way that one lesson focused on reading, while another was devoted to spelling. Yet another lesson was for grammar, and another for writing. And there was yet another lesson to deal with poetry or stories.

There were even Grade 4 classes where one teacher walked into the classroom to teach Comprehension, and another came into teach Grammar or Language. Each teacher was a specialist of a particular aspect of language. One teacher was not expected to put all the aspects (or parts) of language together. And yet that was what the children were forced to do in those schools. The pupils had to listen to what each teacher had to say, and then they had to somehow try to put all the different parts together. It was rather like a jigsaw puzzle.

Why did these schools do this? What was the reasoning, philosophy, or theory of education behind this way of working? Was it based on the notion (held by some educationists) that young children have an attention span of just ten minutes? If so, how valid (or reliable) is this notion or belief? If you have ever observed young children when they are busy doing something that they are interested in, or which they enjoy, you will have noticed that their attention span is *much* longer than ten minutes!

When Alan worked at the University of Cape Town in the School of Education, he taught a B Ed course. One of his B Ed students was doing some action research into his own teaching. This student was a lecturer at a college for Pre-primary teacher trainees. He had been reflecting on and thinking about his style of lecturing. In the course of his research, this B Ed student had asked his own students how they found his lectures. Amongst the responses that this man recorded was one which stands out.

"Sir, another thing is, that you just come in and teach us your subject. But you must know, Sir, we've got a lot of other subjects to consider. Each lecturer just teaches his lesson

and when it is all finish (sic), we must take all the little bits and put it together. They don't tell us how we must do it. I don't think it's fair!" (Quoted in a report submitted by a B Ed student - UCT 1991)

Activity 2 - Putting it all together

At this point, we want you to think very carefully about this story. Is this really fair? Should the ***learners*** be the ones who 'have to put it all together'? Or should that be the role of the one who is sharing their knowledge or expertise, the ***teacher***? Or, should the ***learners*** do this **together** with the ***teacher*** as the facilator?

Open your Journal. Write the date and time. Then write down your thoughts about this in your Journal. Take some time. Don't just write one or two sentences. If a primary school teacher teaches in a school that seems to ***insist*** on timetables, what do you think s/he could do to get the other teachers, heads of department and the principal to begin to open up the timetables?

Has primary education been influenced so much by high school education, that teachers have come to believe that it is better to separate everything out, just as in high schools, and to specialise?

In the past, when people trained to teach in a primary school, they were trained to teach *everything*. The teachers were generalists. Their *specialism* was being able to cover all areas of the primary school curriculum. These teachers didn't focus on two or three subjects or areas of the curriculum. They were able to cover the *whole* curriculum.

It is only since the early 1980s that students who wanted to teach learners from Grade 4 to Grade 7, have followed specialist subject courses. Why was this the case? We believe that primary schools have been influenced by secondary or high schools.

Historically, teachers in high schools have received the most respect. The teachers who taught at the top of the primary school had less respect. And the teachers who taught the first grades, had the least respect.

But how many of the teachers who taught in high schools could have managed to teach in a Grade 1 or Grade 2 classroom? Very few. It takes a very special, multi-talented somebody to teach the youngest learners. We know of many *primary* school teachers who have successfully taught in high schools. But we know of very few *high* school teachers who have managed to teach in primary schools!

So why have we, as primary school educationists, emulated (copied) the way that high schools are organised? Perhaps education would be more successful if high schools modelled themselves on the way primary schools are organised. Is it because the majority of officials and education decision-makers come from secondary schools?

In 1997 Viv had the opportunity to go to the United States of America. She learned that many *high* schools were beginning to open up their timetables. The teachers at those schools were trying to make more space for their learners to learn for themselves, and to make their learners' experiences in school more meaningful. They decided to make each period one hour long. This meant that the teachers had to change their approach to teaching in their classes. They couldn't stand at the front of the class for a whole hour *lecturing* the children. The teachers had to plan activities for their learners to do.

Perhaps a primary school teacher in South Africa, who is forced to teach within a strict timetable, could borrow this idea. Perhaps, it would be a good way to start: to make each period one hour long, instead of 30 minutes. Probably it would be easier if s/he could find a colleague who feels the same way. Then they could approach their head of department and their Principal to see if they could try out something like this in their classes. This would be one way in which education in our schools could become more learner-centred, and less teacher-centred.

If you look back to the Grade 1 timetable on page 4, you will see that in this class, the teacher is not restricted by 30 minute periods. Most periods are one hour, and others are an hour and a half. This is in line with OBE.

Later on you could try to block certain longer periods of time. For example, between break and the end of the day. You could do this gradually, starting with one 2 hour block in a week. If it works well, you could increase the number of longer blocks of time in the week. This would enable you to deal with something more thoroughly. This is what happens in many primary schools elsewhere in the world.

Unit 2 - Moving towards an integrated Curriculum

When Tillie was in South Australia in September 1998, she was very impressed by the way the teachers of learners in Grades 1 to 7 integrated the different learning areas. She visited a number of primary schools and spoke to the teachers who worked in those schools.

Tillie was impressed by the way the teachers and learners worked in those primary schools. In some schools Tillie found that much of the work that learners did was ***project-based***. In other words, the children worked on a particular topic to find out all that they could, and then they reported on their findings. Tillie was very impressed by how well the learners did this.

In some cases, the *learners* chose the topic they would research. In other cases, the learners went out into their community to ask what the *community* would like them to investigate.

But, no matter what topic a group of learners chose, it inevitably involved a number of learning areas, if not all. For example, they counted and calculated, read history, used computers, learned about environmental needs, drew and designed, and so on. And of course, they used language, literacy and communication skills! They ***thought***, they ***spoke***, they ***listened*** to one another, they ***read***, and they ***wrote*** down, or recorded, what they had had learned.

Another thing that really impressed Tillie was that the learners were required to work in 'multi-grade' groups. Children from all grades, from the Reception Class to Grade 7, could be found working in the same group. They even formed these mixed groups themselves. Everybody in the group was given a chance to participate. The young ones worked under the eye of the older children.

At the conference that Tillie and Alan and John Bartlett attended in Adelaide, some children from Colonel Light Gardens Primary School presented what they had done in a Technology Education focused project.

It was clear from their presentation, that these learners had encountered some disagreements when they started out on their project. They explained how they had overcome these disagreements, and wove a lot of humour into their explanation. They seemed to have picked up the idea that people may disagree for some good reasons. And they were proud of the ways they had managed to solve their differences with everybody happy with the solution.

In everything that these learners did, they needed to use communication skills. And as they used their communication skills, the learners learned a great deal. For example,

- Their communication skills were tremendously improved. They noticed people who were in a hurry and those who did not wish to be disturbed, or who were worried, or who looked hurt. For example, they came to a lady in the park whom they noticed was deeply hurt by something, and they decided not to approach her (*non-verbal communication*). In the early morning, people are in more of a rush than by mid-morning. Elderly people seem to have more time than the young and the middle-aged.
- They learned to ***speak*** in a group.
- They learned how to handle and guide a discussion with confidence.
- The shy ones came out of their shells.
- They learned how to approach other people when carrying out their research. (For example, "Good day. May I ask something for my school research? Which sweet do you like?")
- The learners had to ***listen*** constantly as they collected their information (data).
- They ***read*** a lot, for extra information (from newspapers and magazines to library books).
- Their language was extended and developed in a "*real*" context. They learned the correct use of new words and all the parts of speech that go with them.
- The answers and added information were recorded (***writing***). If a learner could not spell a word, the respondent did the writing or spelt the word. The learner could even write the information as s/he pronounced it, ignoring the conventional spelling. When back in her/his group, any necessary corrections could be made with the help of the other group members.
- They learned about how to arrange and record their work.
- Through carrying out project work, the learners' sense of responsibility was tremendously improved.
- They learned to understand themselves (their likes, dislikes, strengths, weaknesses).
- Their self-esteem was boosted.
- They felt they belonged to their community and that they could be of help in the future.

Now think of yourself. You probably have lots of different jobs or roles to play. Maybe you are a mother, a wife, and a housekeeper, as well as a teacher. Maybe you also have certain other jobs that you do in your community. You aren't four or five different people. And often the other 'unofficial' jobs that you do, help you to do your job as a teacher even better. We sometimes have regular times to do certain things. But we don't have a rigid timetable for the jobs that we do in daily life.

Activity 3 - All the different jobs I do

Take out your Journal, write the date and time. Then make a list of all your 'jobs', including your 'official' job of being a teacher. What helps you to do your job as a teacher well? Why? Do you find your timetable helps you to plan and get through all the different syllabi? Why? What stops you from finishing a task with your class? In what ways? Write down your thoughts in answer to these questions.

If we want our children to grow up into truly ***whole*** human beings, we should think about whether this fragmented (broken up) curriculum is a good way to help them to be *whole*. Perhaps it would be better to integrate the different *aspects* of learning areas, as well as integrating different learning areas.

We remember talking to Hugh Hawes a few years ago. He was at a special workshop in Cape Town on the Child-to-Child approach to Health Education. Lots of different people were there. There were people from Early Childhood. There were people from Health Departments. There were doctors and teachers, community workers and people from youth organisations.

Hugh Hawes is well known for his book "Curriculum and Reality in African Primary Schools" (1979)

Hugh Hawes said that a good question to ask about any Primary Curriculum is, "Does it ***nourish*** the child's growing mind?" That led to other interesting questions.

- Is it a balanced diet?
- Does it contain the right amount of the right kinds of knowledge and the right balance of experiences?
- Is it appetising?
- Is it served up in an interesting and enticing way?

If you think carefully about what he was saying, it means that to serve nourishing food, you have to think of putting together interesting meals, made up of a number of different ingredients.

Perhaps we need to think of the school curriculum in the same way. Putting things together helps make for more sen-

sible learning. And when we put things *together*, it makes it easier for children to make sense of what they find put in front of them in school classrooms. One really wonders why we split up the school day into all those neat little 30 minute periods?

People don't feed their families meals as separate items, such as, first eat some dry porridge, then have a small bowl of amasi, then swallow a pinch of salt. Now take a slice of bread, followed by a spoon of butter, and then a spoon of jam. Then finish off with a cup of hot boiled water, followed by a spoon of coffee grains, and finally, two heaped spoons of sugar. (No need to stir!)

Working together to interpret a picture

Working together on a project

Unit 3 - Experiencing a Whole Language Approach

In this unit we are going to start by giving you something to do. As you carry out the activity, you will see that you are ***reading, thinking, writing, speaking and listening.*** You will see that this activity involves all of these five abilities, in different ways, at different stages.

You will do this activity at the face-to-face session where this umthamo is introduced.

Activity 4 - A literature-based whole language experience

When Tillie was trying to recover the story behind an idiom, she heard Steve Tshwete telling this version of the story. Read the beginning of the story that he told. It is *only* the beginning.

A certain master was on a journey with his servant. It was a long journey on horse-back. As they were travelling across the country, the master saw a jackal crossing their path. The master remarked, "This jackal is quite big." The servant replied, "Oh, Master, this is nothing compared to the one I saw yesterday." "Is that so?" responded the master. "Oh yes. It was very, very big. In fact it was as big as an ox!" "As big as an ox?" questioned the master. "Yes, as big as an ox," answered the servant. The master asked again, "You say 'as big as an ox'?" "Yes, really, as big as an ox," said the servant.

The master did not utter a word and they continued on their way, without talking to each other, for about an hour. The servant noticed that his master was not happy and he didn't know what was worrying him. So he asked the master what the matter was. The master told him that they would have to cross four rivers before they reached their destination. The last river was the biggest and the most dangerous of all the rivers. This river was allergic to liars, and no liar could escape its wrath. It swept liars there and then down to the deep blue sea. It never missed a liar, even if the liar was to use "umkhwenkwe" for washing. (People used this umkhwenkwe to bring them luck, and to give them power to conquer evil spirits.)

- Now take a clean sheet of paper, and write the date and time. Then **think** of any questions that you have about this story, and make a list of all your questions. Try to **think** of questions about what might have happened before this story began. You could also **write** down questions you would like to **ask** about happened next. *Don't* **write** down questions as if you are testing

your own **reading** (for example, *How many people were travelling? What transport were they using?*). (What are you doing at this stage? You are **thinking** and **writing** in response to what you have **read**.)

- Get into a small group of four, and **share** the questions that you have **thought** of and **written** down. (You will be **thinking**, **speaking** and **listening**. You may even quickly **read** to check something in the passage, or one of the questions that you **wrote** down.) Then try to **think** of possible answers to your group's questions.

- After a few minutes, as a whole 'class', **share** the questions from each group, and together **think** of some probable answers to those questions. Predict what you **think** is likely to happen in this story. Try to support your answers. You will need to refer to the two paragraphs of Steve Tshwete's story that you have **read** to support your **thinking** and your answers.

Now spend a short time on your own, **writing** in your Journal. **Think** about how you found this experience. When you carried out this activity, you ***thought***, you ***read***, you ***wrote***, you ***spoke*** and ***listened*** to one another. This was an example of a ***whole language approach*** to using language.

Write in detail about how you used each of these abilities as you worked through this activity.

Reading - *First of all **think** about your **reading**. When did you **read**? Did you only **read** when you first worked with the passage? Did you go back and **re-read** at any time? What did you **re-read** and why? Did you **re-read** because you didn't understand something? Or because something caught your interest? Or did you **re-read** because you wanted to check something?*

Thinking - *Did you **read**, and then **think**? Or did you **think** while you were **reading**? What were your **thoughts**? What about when you were **thinking** of questions? And what about when you were **writing**? Did **thinking** about your **writing** make you change anything that you had **written**? And when you were **talking**, how did your **thoughts** work with the **thoughts** of the other people in your group? Did you **agree**? Did you **argue**? Were you **thinking** as you **listened** to one another? What were some of the things you were **thinking** about when you were working on this activity?*

Writing *- When did you actually* ***write****? Did you only* ***write*** *when you* ***wrote*** *down the questions that you* ***thought*** *of? Or did you* ***re-write****, or change, anything after* ***reading*** *or* ***re-reading*** *what you had* ***written****? Did you* ***write*** *down any of the possible answers that were raised?*

Speaking *- When did you* ***speak****? Did you perhaps* ***talk*** *to yourself as you* ***thought*** *of questions? Did you only* ***speak*** *when you were sharing your questions in your group? Did you also* ***speak*** *in the whole group discussion?*

Listening *- When were you* ***listening****? Did you* ***listen*** *to the other people in your group as they* ***read*** *aloud the questions that they had* ***thought*** *of? Did you* ***listen*** *to the possible answers that they* ***thought*** *of in answer to your group's questions? What about during the whole group discussion? How did your* ***listening*** *affect how you participated in the small group, and the whole group, discussion?*

While you were doing this activity, did you notice how your umKhwezeli was watching you? This was an opportunity for your umKhwezeli to ***observe*** how well you were communicating. S/he could see how you concentrated while you were reading and writing. S/he could note who spoke and who listened. This was a chance for your umKhwezeli to do some continuous assessment of how the teacher-learners were working, and to appraise how well people were using their language abilities.

What would happen *next* in your class, if you were to adapt this activity for your learners? You could tell or read the rest of the story. Or you could ask your learners to write their *own* versions of how the story might go. Then they could share their different versions.

The story of how Tillie collected this intsomi

We wanted to include a story in this umthamo, but we wanted to include a story that was not one of the best known stories. We thought of the rich idioms in isiXhosa. And Tillie spent some time thinking of some of these. She tried to remember some of the iintsomi she had heard in her life.

Eventually she remembered parts of a story behind one particular idiom, "Ayikho impungutye enkulu kunenye. Zonke iimpungutye ziya lingana". She tried to remember what had happened in this story. But because the story is not told very often, it was difficult to remember all the details. This is the

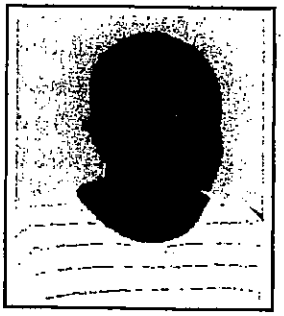
story of how she traced and recovered the details of that story.

What I still remember in the story I want to tell, is that a certain master was travelling on horse-back with his servant.

I'm not sure what happened or led the two to talk about a jackal, which the servant said was as big as a calf or an ox or a cow. The master knew that the servant was lying and he decided to teach him a lesson that the servant would never forget.

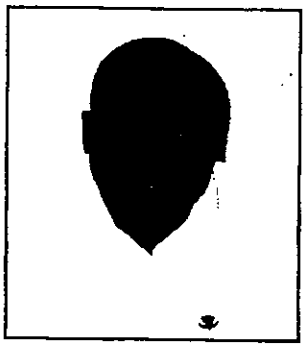
I don't remember how many rivers that they had to cross. But the master said the last river they would have to cross was very, very big, and did not allow any liar to cross it. Any liar trying to cross that river would be swept off down the river there and then. And it would not matter how well that liar could swim. The river was actually called, "*umlambo otshayela amaxoki*", *the river which drowns all the liars.*

I don't remember whether they had more talks, but as they were nearing this river, the master could tell that the servant was guilty of lying and was terribly afraid.



Since I was not sure of what actually happened, I asked my sister-in-law, Lulu Maholwana, about the story. This is what she told me. The servant was fond of lying. It was his habit. Once, he even spoke of a bug and likened it to something terribly big, so big it couldn't possibly be true.

We still didn't know the title of the story, and the details. Then we thought of Mr Caga, who had been a teacher of isiXhosa, and who is now an inspector of schools. When we asked him about the story, he couldn't remember the story, although his age fits the era when we read the story in our Xhosa readers in the lower primary classes. The only thing he remembered was that there was a version of this story in a book which was one of the Stewart Readers.



Then, one day I was speaking to Miss Kolisa Ngodwane, who has been a Maths and Science teacher. I mentioned

this story. She knew the message and philosophy behind the story.

She said that the master had to use a certain technique to stop the servant from lying. The master didn't want to say point blank that the servant was lying, as it is bad to do so. He knew that there were a lot of stories that people respected and in which they believed, that were similar. Kolisa said that the message went through the servant since he repented and told the truth before they reached the river. She didn't remember what really happened and what were the actual words.

So then I asked Mr Hintsa Siwisa, an attorney. He also knew this idiom and the message behind the story. But he couldn't remember the actual story. I quote his words, "It means levelling of the playing fields. Things are going to be tested, and put on the same par."

When I asked him about the origins of the story, he said that he thought the community was sick and tired about the continuous lying of this man. On a certain day, they decided to take him to a place where he was to be put under a vigorous test, and he was to be given a lesson so that he would never lie again. Mr Siwisa was not sure how this was going to be done, nor where it was to be done.

But Mr Siwisa said that the Minister of Sport, Steve Tshwete, was fond of this story, and many other stories. He said that that the Minister was arriving that very same day from Johannesburg, and he promised to make an arrangement so that I could meet him in King William's Town. This is Steve Tshwete's version of the story. (We have included both a version in isiXhosa and a version in English.)

Umlambo otshayela amaXoki

Inkosana nesicaka sayo babekhwele emahasheni beseluhambeni. Endleleni njalo, enquntsuza amahashe bengawaxheshanga, kungekho nancoko ingako kuba wawumkhulu umhlaba womahluko phakathi kwesicaka nenkosi yaso, kwasuka kwathi thaphu impungutye ngaphaya kwetyholo, yanqumla indlela yaya kutshona kwelinye icala.

"Kwowu, yankulu ke laa mpungutye!" yothuka yatsho inkosana. "Hayi, Nkosi, awubonanga nto kanti. Mna sendikhe ndabona impungutye enkulu kangangenkabi yenkomo!" satsho isicaka kubonakala ukuba sonelisekile. "Engangenkabi yenkomo? Yhu! Makube yayinkulu loo mpungutye ezweni!" "Inene, Nkosi yam, yiva ukuba ndikuxelela."

Emka wona amahashe kuba kakade ebengakhange aphazanyiswe nayiloo mpungutye, ngaphandle kokuthi xhungu nje umzuzwana abuye, athabathisa. Inkosana yabonakala ibambelela entloko kanye oku komntu okhumbule into. "Kukho into endilibele ukukuxelela yona singekesuki eBhotwe, kwaye ibalulekile ebantwini abaseluhambeni njengathi aba." Yatsho inkosana kubonakala nangenkangeleko yayo ukuba iyangxengxeza.

"Ingaba yintoni leyo, Nkosi yam?" sabuza isicaka simangalisiwe. "Apha ngaphambili kule ndlela sihamba ngayo kukho umlambo esiza kuwuwela. Ngumlambo odumileyo lowo kuba utshayela amaxoki," yatsho inkosana. "Uthi lo mlambo utshayela amaxoki? Uwatshayela kanjani, Nkosam?" sabuza isicaka sikhwanqisiwe. "Hayi, andithethi ukuba kukho umtshayelo, ndithetha ukuba kuwo akuweli nalinye ixoki." Ahamba wona amahashe nelanga ngoku linendawo efuna ukuthi futhu.

"Mhlekazi!" sabiza isicaka, sesilibele ukuba ngokwemigaqo yase Bhotwe igama elithi 'Mhlekazi' lalisetyenziswa kwinkosi enkulu. "Ndinempazamo encinane endinqwenela ukukhe ndiyilungise. Uyakhumbula ndisithi impungutye endandiyibonile yayinkulu ingangenkabi yenkomo? Ngoku xa sendiyicingisisa okutsha, eneneni yayingangethole le nkomo." Ayaphendula inkosana. Ahamba wona amahashe, laye livakala ilanga. Kwavakala nokugquma komlambo ngaphambili.

"Iyandihlupha ke into yokuwela lo mlambo. Abanye abantu bathi ukuba uyazazi ukuba ulixoki kufuneka wehlele ngezantsi uyekuwela kulaa ndawo ithe cwaka. Abanye bathi kufuneka unyukele ngasentla uwuqhiwulele ungekazukufika apha engxangxasini," yachaza yatsho inkosana. "Nkosi yam, khawundincede undiphe into nje encinane. Ingaba lo mlambo awukhe uthi xa uthshayela, wenze impazamo yokutshayela nomntu ongelo xoki?" sabuza isicaka kuqapheleka ukuba siyangcangcazela.

Ngoku babesebephezu komlambo, sekuvakala kanobom ukugquma kwamanzi. "Ekwazini kwam, kulo sizakuwuwela umlambo ixoki aliweli nokuba selihlambe ngomkhwenkwe," yatsho inkosana. "Mhlekazi, ndicela ukuba sikhe simise," satsho isicaka ngelizwi elitshothozayo. Yemisa inkosana, yehla ehasheni, yakhe yathi gu bucala, yabetha amanzi Ngelo xesha isicaka sasibile sithe xhopho.

"Mhlekazi, ndithi mandilungise le ndawo. Laa mpungutye ndandiyibonile eneneni yayingangenkabi yebhokhwe," satsho isicaka. "Oo! Hayi kulungile xa kunjalo. Kumnandi nakum xa impungutye ilingana nenye impungutye. Betha ihashi siwele."

The River that swept away Liars

Kwathi ke kaloku ngantsomi

Chosi, chosi

A certain master was on a journey with his servant. It was a long journey on horse-back. As they were travelling across the country, the master saw a jackal crossing their path.

The master remarked, "This jackal is quite big." The servant replied, "Oh, Master, this is nothing compared to the one I saw yesterday." "Is that so?" responded the master. "Oh yes. It was very, very big. In fact it was as big as an ox!" "As big as an ox?" questioned the master. "Yes, as big as an ox," answered the servant. The master asked again, "You say 'as big as an ox'?" "Yes, really, as big as an ox," said the servant. The master did not utter a word and they continued on their way, without talking to each other, for about an hour.

The servant noticed that his master was not happy and he didn't know what was worrying him. So he asked the

master what the matter was. The master told him that they would have to cross four rivers before they reached their destination. The last river was the biggest and the most dangerous of all the rivers. This river was allergic to liars, and no liar could escape its wrath. It swept liars there and then down to the deep blue sea. It never missed a liar, even if the liar was to use "*umkhwenkwe*" for washing. (People used this *umkhwenkwe* to bring them luck, and to give them power to conquer evil spirits.)

When the servant heard this, he was quite shocked because he knew how powerful *umkhwenkwe* was. If this river would not yield to *umkhwenkwe*, then he knew it must be a *VERY* powerful river. As they travelled, he became more and more uneasy. The master also became sadder and sadder the further they rode. And as his master grew sadder, the servant grew more and more panic-stricken.

As they neared each river, the size of the jackal changed. When they reached the first river the servant said, "My Lord, the jackal was not exactly as big as an ox. It was a little bit smaller than an ox." The master did not remark.

When they reached the second river, the servant said, "The jackal was not even nearly the size of an ox. It was as big as a calf." But again, the master did not remark. When they had crossed this second river, the master just explained his concerns about the last dangerous river, and said no more.

As they were between the second river and the last river, the servant said to his master, "The jackal was not even as big as a calf. It was as big as a goat." Just before they reached the last river, the jackal was the same size as other jackals, which are common everywhere.

Phela, phela ngantsomi.

That is why there is an idiom which says, "Ayikho umpungutye enkulu kunenye - zonke iimpungutye ziya lingana." Don't try to be important among your colleagues. Everybody has something to share. You don't need to exaggerate things in order to be important.

Do you know any other or different versions of this story? If you do, please write out the version you know. You can write in isiXhosa or English (or even both!). We would really like to collect some other versions.

One of the wonderful things about stories that are *told*, is that there isn't just ***one right*** or ***correct*** version. There are many. When we tell a story orally, the people who are listening influence the way the story is told. That is why stories that are told change with time and place. The storyteller makes the story relevant to the listeners.

When Viv was doing some research about using stories in classrooms, she was studying with someone from Tanzania, Anise Waljee. Anise had found that when she asked people to tell her some of the old stories, she had to get lots of elderly people together. She gathered aunties, uncles, grandmothers, and grandfathers together to talk about the old stories. Then, ***together***, they were able to piece together and remember the stories they had heard when they were young.

In this way, more complete versions of a story can be recovered. A *terrible* thought is that when these old people are no longer with us, a link of the chain that holds oral storytelling together, will be broken. Many parts of the story will be washed down to the sea by the strong river of time.

At the last face-to-face session of the first semester, you were given a tape-recorder, and we asked you to use it to tape-record a story behind an idiom or saying in isiXhosa. (For example you might have tried to recover the tale or intsomi behind "*undibambise iliwa*' you left me holding the cliff.) We suggested that you should go to an elderly somebody in the community, and ask them to tell you a particular story. In the next activity we are going to ask you to do something *more* about that story.

This is what we asked you to do when we gave out the tape-recorders:

- Ask that person if they will tell you a traditional intsomi that has something to do with a well-known saying or idiom in your language.
- Ask them if you can record the story as you listen to it.
- Don't just rely on the tape.
- Listen *carefully* yourself, and try to remember the story so that you can tell it yourself.
- Tell the story to someone else before you listen to the tape. How much have you managed to remember?
- Then find other people and ask them if they know other versions of the same story. Record their versions and make notes.
- Compare the different versions.
- If you do this during the holiday, it will save time next term.

Activity 5 - Collecting the intsomi behind an idiom

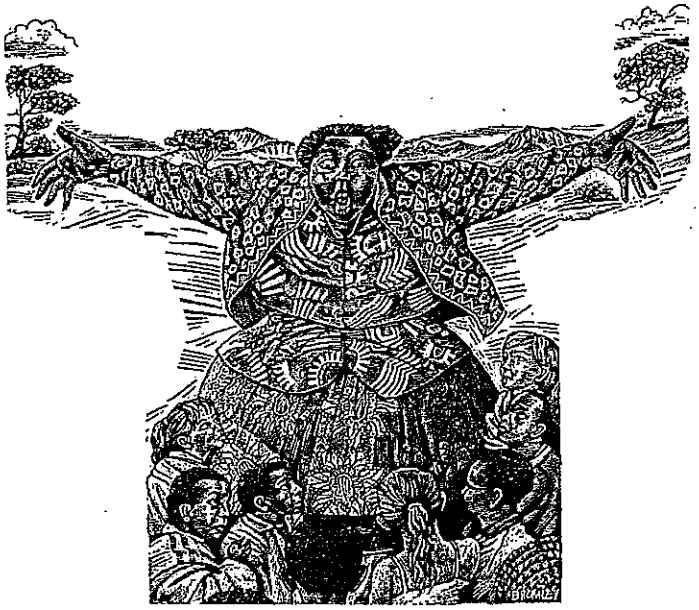
- Now, we would like you to visit and speak to other people and ask if the know the same story that you collected. Don't play your first tape-recording of that story. After the customary exchange of greetings, explain that you are trying to find different versions of the story behind your chosen idiom or saying. Then ask if they know a story behind that idiom or saying. We are sure that you will find that they know *different* versions of the same story.
- If you struggled to get a story, now is your chance to search for a particular story. *Don't* be satisfied with a well-known or popular story. Try to find a less well-known tale. We know that many people in South Africa are rich resources of stories, iintsomi. One of AC Jordan's American students, Harold Scheub, visited Transkei during the early 1970s and collected thousands of iintsomi, or traditional tales!
- You have read about Tillie's search for a ***complete*** version of the story she was trying to remember. You may need to ask quite a number of people, before you put together a version that you feel is ***whole*** or ***complete***.
- You will need to check with each person who is willing to tell you a story if they are happy for you to tape-record their tale. Remember, just as when you were carrying out your research for the umthamo about *Learning in the World*, you, *you are the one in need*, so you really have to be humble in your approach. The person who is helping you is doing you a great favour.
- As well as tape-recording the tale as it is told, you need to listen very carefully yourself to the storyteller. You will also need to notice ***how*** the storyteller tells her/his tale. Watch her/his face, the tilt of her/his head. What does s/he do with her/his hands? What gestures does s/he make? How does s/he sit?

In this way, you will be studying natural story-telling skills that you can choose to use yourself. And in time you can increase your own skills as both a teacher and a storyteller.

- When you have found a version you are satisfied with, we would like you to write out that version of your story in *both* isiXhosa and English. This will take a long time. The learning area *Language, Literacy & Communication* is not about just one language. This learning area includes all the language work that we do in all languages. We believe it is important to give status (importance and position) to ***all*** languages in our province.

- When you have finished writing out the story that you have collected, make sure you have written your name and the date on it. Make sure that you write the name of the person who told you this version. Store this writing in your concertina file.

- Then open your Journal, write the date and time. In your Journal, describe, *in detail*, your experience of collecting the different versions of this story. Mention the people who helped you and give a short biographical description of each person who helped you.



Zozo Figlan telling a story in 1992 at the Weekly Mail Storytellers' Market in Cape Town.

Mrs Nongenile Zenani, gifted iintsomi teller from Transkei, who told an epic tale over 17 days. (Photo taken by Harold Scheub).

Unit 4 - Introducing a Literature-based Whole Language Approach in a Primary Classroom

In Activity 5, we asked you to collect several versions of an intsomi, a traditional tale, or story behind a saying or an idiom. In this Unit of this umthamo, we are going to ask you to think of ***another*** saying or idiom, and we are going to ask you to collect *more* iintsomi.

Activity 6 - Collecting another intsomi

- Think of a saying or idiom, which has a story that is not very well known. You need to think of an idiom that your learners are not familiar with. You may even need to have in your mind two or three sayings, or idioms.
- Then, visit some of the elderly, wise people in your community. If there is somebody who has a reputation for telling stories well or who, like Steve Tshwete, enjoys and knows many stories, visit that person.
- After the customary exchange of greetings, ask that person if they know any stories behind your idiom or saying. Just as you were advised in the umthamo, *Learning in the World*, you will have to approach this person in a proper way. You are the one who needs the information. This person may well have the knowledge you need. If you approach them in an appropriate manner, you will be able to collect your data (in other words, a story or stories behind your idiom or saying) successfully.
- Ask your informant (the person who is sharing their knowledge) if they mind if you tape-record the story (or stories) that they tell you. Explain that you are collecting this story to use with your learners for a language lesson.
- Then listen *very, very carefully*. Watch your informant's face. Watch her/his hands and gestures. Watch the way s/he sits. Observe all your informant's body language. When you listen to your recording later, these observations will enable you to write down more accurately the way this story was told. If you decide to ***tell*** the beginning of this story to your learners, you will do so much better if you have observed the storyteller carefully.
- When your informant has told her/his story (or stories), it is a good idea to play back the tape-recording for her/him to hear what you have recorded. This is not only polite, it is also the correct thing to do. If we want to involve our communities more in the education of the young, it is ***essential*** that the people in our communities trust us.

- At home, transcribe what you have recorded. In other words, listen to the tape, bit by bit, and write down in your Journal every word of the story that your informant told to you. **This will take a long time.** But sometimes doing research takes time. Be thorough. Don't forget to include your informant's name, and some biographical details of that person. Remember this is a degree course. Store this in your Concertina File.
- Open your Journal. Write the date and time. Then write down
  - (i) how you collected your story,
  - (ii) something about your informant (approximate age, sex, and perhaps something which indicates why you chose this person), and
  - (iii) how you found this experience.

Using literature as a basis for introducing a whole language approach

Now you have collected your story, you will need to prepare to use it with your learners.

At the face-to-face session where this umthamo was introduced, you were given the beginning of a story that Tillie collected from Steve Tshwete. We are going to ask you to repeat this activity with your own learners. But you **won't** use the story, *Umlambo otshayela amaXoki* (*The River that swept away Liars*). Instead, you will use the story that you have collected, yourself.

You will have to make some decisions about ***how*** you do this, depending on the age and stage of your learners. You will have to decide whether you wish your learners to **read** the story-beginning, or whether you wish your learners to **listen** to you telling the story-beginning.

The most important thing that we can say is that you ***only need the beginning*** of the story.

This next activity is the first part of the **Key Activity**. You can choose Option A (in which the learners will **read** the beginning of the story), or Option B (in which the learners will **listen** to you telling the beginning of the story).

When some teachers tried this activity with their learners, they did different things.

Those who taught Grade 1 or 2, told the story beginning to their learners.

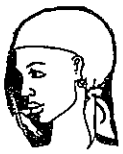
Some teachers were able to make enough copies of the story-beginning, so that their learners could work in pairs, and could share a copy.

Another teacher wrote the story beginning on the chalkboard for her learners to read.

Option A: Reading the story beginning

Activity 7 - Introducing a literature-based whole language approach

Read carefully through the story you collected in your research.

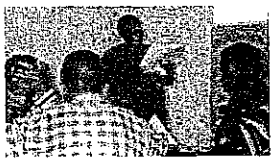


Then you need to make decisions about how much of the story you will give your learners. The idea is to give them a *small* part of the story, so that they have to **think** about what might follow. You want to give them just enough so that they have questions burning in their minds. Each story will be different. You may be able to use the first two paragraphs, or you may need to use the first three. But ***you*** will have to decide.

You will also have to decide whether you write this story-beginning on the chalkboard, or whether you make copies so that your learners can share one copy between two learners. If you have a very big class, this could be quite expensive, especially if your school does not have copying facilities.

When you are with your learners, tell them that you are going to give them something to do that you yourself have done. You are going to give them the ***beginning*** of a story. You want them to read the story-beginning very carefully.

Then hand out copies of the story-beginning (or make sure that you have it written up clearly on the board, or on some newsprint), for your learners to **read.** When we tried this activity with a group of multi-grade learners, the teacher read aloud the story beginning. As she modelled good reading, the learners followed on their own copies of the text.



When you think most of your learners have finished reading, stop them. Tell them to work in pairs, and **write** down ***very quickly*** all the questions that they can think of from what they have read. Make sure that they are quite clear that you don't want questions that *test* what they have read. You want them to really **think** of all the questions that they can about information which is **not** in the passage.

Now get each pair to join up with another pair and tell your learners to share their questions. When they have **read** through each other's questions, tell them to begin to **think** of and to **talk** about possible answers to some of these questions.

Don't give them too much time. Watch your learners. Watch their non-verbal communication! When you feel that they have had time to think of good questions, and enough time to write, stop them. Five to ten minutes should be enough.

You will probably have to allow about ten minutes for this activity. You will have to read your learners' body language to judge when they are ready. If one or two groups don't seem to be talking very much, go to those groups and make sure that they are clear about what it is that you want them to do.

After about ten minutes, stop your learners. At this point you are going to 'conduct' a class discussion - rather like a choir master or a choir mistress! Ask each group to read out one of their questions. (Write each question on the board or make a note of it in your Journal.) Then ask whether they have thought of possible answers to this question. Encourage the other groups to think of other possible answers to this question. Get your learners to support their suggestions. They may have to refer to the passage that they have read to check for clues to the answers. This is an important part of this activity.

Continue in this way. Try to get a question from **each** group. Don't just ask the children who you can rely on to give you answers. Ask some of your more shy learners. Encourage everyone to participate. Make notes in your Journal of the possible answers that your learners give.

Now get your learners to work in the same pairs that they started this activity. Tell them that you want each pair to discuss, and write the rest of the story in their own way. Tell them that you don't just want a few sentences. You want proper stories. Let them do this in a scribbler, or on rough paper. But if they work on rough paper, they will need to write their names on the pages, and they will need to keep them safe. If they really work at this part of the task, it should take them at least half an hour.

If your school has a strict timetable, you will need to do this part of the activity in another period, or you could ask your learners to do this for homework.

At the end of the day, open your Journal, and write the date and time. Think back to this activity.

How did it go?

What surprised you?

What did you learn from this experience?

What did your learners learn?

How did you feel when you were with your learners? Why?

How do you feel now? Why?

As a follow-up to this activity, get your learners to swap the stories which they have written. Encourage them to make positive suggestions about one another's stories. Tell them to write under the story that they read, *What they enjoyed most, and what they would like to know more about.*

Make sure that you make time to tell them the rest of the story. Or you could give them the rest of the story for them to read themselves. Some other time, you could conduct a class discussion about the different versions.

At the face-to-face session where this umthamo is monitored, **you will be expected to share this experience with your fellow teacher-learners.** Take along some of the stories that your learners write, as well as the beginning of the story that you told.

It is a good idea to store some of your learners' stories in your Concertina File. You may want to include some in your Portfolio at the end of the year to show what you have been doing in your classroom with your learners.

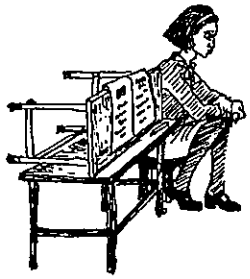
If you think it would be more appropriate to *tell* your learners the beginning of the story, we suggest that you follow the guidelines in Option B. If you have a new class of Grade 1 or Grade 2 learners, and it is the beginning of the year, we would recommend that you follow this Option. Both you and your learners will have a more successful and rewarding experience.

Option B: Telling the story beginning

Activity 7 - Introducing a literature-based whole language approach

Read carefully through the story you collected in your research.

Then you need to make decisions about how much you will give your learners. The idea is to give them a small part of the story, so that they have to **think** about what might follow. You want to give them just enough so that they have questions burning in their minds. You may be able to use the first two paragraphs, or you may need to use the first three. But ***you*** will have to decide.

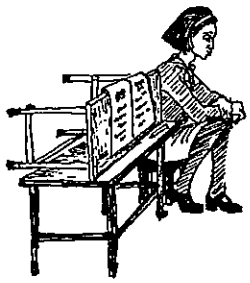


Make sure that you have some large sheets of newsprint paper ready so that you can record the questions that your learners think of. You will also need to have your Journal, or a piece of paper, with you so that you can make notes in it.

If you look back to the first Technology Education umthamo, you will see that there is a suggestion for one way you could improvise an easel or a stand on page 23.

When you are with your learners, gather them around you. Make sure that they are fairly close to you, so that there is a warm atmosphere. This will also help you to make eye-contact with everybody as you tell the story. Tell your learners that you are going to tell them just the beginning of a story, and you want them to listen ***very carefully***. Then tell your story-beginning.

When you have finished telling this part of the story, stop.



At this point you are going to 'conduct' a class discussion - rather like a choir master or a choir mistress! Ask your learners if they have any questions about the story beginning that you've just told them. As they give you their questions, write these up on the newsprint you have put up.

This is a very important part of this activity. You will be modelling for your learners how you write up their ideas. They will see you writing in order to record their questions. They will also see their ideas and *spoken* words being turned into *writing*, before their very eyes. This can be a very powerful experience for young learners and beginning readers and writers.

Try to get questions from as many children as possible. Don't just ask the children who you can rely on to give you answers. Ask some of your more shy learners. Encourage everyone to participate.

When you have put up a number of questions, go back to the first question that you wrote up. Re-read the question. Ask if anybody can think of a possible answer to that question. Encourage your learners to think of more than one possible answer. Try to get your learners to explain or give reasons to support why they think an answer is likely, or unlikely. They may have to refer to what they have heard in the beginning of the story to support their answers. Make notes in your Journal of the answers that your learners give.

Then, together with your learners, re-read the questions that you have written up. Remind them of the possible answers, one by one. Tell them that they are going to make up the rest of the story that you have told them. They are going to create this ***together***, and you will be the scribe, or the secretary. You are going to write down their ideas.

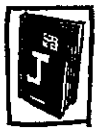
If this is the first time that you are trying something like this, we would suggest that you use the questions that have been raised to help you *guide* your learners to think what is likely to happen next. Then, they need to think what is likely to happen after that, and so on. Don't rush this part of the activity.

As they give you their suggestions, write up whatever they say. Don't worry if they haven't yet learned particular letter combinations. Don't worry if you think the words are too difficult. The important thing is to write down your

learners' ideas. They will be interested in learning to read something they have helped to compose (or make up) themselves. Take your time. It is very important. **This experience can be the start of your learners beginning to see themselves as writers.**

You should just be the secretary. Don't try to impose or push your ideas onto your learners' story. This is not always an easy thing to do. But it is very important to give children the space and freedom to lead the ideas. This is true learner-centred education.

You will need to allow enough time for your learners to finish the story. But you will also need to watch all your learners carefully. If you find that some of them are getting restless, it may be better to stop and leave this to finish the next day. When the story is finished, as a follow-up activity, we suggest that you turn it into a 'big book' *with* your young learners. You will find some guidelines about how you can do this with your class in the Appendix at the end of this umthamo.



At the end of the day, open your Journal, and write the date and time. Think back to this activity.

How did it go?

What surprised you?

What did you learn from this experience?

What did your learners learn?

How did you feel when you were with your learners? Why?

How do you feel now? Why?

Make sure that you make time to tell them the rest of the story.

At the face-to-face session where this umthamo is monitored, **you will be expected to share this experience with your fellow teacher-learners.** Take along the story that your learners make up, as well as the beginning of the story that you told them.

It is a good idea to store the work that you do with your learners in your Concertina File. You may well want to include this in your Portfolio at the end of the year as evidence of the work you have been doing with your learners.

For the second part of the **Key Activity** we would like you to repeat this same activity with your learners. We will explain why we are asking you to do this.

We have found in our work with teachers, that if they are asked to try out a particular task or activity with their learners, quite often they do it just that one time. When we were trialling the Key Activity in the first Mathematics umthamo, we explained to the Principal of a farm school what we were doing with the learners. "Oh yes," she said. "I did something like that once with my Grade 1s for an assignment for my FDE. But I haven't done it since." But that's a problem. If we want to see change in education, new ideas need a chance to become part and parcel of the regular work in classrooms.

So we are asking you to repeat this activity. This activity can be an important way to make your language work with your learners more learner-centred, and more integrated. If you carry out this activity more than once, we believe that you will notice some differences in the experiences. The second time you do this, we are sure that both you and your learners will improve on what you did before, and how you did it.

We also think you are more likely to develop a habit for working in this way if you carry out the activity more than just once. Then it will be more likely to become part of your approach to language work in the classroom.

This time you can make some choices about the story you want to use.

- If you enjoyed researching the intsomi behind an idiom, then you could think of *another* idiom. You will then have to find the intsomi behind that saying. (In this case, we suggest that you follow the instructions in Activity 6 at the beginning of this Unit.) Or,
- You could use the tale that you collected behind the very first idiom or saying (Activity 5, Unit 2). Or,
- You could use the tale that Steve Tshwete told Tillie.

Then you will have to give (or tell) your learners the beginning of the story, and get them to go through the whole process again of raising questions, and thinking of possible answers. After that, they will need to think of ways to complete the story. Any primary school teacher knows that children take great delight in repeating an experience that they have enjoyed.

Afterwards, we want you to compare these two experiences of working with iintsomi with your learners. We will ask you to think about, and write down, what is the ***same***, and what is ***different***.

Once you have your story, you will have to make decisions about how much of the story to give your learners. Again, ***only give the beginning*** of the story. You want your children to ***think*** about, ***question*** and ***predict*** what may have happened, what might happen, and why.

Option A: Reading the story beginning

Activity 8 - Another literature-based whole language experience

When you are with your learners, tell them that you are going to give them another story-beginning. Remind them of what they will have to do.

Don't give them too much time. Watch their non-verbal communication! When you feel they have that they have had time to think of good questions, and enough time to write, stop them. Five to ten minutes should be enough.

Learners **read** story beginning.

Pairs **write** down ***very quickly*** all their questions. Remind them that you want questions that ask for information which is **not** in the passage.

You will probably have to allow about ten minutes for this activity. You will have to read your learners' body language to judge when they are ready. If one or two groups don't seem to be talking very much, go to those groups and make sure that they are clear about what it is that you want them to do.

Pairs link and **think** and **talk** about possible answers to some questions.

'Conduct' class discussion. (Write each question on the board or make a note of it in your Journal.) Encourage learners to think of other possible answers to each question, and to support their suggestions. Make notes in Journal of answers that learners give.

Ask some of your more shy learners. Encourage everyone to participate.

Learners work in pairs to discuss, and write rest of story in a scribbler, or on rough paper. Remind them to write their names on pages, and to keep work safe. (At least half an hour.)

If your school has a strict timetable, you will need to do this part of the activity in another period, or you could ask your learners to do this for homework.

At the end of the day, open your Journal, and write the date and time. Think back to this activity.
How did the activity go this time?
What surprised you?
What was different from the first time you tried out a whole language activity?
What have you learned from this experience?
What do you think your learners learned?
How did you feel when you were with your learners? Why?
How do you feel now? Why?

As a follow-up to this activity, get your learners to swap the stories which they have written. Encourage them to make positive suggestions about one another's stories. Tell them to write under the story that they read, *What they enjoyed most, and what they would like to know more about.*

Make time to tell them the rest of story, or give it to them to read themselves.

At the face-to-face session where this umthamo is concluded, **you will be expected to share this second experience with your fellow teacher-learners.** Take along some of the stories that your learners write, as well as the beginning of the story that you told them.

It is a good idea to store some of your learners' stories in your Concertina File. You may want to include some of them in your Portfolio at the end of the year as evidence of what you have been doing with your learners.

Once again, if you think it would be more appropriate to *tell* your learners the beginning of the story, we suggest that you follow the guidelines in Option B. If you have a new class of Grade 1 or Grade 2 learners, and it is the beginning of the year, we would recommend that you follow this Option. Both you and your learners will have a more successful and rewarding experience.

Option B: Telling the story beginning

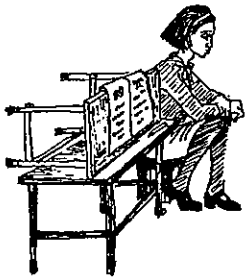
Activity 8 - Another literature-based whole language experience

Make sure that you have everything you need before you get started.

If you look back to the first Technology Education umthamo, you will see on page 23 that there is a suggestion for one way you could improvise an easel or a stand.

Gather learners round you. Tell them you are going to tell them another story beginning, just as you did before. Remind them to listen ***very carefully.*** Then tell the story-beginning.

Try to get questions from as many children as possible. Don't just ask the children who you can rely on to give you answers. Ask some of your more shy learners. Encourage everyone to participate.



'Conduct' a class discussion. Ask learners for questions and write them up. Don't rush.

Deal with possible answers to questions. Make notes in your Journal.

Together with learners, re-read their questions. Remind them of the possible answers. Remind learners of what they did before.

As this is the second time that you are trying this activity, you can decide how you will take this activity further. Either repeat the way in which you worked the first time. Or, while the rest of the class carry on with other work, you could take groups of 6-8 learners, one group at a time. Develop the rest of the story with each group. This

will mean that you will have several *different* endings to the story. The implicit (or unspoken) lesson that your learners will learn from this, is that there are many possible endings for a story.

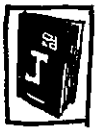
Again, use questions raised to help *guide* learners to think what is likely to happen next, and after that what is likely to happen, and so on. Don't rush.

As they give their suggestions, write up *learners'* ideas. Allow enough time for each group to finish the story.

While you are working with a group, now and then interrupt what you are doing with your group, so that you can reassure the rest of your class that you *are* watching them, and you are aware of what they are doing. They will appreciate your attention and interest.

When each group has created their own version of the rest of the story, turn it into a 'big book' *with* learners. (See guidelines in Appendix at end of umthamo.)

You should just be the secretary. Don't try to impose or push your ideas onto your learners' story. Remember, you are developing a learner-centred way of working.



At the end of the day, open your Journal, and write the date and time. Think back to this activity.

How did the activity go this time?

What surprised you?

What was different from the first time you tried out a whole language activity?

What have you learned from this experience?

What do you think your learners learned?

How did you feel when you were with your learners? Why?

How do you feel now? Why?

Make time to tell the rest of the story.

At the face-to-face session where this umthamo is concluded, **you will be expected to share this experience with your fellow teacher-learners**. Take along the story/ stories that your learners created, as well as the beginning of the story that you told them.

It is a good idea to store the work that you do with your learners in your Concertina File. You may well want to include this in your Portfolio at the end of the year as evidence of the work you have been doing with your learners.

While you have been doing this Key Activity, you will have had many opportunities to appraise your pupils (continuous assessment). You have been able to see how they are **thinking, reading, talking, listening,** and **writing.** (Don't forget, composing [making up and creating] is an important part of writing. Writing is not only the process of *transcribing* ideas onto paper.)

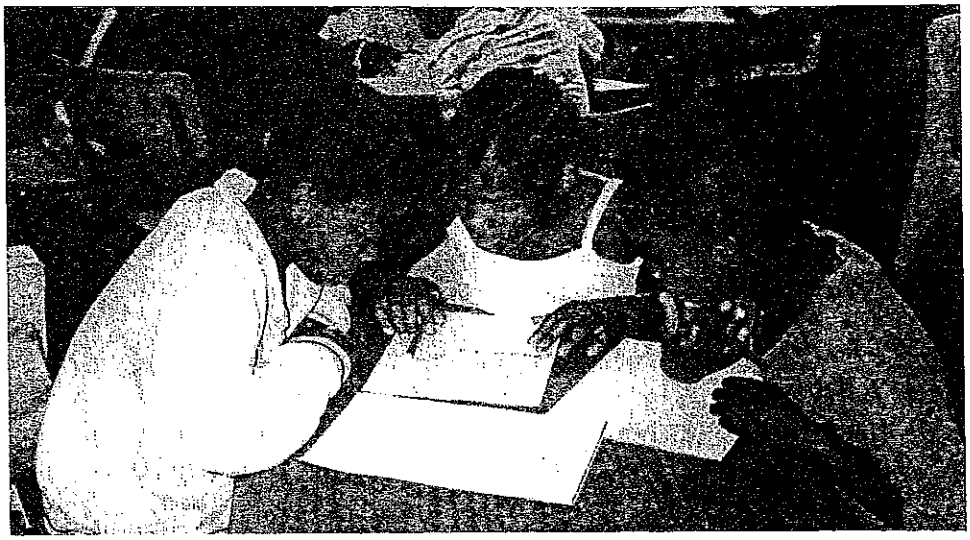
Some of the things that your children have done will have surprised and excited you. As a teacher, you can choose to build on these things. To focus on, and to build on the strengths of learners is a good way of working. Emphasising and developing strengths builds confidence. If we focus on what learners **can** do, they see themselves as **succeeding.** This will give them a sense of power.

Some of the things that your learners have done may disappoint you. You may realise that there are some things that your learners cannot yet do. Perhaps you can think of ways to encourage them to develop the skills, and give them the understanding they seem to need. But remember, when we focus too much on what our learners **cannot** do, there is a great danger that they will see themselves as **failures**. There is a danger that this will give them a sense of powerlessness.

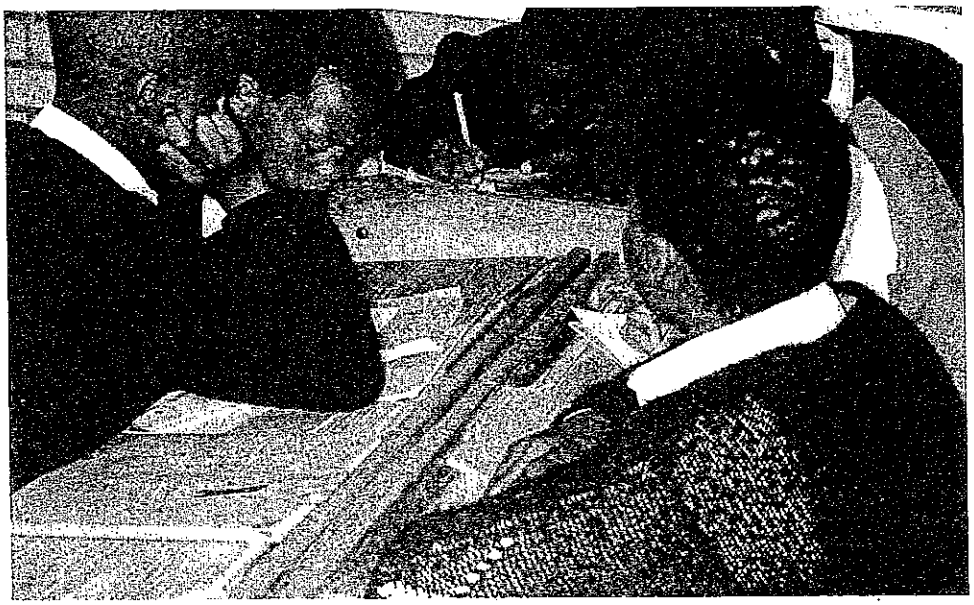
Margaret Spencer (Emeritus Professor, University of London) always says, "Tell the children that they're *wonderful*, and they'll be even more wonderful!"

Reading and thinking

Speaking, listening, thinking and writing

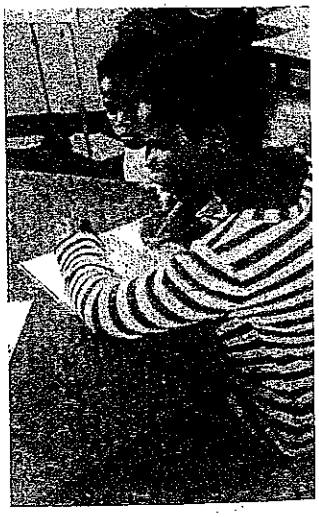


Reading, thinking and discussing



Reading, writing and thinking

Reading and thinking about what we've written



Writing, reading and thinking

Conclusion

In this umthamo we have combined ideas of literature-based writing activities, with the idea of a *whole language* approach to language work in the primary classroom. You have experienced for yourself a literature-based whole language approach.

We have also asked you to collect the iintsomi (or tales) behind idioms or sayings. You have then used the beginning of two tales as a spring-board (good start) to whole language work with your own learners, integrating all aspects of language: **thinking, speaking, listening, reading,** and **writing**.

Throughout this umthamo we have asked you to reflect on your experiences, from your own point of view, and also from the point of your learners. We have asked you to think about what you have learned, and how you feel.

Now we would like you to read a section from a book by Kenneth Goodman called, *What's Whole in Whole Language?* Don't worry if you don't understand *everything* that he says in this text. Skip over the parts you are unsure of. After some time, come back and read the passage again. As you re-visit it, you will find that it will make more and more sense with each re-reading. (We have put one or two explanations in the margins where Kenneth Goodman has used American terms.)

Activity 9 - A Reading

Whole language: the easy way to language development

This riddle has long troubled parents, teachers, and scholars: learning language sometimes seems ridiculously easy and sometimes impossibly hard. And the easy times are outside school, the hard times in school.

Virtually all human babies learn to speak their home language remarkably well in a very short time, without any formal teaching. But when they go to school, many appear to have difficulty, particularly with written language, even though they are instructed by diligent teachers using expensive and carefully developed materials.

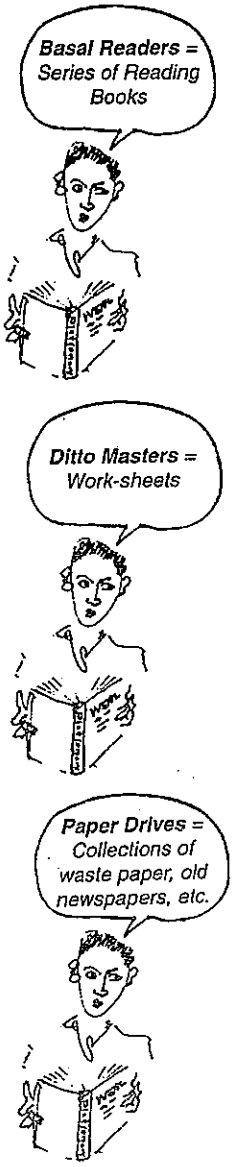
We are beginning to work out this seeming paradox. Careful observation is helping us to understand better what makes language easy or hard to learn. Many school traditions seem to have actually hindered language de-

velopment. In our zeal to make it easy, we've made it hard. How? Primarily by breaking whole (natural) language up into bite-size, but abstract little pieces. It seemed so logical to think that little children could best learn simple little things. We took apart the language and turned it into words, syllables, and isolated sounds. Unfortunately, we also postponed its natural purpose - the communication of meaning - and turned it into a set of abstractions, unrelated to the needs and experiences of the children we sought to help.

In homes, children learn oral language without having it broken into simple little bits and pieces. They are amazingly good at learning language when they need it to express themselves and understand others, as long as they are surrounded by people who are using language meaningfully and purposefully.

This is what many teachers are learning again from children: keep language whole and involve children in using it functionally and purposefully to meet their own needs. That simple, very basic discovery is leading to some dramatic, exciting changes in schools. Put aside the carefully sequenced basal readers, spelling programs, and handwriting kits. Let the readiness materials, the workbooks, and the ditto masters gather dust on the shelves - or better yet, donate them to community paper drives. Instead, invite pupils to use language. Get them to talk about things they need to understand. Show them it's all right to ask questions and listen to the answers, and then to react or ask more questions. Suggest that they write about what happens to them, so they can come to grips with their experiences and share them with others. Encourage them to read for information, to cope with the print that surrounds them everywhere, to enjoy a good story.

This way, teachers can work with children in the natural direction of their growth. Language learning then becomes as easy in school as out. And it's more interesting, more stimulating, and more fun for the kids and their teachers. What happens in school supports and expands what happens outside of school. Whole language programs get it all together: the language, the culture, the community, the learner, and the teacher.



What makes language very easy or very hard to learn?

It's easy when:	***It's hard when:***
It's real and natural	*It's artificial*
It's whole	*It's broken into bits and pieces*
It's sensible	*It's nonsense*
It's interesting	*It's dull and uninteresting*
It's relevant	*It's irrelevant to the learner*
It belongs to the learner	*It belongs to somebody else*
It's part of a real event	*It's out of context*
It has social utility	*It has no social value*
It has purpose for the learner	*It has no discernible purpose*
The learner chooses to use it	*It's imposed by someone else*
It's accessible to the learner	*It's inaccessible*
The learner has power to use it	*The learner is powerless*

There lists show that a whole language program is more pleasant and more fun for both pupils and teachers. But is it also more effective? Yes, it is. With the language they've already learned, children bring to school their natural tendency to want to make sense of the world. When schools break language into bits and pieces, sense becomes nonsense, and it's always hard for kids to make sense out of nonsense. Each abstract bit and piece that is learned is soon forgotten as kids go on to further fractured fragments. In the end, they begin to think of school as a place where nothing ever seems to make sense.

That's why learning language in the real world is easy, and learning language in school should be easy, but is often hard.

What makes language learning hard?

A bottom-up view of learning

Moving from small to large units has an element of adult logic: wholes are composed of parts; learn the parts and you've learned the whole. But the psychology of learning teaches us that we learn from the whole to parts. That's why whole language teachers only deal with language parts - letters, sounds, phrases, sentences - in the context of whole real language.

Artificial skill sequences

Many so-called "skills" were arbitrarily chosen. Whatever research they're based on was done with rats and pigeons - or with children who were treated in the research like rats and pigeons. Rats are not kids; rats don't develop language or think human thoughts. Artificial skill

sequences turn schools into mazes for children to stumble through.

Misplaced focus: language for itself

When the purpose of instruction is to teach language for its own sake, or to make kids discuss language like linguists, then the learner is distracted from what he or she is trying to say or understand through language.

Uninteresting, non-meaningful, irrelevant lessons

Uninteresting, irrelevant exercises are particularly tough on minority children who are constantly being reminded of the distance between their world and the school world. It's hard to motivate kids when the stuff they are asked to read and write, hear and say, has no relation to who they are, what they think, and what they do.

What makes language learning easy?

Relevance

Language should be whole, meaningful, and relevant to the learners.

Purpose

Pupils should use language for their own purposes. Outside school, language functions because users want to say or understand something. In whole language classrooms, the kids own their own language and teachers respect this ownership.

Meaning

Pupils should learn through language while they learn language. Language is learned best when the focus is not on the language but on the meaning being communicated. We learn through language at the same time that we're developing language. We don't learn to read by reading reading; we learn to read by reading signs, packages, stories, magazines, newspapers, TV guides, billboards.

Respect

Schools should build on the language development children have attained before they start school, and on the experiences they have outside school. Whole language programs respect the learners: who they are, where they come from, how they talk, what they read, and what experiences they already had before coming to school. That way there are no disadvantaged children as far as the school is concerned. There are only children who have

unique backgrounds of language and experience, who have learned to learn from their own experiences, and who will continue to do so if schools recognize who and where they are.

Power

School programs should be seen as part of the empowerment of children. Schools must face the bitter fact that children tend to become literate and succeed in school in proportion to the amount of power to use their literacy they and their families possess. Helping pupils become literate will not in itself give them power if society denies them power. But helping them to achieve a sense of control and ownership over their own use of language and learning in school, over their own reading, writing, speaking, listening, and thinking, will help to give them a sense of their potential power. Schools with effective whole language programs can help children to achieve power; they can provide real access to personally and socially useful knowledge through development of thought and language. *Goodman (1986:7-10)*

You will see that in this umthamo, we have tried to take account of much of what Kenneth Goodman advises. We hope you have enjoyed working through the activities and found them challenging. We also hope that you can see the way clear to making your classroom more of a **whole language** classroom, and less of a 'bits and pieces' place!

Thinking, speaking, listening, reading and writing

Appendix

One Way to turn your learners' story into a 'Big Book'

What you will need

Some large sheets of 'newsprint' (approx 60 x 85cm)
Some fat wax crayons
A pencil
A thick koki
A fat sewing (or embroidery) needle
Some thin string
A glue stick
Some smaller pieces of plain white paper
A large sheet of card, or poster paper, or a 'chart'
The beginning of the story that you told your learners
The rest of the story which your learners have dictated to you

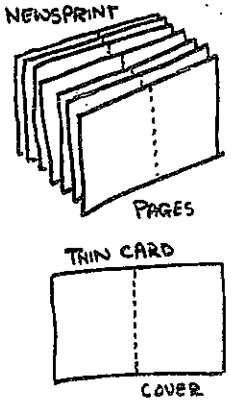
How to make a Big Book

First of all, read through the whole story carefully. You will need to look at the beginning, which you read to or told your learners. And you will need to re-read the rest of the story, which your learners dictated. This will remind you how long the story is.

Secondly, you will have to decide how much text (writing) you want to put on each double-page spread. If you have Grade 1s and it is the beginning of the school year, you may want to make sure that there are no more than two or three sentences on a double-page spread. In fact, in some parts of the story you may only want to write a phrase. If you are working with older learners, you may feel that you can write more.

Thirdly you will need to think about the illustrations, or drawings, to accompany the text.

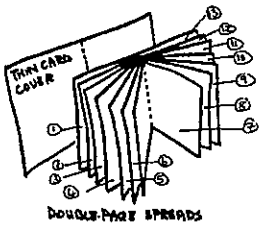
These three factors will help you to decide how long you think the book will be, and how many pages it will have.



When Viv made a Big Book of the story, *The Great Big Enormous Turnip*, she used a double-page spread for each idea. This meant that she needed 7 large sheets of newsprint. This gave her 13 double-page spreads.

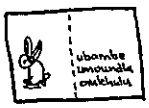
Then take your sheet of thin card, and fold it in half. This will be the cover for your book. We have found that if a book made of newsprint pages, has a card cover, it lasts much longer.

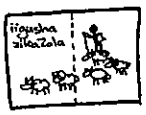
Write out the *whole* story on an A4 sheet of lined paper. As you write it out, write the text for each double-page spread on a new line. This will be really useful when you write out the text on the actual pages.

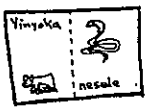


Then fold each sheet of newsprint in half. Slip the sheets together and make sure that they are neat, and fit nicely. Don't fasten the sheets together yet.

Now you need to decide where you are going to put the text. Will you put it on the left-hand page of each double-page spread? Or will you write on the right-hand pages? Will you write at the top of the pages? Or will you write at the bottom? Will each double-page spread look a little different? In other words, will you sometimes write on the left, and sometimes on the right? Perhaps you will choose to write right across the double-page spread sometimes? You will have to make decisions about this.

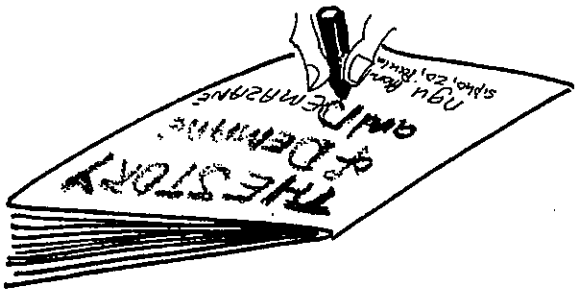




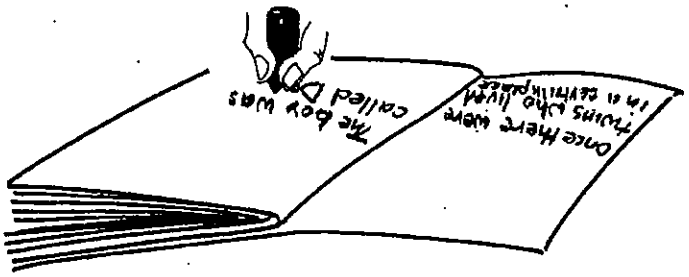


Now take the folded newsprint pages. Work at a large table. Use the fat black wax crayon and write neatly the title of the story on the ***outside*** of the first sheet. Write the title just as it would look on the very first page in a book that you would buy in a shop. You want your book to look professional! Underneath, in smaller letters write the names of all the children who created the story, or your class. (If this is the whole class, it will be very difficult to fit in 50+ names!)

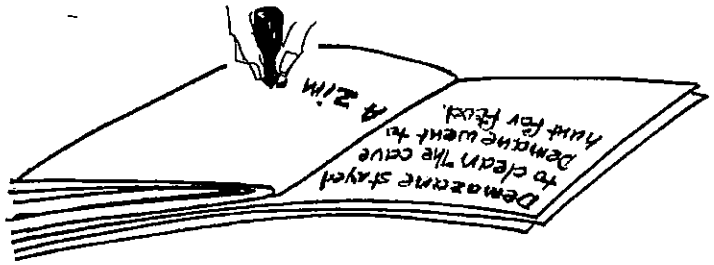
The reason we suggest that you use a wax crayon is that it will not run through the thin paper to the other side. And black works best for the text of the story. Also, fat wax crayons don't break as easily as thin ones.



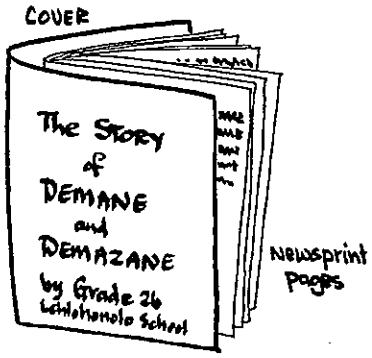
Then open the first sheet of newsprint. This will be your *first* double-page spread. Write the first sentence(s) or phrase(s) on this double-page spread, using the fat black wax crayon. **You *must* leave enough space for the illustrations or drawings.** The space that you leave, should be at least the size of an A4 sheet, or your smaller pieces of paper.



When you have written the text for this double-page spread, turn over to the next double-page spread, and write the next sentence(s), or phrase, with the black wax crayon. Carry on in this way, until you have written out the whole story.

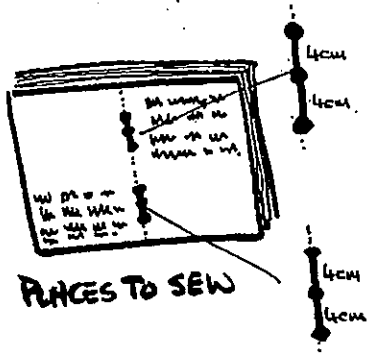


At this point, take the 'cover' of your book. You need to decide where you want the title. It's a good idea to leave space for an illustration. Will you write the title at the top, or at the bottom? When you have decided, write the title lightly in ***pencil***. When you are happy with the way it looks, write over the penciled words with a koki. Then slip the newsprint pages neatly inside the 'cover'.



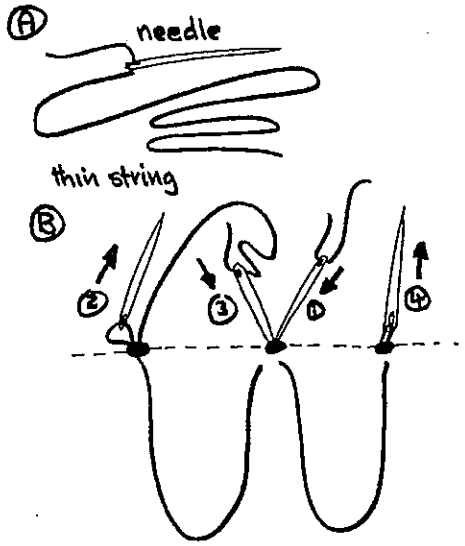
Now you need to sew the pages and cover together. There are several ways that you can do this, but we have found that the following way works very well.

Open out your book so that the cover is at the bottom, and the middle double-page spread is on top. With a big book, it is a good idea to mark ***two*** places on the crease in the middle, where you can sew. Mark one place in the top half of the crease, and mark another one in the bottom half. In each place, make three spots. These spots should be about 4cm apart.



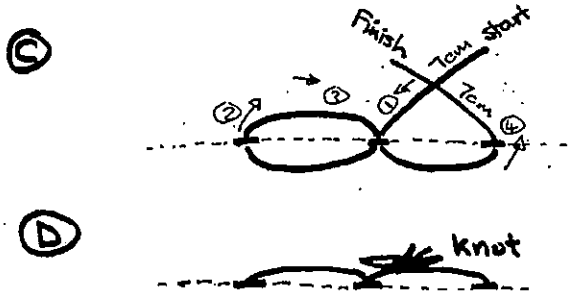
Now thread your embroidery sewing needle with a piece of thin string about 50cm long. Push the point of the needle through the middle of one of the sets of three spots, right through all the newsprint pages and the cover. Pull the string through firmly, but ***leave a piece of string about 7cm hanging.***

Then take the needle to the point furthest from the middle of the page and push it through the cover and all the newsprint pages. Pull the string through firmly, **but make sure that the 7cm piece is still hanging on the newsprint** page side.



Now push the needle through the middle point *again*, right through all the newsprint pages and the cover. Make sure that that 7cm end is still hanging there!

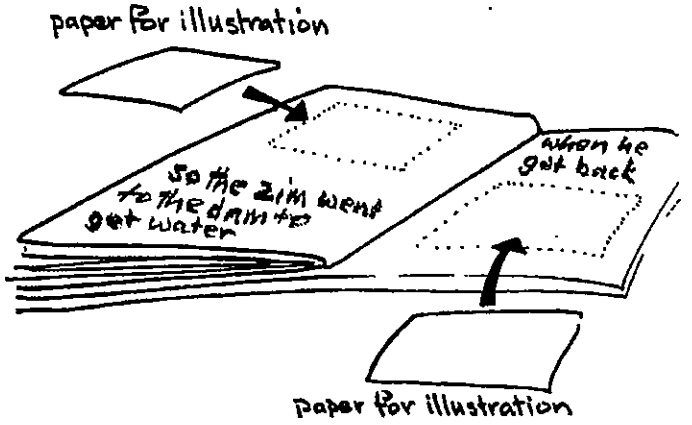
When you have pulled the string through firmly, take the needle to the point closest to the middle of the cover, and push it through the cover and all the newsprint pages. Pull the string through firmly.



Cut the string attached to the needle, about 7cm from where it has come through the pages. Now tie the two 7cm ends together firmly.

Do the same thing at the opposite end of the crease.

Before you go to your class, take the smaller pieces of paper for the drawings. Make sure that they fit into the spaces next to, above, under, or around the text that you have written. Make a list of the illustrations that you need. Decide whether you are going to ask specific children to make the illustrations, or whether you want your whole class to be involved. You may find that your learners can work well in pairs to create the pictures. But, think about the way you think you will organise this, *before* you are with your learners.



When you are with your class, show them the book you have started to make. Read through the whole text with them. Hold the pages open, and read the story aloud. This is an opportunity to model *good* natural reading. Read the story so that it sounds interesting.

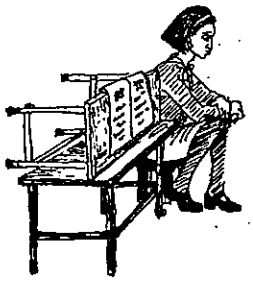
Then talk about the fact that there aren't any pictures in the book. Tell your learners that you want them to make the pictures. As you read through the text a second time, pause on each double-page spread and discuss the picture that it needs. As you and your class decide what is needed on each page, we would suggest that you assign each illustration to a specific child, or pair of children.

Give them time to make the pictures carefully. Remember, that drawing is also **work** if it is done with care and thought. When the drawings are finished, you could either stick them in to the appropriate pages yourself, or you could involve your children.

If you wish to involve your learners in this process, here are some suggestions of how you can do so. When the children bring you their finished pieces of work, get them to *help* you to find the appropriate place in the text. Even beginning readers can memorise the story, and have a sense of where their picture goes. Then glue their picture on the appropriate page. Underneath each picture, write the name(s) of the learner(s) who made that picture. Continue in this way until all the pic-

tures have been glued in and labelled.

This is quite a lengthy process. You may not want to spend most of a morning doing this (although your learners will learn a great deal about how books 'work' from this experience). In that case, spend some time on one day, and a bit more the next, and so on, until the illustrations are complete, and are all stuck in.



When all the illustrations have been glued in, read the book with your learners. We are sure that both you and your learners will feel very proud of your efforts. We would be interested to hear how your learners use this book themselves.

You will find a copy of a booklet, *Stories into Books* in a boxfile at your centre. This booklet has more information about turning stories into books.

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Appendix 5

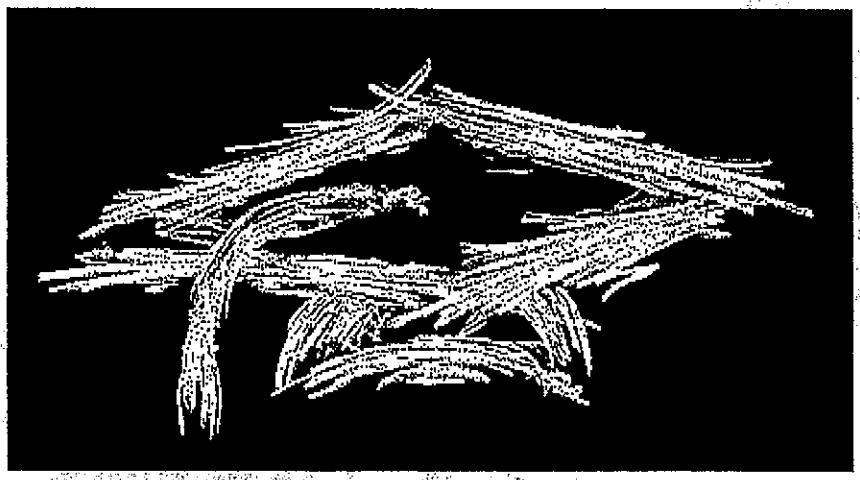
Language in Learning & Teaching (LILT):

front cover, table of contents, general introduction,

Unit 2 of the *Learning Guide,* Chapter 4 of the *Reader*

Pages 133-183

Language in Learning & Teaching (LILT)



LANGUAGE IN LEARNING & TEACHING (LILT)

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Ann Macdonald

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and School of Education, Training and Development
University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg

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Core questions and issues

Introduction to *Language in Learning and Teaching (LILT)*

Learning outcomes

By the end of the Language in Learning and Teaching (LILT) module as a whole, you should be able to:

- ❑ explain key concepts from applied language research, orally and in writing
- ❑ recognise opportunities to apply these concepts in your classroom
- ❑ use a range of techniques to assess your learners' language development
- ❑ understand different theories of reading
- ❑ develop effective reading programmes in your classrooms based on the theoretical understandings acquired in the module
- ❑ explain the link between writing and learning, orally and in writing
- ❑ develop effective writing programmes based on the theoretical understandings and practical examples covered in this module
- ❑ use a theme-based, whole language approach to address language development.

LILT aims to raise your awareness and understanding of the critical role that language plays in the learning and teaching process. Language and learning research shows that the way in which people learn, and their attitudes to different languages (especially the medium of instruction and their home language) affect their motivation and performance as learners and language users. The LILT module explores aspects of this research and links theories to classroom practice.

Research also shows that there is a very close relationship between language and identity. If we respect and promote the language of an individual or group, this helps that individual or group to develop a *positive* sense of identity. On the other hand, if we ignore, or treat as inferior, the language of an individual or group, this could contribute to the individual or group developing a *negative* sense of identity. These positive or negative senses of identity have important consequences for how we, as teachers, promote and develop language competence *in all learning areas*. As you work through the LILT material, you will explore how best to develop a positive sense of identity in your learners.

The relationship between language and power is one which we will also consider. In South Africa, for example, English has come to be seen by many people as the 'language of power' even though there are many other languages spoken. People who are fluent in English and who use English effectively and appropriately in social, political

and education contexts, are often considered more advantaged and more powerful than those who can't. For this reason, many non-mother tongue speakers of English strive to learn to speak English even though they face many difficulties doing so. Many teachers doing this module are studying in English because they and their parents were highly motivated to give as much time as possible to learning English. They may, however, have ambivalent feelings when they see how they have had to develop fluency in English at the expense of a deeper knowledge of their own first languages.

In this module you will learn that the development of the mother tongue in the foundation level phase is essential to produce confident learners. However, you might be one of those teachers who is being persuaded by parents of learners, and by learners themselves, that they want to study in English. In this module we raise some of the issues around mother tongue instruction, and when to begin teaching a second language. This is an important debate for teachers who work in schools within communities where learners are highly motivated to learn English although it is not their first language. We want you to make decisions for your own classrooms that are informed by the theories that you will meet in your study of LILT, and informed by discussion with other students and tutors.

In this module then, we will explore a number of concepts or ideas which have emerged from language and learning research, and which relate to the issues we have raised above. We hope that you, as a learner, will be able to articulate the concepts raised in this module, and that your own understanding of the role of language in learning will be deepened. A thorough understanding of language learning issues will enhance your own practice as an effective and creative educator, which is the ultimate goal of the Bachelor of Education degree programme.

The structure of this module

The Learning Guide

This Learning Guide is written in an interactive manner to encourage active learning. To get the most out of this module you should read the Learning Guide as actively as possible. Do the activities and engage with the issues that the Learning Guide asks you to think about.

One of the problems we face when writing a Learning Guide like this is that we have to turn information-gathering and knowledge construction into something that appears to be quite linear, when in real life it is not. We have presented this module in defined pieces that follow one after the other, but in reality you cannot separate everything as we have done here. However, by referring you to chapters in the Reader, and by anticipating theories that we will cover in later units, and by reminding you of aspects already covered in earlier units, we attempt to show you a less linear process. It is therefore very important that you, as the learner, are active in integrating the parts into a meaningful whole.

Unit 1: Language-based classrooms

Unit 1 begins by establishing the link between learning outcomes, assessment and classroom interaction. Within the context of a series of lessons developed around a theme, we model this process and show its direct application to practice. However, the best of current learning and teaching practices are based on key theoretical prin-cip-les and concepts, most of which have come from the field of second language learning research. So, in this unit, we also introduce you to these concepts and show how a good theoretical understanding of language learning related issues can create a safe, effective and exciting learning and teaching environment. This unit concludes with a focus on language assessment and the distinction this module makes between assessment and evaluation.

Unit 2: Teaching reading

Unit 2 focuses specifically on reading: the processes involved in reading, identifying the sources of reading difficulties, and providing strategies for developing reading skills and a love of reading in learners. In a country such as South Africa, where reading resources and practices have been severely limited in the past, it is imperative that we as teachers do all we can to create opportunities for our learners to read more. But learners will only do this if we model good reading habits ourselves, and provide them with interesting and relevant reading material. This unit, which is well grounded in theory, provides many useful strategies for reading development and shows the integral relationship between reading and writing.

Unit 3: Writing matters

Unit 3 pays special attention to writing development. The ability to 'write well', particularly in the language of formal instruction and assessment, very often determines the level of success or failure that a learner experiences – both at school and in the workplace. In modern, Western societies, English has acquired a particularly powerful status which affects the way in which many people view their own indigenous languages. One aspect of this unit explores the way in which attitudes to English influence the role it plays in schools, and how the use of literate life histories can contribute to a greater understanding of these attitudes. We also emphasise the relationship between writing and learning, and provide sound, well researched approaches to developing the writing skills of learners.

The Reader

The readings for this LILT module are grouped together in a Reader which starts on page 129. You will be referred to these readings in the course of the Learning Guide. The Reader forms an important part of your journey towards understanding the issues that surround language, reading and writing. You will not be able to understand these issues fully without doing the readings. You might need to re-read some readings before you get a good grasp of the issues – please do this if you see the need.

You will see that some words in the Learning Guide and Reader are marked in bold and a definition is provided in the margin. These

are words that might be new or unfamiliar to you in English. If there are other words whose meaning you are unsure of, please use a dictionary or ask your tutor.

The Student Guide

The Learning Guide is supported by a Student Guide that guides you through the Learning Guide according to the tutorial programme of your particular year of study. The Student Guide suggests ways of preparing for your contact sessions and provides all the information you need about assessment including the topics and instructions for the three assignments. Remember to work with both the Learning Guide and the Student Guide and to follow all the instructions carefully.

Workbook activities

You should buy either an A4 hardcover exercise book or a file which will serve as your workbook. Use the workbook to do the activities in the Learning Guide.

You should also use your workbook to note any thoughts which may occur to you as you work through the module. The workbook is a useful record of the development of your understanding. It provides a great opportunity for you to assess your own development. Go back to the activities occasionally and reflect on your own learning through recognising the new understandings which you might not have had at the time you did a particular activity.

Tutorial sessions

You are expected to attend tutorial sessions during the course of this module. At these sessions you will have an opportunity to meet your tutor and other colleagues who are also doing this module. The tutorial sessions are *not* lecture sessions – they are discussion sessions. As explained, the Learning Guide has three units. Materials related to each unit will be discussed at each of the tutorial sessions. In other words, in the first tutorial session we shall discuss Unit 1 on 'Language-based classrooms'. The second and third tutorial sessions will concentrate on Units 2 and 3 respectively. Be warned that you are unlikely to follow the discussion in the tutorial unless you have completed all the work associated with a particular unit!

What is Language in Learning and Teaching (LILT) all about?

Have you ever wondered about how you communicate your knowledge to others, and how they communicate what is in their minds to you? What moves ideas between people so that thoughts don't get locked up in each person's head? We get some information through facial expressions and body language, and from pictures and models,

but for the most part we use *language* to share our thoughts and ideas.

In a school environment language is the dominant channel or means of communication. Through language we demonstrate our understanding and we construct our knowledge. Language is used for talking, reading, writing and thinking. A learner with a good command of language will communicate his or her knowledge more successfully in a written or oral examination than a learner who does not have such control of language.

It will be useful if you start to think of language as *a tool for thought*. If you think of language in this way, you will begin to appreciate that learners need to use language efficiently and effectively in order to achieve to their full potential. Actually, a learner needs to be able to use language in a lot of different ways in order to convey information and understanding successfully. Thus learners need to speak and listen and read and write a great deal, in a variety of styles, so that they become competent at using language.

This module is therefore about the importance of language development in every classroom, not just in the English language or Zulu language classroom. By talking and writing, learners can clarify their thinking, and so reach a better understanding of the subject matter. They also begin to create their own knowledge of their subjects and, in doing so, gain control over this knowledge. Learners should be given plenty of opportunities to speak, listen, read and write in every subject. We are therefore suggesting that all teachers, and not just the English, Zulu and Afrikaans teachers (that is, the language teachers), need to be aware of themselves as guardians of language development. We hope that by the end of this module you will have a better idea of how you can integrate ways of facilitating language development into your day-to-day content subject teaching.

Activity 1

(Suggested time: 10 minutes)

In your workbook write down six expectations that you have of this module: three should be about learning/teaching and three should be about language.

Core questions and issues

A powerful way to start a module or course is to pose key questions and then to seek the answers to them. We have asked four core questions to which we want you to develop responses by the end of this module on *Language in Learning and Teaching (LILT)*.

Core questions

1. How can we use language to facilitate learning?
2. How can we use content subjects to facilitate language development?
3. What are the theoretical principles that should underlie any

classroom practice where language development is being fostered?

4. How can we assess learners in a way that will encourage language and cognitive development, and discourage rote learning?

The questions we ask above are designed to challenge you to formulate responses based on this module, the readings and the contact (or tutorial) sessions. At the moment you might have some ideas from your experience in your own classroom. By the time you have completed all three units of the module on *Language in Learning and Teaching (LILT)* you will be in a position to develop and write some well-thought-out responses to these questions. However, the responses that you give should not be seen as final because knowledge is not fixed, and you are always in the process of reflecting, and developing new insights.

UNIT 2

Teaching reading

Teaching reading

The following chapters in the Reader are relevant to this unit:

- Chapter 4: Fiona Jackson, 1999, 'Ways to understanding: the reading process: implications for teaching'
- Chapter 5: Fiona Jackson and Carol Dixon, 1999, 'Literate life histories: do they provide active and empowering language development experiences for teachers?'

2.1 Introduction

Why is reading so important?

Reading is one of the most powerful ways of receiving ideas, information and stories. Reading the printed word has such great strength as a way of sharing ideas and information because books can reach so many people, and those people can read and interact with them as often as they like.

Printed language communicates information to learners. Learners then need to become good at working with that information in order to create or construct their own new knowledge. Learners need to learn how to derive meaning from written language so that they can become independent learners who interact with information meaningfully. All learners need to become proficient in the language skill of reading if they are to grow up to participate fully in democratic life when they leave school. People who read as part of their daily life have more information and, as you well know, information is very empowering.

How can we see reading as the other side of writing?

In addition to becoming proficient readers in all their subjects and spheres of life, learners need to realise that the things that they read are written by human beings just like themselves. People collect together ideas and information, arrange them and write them in order to be read and understood. As we wrote this Learning Guide, we were aware that you would be reading it in the foreseeable future. As we wrote, the words appeared on the computer screen, but you end up with the finished product. We did our best to write things down in a way that would be very readable for you. However, you must remember that as an independent thinker, you can make choices about what you accept or resist when you read. It is important too, that you teach your learners about the choices they can make when they read. They can either 'submit' to a text, or be 'assertive' when they read. If you go to Chapter 4 on page 155 of the

Reader, you can read in more detail about the roles that a reader can play in the reading process.

Furthermore, since we always write in order to be read, we can say that reading is 'the other side of writing'. Reading and writing are inseparably bound together like the two sides of a coin. Learners should be encouraged by their teachers to be real writers whose work will be read by real readers.

Surveying a textbook is an important reading skill that you can teach learners to do with all their subject textbooks. When you know your way around a book, you use it more efficiently.

Activity 20

(Suggested time: 60 minutes)

Surveying a textbook

1 Use the checklist below to survey:
   a. A textbook that you use in your teaching
   b. This LILT study material
   c. Another textbook that you use in one of the other B. Ed modules.

Write your responses to the checklist given in Table 2.1 in your workbook.

2 Write down the *function* of each item in (11) of the checklist below.

3 In textbooks and reference books in science, many of the reference-type features (in (11) on the checklist) are placed inside the back and front covers, or as near to them as possible. Why do you think this is the case?

Table 2.1 Checklist for surveying a textbook

1	Title of textbook (including a subtitle, if any)
2	Turn the title into two or three questions.
3	Names of author(s)
4	Date of publication (latest edition)
5	Has it been reprinted often?
6	Has it had a number of editions?
7	a Is there a preface?
	b Does it give the author's purpose for writing the book?
	c If so, what is the author's purpose for writing the book?
8	If there is an introduction, list at least two main points made in it.
9	Examine the table of contents.
	a How many chapters are there?
	b How many headings are there?
	c List all the headings, and then turn at least five headings into questions.
10	How are the chapters organised? Look for a structure by examining the subheadings. See if there is a pattern common to all the chapters. Describe this pattern.
11	Other important sources of information in a textbook that you should look out for are the:
	❑ bibliography reference list
	❑ index
	❑ appendix
	❑ glossary
	❑ solutions to questions.
Which of these appears in the textbook that you are surveying?	

Turn to Chapter 4 on page 155 in the Reader, and preview 'Ways of understanding the reading process: Implications for teaching' by Fiona Jackson.

Take note

Remember that when you preview any text you quickly glance at the title, author's name, the way the text is divided with sub-headings, and whether there are any graphs or diagrams. Then you read the first paragraph of the text, the first sentence of each subsequent paragraph and then the final paragraph of the text.

Now use the pre-reading questions in the chapter to guide your careful reading of the text.

2.2 Models of reading

Why do you need to know about reading theory?

If you are to encourage your learners to be efficient readers for information and ideas, it is important that you understand the reading process itself. After all, how can we teach others to read meaningfully, if we do not know enough about reading ourselves?

Chapter 4 in the Reader outlines how our understanding of the reading process has grown over the last 30 years. In this chapter Fiona Jackson gives a brief outline of a number of ways in which reading researchers have described the reading process. These are:

1 Bottom-up and top-down processing
2 The interactional model of reading
   a Levels of reading interaction – Adams and Collins
   b A cognitive-psychological model – Kintsch and Van Dijk
3 The transactional model of reading – reading as communication – Widdowson

While you study the rest of this unit, we would like you to think about your own reading experience and the reading experience of your learners. You might like to write some of your thoughts about how you read into your workbook. It is a good thing to become more aware of yourself as a reader. This conscious awareness of how you are reading and how you are learning through reading is called *'metacognition'*.

Metacognition is the knowledge you have about thinking, and the control you have over your own thinking. All learners have strategies for learning, that is, ways in which they learn. In this unit we are concerned with the knowledge all readers have about the way that they read. If learners become more aware of the way that they read, and are able to think about their reading style, and articulate their thoughts, then they are better placed to be able to modify their reading style to be more strategic and more focussed.

Activity 21

(Suggested time: 45 minutes)

Thinking and writing

Write a heading 'Levels of Reading Interaction – Adams and Collins' in your workbook, followed by the subheadings: letter, word, syntax, semantics and interpretation.

Think about each of the levels of reading described by Adams and Collins that are referred to in Chapter 4 of the Reader, and write down any difficulties that your learners have at each level. Try to identify at which level most of your learners have a problem.

Study skills

Reading from key points

If a reader has a well developed schema about a certain topic, that reader will find it much easier to read and remember text concerning that schema. Readers attach new information to an already existing schema. See Chapter 4 on page 155 in the Reader for a detailed explanation of schemata (the plural form of 'schema').

Read the key points given below and then turn to Chapter 4 of the Reader and read about the interactional model of reading.

Key points

- ❑ Second language readers have to make more inferences and they experience greater overload problems than first language readers.
- ❑ Teachers need to become aware of what constitutes good, well written, well organised textbooks because the way books are written affects learner processing capacity.
- ❑ Teachers need to give learners support in building up their linguistic, content and formal schemata so that they are able to accept new propositions more easily when they read.
- ❑ Learners need to establish a purpose when they read so they can find meaning from text more efficiently.

Activity 22

(Suggested time: 30 minutes)

1 Does having a schema (in this case gained through the summary of key points) assist you in your reading, understanding and remembering?

2 Read the key points given below. Then turn to Chapter 4 of the Reader (page 155) to search for and understand those key concepts in this chapter.

Key points

- ❑ Reading can be seen as a negotiation of meaning between the writer and the reader.
- ❑ Reading is not passive. It demands the use of many 'active' strategies on the part of the reader in order to negotiate the meaning intended by the writer.
- ❑ Reading strategies need to be taught so that learners can negotiate meaning effectively.

2.3 A developmental model of reading

A researcher called Jeanne Chall looks at learning to read (in the first language) in terms of a process of development. Chall hypothesises a six-stage model of reading, which covers the whole range of reading ability, from a kind of **pseudo**-reading to reading that is highly sophisticated. The speed with which any one reader progresses through the stages depends on a number of individual and environmental factors.

pseudo
an imitation of the real thing

Stage 0

This is the pre-reading stage. Stage 0 covers the time from birth until a person begins to learn to read. It can involve the learning of a host of reading skills which a child uses and develops before she is able to read words with real understanding. Depending on the environment, it is at this stage that a child can become familiar with books and the idea that information and pleasure can be derived from books. The child can learn to handle books and the conventions associated with reading. For example, the Western reader reads from left to right, the reader holds a book in a certain way, and turns the pages in a certain way. The pre-reader becomes aware of books with pictures, that some books have no pictures, that magazines, newspapers, and television all have readable elements. Obviously the environment plays a large role in the richness of pre-reading learning, and the speed at which the child builds up this learning. The availability of reading material, the status of reading in a child's home, and whether or not children have stories told or read to them by parents or older siblings, will all affect children's attitudes to print and their exploration with letters and sounds.

Stage 1

Stage 1 consists of learning the letters of the alphabet and associating these with corresponding parts of spoken words. The reader learns and internalises the knowledge of the alphabet and the spelling system. The reader passes through a series of phases in which, at first, the memory plays a large part, as it did in Stage 0, then the reader pays close attention to the words, makes many errors as she battles to make sense out of the system, and finally learns to manage it. Stage 1 takes about two years to complete.

Stage 2

This is the time when the Stage 1 reader develops the skills that have recently been acquired and becomes fluent in them. In Stage 2 the reader does not acquire much new information but consolidates the information already known. For example, she now reads the stories that were previously read to her, and because the story is familiar this is a time of building up confidence in readers. Readers in this stage become more sure of themselves, more fluent and faster. Stage 2 takes between one and two years to complete.

Stage 3

Up to this stage the child was learning to read. Now she begins to read in order to learn. Up until now the readers have learnt things mainly through experience or through being told them by someone else, for example, their teachers, peers or parents. During this stage of reading development the reader can access knowledge from books, and it is at this time in the primary school that subjects with factual content are introduced. The reader copes best with material that only suggests one viewpoint. Readers make use of their previous experience and world knowledge. They begin to understand the need for skills to help them find information from books, and so they appreciate the function of, for example, an index, a contents page and the division into chapters in a book. This stage stretches over a relatively long period of time because there is much to be learnt in any number of fields of interest. As readers develop their reading skills in this stage they begin to develop the ability to be more critical about what they are reading. They are able to deal with different opinions about a piece of information and to analyse what they are reading as they are reading it. For the learner at school, Stage 3 will cover the intermediate and senior phases, up to Grade 9.

Stage 4

This coincides with the final years of high school. Stage 4 is characterised by the reader learning to deal with layers of facts and concepts. Readers can now deal with differing viewpoints, and can critically analyse what is being read, and revise their knowledge in the light of new material that they find in their reading. Experience in this stage leads to the development of the ability to acquire new concepts and new opinions through reading.

Stage 5

The reader becomes more adept in the process of analysis, synthesis and judgement of the material being read. In this stage the reader develops the ability to construct new knowledge on a high level of abstraction. The reader can now get to deeper levels of meaning in, for example, a novel, that was previously read on a more superficial level just to get the story line.

It must be apparent that becoming a good reader takes a long time and involves plenty of reading experience. Learners need help and support plus a great deal of exposure to different kinds of writing in order to become accomplished readers. All the teachers in a school need to be aware of this framework so that they can provide appropriate reading experiences, and they can try to get more resources into their school as a whole.

Key points

- Becoming a proficient reader is a developmental process which is achieved by doing a lot of reading.
- When learning to read in a second language a person goes through some of the stages again. If they have achieved Stage 5 in their first language they will be about 20 years old, and could reach Stage 5 in a second language more quickly than they did in their first language.
- All teachers need to be aware of the stages so that they can support learner reading development across the curriculum.

2.4 Teaching initial reading for foundation level readers

Think back to how you were taught to read and write. Can you remember much about it ? Were you, like Chall mentions above, an **avid** Stage 0 'reader' ? Did you look at books? Did your older siblings, who were already at school, ask you to play 'school' with them, in which they were the teacher and you and your friends were the Grade 1 learners? Did you have many books in the house? Or magazines, or newspapers? Did you recognise the tins in the kitchen, and the porridge packet covers, and the adverts on the TV? Chall would call all this activity 'reading' because it is getting you orientated to the reading of the text inside a book. You are recognising meaningful symbols, and relating them to something that you know in reality. So recognition of symbols is part of 'reading', and so is recognising that the symbol relates to something in your real life/real world experience.

avid
keen; interested

Perhaps you learnt to puzzle out the meaning of words, phrases and sentences before you went to school? The probable description of you when you were doing this is that you were not the eldest in the family, and that you turned six years old before you went to Grade 1. You probably came from a home in which older role models were involved in different kinds of reading, for interest, for schoolwork (if they were school learners), and if they were teachers at school, for distance learning if they were upgrading their qualifications. You will have had stories read to you, and you will have been encouraged to explore literacy avenues – for example, when you wrote your name, or you 'read' to your little sister, you will have got the impression that this was a 'good thing'. If your family was wealthy enough to send you to a pre-primary school you would have looked forward to that, and by the time 'big' school came around – you were very ready for Grade 1 at school. What language/s did you do this 'pre-reading' in? Your first language? If your first language is not English, were you encouraged to work hard at learning to read and write in English? If your first language is English, were you ever read to in a language other than English?

You also need to reflect on the fact that you are a trained schoolteacher now, as well as the fact that you are doing a Bachelor of Education (B. Ed) degree at the moment. You have got this far, we would argue, because reading has had some measure of satisfaction

for you, and teaching has a great deal of satisfaction for you. Although you are surrounded by teachers at school and in your B. Ed classes, you are unusual in the world – it is not unusual that adults want to contribute and serve their community through the work they do, but it is unusual that an adult wants to contribute by returning to school, so recently left, as a teacher.

Activity 23

(Suggested time: 30 minutes)

In your workbook write about the people or events that helped you to start reading and encouraged you to persist with reading. What exactly did they do to inspire you to become a keen reader?

Teaching reading in Grade 1

The learners who come to you in Grade 1 are expected to be able to read and write their first language by the end of the foundation phase. If there is pressure on the school to introduce a second language (usually English) into the syllabus during the first phase, then as the Grade 1 teacher you should insist that the introduction of the English second language work should not be done at the expense of learning to read and write, in the first/home language.

The Threshold Project (Macdonald and Burroughs 1991) looked at the needs of children who do not have English as their home language, and on the schooling system which encourages Grade 5 classrooms to be doing all the teaching of content subjects in English. Macdonald and Burroughs found that most children cannot cope with the thinking demands of learning through the medium of English after such a short space of time at school.

Macdonald and Burroughs continue: 'Are there benefits for the children if they start their learning in their first language?' The answer is: 'Yes, there are.' A thorough first language course gets children off to a good start in education because the language provides a bridge between the child's home and the demands of the new environment of the school (1991, 30).

Perhaps the compromise situation at the school in which you teach in Grade 1 and Grade 2 is to ensure that children are motivated to read. They should be given a great deal of opportunity to read material that interests them, and which they have chosen, so that by the end of Grade 2, or the beginning of Grade 3 the first language skills are established and children can move more confidently to reading in English.

Activity 24

(Suggested time: 30 minutes)

In some schools, Grade 1 teachers *and learners* face a very difficult situation. Often a teacher will have a Grade 1 class with mixed reading experiences and ability. Some learners will have already been through Chall's Stage 0 (the pre-reading stage) before they started school, and be ready for Stage 1. Others may not have had the opportunities or resources to move

through Stage 0 before they come to school, and so now have to work in Stage 0 and Stage 1 at the same time. Write down your responses to the following questions in relation to this situation:

1 What feelings might these Stage 0/Stage 1 learners be experiencing?
2 What can a teacher do to make the learning environment of these learners safe and encouraging?
3 What strategies can a teacher adopt to help these learners to move fully into Stage 1?

In case you do not teach Grade 1 learners, or the questions in Activity 24 were difficult to respond to, we have outlined some ideas in the following paragraphs. Read them carefully.

One of the ways to teach reading communicatively to learners who, even at the same age, show varying mastery of some of the reading skills, is to adopt a process approach to reading. Instead of teaching reading as only a set of decoding skills, the teacher uses the content that her learners bring to their classroom with them. For example:

> Early learners can be encouraged to explore features of written text through experience with the language itself ... Learners are given sets of words and blank cards on which to add new words of their own. They then create their own sentences on a sentence builder ... the learner is allowed to experiment with sentence building and the teacher is at hand to guide and adjust this exploration. (Wallace 1992, 57)

In the process approach to teaching initial reading mentioned above, the teacher takes into account that using interesting material, possibly drawn from the learners' own experience, is a way to motivate learners to risk and experiment. Another way that teachers can get relevant stories for initial readers to read, is by asking the Grade 1 class to talk about items of news. So one learner may say, 'My granny took me to the market.' Another may add, 'I got a wors-roll at the market.' The teacher can write the sentences onto sheets of newsprint for the learners to illustrate.

Alternatively, the learners can be asked to draw pictures of their family in crayon in their news books, and the teacher can go from learner to learner and write a caption for each page: for example, 'My sister has a cat called TOM'; 'I love my dad.' At the end of that day the teacher can staple all the drawings into a book form, and later in the teaching time, learners can take these 'books' from the teacher's cupboard to practise reading.

At the same time that learners are beginning to learn how to read pictures, and words and sentences in their first language, they should be learning how to write the letters and words that make up the sentences they will be reading. A lot of time should be spent on clear forming of the letters and numbers. An absorbing way of doing this is to start by learners colouring in and making pictures out of the letters, one at a time. Remember that the purpose here is to get a learner familiar with the shape of the letters, and by widening the vocabulary of the learner about objects that begin with that letter.

The deeper cognitive purpose is for the learner to associate squiggles on the page with concrete objects that are part of the

learner's real world experience. As the learner learns to recognise what the squiggles on the page mean, or what the pictures on the page mean, the learner should also be taught to make pictures and letters to represent on paper what he can report from his real world experience. In this way, learners come to understand that writing is the other side of reading.

This process of learning to read and write should proceed with as much encouragement and motivation as possible. It should not be a stressful experience for the learner, but one in which the learner blossoms and gains confidence in herself as a school learner. The more the learner reads in Stage 1 the more she builds up a fluent recognition of the letters and words in her first language. So she becomes more and more familiar with the letters written in different fonts, in different colours and different sizes. She learns to recognise the letter in its appropriate orientation on the page, (that is that a 'b' is a different symbol from a 'p' although it is made up of the same 'bits') and that the same letter or number orientated differently, is symbolic of a different object.

Macdonald and Burroughs summarise what has been said about the early stages by claiming that:

> When (information) is presented in writing, it cannot be understood unless we have the skills of:
>
> - recognising the shapes of the letters
> - pronouncing the sounds associated with the letters
> - putting the sounds together into words/recognising the words . . .
> - being able to grasp the meaning associated with that sentence (of words) . . .
>
> Learning to read in the language you already know has the advantage that you can focus completely on the complex set of skills involved. (1991, 44–45)

Reading in a second language

If reading in a second language has to begin within the first few years of schooling, then it should be once the learners have become fluent in reading in their first language.

The move from first language reading development to second language reading development

Chall, and other reading researchers, maintain that learners do not have to go through Stage 0 and Stage 1 when they come to read in a second language. They will have to identify which letters represent which sounds in the second language, but this is a simple task compared to learning to read for the first time.

As Grade 2 learners start to use English (or any other second language) they will first begin by speaking the language. Once they have developed basic face-to-face communication in the second language, the teacher needs to use *reading* in the second language as a way to enhance the *learning* of the second language. The teacher can

set tasks for the learners to learn new vocabulary in the second language, to begin to write words in the second language, and at the same time begin to read in the second language, drawing on the resources that they have developed for reading their first language.

The truth about learning to read well in your first language, and then in your second and additional languages, is that the more you enjoy reading the more you read. As reading becomes easier, it becomes a more satisfying thing to do. The more satisfying it is, the more you want to do it. And the more you read, the better you become. Being a good and confident reader means that you can take risks by not reading every word in the story but guessing what it says. As soon as you lose the meaning you can quickly return and read that piece of text over again.

On the other hand, if you don't like reading, and you avoid reading as much as you can, reading tasks are likely to become increasingly difficult. As you don't have a large vocabulary, you are going to meet many words that you do not recognise. This makes understanding a story difficult. Trying to battle your way through sounding out each word and guessing what it might mean makes you into a slow reader.

2.5 All teachers are reading teachers

Chall's findings on reluctant readers show that it is when readers have not mastered Stage 2 that they begin to find difficulties in reading to learn, that is from Grade 5 onwards when the purpose of reading textbooks is to gain information about new concepts. This is very different from Stage 2 which is the mastery of the reading process, during which avid readers will be broadening their knowledge of vocabulary and the different texts that are available for reading.

In South Africa where most Grade 5 learners are now expected to do their content subjects through English, Macdonald and Burroughs (1991, 14) find that the expectation on learners from rural and lower income homes is unrealistic. Many English second language learners will have fewer than 800 words of English after three years of learning English as a subject in school. Once they reach Grade 5 they will be expected to be able to work with about 5 000 English words in their content subjects.

> The volume which children have to learn in Standard 3 [Grade 5] is reflected in the pile of textbooks they have: one book each for Geography, History, Health Education, and General Science as well as a Mathematics book and books for three languages. The content subject books are in English, about 400 pages in all. (1991, 15)

It is very important that teachers in the primary and secondary phases of education see themselves as reading teachers as well as subject teachers. Their learners usually want to learn to read in English, but teachers will have to work with the English teacher to ensure that there is a systematic broadening of the vocabulary base. Themes in English and in the first language could be linked to the

content subjects from Grade 4 onwards so that learners are using the new words in different learning areas, and their understanding of them is reinforced. They could be required to use new vocabulary in a range of different writing tasks in the content subject lessons.

2.6 Reading difficulties

Think about South Africans as a whole. We are *not* a nation of readers. Why is that the case? Most learners leave school still very dependent on the teacher for reading and understanding their textbooks. They struggle to learn independently. The only novels completed by many of our learners are the ones they do as their language setworks.

Activity 25

(Suggested time: 60 minutes)

Go back to Chapter 4 in the Reader, and read the section called 'Sources of reading problems' starting on page 163 again.

Make notes while you read. Start by dividing a page in your workbook into two columns. In the left-hand column, try to answer the questions listed below. In the right-hand column write your own comments and experiences about what you are reading.

1 Very quickly scan the first page to find the words 'intrinsic' and 'extrinsic'. To scan text just run your eye down the page in search of key words. You do not have to read the whole page. What do you think the words 'intrinsic' and 'extrinsic' mean?
2 What are the intrinsic disabilities learners may have with reading?
3 What are the key points about the following extrinsic disabilities:
   a deficiency in teaching
   b deficiency of motivation
   c cultural difference.
4 From your own teaching and learning experience in the South African context, are there any explanations of reading disabilities that you feel have been left out by Jackson? If so, make a note of them in your workbook.

By now you should be aware that the causes of reading difficulty that many South African learners have are very complex. The problems are often extrinsic. In the South African context we need to understand that many people do not grow up in a reading environment. Chall (whose work you encountered in Section 2.3) has done additional research in North America on reading difficulties, and can add to our understanding. She used the 'stages of development' model of reading that you learnt about earlier as her research framework.

Chall found that children from low-income families have more reading disabilities than middle class children. Her main discovery was that low-income children very often achieve well until their fourth year of schooling which is when readers make the transition from learning to read to reading to learn (Stage 3 in reading devel-

opment). She found that low-income children experience what she calls a 'slump' at this stage of their reading development. This slump is a lag in progress and it gets worse as the learner goes up through school. By the time the child from a low-income family reaches the end of primary school she has fallen two years behind her reading age.

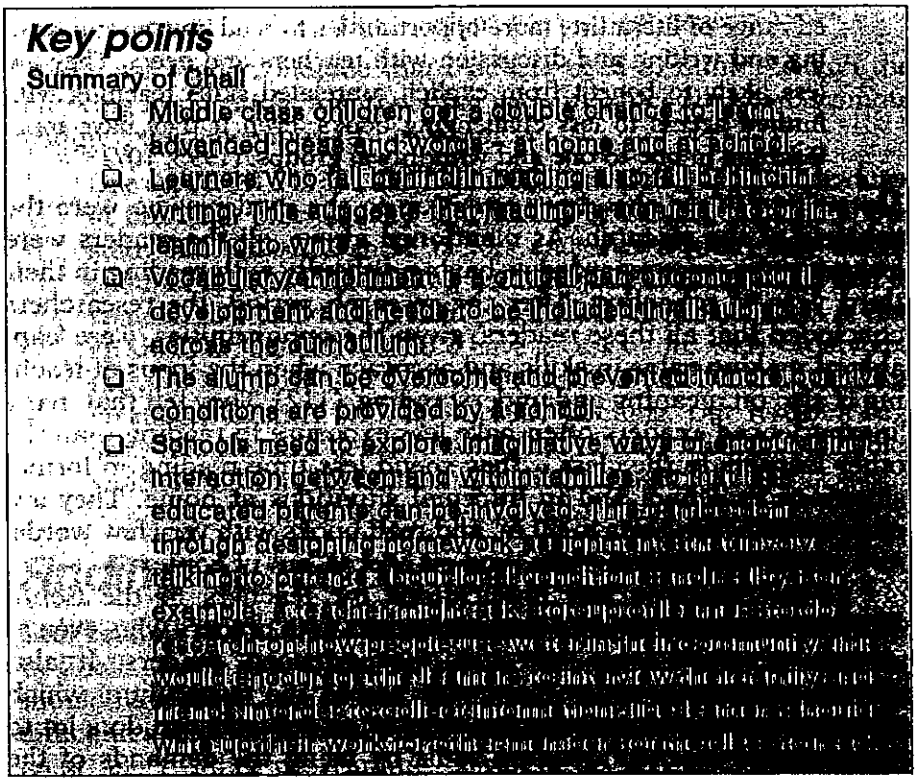
Chall found that the first slip was with vocabulary. Learners with reading difficulties struggle to define the more abstract, academic, literary and uncommon words used in their content textbooks.

She also found that below average readers experienced a slump in their ability to write, especially in the writing of expository text and their use of a wider vocabulary. But she also found that these same learners read for meaning and that cognitively, they were equal to all the other learners.

To find an explanation for her findings, Chall looked at the home conditions of the learners she was monitoring. She found that children from homes where the parents interacted with their children a lot, and played an active part in the educational achievement of their children, were better readers. She also found that good readers came from homes with literate, educated parents.

Chall argues that a school needs to take greater responsibility for the literacy development of low-income children, especially from the fourth year onwards.

- ❑ Learners should be given a structured and challenging reading programme to follow.
- ❑ Learners should be taught quite explicitly how to read at higher levels.
- ❑ In addition to their textbooks, a wide variety of reading materials should be made available to the readers.



Other research has been conducted with readers and will also be of interest to teachers in South African schools.

A. Pandian, a researcher into the reading culture of high school and university students in Malaysia, found that 86 per cent of high school students were reluctant readers in English, while 74 per cent were reluctant readers in Malay. From her study she concludes that:

> The major reasons leading to the phenomenon of reading reluctance are (a) lack of positive role models in homes and schools, (b) peer influence, and (c) the limited availability of reading materials at home and at school. (1995, 403)

Maggie Moore and Barrie Wade (1995) conducted a 15-month study on two groups of inexperienced readers in the West Midlands of England in the United Kingdom who were enrolled in Year 3, which is equivalent to Grade 3 in South African schools. Each group consisted of learners who were having difficulties with reading, but were of comparable reading and comprehension ages. They found that readers who showed most improvement over the research period were taught using an integrated programme in which skills teaching within the context of reading and writing was driven by having a purpose for reading tasks and reading for meaning. Learners experienced a wide range of texts in this programme.

The learners in the other group were taught using reading schemes with tasks derived from those schemes. The context of the reading schemes was narrower and more limiting than those of the integrated programme.

> Our results suggest that the children in the Integrated Groups learnt phonic skills, amongst others, and were able to use them appropriately to achieve higher reading ages scores which were obtained from a test which assesses skills. Phonics teaching took place in the context of making meaning from texts. Results therefore also indicate that inexperienced readers will benefit from reading an extended range of literature, more opportunities to read, purposeful reading and writing and discussion with teachers and peers. They are less likely to benefit from explicit, unrelated skills teaching with limited access to less challenging books, even if they have more teaching in one-to-one and withdrawal groups. (1995, 107)

Moore and Wade also draw attention to the readers who were the subjects of the research. As mentioned above, all the readers were learners who were regarded as having difficulty with reading in their third year of schooling. After the research period, the researchers concluded that all these readers, given the opportunities, were 'capable of making gains in skills and accuracy when the focus of teaching is also on meaning and understanding' (112). They felt that many 'inexperienced' readers often have less exposure to reading than the other learners in the class – they spend less time reading in formal situations in school and in informal situations at home. They are often given worksheets to fill in, and read books with very few words. As a result, they spend more time on 'words' out of context.

Their research has implications for teachers in the South African situation who are often confronted with readers who, even at secondary school level, are still 'inexperienced' readers. It also reinforces the concept of 'Language across the curriculum' which underpins this LILT module. Teachers of all subjects can do a lot to develop their learners' reading skills by using the demands of the

subject that they teach as a context for teaching specific reading skills. This means that teachers need to set tasks which value reading and writing skills, as well as the content subject knowledge required for the successful accomplishment of the task. Moore and Wade's research therefore, reinforces the point that *all teachers are reading teachers.*

Encouraging learners to be effective readers in the subject/content classroom

If you want learners to enjoy studying you must encourage them to be effective readers in your subject classroom. The following steps provide you with one possible approach to making reading a focus in your content lessons.

- Choose one particular grade of a subject that you teach. What reading is required by the subject at that grade-level? Make a list of all the reading tasks that learners have to do. How many of these do you assume that they can easily do when they enter this grade?
- Now focus on the areas that you think have the most opportunity for you to set specific reading tasks.
- Think of all the times when learners are reading in these areas (for example, reading instructions for an experiment, reading a thermometer during an experiment, reading the newspaper for current information, reading a table or a graph in their textbook).
- Design a range of tasks which focus on reading, and which you can assess, giving some marks for the reading aspect of the task as well as the content aspect.

Moore and Wade conclude that teachers need to think through the following implication, and then find ways in which they can promote reading experience in their classrooms:

> One aspect [of a broad and balanced curriculum] ... is a wide range of literature plus mastery of a variety of reading strategies. Our study has endorsed these factors and shown [that] they enable children to read with fluency, accuracy and understanding and to respond to a text with greater perception. The implication is that all children, therefore, should have access to this wide variety and range of literature that is varied in terms of content, structure and language, together with appropriate teaching. Our research suggests that children benefit from choice in their reading; but choice which is meaningful to them as individuals. (110)

Finding out about reading attitudes

Your reading of Chapter 4 in the Reader, and the research conducted by Chall, Moore and Wade and others that you have just read about, should have given you lots of ideas about your own learners and the difficulties they may have with reading. However, before you implement any reading programme, it would be very useful for you to

explore their existing attitudes to reading and their reading habits. With this information, you should be able to design reading programmes which accurately and relevantly meet the needs of your particular learners.

But, if reading is going to be one of the communication skills that Curriculum 2005 promotes, and subject teachers are required to be part of the development of learners as effective readers, then it is also vital that *you* as the teacher, know as much as possible about your own reading attitudes. It is difficult for teachers to encourage their learners to become keen and good readers if they don't read regularly themselves.

For this reason, we would like you to complete the quiz in Activity 26 yourself, before you give it to your learners. Not only will you then understand yourself better, it will also give you the opportunity to change or adapt the quiz to suit your own context.

Activity 26

(Suggested time: 30 minutes)

Finding out about your views of reading

1 Indicate in your workbook whether the following statements are true or false. In each case give good reasons for your answer.
   - **a** You should always read a book from cover to cover without leaving anything out.
   - **b** If you do not remember everything that you read, you are lazy or stupid.
   - **c** You can read some things very quickly for the main ideas and leave out the unimportant points.
   - **d** You must read some things slowly and carefully.
   - **e** Good readers read everything the same way, that is, slowly and carefully.
   - **f** You should read one textbook very thoroughly, rather than get information from other books as well.
   - **g** Talking to people about what you are reading can help you better understand the ideas in your book.
   - **h** You learn more when you read aloud than when you read silently.
   - **i** You should never learn anything by heart.
   - **j** Making your own notes of important ideas from a textbook helps you to remember those ideas.
   - **k** Good readers ask questions as they read.
   - **l** f you have learnt to read, you will be able to understand any book written in that language.

Answers: True: c, d, g, i, j, k
False: a, b, e, f, h, l

2 Do you agree or disagree with the answers we have provided? Discuss them with other students and see what they think.

The reading quiz in Activity 26 is meant to be quite light-hearted, but it could be used in class with your learners. After they have answered the quiz, and you have discussed the answers that the class has given, learners could work in pairs and come up with three more questions. True and false quizzes are very quick to mark – and they give rise to

much discussion because learners want to defend their answers. However, often issues like reading – which takes place in all situations of social life – will not be **amenable** to right or wrong answers. This type of quiz is useful because it sparks off learners' interest.

amenable suitable

We hope that the questions in the quiz in Activity 26 made *you* think more seriously about the way in which you think about reading. This quiz is really about readers' attitudes towards reading, and what they believe is the right and wrong way to read. These attitudes will come from the underlying beliefs and assumptions that we hold about the reading process and our relationship with reading. Having done the quiz, you should now be much clearer about the assumptions that you have about reading. What you need to consider now, is the way in which *your* beliefs and assumptions about reading have influenced the way in which you have approached reading in your classroom.

Finding out about reading habits

For teachers to find out even more about the reading behaviour and habits of the learners in their classes, it is possible to conduct a more extended questionnaire that will provide you with useful background information. As teachers we tend to assume things about our learners. Unfortunately, as we grow older, we become increasingly out of touch with the adolescent view of life. The administration of a questionnaire like the one suggested below, can help you as the teacher, to be informed about the attitudes, reading habits and interests of the classes you teach.

We have seen from the readings in this unit, that reading is not a fixed attribute that readers have and are unable to change. Rather, reading is a complex set of skills that is closely tied up to our family, our past experience of reading, our access to resources, and our purposes in reading. The following section is designed so that you can:

1. get information about the reading habits of your learners
2. give your learners an opportunity to think about their reading behaviour, and to write about it. This is a metacognitive skill that is useful to foster in learners.
3. design classroom activities and homework tasks that draw positively on your learners' abilities and resources and, more importantly, give value to the things that they like doing, and are good at doing.

Designing a reading questionnaire: What questions do you want to ask?

Before designing your questionnaire, you need to discuss with your colleagues whether or not the learners will be willing to give you the information you are looking for. For example, will they be honest, or will they make up the information, or just refuse to give it? In different communities, different aspects of information will be regarded as private. For example, your learners might be unwilling to tell you whether or not their parents are unemployed, while in another community, learners might be unwilling to give out information about their parents or grandparents being unable to read.

There are two main types of questions that you can ask in a

questionnaire: *open* or *closed*. *Open questions* invite people to give their own opinions and ideas. *Closed questions* do not permit people to elaborate. Closed questions limit and define the kinds of answers that can be given. Open questions are difficult to categorise afterwards, but might give you much richer information than closed questions would. There is however, usually scope for both kinds of questions in a questionnaire. The most important aspect of designing a questionnaire, is that the questions should be clear and unambiguous, so that learners can respond with confidence. The different kinds of questions will also be dictated by the age, grade, and writing abilities of your learners.

Initial surveys and follow-ups

It might be useful to set a series of closed questions for your *initial survey*. This is your first attempt to get information. Later, as part of the *follow-up* process, you could interview some learners, or you could get learners to write a response to the whole task in which they are allowed to write about two pages on some aspect of their reading ability. These kinds of follow-up processes give you the opportunity to clarify anything that was unclear or left out of the initial survey.

If you are putting together all the responses to the questions from your whole class, or the whole grade, it is easy to count up common responses and then express them as a percentage of the whole class/grade.

Table 2.2 shows some sample questions. You might like to use some of them and, in addition, generate some questions of your own that suit your learners' situation more closely.

Table 2.2 Sample questions for a questionnaire on discovering reading habits

1	Do you have teachers in your family?
2	Which members of your family read to you before you could read?
3	Do you read to members of your family who cannot read?
4	Do you enjoy reading?
5	Do you read books that are not school textbooks? If yes, what sorts of books?
6	Do you read magazines and newspapers? If yes, which papers or magazines do you read?
7	Who in your family enjoys reading?
8	What kinds of reading do they enjoy? Please be specific.
9	Do you have books in your home? Many? A few?
10	Do you watch TV, or listen to the radio? Please be specific as to how many hours per week you listen to the radio or watch TV.
11	What are your favourite programmes?
12	Do you have a library at your school? If yes, do you use it? If yes, how often do you use it?
13	Do you ever go to the library in town? If yes, how often do you borrow books from the town library?
14	Where do you get information about the things that are happening in your area, in the country, in the world?
15	How many languages can you read in? Please identify them. Which language do you read in most often? Which language do you enjoy reading in most?

To summarise all the useful information from the responses to a set of questions such as those in Table 2.2, you would need to draw up a grid with the questions down the left-hand side, and columns with likely answers to each question (as shown in Table 2.3 on page 76). Then you would need to go through each learner's responses and mark down what choice was made, as well as any specific information.

After doing this you should be able to add up all the responses in a particular column to a particular question, and express this number as a percentage of the total number of answers to that question.

Your final percentages will give you a profile of the class/grade in terms of the questions, and you can begin to establish a reading profile for your class/grade. How will that be useful to you? Well, if only 20 per cent of learners have access to TV then you cannot use TV as a resource to stimulate their interest in your subject. But, if 85 per cent watch a lot of TV then you could set writing tasks which require them to watch a particular programme and then to write down information to satisfy the task that you have set them. If it is clear that most learners do not live in homes in which people read and enjoy reading, then your job of encouraging and facilitating the learners' development as effective readers will be more challenging.

2.7 Developing learners as confident readers

Let's move on and focus on different strategies that facilitate reading development. We hope that you have already learned a number of strategies relevant to academic reading through your interaction with Units 1 and 2. What follows is a list of the strategies that you have already encountered in this module:

- scanning – looking for key words or concepts
- skimming – surveying textbooks and previewing a text
- activating background knowledge
- reading with a purpose
- posing questions
- close reading
- note-making
- making notes about notes
- using a *before*, *during* and/or *after* plan.

All these strategies are useful to any learner who is creating meaning from academic texts and integrating that meaning with existing knowledge. Consequently, it is important that you as the teacher are on the lookout for opportunities to make these strategies explicit to your learners during the authentic reading tasks that occur in your learning area.

However, learners also need to develop another set of reading strategies so that they learn to read differently for different purposes. They also need to learn more about how text is written and organised so that they can develop their ability to read it effectively. An approach which promotes this kind of learning is the *genre approach* to reading.

Table 2.3 Sample grid showing results from surveying 50 learners in a Grade 6 Science class

1. Do you enjoy reading?	Yes: 30/50	No: 10/50	Sometimes: 10/50
2. Do you read books that are not school textbooks? If you do, what sorts of books?	Yes: 35/50	No: 15/50	Sorts of books: annuals, science fiction, Mills and Boon
3. How many books do you have in your home?	Less than 20 books: 15/50	Between 21 and 50 books: 30/50	More than 51 books: 5/50
4. Do you ever read a magazine or newspaper? If yes, which are they?	Yes: 30/50	No: 20/50	*Echo*, *Natal Witness*, *Sunday Times*, *Topcar*, *Sports Illustrated*, *Wildlife*, magazines, etc.
5. Do you watch TV? If yes, what are your favourite programmes?	Yes: 35/50	No: 15/50	Sports programmes, 50/50, Yizo, Tube
6. Do you belong to the library in town?	Yes: 20/50	No: 30/50	
7. How many library books have you read this term?	None: 6/50	Between 1 and 4: 25/50	More than 5: 19/50
8. Can you read in more than one language?	Yes: English and Afrikaans: 10/50	Yes: English and Afrikaans and isiZulu: 20/50	No, only English 20/50
9. Who in your family encouraged you to learn to read?	Parents: 20/50	Older siblings: 20/50	No-one: 10/50
10. Do you read to younger members of your family at home?	Yes: 25/50	No: 25/50	

The genre approach to reading effectively

This LILT module aims to establish an awareness that reading is the other side of writing. Throughout this module we have asked you to reflect on this image of the close relationship between reading and writing. Readers have to respond to texts that were written by other people. You will see in Unit 3 that, as writers, you will have to produce written texts that will be read by other people. You will have to bear in mind who your audience will be and what the purpose of your writing is. Widdowson (in Jackson, 199) develops the idea of

reading as communication, as a negotiation of meaning between the reader reading the text, and the absent writer of that text. Or, seen from the other side, the writer deciding what to write in the text that she is producing for an absent reader who will read it in the future.

An approach to the teaching of writing, namely the *genre approach*, which you will study more about in Unit 3, can be used from the 'other side' as a way of empowering readers to read more effectively. This approach involves looking at the purpose for which something is written, and classifying different types of writing based on their purpose.

Activity 27

(Suggested time: 30 minutes)

There are many different types of texts, for example, a story, a recipe, instructions for setting the channels on your TV set, a science textbook, etc.

1 What other types of texts can you think of?
2 Now decide what the *purpose* of each piece of writing is. For example, what is the purpose of a folk-tale? What is the purpose of a recipe?

The library classification system classifies books according to their subject. So books about South African history will be classified together, and books about mathematics will be classified together. However, within these classifications you will probably find that the books under 'Mathematics' are also sub-classified under different types of mathematics, for example: 'teaching mathematics', or 'testing mathematics'. As the classifications become more focussed, the reason or purpose of a book becomes more apparent.

The writer and education researcher, Allison Littlefair, did an analysis of over 100 different books used at primary and secondary school in terms of the author's purpose (1991, 4). She found that there were four broad categories in which she could divide the books in terms of the writer's purpose, that is, its genre. The four genres are: books in the literary genre (in which there are sub-genres of folk-tales, short stories, poetry, etc.); books in the expository genre, (with sub-genres of textbooks, guide books, etc.); books in the procedural genre (with sub-genres of instructions manuals, cookery books, gardening books, etc.); books in the reference genre (with sub-genres of dictionaries, encyclopaedias, atlases, etc.).

Activity 28

(Suggested time: 20 minutes)

Littlefair describes the author's purpose in the *literary* genre as '. . . of narrating, of describing personal or **vicarious** experience, or of experimenting with the use of language itself' (1991, 4).

How would you describe the author's purpose in the other three genre groups that she identified among books used in school, namely:

- ❑ the expository genre?
- ❑ the procedural genre?
- ❑ the reference genre?

vicarious
learnt by imagining you share the experiences of others

If we looked more closely at examples of writing from any one of the genres discussed above we would note other differences between such examples. These differences have to do with the variety of language that the authors have used to achieve their purpose. Varieties of language are called *registers*, and authors choose an appropriate register to fulfil their particular purpose in a particular situation.

The register or variety of language used in any piece of writing can be further divided into *field*, *tenor* and *mode*. The following example illustrates these three concepts. Imagine that you have on your table with you as you read, two school textbooks – the one is *Geography for Grade 4* and the other is *Business Economics for Grade 12*. They are both examples of the expository genre, that is, the author's purpose in both cases is to 'describe or explain objectively, to inform' (Littlefair 1991, 4).

Although these textbooks belong to the same genre, we will see when we look closely at the language that they are written in *different registers*. The content (subject matter) of a text is the *field*. The field can be identified mainly through the vocabulary that is used. In a specialist text, such as the geography book, there will be specialist, or technical vocabulary (for example, latitude and longitude), and many words will have specific meanings in that subject. For example, in a geography text, the word 'crust' refers specifically to the outer surface of the earth. In another context, such as the home, or in an advertisement for a bakery, 'crust' carries the common meaning of the crust of bread. In the Economics textbook, technical vocabulary will show a different field of study.

The *tenor* of the text is concerned with the audience of the text and the relationship between the writer and the reader. The author writing for Grade 4 learners will use language that is accessible to eight-year-old learners. In an effort to try to hold the readers' attention the author might use the familiar terms 'you', 'I' and 'we' to create a relationship between himself and the reader. In *Geography for Grade 4*, the writer writes very directly and simply, for example, 'Copy these pictures of boys and girls exactly as they are here.' However, *Business Economics for Grade 12* uses different ways to address older learners.

The *mode* of the text is concerned with the way in which the text is constructed and the medium of communication. The way the author uses grammar and vocabulary together will create a text that reflects a particular register. In our Business Economics and Geography textbooks the language pattern in both is likely to be one of cause and effect, or problem and solution.

Difficulties with textbooks

Teachers and researchers have drawn attention to the fact that many textbooks that are required for use by learners at school are in fact written in an inappropriate register. They are very difficult, and sometimes impossible for use by learners in a particular grade, or if the learners are working in a language other than their first/home language.

David Langhan, reporting on research he has conducted on the difficulties encountered by South African primary school learners, both English first and English second language users, makes the fol-

lowing recommendations to writers who are writing expository texts in textbooks (1995, 60–62):

- Writers must ensure that readers are able to relate the topic to their existing experience of the world.
- When writers are using diagrams or graphs as supporting material for the topic, they must ensure that such supporting material is interpretable by the readers.
- Writers must not assume that their young readers are able to distinguish between the development of the topic, and other less important material.
- Writers must not assume that young readers can make inferences, and so must supply all the information that is necessary for the development of the topic.
- Writers need to establish concepts clearly for the reader before the concept is used in its subject context.

Langhan gives the following example from a geography textbook:

> This is particularly important when a referent, crucial for the understanding of a passage, is to be found only in a supporting map or diagram: for example, the use of 'interior plateau' used in a diagram as a labelling term, without 'plateau' being conceptually established. (1995, 61)

Reporting on a similar kind of study of school science textbooks in the United States of America, Linda Meyer explains that text is considerate (to the readers) when the writer has:

(1) systematically arranged the ideas in a pattern that is compatible with the discipline (for example, using a cause and effect pattern in a science text)
(2) logically connected the ideas
(3) avoided distracting or irrelevant information
(4) taken into account the reader's probable background knowledge. (Meyer 1991, 28)

Meyer's own analysis of science textbooks led her to suggest that when selecting a science text for their learners, teachers need to look at a number of textbooks at the appropriate grade level and ask the following questions: 'What is in the books? How is the content presented? How considerate is the text?' For the teacher who is mediating the existing textbook to meet the needs of her learners as they read, the above points about the textbook are important.

Activity 29

(Suggested time: 60 minutes)

Choose a particular textbook that you use with one of your classes. If the textbook seems inaccessible to your learners, how could you make it possible for them to learn from it?

For this activity you will need to look at what may be inconsiderate, and then think of ways to 'unpack' some of these aspects for your learners so that they are able to engage with the reading task.

2.8 Strategies for teaching reading in the subject classroom

Often we become disheartened by our learners' resistance to reading. If learners are not yet enthusiastic readers then we have to find ways to scaffold the reading task with other activities that our learners do like doing. One way to do this is to get learners to talk about a section of work *before* you start on it, maybe to tell stories about that topic. For example, in biology, learners will have stories about animals, why they are afraid of snakes, how animals developed certain forms or characteristics, etc. It is a good idea to get learners to recall stories from their own culture and family background. For example, imagine that you are about to start a section of work on reptiles. Set the learners a homework task to go and ask their parents or grandparents if they know any stories about snakes or lizards. Get them to write down the story and bring it to the next lesson.

Similarly, you can make use of television to encourage your learners to read. If you are doing a particular section of work, set a homework task in which learners have to watch a particular programme (for example, 50/50, or other nature programmes) and come to school ready to tell the class about the programme. Then set a task in which learners have to get a book from the library, about a section of the work that interests them, and read it. In this way, interest can be sparked in a subject area through means other than reading. Once the learners are interested, it is easier to get them to read about a subject.

You can also use newspapers to teach your learners reading skills and to develop their ability to scan for information, or to preview articles. The newspaper has many genres represented in it. Each genre is read for a particular purpose. Learners can gain insights into purposeful reading by using the newspaper. Examples of some of the genres in a newspaper are: advertisements, editorials, sports reports, classified advertisements, feature stories, cartoons, as well as reviews of films, videos and CDs.

How do teachers encourage learners to be avid readers?

Peter Traves believes that teachers of English have a responsibility to develop their learners as active and critical readers. He believes teachers, and schools, should ask themselves: 'What impact do we want reading to have on the lives of the children we teach?' (1994, 91).

He says teachers and schools should develop their learners as readers in three ways. First, they must encourage their learners to be enthusiastic about reading. Teachers themselves can provide a model of how experienced readers go about finding reading material that they are enthusiastic about.

Secondly, teachers should draw their learners' attention to the way that the text that they are reading together in class offers particular meanings. It might be explicit, that is, very clear, about the

values that are being put forward, or it might assume that the reader understands and shares the values of the writer. A writer might allow the reader to think that the writer's way of viewing a situation is the 'common sense' way of viewing it. The implication is that all people will view it in that way, and that is the 'natural' way to view the situation, and therefore the reader should also see it that way. Or, the writer might explicitly offer a point of view while being open about the fact that there are other ways of looking at the situation.

As readers become more experienced and are able to read comfortably, they are able to react to the views of a writer either with pleasure or displeasure. They make informed judgements about the views of a writer. With experience, readers cease to be *consumers* of text and become *participants* in the making of meaning. Traves believes that readers must develop to see themselves as contributing to the meaning of the text. This view is similar to the view expressed in Unit 1: that communication is the negotiation of meaning.

The third way in which teachers can help learners to develop as readers is to show that critical readers place their own values about a situation, or about the world, in relation to those of the writer of the text. Critical readers read from a particular position to get their own view of the situation. This is a useful attribute of an experienced reader because it is self-empowering.

An interesting project that operates in ten schools in Soweto and in two other schools in Daveyton and Mamelodi could give ideas to schools and teachers who are trying to promote reading among their learners. Letta Mashishi writes about the Parents/Schools Learning Clubs project (PASLC) that was started in 1990 (Mashishi 1996). Its purpose is to encourage parents to play an active role in creating a favourable and pleasurable learning environment for their children. Mashishi, who works at the Centre for Continuing Education at the University of the Witwatersrand, reports that the project has been reaching 1 500 parents per year. The project employs 2 people full-time and 53 parents work in a voluntary capacity. The project has a mobile library, and parents are able to borrow three books each every fortnight.

The project runs workshops for parents to learn the kinds of interaction with their children that will promote literacy for the whole family. Some of the workshops that parents attend, focus on developing routines such as 'Know your child', 'Time Management' and 'Reading' in which parents develop the communication skills necessary to discuss learning with their children, to find out what things they like doing at school, to discuss the day's school activities, to establish time allocations for play, watching television, doing homework, and to develop a regular time and commitment to reading and/or telling stories.

They also develop parents' awareness of their children's attitudes to reading so that they build on the kinds of reading that are enjoyed and so develop their children as confident and able readers. There are workshops about vocabulary development, rhymes to help children understand the different languages that they are doing at school, and ways of telling stories so that older members of the family are valued for their ability to tell stories and to develop storytelling in children.

The clubs are run in a non-competitive ethos, and parents are

not allowed to compare their children's progress, but they are encouraged to praise their children's efforts and support and inspire them. The clubs are also very careful to be supportive of parents who might themselves feel threatened by their own lack of reading ability, or education. The clubs have become a place where parents themselves are encouraged to become better readers.

Activity 30

(Suggested time: 30 minutes)

1 Does your school encourage parents to support their children and develop a culture of learning?
2 How could you as a teacher draw on some of the ideas from the PASLC project?
3 Are you a parent? If you are, how could you be more involved in your children's reading development?

What have you learnt so far?

We hope that you have gained an understanding of reading, the difficulties encountered by learners, and some of the strategies that readers could use. This knowledge, together with some of the work you will do in our contact session, should help you to build a positive reading environment in your classroom.

In schools where resources are scarce and there are socio-economic constraints on the learner's development, teachers need to find ways of overcoming the obstacles in their way. Teachers should be on the lookout for reading material all the time, either from what is available locally (such as newspapers, cereal boxes, magazines, etc.), or from outside their immediate environment (which they might have to write off for and order).

The Appendix on page 127 contains a list of resources with addresses which you can write to.

CHAPTER 4:

Ways of understanding the reading process: Implications for teaching

Fiona Jackson

Pre-reading questions

A. Read the following text and then answer the questions below it:

'Twas brillig and the slithy toves did gyre and gimble in the wabe.
All mimsy were the borogroves and the mome raths outgrabe.'
(From *The Jaberwocky*, by Lewis Carroll)

1. What can toves do?
2. Where can toves do what they can do?
3. What were the borogroves like?
4. Who outgrabed?

Reflection questions

1. Did you find it hard to answer the above questions?
2. Did you know the meaning of all the words?
3. What enabled you to answer the questions?
4. How meaningful a reading task did you find this?
5. Is the above kind of reading task familiar to you?
6. Can you think of ways to work with the above text that might have made it a deeper learning experience for you?

B. 1. a When you read a newspaper, do you read it from cover to cover?
   b Why/why not?
   c What kind of strategies do you use to read it?
   d Are they very different from the way you read a telephone directory? An academic article?
   2. What comments can you make about the reading process in the light of your answers to B (1)?

C. What makes reading very difficult for you?

D. What makes reading very easy for you?

E. How do you think our brains work to make sense of print when we read?

Introduction

Reading is a critical part of contemporary learning, schooling and society. Successful learners are usually highly successful readers. For many South African learners, however, reading is experienced as an alien process used only for the tedious rote-learning of subject content that often has no obvious, meaningful connection to the rest of their lives. Content-subject teachers who wish to improve their learners' abilities to engage meaningfully and actively with the issues of their subject will be helped a great deal by understanding more about the reading process.

This chapter introduces key understandings and theories about the reading process – namely, the *bottom-up*, and *top-down processing* theories, and the *interactional* and *transactional* theories. Thereafter, it outlines problems and difficulties that obstruct reader progress. Finally, the chapter concludes with a brief consideration of reading as the negotiation of meaning, and some implications and principles for facilitating the development of learner reading in school classrooms.

Reading researchers have over the last forty years generated a number of different theories about the reading process. That is, they have tried to build a comprehensive model of what people's minds do as they engage with written forms of communication. However, these theories are always incomplete and inadequate because it is impossible for us to study and observe the inner processes of our brains directly. Researchers have to work 'backwards' from secondary information, such as visible, outward forms of behaviour (for example, how our eyes move as we read) and what people say they are doing as they read (which is not exactly the same as what their brains actually do when they read.) The different theories of reading foreground and background different aspects of the reading process because it is so difficult to try and explain accurately and systematically everything at once. New knowledge and understanding about reading is often built by new researchers identifying gaps and weaknesses in existing theories, and building new theories from those points.

Bottom-up processing

The first theory we shall consider is called *'bottom-up processing'*. This theory emphasizes the ways in which readers process written language by breaking the text up into the smallest possible linguistic units (e.g. **phonemes**, morphemes, **lexemes**) in order to understand it. It focuses on the *text-driven* aspects of the reading process – on the information clearly contained in the writing itself. This view of reading was heavily influenced by the behaviourist school of psychology. Behaviourist psychologists believe people learn new things by a process of behaviour modification. New skills are mastered by lots of practice, and getting positive rewards for showing the right behaviour and negative responses for showing the wrong behaviour. From the behaviourist perspective, then, people would master reading by doing lots of drills using techniques such as flash cards to promote letter combination and word recognition. Learners would receive positive praise from the teacher for correctly recognizing what was on the cards, and negative comments when they were wrong. The ability of learners to read what appeared on the cards would be the evidence that their behaviour had been modified – the learners would have been shaped into making the correct links between certain language sounds and visual language signs. Good readers, from this perspective, would be those whose behaviour was modified so successfully that their ability to link language sounds and signs happened automatically.

phonemes
a unit of sound in a language

lexemes
a unit of vocabulary

Top-down processing

However, the bottom-up processing theory was criticized for ignoring other important aspects of the reading process. Other researchers later demonstrated how readers draw on experience and background knowledge they already have to predict what is contained in a written text. Readers then check these predictions against the text itself, as they read, to confirm or reject them. This new view of reading is called *top-down processing*. It emphasizes that readers work downwards from an overall, global idea of what they think a text will be about. This theory foregrounds *what readers bring to the text*, and how they use this knowledge to make sense of texts. Thus it focuses on the *reader-driven* aspects of the reading process.

The interactional view of reading

Currently many theorists recognize that successful reading involves aspects of both the above explanations of the reading process. Thus they promote the *interactional theory* of reading, which claims that an interaction between bottom-up and top-down processing is essential for effective reading. It claims text comprehension is achieved through the interaction of text-based (bottom-up) and knowledge-based (top-down) processes (Carrell,1988: 101). The strength of this theory is that it focuses on the interdependence of the top-down and bottom-up processes. This theory argues that it is important for readers to develop rapid and accurate feature recognition of letters and words (that is, bottom-up processing). The more automatically readers can perform bottom-up processes, the more time and energy they will have to develop good top-down strategies. Researchers testing this theory found that poor readers often lack automatic decoding skills. These readers therefore spend a lot of time guessing from the context. They have to do this so much their reading is slowed down too much and their processing capacities are overloaded. This means they have very little time over to give to higher order reading and thinking processes. (Eskey and Grabe, 1988)

Schemata

A key concept used in theories which see reading as much more than just a bottom-up process, is that of *schemata*. 'Schemata' is an abstract term for the way people are believed to structure their knowledge and experience in their minds. We create a particular schema by establishing relationships between all the parts related to that specific idea, situation or experience. Once we establish a particular schema we can activate it whenever we think it can help us interpret a situation. If you re-read the short sections on top-down and interactional views of reading, you will recognize their dependence on the concept of schemata. When you get to the 'transactional' view of reading, you will see that the concept of schemata is central to this view as well.

'The Family': A worked example of schemata

A schema for the idea of family probably would contain the following:

- community into which one is born
- blood relatives
- parents: father and mother
- siblings: brother and sister
- grandparents: parents' mothers and fathers
- aunts and uncles: parents' siblings
- children: daughters and sons.

It is also likely to contain ideas about the roles and responsibilities of the various members towards each other, and ideas about the physical living patterns and connections between the members.

So when reading a text in which the idea of 'family' is central, our 'family' schema is activated. If the way in which it is being used in the text is very new to us, then our existing schemata will have to be altered if we are to make effective sense of the text. For example, if a text presents a person as having two mothers, I would have to work hard to make sense of that, as my schema is organized around the idea that only the woman who physically gave birth to a person, or who has legally adopted a person as her child, is that person's 'mother'. But I have learnt that in some communities, the sisters of your parents are seen as your mothers as much as your birth mother. Readers from such communities would not have trouble matching their existing 'family' schemata to the text presenting a character with two mothers.

Schemata can be seen as our tools for organizing and interpreting the world. Our schemata are completely shaped by our unique experiences and socializations. The particulars of schemata are thus highly culturally contextualized. 'Readers use schemata to read between and beyond the lines: what is actually on the page is merely suggestive, never fully explicit' (Lytle and Botel, 1990: 23). This has important implications for school reading. If most of the time there is a large gap, or mismatch, between the schemata of the writers of school texts, and those of the learner readers, it will be extremely hard for those readers ever to experience reading as a positive, sense-making activity. Therefore classroom readers need both the inclination and the opportunity to access what they already know in order to respond to new information: to relate the new to the unknown.

The transactional view of reading

The interactional theory is closely linked with the *'transactional'* view of reading. The transactional view foregrounds the way in which readers can be seen to transact actively with texts, so as to build meaning out of the interaction between their knowledge and the information in the text. Seeing reading as 'transactions with texts' foregrounds reading as dynamic and organic in character, as well as

acknowledging that readers bring previous knowledge, beliefs and attitudes to the reading process (Lytle and Botel, 1990: 22). The interactional and transactional views of reading present readers as active constructors, with experience of the world and meaning-making that even as novice readers, they bring to the texts they read. Viewed in this light, reading can be seen as an act of communication, one in which meaning is negotiated between a writer and a reader.

Reading as a negotiation of meaning

Understanding how reading can be seen as a negotiation of meaning is extremely helpful as a basis to formulating ways of helping learners become more active, engaged and skillful readers.

Widdowson (1984) sees reading as an active process of negotiation between the writer of the text and a reader. That is, he argues that communication in general involves the negotiation of meaning, and that reading is an act of communication. People are private creatures who need to interact with each other. They need social contact to fulfil the different needs in their lives – food and shelter, love, and affection, and safety. Both verbal and non-verbal communication is used by people to make social contact happen. When two people talk to each other, two different worlds (that is, two different sets of schemata) are brought together. When the two people share a lot of the same knowledge and experience there will be a lot of overlap between their schemata. When they have had very different experiences there will be a lot less, maybe almost no overlap. This would make their communication much more difficult as they would have to work extremely hard to alter their existing schemata so as to include the experiences and ideas from the other person, and to make meaningful sense of those ideas. That is, to communicate effectively, people have to co-operate with each other in order to negotiate shared meanings.

If reading is seen as communication then it also has to involve the negotiation of meaning. Learners can find it difficult to see reading in this way, because so much reading is done by individuals on their own. Widdowson argues that reading can be seen as an act of negotiation because the writer interacts with the reader, even though this interaction is a concealed one. The writer interacts with the reader by trying to anticipate how an imagined reader may react to what s/he is writing. The negotiation of meaning thus happens between the writer and an imagined reader. When the text is eventually read (usually a long time after it was written) the reader has to negotiate the meaning of the text by trying to reconstruct the writer's ideas as they were intended. To do this successfully is an active, cognitive process of negotiating meaning. This means that for learners to become effective readers they have to become active readers who can draw on a wide range of strategies and skills in order to negotiate meaning successfully.

The writer of a text creates their side of the interaction by using tactical and strategic procedures to pass on an arranged pattern of ideas and information. This arrangement of ideas and information is

a projection (in the way that a video is a projection from a videotape) of part of the writer's world. Through this process the writer has to try to persuade their reader to accept the claims they are making in a particular 'projection' or text.

If actual readers are willing to accept the roles that the writer wishes to place them in, then the readers will try to work out the meanings lying below the surface of the printed words. That is, from one perspective, reading will be an act of *submission*. Readers will have to submit to the 'authority' of writers in order to facilitate access to the information given in the text. This will often mean that the readers have to adjust their schemata in order to accommodate new ideas and information. Under such conditions readers permit themselves to be directed by the writer, and to stick to the paths the writer has outlined for them.

But readers do not always wish to be submissive in the face of the writer's views. Readers may not be willing, and/or able to include the writer's theories of world (schemata) into their own schemata. It is not compulsory for readers to do this. Readers are free to use a written text in whatever way suits their purposes. Instead of adjusting their schemata to include those of the writer, they can impose their own frames of reference on what they read. This would mean that the readers adjust what is in the texts to match their own schemata. From this perspective, reading becomes an act of *assertion*, not submission. Thus readers may decide to be dependent and to change in a submissive way to the writer's schemata, or they may decide to be dominant and foreground the strengths of their own schemata. Readers can shift from one of the above positions to the other throughout their processes of reading texts. These shifts will be the result of *ideational factors* (that is, those to do with the ideas and thinking of people.) Whatever position they choose to adopt, readers have to draw as much from nonvisual information available to them, as from the visual information presented to them in the form of writing. The reader would draw on nonvisual information from their schemata.

Readers have to get as much information as possible from the reading process in order to make stronger, or to change, the schemata they are working with. When readers choose to consolidate (that is, to make stronger) they are likely to be assertive. When they seek to change their frames of reference, they are likely to adopt submissive positions in relation to the text being read. Whatever position readers adopt in order to achieve their ideational purposes they have to build a link between their own frames of reference, and those of the writers whose texts they are reading. There always has to be some overlap between the frames of reference of both readers and writers in order for the meaning of a text being read to be negotiated successfully.

Adams and Collins: Levels of interaction

The interactive model of reading has been developed further. Later refinements (Adams and Collins, 1979) give a more detailed picture of the fine, complex interlinking of the visual, linguistic and concep-

tual information processing systems and the reader's existing knowledge. The interaction between the reader and the text occurs at the different levels of the letter, word, syntax, semantics and interpretation. The interactional model argues that readers recognize words both holistically and through letter recognition. That is, one letter activates a schemata by triggering an expectation for another letter (e.g. in English an 'e' is often followed by an 'a' so you read 'ea'. But this combination is never found in Zulu.) With words, one word generates expectations of other particular words that could occur in the same sentence.

At the syntactic, or sentence, level the top-down process means readers draw on their existing grammatical knowledge in order to 'fill in' necessary pieces of the text without slowly reading every printed letter. For example, when you read the following extract you can probably insert the absent words because of your knowledge of English grammar:

> Here is a ... of ... woman who came on foot ... the Bophuthatswana township of Wintervelt near 'Pretoria ... Inhambane in Mocambique more than ... 1 000 km ...

At the level of ideas and meaning (i.e. the *semantic level*) readers must call upon vast sections of their world knowledge to enlarge the meaning sparked by the text. So, for example, if you look at the word below it will make you think of a lot of things beyond just the word itself:

> Apartheid

At the *interpretive level* of processing text, the reader uses abstract knowledge that exists outside of the actual content of the text. This knowledge is shaped by things like the purpose and nature of the genre (text structure) and the writer's intentions.

The above analysis of the reading process at different levels highlights how complex a process it is. Readers have to draw on many different kinds of knowledge and skill simultaneously in order to understand a text. Ann Macdonald (1995) writes that the interactive view of reading is a helpful model for teachers because it can give them:

> a grasp of how background knowledge operates at the bottom and top levels of reading. Teachers need to be aware of how much background knowledge pupils are able to bring to the text from letter and word level up to the interpretive level. Lack of background knowledge at any one of the levels, on the part of the reader, makes text more difficult to read and meaning harder to reconstruct. When readers lack the relevant linguistic, content and formal schemata it is harder for them to make the right predictions and inferences. They read very slowly, in a word-by-word fashion, and they are more likely to misinterpret the text.

The interactive model of reading has also been extended using ideas from cognitive psychology and *discourse* theory. 'Discourse' refers to any extended piece of spoken or written text of more than one sentence. This extension of the interactive model focuses on how the mind works when we read and on how readers use knowledge and inference processes to understand semantic structures (i.e. propositions/ideas). A person makes an inference when they go beyond the information they have, drawing a conclusion from it to reach fuller

meaning. These ideas apply to readers whose bottom-up decoding processes have become automatic, but they also have relevance for readers who are still mastering such bottom-up processes.

This extension of the interactive model is built around the idea of 'coherent text bases' (Kintsch and Van Dijk, 1978). *Coherent text bases* are hierarchically ordered propositions that are made up of macro propositions (main ideas) and micro propositions (supporting ideas). The reader builds a 'coherent text base' for herself by a process that happens in cycles. The process has to be cyclical because the reader can never understand the whole text at once due to the limitations of working memory. Text is therefore internalized in chunks of propositions at a time. The reader herself, and the way the text is written, determine the number of propositions absorbed in each chunk. That is, the sentences, clauses and phrases and the way the reader actually reads, together affect how the text is chunked.

The manner in which we process text is linked to our memories. Everyone has both a short term memory (STM) and long term memory (LTM). The short term memory acts as a buffer (that is, a protective screening device) between the reader and the incoming propositions. A reader selects only some of the propositions they receive. These are stored in the short term memory buffer. Only those propositions that are kept in the buffer can be connected to further incoming chunks. If there is some overlap between existing and new chunks, the new input is accepted as coherent with the previous text. If the reader cannot see any overlap, they have to make a resource-consuming search through the long term memory of all previously processed propositions. If this is unsuccessful, the reader then initiates an inference process. Inferences and long term memory searches make fairly heavy demands on the reader's resources. Too many of such demands cause *'overload'* in the reader, making it difficult for the reader to understand the text. The reader processes the text by making inferences and deletions. This results in the reader reducing the text to its **gist**. The process of summarizing a text to its gist is organized by the reader's *purpose*. So it is very important for readers to be clear about their purposes, as this enables them to extract information from the text more efficiently.

gist
the general idea

The above ideas can help teachers realize that learners often experience 'overload' when they read their textbooks. The research behind the above understanding of reading points to a number of possible causes of reading difficulty for learners. They might battle to make cognitive sense of text because of:

- a lack of background knowledge,
- inadequate linguistic competence, or
- the way in which the text is written and organized.

All of these fa.ctors can cause reading problems for learners. Often, when faced with such problems, learners will rote learn instead of meaningfully engaging with knowledge. Reading difficulties will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

To sum up, the more holistic approach of the interactional model of reading offers a lot to teachers concerned with promoting language development across the curriculum. As content teachers, their key focus must be on promoting in-depth understanding of their subjects amongst their learners. Their concern is not primarily with linguistic mastery, for its own sake. The interactive model

enables teachers to understand how linguistic skills and thinking skills work together for learners to read effectively. It is as important for teachers to understand reading as a process of meaning making as it is for them to understand reading as a process of linguistic decoding.

Sources of reading problems

For many learners, particularly in South Africa, the process of mastering reading happens under very difficult circumstances. Given a range of factors, including the very negative **legacy** apartheid left for education, the poverty and consequent lack of written materials in many homes, and the fact that most South African learners do the majority of their school reading in a second or third language, it is not surprising that school learners here experience many challenges and obstacles in mastering reading processes. The following section explores the nature and reasons for such difficulties.

legacy
effects or leftovers from the past

It is very important to highlight from the beginning that the causes of reading problems can be very complex. One kind of difficulty may stem from very different causes. Being inaccurate about the cause could undermine the effectiveness of strategies implemented to help the reader overcome the difficulty. The popular conception of reading problems often locates the cause of the problems entirely within the reader, seeing all reading problems as *intrinsic* to the reader. However, because reading is a social activity, this view is too simplistic. Many reading difficulties can arise from problems *extrinsic* to the reader. So it is important to approach the issue of reading difficulties from a critical psycho-social perspective (Donald, 1980).

As I have noted, skilled readers perpetually draw on both top-down and bottom-up processing, constantly varying their type of processing of the text as they adapt to the demands of specific texts and reading tasks. Novice readers, however, often over-rely on only one mode. If they overdepend on bottom-up processing, they are said to use too much text-biased processing. If they overdepend on top-down processing, they are said to use too much knowledge-biased processing (Carrell, 1988: 101). Some research studies on the strategies of ESL learners show learners under using knowledge-based processes (Carrell, 1988), while other studies show learners under using text-based processes (Steffensen, Joag-Dev and Andersen, 1979; Carrell, 1981). While these studies do not provide definite answers as to the causes of these problems, researchers have constructed a number of hypotheses that are helpful.

A key source of reading problems could be that of *schema availability* (Carrell, 1988: 104). That is, a reader without a relevant schema cannot use it to help process a text. For effective reading to happen, readers must be able to call on relevant *formal* and *content schemata*. Formal schemata contain knowledge of how specific types of texts are organized, for example, structures of folktales, newspaper reports, editorials and academic expository texts. Content schemata organize implicit cultural knowledge and background knowledge to the content of a text. Because cultural knowledge is so often implicit (that is, unconsciously known), texts based on a learners culture are generally easier to process than other texts of a

syntactic/rhetorical
grammar rules/argument

similar **syntactic/rhetorical** level. For example, Johnson (1982) showed that a text on a known topic was better remembered by ESL learners than a comparable text on an unknown topic. Wholly alien reading materials, and contextually insensitive ways of presenting them to learners, constitute one of the key extrinsic causes of reading problems.

Many research studies have highlighted how lower class children achieve less well in reading than middle-class children (Bernstein, 1972). Such children do not have any innate reading problems. Rather, the problem is one of cultural difference. Where there is a large mismatch between the culture of the home, and the culture of the school, learners will experience difficulties in the school environment. That is, the types of reading materials and tasks such learners will encounter presume middle-class orientations, language, values and processes. This disadvantages the lower class learners because, in school, the language used is that of powerful middle-class discourses. This excludes children from other discourses. The problem is much more fundamental than superficial differences of linguistic structures: the experiences, patterns of interaction, and values in the learners' reading material can cause profound inner conflict and alienation for children from 'excluded' discourses. In addition, if books are not a familiar source of information and enjoyment for learners *before* school, then they may experience them as an 'imposed artefact' of an alien culture. Problems in these areas may be worsened by a poor match between readers and materials. It is very important to provide reading materials that will interest learners and that are not too linguistically difficult for them to read. A partial solution would be to alter the reading materials and tasks, not the learners. In addition, such learners would benefit from explicit instruction in key aspects of the most important written genres of the mainstream school discourse, that too often are left implicit. If these aspects are not explicitly taught it is extremely difficult for learners from other discourses to master the powerful discourse.

Even if learner readers (especially ESL readers) have a relevant schemata they may fail to activate it at the appropriate point. This may happen even if the text is on a familiar topic but is written very densely. Such texts lack sufficient lexical signals (i.e. words) of a kind to help the reader call up the right schemata.

Teaching problems make up a major area of extrinsic causes of reading difficulties. Poor teaching can both initiate and maintain reading difficulties for learners. Donald believes that while basic reading skills are generally well taught at primary school, this is often at the expense of higher-order reading skills. That is, an over emphasis on word recognition, and minimal attention to the building of meaning when reading, can lead to reading problems. But a number of learners may not master even the basic reading skills because teachers cannot adapt their methodology to the needs of specific learners. At the level of higher-order skills, reading problems are very common. Learners may experience such problems because of the kinds of conceptions they have about the reading process. That is, learners might suffer from the 'meaning-in-the-text' fallacy (Carrell, 1988: 108) where they assume that all the meaning of a text is located only in the text. This might be especially common in classrooms where reading is mostly done for the teacher's purposes and

not the learners'. Furthermore, learners who have first encountered reading through:

- an overstress on decoding skills,
- the use of insular reading passages with no connections to their own interests and tests focusing only on literal text content, may see reading only as a bottom-up process and fail to work actively to build meaning from the text.

Negative attitudes towards reading and learning can contribute to the development of reading difficulties. Problems in this area could have intrinsic and/or extrinsic sources. For example, slow-to-learn readers could experience negative pressures that lead to them seeing themselves as failures. If the culture of the school reinforces this, they may experience long term reading problems derived from both intrinsic and extrinsic factors.

Attitudes towards reading can play a crucial role in encouraging or undermining learner motivation to read. While lack of motivation exists inside a reader (that is, exists intrinsically) it can be generated by extrinsic factors such as attitudes in the surrounding community. Donald sees parental involvement as the most critical motivating influence for young learners' attitudes towards reading. Parents who are active readers role model enthusiasm and engagement in reading. This creates a culture of reading which can encourage children without pressure. Children can see reading as providing meaning and reward. Given that many South African children do not yet come from homes with strong reading cultures (due to the limited access to education and money of many parents), it is extremely important for teachers to provide some comparable role modelling. This can be achieved by teachers talking with learners about pleasurable reading experiences, and creating opportunities in class where they, as well as the learners, read for meaning and personal satisfaction.

Peer values may also have a strongly positive or negative influence on reader motivation. The need for peer acceptance and conformity to peer values is a strong motivating force for young learners. Much about South African culture does not support a culture of reading amongst young people – for example, the strong focus on sport in the country and the accessibility of television. Motivation can also be influenced by class and sub-culture values.

Generally, if the reward children can experience intrinsically from reading can be increased, then motivation problems for reading can be overcome. For readers' motivation to read to be nurtured, they must have reading experiences that give them deep personal satisfaction. Exactly what will provide personal fulfilment will vary from reader to reader. Personal satisfaction through reading can be achieved via: success and mastery, emotional identification, discovery, emotional challenge within a 'safe' environment, locating information, and affirmation (Donald, 1980: 5).

Intrinsic factors

Intrinsic reading difficulties range from the biological to the psychological. Readers can experience problems because of physiological, intellectual, psychoneurological, linguistic and emotional disabil-

ities. While identifying a physiological problem (such as blindness, persistent poor health) is fairly simple, pinpointing intrinsic emotional disabilities is very complex. It is not easy to determine when emotional problems are a primary or secondary cause of the problems. Emotional problems can also decrease readers' motivation to read (Donald, 1980: 4). It is very unlikely that any of the above factors operate in isolation. Often the combination of some of these factors triggers a reading problem. Furthermore, the continuation of the problem may be supported by the presence of extrinsic factors.

Finally, ESL readers may also experience a range of skill deficiencies that obstruct their reading of a particular text. They may not yet have enough vocabulary skills for a specific text. Problems with vocabulary can also reduce the transfer of effective first language reading skills to the second language context.

Spiro (1978) suggests that a two-level approach to skill deficiencies may be necessary. First problems amongst the numerous skills that contribute to reading comprehension need to be identified. Then the way in which these inadequacies may express themselves in a reading 'style' needs to be carefully considered. That is, readers may respond to their problems in different ways. Some may keep on trying in the problem area. Others may retreat from the problem by moving processing resources in an effort to make up for the problem (Carrell, 1988 : 107).

For example, a reader who is a slow, straining decoder might persist with their painful decoding efforts. But the severe limits of their information processing capacity and short-term memory will create a bottle-neck in their system. Such a reader who tries to keep too many unconnected bits of information without any linking higher order relationship cannot attend to higher order, knowledge-based processes. By contrast, another inexpert decoder may try to escape the painful decoding task by over-depending on prior knowledge. This would lead to neglect of text-based processing in favour of extreme guessing of content.

Teachers need to be aware that inadequate, unidirectional reading styles may have very different causes. This can affect the choice of strategy best suited to overcoming the problem. That is, it is important to treat the cause, not the symptom.

Developing effective readers

Widdowson's ideas on reading as the negotiation of meaning point to a number of implications that teachers need to be aware of in fostering the reading development of their learners. It is clear that to become more successful readers, learners have to be helped to develop strategies of active negotiation of meaning with texts. They need many opportunities to become more aware of how their existing knowledge can be both a helpful bridge to making sense of new texts, and at times an obstacle to understanding texts. Only through extensive supported practice at purposeful, meaningful reading can our learners become good enough at both the linguistic decoding processes, and the global sense-making processes needed to make effective choices as to when they should be submissive or assertive readers.

Teachers have a critical role in helping learners develop the characteristics of active, engaged readers. Such readers are problem posers and solvers. They perpetually ask questions and monitor their own levels of understanding well. Good readers can use a wide range of strategies, including planning, predicting, tracking levels of understanding, and searching for evidence to confirm predictions. Overall, such readers adopt a creative and critical attitude towards their reading texts, that is, they know when it is appropriate to be assertive in their reading. Effective readers also have at least implicit understanding of:

- what *they* bring to the text,
- what *the* text brings to them (e.g. in the nature of the structure, content and form), and
- what goals and expectations are suggested in the reading task.

In order to develop such readers, teachers need to encourage learners to:

- engage *actively* with texts,
- adopt a tentative or questioning attitude to text,
- probe beyond their first, surface understandings,
- take responsibility for their own understandings, and
- build up a **repertoire** of reading strategies, both conscious and unconscious.

repertoire
selection; range

It is possible to develop these characteristics in even very young learners if they are given reading materials appropriate to their age and interests. Teachers can help learners to build their capacity to draw on relevant strategies by posing the right kinds of questions for learners, and providing space for open-ended responses to them. To become strategic readers learners need opportunities to change their style of reading depending on the context, task and text. They need spaces in school to 'figure out how to go about reading something' (Lytel and Botel, 1990: 29).

In order to become effective readers across the curriculum, learners have to master the terminology, conventions and rules of evidence of different disciplines. They also have to master general approaches to reading that are helpful in a range of contexts. Learners need exposure to a range of different types of reading transactions as well as types of texts. The reading activities need to be designed to help learners internalize the right kinds of questions to ask of the texts they encounter in different subjects as aids that help them towards independent, self-guided reading.

Conclusion

This introductory exploration of ways of understanding the reading process has highlighted how teachers can benefit from understanding the bottom-up, top-down, interactional and transactional theories of reading. Consideration of these theories reveals the complexity of the reading process, and the range of competencies and skills that learners need to master in order to become effective readers. This chapter has also focused on the kinds of difficulties

learners can encounter as readers, highlighting both intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Knowledge of the diversity of possible causes of reading difficulties can help prevent teachers from making over simplistic judgements of their learners' reading problems. This knowledge, coupled with principles for the promotion of effective reading processes, can help teachers to plan their teaching to include a diverse range of learning tasks. By incorporating a rich variety of reading activities teachers will assist their learners in experiencing reading as a powerful, meaningful and effective strategy for knowledge building.

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Appendix 6

***Theory and Practice of English Language Teaching*:**

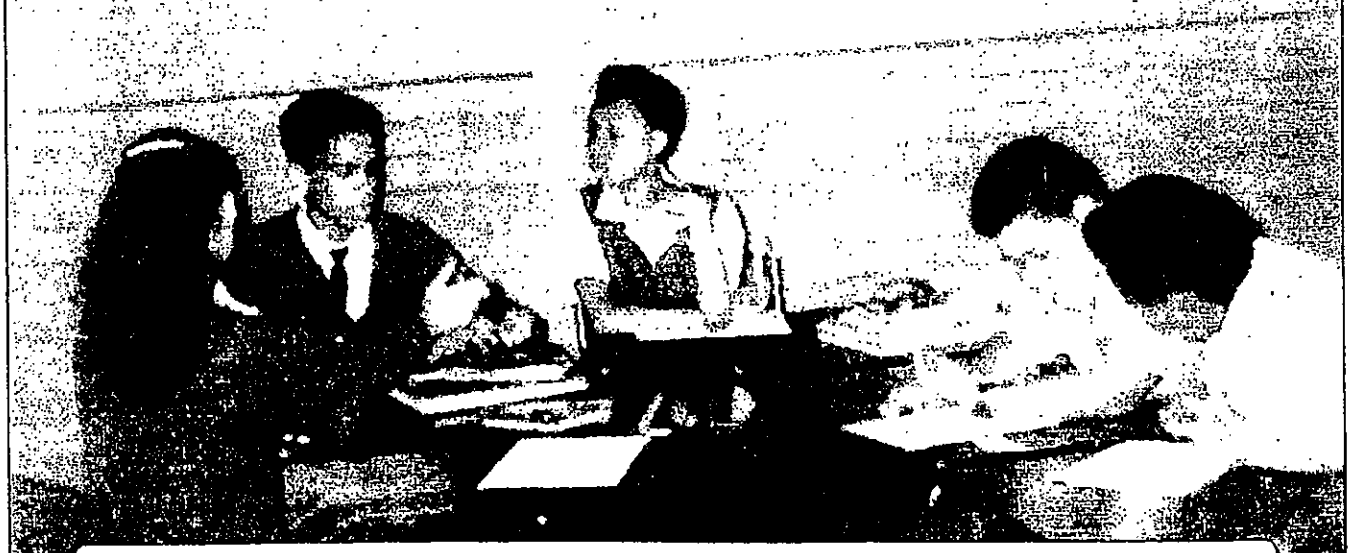
front cover, table of contents, general introduction,

sections 3.1 to 3.5 of Unit 3

Pages 184-257

Further Diploma in Education

Theory and Practice of English Language Teaching



FACULTY OF EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND

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THEORY AND PRACTICE OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Before you begin work on Unit One, read the two introductory sections below and do the activities in each section. These sections are:

- keeping a personal-professional journal
- language terminology

- **Keeping a personal-professional journal**

As you will know from your previous experiences of studying and from discussing the subject of studying with colleagues and with your learners, there are several different ways in which learners can work through a course of study.

The developers of the Further Diploma courses hope that you will use these courses to extend your ability to reflect on teaching and learning issues, to observe closely 'what happens' in your own and your study partner's classrooms and to develop and try out new ways of working with your learners.

In order to do these things effectively we suggest that you keep 'a personal-professional journal' in which you write regularly about the following:

- your responses to what you have been reading in the course materials;
- ideas or questions which you wish to discuss with your study partner and/or the course developers;
- outcomes of these discussions (e.g. points that you want to remember and/or to work with in your classroom);
- ...

- your classroom observations;
- your thoughts about what you have observed;
- the influence of 'the outside world' (the rest of the school, your family, the wider community etc.) on your classroom teaching;
- 'work in progress' for your assignments;
- your responses to the feedback you receive on your assignments;
- suggestions for improvements to the courses.

Many of the course activities, will provide you with opportunities to think, to discuss and to write your responses in your journal. The majority of these activities have been included with the aim of contributing to your professional growth rather than for assessment purposes. However, they are an important part of your preparation for the assignments which form part of each unit.

Your journal entries can be written in a notebook, exercise book or file. The choice is yours because what you write is for your eyes only unless you specifically choose to share it with others. We hope that you will decide to share some of the ideas, questions etc. which you have written in it with your study partner, your colleagues and the course developers.

Activity

Read what Mary Louise Holly has written about keeping a personal-professional journal and then try to put her ideas into your own words. If possible, discuss Holly's ideas with your study partner. One of the points she makes is that we get new ideas and view situations that we have written about in new ways, when we go back to our journals to re-read what we wrote some time ago. You may find that you gain a greater understanding of what Holly has written after you have been working on this course for some time and after you have tried keeping a journal.

Keeping a journal is a humbling process. You rely on your senses, your impressions, and you purposely record your experiences as vividly, as playfully, and as creatively as you can. It is a learning process in which you are both the learner and the one who teaches.

A journal is not merely a flow of impressions, it is impressions plus descriptions of circumstances, others, the self, motives, thoughts, and feelings. Taken further, it can be used as a tool for analysis and introspection. It is a chronicle of events as they happen, a dialogue with the facts (objective) and interpretations (subjective), and perhaps most important, it is an awareness of the differences between facts and interpretations. A journal becomes a dialogue with oneself, over time. To review journal entries is to return to events and their interpretation with the perspective of time. Over time, patterns and relationships emerge that were previously isolated events 'just lived'. Time provides perspective and momentum, and enables deeper levels of insight to take place.

(1984:1)

- **Language terminology**

The terms below are all currently used in:

- language policy in education documents;
- syllabus documents;
- examinations;
- articles and books about teaching and learning language.

FIRST LANGUAGE	HOME LANGUAGE	MOTHER TONGUE
NATIVE LANGUAGE	MAIN LANGUAGE	LANGUAGE OF CHOICE
SECOND LANGUAGE	ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE	
TARGET LANGUAGE	FOREIGN LANGUAGE	

Not all writers use the same terms and some express strong criticism of terms which others find acceptable. We will investigate why there is debate about these terms (and about others which will be introduced later in the course).

Activity

Think back to the work which you did on your own language history and to the discussions at the first residential workshop. Work with your partner to do the following:

1 **Write a brief definition of each of the terms in the boxes on the previous page.**

2 **Discuss into which box you would put each of the languages that you know and use. (For example, if at school or in the workplace you 'added' Afrikaans to the languages you know, you could place Afrikaans next to Additional Language.) You may find it difficult to 'place' your languages because the terms do not 'fit' your personal language profile.**

3 **Discuss which terms you accept and which you reject and give reasons for your choices. (Any difficulties which you experienced in the previous part of the activity in trying to 'place' your languages should help you with this part.)**

The terms 'first language'*, 'second language'*, 'home language'*, 'mother tongue'* and 'native language'* are used extensively by writers based in a context in which most people are monolingual* or at best, bilingual*. For example, the majority of people in England, the United States of America and Australia only speak, read and write English. Even though a minority of people in these countries speak a wide range of languages, English is the dominant language*. In the past, terms developed by language educators in these countries have been widely used in South Africa. This situation is now changing because these terms are inaccurate as descriptions of the language knowledge and use of many people in our multilingual* society.

For this reason the terms used in the discussion of language development in these course materials will be:

- main language(s)*;
- additional language(s)*;
- language(s) of choice*;
- target language(s)*.

All of the language terms referred to so far and any others to which an asterisk (*) is attached, are briefly explained in a glossary at the end of Unit One. You may wish to compare the definitions you wrote in the previous activity with those in the glossary.

Ordinary and technical language

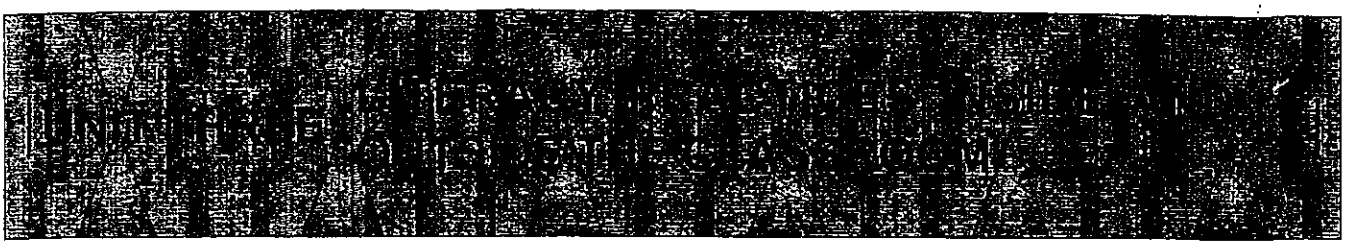
It is likely that in your teaching, you will have helped learners to understand the difference between the 'ordinary' and the 'technical' or 'specialist' meanings of some words. For example, think about the words ***table*** and ***power***.

table	ordinary meaning:	a piece of furniture, with a flat top, supported by legs or a central column; used to place things on for various purposes such as eating a meal or studying
	technical meaning:	an arrangement of information in columns or lines
power	ordinary meanings:	(i) physical strength; (ii) political strength or control
	technical meaning:	in Mathematics: a number raised to a power means that number multiplied by itself; 3 to the power 4 means 3 multiplied by itself 4 times (3 x 3 x 3 x 3 = 81)

Activity

Write down some other words which have both ordinary and technical meanings. (Use any of the languages which you know for this activity.)

During your Further Diploma studies you will be introduced to the technical meanings of some words which you are likely to have used in an 'ordinary' context. The first two of these, **'learning'** and **'acquisition'**, are introduced on the first page of Unit One.



INTRODUCTION

The goal of this unit is to provide you with opportunities to do the following:

- extend your understanding of the meanings of literacy;
- think about literacy in social contexts such as the home, the community and the school;
- investigate some literacy events and literacy practices in these contexts and think about the implications of your findings for your teaching;
- extend your understanding of 'reading';
- read about, discuss and evaluate various approaches to the teaching of reading;
- try out in your classes some activities which focus on aspects of reading development;
- extend your understanding of 'writing';
- read about, discuss and evaluate various approaches to the teaching of writing;
- try out in your classes some activities which focus on aspects of writing development;

3.1 MEANING(S) OF LITERACY

At the beginning of Unit One you considered the 'ordinary' and the 'technical' or 'specialist' meanings of some words. The first part of this unit introduces some of the possible meanings of the word **literacy.**

Activity

- **Write your own definition of literacy.**
- **Ask three people for their definitions.**
- **Note what is common to all of these definitions and also any differences between them.**

In this part of the unit I will make frequent references to ***Literacy*** by David Barton. In his view all sorts of people talk about literacy and make assumptions about it, both within education and beyond it:

> *The business manager bemoans the lack of literacy skills in the work force. The politician wants to eradicate the scourge of illiteracy. The radical educator attempts to empower and liberate people. The literary critic sorts the good writers from the bad writers. The teacher diagnoses reading difficulties and prescribes a programme to solve them. The pre-school teacher watches literacy emerge. These people all have powerful definitions of what literacy is. They have different models of literacy, different views of the problem and what should be done about it.*

(1994:2)

When Barton consulted a number of dictionaries to find out how literacy was defined in each of them, he discovered that he needed to consider four words: literate, illiterate, literacy and illiteracy. These words came into use in the English language over a period of several centuries, with literacy being the most recent. In the Shorter Oxford Dictionary (1973 edition) they are defined as follows, with the year of first recorded usage in brackets:

literate: acquainted with letters; educated, learned (1432); one who can read and write; opposite to illiterate (1894)

illiterate: ignorant of letters or literature; without education (1556)

illiteracy: the quality or condition of being illiterate; ignorance of letters; absence of education; (1660)

literacy: formed as an antithesis to (opposite to) illiteracy (1883); quality or state of being literate (1894)

3.2 LITERACY AS A SET OF SOCIAL PRACTICES

A number of questions can be raised in relation to the dictionary definitions you have just read. For example:

Can you learn and know things without being able to read and write?

Can you teach learners who cannot read and write?

The answer to both questions is 'yes'. Think back to your studies of language acquisition. Informal education in the home and community enables young children to learn a great deal before they learn how to read and write. They listen and watch while people around them talk and work or play and they participate in a wide range of activities. In homes where older children and adults use reading and writing for various purposes, young children begin to learn that there are different kinds of reading and writing and they learn something about the different contexts in which these different kinds of reading and writing are used.

In South Africa millions of adults have not had opportunities for formal schooling but there are many things that they know about and that they know how to do. Some are skilled storytellers who are able to pass on important community history and community stories from generation to generation. There are many different kinds of knowledge and only some of these depend on print.

Before the elections in 1994 some of the voter education campaigns were specifically aimed at people who could not read and write. They learned about how to vote by watching and listening to drama performances and by listening to information on the radio. On election day they knew how to vote and they knew who they wanted to vote for. Thus, people who are not able to read and write should not be thought of as people who 'know nothing'. However, being able to read and write gives people access to a wider range of information and more forms of communication than is possible for people who cannot read and write.

Until the beginning of the 1980s, much of the research on reading and writing focused on what skills children (or adults) needed to develop in order to read and write competently. Long lists of these skills were compiled and presented to teachers, together with suggestions about how to help learners to become skilled in particular aspects of reading and writing. Many of these skills are listed in the sections on reading and writing in the Interim Core Syllabus for English Second Language. In the last fifteen years many researchers have shifted away from studying the separate skills associated with reading and writing and instead are studying reading and writing in social contexts. They focus on how people use reading and writing in their day to day lives. They try to understand what factors influence the choices people make about reading and writing. **The term 'literacy' has become associated with reading and writing in social contexts.**

The four quotations which follow introduce a number of important ideas to consider in relation to literacy.

Mary Hamilton, David Barton and Ros Ivanic argue that there are different *worlds of literacy:*

> *'... there are distinct literacies which exist alongside each other, that individual people have different experiences and different demands made upon them, and that different people have distinct experiences of and hopes and purposes for reading and writing. There are separate worlds of adults and children, of people speaking different languages, of men and women. There are also various public worlds of literacy, defined by the social institutions we participate in - including school, work and official bureaucracies.'*

(1994: x)

Brian Street makes a similar point when he argues that 'In learning specific literacy practices we are not just acquiring a technical skill but are taking on particular identities associated with them.' (1994:15)

In the first paragraph of a chapter titled 'Writing in the Classroom' Pam Czerniewska makes connections between every day life and the classroom:

> ***'...literacy needs to be seen as a set of social practices, functional varieties of language which are drawn on according to the purposes and audiences found in a particular social context. Teachers of literacy need always to be asking themselves about the view of literacy they are promoting. Does the view support or conflict with the literacy practices of the child's home culture? And do the different types of writing taught in school equip children to cope confidently with the different functions of literacy that they will face when they leave school?'***

(1992:76)

The following statement on literacy comes from a 1997 Languages, Literacy and Communication Learning Area document:

> Initially "literacy" was seen as a cognitive process that enables reading, writing and numeracy. In this document the use of the term "literacy" has expanded to include several kinds of literacies across all Learning Areas. "Literacies" stress the issue of access to the world and to knowledge through development of multiple capacities within all of us to make sense of our worlds through whatever means we have, not only texts and books.
>
> Examples of kinds of literacies:
>
> - Language literacy – The Interim Policy document for ECD affirms that the over-arching goal of language development is effective communication. The focus will be on the improvement of learners' listening, speaking, reading and writing skills.

- **Cultural Literacy** – cultural, social and ideological values that shape our "reading" of texts
- **Critical literacy** – The ability to respond critically to the intentions, content and possible effects of messages and texts on the reader
- **Visual literacy** – The interpretation of images, signs, pictures and non-verbal (body) language, etc.
- **Media literacy** – The reading of e.g. TV and film as cultural messages
- **Computer literacy** – The ability to use and access information from computers

Activity

Many of the ideas introduced in the quotations you have just read will be discussed in this part of the course. As a way of beginning to work with the ideas expressed in them, read the texts printed on pages 137 to 140 and then answer the following questions:

- **Who do you think would write such texts?**
- **Who would read them?**
- **What kinds of knowledge do these people need to have in order to be able to write or to read such texts?**

If possible, compare your answers with those of your study partner.

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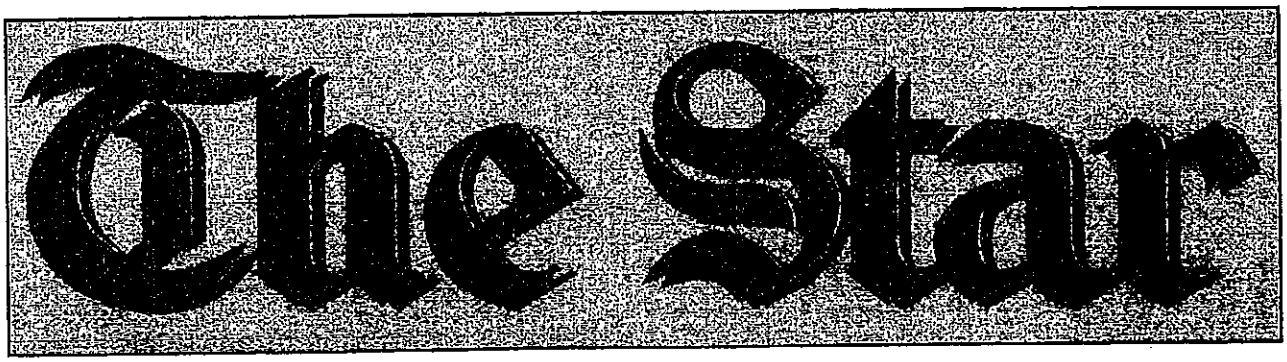

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All colours & sizes: V-neck & cardigans available – @ **R15** each

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GLENVAAL INSURANCE HOUSE

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(CORNER SMIT STREET)

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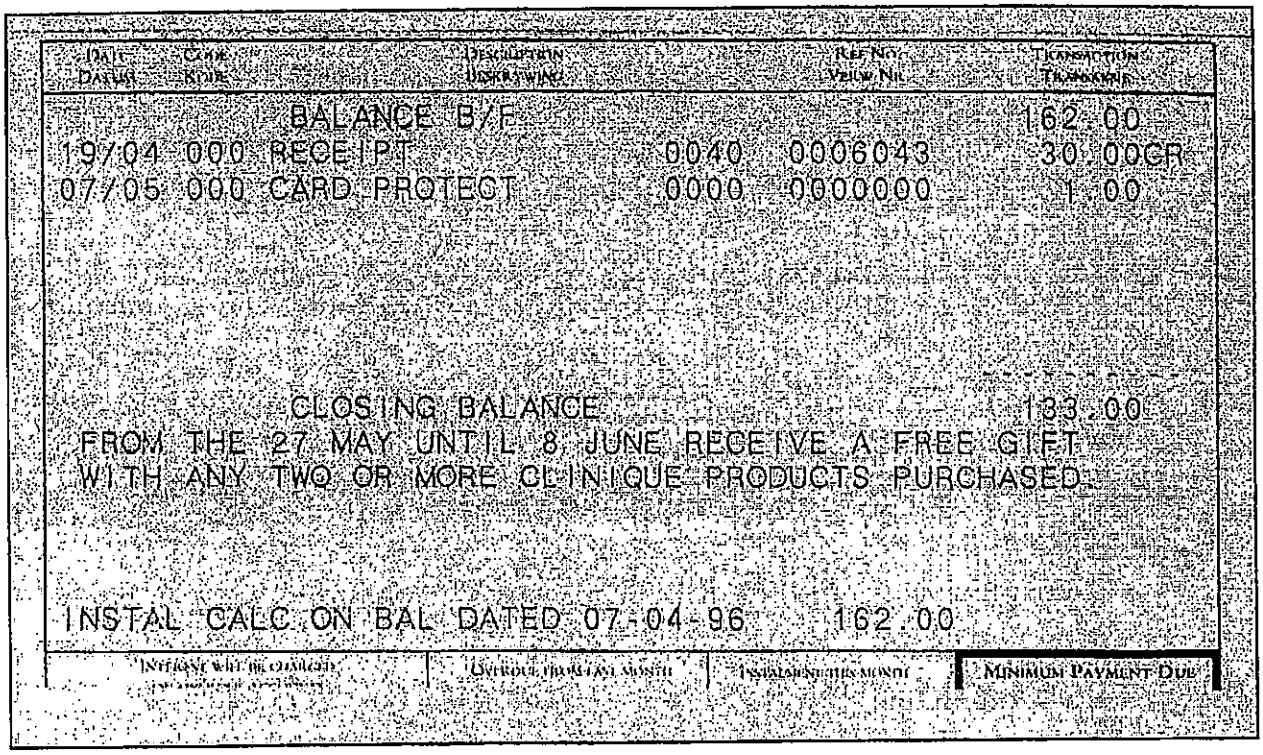

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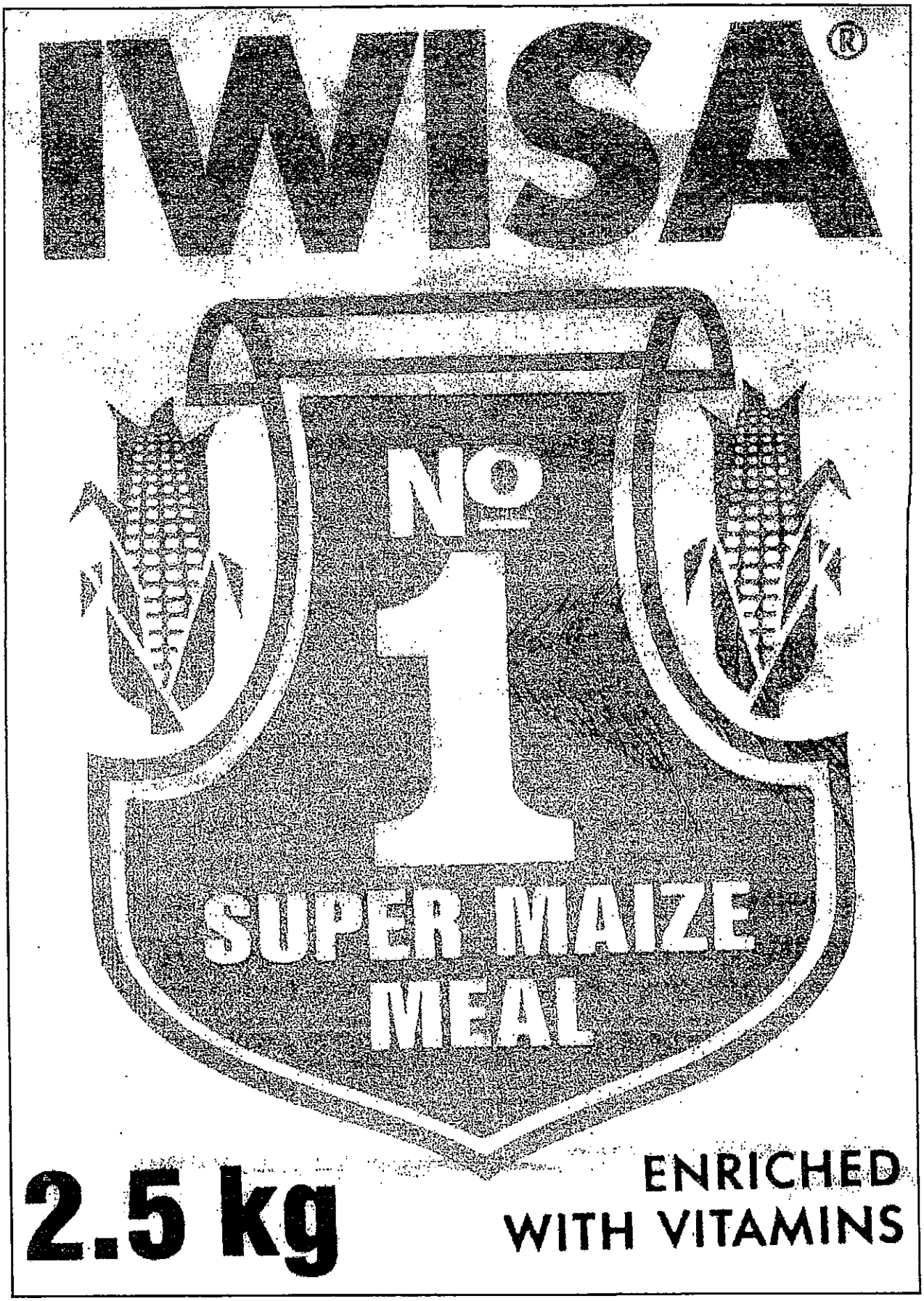
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3.2.1 Thinking about literacy as social practice in social context

In Unit One you reflected on your own experiences of language acquisition and language learning as a starting point for thinking about the opportunities for language development that you provide for your learners. Similarly, in this unit you will reflect on your own literacy history and on literacy practices in the community in which you live and work before turning to literacy events and literacy practices in the classroom.

The framework for this reflection is provided by Barton who lists eight key points about literacy. (The framework and some of the explanations and examples are taken from Barton, 1994, Chapter 3, pp. 36-52.) Each point made by Barton is printed in italic script and is explained with examples. There are activities to complete in relation to some of these points and examples.

The Barton framework is followed by an extract from a teacher's literacy history and two case studies. Aspects of literacy which you have just read about in the three quotations and which you will read more about in the framework are illustrated in the extract and the case studies.

1. ***Literacy is a social activity and can best be described in terms of the literacy practices which people draw upon in literacy events.***

A **literacy event** is any occasion in everyday life where the written word has a role. Writing down a telephone message and reading a bedtime story to a child are two examples of such literacy events. In each of these examples speaking and listening are as important as writing and reading. In the first one, there will be conversation about taking the message and in the second, conversation about the choice of book and subsequently about the story.

A **literacy practice** is a way of using reading and writing that is socially and culturally accepted within a community: the way of using reading and writing in repeated, similar situations. Some years ago I participated in the marking of a Standard 10 English paper in which one of the questions asked learners to write a letter of condolence to a teacher after a member of the teacher's family had died. Several markers were puzzled by a sentence with which some of the candidates concluded their letter. The sentence was 'I wish you long life'. Fortunately for these candidates, one of the markers commented on this sentence while we were discussing the

progress of our marking. It was also fortunate that one of the markers was from the Jewish community. She explained to the rest of us that this sentence is always included when Jews write letters of condolence after a death. It is also what Jewish people say to mourners, so it is an example of an oral and a literacy practice within a particular religious and cultural community.

In Barton's words, *'Literacy events are the particular activities where literacy has a role; they may be regular repeated activities. Literacy practices are the general cultural ways of utilizing literacy which people draw upon in a literacy event.'* (1994:37). To return to the previous example, writing a particular letter of condolence is a literacy event; writing it in a particular way involves a literacy practice.

Activity

As you read these words you are participating in a literacy event: reading your course materials. Think about the literacy practices which you draw upon in this literacy event. For example, when you are studying, do you underline sections of the text, do you make notes, etc.? Make a few notes about these practices to discuss with your study partner. (If you find it difficult to get started, think about some of the possible differences between the literacy practices which influence the ways you read your course materials and the ways you read a newspaper or a letter from a friend or a religious text.)

2. ***People have different literacies which they make use of, associated with different domains of life. Examining different cultures or historical periods reveals more literacies.***

Barton suggests that people act differently and use language differently in the different domains of their lives. **Domains** are areas of activity in which we find ourselves in different situations. Some examples of such domains are home, school, workplace, sports club, church or mosque. In multilingual communities different literacies may be associated with different languages. In *Languages in South Africa*, Janet Orlek makes this observation: *(see next page ...)*

We all use different languages in different situations. We always try to use a language which will allow us to communicate effectively in a particular situation. Sometimes we can choose which language to use and at other times the choice is made for us by other people or by the situation. There are also times when some people cannot choose the language that would enable them to communicate most effectively in a particular situation.

(1993:3)

Activity

When you wrote your language history at the beginning of this course, you included a table in which you listed the languages which you are able to read and write.

- **Refer to this list (or make a new one).**
- **Make a list of the kinds of texts (e.g. letters, newspapers, advertisements, notices, hymns, novels etc.) you read in the different languages and the kinds of texts (e.g. letters, instructions, recipes, study notes) you write in these languages.**
- **Make a second list in which you record the different kinds of reading and writing which you do at home, at school and in other situations such as meetings.**
- **Exchange your lists with your study partner and together discuss whether you agree with Barton's suggestion that people use different literacies in different domains of their lives.**

3. ***People's literacy practices are situated in broader social relations. This makes it necessary to describe the social setting of literacy events, including the ways in which social institutions support particular literacies.***

Social institutions such as the school influence the roles people play (the way they act in particular situations). For example, in school there are traditionally certain roles for the teacher and others for the learner. People need particular literacies and use them in particular ways when they play

particular roles. For example, the teacher writes an end of term report on a learner in her role as communicator to the family about the progress of this learner at school.

A family is also a type of social institution because institution is a word which can be used to describe any established form of social organisation. Within families, members often play particular roles, though the roles which particular members play may differ from family to family. As an example of this role playing, Barton quotes a headline which appeared in a British newspaper: 'Wives write Xmas cards ... Husbands write cheques' (Daily Mirror, 17 April, 1989).

The research into literacy practices which Barton and his colleagues have conducted in Lancaster, England has confirmed that this division of writing tasks according to gender is a common one in the communities which they have studied. Women are more likely than men to do 'the personal writing' (letters to family members and friends, birthday, Christmas and other cards) and men are more likely than women to deal with 'the business world' (paying bills, getting quotes for household repairs or extensions). In families where children see each of their parents engaged in different literacy practices, they may learn to associate these practices with being male or being female.

Activity

Discuss with your study partner, the literacy practices of men and women in your families. Are some or all of these practices associated with being male or female or not?

4. ***Literacy is based upon a system of symbols. It is a symbolic system used for communication and as such exists in relation to other systems of information exchange. It is a way of representing the world to others.***

When we speak, the sounds form words which are symbols for our thoughts. When we write, the letters are symbols for the sounds we use in speech. Language in its written form enables people to communicate across time and space. Writing always involves some use of tools, whether these be pencil and paper, typewriter or word processor. Some of the similarities and differences between speech and writing and

some of the literacy events which involve talking as well as writing and reading will be considered later in this unit and in Unit Four.

5. ***Literacy is a symbolic system used for representing the world to ourselves. Literacy is part of our thinking. It is part of the technology of thought.***

In the previous point Barton stated that literacy is based upon a system of symbols. This means that literacy is the capacity to use this symbolic system. Put very simply, we can use what we read and what we write not only to understand other people's ideas, views and stories but also to create or develop our own.

6. ***We have awareness, attitudes and values with respect to literacy and these attitudes and values guide our actions.***

Activity

Think about, and if possible discuss with your partner, your attitudes to the following:

- **reading during a family meal**
- **writing comments in books**
- **choosing to read comics or magazines rather than books**
- **choosing to spend leisure time on reading rather than on some other activity such as gardening or sewing or attending a soccer match on a Saturday afternoon.**

There are no 'right or wrong' responses to these activities, but whatever your responses are, they indicate your attitude to these activities. Barton makes the following points:

> *people's views of literacy are important in how and what they learn and a parent's attitudes and actions influence a child's behaviour at school. Attitudes are also at the heart of whether or not people think they have a 'problem' with reading and writing and whether or not they think it is appropriate to attend adult literacy classes.*

(1994:48)

7. ***Literacy has a history. Our individual life histories contain many literacy events from early childhood onwards which the present is built upon. We change and as children and adults are constantly learning about literacy.***

Activity

- **Think about the literacy events you have so far experienced in your Further Diploma courses in English and in Education. Make notes on any new ways of reading and writing which you have experienced. (Two possible examples to get you started: writing a journal may be a new literacy experience for some of you and making notes on interviews may have been new to others.)**

- **Share your notes with your study partner and discuss what you have added to your knowledge about literacy by participating in the Further Diploma.**

8. ***A literacy event also has a social history. Current practices are created out of the past.***

The 'language learning' histories of many South Africans include references to having to begin primary school studies in a language which was not a language of the home and of having to change to another language of learning in the intermediate phase or at the beginning of secondary schooling (depending on when people were at school). Many learners have not had sufficient access to textbooks and library books to read and exercise books to write in. In these examples the social and political history of the apartheid era has affected the literacy events in which teachers and learners have participated.

3.2.2 An extract from a literacy history.

Activity

Barbara Baloyi is a teacher and teacher educator who wrote her literacy history as part of her course work for an Honours degree in Applied English Language Studies at the University of the Witwatersrand. While you are reading the extract which describes her experiences as a community letter writer, think about how you would answer the following questions:

- **Barton suggests that people make use of different literacies in different domains of their lives. What do you think would have been the main differences between Barbara's classroom experiences of reading and writing and her experiences as a community letter reader and writer?**
- **How would you describe the social context in which she experienced many of the literacy events of her childhood?**
- **What were some of the difficulties which Barbara experienced in 'representing the world to others' (Barton's point 4.)?**
- **She writes about positive and negative learning experiences in her role as community letter writer. Which of her experiences would you consider to be positive and which negative? How do you think these experiences have affected her personal literacy history (Barton's point 7.)?**

Barbara was born in Tshiawelo, Soweto. XiTsonga was the main language of her home. When she was a small girl her father was murdered on his way home from work. Since her mother had to work long hours as a hawker, she sent her children to be cared for by relatives in Tzaneen. Now read the letter writing part of her story on the next page:

I was ten years old and doing standard one when I came to Petanenge (Pull leg) so named because of the river one had to cross to reach the place.

...

Many families lived in degradation. Fathers who usually worked in Johannesburg, Pietersburg and Phalaborwa and Gravelotte mines never came back to their families. Families were left destitute.

There was little or no motivation for learning. Those who were motivated quickly left school because of the distances they had to travel and poverty. Parents would urge their children to go to school mainly because they wanted them to be able to read and write letters.

My two sisters and I did not stop going to school. We were amongst the few who stuck to school. Since the place did not have any electricity or telephones, communication was limited to letter writing.

Many people would come to us every week to ask us to either read or write letters for them. The majority of these people were women who wanted to communicate with either their husbands, children, boyfriends or fiances. Men would mainly want to write to their sons. Young men, however, did not come either because they knew how to write or were too proud to ask for help.

It was through reading and writing these letters that I picked up a lot about my language and the culture of our people. Our values and norms were entrenched in me. I learned the richness of the proverbs of our language.

Old men would squat and old women would kneel when coming to request our services. This was a gesture only accorded elderly people or important members of the community. These were, I remember, the most humbling moments of my youth. Humbling because these old people entrusted me with the most private and intimate news of their life.

Old people would ask you to write letters to their sons in Johannesburg, who were entranced by the city and no longer prepared to come home. The sufferings of these people would so vividly show in their eyes. Tears would sometimes be shamelessly shed. They would beg, plead, even threaten their young men with evil spells if they did not heed their call, for such people were ridiculed by parents whose sons kept contact, sent money home and came to visit during holidays. They were thought to be cursed by their ancestors for something wrong which they had done.

Letters were often written to sons, warning them against marrying women from other ethnic groups. Through letters they arranged marriages for their sons, sending photos of prospective wives.

I don't particularly remember writing any letters in English, but I do remember an old man who came with a letter written in English. The letter was from his previous employer. He was informing the man about his intentions to re-employ the man after he had been away for two years. I could read the letter although I did not understand most of the content. The old man was happy to let me take the letter to my teacher who read and translated it for me so that I could read it to the old man. He was so happy that he promised to buy me sweets, but he never did.

A man who spoke Venda came to ask me to read a letter for him. The letter was written in Zulu, from his wife in Johannesburg. It is difficult for me to recall the content of the letter. What I remember is that I had to reply to the letter in Zulu, when he actually told me what to write in Tshivenda. This was one of the most difficult literacy events I was involved in. First I had to read and explain in Venda and later be told what to reply and to translate the message into Zulu. This man was very impatient. He was also aggressive as most of them were; for him, this was a duty I had to perform unconditionally. In the end, we managed to put something down.

What I dreaded most was to read letters, telegrams or messages informing the relatives about deaths in their families. This was not uncommon for a community where people worked on the mines. Some of these letters were written in fanakalo, describing horrible accidents in which people were killed in the mines. I would watch helplessly while my aunt tried to comfort the poor father, mother or wife. I would be reminded of my father's death in Johannesburg.

Let me draw you back to the fact that when I started reading and writing these letters I was a young girl of ten. I began to be socialized into thinking that by right women were inferior to men. Women were subjected to shame and humiliation. They were not seen as part of decision-making in their families. Men could decide on the number of children they wanted in their families. They would stay in Johannesburg for years, while they entertained themselves with women, expecting their women back home to wait for them. Some women tried to go against this but they were met with great criticism from men and women in the community.

Fathers were not prepared to fund their daughters' education while often willing to pay for their sons. I was too exposed to adult life. In a way I feel robbed of my childhood.

I must also add that my role was not just to read. I often had to explain many words. People in Johannesburg would write about experiences which seemed peculiar to an average rural person. This necessitated explanations from me.

I would explain things like *makhulu baas* (big boss) ... I must confess as a child there were also many things that I did not know or could not explain.

When writing these letters, people expected me to be fast. They did not understand that when writing for a person far from your context you have to consider many contingencies in order to be understood. They saw written language as similar to spoken language. I was given no chance to modify what I was writing. As I grew older I realised that I had conscious control of the words. I could determine whether to reject or modify the words said.

I realised that one can only spell what one has already seen written down because one cannot rely on sound. Most of what these people were telling me to write was new. I had never seen the words written before. I therefore had to invent a lot of spelling based on what I heard.

Each writing episode was for me a learning experience. I would at times be offered money which I refused to take. As the post office was far away from the village, I had to mail the letters at our school.

It is sad to note that even today education for women in this area is still not given priority. Women are expected to read, though not beyond home-tic roles. Those who break the rule in order to become professionals are stigmatized and often cannot find any man to marry them. Economic circumstances in the family continue to press children to become workers. There is great potential for an eight year-old to become a source of family income.

(Baloyi, B. 1995. Extracts from an unpublished report)

3.2.3 Case studies

A case study report is an account of what a researcher (or group of researchers) found out when they made a detailed study of an aspect of the 'behaviour' of an individual or group. The researcher usually assumes that the information which he or she has gathered about this one individual or group will be true of other individuals or groups whose circumstances are similar.

Activity

Part of the research conducted by Carol Macdonald and her colleagues in the Threshold Project involved investigating literacy events and literacy practices. Some of the Project's findings were presented as case studies in *Eager to Talk and Learn and Think.*

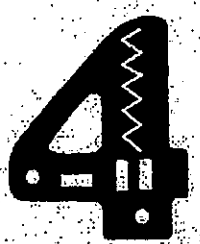
- **While you are reading the case studies below think about which of Barton's eight points about literacy are illustrated in these studies. You may find it useful to pencil a number on a particular part of the description. For example, point 7 - that literacy has a history - applies to the early childhoods of Mary and Mandisa in different ways: by the time she was two Mary had had experience of twenty or thirty books whereas Mandisa's first experience of a book was in the classroom.**

- **Make notes on any aspects of the case studies which interest you and which you would like to discuss with your study partner.**

- **Discuss the case studies together.**

Case Study One

CASE STUDY



Mary is a six-year-old at a school in Cape Town. At the age of two, she had twenty or thirty books that she had looked at often. Her father, Mark, would put her on his lap and they would look at the pictures of cows and sheep, pigs and hens. At first Mark would make the noises and point to the animals. Later, Mary would try and make the sounds the animals made when her dad pointed to the pictures.

At three, Mary would go to the library often with her mother. Her mum would help her choose some new books to take home. Mary never went to bed without a story. By the time she started school, she had enjoyed looking at hundreds of books.

It did not take her a long time to learn to read.

Mandisa is Mary's very best friend at primary school. Her first book was a reader handed out to her when she started school. She was very pleased with her book, but it took her a little while to distinguish which was the front and which was the back of the book.

Because Mandisa is at an 'open' school, her first reader was in English. Although she is starting to understand quite a lot of what is happening in the classroom, she finds reading very difficult. She listens carefully to the others and then copies what they say. If the teacher stops her at a particular word, she becomes embarrassed because she does not yet know the shapes of the words. Mandisa does not have a Xhosa reader. She does not know that it would be easier to learn to read in Xhosa.

(1991:39)

(***Eager to Talk and Learn and Think*** was published in 1991. At that time an 'open' school referred to a private school which admitted children of all 'racial classifications'. The state schools were still segregated.)

Case Study Two

CASE STUDY 6

Kagiso, a colleague, was speaking recently about his experiences at school. The thing he hated the most about school was being beaten — for being late, for failing Maths, for not running fast enough. The nickname of his school was "Alcatraz" and the motto which the students gave it was, "No-one shall ever escape."

At university, Kagiso did really well. In fact, he received one of the ten bursaries given to the best students on campus. He loved university, he says, because there was no punishment and because he found that he could excel at the new subjects, which included psychology and sociology.

It came as a real surprise, then, when Kagiso confessed to reading only when he had to. "I never buy a newspaper, unless I know that there is going to be information I need . . . like when they are going to cut off Atteridgeville's electricity. And then the only thing I read is the article about the electricity." He never reads novels, "let alone a magazine". And the idea of reading for pleasure is completely strange to him.

Schooling, he says, is just preparation for exams. Even at university, he would read a book for an assignment, do the work and forget about the book as quickly as possible. Reading was just a way of "collecting courses for my degree".

After a workshop on reading, Kagiso said to his girlfriend, "Hey, Mary, other people read for pleasure." When they spoke about it, they realized that they both feel uncomfortable when other people talk about something they have discovered while reading. They feel that they might be missing an important experience.

(1991:67)

The first case study suggests some of the ways in which literacy practices in the home may affect a child's experiences with print at school. The second suggests how experiences with print at school or university may affect attitudes to print outside the classroom.

3.3 LITERACY IN EDUCATION

Thinking about literacy (or literacies) as social practice(s) in social contexts has important implications for the ways in which we think about what Barton refers to as 'school literacy'. He presents a list of suggestions in relation to curriculum, to assessment and to home-school liaison for teachers to consider.

Barton acknowledges that he has put into his own words a list - of how schools can take account of new views of literacy - which was first developed by Ros Ivanic and Mary Hamilton. He has added his own interpretations, but also includes some direct quotations from their work. I have used bold type for Barton's words and bold italic type for Ivanic and Hamilton's words.

Some of Barton's points are followed by my comments or interpretations. This means that you are reading a text which includes ideas, interpretations and commentaries from four writers: Ros Ivanic, Mary Hamilton, David Barton and Yvonne Reed (though I hasten to add that I am not a published author and have not conducted extensive research into literacy practices as have the first three writers). While you are reading I invite you to write your own ideas, interpretations and commentaries on some or all of the points made. When you do this, you will become the fifth writer!

Most of the points in Barton's list will be referred to again as you begin to think about literacy events and literacy practices in your classroom. For this reason I have not commented on all of them.

Barton begins with some suggestions related to the curriculum:

1. **School literacy is one of many forms of communication, and should be developed alongside other forms such as spoken language, physical communication, graphics. Maybe, print literacy should not monopolize the education process.**

   In South Africa many people have grown up in families where listening to and telling stories has been an important part of their lives. For example, on pages 103 and 104 of *Level Best,* read what Gcina Mhlope thinks about the importance of stories. Your learners may enjoy and learn from stories told in the family and wider community which they can in turn tell to their classmates.

2. Literacy practices beyond school are extremely varied, and often quite different from those in school. Teachers could work critically on out-of-school literacies such as consumer literacy, examining the range of literacies in life.

Consumer literacy involves understanding the practices through which advertisers make us want to buy their products and learning how to evaluate the claims they make. It also involves understanding the language of lay-bye and hire purchase agreements and many other documents associated with buying and selling. Another important set of out of school literacy practices could be described as literacy practices associated with looking for work: reading job advertisements, writing application letters, filling in forms, writing a CV. (Looking for work also involves oral practices such as speaking on the telephone or coping with a job interview.)

3. It is important to see school as one context for learning amongst others. Children learn about literacy informally in their everyday lives, both before they go to school and when they are in school. *This sort of learning does not follow any step-by-step pattern: people learn about uses, strategies and values simultaneously and haphazardly.*

This informal learning is part of the experience of all children , but they have different kinds of experiences with print. Shirley Brice Heath is an ethnographer (see point 7 on page 158) who researched literacy events and literacy practices in three communities in the United States. She found that the children in each community learned ways of using and making sense of print that differed from those in the other two communities. In each community they learned different 'ways with words' outside the classroom. She found that only some of these ways with words were valued in the school which children from the three communities attended. For example, children in two of the communities were used to being asked questions to which the adults who asked these questions knew the answers. These questions were often about books that children and adults read together (What's this? What's happening in this picture?). In the third community, children were not used to being questioned in this way - a way that is commonly used by teachers. Thus for some children there was continuity between home (and the community of which the home is a part) and school literacy practices while for others there were confusing differences. (See also points 12 and 13 on pages 157 - 158.)

4. There are social purposes for reading and writing. In everyday life people do not read and write without a purpose. This supports the idea of reading and writing for real purposes in schools. Exercises, materials and activities which only involve reading and writing for their own sakes should be avoided.

At the beginning of each unit in *Level Best* the authors list the purposes for which learners will be speaking, listening, reading and writing in that unit. I am not certain whether Barton would accept all of these as 'real purposes' but the list does give learners reasons for working on particular tasks.

As an example of an activity with a real purpose, read Activity 4: Becoming A Peacemaker on page 145 of *Level Best.*

5. Everyday literacy involves collaboration and using networks of support. This should encourage those who are developing collaborative reading and writing in the classroom.

In every day life if we have difficulty in reading or writing a particular type of text we are likely to ask someone for help. For example, I find it difficult to read the instructions in computer manuals and the information on computer screens because I am not sufficiently 'computer literate'. When I have a problem I ask for help from someone who is skilled in reading this information. As a second example, several of my colleagues have helped me to rewrite parts of this course material.

The reason for sharing a reading or writing activity (that is, reading or writing collaboratively) is not always because the activity is difficult. It may be an activity in which two or more people wish to share in the enjoyment of reading a comic book or writing an advertisement, to give just two examples.

Barton suggests that teachers should encourage learners to work together on reading and writing activities. Many of the activities in *Level Best* and *Activities for Multilingual Classrooms* give learners opportunities to work in pairs or small groups.

6. People who have gone through the school system without learning to read and write very well, such as adult literacy learners, can provide insights into the process of education which teachers can take account of.

In South Africa millions of adults have not gone through the school system at all. Some of those who have attended school but who believe that they have not learned to read and write well, may have important ideas about why they have not achieved the level of literacy which they had hoped for.

7. Children can reflect on their own and others' literacy practices and become ethnographers of literacy, *documenting why, when, where and how their parents, grandparents, neighbours or role-models read and write.*

Ethnographers are researchers who base themselves in a particular social context (for example, a school, an informal housing settlement, a rural village) for a considerable period of time to observe and collect information about 'what people do' in that context. Barton suggests that children could conduct this kind of research in their own homes, schools or communities.

Barton offers these suggestions on diagnosis and assessment:

8. Parents, politicians and educators should be more wary of standardized tests of reading and writing, and rely more on teachers' assessments and children's own self-assessments. With regard to adult literacy, *Adults' assessments of their own literacy is defined by their current needs and aspirations in varying roles and contexts, not by independent measures and objective tests.*

In your Education course on Assessment you will consider several alternatives to standardized tests.

9. Teachers should be wary of tests which isolate literacy from any context or simulate a context.

Read Activity 9: Sound Familiar? and Grammar Spot: Requests In English and Activity 10: Grammar Practice on pages 64 to 66 in *Level Best*.

The questions in the Grammar Practice activity are an example of a test which is placed in context. The learners are able to refer to the poem 'Tea-time' and to their own experience in giving their answers. If the learners had been given only a list of sentences and asked to write whether these sentences were questions or instructions this would be a test without a context. Without a context it is very difficult (perhaps impossible?) to decide whether a sentence such as *Could you finish this work by lunchtime*? is a question or an instruction.

10. In all areas of reading and writing, when people make a mistake, they usually have a rationale for it. Adults and children are good sources of information about their own learning.

Barton is suggesting that learners can often give reasons (that is, provide a rationale) for why they have written or read a text in a particular way. Teachers can use these explanations to assist learners to continue their reading and writing development.

11. If teachers value marginalized literacies and literacy practices outside the educational domain, they will understand more about those children who reject school literacy.

This point is linked to point 13. To be marginalized is to be pushed to the edges (margins) of society or of a particular social institution and to be considered either unimportant or a problem. For example, some teenagers are much more interested in music than in school work. They may do almost no writing in the classroom and be considered 'a problem' by their teachers and yet fill notebooks with songs which they write in their free time.

Barton's list concludes with two points about home-school liaison:

12. Home-school liaison is not just about initiating parents into school practices and expectations. It should be a two-way exchange and could include collecting information about community practices to inform what happens in schools. The educational system needs to make it possible for teachers to know what children are familiar with at home, and be willing to change school practices where necessary.

Barton is referring to home and community practices in relation to ways in which speaking, listening, reading and writing are used by family and community members. For example, at her aunt's home, Barbara Baloyi was frequently asked to read and write letters for community members.

13. Children tend to feel excluded when their own literacy practices are not valued by the school. Schools should investigate which community practices should be legitimated by integrating them into the classrooms.

(Quotations from Barton, 1994: 211-212)

3.3.1 A note on visual literacy

In the first of the points about school literacy which you have just read, Barton suggests that 'Maybe, print literacy should not monopolize the education process.'

Activity

To monopolize means 'to take total control of'. Discuss with your study partner what sources of information and enjoyment learners are missing out on if they only work with print at school. You may find it helpful to page through *Level Best* when you have this discussion.

The authors of *Level Best* agree with Barton's suggestion that learners should have opportunities to learn from sources other than print. That is why the textbook contains many photographs, drawings, maps and cartoons (that is, visual images). At the beginning of Unit 4 (page 54) they provide learners with guidance to help them read the photographs. This is an example of an activity which guides learners in their development of visual literacy. There is another example on pages 126 and 127. The 'Reading Between The Lines' activity includes guidance in looking for 'hidden meanings' in pictures as well as in words.

Activity 4.1 on page 62 and Activity 5.1 on page 84 of *Activities for Multilingual Classrooms* are examples of visual literacy activities which encourage learners to develop observation skills and the ability to compare and contrast. You will notice that such an activity can be used either in the English class or in other subjects across the curriculum.

You have probably heard the expression 'A picture is worth a thousand words'. Visual images (photographs, drawings, maps, diagrams) can often convey to us information or ideas or arouse our feelings in ways that are different from words.

Activity

Read the photographs on pages 159 - 161. What do they tell you about these literacy events? Write a few lines about what you see in these photographs and how you respond to what you see. If possible, share these with your study partner. You may find that you have seen different things and have responded in different ways.

Photo by courtesy of Santu Mofokeng

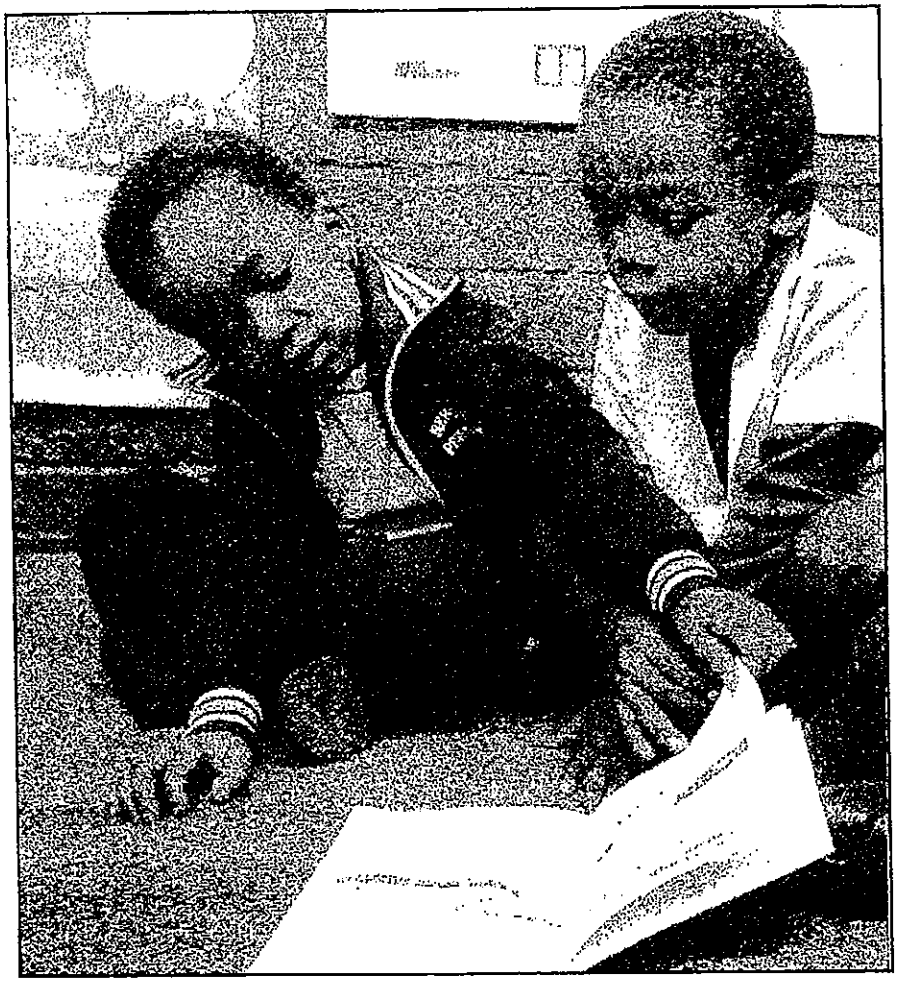


Photo by courtesy of READ Educational Trust

Photo by courtesy of READ Educational Trust

3.4 LITERACY EVENTS AND LITERACY PRACTICES IN OUR CLASSROOMS

The points about literacy as social practice and about school literacy to which you have been introduced in this unit are general points to think about whether you are teaching learners in any phase of schooling school learners or adults. They will be referred to again in this part of the unit. At whatever level we are teaching, we can respond to the challenge of this statement from Yetta Goodman:

> ***School is an important setting for literacy learning. There, the learning of literacy skills can be an exciting and stimulating experience; however, it can also be discouraging and inhibiting.***

(1990:144)

There are debates about various approaches to the teaching of reading and writing which are relevant to all language teachers. Some of these are introduced in this unit.

The texts which you began to use in the previous unit - *Level Best* and *Activities for Multilingual Classrooms* - will be referred to frequently in the rest of this unit and in Unit Four.

As teachers of English we are aiming to 'contribute to learners' overall communicative ability' which involves speaking, listening, reading and writing. Classroom reading and writing are discussed separately in this unit, but you should keep in mind the many ways in which they may be linked to each other and to listening and speaking in the classroom and in the wider society.

3. 5 READING

3.5.1 Attempting to define what reading is

Activity

It is possible 'to read' each of the following (and many other examples could be given):

- **the expression on a person's face**
- **a map**
- **animal tracks on the ground**
- **clouds in the sky**
- **a stop sign**
- **the news on radio or television**
- **the bible**
- **a comic book**
- **instructions for making, doing, fixing, etc...**
- **a poem**
- **a textbook**
- **a story**
- **minutes of a meeting**
- **a photograph**
- **a time-table**
- **a graph**

Think about what is involved in reading each of these examples. With your study partner try to write a definition of reading.

At the beginning of a chapter on helping learners to become better readers, the compilers of *The English Handbook, Years 8-10,* define reading and offer some observations on their definition.

As people go about their lives they 'read' their environment, and decide which bits of all the information available to them they will select and make use of. Reading is an extension of that thinking, perceiving behaviour. Readers use their knowledge of the world and the structures and patterns of language to interact with the print, and with all these cues and frameworks of knowledge and values, the reader constructs meaning. Reading is not a passive act of receiving meaning, in the sense that meaning is embedded in the print and that if it is decoded correctly the correct meaning will arrive in our heads. Reading involves active processes of making meaning. Consequently we should not expect all readers to make meaning of a particular text in the same way.

Children want to make meaning. They are thinkers. They select or sample information. They make predictions and then they test their predictions. If they are confirmed, they go on to sample more information. If their predictions are not confirmed, they re-examine their original sample and predictions; then they may reject and re-predict.

These thinking behaviours are being used all the time. Babies to toddlers to young children 'read' their environment. By the time they enter school, learners have already developed sophisticated and competent language and thinking behaviours which they use to make meaning with print.

Because children belong to social groups, they hear language and learn its rhythms and patterns. As children begin to speak, they practise and play with these patterns, thus developing their language through experimentation, repetition and constant interaction with other people.

These are the essential foundations from which their ability to read develops.

(1987:91-92)

The writers of the passage on the previous page refer to a number of the ideas which you have worked with in this unit and in the previous units:

- children's acquisition of their main language(s) happens in a social context in which they repeat some of the sounds and words which they hear - a key point in the behaviourist theory of language development;
- children experiment with language and produce words and phrases which they have not heard used by others - a key point in the innatist theory of language development;
- children's language development is assisted by their interaction with children and adults in their social group - a key point in the interactionist theory of language development;
- children have acquired a great deal of language knowledge and in many communities have also learned a great deal about literacy informally long before they go to school.

Some of the other ideas in this passage, for example, that reading involves active processes of meaning making, will be taken up in the following sections.

3.5.2 Learning to read: a lifelong process

David Barton suggests that as children and as adults we are 'constantly learning about literacy' (see page 146 in this unit). With specific reference to reading, William Grabe argues that 'fluent reading is the product of long-term effort and gradual improvement' (1991:379). Fluent readers are readers who read easily and capably.

Activity

- **Think of capable readers whom you know (learners in your classes, colleagues, family or community members). Try to describe what these people do when they read (that is, try to describe how they go about reading).**
- **Now think of some people who do not read fluently. Try to describe what these people do when they read.**
- **Exchange your descriptions with your study partner and work together to develop a combined list of features of fluent reading.**

William Grabe describes six features of fluent reading:

(i) It is **rapid** - the fluent reader takes in 'a flow of information' and uses this to make connections with what has already been read and to predict what is to come.

(ii) It is **purposeful** - for example, the fluent reader reads for information, for entertainment, etc. and this purpose provides motivation for reading.

(iii) It is **interactive** - firstly, because the fluent reader makes use of information from his or her background knowledge as well as information from the printed page (that is, what the reader already knows about a subject interacts with what he or she reads on the page); secondly, reading is interactive because the reader uses a number of skills in the process of reading and these skills interact and work together.

(iv) It is **comprehending** - the fluent reader usually expects to understand what he or she is reading. Grabe makes the point that many learners who are attempting to read in a 'second' language do not have this expectation. Instead, they are anxious about whether or not they will understand.

(v) It is **flexible** - the fluent reader uses a number of strategies according to the nature of the text and his or her purpose for reading. Such strategies include skimming, scanning, considering headings, titles, pictures, the way the information is structured etc.

(vi) It **develops gradually** - the reader does not become fluent suddenly (for example, as a result of one particular reading development course). (Grabe, 1991:378-79)

Writers about 'school literacy' have a number of different ideas about how best to teach learners to read when they first come to school and about what teachers and learners should focus on in order to help learners to become progressively more fluent readers, of a range of text types, throughout the school years. In the following sections you will read about some of these ideas in relation to teaching and learning from the junior primary to the senior secondary phases of schooling.

Activity

As a result of your previous studies and your teaching experience you may already be familiar with a number of the approaches described below. While you are reading, think about whether what you read in this course material confirms, contradicts or extends what you already know about reading development. In the margins, write CF for confirms, CTD for contradicts and EXT for extends.

3.5.3 Beginning to read

Activity

Use your own experiences of learning to read and your experiences of teaching reading to make a list of what a beginner reader needs to be able to do in order to read a text. If possible, exchange your list with your study partner and discuss both lists.

Learning to read involves learning how to make meaning from printed symbols. How teachers can best assist beginner readers to 'make meaning' has been and continues to be a much debated subject. Three different approaches which teachers could use are briefly described in this section of the unit. These are:

- The 'bottom up' approach,
- The 'top down' approach, and
- An interactive approach.

- **The 'bottom up' approach**

Some of the people who have written about learning to read recommend a **'bottom up approach'.** This approach involves taking learners through the following sequence:

- recognizing the shapes of the letters;
- pronouncing the sounds associated with the letters;
- putting the sounds together into words;
- putting the words together to form sentences;
- grasping the meaning(s) associated with the sentences.

A word which is often associated with this approach is **'decoding'**. Decoding means taking information from a set of symbols (a code) such as words on a page.

The first two steps in this sequence involve helping learners to recognize and name the letters of the alphabet and to learn the sounds of the letters. Learning these sounds is usually referred to as 'learning phonics'. It is quite difficult in English as the same letter does not always correspond to the same sound. For example, think about the differences in sound between the letter 'c' in 'cat' and the letter 'c' in 'certain'. Alternatively, the same sound may be spelt in different ways. For example 'ph' in photograph and 'f' in first have the same sound. (Perhaps this is why there is a chain of photographic shops in South Africa called 'Foto First'.)

The next steps involve a focus on particular words. Flash cards made by the teacher are often used at this stage. In some schools each learner has a set of these words. The flash cards and the short sentences used in the next step are often explained with drawings. There is usually a great deal of repetition in these short sentences. I can still remember some of the first sentences in my first school reader: "This is John. This is Betty. John can run. Betty can run."

Activity

Read the extract from *Weep Not, Child* and the poem, *Good reader*. What do you think the writers are suggesting about the 'bottom up' approach to teaching reading? Have you had similar experiences as a learner or as a teacher? If possible, discuss your ideas with your study partner.

'At school Njoroge proved good at reading. He always remembered his first lesson. ... When the teacher had come in he made a strange mark on the board.

'A'. This was meaningless to Njoroge and others.

Teacher Say Ah.
Class Aaaaa.
Teacher Again.
Class Aaaaa.

(continued on opposite page)

One felt the corrugated roof would crack.

Teacher (making another mark on the board) Say Eee.
Class Eeeeeeee.

That sounded nice and familiar. When a child cried he said: Eeeee Eeeee.

Teacher I.
Class Iiiiii.
Teacher Again.
Class Iiiiii.
Teacher That's the old Gikuyu way of saying, 'Hodi', 'may I come in?'

The children laughed. It was so funny the way he said this. He made yet another mark on the board. Njoroge's heart beat fast. To know that he was actually learning! He would have a lot to tell his mother.

Teacher Oh.
Class Ooooo.
Teacher Again.
Class Ooooo.

Another letter.

Teacher U.
Class Uuu.
Teacher What does a woman say when she sees danger?
Class (the boys looking triumphantly at the girls) Uuuuuuu.

There was laughter.

Teacher Say U-u-u-u-u.
Class U-u-u-u-u-u-u-u.
Teacher What animal says this?

A boy shot up his arm. But before he could answer, the class had burst out 'a dog'. Again there was laughter and a little confused murmuring.

Teacher What does a dog do?

Here there was disagreement. Some shouted that it said, U-u-u-u-u, while others simply declared that a dog barked.

Teacher A dog barks.
Class A dog barks.
Teacher What does a dog say when it barks?
Class U-u-u-u-u-u.

From that day the teacher's name had become Usu.

Njoroge loved these reading practices, especially the part of blabbering and laughing and shouting as one liked.

(extracts from Ngugi Wa Thiongo, 1964: 33-35)

My little brother's reading really well.
He brings his words home in a little tin
and he can pick out aeroplane
from Pat and Peter, dog and Jane.

Oh yes, my brother's reading really well.
He named his rabbits John and Janet,
then Dick and Dora. Now they're Nip and Fluff.
He tries to keep up with the latest stuff.

His teacher says he's reading really well.
He knows this string of words by heart: tree little
milk egg book school sit frog... He scores the best
marks in his class on every reading test.

It's plain to see he's reading really well.
Yesterday he stopped the talk at breakfast
by asking, can the rat pat the fat cat?
My dad didn't know what to make of that.

He said he'd cancel all my brother's comics,
but Mum said it was all the fault of phonics.
He'd soon be back to normal and besides
the clever lad was reading really well.

Ask him what he's reading and immediately
he'll tell you he's on Level 4, Book 3
same as last month. He must like that book a lot.
I'm glad my brother's reading really well.

Our Grandma thought that he might like a book
at Christmas, but she had the sense to look
into his room and found one there already.
Oh yes, she said, he's reading really well.

She bought him an electric train instead
and now his book is opened up – not read.
It makes a lovely tunnel for the train.
It's lucky that he's reading really well.

Barrie Wade (In Dougill & Knott, 1988:44-45)

We have already established that children's ability to speak the language(s) of their family and community develops as a result of listening to people around them, working out their own rules for the sound system and grammar of the language(s) they hear, trying out the language(s) and being stimulated to further experiments by the feedback they receive from the people with whom they are communicating. Young children, learning to speak, are active meaning makers.

Contrast this experience of learning to speak, with the experience of learning to read, if teachers take what Viv Edwards and Sue Sheldon refer to as a 'traditional approach' to the teaching of reading in the first years of primary school:

> *Reading, unlike speech, is often taught as though it were a passive skill with children being presented with already-prepared learning materials and books rather than being expected to generate them. Great emphasis is put on carefully graded written material which will assist children to acquire decoding skills and mastery of the symbolic process through a series of well defined stages. Considerable emphasis is put on accuracy, since departures from the text are seen as evidence that children's decoding skills are not as well developed as they might be.*

(1985:45)

- **'Top down' as an alternative to 'bottom up'**

In the description you have just read, Sheldon and Wade have described aspects of the bottom up approach which are illustrated in the extract from *Weep Not, Child* and in the poem *Good reader*. This approach has been criticised by teachers and reading researchers who argue that children (and adults) who are learning to read need to experience 'real books', written in natural language, with an interesting story which has some connections with their own experience. The learners read books for interest, for fun, for the pleasure of reading and not just to practice reading. Learners and teachers focus on reading as meaning making.

An approach to the teaching of reading which begins with the whole text - pictures and printed story/information - and the background knowledge, from their own experience, which readers bring to the text, is sometimes referred to as a 'top down' approach. Readers who use a top down approach use their background knowledge to predict what information they are likely to find in the text. This background knowledge includes knowledge of the subject or topic they are reading about,

knowledge of the grammar of the language they are reading and knowledge of the way in which writing is 'organised' on the page. They then 'sample' the text to see if their predictions are confirmed. The 'Guess the Story' activity on pages 66 to 69 of *Activities for Multilingual Classrooms* is an example of an activity which helps learners to understand some of the prediction strategies which they use when reading.

Many teachers who take a 'top down' approach to teaching reading have been influenced by the **'whole language'** approach to literacy development. A great deal has been written about whole language but some of the main features of this approach have been helpfully summarised by Robin Campbell:

> *A basic feature of whole language is the view that language is indeed whole and it is best learnt as a whole with meaningful and relevant texts. For reading, therefore, real books written by someone with a story to tell or something to say are used rather than books which might have been written for some other purposes, such as teaching phonics or systematically controlling the language in some way - often in reading schemes the controlled introduction of new words. The texts that are used should, therefore, be written typically in natural language. Environmental print, which provides an authentic and functional use of language, should be used alongside the stories and other books which are meaningful to children.*
>
> *The learning experiences that are provided for the children should recognize the active and constructive role of children in the learning process. Therefore, contexts which the children might perceive to be important and which require the need to communicate should be provided rather than the children being confronted by substantial periods of direct teaching. The learning should not be premised on the teaching of a sequence of skills, but should be based on learning to read by reading predictable texts, where the children are able to generate hypotheses as they transact with the text... And the children can learn to write by writing, especially where the writing is for a clear purpose.*

(1995:161)

The environmental print to which Campbell refers is print which children find in their local environment. For example, at the time of elections, they are likely to see posters with photographs and print on them. They are likely to see print on packets of mealie meal, on tins of fish and other grocery items. Campbell uses as an example the word 'cornflakes'. He suggests that the pictures, colours and writing on the cornflakes box as well as the contents of the box help the child to make a connection between the word and the product. Environmental print is print in context and seeing print in context helps the child to learn.

- **An interactive approach: combining features of top-down and bottom up**

Supporters of this approach argue that reading involves both a number of 'lower level, rapid, automatic identification skills' (Grabe, 1991:383) such as recognition of letters, sounds, words, grammatical structures and punctuation and a number of higher level comprehension and interpretation skills. In other words, learners need opportunities to work from both the bottom up and the top down.

3.5.4 Stimulating and supporting beginner readers

The syllabus writers make the following recommendations:

> 4.2 (f) ..Reading material should be stimulating and enjoyable so that learners will be motivated to read. Over-reliance on old style 'second language readers' should be avoided where possible; teachers should rather attempt to extend their learners' reading ability by finding additional reading materials appropriate to learners' language and interest levels.

One of the greatest challenges facing teachers, parents and learners is the challenge of providing books for under-resourced schools and of using the available books as effectively as possible. We will discuss this subject during one of the residential sessions in this course.

One of the strategies which teachers can use with beginner readers is to make **'big books'** to use in **shared reading** sessions with the class. To make a big book you need large sheets of newsprint or cardboard and a felt tip/marker pen (several pens in different colours would be an advantage) and some materials for holding the sheets (pages) together. To put the pages together you could punch holes in each sheet and then put wool or string through the holes. Alternatively you could 'bind' all the pages together with plastic tape or masking tape.

To stimulate interest in reading, many teachers who use big books ask their learners for contributions to a story or for rhymes or songs. The teacher then writes the story or the rhymes or songs in his or her out of school time and brings the book to class. Some teachers also ask learners to suggest ideas for illustrations or to contribute their illustrations to the book. Others supply their own, by drawing or using photographs cut out of newspapers or magazines. The book must be interesting and most of the words should be ones which learners find easy to recognise.

When the book is being used in class, the teacher needs to balance it on a chair in a position where it can be seen by all the learners who will take part in the reading. The book will be easier to use in this way if it has a stiff cardboard cover. This cover could be made from old cardboard boxes. Some teachers who work with large classes, give one half of the class a task to do at their desks, while the other half participates in a shared reading activity with the big book.

Here is an example of a shared reading activity with a class of beginner readers, which the teacher began by dividing the class into two groups. She then said the following:

> **'We are going to try group reading. The people on this side of the group please read the lines with numbers, like one, two, three and four and so on. The other half of the group read the line after the numbers. We'll join in on the last line 'Hungry again'. Ready everyone!'**

The class then read the following:

(continued on opposite page)

One, two
Chocolate goo
Three, four
Want some more
Five, six
Pudding mix
Seven, eight
Bring your plate
Nine, ten
All: *Hungry again*

The teacher then commented:

'Great everyone. Let's repeat it starting softly and getting louder.'

(Hill & Hancock, 1993:62-63)

In this example of shared reading with a big book, the learners are learning how to participate co-operatively in a group activity, hearing rhyming words, and learning how to 'match' sounds with words.

If a big book tells a story then the teacher can use it for prediction activities (part of the top-down approach) before and during the story and for discussion afterwards. An example of a prediction activity before the story reading would be for the teacher to read the title of the story, show learners the illustration on the cover of the book and ask them to predict what the story will be about. While the teacher is reading the big book and the learners are following the text, he or she can stop and ask the class what they think will happen next. One of the discussion topics afterwards could be suggestions for different endings to the story.

Big books can be used for both 'top down' and 'bottom up' reading activities. One example of a bottom up activity would be to ask individual learners to identify the punctuation used in a big book story. Another would be to ask individuals to point out all the words beginning with a particular letter.

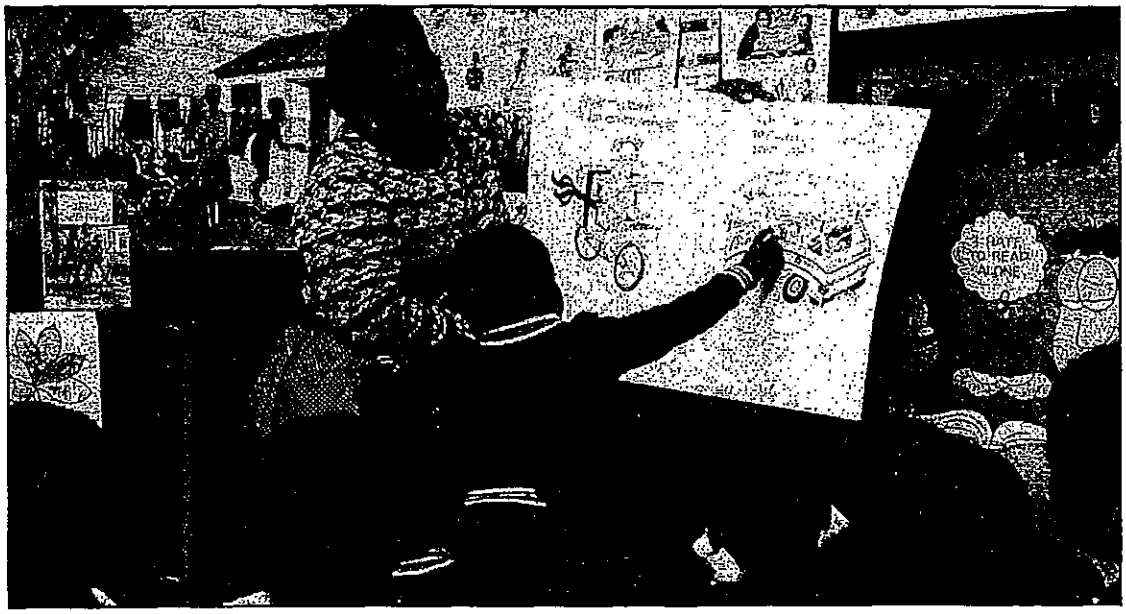


Photo by courtesy of READ Educational Trust

Activity

If you work with young learners who would enjoy participating in shared reading with a big book, make one to try out in class. You could use this activity as the basis for part of your fourth assignment for this course.

To extend the number of texts available to learners they could be encouraged to draw and write for each other in order to build up a class collection. Older learners could also be encouraged to make big books for younger readers (see page 210 - 211). Such book writing and illustrating could become a project throughout the school.

Before turning to the subject of further reading development beyond the beginner level, pause to think about a situation with which you may be familiar: the situation of a beginner reader whose first classroom encounters with print are in a language which he or she does not know well or may not know at all.

3.5.5 Learning to read in an additional language

The case study (on page 151) which describes Mandisa's early experience with books at school ends with the sentence 'She does not know that it would be easier to learn to read in Xhosa.' To quote from the passage from *The English Handbook,* her 'sophisticated language and thinking behaviours' have developed in Xhosa, the language of her home. This is why it would be easier for her to learn to read in Xhosa than in English, just as it is easier for Mary (the other child in the case study) to learn to read in English than it would be for her to learn to read in Xhosa. Note that the 1995 Interim Core Syllabus for English Second Language, Grade 1 to Standard Four includes this directive to teachers:

> ***Even where pupils use English as the medium of instruction from Grade 1 and are thus introduced to the printed word in English almost at the same time as they are acquiring literacy in the home language, the importance of learning to read and of developing reading skills in the home language, should not be neglected.***

Carol Macdonald and Elizabeth Burroughs explain why learning to read in an additional language (which they refer to as a 'second language') is more difficult than learning to read in one's main language. They write about children, but adults who are learning to read for the first time face similar difficulties if the printed texts which they are using are written in a language which they do not know well.

Activity

Before you read their description and explanation, think about your own experiences of learning to read. Did you first learn to read in your main language(s) or in a language which was new to you? What helped you to learn to read or what made it difficult for you? What can you remember about your early experiences of reading texts printed in a language which for you was an additional language?

Now read 'Learning to read in a second language'

> When children have to learn to read in a second language, which they do not know very well, they cannot rely on knowing *what* is being said in the text. They are being asked to learn to read *and* to learn a new language at the same time. It is particularly difficult when the learners are dealing with a language not related to their own, because the two languages are likely to express the same ideas differently in the structure of their language. The African languages in South Africa are not related to English, although the Sotho languages are related to each other, as are the Nguni languages. So there will be no simple match between the written second language and the students' experiences. Even if the experience is a common one, there is no language match when a Tswana girl reads a sentence like "Mother washes the clothes". An English-speaking boy would have the same feeling of not understanding when he reads "Mme o thatswa diaporo". For each of them, reading the words is complicated enough because the combinations of letters are so strange. As for the meaning, there is almost none until the students have acquired enough skills to make sense of words in the new language.

(1991:45)

Some of you may be working with some learners whose first experiences of learning to read involved learning to read texts in a language which was new to them (whether this was an African language different from their main language(s) or whether it was English or Afrikaans). Carol Macdonald and Elizabeth Burroughs suggest that this would have made learning to read much more difficult for them and they may not have become very successful readers. Learners who find reading difficult in the early years of primary school may continue to do so throughout their school years, unless teachers find ways of providing positive experiences with print for these learners. Such positive experiences need to lead to both changes in attitude and development of skills.

In many schools, those of you who are teaching English in the intermediate phase are working with learners who are supposed to switch from an African language as the main language of learning to English as the main language of learning. This is particularly challenging for Grade Five teachers. Some of you may be teaching learners who have been using English as their main language of learning from Grade One, even though it is not the main language of their homes and communities. There may be changes in school language policy in the direction of promoting additive bilingualism and multilingualism (refer to Unit One for definitions of these terms) if recommendations in current language policy discussion documents are implemented. However, at present most of the textbooks with which learners work are written in English.

Carol Macdonald and her fellow researchers in the Threshold Project examined the kinds of texts which learners, for whom English is an additional language, were reading in their English classes in Grade Four. The research team compared these Grade Four texts with the kinds of texts learners were supposed to be able to read in each of their subjects in Grade Five. Here are two examples:

(i) Grade Four English reader

> One day all the animals in the village began to fight. The Elephant said he must be the chief of the animals because he was the biggest. The Lion said he must be the chief because he had a loud voice. The Hyena said he must be the chief because everyone was afraid of his laugh.

(ii) Grade Five Geography textbook

> Pollution is caused mainly by big factories, industries and the mines which use water. This water passes through various machines and becomes poisoned and dirty. Many of the chemicals used by farmers are washed by rain into the rivers, making them impure. Even mud from our lands makes our rivers brown, spoils the water for our use and, in time, fills up our dams. (1991:13)

Activity

Discuss the following with your study partner:

- **the ways in which the Grade Four and Grade Five texts differ from each other;**
- **the difficulties that Grade Five learners might experience with the pollution text;**
- **what you would do to assist Grade Five learners to understand this text.**

3.5.6 From learning to read to reading to learn

Carol Macdonald and Elizabeth Burroughs divide the process of learning to read into three stages:

(i) thinking about reading as a 'whole new system of communicating' which involves recognising shapes (letters), associating shapes with sounds etc.;

(ii) reading to confirm what they already know by reading familiar stories and other texts in which commonly used words appear;

(iii) reading to gain new information, to learn about what is beyond their own experience. (1991:46-47)

For a Grade Five learner the pollution text would belong to this third stage. There are several possible sources of difficulty for learners attempting to read this text. Did you notice that the word 'pollution' is not explained? The reader has to work out its meaning from the examples which the writer gives. This will be difficult for a Grade Five learner to do if he or she does not know the meaning of words such as 'chemicals' and 'impure'. It may not be clear to learners that the whole text is about one kind of pollution: water pollution.

Thus in the pollution text there are at least two kinds of difficulties: words which learners may not know (vocabulary difficulties) and insufficient or unclear links between one point and another in the text.

In schools which are not well-supplied with well-written and appropriate textbooks, reference books and other reading materials, teachers face the challenge of working with what is available. This is a challenge which applies equally to teachers of English and to teachers of other subjects. So, what could be done with the pollution text?

The following are a few ideas to compare with the suggestions which you made above.

- Several **pre-reading activities** could be used. These might focus on pollution in general or be directed to the topic of 'clean and dirty water'.

Pollution

(i) Ask learners to work in groups to make a list of all the dirty or untidy areas in the local community - depending on where the school is situated, these could include streets and roadsides where rubbish has been dumped; rivers or dams into which factory or mine waste has been pumped; areas which are grimy and smoke-filled because of smoke from factory chimneys. Ask a spokesperson from each group to report to the class.

Use the examples given by the learners to build up the idea of pollution as a term to describe damage to the environment.

(ii) Bring to class some photographs from newspapers and magazines which illustrate various kinds of pollution. Ask learners to work in groups to discuss what they see in the photographs - some questions to guide their discussion may be helpful. Use their responses to the photographs to build understanding of 'pollution'.

(iii) Ask learners to explain the meaning of words such as 'chemicals', 'poisoned', 'impure' in English or in any language which they know. If no-one is able to explain fully, offer explanations using as many as possible of the learners' ideas.

Clean and dirty water

(i) Ask learners to work in small groups to make a list of all the 'things' they can think of which change water from being clean and pure and safe to drink to being dirty and impure and unsafe to drink. Ask a spokesperson from each group to report to the class.

(ii) Use the learners' ideas to introduce the reading text. Tell them that when they read it, they should notice how many of their ideas are in the text; what extra information they have thought of; what is in the text that they had not thought of.

(iii) Photographs and discussion of particular words as in (ii) and (iii) above could be introduced before learners read the pollution text.

- **While-reading activities** may also motivate learners to read the pollution text by giving them a purpose for reading. The 'matching' of learners' ideas on a topic with those found in the printed text is one example of such an activity. Another is to ask learners to think of (and perhaps, to write down) questions they would like to ask or comments they would like to make on this text. You have probably noticed that in Units 1 to 9 of *Level Best* the authors have included 'Reasons for reading' at the beginning of the reading passages in order to give learners a purpose for reading.

- If learners seem particularly interested in a local pollution issue, a **post-reading activity** could involve writing to a relevant authority such as the local council (for example, if rubbish is not being collected) or a factory or mine manager to express their views and ask that action be taken. If there is rubbish in or near the school grounds a class could collect all the rubbish and sort it into categories (e.g. bottles, tins, paper, plastic bags). In some parts of the country, glass, tins and paper can be sold to recycling companies as a way of both tidying up the environment and raising money for the school at the same time.

The comic book, *The River of our Dreams*, produced by The Storyteller Group, tells the story of learners who clean up a polluted river. Copies will be available at one of the residential sessions.

3.5.7 Reading a dictionary

On page 156 of *Level Best* the authors include this advice to learners who are about to read the short story which begins on the following page:

> There may be a few words and sentences in this story which you do not understand the first time you read it. Don't worry about this. Go for the main ideas in the story first. You can always go back and read the details again later. If you come across a word that you do not understand, don't panic! Try to work out the meaning of the word from the surrounding words and sentences. See if you can recognise the word as part of another word you know. If you are still stuck, look at the word list at the bottom of that page, or look up the word in a dictionary.

(1995:156)

Activity

Discuss the following questions with a colleague or with your study partner:

- **Why do you think the authors of *Level Best* give learners this advice?**
- **Do you agree with their advice?**
- **When you come across unfamiliar words while you are reading, what do you do?**
- **Would your answer to the previous question depend on what you are reading (the kind of text) and why you are reading it (your purpose for reading)?**

The authors of *Level Best* write about 'How to work out new words in English' in Unit One (on page 16). They help learners to cope without a dictionary, but they also recognise that it is important for learners to learn how to use a dictionary.

In the 1995 Interim Core Syllabus for the senior primary, junior secondary and senior secondary phases, the reading activities section begins with this statement:

> ***Reading activities should enable the learners at least to use an English dictionary and to find the appropriate meaning of words encountered in their reading.***

Think back to your first encounters with a dictionary. Was it easy to find out what you wanted to know? Some dictionaries are more 'user friendly' than others. Learners who are learning English as an additional language are likely to find it easier to use one of the dictionaries which has been specially developed for readers who do not use English as their main language. If your school has the resources to purchase some reference books, you may wish to consider including some of these dictionaries in a reference collection.

Even the most 'user friendly' dictionaries can be puzzling at first. On page 81 of *Level Best* you will find an explanation headed 'HOW TO USE A DICTIONARY'.

Activity

Think about how you could use this explanation of how to use a dictionary with the learners you teach. Develop an activity which could help your learners to extend their dictionary skills.

In Section Three of *Activities for Multilingual Classrooms* the activities focus on 'vocabulary and concepts'. Activity 3.6 on pages 44 and 45 could be adapted for use at all levels of schooling. If learners are involved in compiling definitions of new words which they encounter in their reading, using all the languages which they know, they are likely to have a much better understanding of new vocabulary and concepts than if they only consulted an English dictionary.

Language researchers have found that children and adults are often able to understand what particular words mean and to use them appropriately long before they can give a definition of these words. Thus learners may find it easier to write examples of how particular words are used in phrases or sentences than to write definitions. These examples could be a useful part of the class or individual learner's dictionary.

3.5.8 Reading a range of texts for a range of purposes

The pollution text quoted above is from a Geography textbook, but a reading passage on pollution could also be used in an English class. One of the aims of teachers of English is to assist learners to develop competence in reading a wide range of text types and in reading for a range of purposes. The authors of *Level Best* kept this aim in mind when they developed the book.

In each unit learners read information which tells them what the unit is about and instructions for carrying out the various activities. They also read a range of texts for a range of purposes. For example, in Unit 3 they read :

- an example of a chart (p.38);
- an example of instructions for playing a game (p.39);
- a short story and the drawings which illustrate it (pp.40-43);
- an explanation of nouns and adjectives (p.45);
- photographs (p.45);
- ...

- an explanation of past tense (p.47);
- some notices (p.48);
- a newspaper article (p.49);
- a spidergram (p.50);
- speech bubbles and photographs (pp.50-51)

Some of these are texts which readers would expect to find only in a language textbook: explanations of nouns, adjectives and the use of the past tense. Most are texts which readers are likely to encounter outside the classroom as well as in it. Some of the activities encourage learners to work collaboratively (in pairs or groups) to respond to the texts.

If you refer to the suggestions about literacy and the school curriculum in Section 3.3 on pages 153 - 158 in this unit, you will notice that many of these suggestions have been put into practice by the authors of *Level Best:*

- learners read drawings and photographs as well as words;
- they talk about what they read;
- they have a purpose for reading each of the texts;
- several of the texts are similar to texts they are likely to read outside of school;
- they work collaboratively on some of the reading tasks.

Activity

Next to each of the text examples from Unit 3 of *Level Best* which I have listed above, write down the purpose of reading that text. The activities which accompany the texts will assist you in this. Perhaps you have ideas for additional activities which learners could also do with these texts. If so, write those down too. If possible, exchange your ideas with your study partner.

For example, the story, 'Games At Twilight' (*Level Best, pp.40-43)* is 'surrounded' by pre-reading, while-reading and post-reading activities. The purpose of the pre-reading task is to interest learners in the story and to give them some 'clues' to guide them into the reading. The 'reasons for reading' questions give them exactly that and encourage them to read carefully. The post reading activity is headed 'Understanding the story'. Now you decide on the purposes of the other texts.

3.5.9 Thinking about 'doing comprehension' and about other purposes for reading

Activity

Read the six questions in Activity 4 on page 44 of *Level Best* and then respond to the following questions:

- **In your view, which of these questions help teachers to find out whether learners have understood the story?**
- **Do any of the questions have other purposes? If so, what? (In other words, why do you think the authors asked these questions?)**

In South Africa, textbooks and examination papers have tended to place considerable emphasis on 'doing comprehension exercises or tests'. An important question to ask is whether the questions which accompany the texts help learners, teachers and examiners to find out whether learners have understood the text. The writers of *The English Handbook, Years 8-10* make an important point in the following observation:

> *The process of comprehension is one in which the parts contribute to the understanding of the whole. Comprehension is concerned with unifying and holding together but, ironically, the 'comprehension exercises' so well known in schools in the past were designed to take a text apart.*
>
> (1987:104)

Questions which involve taking the text apart focus on particular details. The first question of the six which you examined on page 44 of *Level Best* is an example of such a question: What was the weather like? Does the answer 'It was hot' indicate understanding of the story? In this case, it could be argued that the heat is an important part of the background to the story and that there is reason to ask the question as an introduction to questions which make connections between the text and the reader's own experiences. However, we need to be aware that some types of questions which focus on detail can be answered without any understanding of the text at all.

Here is an example from a worksheet in *Eager to Talk and Learn and Think* which illustrates this point:

> Read the following passage of nonsense English and then answer the questions.
>
> **Some socklings were mipping cleds into a bild. Unstrengly, the bild had a wantle in it and caddled into twerds, pumperdinking all the socklings. Wantled bilds often caddle.**
>
> (a) Who were mipping cleds into a bild?
>
> (b) What happened while the socklings were mipping cleds?
>
> (c) Why did the bild caddle?
>
> (d) What happened to the socklings when the bild caddled?

(1991:82)

Activity

- **Try to answer the questions.**
- **Think about how you decided on your answers (that is, what strategies you used).**
- **If possible, discuss with your study partner the answers you wrote and how you decided on them.**

This is Macdonald and Burroughs' commentary on this exercise:

> The chances are that you will have got 4 out of 4 for the comprehension test, even though you don't really know what **socklings**, **bilds** and **twerds** are. Nor do you know what the verbs - to **mip**, to **caddle** and to **pumperdink** - mean.
>
> Have you ever had to answer comprehension questions in a language you hardly know? Many children learn to guess in just the way you have done; the teacher thinks, 'Good, they understand.' But, the truth is, they have learned a few routines which help them through without having to understand anything.

(1991:88)

I would argue that many learners who are reading and writing in their main language still use these routines because the questions on the text are asked in ways that allow them to do this. For example, to answer the question 'Who were mippling cleds into a bild?' all learners need to do is to find the subject of 'were mippling cleds into a bild': some socklings.

Should you wish to check your answers to 'the socklings passage' here they are:

(a) The socklings were mipping cleds into a bild.
(b) The bild caddled into twerds.
(c) The bild caddled because it had a wantle in it, and wantled bilds often caddle.
(d) The socklings were pumperdinked when the bild caddled.

(1991:88)

To return to 'Games at Twilight' and the questions on page 44 of *Level Best*, learners' answers to questions 4,5 and 6 would indicate whether or not they had understood the story. Learners could also demonstrate their understanding by responding to questions such as 'Has anything like this ever happened to you? or What would you have done if you had been in Ravi's situation? These are examples of questions which encourage readers to make connections between their own experiences or ideas and the text.

If answers to comprehension questions always come from the text rather than from learners' general knowledge or own experiences, this creates the impression that the 'truth' is in the text and that whatever is written down has authority and should be accepted.

Comprehension exercises and tests, particularly when multiple choice questions are used, often signal to readers that there is one 'right' answer or only one meaning to be taken from a text. In reality, different readers interpret the same text in different ways. It is possible to construct questions which indicate that 'multiple readings' are not only permitted, but are valued.

The idea that texts should be examined critically is discussed in 3.5.12 on pages 191- 194.

Activity

- **Do Activity 3 on pages 72 and 73 of *Level Best*.**
- **Compare your answers with those of your study partner.**
- **Discuss what the similarities and differences in your answers suggest to you about**
  - **(i) reading texts (in this instance, reading the Benetton advertisement) and**
  - **(ii) setting questions.**

Whenever we ask questions or set tasks on reading we need to think about **why** we are asking or setting them. The entries under 'Reading' in the Interim Core Syllabus for the junior and senior primary and junior and senior secondary phases list many purposes for reading and suggest a number of skills which learners should be assisted to acquire during their years at school.

To return once more to 'Games at Twilight', question 2 on page 44 encourages learners to read a section of the story intensively to check on the sequence in the game. Learners sometimes have difficulty in presenting information in a logical order when they write, so this question gives them an opportunity to practice such ordering and perhaps to think about the importance of logical sequencing in a set of instructions or in some types of description.

Activity 7 and Activity 8 on pages 28 and 29 of *Level Best* are examples of activities which ask learners to read for particular purposes: to find main ideas (Activity 7) and to find particular details (Activity 8). Both are examples of activities which require **intensive reading** and there are many other examples in this book .

If you accept the statement that 'we learn to read by reading' (Smith, 1985:94), you will wish to encourage 'reading for pleasure'. Turn to Unit 10 in *Level Best*. Unlike each of the other units, it begins with one simple statement: 'In this unit you will be invited to read a short story.' (p.155) On the next page learners are given some background information to assist their understanding and some possible reading strategies to make use of, but there are no questions or activities. This is an example of an **extensive reading** text.

We also need to think about whether asking learners to produce written answers is the only way to assess understanding. For example, as an alternative to writing, learners could be asked to **produce a drawing** to indicate what they have understood from a text that they have read. Learners could also be asked to work in groups to **act out their understanding of and responses to a text** that they have read. For an example of such activities see questions 2 and 6 on page 65 of *Level Best* in which learners respond to the poem 'Tea-Time'.

3.5.10 Encouraging extensive reading

Units 1 to 9 of *Level Best* end with a 'GOOD READS' page. Notice that each 'write up' gives learners information about a book to whet their 'reading appetites'. This is one of the tasks of teachers: to inform learners about books. Many of the books described on the 'Good Reads' pages are likely to be enjoyed by learners in all standards in the secondary school and some are also suitable for capable readers in standards four and five. One source of information about books for learners from Grade One to Grade Twelve is the READ Educational Trust (see Appendix on page 234).

As indicated in the section on beginning to read, we need to find ways of providing stimulating reading for learners. If any participants in this course have suggestions in this regard, please contribute these to the discussion on resources which we will have during one of the residential sessions.

If learners do have access to books they could be encouraged to develop a 'reading log' for some of the books they read. A reading log is a kind of journal and it will be explained in Unit Four where the focus is on integrating reading and writing.

As mentioned in the section on learning to read, learners could also be encouraged to write reading materials for one another. This topic will also be addressed in Unit Four.

3.5.11 'Literature setworks'

The 1995 Interim Core Syllabus for English Second Language, Standards 8,9,10 states that learners should be able to 'respond to and appreciate the texts in the reading programme'. One of the specific outcomes for the Language, Literacy and Communication Learning Area states that the learners should be able to 'respond to the aesthetic, affective, cultural and social values in texts'. Ideas for teachers to consider in relation to these statements will be introduced in the Option Course, Literature in the Language Classroom. Many of the ideas included in this unit are equally relevant to the teaching of texts prescribed for internal or external literature examination purposes.

3.5.12 Becoming a critical reader

The introduction to the chapter on reading activities in *Activities for Multilingual Classrooms* includes the following paragraph:

> **The process of making meaning is not simply a matter of comprehension: it involves you not only in understanding the text, but in questioning the text. Reading is a reflective, critical process - you think about a text, weigh it up, and revise your previously held ideas selectively in the light of what you have read.**

(1997:58)

In the introduction to each of the books in the Critical Language Awareness series (listed on page 118 of Unit Two) Hilary Janks, the series editor, describes critical readers in the following way:

> **Critical readers resist the power of print and do not believe everything they read. They start from a position of strategic doubt and weigh texts against their own ideas and values as well as those of others. This is not opposition for opposition's sake. If CLA enables people to use their awareness to contest the practices which disempower them and to use language so as not to disempower others, [illegible] can contribute to the struggle for human emancipation.**

(Janks, 1993: iii)

Activity

Think about your experiences as a school learner and as a college of education learner. Were you encouraged to question what you read in textbooks and other materials? Were you encouraged to give a range of interpretations of a poem or a short story? Did you sometimes disagree with the views expressed in textbooks or by your teachers or lecturers? If you disagreed, did you have an opportunity to express your views? Could you always work out why you disagreed?

In the same introduction quoted above, Janks explains that becoming a critical reader involves **deconstructing** texts. Texts are constructed or built from particular choices of words and images and in the case of printed texts, particular decisions about the placement of these words and images on a page. To quote Janks again, 'Every choice foregrounds what was selected and hides, silences or backgrounds what was not selected.' (1993: iii) Deconstructing a text involves taking it apart or 'unmaking' or 'unpicking' it. It involves asking critical questions such as 'Why did the writer or speaker make these choices? Who is empowered or disempowered by the language used?' (1993: iii)

The following 'Checklist for critical reading' from *Language Skills For Life* offers a list of questions which learners could use in the process of deconstructing a text:

- From what other perspective could this text be written?
- What else could be said about this topic?
- What is the writer's attitude towards his or her topic?
- What is the writer's attitude towards his or her readers?
- Why has the writer written this text in this way?
- Who is this text written for?
- Do you agree with the writer's position or attitude?
- Are any words in the text offensive or problematic?

(1995:107)

Activity

You may like to do a critical reading of the material in this course. I have had to make a number of assumptions about the previous learning experiences and current teaching contexts of the teachers on the course and I may have 'positioned' you in ways which you resist (disagree with). I invite you to comment critically on this text and to suggest changes to it.

If any aspects of these materials make you feel irritated or angry or disappointed, these aspects could be the starting point for both your critical comments and your suggestions for changes to the writing.

The books in the Critical Language Awareness series contain many activities which help secondary school learners to read critically. On the ~~opposite~~ next page is one example from the book, *Language and the News.*

In this example, learners are encouraged to think about what these headlines suggest about the attitudes of the various newspapers to the referendum and about how the headlines suggest these attitudes. They are encouraged to think critically about what they read. This lesson material is also an example of material and of activities which link the school to the wider society.

In *Level Best* there are several examples of materials and activities which encourage the development of critical reading. In the first part of Unit Five (pages 70 to 73) learners are encouraged to look for a variety of meanings in an article and an advertisement and to decide whether or not they agree with the 'messages' in the texts. In Unit 8, 'Reading between the lines' on pages 126 and 127 and 'Whose point of view?' on pages 128 and 129 also encourage learners to be critical readers.

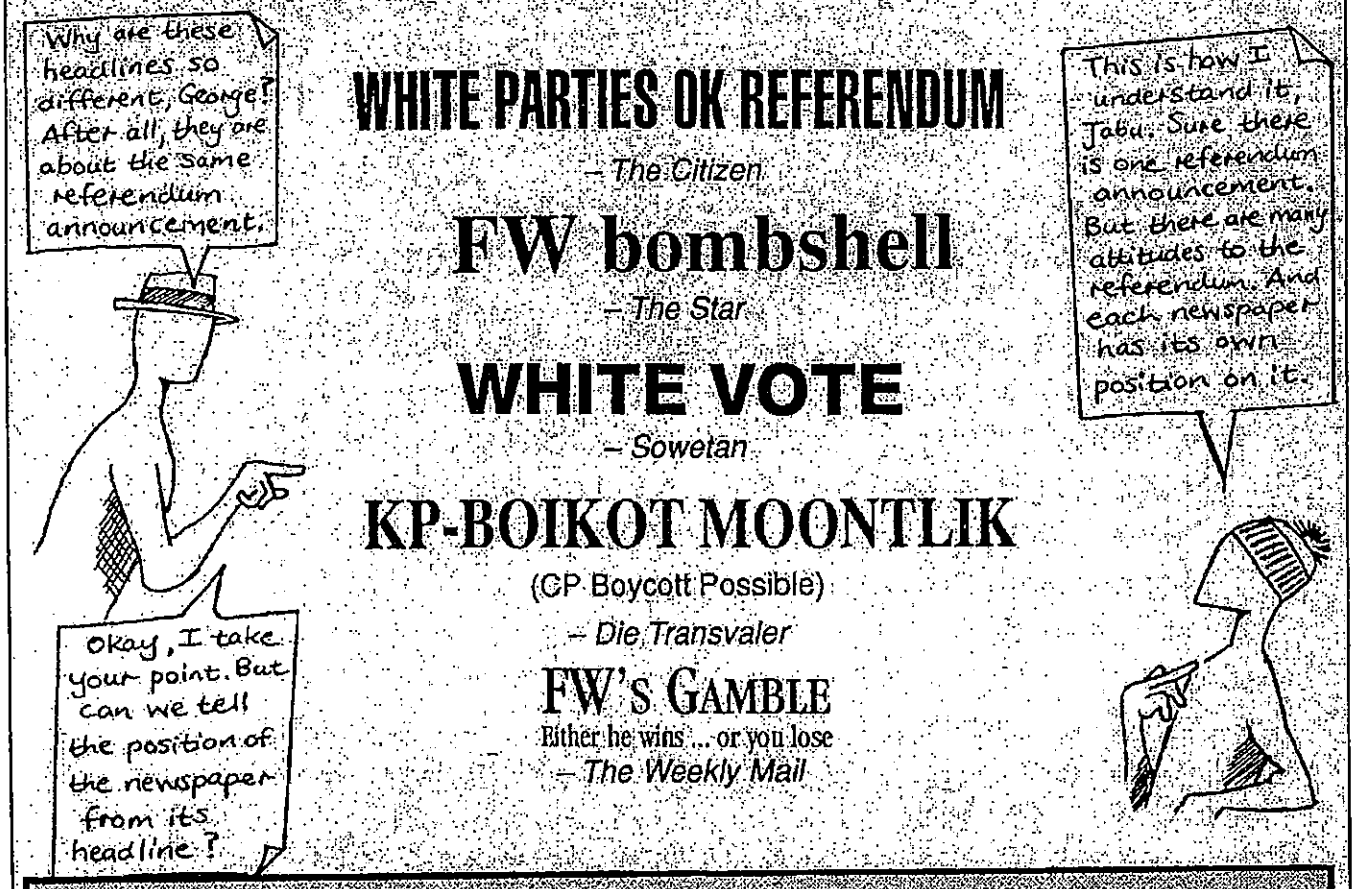
As teachers, whether we are working with primary or secondary school learners, with learners at college or university or in adult basic education classes, we need to keep the following in mind:

> *Reading is more than the decoding of black marks upon a page; it is a quest for meaning and one which requires the reader to be an active participant.*

(Cox 16.2 quoted in Jones, 1990:155)

NEWSPAPER HEADLINES : THE NEWS IN BOLD

On Thursday 20 February 1992 President FW de Klerk announced a white referendum with constitutional reforms. The following day Johannesburg newspapers featured this announcement on their front pages. Each newspaper had a different headline. **A headline is what you see first when you read a story in a newspaper. It tells you the main point of the story.**



We can begin to work out the attitude of the newspaper by looking at what the headline emphasises. The emphasis of the headline makes the reader see the story from a particular point of view. Examine this diagram carefully.

1. Look at the referendum headlines above. Look at the questions about the referendum announcement in the grey box. Now work out the *emphasis* of each headline by seeing which question it answers.
2. How do these headlines show whether the newspapers think there should be a referendum or not?

(Rule, 1993: 12)

Appendix 7

An example of material redesigned in response to a critical pedagogic analysis of *Theory and Practice of English Language Teaching,* Unit 3

Pages 258-261

An example of material redesigned in response to a critical pedagogic analysis of *Theory and Practice of English Language Teaching*, Unit Three

Unit Three is titled 'Literacy Practices Inside and Outside the Classroom'. The first three "goals" of the designers are listed as being "to provide you with opportunities to do the following: extend your understanding of the meanings of literacy; think about literacy in social contexts such as the home, the community and the school; investigate some literacy events and literacy practices in these contexts and think about the implications of your findings for your teaching" (Reed, 1999, p. 131). In my view, these goals, written for the first printing of *Theory and Practice of English Language Teaching* in 1996, continue to be important in teachers' professional development.

What is presented below is a redesigned version of the opening pages of Section 3.1 MEANINGS OF LITERACY (See pages 132 and 133 in Appendix 6), followed by a brief comment on this redesign.

3.1 MEANING(S) OF LITERACY

What is literacy?

What does it mean to be literate?

In your study journal, write your answer to each of these questions and then read the opening paragraphs of *Literacy and Power* by Hilary Janks.

> Many languages do not have a word for *literacy*. This first came to my notice when reading about work done on the literacy practices of taxi drivers in South Africa. The Social Uses of Literacy researchers claimed that
>
> > In the discourse of most of the drivers and owners we spoke to ..., the word 'literacy' did not feature. This was partly because the two African languages encountered in this research – Xhosa and Sotho – do not contain words for 'literacy' and 'illiteracy'. (Breir, Matsepela & Sait, 1996:230)

Having checked this with a colleague in the Department of African Languages, I felt confident to use this information in a paper that I was presenting at a trilingual conference in Vienna on literacy in the information age. The conference offered simultaneous translation across German, French and English. Here I discovered that French and German also have no word for *literacy,* ironic really at a conference on literacy. The interpreters translated 'literacy' as either communicative competence or alphabetic ability, neither of which do the concept of literacy justice.

What then is the usefulness of the word *literacy*? Why do we need it? Does it enable or constrain our thinking? In common usage, literacy is understood to be the ability to read and write and was 'formed as an antithesis to *illiteracy*' in 1883 (OED department, 1980). More recently literacy has been defined as a social practice. The notion of a literacy practice implies patterned and conventional ways of using written language that are defined by culture and regulated by social institutions. Different communities do literacy differently.

Before you read further, think about these questions:

1. Is there a word or phrase for *literacy* in the languages that you speak? If so, what is it? If not, what words or phrases do you use if you wish to speak about *literacy*?
2. According to the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) the word literacy was formed as the antithesis (opposite) of illiteracy. Is it always easy to decide who is 'literate' and who is 'illiterate'?
3. Janks's final sentence sums up what she had written in the longer sentence that preceded it. Do you agree with her that different communities do literacy differently? Think of some examples to support your response to this question.

Janks begins her next paragraph with the statement "But none of this is simple". She then raises a number of important questions about literacy and discusses her response to them. While you are reading, you may find it helpful to write in the margin a few words or a sentence that sum up the main idea developed in each paragraph. When you reach Janks's bullet point summary, you could then compare your margin notes with her list of key ideas.

Comments on this redesign

1. While I have retained the original heading, I have attempted to signal more clearly the focus of the section by beginning with two questions, in bold type for increased salience. Readers are constituted as students and teachers who will have a response to offer.

2. I have chosen a text written by a South African academic in which the author uses both local and international examples to introduce readers to a discussion of literacy which is likely to challenge their everyday understandings of the concept. Janks's inclusion of the local and the global accords with the original intention of the designers of *Theory and Practice of English Language Teaching* to acknowledge teachers' 'locals' but to relate these to the global.

3. In this redesign I have chosen not to summarise or paraphrase the author's text but rather to support readers as they engage with it. To this end, in the questions that follow the opening paragraphs of Janks's chapter I have glossed 'OED' and 'antithesis' and drawn readers' attention to the final sentence as (more or less) a summary of the complex sentence that preceded it. I then suggest a note-making activity which is an example of Lockwood's "tutorial in print" as readers can check their summaries against the one provided by Janks on page 5 of the chapter. The modality indicates to readers that I am making a suggestion rather than giving an instruction as I am attempting to include both readers who need practice in identifying key ideas and those for whom such identification is not difficult.