AN ANALYSIS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH (C.A.) IN THE SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN PIETERMARITZBURG CIRCUIT NO.1 OF THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING.

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ABSTRACT

The study examines the implementation of the communicative approach to language teaching in African secondary schools which fall under the Department of Education and Training. By examining the official documents the author establishes the 'official' version adopted and introduced by the curriculum planners and developers.

The author demonstrates how innovators' conception and perceptions differ from the one shared by the teachers who are expected to implement the innovation in the practical classroom situation. The report of the findings of the research indicate that inappropriate strategies of innovation management were employed and this resulted in the failure of the innovation impacting on and informing classroom practice. The author emphasises an adoption of normative - re-educative strategies of innovation implementation where the innovation implies attitude, behaviour and relationship changes.

The scenarios highlight the need for proper planning, monitoring and evaluation of innovative attempts as well as the adoption of a reflective practitioner model for both pre-service and in-service teacher training programmes.

PREFACE

The survey described in this dissertation was carried out at the five secondary schools in the Pietermaritzburg No. 1 circuit of the Department of Education and Training from January 1991 to December 1992, under the supervision of Professor R.K. Muir.

These studies represent original work by the author and have not otherwise been submitted in any form for any degree or diploma to any University. Where use has been made of others it is duly acknowledged in the text.

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CHAPTER 1

THE GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1 Introduction

The importance of English as both a subject and a medium of instruction in African classrooms cannot be overemphasised. The view held by most educationists and supported by research findings is that language ability is not only crucial for communicative purposes but also impacts on the cognitive development of the learners. English is perceived by an African child as a language of access and power and this is an understandable pragmatic view. Significant too is the fact that as a medium of instruction English is the vehicle through which a given learner gains mastery of the content in the other school subjects.

It is tragic, however, to realise that not much has been done to investigate what goes on in the English language classes in African schools in South Africa. Attempts at improving the quality of the teaching learning situation have been superficial, simplistic, and erratic. This has been worsened by the fact that no effective attempts have been made to evaluate the extent to which innovations introduced impact on the classroom and how they have informed classroom practice.

In this first chapter of the study the aims are set out, the rationale behind the choice of the field investigated given and a brief outline of the steps taken to achieve the set aims laid.

1.1 The aims of the study

The general aim of this study is to analyze the implementation of the Communicative approach (C.A.) in the Department of

Education and Training (D.E.T.) by examining, firstly, the official policy documents and the strategies of implementation adopted by the curriculum planners and developers and, secondly, the perceptions of the teachers in the classroom charged with introducing the C.A. into their lessons. The steps taken in order to achieve this aim were:

(a) to examine the documents issued by the D.E.T. in order to give documentary evidence for the adoption of the C.A. and to give a factual account of the official introduction of the C.A.,

(b) to describe the strategies employed by the Department to introduce the new approach,

(c) to investigate the understanding, by a sample of 15 teachers, of the C.A. and its usefulness in the teaching of English as a second language, the kind and quality of training in the approach they received in preparation for effective implementation, the support and evaluation given and conducted by the D.E.T. during the implementation period as well as the problems they have experienced in the implementation of the approach in the classroom,

(d) to record observation of verbal interactions within the classrooms of a sample of 5 teachers selected from the 15 referred to in (c) above, to examine the extent to which the theoretical ideals of the approach inform practice, and

(e) to conduct interviews on the sample of five teachers so as to compare their perceptions of the interaction patterns in the classroom with the researcher's observations.

1.2 The study in context

1.2.1 Departments of education in South Africa

The D.E.T. is one of the 19 departments of education in the country. There are five White, one Indian, one Coloured, eleven African and one 'umbrella' department which sets norms and standards for the other 18 (The Weekly Mail, 15-21 February, 1991). The African departments of education are divided into: 6 departments of education for the self governing homelands, four for the independent homelands and one department for the Africans in so- called, White designated areas, the Department of Education and Training (D.E.T.). The latter is better than the other ten in terms of the provision of educational infrastructure, facilities and teaching personnel. In 1990 the D.E.T. was responsible for 2 130 698 African pupils which represented 41% of the total African pupils in the White designated areas and the self-governing homelands. The total number of pupils in these areas was 5 139 592. This figure excludes the pupils in the four independent homelands, (SAIRR, 1991).

1.2.2 The division of the D.E.T area

The White designated areas covered by the D.E.T. are divided into 8 regions, one of which is Natal where this study was conducted. Each of these regions is divided into smaller units called Areas which are further divided into Circuits with a Circuit Manager or Inspector responsible for the control of schools falling within the circuit. Each Area consists of a number of circuits whose Circuit Managers report to the Area Manager who in turn reports to higher authority and so the line of command goes until it ultimately reaches the Minister of Education and eventually the State President of the Republic. The Pietermaritzburg No.1 circuit is one of the circuits within the Pietermaritzburg Area. The circuit consists of 7 secondary schools, 20 senior primary schools and 20 junior primary schools.

1.2.3 Secondary schools and recent developments

Secondary schools are educational institutions which offer tuition to pupils who have had at least seven years of formal schooling. Pupils join these schools having completed their standard 5 at senior primary schools, to do their standards 6-10. The last three years of secondary school are known as the senior secondary phase. This is a relatively new arrangement, implemented in 1992. Prior to this, standard 8 which is the third level at these institutions formed part of the junior secondary phase. This change has had far-reaching implications, two of which are worth mentioning here. Firstly, this has necessitated a change in final assessment procedures and pass requirements for the pupils in their tenth year of schooling (std.8), as these have to be in line with those followed in years 11 and 12. Secondly, it has also meant that pupils have now to select the subject combinations leading to their chosen careers a year earlier than has been the case. In principle the pupils at these schools should be between the ages 13 and 19. In reality, however, it is not very rare to get pupils who for various reasons matriculate or drop out of these schools when they are well over twenty.

1.2.4 Delineation of the field of study

This study covered five of the seven Secondary schools in the circuit. The other two were not included solely because of their location. Whereas the other five are within walking distance of each other these two are quite distant from the rest. The decision not to include the two in the study was based on the ease with which the researcher would reach the target schools. It was also felt that the exclusion of these schools would not adversely affect the achievement of the aims of the study. Limiting the focus to only five schools has also enabled a closer examination of the sample.

Four of the target schools are day schools, which means pupils stay at their homes and walk or travel to school daily. These schools draw their pupils mainly from their localities. The majority of the pupils reside at Imbali township and attend the secondary school nearest to their homes. Various reasons which include, inter alia, individual preferences, peer influence, subject choices and failure to get admitted at a school nearer home do result in some pupils having to travel or walk reasonably long distances to school. The development of new residential areas which do not have educational facilities has also added pressure on existing schools and led to pupils being drawn from distant areas.

The pupils mainly come from low to average socio-economic backgrounds as parents who can afford the financial implications prefer to send their children to the schools of other racial groups. Reasons often cited by parents who withdraw their children from these schools are, the quality of education and the frequent disruption of schools caused by political disturbances in the area. Most pupils who are academically gifted no longer last in these schools and it is not very rare to hear teachers encouraging pupils to leave for better schools in town although they remain equally concerned that the loss of such children reduces the chances of the school improving its matriculation (std. 10) pass percentage. It is mainly this percentage pass criterion which is used to judge the quality of work of secondary schools in the country.

The fifth school on the other hand is different from the others in a number of striking ways. The school is a boarding school of great repute within the country and draws its pupils from all over the country. Whilst the others complain about a lack of facilities this school is well provided for.

On entering the premises of this school you have to register with gate security, an unknown feature at the other schools, where there is no effective security and intruders enter premises at

will and occasionally bring about an early end to the school day. The buildings and grounds at this school are immaculate and attractive, in shocking contrast to the conditions at the other schools where buildings are dilapidated, with falling ceilings and not a single pane on some windows. In one of these schools, a part of the school where the classroom the researcher observed was situated could well be described as unhygienic. Burglaries and sheer vandalism are an everyday occurrence at these schools.

Although it can justifiably be argued that these schools are not well provided for, it can also equally be argued that communities have not learnt to look after the little they already have. An irresponsible attitude still prevails in the minds of the people to whom these schools are a service and continued or improved provision of facilities alone can not be the answer.

1.2.5 Statistical information on the target schools

Table 1 shows the total enrolment and the number of English teachers in each of the five schools over a period of five years from 1988. The data are official statistics supplied by the Circuit Office on request. (see. appendix A.)

TABLE 1. The total enrolment and the number of English teachers in each school over a five year period (1988-1992).

School	1	2	3	4	5
Enrolment					
1988	879	807	819	226	834
1989	850	714	724	458	861
1990	812	498	714	378	1028
1991	820	600	811	723	1034
1992	909	776	921	750	1024

No. of English Teachers:

1988	4	5	6	2	7
1989	5	5	6	2	7
1990	3	2	5	2	7
1991	7	5	6	3	7
1992	7	6	6	5	7

Although the official average number of pupils in each class is 35, in practice classes of well over forty do exist. The number of pupils places an additional burden on teachers in general and language teachers in particular.

The Head of Department, Official Languages, manages the teaching of languages in the school, controls the department and reports the achievements or problems of his/her department to the Principal. To qualify for this position the applicant should be a teacher who has taught for at least four years and has successfully completed at least one year of either English or Afrikaans at degree level.

A Subject Adviser based at the regional office is in charge of English in the Natal region. This means she is responsible for 177 secondary schools. The Subject Adviser and H.o.D.s meet once at the beginning of each year. In these one-day courses the Subject Adviser orientates the H.o.D.s who are then expected to take whatever information back to their respective schools. In-service courses for the teachers are rarely conducted.

1.3 Steps to achieve the aims of the study

Having set the general aim of the study and outlined the context within which it was carried out, the investigator then turns to the steps to be followed in achieving the aim of the study. Before embarking on this task, however, it is appropriate to

give a broad definition of what the communicative approach is, although a more detailed account of the approach and its tenets will be given in chapter 3.

1.3.1 Definition of the C.A.

The C.A. is an 'umbrella' term which encompasses a number of approaches that emphasise the importance of meaningful communication to language teaching. These approaches de-emphasise the explicit teaching of grammatical structures and language rules and emphasise that it is in the use of the language for communication purposes that language is learnt. Grammatical structures are therefore not to be presented in a formal and explicit way. Formal instruction is only accepted in special cases, such as when the teacher is attending to individual pupil problems or difficulties.

The differences which are traceable among the approaches which fall under this umbrella are those of degree of emphasis rather than differences of kind. The communicative potential of a lesson refers to the extent to which the principles or features of the approach are present or absent in that lesson.

This study aimed at examining the extent to which classroom practice in the lessons observed at the schools covered by the study approximates the C.A.. Local workers in the field of language acquisition such as Webb (1986), Murray (1991) and Thomas (1992) have argued that, given the necessary preconditions the C.A. (in particular the strong version of the C.A. to be discussed in chapter 3) can enhance the communicative competence and cognitive functioning of second language learners. The empirical studies they have conducted confirm this perception. It is for this reason that the researcher felt the need to look at the introduction of the C.A. by the D.E.T. and how it has informed classroom practice.

It is unfortunate, however, that these researchers do not identify the 'necessary preconditions' to be met. If it were possible to set such preconditions, it would be easy to proceed with a checklist to see which of these were met or not met by the D.E.T. on the implementation of the C.A.. Not being able to be explicit on the preconditions makes the task a complex one.

Having shown the evidence that the C.A. was adopted we shall proceed to an examination of the presence or otherwise of the version in the lessons observed at five of the seven secondary schools in the circuit.

1.3.2 A summary of the steps followed

The initial step of this study was an examination of the official documents which was canducted with three main objectives in mind.

The first objective was to give evidence contained in such documents to support the fact that the D. E. T adopted the C.A. and implemented it in the secondary schools under its jurisdiction. It is significant that it be shown that there is documentary support for this fact if the study is to be of any relevance. Without such evidence the study cannot be worth the effort and time spent in conducting it.

The second objective was to give a factual account of the adoption and introduction of the C.A.. The investigator attempted to gain access to the official documents which reflect details on the planning of the introduction of the approach. The assumption held was that the fundamental nature of the innovation necessitated that careful planning be carried out and implementation procedures be clearly outlined to avoid possible confusion which would be inimical to the aims of the curriculum planners and developers as innovators.

Thirdly, the introduction of the C.A. was an innovation which would have meant change for the many actors involved in the innovation as well as all interested in the improvement of the quality of teaching in the classroom.

The adoption and implementation would be accompanied by amongst others syllabus, textbook, teaching method and assessment procedure changes. For this reason the investigator felt it necessary that the strategies employed by the D.E.T. to introduce the C.A. at schools be looked at. An innovation of this magnitude and significance demands that specific strategies be adopted and that attempts be made to deal with predictable problems or alternately procedures be set up for unpredictable problems.

The success of an innovation depends quite largely on the quality of the planning, the suitability of the strategies adopted and their effective implementation as well as continued evaluation of the process. The official documents the investigator could have access to, will be discussed in chapter 4.

Having shown that the D.E.T. decided to adopt the C.A. and examined the strategies employed to implement the decision, the study will then investigate the teachers' understanding of the innovation. The rationale behind this line of action being that, as Bolam and Pratt (1976) point out, teachers as innovation users are likely to perceive and define an innovation differently from the innovation agent. The objective was to explore the fate of the 'official' version of the innovation.

A sample of 15 teachers from the 5 Secondary Schools responded to the questionnaire whose major objective was to examine the teachers' understanding and definition of the approach as well as the initial preparation they received prior to, or during the implementation stage. Preparation is used here to refer to both the motivational or attitude attributes and 'academic' readiness. The latter is important in as far as it determines each teacher's confidence in the

ability to carry out the task expected of him or her. This was made even the more important by the fact that the innovation was introduced in a 'Top-Down' fashion with the teachers not playing any effective role in its conceptualisation and decision making. Chapter 5 deals with the questionnaire and the analysis of the responses.

The questionnaire was followed up with an observation of a sample of five classrooms selected from the fifteen teachers who returned the questionnaires. Details of the selection and the observations are given in chapter 6.

The aim of the observation of the verbal classroom interaction was also two-fold. Firstly, it was to examine the extent to which such interaction approximates the C.A.. Secondly, to compare the teachers' perception of what goes on in the classroom with the 'actual' classroom experiences of their pupils as recorded by the observer. The observations were to some extent cued by the responses to the questionnaire that preceded them.

The insight gained through the observations highlighted the necessity to interview the teachers whose classes had been observed. These interviews were aimed at illuminating some of the issues which had been raised by the responses to the questionnaire, but still needed further clarification. Probing questions put at the interview were of great use in that they enabled the interviewer to obtain a deeper understanding of the teachers' understanding of the C.A.

Through the interviews insight into the teachers' perceptions of their classroom activities was gained. This enabled the investigator to compare these perceptions with actual practices as observed in the sample lessons . The interviews were to a large extent open-ended and the analysis of the findings will be given in chapter 7.

1.4 Factors of innovation management

It will be noted that this study aimed at attempting an examination of the process from the adoption stage to the actual implementation in the classroom. The researcher acknowledges the importance of the four factors of innovation implementation identified by Bolam and Pratt (1976, p.13) as the change agent, the innovation user, the innovation and the process over time.

The study focused largely on the first three in that it looked at the change agent by examining the official version and strategies employed by the curriculum planners, the user, by investigating the teachers' perceptions and definition of the innovation and the innovation itself by observing what goes on in the sample classes.

The decision not to focus on the fourth factor was dictated by the scope of a study of this nature. Although this aspect is not given a direct focus, indirect comments are made, as questions are raised about the evaluation of the implementation process over time and the creation of feedback mechanisms.

CHAPTER 2

THE BACKGROUND AND REASONS FOR THE STUDY

2.1 Background to the study

Eight years of involvement in the teaching of English at secondary school level have offered me an opportunity of getting insight into what goes on within a second language classroom. In the eight years I have had the privilege of reflecting upon my own teaching, that of my colleagues as well as that of the student teachers during practice teaching. Added to this advantage is the fact that I have worked within the same department for the whole of this duration. My claim of familiarity with issues pertaining to English 2L teaching within D.E.T. is based on this fact. This should not be read to mean that I could with any certainty preempt the findings of the study whilst not denying the obvious fact that the very decision to investigate this area was influenced by my experiences within the D.E.T..

It was not until I was introduced to the C.A. that I began to realize and understand fully the implications and outcomes of effective reflective teaching. Although the one-year course in English as a second language, which I did as part of the B.Ed. at the University of Natal (Pietermaritzburg) could not do much more than give a cursory look at the basic tenets of this approach, it succeeded in developing renewed interest in 2L. teaching and bringing about exposure to current thought and the theory of 2L. acquisition. I began to look at the methods I employed in my English 2L. lessons with a critical awareness.

Literature in the field offered valuable insight into the teaching of English and presented useful options on approaches to Language teaching in general and 2L teaching in particular.

Work as a Head of Department (Official Languages) entailed conducting class visits, which in hindsight, I see as a form of classroom observation. Although the focus of these visits was basically pace monitoring to ensure the completion of the syllabus within the stipulated time, these visits afforded me an opportunity to compare some of my colleagues' lessons with the ones I believed epitomised the C.A..

The observation of student teachers during practice teaching also made me aware of the under-employment or total absence of activities which were consistent with the C.A.. Although the student teachers appeared more amenable to the approach and showed preparedness to implement it in the classroom, their attempts did not always last for long.

Student teachers faced problems with classroom discipline and soon resorted to the more traditional teacher-centred approach which ensured 'better' control and discipline of the class. These observations led to an initial reaction of discouragement and despondency as well as a desire to know how, if at all, the situation could be improved.

My involvement in the marking of the Standard 10 examinations also awakened me to the disastrous situation prevailing in African education. It became noticeable that whilst the percentage pass in English increased to an average of about 90% in all schools, the language abilities of pupils did not match the increase. It was believed that a study of this nature would highlight other aspects of the problem and give insight into some of the issues related to this concern.

Webb (1986, p.200) commenting on students who join Soweto College of Education argues that:

> The student is not aware of the nature of the demands she has to meet. We see language as a problem in Black Education but the students don't perceive it as such.

This statement was made after a study conducted at the college showed that first year students did not seem to appreciate the language problems they had. These student teachers are in the main products of the D.E.T. secondary schools which are the college's feeder schools. It is the teachers who qualify from these colleges who go back to join the secondary schools as teachers. This scenario is by any one's standards both serious and tragic. We indeed find ourselves in a self perpetuating vicious cycle of unawareness and complacency.

My focus will now shift to the teacher whose work is reflected in pupil performance, and the study will examine this aspect so as to arrive at a deeper understanding of a need for studies of this nature.

2.2 Educational innovations and the teacher

2.2.1 Teachers, teaching methods and change

The role of the teacher in the implementation of educational innovations cannot be overemphasized. The teacher remains the most crucial practitioner determining what eventually takes place within the classroom. An awareness of this point is crucial because, in spite of the concentration on the ramifications of syllabus design and the concomitant embrace of the C.A., little change can come about unless the teachers themselves realize and appreciate the need to change. This point is reiterated by Foggin (1991, p.41) when he quotes Brumfit as saying:

> Teachers can control the methods they use, they can control little else. Yet changes made to materials or syllabuses will be ineffective if teachers fail to understand them or feel unconvinced of the need for change.

This assertion, read together with Widdowson's (1984) contentious statement that, with the C.A., it is the syllabus that is

structured and the methodology which is communicative, underlines the importance of the role of the teacher in the implementation of innovations.

When we consider the scepticism and resistance that generally greet innovations as well as the problems of teacher apathy, poor working conditions, poor teacher qualifications and demotivated pupils, to mention but a few of the problems prevailing within the education system of the Africans, we begin to realize just how much attention should be devoted to the preparation of teachers for an innovation to succeed.

This study has as one of its major tasks an investigation of the amount of attention this area received before and during the implementation stage of the C.A. within D.E.T. schools. This aspect is examined in chapter 4, where we examine the strategies employed in the implementation of the C.A.

2.2.2 Theory and the practising teacher

It has been argued that educational planners/experts and teachers talk past each other. There is very little, if any, productive interchange, with the result that innovations do not impact on the classroom as intended. Krashen (1982), and van Vuuren (1991), provide evidence for this argument.

Working within the South African context, van Vuuren (1991) stretches the point further by adding that, structures which facilitate and promote teacher participation do not exist and teachers either dutifully administer existing syllabi (and grumble helplessly about what happens in public exams) or at best do their own thing in the classroom in which case they may find their students disadvantaged in the final examinations.

Ward (1984) argues that the language classes today are far from communicative and have not shifted from the traditional teacher centred, decontextualised teaching practices. He quotes Flanders

(1967) and Barnes (1976) as saying average teacher talk amounts to 75% of classroom time. Ward (1984) also cites studies conducted by Barnes (1976), Mushler (1972) and Stubbs (1976), which showed that the common classroom procedure is for the teacher to ask a question for which he already knows the answer, call on a student to answer, and correct or evaluate the student's response.

That this is a deficient teaching method needs no debating. Ward (1984) continues to say this type of communication is found in court rooms and classrooms only and does not exist in real life situations for which classrooms purport to be teaching. Language classrooms do not give the learners the opportunity to evaluate and synthesise the information presented to them. This is very different from normal conversational settings where people comment and present their views on the idea being discussed.

Studies by Ward (1984) demonstrate that communication is enhanced if teachers use referal questions or enrich the learning experiences of the pupils by making them mirror the real-life communicative situations. It is argued that if pupils fail to get an opportunity to synthesise they fail to achieve the leap forward to communicating. Communication becomes an echo of previously memorised utterances.

In the light of these findings one is bound to ask if this is not the situation that still prevails in African second language classes in spite of the effort and monies that have been poured into the education system. Is this perhaps because methods which have universally been proven to be less useful and at times detrimental are still deliberately upheld and implemented in order to disempower the people or have genuine attempts at improving the situation failed for reasons which were innocently unintentional?

Of crucial importance are the findings that interrogative patterns of classroom teaching adversely affect pupil attitude,

decrease fluency and affect cognitive functioning. Ward (1984,p.12) concludes by saying:

> In short, because E.F.L. and E.S.L. students are not given the opportunity to expand their ideas, initiate questions, interpret what has been presented to them and generally behave in a more natural way, they can not communicate in English.

The examination of the extent to which this can be said to be applicable within the D.E.T. forms a relevant part of this study.

2.2.3 Challenges for the teacher

Murray (1991) identifies the challenge facing the teachers as the creation of better learning opportunities for students and developing their language competence. She, however, hastens to add that there is a problem in addressing this challenge.

The problem stems from the fact that the way we teach is informed and determined by a number of factors which include, inter alia, beliefs about education and knowledge, our social and cultural histories and the way we were taught. This argument is crucial in that it underscores the importance of teacher training, puts it within its socio-cultural context and awakens us to the possible futility of all endeavours which do not take cognisance of the points made here.

The C.A. advocates teaching methodology which is diametrically opposed to the instructional method of 2L teaching. The assertion that teachers teach the way they were taught further highlights the importance which the D.E.T. should have given to teacher training and support if the implementation of the C.A. was to have the positive results intended.

The focus in chapter 4 will be on an examination of how the teachers were persuaded to embrace the approach. Following this

examination will be an investigation of how the ideals of the approach have permeated the classroom and informed teaching methods employed by the teachers in conducting their lessons.

Howatt (1984), posits that the implementation of the C.A. places a lot of demands on the non-native teacher of English 2L, by emphasizing the appropriateness of language use. He believes that this demands near-native competence from the teacher and where this is lacking teachers evade this by sticking to the textbook, thereby not allowing the innovation to add an extra burden to their already unbearable responsibilities.

Krashen (1982), on the contrary, argues that research has shown that teachers need not of necessity acquire near-native competence but will perform equally well if they are confident in themselves. This apparent contradiction does not nullify the claim made here that teachers stick to the text book in an attempt to make their lives less difficult. This is yet another crucial area the study set out to investigate, given the fact that the language ability and competence of Black teachers leave much to be desired as shown in the comments made by Webb (1986), earlier on.

2.3 Justification for the study

Studies which look at the teaching of English in African schools are long overdue and it is only unfortunate that attention seems to be shifting to multi-cultural classrooms at a time when one would argue that E.S.L. African classrooms form the area which demands more urgent attention. This is of course not to say that multi-cultural classrooms should be ignored. The view held here, however, is that a preoccupation with problems in that area may tend to be dealing with the symptoms rather than the causes.

The lack of literature on studies conducted in the teaching of English as a Second Language in Black Secondary Schools is evidence of the fact that this is a field which has largely been

ignored. A lot more effort seems to have been expended on matters of curriculum and syllabus design with the result that an evaluation of how these impacted on the classroom suffered. The result has been an unfortunate, yet unavoidable, deterioration of the situation within Black education.

Saddening still, is the realization that the solution to this problem, though perhaps in sight, will remain beyond reach for some time in the foreseeable future. This may sound too pessimistic, yet statements like the one made by Widdowson, and quoted by Howatt (1984, p.277), draws us closer to the reality of the situation:

> The problem is that students, and especially students in the developing countries, who have received several years of formal' English learning, frequently remain deficient in the ability to actually use the language, and to understand its use, in normal communication, whether in spoken or written mode.

If this scenario prevails in education in our country in general and within African education in particular, given the problems of numbers and physical conditions prevailing, it should be uppermost in our minds to establish the reasons for this state of affairs .

It also remains our responsibility to advance and implement recommendations aimed at addressing the problem. It is imperative that we act with the urgency and haste dictated and demanded by the circumstances. Political reforms should proceed alongside significant, proactive and affirmative reforms of an educational nature.

Yalden (1981) also notes that, in spite of the great efforts that have been made to enrich 2L. teaching, there are still many students who complain that they have never learned to 'really use language.' This points to a possibility that there is a problem

with the teaching methodologies employed. The nature of the problem needs to be investigated and attempts should be made to address it.

The present emphasis on the C.A. to language teaching is seen as an attempt at address ing the demands f or ef f ective approaches to language teaching. We should, however, be wary of offers of quick-fix solutions. Educationists should begin to realize and appreciate the complex nature of the process . There should be an awareness that the situation demands ongoing attention and alertness. This is made all the more imperative by the fact that the choice of English as a medium of instruction for the future S.A. seems an inescapable reality.

From 1976 to the present language policy discussions have weighed quite heavily in favour of English. This is probably why Professor Mawasha (1986, p.25) concluded that:

> English will remain the medium of instruction in Black education for many years to come. Problems accompanying this preference will have to be addressed diligently in order to give the learner maximum advantage in the classroom.

This use of English as a medium of instruction in the South African context is called by Murray (1991) the IL. functional value of English (here she uses Mazrui's definition of IL). Teachers as practitioners should be drawn closer to matters of syllabus design if they are to meet the demands of the challenge they are faced with. An integrative approach has to be conceived and adopted and the gap between theory and practice bridged.

Studies have shown that the students' ability in the medium of instruction determines and affects performance in other subjects taken in that medium. General academic performance is therefore to some measure a product of the language competence of the individual learner. This assertion has been endorsed by

the concern shared by the tertiary institutions over the language proficiency of most if not all the African underprivileged secondary school products.

Foggin (1991) argues that Black first year students from disadvantaged backgrounds who need to be able to speak and write fluently and accurately have a very limited repertoire of language thinking skills on their arrival at the University of Durban Westville. Webb (1986), argues the same point with regard to those who join the Teacher Training Colleges. He states that these students have very serious comprehension and expression problems which seriously hamper their progress. Sadly however, as mentioned before, students do not seem to be aware of their problems. It was thought probable here that the teachers could equally be unaware of their own problems and those facing their pupils.

What can be concluded from the work done by Murray (1991) and Webb (1986) within a University and a College respectively is that there indeed exists a serious problem in the teaching and learning of English in Black schools, the effects of which get carried over to the tertiary level. Webb (1986) further argues that there is evidence which shows that poor command of the language invariably implies poor cognitive functioning.

English is also made the more important by the instrumental value it is perceived to have by most pupils. Many pupils believe that English offers a chance for personal advancement. The "historical structural" view of language and language policy as proposed by Toffelson, and quoted by Luckett (1992), clearly shows the relevance of the pupils' views. This perspective brings about an understanding of the relationship between language and the structuring of power and inequality. Debates about language being a tool used to empower or disempower a people is one that this country is well conversant with. Language policy has to deal with the role and status of the English language and how it has to be

presented at schools. The pupils' view mentioned earlier is understandable given the fact that their experiences and observations have made them realize how much one's knowledge of the language is used to determine one's station in society.

Crucial too is the examination of the gullibility with which certain 'fashionable ideas' are adopted. It is not within the scope of this study to explore this avenue in any detail. Murray (1991) warns against this when she says, we should be wary of uncritically transplanting practical ideas for language teaching from one context to another. Howatt (1984) sounds the same warning when he says that third world countries have become victims in the past of the over-enthusiastic promotion of 'packaged' methods originally devised for quite different circumstances. This kind of 'salesmanship' seems to have been adopted with regard to the C.A.. This area warrants research in its own right. Studies in this area would focus on the approaches which emphasize the appropriate use of language and examine their appropriateness within our social, economic and demographic conditions.

In concluding this section I find the Nuttall and Murray (1986, p.223) quotation presenting a terse summary of the situation in Black schools. They say that:

> Pupils in Black Schools in S.A. spend many hundreds of hours over a number of years attending classes in Second Language, and yet the successes of these learners in acquiring communicative competence in these languages are extremely modest, and are certainly not commensurate with the time and effort expended on language teaching programmes.

In addition to the time and effort these writers see as having been wasted in programmes that do not yield the required results, one can mention the monies spent in syllabus design, teacher training as well as textbook and materials production.

2.4 The C.A. and general pupil performance

At this moment of gloom and despair Thomas (1992) sheds a glimmer of hope when she cites research which has shown that improved English communication skills in all subjects might be considerably augmented through the implementation of a strong version of the C.A. in English lessons. This again underscores the centrality of English in the learning process as well as offering us some solace whilst unveiling the magnitude of the task which lies ahead.

I find it important to give the reason why I have preferred to refer to the target group as Africans rather than Blacks. The main reason is that in its common usage the latter also includes both the Indian and Coloured communities of this country. Because of this all inclusive usage it would evidently be inaccurate to use this concept given the context within which the study was conducted. This is not to suggest that the use of the former does not create problems of its own. It will be noted, however, that a reference to the target population as Black is not completely avoidable. The two are on occasion used as synonymous but should be understood to mean the indigenous Black South Africans.

CHAPTER 3.

THE C.A. AND THE TEACHING-LEARNING SITUATION

3. The C.A. and language acquisition

In this chapter a brief outline of the development of the C.A. as an approach to language teaching is given. Some of the basic principles of the approach are given with the view of using these in establishing the basis upon which the examination of the official documents, the assessment of the teachers' understanding of the approach and the observation of the verbal classroom interaction, which form part of the study are later conducted.

3.1 The historical development of the C.A.

3.1.1 The behaviourist classroom

The C.A. developed as a reaction to the approaches to language teaching that were influenced by Skinner's behaviourist theory. Skinner's perspective held that language like other forms of behaviour is learnt through habit formation. Skinner's behaviourist view influenced thought about language teaching and learning and coloured classroom practice.

A typical lesson was consequently characterised by the teaching of the abstract forms of the language. Repetition and drill work were the espoused teaching methods. Structured, out of context dialogues were drilled in a somewhat mechanical fashion with substitution and transformation drills considered the most desirable and effective, if not the only way to achieve language proficiency. These drills were to be conducted flawlessly and near-native pronunciation was the goal. Learner language errors were seen as abberations which had to be corrected promptly.

The teacher was in the centre of the learning-teaching situation and his or her role was to present and conduct the teaching of graded language structures to passive recipients. The language rules were presented to the learners who through a conscious effort characterised by repetition and reinforcement of correct responses would learn the 2L and gain competence in it.

Littlewood (1984, p.5) summarises this process of habit formation by identifying its components:

(a) The child imitates the sounds and patterns which he hears around him.

(b) People recognise the child's attempts as being similar to the adult models and reinforce (reward) the sounds, by approval or some other action.

(c) In order to obtain more of these rewards the child repeats the sounds and patterns, so that these become habits.

(d) In this way the child's verbal behaviour is conditioned or shaped until the habits coincide with the adult models. The influence of these components is evident in the lessons we outlined above.

3.1.2 Chomsky reacts

Noam Chomsky shook the foundations of the behaviourist school and argued that language was not just another form of behaviour over which the teacher can have manipulative control. He challenged the view of language as behaviour that can be conditioned through proper response-reinforcement strategies. He initiated a focus on the ' inside' of the learner' s head by arguing that the learner has an innate capacity to learn the finite rules of a language and then use these to create an infinite number of linguistic utterances. Put more simply, he argued that language learners do not only reproduce utterances they have heard before, but use their own creativity to produce new utterances.

Learners internalise the underlying system of rules and gain competence, which is unobservable, before they engage in performance, which is observable. Interesting to note as well is that Chomsky mentioned that speakers of a language, particularly native speakers, will have unconscious control over the rules of the language and produce an infinite number of grammatically acceptable sentences at the performance stage (Harmer, 1983).

This new focus spelt a change in the perception of what language learning and teaching situations should be like. It is evident that whereas second language teaching in the structural approach, influenced by the behaviourist view of language teaching, was limited to an emphasis on accurate repetition, drillwork and reinforcement of correct responses, the Chomskian perspective proposed a presentation of the rules to build competence in the ultimate hope that the learner will then produce grammatically acceptable utterances during the performance stage.

Although Chomsky focused mainly on native speaker competence and even then met with fierce criticism, his views remained useful in that they introduced the importance of meaning in language learning and represented some kind of a 'half-way' station on the journey from the audio-lingual approach to the communicative approach. We however need to be constantly cautious not to mistake the half-way station for the destination.

3.1.3 Hymes and appropriateness

The sociolinguist Hymes pointed out that Chomsky omitted anything of socio-cultural significance and was content with psychological constraints rather than social interaction (Hymes, 1971). The speaker of a language may have the competence (knowledge about the language) but be unable to use this knowledge in day to day communications, argued Hymes. The language so learned would then be of little or no use to the learner. Hymes (1971) asserted that there exists a set of rules of use, without which the grammatical rules would be useless.

Harmer (1983) gives an apt example when he says that it does not help to know that 'would you like to' takes the infinitive, unless you know that 'would you like to come with me to the cinema' performs an inviting function. The language acquired only acquires significance through its appropriate use. The social interaction, the negotiation of meaning and the appropriate use of utterances receive significance over the mere understanding of the abstract forms of the target language. It is argued that the learning of the rules of the language as proposed by Chomsky does not on its own ensure that such knowledge will be transferred in any meaningful way and used in real-life situations. Language learnt in this way does not lead to communicative competence but results in production that is limited to the repetition of memorised words and phrases.

Competence acquired new meaning in that it was now used to refer to the ability to use the language in real-life situations rather than the knowledge of the rules of the language as Chomsky had originally used the term to mean. Communicative competence meant the ability to make utterances in the target language (TL) for communicative purposes within real-life environments. Emphasis was now placed on the accurate choice of appropriate utterances in communicative encounters. This is what made Munby (1978, p.9) conclude that competence should refer to:

> An understanding and production of utterances which are not so much grammatical, but more important appropriate in the context in which they are made.

It is evident here that this perspective represents a major shift from the Chomskian view of competence. This study has as a part of its aim, an observation of classroom activities to see how they approximate this view of language teaching and learning.

3.2 The themes of the C.A. and implications for the classroom.

A brief examination of some of the major features of the

C.A. shows just how diametrically opposed to the ideals of the traditional approaches to language teaching this approach is. This then highlights the need for careful planning and choice of implementation strategies, the ingenious implementation of such strategies, the building in of appropriate feedback mechanisms, and a continuous evaluation of the process.

3.2.1 The nature of language and language learning

The dominating view within this paradigm is that language learning should not be divorced from the context within which it occurs. Language is used within particular social situations and the teaching-learning situation should reflect the social use of the language as a means of communication. Savignon (1987) puts it more succinctly when she says communicative competence has to do with a real speaker listener.

In the classroom situation learners should therefore, interpret, express and negotiate meaning in many different settings. Memorisation of out of context dialogues, focusing on abstract language structures rather than their use in real life situations and emphasis on intonation and pronunciation achieved through the reinforcement of correct behaviours coupled with a systematic avoidance of learner errors, characteristic of the structural approaches to language teaching, are all anathema to this paradigm.

If this is put in the context of an African setting where the learning of the target language (TL) mostly, and more often always, takes place within a classroom where materials used are based in a cultural milieu foreign to the learners and often presented by a teacher whose knowledge of the TL and its culture is itself limited, the demotivation and despondency of the learners becomes a real possibility and the difficulty of successfully implementing the C.A. a threatening possibility.

If true, this assertion leads to a number of practical questions

which are related to classroom practice. These questions would include, inter alia:

(a) Whether the teachers have clarity on what is expected of them?

(b) Whether they have the necessary skills to carry out the tasks expected of them?

(c) What options would be left to the teacher who feels less confident about his or her ability to cope with the change?

Very crucial decisions would also have to be taken with regard to the suitability of the innovation within an environment where learners would be minimally exposed, if at all, to native speakers of the TL and the choice of the strategies to be employed would indeed be an engaging task.

3.2.2 The teacher pupil relationship

The C.A. also assumes a completely different stance with regard to the relationship of the two major players in the classroom. Whereas in the traditional approaches knowledge is reified, and the teacher assumes the role of the 'knower' who must present knowledge to the passive recipients, the C.A. views knowledge as a social construction, the teacher loses the prerogative of the possession of knowledge which s/he enjoyed in the traditional paradigm.

The teacher's role becomes limited to that of facilitator of communicative activities and is no more at the centre of the teaching-learning situation. The teacher's first aim is to prepare students to communicate in the TL. The approach's departure point is that all students can achieve communicative efficiency (a distinction between competence and efficiency is made at the end of this chapter, see 3.2.8).

It is conceded, however, that students will show differing degrees of success in their acquisition due to individual

differences. The second aim is to teach learners how to learn. Teachers aim at developing their pupils' universal learning strategies that will enable them to continue to learn on their own after the period of formal instruction has ended (Larsen-Freeman, 1991).

An overriding aspect of this feature is of course that the teacher and the learner are both 'co-creators' of knowledge. Looking at the role of the teacher in chapter 2, we mentioned the challenges facing the teacher as identified by Murray (1991). Quite unfortunately, however, the teachers who are charged with the task of implementing the C.A. in the classroom situation, who have control over methods, were taught in a way dramatically different from the one they should now implement, yet as said before, teachers teach the way they were taught. They internalized a conception of knowledge as something 'out there' which they as teachers are fortunate to have and should impart to the 'poor' learners.

A number of questions arise from this. Have teachers changed their conceptions and perceptions of the relationship between them and their pupils? If the answer is no, what effect has this had on the implementation of the innovation? Given the knowledge of the cultural values, norms and perceptions of authority shared by the group targeted for the innovation, were the strategies employed appropriate or was this perhaps another instance of a transplantation of fashionable ideas into third world countries?

3.2.3 Acquisition v. learning

Some proponents of the C.A. distinguish between acquisition and learning, and this is a fundamental distinction which has fuelled research in 2L acquisition. 2L acquisition theory developed largely as an extrapolation from studies in 1L development.

Acquisition is consequently seen as a process similar to the way in which children develop language ability in their first

language. It is subconscious in that whilst going through the process learners are not aware that they are acquiring the language.

Acquired competence is likewise subconscious, as the learners are generally unaware of the grammatical rule that they have acquired. The 2L learner develops a 'feel' for correctness and can tell if an utterance does not 'sound' right without being able to identify the grammatical rule that has been violated. This is what Krashen (1982) refers to as the picking up of language. He notes that research has shown that acquisition does not disappear with age but is there even with adult learners. Learning on the other hand refers to the knowledge of the formal rules of the language and the ability to talk about them.

In a communicative lesson language is acquired as learners engage in authentic communication using the language they have already acquired without any conscious focus on the language structure still to be learnt. The teacher's role is again crucial as the structuring of such activities remains his or her responsibility. Formal learning of the language structure is reserved for situations where it is a real necessity, as when the lack of its grasp hampers the learner's engagement in meaningful communication.

Once more this has serious implications for the implementation of the approach in African schools where most if not all teachers were taught in the traditional language learning paradigm. The questions to ask here would again be mainly concerned with how the teachers were prepared for the drastic change in emphasis and how they have coped with the problems they have encountered.

3.2.4 The interactive mode in classroom interaction

Classroom interaction in the behaviourist orientation exhibited patterns quite different from those to be observed in a communicative classroom. These were basically:

(a) teacher-to-student, with a form to be repeated or transformed or a question to be answered,

(b) student-to-teacher, performing the appropriate operation on the form, or answering the question and

(c) student-to-student, performance of set dialogues.

The patterns in a communicative classroom on the other hand reserve a significant portion of the time for interactive activities. Students are given opportunities to use the language for meaningful communicative purposes. It is believed that the emphasis on the asymmetrical roles of the teacher and students places restrictions on the learners' contributions. In such classroom settings learners talk far less than teachers and perform a narrow range of language functions.

The crucial factor, it is maintained, is the extent to which the learners control classroom discourse. Ellis (1990) quotes a study conducted by Barnes (1976), which found that a group of junior school children produced language marked by a rich vocabulary complexity and a range of grammatical structures and long utterances when the teacher ceased to control the moment-by - moment progress of the discussion.

Cathcart (1986) arrived at similar conclusions in a study conducted amongst Spanish-speaking E.S.L. children. She found that situations in which the learners had control of the talk were characterised by a wide range of communicative acts and syntactic structures, whereas the situations where the teacher had control seemed to produce single word utterances and short phrases.

This evidence suggests that where the interaction is not restricted to short responses to teacher questions and other prompts, but enables learner discourse in a communicative

environment, language ability develops more fully and communicative proficiency is achieved. On the contrary teacher-centred and dominated lessons characterised by short often meaningless and out of context responses do not give the learners an opportunity to learn how to take part in classroom discourse and this naturally leads to a lack of communicative proficiency in life outside the classroom as well.

Cathcart (1986) also quotes the results of a study conducted by Holmen (1985) which found that older students were more passive and this reflected the kinds of schools they came from. Schools with teacher-centred classrooms encouraged passive students.

She, however, recognises the influence of personality traits as well, in that some learners will be able to 'steal turns' and grab the teacher's attention whenever they can. One question we can pose here is whether teachers are aware of these trends and use these findings to test their own intuitions, long held beliefs and personal experiences?

If teachers are well versed in theory and proceed to test it in their day-to-day practical activities in the classroom hope for a fruitful implementation of an innovation of this kind can be cherished. If on the other hand they remain ignorant of current thought and findings the chances of success are minimised.

The investigator is aware that knowledge by itself is no guarantee of successful implementation, as was shown in the study conducted by Long and Sato (1983). These researchers found that even where teachers understood and were committed to the C.A., the activities they employed in their lessons were only superficially communicative and on deeper examination proved to be essentially traditional in orientation.

These apparent contradictions are raised to highlight the significance of in-depth planning and constant evaluation of an innovation of this kind. An attempt will be made to examine to

what extent the D.E.T. curriculum planners took cognisance of such dynamics and problems.

3.2.5 Comprehensible input and acquisition

Krashen (1985) asserts that learners acquire language in only one way by understanding messages or receiving comprehensible input. His theory of the gradual accumulation or developmental process (i+1) shows a close relationship with Vygotsky's (1986) Z.P.D. or (zone of proximal development) in cognitive development.

Competent use of a language structure is not acquired through conscious tuition, but through a subconscious manipulation of the structure. Learners understand language containing grammar with the help of the context. The caretaker in 1L acquisition, or the teacher in a 2L acquisition classroom provides extra linguistic information necessary for the understanding of the language before learners have acquired competence in the use of the structure, gradually reducing assistance as competence develops, eventually moving to the next level of structural complexity.

This hypothesis maintains that if the input is enough and comprehensible, grammar is automatically provided. Related to this hypothesis is the insistence on the use of the information gap in communicative activities, particularly where pair work or group work is used. Finally, they emphasise the importance of the authenticity of the communication. The question to ask here is whether this is what transpires in classes and if not with what implications and consequences?

3.2.6 Krashen and the affective filter

The affective filter as Krashen (1985) calls it also plays a crucial role in the learner's acquisition of communicative competence. A communicative classroom should create an environment which eliminates learner anxiety and increases self confidence. Where these are lacking a 'mental block' is created

which then prevents the acquirers from utilising the comprehensible input they receive.

Much as the silent period which Krashen makes mention of is a controversial issue, the investigator feels that it is useful in as far as it warns the teacher not to force production during this period as this may result in anxiety which hampers acquisition. It is felt that the teachers' ignorance of these and other factors would adversely affect the implementation of an innovation of this kind.

3.2.7 The strong v. the weak version

A distinction between two versions of the C.A. has gained acceptance and use. Only a brief outline of this distinction can be made within the scope of a study of this nature. The basic theoretical tenets outlined above characterise the strong version which emphasises an unconscious acquisition of language competence through authentic communicative activities which are close to real-life situations.

With the strong version it is not a case of merely activating existing but inert knowledge of the language, but the main focus is the development of the language system itself (Howatt, 1984). This is what Howatt (1984, p.279) describes as "using language to learn it "as opposed to the weak version which he describes as "learning to use the language".

The role of the teacher in the weak version classroom is to provide pupils with opportunities in which their knowledge of the language can be used for communicative purposes. The teacher focuses on promoting competent performance. Emphasis in the strong version on the other hand is on the communicative competence which is developed, achieved and promoted by the use of the language in meaningful communicative activities.

Although this argument is not to be followed to any depth in this study, the reader is reminded of the claim made by Thomas (1992),

and mentioned in chapter 2, that improved English communicative skills in all subjects might be considerably augmented through the implementation of the strong version of the C.A..

3.2.8 Communicative competence or communicative efficiency

It is appropriate at this stage to highlight the problems associated with the use of the term communicative competence as identified by (Harmer 1983, p.23-24). He makes a crucial observation which does not seem to have been followed up quite adequately or given due consideration in the adoption of the C.A. for 2L learners. He argues that competence refers to the native speaker's knowledge of what is appropriate in certain situations, which then enables him or her to select the language to use. The problems he has with this view are:

(a) Whether it is possible to make 2L speakers know what is really appropriate without actually living for some time in the TL community?

(b) Whether it is possible to teach 2L learners what is appropriate in all situations given the constraints of the classroom and its remoteness from the TL community? and

(c) Whether by aiming at competence we are not changing language classrooms to 'cultural stereotyping' centres?

He proposes the use of communicative efficiency which will refer to the learners' ability to express what it is s/he wishes to express. The aim is to teach learners to convey their thoughts and purposes efficiently and not to make them model Englishmen or Americans.

Although we should not allow this view to cloud our thoughts and divert our attention from the aim of this study it is crucial that we keep it somewhere in the back of our minds. It is the investigator's view that this distinction is a significant one, particularly when determining assessment criteria. We need also

to be always reminded of the emotive nature of language choices and presentation, more so in this country. For practical reasons these terms will be used as though they are interchangeable.

CHAPTER 4

THE ADOPTION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INNOVATION: AN EXAMINATION OF THE OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS

4. The adoption and introduction of the C.A.

In this chapter the investigator shows that the introduction of the C.A. was a fundamental innovation and the question is asked as to whether the known principles of innovation management were recognised by the innovators. This first phase of the study examines the official documents and evaluates the strategies of innovation implementation employed by the D.E.T. curriculum planners and developers.

4.1 The C.A. an innovation.

Although varied and sometimes conflicting definitions of innovation have been advanced, there appears to be agreement on at least three aspects. Firstly, an innovation is fundamental in nature; secondly, it is a planned and deliberate action; and thirdly, an innovation has as its intention an improvement of the system in which it is introduced.

An examination of the introduction of the C.A. in D.E.T. shows that it was conceived of and implemented as an innovation in that it shares the three general aspects that define an innovation. The introduction is fundamental in that as shown in Chapter 3 the C.A. clearly implies a dramatic change in the culture of the school so that as Schmuck (1974, p.108) puts it, 'authority relationships, communication networks, status groupings and even friendship cliques are forced to change.' It was planned and deliberate in that there was a specific change which was 'novel' and introduced because of a belief that it would be more

efficacious in accomplishing the aims of the organisation. It was also a purposeful exercise emanating from a desire and intention to improve the teaching of English, the benefits of which, it was believed, would have a spill-over to the broader social fabric of the country.

Before we look at the evidence which shows that the C.A. was introduced in D.E.T. secondary schools, it is appropriate that the investigator reports on the experiences and difficulties encountered in the process of acquiring the official documents.

4.2 Access to official documents

In keeping with policy the investigator wrote to the Head Office of the department in Pretoria applying for permission to conduct the study. The specifications of the study were accompanied by a letter which asked that official documents relevant and helpful towards the achievement of the stated aims of the study be made accessible to the investigator. Specific mention of policy documents was made. The document the researcher hoped for was not in the consignment of the syllabuses and teachers' guides which was eventually sent.

Information on the life-history of the innovation given in this section consists of what the researcher could pull together from an examination of the documents available, and a reliance on his personal experiences as an English teacher within the department at the time of the introduction. Whilst acknowledging this as a possible limitation, it should also be pointed out that the documents examined are official records which contain matters of policy· and which are meant to impact on the classroom activities of English teachers in the employ of the D.E.T. (see Appendix B for a list of the documents examined).

Subsequent telephonic conversations with the Senior Deputy Education Specialist (Subject Curriculum Development) and the Senior Deputy Chief Education Specialist Advisory Service

(English Second Language) yielded the explanations below:

(a) The D.E.T. does not draft or keep policy documents. The revision of syllabi and the drafting of curricula is the prerogative of the Department of National Education in close co- operation with the Joint Matriculation Board (J.M.B.) which sets examination standards and requirements (the latter is however in the process of being phased out) . It is this department which drafts a core syllabus and on completion issues it to all the departments of education in the country, (refer to 1.2.1 for an explanation on the departments of education in the country), who then adapt the syllabus to suit their circumstances.

(b) In addition to the syllabus the English 2L. department has a language policy document which is meant to support the syllabus.

(c) A textbook evaluation guide is used to select appropriate communicative textbooks.

(d) In principle, the Senior Deputy Chief Education Specialist Subject Advisory Service also known as the Principal Subject Advisor and based at Head Office in Pretoria, relies on the Regional Subject Advisors for the dissemination of information to the teachers. The latter are also responsible for attending to teacher problems and the arrangement of workshops and seminars for the teachers in their regions.

(e) No programme exists for the training of these subject advisors in the C.A. on appointment.

(f) Although no specific, official English 2L. publication exists at the moment, the Subject Advisers are expected to co-ordinate and circulate a regional English newsletter in their respective regions.

It is both significant and appropriate that it be mentioned at this stage that, in his experience as an English teacher in the region within which the study was conducted, the researcher cannot recall any newsletter or seminar held with the purpose of persuading teachers to adopt the C.A..

The responses of the teachers who participated in the study will also show that no document other than the syllabus, which as will be shown has its own limitations, has been of any assistance to the teachers in their attempts to implement the C.A.. Disturbing too is the admission that no deliberate attempts were made to train the appointed Subject Adviser in the approach.

The investigator could not establish with any certainty whether a thorough situational analysis was carried out before the decision to introduce the innovation was taken, nor ascertain whether the innovators in this instance attended to the tasks to be carried out before innovative attempts were taken.

Available evidence leads to the conclusion that the mechanisms designed for the monitoring of the innovation, the provision of needed resources, the supporting of teachers and the dealing with teacher resistance to change or any other problem known to be associated with innovations were equally inadequate.

This situation is unfortunate because as Nicholls (1983) asserts, if innovations are not effectively managed this is likely to result in a huge waste in terms of time, money and effort. More serious however, is the possibility of the failure to manage innovations effectively resulting in a poorer quality of education because the desired improvement does not become a reality.

4.3 Evidence for the adoption

The examination of the documents available led the researcher to the conclusion that the D.E.T. did indeed adopt the C.A. The

investigation of the documents showed a strong inclination towards the features of the C.A. as outlined in Chapter 3, albeit in differing degrees of emphasis.

Whereas the syllabuses revised in 1985 were seen to be slightly less explicit and somewhat more inclined towards the weak version of the approach, the Primary Teachers' Guide issued in August 1992, was seen to be more explicit on its inclination towards the strong version of the C.A..

What is of relevance for the purposes of this study, however, is that the documents showed an unambiguously clear choice of communicative language teaching as an approach, and a strong belief in its usefulness. A few quotations will be made in order to support this assertion.

4.3.1 Syllabuses have somewhat similar perspectives, aims, policy and objectives as well as stipulations on assessment procedures.

(a) Aims: Of the six aims reflected most assertive is the one which states that:

> As the overriding concern of this syllabus is communicative competence, for personal, social, educational and occupational purposes ... (Syllabus for English Second Language H.G.Standard 8.)

(b) Policy and objectives: The opening statement of this part of the syllabus states that:

> Teachers must create a climate within which pupils can use English with interest, purpose and enjoyment. However language is used, it should be seen in relation to context ie. to purpose, audience and circumstance.

The Primary Teachers' Guide issued in August 1992 is even clearer on the aims and how they should be achieved. The example below

is an attempt at showing the similarities between the terms used in the guide and those found in literature on the C.A.

	C.A. concept.	Guide concept.
1.	silent period	silent incubation
2.	comprehensible input	meaningful language
3.	rough/fine tuning	roughly tuned
4.	production stage	time for talking

This document's emphasis on pair-work, the de-emphasis on language drills, the discouraging of the use of 'aggressive efforts' to eliminate errors and the mention of the affective filter on page 8 are all examples of the influence of the strong version of the C.A. The guide, unlike the syllabus does not only present the aims of the curriculum planners but goes further to give suggestions on how these can be achieved.

4.4 How the C.A. was introduced

It would appear that the decision to adopt and implement the C.A. was taken higher up the hierarchy some time in the early 80s. The old syllabuses were revised in 1985 and the new syllabuses marked the change in the approach in the teaching of English as a second language. These syllabuses were to be implemented in secondary schools as follows: January 1986, saw the introduction of the approach in standards 6, 7 and 8. Standards 9 and 10 followed in November 1987 and November 1988 respectively.

The syllabuses distributed to schools were accompanied by new textbooks which the work programme of the department for standards 6-10 prefers to call 'modern textbooks'. Point 4.1 of this document reads:

> The teacher can assume that the textbook covers the context of the syllabus and embodies an approach to second language teaching compatible with the syllabus and the Departmental English subject policy.

Point 4.2 states that "it is important to deal with every unit (the textbooks are divided into 16 units each covering work to be done in a fortnight) .. . than to work through every detail but not reach the end of the textbook."

The two statements above imply that the departmentally approved textbooks are designed in the C.A. and that by dutifully going through the whole book with his or her pupils the teacher will be able to teach communicatively and cover the syllabus at the same time. The extent to which the first proposition is compatible with the principles of the C.A. is both contestable and unsettling.

The investigator remembers having to make a hurried choice from a set of departmentally approved textbooks. The set included such books as Advance with English, New Horizon and Successful English (details on these textbooks are given at the end of the list of references). The textbooks were supposed to arrive with a teacher's guide which the investigator has unfortunately not seen as yet.

In summary, it can be said that, it seems as though the innovators strongly believed in the strength of the syllabus, the subject policy, the textbook and the work programme for the successful implementation of the approach as an innovation in African secondary schools. The assumption held appears to have been that, all that was needed were materials for the teachers to read and use in the classroom for the intended switch from the traditional approaches to communicative language teaching to be effected. Whether this was a realistic or too simplistic a view is a subject for debate.

Interesting too is the observation that, whereas the first implementation date for the secondary schools was January 1986, the C.A. is only mentioned explicitly in the 1990 structure of the teacher training syllabus and the primary teachers' guide was

only released in August of 1992.

4.5 Innovation implementation strategies

Writers in the field of innovation management agree that once a decision to adopt an innovation has been taken there are a number of early decisions to be taken. These include deciding on the manner in which the innovation will be introduced to the teachers who will be involved and the way in which the innovation is to be developed and sustained. The choice of the strategies to be employed is of paramount importance.

Nicholls (1983) proposes the use of three major groups of strategies which were identified by Cleen and Benne and have since become generally accepted and used by workers in the field. These are: the empirical rational; the normative-re-educative; and the power coercive.

4.5.1 Empirical rational strategies.

This group of strategies rests on the assumption that man is rational and intelligent. Only ignorance is an obstacle to innovations. The innovator suggests the innovation and attempts as effectively as possible to show the validity of the innovation by emphasizing the gains to be achieved by adopting it. The optimistic view held is that by appealing to the enlightened self-interest of the users through the use of logical argument, shared premises will be established and this will guarantee effective implementation. Nicholls (1983) argues that this is a deceptively simple approach particularly with regards to innovations that require the users to change their behaviour, attitudes, roles and relationships.

4.5.2 Normative-re-educative strategies.

This group contextualises the introduction of an innovation in that though not denying user rationality and intelligence the

socio-cultural norms of the users are taken into cognisance. It is recognised that practice or action change occurs only if people are made to change their normative orientations to old patterns and develop commitment to new ones (Nicholls, 1983). Below are some of the points emphasised in this view which seem relevant for the purposes of this study:

(a) Emphasis is placed on the involvement of the client in developing programmes of change and development.

(b) It is believed that the presentation of technical information alone is not enough for effective change to take place.

(c) Important too is the belief that users should learn from own experience.

Nicholls (1983) also states that strategies in this group see a commitment to re-education, openness of communication, trust between people and the lowering of status barriers between parts of the system as necessary preconditions. It is obvious that these strategies demand a lot from the innovator in terms of time, effort, commitment and readiness to face complex situations. Nicholls (1983), argues that this may well be the reason why they tend not to be used.

4.5.3 Power coercive strategies.

In this group of strategies the innovation is initiated by those higher up in the hierarchy of the organisation. The ones lower down who have to implement the innovation do so because if they do not, sanctions may be used against them. Power which may be manifest or latent is used and advice is perceived by the users as non-rejectable and seen as an order. Interesting too is the fact that the users are not necessarily always aware of such power. This is of course a very simplified version of this group of strategies which nevertheless suffices for the purposes of this study. One should add here that writers in the field

acknowledge that in practice these divisions are rarely discreet and that combinations of strategies are often used.

4.5.4 The strengths and weaknesses of the strategies

The normative-re-educative strategies are time consuming and require knowledge that may be available only in a limited extent. Advocates of these strategies, however, assert that their use ensures lasting and self-sustaining innovations. Nicholls (1983), argues that there is evidence to support this claim and the strategies are the most in keeping with the currently advocated management style.

Because of their simplicity the other strategies appeal to innovators but have serious shortcomings. Firstly, teachers may not always be rational and their behaviour may be determined by factors other than rationality. Secondly, the use of power coercive strategies often results in the users lacking commitment to the innovation. This sometimes develops into opposition to or subversion of the innovation.

Given the nature of the innovation in question and the above input, it seems logical to expect the D.E.T curriculum planners to have decided upon a combination which would include the normative-re-educative group of strategies.

4.5.5 Strategies employed by the D.E.T

Available evidence points to the fact that the curriculum planners decided to adopt a combination of the power-coercive and the empirical-rational strategies. Firstly, the decision to introduce the C.A. was taken higher up the hierarchy of the bureaucracy. There is no evidence that the teachers were involved in the decision-making process. Secondly, the innovation monitoring strategies which include the use of the Subject Advisers and the H.o.D.s is characteristic of control rather than influence strategies of innovation management. It can be said

that the implementation relies more on latent sanctions as teachers are expected to comply with syllabus, subject policy, textbook and work programme stipulations as well as instructions from the officials in the English department. In the light of the information given above it is possible to assume that, though the innovation may have been conceived by innovators as advice, teachers perceived it as an order.

The use of the empirical-rational strategy is also evident in the manner of the introduction. The provision of the documents mentioned earlier was seen as an adequate means of appealing to the teachers' rationality and intelligence. There is little doubt that very little, if any, consideration was given to the principles embodied in the normative-re-educative strategies.

4.5.6 The innovation evaluated.

In concluding this section I find the study conducted by Gross et.al. (1971) relevant. The Cambire innovation and the introduction of the C.A. in D.E.T. schools share a number of similarities regarding the nature of the innovation, the characteristics of the user system, the manner in which the innovation was introduced and the control and monitoring of the process.

Cambire was a ghetto school with predominantly black pupils, the teachers taught in a fairly traditional fashion, the innovation implied a change in teaching methods and, the teachers were not directly involved in the decision-making process nor properly trained for their new roles.

Conducted six months from the implementation date the evaluation study found that, although the conditions were generally favourable the innovation apparently failed. The researchers then identified the following reasons:

(a) Teachers did not have a clear understanding of what was expected of them in their new roles;

(b) in any case, they did not have the necessary skills to carry out their new roles;

(c) they did not have the required materials and equipment;

(d) the organisational arrangements within the school were incompatible with the innovation;

(e) there were no feed-back procedures to correct the deficiencies, and

(f) unsatisfactory experiences led to the development of resistance to the change.

These researchers concluded that the failure of the innovation had to be attributed to the innovator's simplistic view of the implementation process and lack of awareness of his responsibilities.

CHAPTER 5

THE TEACHERS' CONCEPTIONS AND PERCEPTIONS OF THE INNOVATION

Introduction

In this and subsequent chapters the focus of the study moves to the investigation of the teachers' understanding and definition of the approach. The responses of the 15 respondents to the questionnaire are compared to the investigator's observations of a sample of 5 classrooms and the recorded interviews with a sample of 5 teachers.

This chapter traces the steps followed in the construction and application of the questionnaire and analyses the responses. Through all these steps the general aim of the study and the objectives of the questionnaire in particular are constantly referred to, not only to retain cohesion but also to ensure that the reader is constantly aware and reminded of the aims and objectives, the steps taken to achieve these, and the rationale behind the choices made.

The findings of this second stage of the study are presented in a statistical form where the nature of the questions enabled this. The investigator has, as far as possible, refrained from giving comments on the findings.

5.1 The construction of an accountable questionnaire and its application

There are various possible ways of data collection. Fox, cited in Mkonto (1988, p.46) mentions three of these, namely: measurement, in which the researcher applies some device to the respondent; observation, in which the researcher gathers data by watching the respondent function in the research situation; and

questioning, in which the researcher poses a verbal question or a series of questions to be answered by the respondent.

5.1.1 The questionnaire

Workers in the field of research often group interviews and questionnaires together. Ary (1979) in Mkonto (1988) sees these as means of obtaining information concerning amongst others, facts, beliefs, feelings and intentions. Researchers have emphasised the fact that the basic theme underlying the construction of a good questionnaire or interview schedule is based on the formulation of questions that give maximum opportunity for complete and accurate communication of ideas between the researcher (or interviewer) and the respondent. The three components identified for this communication process are: language, frame of reference and conceptual level of difficulty.

The argument raised here is that for data obtained to be valid the communication should be effective. Effective communication will be that which meets the dictates of the components mentioned above. The investigator took cognisance of this and attempted to ensure that the questions matched the vocabulary level of the participants, were of a shared level of understanding and would as far as possible not evoke differing mental images. Important too is the fact that the researcher should have a clear conception of the problem to be researched and a precise idea of the information to be collected.

5.1.2 Structured and unstructured questionnaire design

An open-ended question can be defined as a question that leaves the respondent free to respond in a relatively unrestricted manner. A closed-ended question on the other hand, would be one which restricts the choice of responses by forcing the respondent to answer in terms of given categories or alternatives.

The appropriateness of using any of the two is determined by the objectives of the researcher, the attributes of the respondents and the nature of the information to be given. It is evident that the use of open-ended questions when the objective is simply to classify individual respondents' attitudes on some clearly defined and understood dimension would be as inappropriate as the use of a closed-ended question when the participants' opinions or views may be varied or even unknown.

In this study a combination of the two types of questions was used largely because:

(a) The possibility existed that the issue raised in the questionnaire could be outside the experiences of some of the respondents and this would result in a blind choice of responses if close-ended questions were used.

(b) The level of information among the respondents could be extremely variable and unknown to the researcher.

(c) The aim of the study necessitated that the respondents be made to recall, re-organise and evaluate personal experiences, all of which could not be achieved by the use of close-ended questions alone.

The investigator was aware of the difficulties associated with the analysis of open-ended questions but felt it would be inexcusable to use close-ended questions simply to avoid such difficulties. Given the possibility that the validity of the findings could be weakened by this limitation, it was decided that interviews be conducted in order to minimise the limitations.

5.1.3 The draft and the pilot study

In an attempt to ensure that the questionnaire elicited responses relevant to the study the following line of action was adopted:

(a) A clear aim of the study was established and a good conception of the issue to be investigated sought.

(b) Informal discussions were held with colleagues to establish the meaningfulness of the issue.

(c) In order to elicit candid responses, respondents were not asked to put their names down. The identity of the respondents could, however, be deduced from the answers to the questions.

(d) A pilot study was conducted on the teachers who would not participate in the study proper.

(e) The responses of the pilot population were analyzed, the necessary changes effected and the final version sent to the actual target population. See Appendix C for the full text of the questionnaire.

5.1.4 Sampling and application

Four questionnaires were delivered to each of the five schools the study covered. They were to be randomly distributed to four English teachers in each school. Having secured the support of the Circuit Inspector and the Subject Adviser the investigator proceeded to the headmasters of the schools. The headmasters then referred the investigator to the H.o.D.s who were equally enthusiastic and offered to issue the questionnaires to the teachers who were willing to participate in the study. In one of the schools the headmaster offered to perform this task himself since the respective H.o.D. was on sick leave. A suitable date on which the completed questionnaires would be collected by the investigator was agreed upon.

Of the 20 questionnaires sent out 15 were returned. This represents a 75% return. Although the return was not 100% the return percentage remains both reasonable and representative of the target population. Since there were 31 teachers in the Circuit covered by the study in 1992 (see Table 1 in Chapter 1), the sample represented almost 50% of the total number of English teachers in this circuit. The teachers who returned the usable questionnaires took their time and their responses were valuable.

The researcher is convinced that the study satisfied the basic sampling procedures in that the area to be covered was clearly demarcated, the test population was identified, the population selected was representative of the total population and the participants were randomly selected. These sampling procedures are identified by Mkonto (1988).

5.1.5 Questionnaire breakdown

As stated in Chapter 1, the questionnaire had a number of objectives with the emphasis set on the teachers' understanding and definition of the approach, the preparation the teachers received from the D.E.T. before or during the introduction, the support they were given and the evaluation conducted in order to ascertain the effectiveness of the implementation process. The rationale behind the choice of an evaluative approach to the study was to raise issues appertaining to the success, or lack thereof, of the C.A. as an innovation, in improving the quality of teaching in the classroom situation.

To analyze the data collected the investigator designed a table in which all the responses to the closed-ended questions were entered. The columns corresponded with the questions in the questionnaire and the responses were entered accordingly. The responses to the open-ended questions were first listed and then summarised by the investigator. The table made data manageable and analysis possible as patterns became noticeable at a glance. Some of the responses have been quoted verbatim to allow the respondents to speak for themselves.

Q.1-3. These questions reflect the respondents' personal details and were later used to identify them. Q.4-8. The main aim was to use these questions to identify the respondents who were in the employ of the D.■.T and involved in the teaching of English sometime during the implementation process.

Q.9-10. The questions gave information on whether the respondents received any training in C.L.T and where they received it. Q.11-14. These questions collected data on the kind of support received, perceptions on the usefulness of textbooks and the quality of the evaluation conducted. Q.15. Question 15 and 18 were aimed at identifying the problems experienced by the teachers but were deliberately separated so that they could serve as distracters to eliminate the possibility that the respondents read the reseacher's goals. Q.16. This question focused on the teachers' understanding and definition of the C.A. Q.17. The question aimed at getting an idea of the other teachers' attitudes towards the approach. Q.19-20. The aim was to examine confidence and get views on how teachers feel English should be taught.

5.1.6 The categories and frequencies of responses.

	categories:	frequencies:
Q.1. Sex:	(i) males	6
	(ii) females	9
Q.2. Age in years:	25-30	7
	31-35	4
	36-40	1
	41-45	3
Q.3. Distribution of nos. of teachers in the 5 schools	1	4
	2	4
	3	3
	4	3
	5	1
Q.4. Teaching experience in D.E.T.	5-17	7
	3-4	5
	2	1

Two of the respondents could not fit in these categories because they had taught in another department and the actual number of years with the D.E.T. could not be accurately determined.

Q.5. Teaching experience in years:

categories:	Frequencies:
2	1
3-5	2
6-10	7
11-15	4
16-20	1

Q.6. Experience in the teaching of English in years:

0-1	1
2-5	7
6-10	6
10-15	1

Q.7-8. These questions were mainly for the easy identification of the respondents. It was noted however, that only 4 of the 15 respondents have taught std.10 in their teaching career. Could this be because schools give the teaching of this level to only a selected few?

Q.9. Only two of the teachers received training from college and University accordingly.

Q.10. Only the 2 teachers who answered yes to 9 (a) above said their training was adequate.

Q.11. (a) Five respondents did not receive follow up after their training in order to assess application. The rest did not respond to the question.

(b) No participant responded to the question.

Q.12. (a) One respondent received materials, eleven did not and three did not respond.

(b) Only the one respondent who answered yes, in 12 (a) above listed the syllabus and guides, the rest either left the space provided blank or put a dash.

Q.13. Responses to the usefulness of the textbook were both positive and negative. The 7 positive responses included such comments as:

(a) it gives ideas for oral communication,
(b) it helps in group discussions,
(c) it has exercises in C.L.T., and
(d) it offers easy and understandable exercises.

The 4 negative responses on the other hand included:

(a) too scanty, not much help, only vocabulary,
(b) helps very little, pupils get bored, and
(c) 'the prescribed textbook has not helped at all.'

Q.14. The materials mentioned and their frequencies are as follows; newspapers and magazines=10, chalk board and charts=1, stories and pictures=1, cassettes, videos and the radio=2 and own literature=1.

Q.15. A11 the respondents save one who did not respond to the question said something positive about their pupils. Answers included such descriptive words as: co-operative, good, positive, well, active interested and so on. Three respondents added qualifying statements such as this one: 'positive sometimes indifferent in some classes.'

Q.16. Responses to this question showed a very shallow understanding of the C.A.and how it differs from the traditional approaches to language teaching. Five participants did not respond to the question. The following were some of the comments given: C. L. T. increases pupil participation, it is time consuming and tedious and pupils become involved. One of the

responses is worth quoting: "it requires energy, imagination and enthusiasm, the teacher gives up dictatorial powers." This was the only response which focused on the role of the teacher.

Note. The investigator doubted if this question had been well understood and consequently rephrased it and left it more open-ended in the interview.

Q.17. Responses showed that teachers have a positive attitude towards the approach and see it as 'productive, effective and helping the pupils.' One somewhat different response is worth quoting though; 'Teachers feel threatened 'cause it is new and means moving away from the known.'

Q.18. The problems have been grouped into two. Nine respondents focused on pupils. Their responses included such problems as, pupil passivity, lack of co-operation, shyness, resistance to speak in the language or silence. The other problems have to do with the teachers' perceptions of the C.A.. These include comments like, it means less work for pupils which is seen to result in poor language use and, that C.L.T. means few grammar exercises. One respondent said that the pupils were nervous at first but gradually became positive.

Q.19. Nine respondents perceived themselves as proficient, one as not proficient, one was not sure and four did not respond.

Q.20. Suggestions on how English should be taught showed a fascinating relation to the problems raised earlier on and seemed to concentrate on immediate, practical solutions. These can be summarised as follows:

(a) C.L.T. should be introduced at primary schools.
(b) Special courses and workshops should be arranged for teachers to improve their knowledge and share ideas.
(c) More time should be given to the teaching of English.
(d) More oral work should kle given.

(e) The department should supply teachers with materials.

One interesting comment made by a respondent with fourteen years' teaching experience was that more teaching of grammar and drillwork was necessary.

Conclusion

Although some of the responses may appear simplistic and perhaps naive the investigator believes that they reflect the teachers' understanding of the C.A., their genuine feelings and attitudes towards it and are based on their practical experiences in the classrooms. The suggestions raised may not be the best but their sincerity is unquestionable and if they are short sighted it is indeed a reflection not on the teachers as such but on the quality of the planning and the general monitoring and management of the introduction of so fundamental an innovation.

CHAPTER 6

CLASSROOM INTERACTION PATTERNS OBSERVED

Introduction

The third stage of the study consisted of the observation of verbal interactions in the classroom situation. To compare the official version and the teachers' understanding of the C.A. it was necessary to examine the interaction patterns in the classroom where the change was meant to impact.

Although only two lessons per class were observed and only the observations of the second lessons were recorded, the researcher feels fairly confident that these were typical lessons.

6.1 The observation method adopted

Croll (1986) identifies two kinds of approaches a researcher can employ to collect data through observation. In the systematic approach the observer or observers devise a systematic set of rules of recording and classifying classroom events. This technique is sometimes referred to as the objective approach. The results of the research exercise are often presented or reported in numerical or quantitative terms. In the second approach, which is associated with ethnographic or qualitative techniques on the other hand, the observer attempts to arrive at the social processes in the classroom for the subjects being observed, and conveys this by means of field notes and verbatim accounts of selected episodes rather than by quantitative analysis.

Proponents of these paradigms have defended the paradigm within which they work whilst seeking every possible reason to criticise the other. The question of the validity of the findings has always been central in debates and arguments.

Although Croll (1986) commits himself to the systematic approach, he hastens to add that some research problems may be better tackled by ethnographic than by systematic methods.

Though aware of and appreciating the controversy surrounding the use of the ethnographic methods in classroom observation, the investigator was convinced that this was the best method by which data relevant to the aims of this study could be collated. Arguing in defence of the ethnographic methods of research Holy (1984,p.18.) cites Kaplan (1964) as saying:

> We do not observe everything that is there to be seen. An observation is made, it is the product of an active choice not a passive exposure. Observing is a goal directed behaviour, an observation report is significant on the basis of a presumed relation to a goal.

The emphasis is on the goals and the use of the problem as the guide. Ethnographic studies should not, it is argued, imply a sacrifice of the undirected and open-ended nature of observations of this kind. As was argued in chapter 5 in describing the construction of the questionnaire, the observer in this study remained constantly aware of the fact that he could not, a priori, state with any certainty all the events to be expected in the classroom. For this reason non-participant observation became an obvious choice for a study of this kind. This should not, however, be read to imply that the observation had no focus, direction or structure.

The findings of the questionnaire were used to give structure to the observation without seriously affecting the open-ended nature of the observations. The decision to observe lessons had in any event been partly prompted by a realization of the limitations associated with such self=report methods as the questionnaire.

Borg and Gall (1983) state that sometimes respondents cannot accurately recall events and aspects of their behaviour. Observations of an ethnographic nature can overcome these limitations.

The limitations of this method were not ignored either. Aware of the possibility that his presence might have changed the situation to be observed, the observer decided to conduct interviews with the teachers whose classes had been observed. This offered an opportunity to test any conclusion the observer could have erroneously arrived at, thereby overcoming the limitation.

6.2 Observation tools used

Anderson and Burns (1989) identify some of the instruments which are at the disposal of the researcher intent on the observation of classrooms. These include:

(a) Categories to focus on, and rating scales which are used to record observational information,

(b) video or audio-tape recordings which are used to record verbal interactions which are then later transcribed, and

(c) The taking of notes on things interesting to the observer.

In this study both (c) and (b) were used. This step was taken in order to retain the strengths of each method at the same time reducing the effects of the limitations known to be associated with each of them. This turned out to have been a useful decision because the recorded data enabled the researcher to have reliable extracts which could be quoted verbatim thus improving validity.

6.3 The observed sample

A sample of five teachers was selected from the fifteen who responded to the questionnaire. The investigator used the information on the personal particulars of the respondents (questions 1-3) and the standards they were teaching (question 7)

to identify the participants whose responses would contribute most towards the achievement of the aims of the study.

Before the criteria which were used to select the interviewees are given, it needs to be explained that interviewees were drawn from only four of the five schools involved in the study. The fifth school was not included because it was the school in which the researcher was employed as deputy principal. It was felt that since the investigator was in an authority position in this school, this would adversely affect the findings in at least three possible ways:

(a) The teacher approached to participate in the interview could possibly interpret this as an order,
(b) the presence of the investigator could change the situation observed even more, and
(c) the possibility of bias could not be ruled out.

Interviewees were selected as follows:

Reason for the selection.		Number.
(a)	Teachers who had been with the D.E.T. for four years and more.	2
(b)	Had been with D.E.T. for two years but received training in C.L.T.	2
(c)	Had been with the D.E.T. for three years but gave 'interesting' responses.	1

Note: The fifth interviewee is the one who emphatically stated that the textbook does not help and showed a deeper understanding of the C.A. even though she received no training in the approach (question 9.a. of the questionnaire).

Having approached the principals of the schools again, the teachers were visited and asked if they would be willing to participate and have their lessons recorded. All the teachers

expressed their willingness to co-operate and together the details of the exercise were worked out.

The classes to be observed were selected randomly. The fact that the investigator was also a teacher at the time necessitated that only the classes which coincided with his non-teaching periods could be involved in the study. This inadvertently prevented the teachers from choosing their' best' classes to participate.

This third stage began approximately two weeks after the analysis of the questionnaires had been done. It consisted of at least two non-interventionist observational visits to the classrooms of the selected teachers.

The initial visit was meant to serve three purposes. Firstly, it was hoped that the visit would minimise the situational change of the classrooms because the actual recording was only done on the second visit. Secondly, the investigator obtained an opportunity to test the feasibility of the exercise. Thirdly, it served as some kind of a pre-run exercise in observational techniques, particularly note taking and the transcription of data.

6.4 The structure of the observations

As was mentioned in 6.1 the observations centred around certain issues which had been highlighted by the questionnaire.

(a) Amount of teacher talk

The investigator intended to assess the extent to which Ward's (1984) statement, that language classes today are no less traditional and teacher-centred, would be applicable to the lessons to be observed.

(b) The type of questions used

Ward (1984) also argues that teachers use a deficient teaching method, in that the communication in classrooms is typical of that found in court rooms (see Chapter 1). Such practice if prevailing would be a disregard of the principles of the C.A. and the aims of the innovators.

(c) Pupil response and pupil passivity

The apparent contradiction showed by the responses of the participants, to questions 15 and 18 of the questionnaire, struck the investigator as odd and necessitating further investigation. Whereas 14 of the 15 respondents had described their pupils as co-operative, responsive and enthusiastic in question 15, passivity, silence, lack of co-operation and resistance to speak were mentioned by 9 of the 11 participants who responded to question 18. Since the possibility existed that the question could have been understood differently by the respondents, it was believed that a conscious observation of this aspect would result in much-needed clarity.

(d) The use of other materials

The researcher hoped to see the materials mentioned by the 12 respondents to the questionnaire in use.

(e) The use of the textbook

The general impression gained was that teachers found textbooks useful in teaching communicatively. The aim was to examine the manner in which the textbooks were used in the classrooms. The response of the one teacher mentioned in 6.1 also aroused interest. This respondent emphatically stated that the textbook had not helped at all.

6.5 Observation report

The 35-minutes-long lessons were observed and recorded, the notes and the recordings compared and conclusions drawn. The age of the pupils was not taken as a significant attribute for the purposes of this study. It will be noticed that the numbers of pupils in each of these classes are not as large as estimated in Chapter 1. Two reasons which account for this discrepancy, can be advanced. Firstly, the official statistics reflect the position as at the beginning of the year and consequently include school drop-outs. Secondly, it will be noticed that boys are remarkably fewer in these classes, and this is due to the fact that the schools are situated in the area which had been affected by violence. Boys are often the most affected by such disruptions.

6.5.1 Lesson 1: This is a standard 7 class of 9 boys and 29 girls. The teacher has 8 years' teaching experience and four years in the teaching of English. The lesson topic is 'Idiomatic expressions, the use of get- and break-.'

Activity 1: The teacher reads questions in exercise one of the textbook, New Horizon Std.7, and pupils raise hands if they know the answer. The teacher points at one of them. If the answer given is correct, it is repeated by the teacher to the class, but if it is wrong the teacher answers 'no', and gives the turn to the next pupil.

Activity 2: Pupils work in pairs to complete exercise 2, a substitution table and a sentence completion exercise.

Activity 3: The teacher reads exercise 2 questions and pupils respond in chorus. The first three questions are done and the bell rings for the end of the lesson. Exercise 2 and 3 are to be done as written home work. Language errors are corrected as they occur.

6.5.2 Lesson 2: standard 9 class of 12 boys and 18 girls. The teacher has nine years· teaching experience and nine in the

teaching of English. It is a literature lesson and the class is reading a short play.

Activit 1: Pupils take turns reading as characters in the play. The teacher stops them occasionally to explain a word, correct pronunciation errors or give a summar of what has been read. The lesson is interspersed with questions which link what is read in this lesson to what went on before. All small prints, such as stage directions are read by the teacher. Parts of the play excite the class and roars of laughter punctuate the reading. In one example a boy is reading as Japhet, one of the characters in the play. The boy has to mimic a woman's voice as Japhet does in the play.

Japhet: You (the husband) have a good time with your girl friends all I get is hard work and babies. [The class laughs and the teacher reads again and asks if this is real. Boys shout 'no' whilst the girls scream 'yes'. The teacher responds: 'some say yes some say no, ok, continue. This activity goes on for the whole 35 minutes.'

6.5.3 Lesson 3: A standard nine class of 8 boys and 26 girls. The lesson topic is 'The direct and indirect speech.' It is a revision lesson, and the teacher has two years' teaching experience as well as in the teaching of English.

Activit 1: The teacher writes the lesson topic on the board and asks the class for the difference between the two. No pupil raises a hand, and she writes two sentences, one in the direct and the other in the indirect speech. Pupils raise hands but the only differences they give are the observable ones such as punctuation. Disappointed, she gives the definition: 'words said by the speaker are in the direct speech and those reported by someone else are in the indirect speech. It is interesting to note that no explanation is given as to when and how the two are used. Sentences are written on the board and pupils with the assistance of the teacher struggle to change them accordingly.

6.5.4 Lesson 4: A standard seven class of three boys and eighteen girls. The teacher has six years' teaching experience and has been teaching English for all these years. The lesson topic is 'The expressions', a revision lesson and the textbook is Successful English Std. 7.

Activity 1: The teacher reminds the class that expressions are normally followed by the infinitive and writes examples on the board, examples: 'He was too honest to tell a lie'. The teacher asks which words are infinitives. Pupils raise hands. One is asked to give the answer and the teacher turns to the board to write another sentence. Chaos reigns as the girls eat, laugh and talk whilst the teacher has his back to the class. The next sentence is 'The food is too good for us to waste',and the same process is followed.

Activity 2: (a) Teacher explains the use of countable and uncountable nouns (underlined words are original). From the lesson it is not apparent what these are. It is obvious that the teacher is not certain of these concepts either, as it will be shown in the next quote (6.6.1 (e)), where completely different words (accountable and unaccountable nouns) are used to refer to the same nouns taught in the lesson. (b) Sentences with a missing expression are written on the board and pupils are asked to complete them orally. The activity continues to the end of the lesson.

6.5.5 Lesson 5: A standard eight class of 13 boys and 27 girls. The teacher has three years' teaching experience and has always taught English. The lesson topic is 'Creative writing.'

Activity 1: The teacher tells the class to close their eyes and listen to the song 'Don't pay the ferry man'. When the song comes to the end she tells them that she has the words of the song and projects them on the screen. The tune is played again and the class soon joins in the singing.

Activity 2: The teacher asks questions based on the song. Example: What did you imagine when you heard the song? The question prompts a number of different views which the teacher accepts. The vocabulary is given to the pupils.

Activity 3: Pupils are told to get into groups of five and discuss the questions on the board. Each group is asked to choose a scribe and a spokesperson and is told that a group mark will be allocated. The questions generate discussion which in some groups develops into a debate. At the end of the period the class is told that each group will present their views in the next lesson. The investigator noted that the pupils were involved but their conversations were largely in their first language, although the writing was in the second language.

6.6 Interpretation and comments

The observations and to some extent the questionnaires prompted the conclusions below with regard to the extent to which the English lessons approximate the 'official' version of the C.A.

6.6.1 The role of the teacher:

(a) Teacher pupil relationship.

In all four of the lessons observed the teacher assumed the role of the 'knower', characteristic of the traditional approaches to language teaching. Only the fifth teacher played a role closer to that of the facilitator of classroom activities. In at least this single aspect classroom practice was shown to be far from the principles held by both the advocates of the C.A. and the D.E.T.'s curriculum developers.

(b) Amount of teacher talk

It was also evident that at least four of the teachers observed still dominate the lessons and do most of the talking. Although

an interactional analysis schedule was not used, the investigator believes that if it had been used, the findings would not have been any different from the 75% Flanders and Barnes arrived at (Ward 1984).

(c) The type of questions

The type of communication in four of the lessons observed was found to be similar to what Ward (1984) referred to as the language of classrooms and court rooms. Teachers asked questions for which they already knew the answers and as shown in one of the lessons very often teachers did not take the responsibility of explaining why a pupil's response was incorrect but instead they turned to the next pupil until the correct answer was given. This is quite unfortunate because Ward (1984) argues that numerous studies have shown that communication is enhanced only if teachers use referential questions.

In four of the lessons observed the pupils were not given an opportunity to evaluate and synthesize, processes which are characteristic of their everyday real life communication. If another study were to find the communicative ability of the pupils in these classes to be weak, one would not hesitate to attribute this, at least in part, a major part at that, to the interrogative character of classroom interaction.

(d) Pupil activity and pupil response.

The investigator observed that contrary to the responses of most teachers to question 15 of the questionnaire the pupils in the classes observed could not be described as responsive, active or enthusiastic. Although a few seemed involved, most of the pupils appeared either confused, uninterested or having a 'good time' engaged in activities other than the one the teacher expected them to be engaged in. This was more obvious in lesson 4 above. A verbatim quotation of part of this lesson will help clarify this point. The teacher has explained the use of -a little- and

the rest of the interaction goes on like this:

Teacher: When do we use this expression -a little ?
[silence]
Teacher: In what types of nouns do we use this two expression?
[silence]
Teacher: There are <u>accountable</u> and <u>unaccountable</u> nouns, now when do we use this (pointing on the board) a little?
[silence and some giggles]
Teacher: Accountable or unaccountable nouns?
Class in chorus: Accountable nouns, one girl at the back responds along with the others,'accountable or unaccountable nouns.'
[Laughter]
Teacher: One at a time.
[Note: Underlined words are original quotes which as mentioned earlier show confusion and a clear lack of understanding.

It would be true to say pupils enjoyed this lesson because they were making fun of the teaching situation but it is doubtful whether this is what the respondents to the questionnaire really meant. Interesting to note is that the lesson was conducted by a teacher who according to the questionnaire received training in C.L.T. and feels confident about his or her proficiency.

(e) <u>The use of other materials</u>

Whereas the observer expected to see some of the materials mentioned in the questionnaire used in the lessons, it was only in lesson 5 that some of these were used.

(f) <u>The use of the textbook</u>

Howatt (1984) argues that because C.L.T. demands near-native competence, teachers who cannot cope evade this by sticking to the textbook. The lessons observed seem to confirm this viewpoint, although it should be pointed out that in doing so

teachers are actually complying with a departmental instruction.

6.6.2 Principles of the C.A. in the classroom

It was evident that the teaching methods employed by the four teachers are typical of the structural approaches to language teaching, if not worse. Three of the teachers were quite explicit about the language structures they were teaching and drilled them for the whole lesson time. One wonders to what extent the textbooks and the manner in which they are used promote this.

The teachers did not create a communicative environment and even as this opportunity brought itself up in the course of one of the lessons the teacher did not use it (see lesson 2). In all four of the observed lessons an emphasis on the correctness of grammatical structures and pronunciation was evident. These lessons could not have been any less commnicative. The investigator became convinced that the teachers do not undersatnd the C.A. nor are they acquainted with its principles and this is reflected in the interaction patterns observed in their lessons.

The picture painted above is tragic if we consider the fact that studies have shown that intercation patterns such as the ones observed in these lessons do not promote communicative competence nor enhance cognitive development. It would, however, be most unfortunate if teachers and pupils were to be unaware of the enormity of the problem. It is the investigator's view that this vicious cycle which never gets broken prevails because people come through this system and perpetuate it simply because they do not know any better.

CHAPTER 7

TEACHER PERCEPTIONS AND THE CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS: A COMPARISON

Introduction

The fourth stage of the study consisted of interviews with the five teachers whose classes had been observed. The aim of this final stage was to consolidate the findings and conclusions reached at earlier stages.

7.1 The construction of the interview schedule

The considerations taken into account in the construction of the questionnaire, as outlined in chapter 5, were equally applied in the construction of the interview schedule. The guiding principle was that the communication had to be effective and accurate. The choice of questions was determined largely by the fact that the interviewer aimed at assessing the quality of training the teachers received in their pre-service and in-service training and the depth of their understanding of the tenets of the communicative approach to language teaching.

Important too was a follow-up on the contradictions in responses to questions 15 and 18 as detailed in the previous chapter. It was hoped that a discussion of the teachers' problems would give further clarity on this issue. The interviewees were also to be given an opportunity to give their suggestions on how the quality of classroom teaching could be improved. Mahlangu (1987, p.87) quotes Connell and Kahn, as saying:

> An interview is a two person conversation initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining research-relevant information.

The following steps were taken in order to ensure that the interview schedule was a reliable research instrument:

(a) Available literature on research methods and interviewing in particular was widely read.

(b) The interview schedule was piloted on a sample of two teachers who were representative of the test population but not part of the actual sample.

(c) The questions were kept as few and as short as possible to avoid boredom.

(d) The researcher solicited the opinions of two skilled researchers before the final schedule was applied.

(e) Four of the interviews conducted were recorded with the permission of the interviewees.

7.2 Structured or unstructured interviews

In the structured interview the interviewer prepares an interview schedule which determines the pattern the interview will follow. The questions included in the schedule are asked in the order determined by the interviewer and the coding or categorising of the answers is determined in advance.

In the unstructured interview on the other hand, the interviewer is not as restricted as is the case in the structured interview. Even though a set of questions may be set in advance, the choice of the wording of the questions and the order of asking them is left to the discretion of the person conducting the interview.

In this study the investigator chose the use of the unstructured interview. The aim was to leave the questions as open-ended as possible for the interviewees to express their feeling, opinions, and attitudes freely. The interviewer used his discretion in deciding upon the order in which the questions were asked and the amount of probing necessary. The interviewees were also allowed to determine the course and direction of the interview so long as this did not distract from the aims of the study.

7.3 Sampling and application

The sample consisted of the respondents who had participated in the third stage of the study (classroom observation). The use of the same respondents-made the comparison of perceptions against observable practical behaviour possible. Where possible the interviews were conducted on the same day on which the observations were carried out. Two major advantages flowed from this. Firstly, the interviewees were able to use the observed lessons as examples. Secondly, the investigator could use the interview to establish whether the teaching methods observed in the lessons could be viewed as representative of daily classroom activities and interactions.

7.4 Interview schedule breakdown and comments

As was stated towards the end of Chapter 1, the aims of the interviews were the illumination of issues raised by the questionnaire, an assessment of the teachers' understanding of the C.A. and an arrival at the teachers' perceptions of their classroom practices. The decision to adopt these aims was prompted by a conviction that, for any educational innovation to be successfully implemented, the teachers should have a clear conception of what is expected of them, have the skills necessary for the implementation, have the materials needed, arrangements be made for dealing with predictable problems, mechanisms be set for the teachers to feedback their problems and experiences and most important, constant monitoring or evaluation of the process be organised and carried out. Note: See Appendix D for a full text of the interview schedule.

Q.1 Review of the pre-service training

This question was aimed at examining the focus and thrust of the pre-service training received by the teachers. The importance of establishing a firm background at this early stage can not be over emphasised. Krashen (1987) argues that the failure of the

Transformational-Grammar approach was due to the fact that its implementation moved straight from theory to practice, with the result that teachers felt unprepared.

Q.2. The details of in-service training received

Bearing in mind the problems facing the teacher, as outlined by Murray (1991), and mentioned in Chapter 2 of this work, it became crucial to ascertain whether adequate attempts were made to change the teachers' conceptions of knowledge, education and their role in the classroom. Properly planned and controlled in-service training of teachers remains an invaluable avenue by which this end can be reached.

Q.3. Understanding of the C.A.

Question 3 was included in order to clarify the uncertainties which were created by the teachers' responses to the questionnaire. Some understanding of the approach and its principles is significant if the teachers are to be able to implement these and reflect on their teaching to develop as E.S.L. teachers within the communicative paradigm.

Q.4. How the syllabus has helped

The primary aim of including this question was to examine the effectiveness of the strategy adopted by the D.E.T. in introducing the C.A.. The teachers' major source of information on the C.A., and indeed on any other aspect pertaining to their classroom practice, is the syllabus. As shown in Chapter 4, this document is the vehicle through which the curriculum developers hoped to change the teaching methods used by the teachers, thereby impacting on the classroom and improving the quality of the teaching of English in African schools. This question assessed the teachers' understanding of the contents of this document and its usefulness in assisting them towards the achievement of its stated aims and objectives.

Q.5. Pupil passivity as a problem

The question aimed at focusing the interviewee's attention on a single problem which had been mentioned by most respondents to the questionnaire. The presence of a problem of this nature would indicate a confirmation of research findings which have shown that deficient teaching methods lead to pupil demotivation, the development of a negative attitude and decreased fluency (Ward, 1984).

Q.6. The interviewees' own suggestions

Having looked at the quality of training, the support given during the implementation and the problems experienced in the class, the interviewees were given a chance to raise their suggestions on how the situation within their classrooms could be improved. The investigator respects and places great value on the suggestions of the teachers as practitioners.

7.5 The interview report

A summary of the responses to the questions is given below. Some of the responses have been quoted to allow the interviewees to speak for themselves.

Q.1. Qualifications: Two of the interviewees hold university degrees with majors in English and the other three hold three year diplomas with English as a specialization subject, obtained from the Colleges of Education. Responses to this question varied but repeated mention of the child-centred approach in language teaching was made. The fifth interviewee trained within a first language environment and, 'although no mention was made of C.L.T.' in her training, the concepts she used were akin and at times similar to those used in this paradigm.

Q.2. In-service training

All interviewees did not receive any in-service-training or attend any course in the teaching of English since they started working as teachers.

Q.3. The understanding of the C.A.

Responses to this question revealed a very shallow understanding of the C.A.. For most of the respondents C.L.T. is equivalent to oral. One interviewee said 'it means getting pupils in groups and making them talk. ' Asked what she meant by 'making them' talk she could not explain, she went on to give the problems she encounters in trying 'to make them talk.'

The respondents did not show a clear understanding of their role in a communicative classroom. Faced with the question on what he perceived his role to be one interviewee responded with this question; "What in actual fact is this C.L.T.?" This was notwithstanding the fact that this respondent had initially claimed to be teaching communicatively. Two of the respondents did, however, show a clearer, though not precise, understanding of the approach and their responses are worth quoting too:

Teacher. 1 "It means pupils learning the language in use and no formal teaching of grammar"

Teacher. 2 "I think we got to work towards pointing out grammar without teaching grammar lessons."

It is the investigator's view that although some studies have shown that knowledge of the principles alone is no guarantee for a successful implementation, success cannot be achieved without some knowledge and clarity on the principles. If teachers are to change their tried and tested teaching methods they must be convinced of the benefits to accrue from such a 'sacrifice'. Perhaps the teacher's ear should first be left to the persuasive voice of the tenets of the approach.

Q.4. How the syllabus has helped

Responses revealed that teachers are not acquainted with the contents of the syllabus. One interviewee responded confidently and emphatically to this question claiming that, 'the syllabus does not correlate with classroom practice because it emphasises the teaching of grammar. ' This is, as shown in the examination of the official documents, far from the truth and shows the teacher's ignorance and unfamiliarity with the contents of the revised syllabus some six years after the implementation date. It appeared as though teachers either have no respect for this document or they resent it. This comment by one of the interviewees demonstrates this point quite clearly:

> "Truly speaking I have not bothered about it (the syllabus) I just do it my own way."

This is indeed an unfortunate situation if we consider the fact that this is the officially trusted document.

These conclusions gain more substance if we note that, in their responses to question 12 a-c of the questionnaire, all but one respondent failed to mention the syllabus as material issued by the D.E.T. to help English teachers teach communicatively.

Q.5. Pupil passivity as a problem

Four interviewees shared this problem and said their pupils are not prepared to experiment with the language. They continued to say that even where an attempt is made this is confined to the English lesson and English is not used outside the classroom. Other subject teachers were blamed for this situation. The interviewees argued that these teachers do not hesitate to teach their content subjects in the mother tongue.

The fifth interviewee, on the other hand, said that her pupils were nervous at first but gradually gained confidence and

enthusiasm. She agreed, however, that pupil to pupil interactions were mostly in mother tongue (the teacher is an English first language speaker who does not speak her pupils' first language.)

Interviewees could not enunciate the attempts they have made to solve the problem. They raised problems which interfered with their efforts instead. These can be summarised as follows:

(a) Pupils are used to spoon feeding and rote learning.
(b) Classes are too big and group work can not be monitored.
(c) Pupils who try to use English are ridiculed and laughed at. In one of the schools such pupils are called 'Margaret Thatchers'.
(d) Group work gets dominated by a few 'good ones.'
(e) Pupils can not think creatively.

The seriousness of this problem was evident and the teachers' concern about it clear. Unfortunately though, teachers seem resigned to their fate and are unable to ponder the means and ways of bettering their lot. This is the wailing voice of the dedicated but helpless teachers, ill-equipped and lacking the necessary skills to extricate themselves from the entanglement they find themselves in.

Q.6. <u>The interviewees' own suggestions.</u>

Once again the responses were quite similar to the suggestions raised in question 20 of the questionnaire. We can only restate them at the risk of being repetitive. The one point which may need restating is that interviewees seemed to feel that pupils come to the secondary school unprepared for the sudden leap into secondary school demands. This was reiterated even as the interviewees had indicated to the interviewer that they actually did not know what is done in the primary schools.

One striking realisation made was that teachers remain favourably disposed towards the approach in spite of the problems they have encountered. This could be, as Krashen (1987) points out, because

they feel that the failure of the innovation is due to their ignorance. This view was confirmed in a comment by one of the interviewees on the effectiveness of the use of the approach in African schools. He responded thus:

"It is good, very good, if only it can be done correctly."

By clarifying areas which the questionnaire and the observations had raised the interviews enabled the investigator to arrive at and confirm a few conclusions. It is possible at this stage to say with some confidence that the implementation of the C.A., in Secondary schools within D.E.T. (those schools covered by the study that is) approximately seven years ago, has been a failure if not a disaster.

It has been shown here that so many years from the date of implementation, teachers are still not clear of what is expected of them. This is to be expected since they received no effective training in the approach before and after their qualifying as teachers and subsequent employment by the D.E.T.. The failure of the innovation is also not a surprise if we consider that teachers are not familiar with the contents of their only major source of information, the syllabus. Their life is that of miserable creatures doing all they can to get through each day in the midst of unco-operative, demotivated pupils.

CHAPTER 8

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The researcher's intent had been to analyze the implementation of the C.A. in D.E.T. secondary schools with a view to examining the extent to which the approach has permeated and informed classroom practice.

In order to achieve this aim, the official documents were examined to determine the official version adopted and the strategies employed in its introduction. Believing in the centrality of the teacher's role in the implementation of educational innovations, the study then focused on the teachers' understanding and definition of the approach which was officially intended to make them change their teaching methods. Insight into this aspect was gained through the teachers' verbalization of their perceptions which were then compared with the observations of interaction patterns inside their classrooms.

In this chapter the researcher revisits the findings of the study in order to give a summary and to highlight the conclusions which can be drawn from them. The strategy adopted has been to juxtapose the intended situation with the present or prevailing situation. Possible reasons for the discrepancies noted are then advanced. The researcher also sketches two scenarios which give perspective to his views and suggestions. The obvious limitations of the study are acknowledged and areas for further research are suggested.

8.1 The intended situation

The examination of the official documents gave a glimpse of the aims of the curriculum developers. The examination found that the D.E.T. certainly did adopt and introduce the C.A. in secondary schools. It was also clear that the version adopted was closer

to the one detailed in Chapter 3 of this work. It was also shown that through the use of policy documents, the chief one being the syllabus, and the supply of departmentally approved textbooks the curriculum developers hoped to appeal to the rationality and intelligence of the teachers for the innovation eventually to reach the classroom situation.

The assumtion held was the this strategy would successfully persuade the teachers to embrace and sympathise with the approach enough for them to change thair teaching methods amd roles in the classroom. The aim of the introduction of the C.A. is perceived in the broad terms which go beyond the confines of the English lassroom and the school life of the pupils. Thr ultimate aim is for E.S.L. teaching to impact on society, because as stated in the syllabuses the concern is with 'English as means of communication in our multi-lingual society.'

The teacher is also viewed as a responsible professional whose creativity and dynamism should not be restricted by the syllabus. The policy objective of the syllabus states that the teachers should use all the opportunities that come their way in order to foster communicative competence, even if these may not be specified in the syllabus.

The two statements above evidently suggest at least two criteria which can be used to assess the success of the innovation. The first would be to examine the extent to which teachers use the textbooks and their creativity to foster the development of their pupil's communicative competence. The second, and perhaps not so easy to evaluate, is whether classroom activities do in fact equip the learners with the competence they need for effective communication in our multi-lingual society.

8.2. The present position.

The findings of this study suggest that the teaching method employed by the teachers does not foster the development of

communicative competence. The observations showed that the method used by the teachers is characteristic of the instructional approach to language teaching. John (1993) states that Sinclair and Coulthard, call this method the initiation-response-feedback (I.R.F.) method of language teaching. In the I.R.F. the teacher stands in front of the class, conducting instruction by means of lengthy informing moves, interspersed with questioning (John 1993, p.2).

The observed lessons also shared most of the characteristic traits of the deficient method of language teaching. John (1993) identifies some of these as follows:

(a) The teacher dominates the content of talk and the way talk progresses.
(b) The teacher asks 'known information' questions and closed questions.
(c) The teacher functions as assessor.
(d) Pupil speech acts are limited to the role of responder.
(e) Pupils produce isolated sentences.
(f) Pupils are relieved of the responsibility of operating in a normal speech exchange system.
(g) Pupils develop strategies for answering questions.
(h) The whole heterogenous group covers the same ground, at the same pace, via the same approach.
(i) Learners do not get enough time to practice the new language.

Studies conducted by Ellis (1981), Cathcart (1986) and Mitchell (1988) quoted in Chapter 3 (see 3.2.4.) all showed that where teachers dominate the interaction in the classroom the pupils become communicatively deficient. There seems to be enough evidence for the researcher to conclude that the pupils in the classrooms observed and indeed all others in which the same method is employed, are not being prepared for effective communication in our multi-lingual society. John (1993,p.1) quotes Allwright as saying:

> There is no point in being 'for' or 'against' classroom interaction as it is an inescapable and inescapably crucial aspect of classroom life in the most general sense ... All classroom pedagogy proceeds, necessarily, via a process of interaction, and can proceed only in this way.

The available evidence eventually draws us to the regrettable and painful realisation that the implementation of the C.A. failed.

8.3 Possible reasons

Literature on the evaluation of innovations advances several reasons why innovations fail. A few of the reasons will be suggested here. For convenience the reasons have been divided into those related to the curriculum developers, the teachers as the innovation users, and the pupils as role players in the classroom situation.

8.3.1 Curriculum planners and developers

In Chapter 4 we drew parallels between the Cambire innovation evaluation conducted by Gross et.al. (1971). The similarities drawn now lead us to the conclusion that the findings of one should be equally applicable to the other.

The D.E.T. curriculum developers adopted strategies which appealed because of their simplicity, and allowed a search for a 'quick-fix' solution to override a concern for the implementation of a lasting self-sustaining innovation. As shown in Chapter 4 the normative-re-educative strategies, though time consuming, have been shown to be the most effective in introducing self-sustaining innovations where teachers have to change their roles, attitudes, behaviours and relationships.

Similar to the findings of the study conducted to evaluate the Cambire innovation, the teachers who were involved in this study

showed a lack of understanding of what is expected of them, a possession of insufficient and inadequate materials. Teachers in the project had no mechanisms by which they could feed back their experiences and difficulties. These are some of the reasons which made the evaluators of the Cambire innovation conclude that the innovator had shown a simplistic view of the implementation process and a lack of awareness of his responsibilities.

Studies have also shown that innovators tend to suggest an innovation and then leave the implementation process in the hands of inadequately prepared users. This has been found to be another factor which crippled the implementation of the C.A. in D.E.T. secondary schools. The study could not find any evidence which pointed to the effective monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the C.A..

Situation analysis should have shown the innovators just how much the cultural history of the target group would militate against an innovation of this kind. In a culture where authority relationships are ascribed and determined by seniority, an innovation which threatens to challenge existing authority relationships, as the C.A. does, would demand greater caution and sensitivity. As mentioned in Chapter 2 of this work, the conclusion we can draw from this situation is not very far from what Howatt (1984) calls, an over-enthusiastic promotion of 'packaged' methods originally devised for quite different circumstances. We seem to have been trapped into this tendency to be found in third world countries which he warned us against.

The observation made by Nuttall and Murray (1986) that the language of our pupils after years of teaching remain extremely modest and certainly not commensurate with the time and effort expended on language teaching programmes is painfully true. The researcher in this instance has attempted to avoid the deterministic approach adopted by the Cambire study evaluators, who attributed the overall failure of the implementation to the innovator. Such a view would unfortunately be too simplistic in

this occassion. This does not however relieve the innovators of their share of the blame for the failure of the implementation of the C.A..

Innovators should from the conception stage be aware of the costs, in terms of effort, time, money and the quality of education, their attempts entail. It is a sad and tragic reality that as noted in Chapter 4 poor innovation management results in a poorer quality of education because the desired improvement does not become a reality.

8.3.2 Teachers as the innovation users

Commenting on the role of the teacher in curriculum development Van Vuuren (1991) asks if teachers can come in from the cold. She notes that in the present notorious top-down system:

> teachers either dutifully administer existing syllabi even when they see shortcomings (and grumble helplessly about what happens in public examinations), or at best do their own thing - in which case they may find their students at a disadvantage in the final examinations. (Van Vuuren 1991, p.11)

There are two questions to ask here. The first question would be to ask if public examinations do really present as many problems for the teacher intent on teaching communicatively as we are made to believe. The second question appeals more to the teacher's conscience and moral obligation. All things being equal, which of the two teachers described above is doing the best for the pupils in his/her care ?

With regard to the first question, it is the researcher's strong feeling that the gripe about syllabus and public examination constraints is more an excuse than a justifiable complaint, especially with regard to language teaching. Firstly, the teacher

committed to the C.A. could take advantage of the first three years of secondary school where syllabus and examination restriction are not as stringent. Greater latitude exists for the dedicated teacher, and examinations present little or no constraints on the teacher at this level.

Secondly, as noted in Chapter 1 and Chapter 4, one of the strategies adopted by the D.E.T. was to use the examinations to persuade and compel teachers to adopt teaching methods propagated by the C.A..

The unfortunate reality has been that, whilst assessment has moved towards a communicative paradigm, teachers have obstinately remained within their more secure traditional methods of language teaching. The resulting mis-match has been reflected in poor pupil performance in creative communicative tasks. In the third place one could answer in the form of a question. What have teachers, as dedicated and committed professionals, done to challenge and change the present system? Is it enough to plod along and grumble helplessly?

In as far as the second question is concerned, my choice would obviously be the second teacher identified by Van Vuuren because s/he gives evidence of teaching independently.

The fifth teacher in the sample, quoted in the second and fourth stages of this study, is a typical example of this type. It is consequently not surprising that her pupils, 'though nervous at first, gradually became more confident and communicatively competent.' In the end it is the pupils' communicative competence which should determine our teaching methods. The researcher also fails to see how a communicatively competent pupil can fail an examination set in the 'communicative approach'. On the contrary, communicative competence should, in principle at least, enhance cognitive development and lead to improved general performance.

In concluding this section it is appropriate that I raise a point which may be highly contested, but has to be raised all the same.

It is my perception that teachers have been content with complaining about their working conditions, lack of facilities and teaching materials, to the extent that this has blinded them to the many possibilities that exist for them to contribute in the changing of the present situation. How can a teacher not be aware of the contents of the syllabus in his/her possession, not bother about it and still be restricted by it.

Unless teachers are prepared to develop themselves and keep abreast of the developments and current thought within their teaching subjects, break the chains of convention and tradition, they will free2e in the cold, and so will the nation.

8.3.3 Pupils and classroom interaction

The D.E.T. can change the strategies, teachers can come in from the cold, but the efforts of these parties alone would be in vain because as John (1993) puts it, at the end of the day classroom interaction is what the pupils want it to be.

Concerned educationists and the society at large clamour for a revival of the 'learning culture' in African schools. Much as this can be said to be everybody's responsibility it can be argued that eventually the buck stops with the pupils. Unless pupils are co-operative and disciplined nothing will change for the better. This is indeed one area which demands concerted effort and constant attention.

8.4 Remedial scenarios

In this section the researcher sketches two scenarios which he calls the 'low road' and the 'high road'. The two represent the alternatives which the curriculum developers have in their attempts to remedy the situation.

8.4.1 The low road

This route starts off with a realisation that the introduction of the C.A. has failed. In an attempt to examine the reasons for the failure the innovators mistake the symptoms for the causes of the failure. Consequently the teachers and the textbooks used are blamed for the failure.

Curriculum developers then proceed to an identification of actions to be taken to improve the situation. The following actions are eventually decided upon:

(a) New communicative textbooks and materials are developed and distributed to schools.
(b) Methods are devised to ensure that teachers read the syllabuses and policy documents.
(c) Subject advisers and H.o.D.s are instructed to be stricter in their control and condemnation of deviant behaviour.
(d) Assessment procedures become more and more communicative and the attention of the teachers is drawn to this fact, in the hope that this will make them change their teaching methods.
(e) Evaluation mechanisms are then set to assess the success of the implementation.

The results turn out to be equally disappointing. The interaction patterns in the classroom remain within the I . R. F. mode, teachers are clearer on what is expected of them but remain blank on the why and how of implementation. Consequently the new materials and textbooks get adapted to the traditional teaching methods, the quality of education deteriorates even further and so the vicious circle continues.

8.4.2 The high road

In this alternative route the curriculum developers awaken to the need for implementing normative-re-educative strategies and focusing on the changing of the teachers' attitudes, roles and

relationships. Emphasis is consequently put on appropriate means by which teachers can be persuaded to embrace and sympathise with the approach. Teachers are exposed to accessible literature on the C.A.. Seminars, workshops, symposia and locally based in-service training courses which emphasise the practical application of the principles of the approach are organised.

Teacher training programmes are themselves run communicatively and attempts are made to improve the teachers' language competence. Teachers are gradually involved in matters of curricula and materials development. Reflective teaching is fostered and deliberate attempts made to encourage teachers to observe their colleagues' lessons and be amenable to the same being done in their lessons too. Sharing of resources and ideas is also encouraged. Initiative is rewarded and incentives arranged for teachers who successfully complete courses in the C.A..

This route, though perhaps sketched in a simplistic way here, is admittedly both time consuming and engaging. It is evident, however, that it has a better hope for a successful implementation of as fundamental an innovation as the C.A..

8.5 Limitations of the study

A few limitations have been noted and will be acknowledged below.

(a) The study was conducted at a time when the atmosphere in the Imbali area could be described as quiet but tense. This could have accounted for the reduced number of pupils in the classes observed.

(b) Classroom observations were conducted towards the end of the third term when much of the focus is on preparation for the examinations. It was for this reason that the standard 10 classes were not included in the observation sample. Although three of the lessons observed were revision lessons the investigator did not notice any dramatic differences between these and the other two. It is possible to assume that the lessons observed represent

the type of interaction patterns dominant in the observed teachers' lessons.

(c) Due to time constraints the researcher could observe only two lessons per class and only the observation of the second visit was recorded. It is, however, worth mentioning that the two lessons observed were in all cases very similar and can thus be assumed to be representative of the normal day-to-day interaction patterns of the observed classes. Important too is the fact that the teachers whose lessons were observed already knew the investigator's interest in the communicative approach and its implementation.

Though deficient, this study is an attempt to explore what is happening in language classrooms in African secondary schools within D.E.T.. Disturbing as the findings may be, they are a reflection of how teachers respond to official policy and curriculum decision-making.

8.6. Areas for further research

The African English second language classroom is an area that has as yet not received sufficient investigation. The appropriateness and usefulness of 'modern' approaches to language teaching for this context should not be assumed. It is therefore significant that researchers examine the role played by the culture of the target group in facilitating or hampering the implementation of an approach of this kind.

Pupil attitude towards the language was also shown to be a factor in their preparedness to communicate. Important here would be to examine the reasons and effects of a negative attitude towards the acquisition of the language.

It was evident, from the responses of the participating teachers, that they perceive pupil resistance as responsible for the pupils' lack of communicative competence. The extent to which the teachers themselves are responsible for this is a subject for

further investigation.

8.7 Conclusion.

In conclusion it should be stated that there is an obvious absence of the communicative approach even though it was implemented some seven or so years ago. The immediate challenge facing researchers and educationists is therefore to identify the causes and raise suggestions on how to rectify and improve the prevailing disturbing situation. The enormity of the problem facing African English 2L. learners demands that deliberate decisive decisions be urgently taken to address the crisis before it reaches alarmingly uncontainable proportions.

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APPENDIX A

THE UNIVERSITY OF NATAL - FACULTY OF EDUCATION

M.ed. (CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT) RESEARCH PROJECT

NAME OF RESEARCHER : D.T. NDHLOVU

RESEARCH TOPIC :

The analysis of the implementation of the communicative approach (C.A.) in the Pietermaritzburg No. 1 Circuit of the Department of Education and Training.

QUESTIONNAIRE/ SCHEDULE FOR : The Inspector P.M.B. No.1 Circuit.

Sir, Your co-operation in completing this questionnaire/schedule is greatly appreciated as your contribution is invaluable in helping us understand the issues pertaining to and surrounding the implementation of C.L.T. in our schools.

1. Please give the number of Junior Primary. Senior Primary and Secondary schools in the spaces provided.

J.P.	S.P.	S.S
☐	☐	☐

2. What age groups should be at these schools?

J.P.	S.P.	S.S.
☐	☐	☐

3. Are the age limits adhered to?
(Please cross the appropriate block)

YES	NO
☐	☐

4. If the answer in 3 is NO, can you give reasons?

.....
.....
.....
.....

5. Give a brief description of how the circuit this study aims to cover fits in the broader structure of the D.E.T.

.....
.....
.....
.....

6. The schools below are a target sample for the study. Please complete the required information on each item.

SCHOOL	1	2	3	4	5
Enrolment					
1988					
1989					
1990					
1991					
1992					
No of Eng Teachers					
1988					
1989					
1990					
1991					
1992					

7. What is the average number of pupils per class in these schools

.....

8. Have any in-service coursed been conducted for the English teachers. (Please give details)

.....
.....
.....
.....

9. Are there English Heads of Departments in these schools?

YES NO

10. How are these H.O.D.'s selected?

.....
.....
.....
.....

11. What is the single most important duty of the H.O.D. English?

.....
.....
.....

12. Is there a subject advisor(s) for English? .....

13. For how many schools is s/he responsible? .....

14. When was the Subject Advisory services introduced? .....

15. Is the support given to teachers by the Subject Advisor adequate? (please give reasons)

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16. What in your opinion needs to be done to improve the teaching and learning of English in our schools?

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APPENDIX B

RESEARCH PROJECT STAGE I

OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS EXAMINED

1. Syllabus for English Standards 6 to 10.
2. Work programme for English Standards 6 to 10.
3. Subject policy for English Second Language Standards 6 to 10.
4. Syllabus for English Communicative Competence Secondary Teacher's Diploma.
5. Syllabus for English medium of instruction. Secondary Teacher's Diploma.
6. Language Textbook Evaluation Guide.
7. "Learning through a second Language" Junior Primary Teachers' Guide.

APPENDIX C

RESEARCH PROJECT STAGE II

UNIVERSITY OF NATAL - FACULTY OF EDUCATION

M.Ed (CURRICULUM) RESEARCH PROJECT

RESEARCHER : D.T. NDHLOVU

Part of the M.Ed. (Curriculum) course offered by the University of Natal (Pietermaritzburg) requires that students conduct a research in an area of their choice. The uncertainties surrounding English Second Language teaching have inspired me to choose the implementation of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) within the D.E.T. Secondary schools in our circuit as my field of study. It is hoped that the findings of the study will in some way, however modest, benefit both the learners and teachers in the classroom situation. Your co-operation in completing this questionnaire is highly appreciated and your contribution invaluable.

INSTRUCTIONS :

1. Please complete this questionnaire on your own.
2. Make sure to attempt all questions.
3. Fill in your answers in the spaces provided.

1. Sex : .....
2. Age : .....
3. Name of school : .....
4. Other school(s) you have taught at : .....
   .....
5. Experience in teaching :.....
6. Experience in the teaching of English : .....
7. What standards are you teaching presently? .....
8. What other standards have you taught in the past? .....
   .....

9. (a) Have you received any formal training in communicative language teaching : (please tick)

YES NO

(b) If you answered yes in 9(a), where did you get your training? (eg.College,In service,etc.).....

10. Do you think the training you received was adequate?

YES NO

11. (a) Did you get any follow-up to ascertain whether you were implementing what you had learnt?

YES NO

(b) If you answered yes in 11(a) please state how this was done?.....
.....

12. (a) Did you receive any guidelines or documents from the department on CLT? YES NO

(b) If you answered yes in 12(a) please name the documents.
.....
.....

(c) Are you using any of these documents, please specify
.....

13. How have the textbooks helped you in teaching communicatively?

.....

.....

14. What other materials, other then the textbooks, do you use in your teaching? .....

.....

15. How do pupils respond to your lessons? .....

.....

16. How do you think CLT differs from other approaches, eg. audiolingual, grammar, translation, in terms of the amount of work to be done by the teacher? .....

.....

17. What do you think fellow teachers think about communicative language teaching?

.....

.....

.....

18. What problems have you encountered in the implementation of C.L.T.? .....

.....

19. If C.L.T. were to be concerned with the appropriate use of the language would you see yourself as proficient enough to teach communicatively?

YES NO

20. Say the Subject Advisor asked you to give suggestions on how English has to be taught in our schools. Please write at least <u>three</u> of the suggestions you would include :

.....

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APPENDIX D

RESEARCH PROGRAMME : STAGE III

TEACHER INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

These questions serve as a guide schedule. Questions are to be left as open ended as possible.

1. Please give a brief review of your Pre-Service Training as an E2L teacher?

2. Please give the details of the in-service training you received since you joined the D.E.T.
   (Probe details of the quality of the training)

3. What do you understand C.L.T. to mean?
   (Probe for knowledge of the tenets of the approach and how it differs from other approaches to Lang. Teaching)

4. The syllabus states communicative competence as it's overriding aim.
   (i) How has this departmental document or any other helped you to achieve this goal?

5. Pupil passivity, silence or unco-operativeness has been raised by some teachers as one of the problems in implementing the C.A.
   (i) What has been your experience?
   (Probe for details on the nature and intensity of the problem)
   (ii) How have you coped with this problem?

6. How do you think you, as an English teacher, can be assisted to improve the quality of teaching in the classroom?