

## CHAPTER FIVE

### A REFLECTIVELY CRITICAL LANGUAGE STUDY AND C2005

#### 5.1

#### PROLOGUE

*From the time a child can talk onwards, he is continually being suppressed -- being moulded into ordinary everyday monotony of a non-thinking community: this being the right and proper way to exist (Kierkegaard: Cited by Abbs:1969:11).*

*The school metamorphosises the child, giving it the kind of self the school can manage, and then proceeds to minister to the self it has made (Henry: Cited by Abbs:1969:xi).*

A mouthful indeed. A calculated grand plan in action. But as to how a school curriculum, founded on issues germane to the scenario portrayed by these quotes, could claim to enhance the learners' autonomy as critical thinkers is not only hypocritical but deterministic to the core. To a considerable degree Outcomes-based Education exhibits elements of the conformists intent displayed here. First, outcomes are the live wire of the process of economic rationalism and scientific and technological management (Smyth and Dow:1998:292). Within this context education is overtly or otherwise used to meet the demands of a capitalist economy through the establishment of a correspondence between school and industry. The rallying point of the outcomes rhetoric is enlivened by an association with international competitiveness, public sector reform and rational planning regime that ensure the production of a workforce that is flexible, adaptable and socialised (Smyth and Dow:1998:296-7). The crucial drawback, however, is that the flexibility, adaptability and the ability to socialize referred to, operate within the confines of the capitalist economy. This is a typical conform or wither situation. Of course in here lies the danger of perceiving education from a competency-based perspective.

Such a perspective is not far-fetched within the countries that adopted Outcomes-based Education. For the Australians a move towards an outcome-based education is the brain child of the Competency-based Training movement's, (CBT), conviction that the country's economic success locally and on the world map depends on the control of Vocational Education and Training (VET) by the industrial sector. This sector specifies its own competency standards within which qualifications are awarded against assessment of competencies. In short, the CBT approached VET as follows: Training focuses on outcomes; the outcomes are assessed against specified standards; and the standards are defined by industry (Killen:1998:2).

The Australian National Training Authority (ANTA), the National Training Framework (NTF), and the National Qualification Forum (NQF) were established to monitor and direct the CBT (Killen:1998:2). It is beyond argument that the motif that propelled the Australian training reform agenda in both VET and school education is the guiding principle behind the various forms of OBE in the country. The business and public sector spoke in unison that clarity about intended outcomes is a prerequisite to well-focused planning and the community's pressure for accountability in education mounted. The fundamental point of departure is that if education achieves predetermined outcomes, all will be well with education, the economy and with the future of the society (Killen:1998:2). Hence the identification of Key Learning Areas, outcomes and profiles that stipulate what the learners ought to learn at different levels of schooling-- key competencies. According to Eltis (1995:11) the development of National Profiles reflects a new political will in State towards collaboration and rationalisation. The striking observation made by Killen is that:

*These developments were closely related to the Commonwealth Government's drive for national economic efficiency, which itself reflect a worldwide emphasis on accountability including calls for schools to produce measurable "outputs" commensurable with the public money invested in them (1998:2-3).*

For the South Africans OBE and C2005 are part of a collage of policy frameworks adopted by post-apartheid government to restructure and transform the legacy of apartheid education and training (Christie:1999:279). Taking a leaf from the Australians and other international experience, the South Africans initiated this transformation through the establishment of, among others, bodies such as the South African Qualification Authority (SAQA), and the National Qualification Framework (NQF). The NQF considers competence drawn from a wide range of contexts as valuable experience to be accredited in a form of a recognised qualification.



A qualification is therefore defined as a planned combination of learning outcomes which has a defined purpose(s), and which is intended to provide qualifying learners with applied competence and basis for further learning. Most importantly, a qualification may be achieved in whole or in part through the recognition of prior learning, regardless of whether this is achieved in a formal, informal, non-formal or work experience. Moreover, the NQF serves as a regulatory body charged with the task of bringing the previously disparate education and training subsystems together (Kraak:1999:33). Advancing the concept of an integrated system, NQF comprises of three bands namely, General Education and Training (GET), Further Education and Training (FET) and Higher Education and Training (HET). Its main task is to address the educational, political and economic imbalance within the society.

It is without doubt that questioning the implications of NQF on the education standards could be interpreted as a subtle attempt to further the aims of the apartheid education. Used as a check point, a conscience so to say, this question could ensure that the political and socio-economic aspects do not compromise the fundamental principles, goals and standards of education. Besides this genuine concern, politically the merits of NQF appear laudable indeed. Young's evaluation on the NQF concurs with the point just made. He concludes that:

*NQF is an inclusive system that provides ladders for everyone to move along. [It] replaces an exclusive system based on the idea that only a limited proportion of any cohort has the ability to become qualified. [It] is not limited to accrediting learning in specifically educational institutions such as schools and colleges. [It is not] only focused on learning in the preparatory phase of a person's life. [It] is designed to accredit learning wherever it occurs and at any stage of a person's life. [It] abolishes distinct academic and vocational tracks and replaces them with an integrated system in which learners are not differentiated by the track they are on, but by the combination of modules at each level that they achieve. [It] is designed to be as appropriate for adults at any stage as it is for young people. [It] is designed not only as a basis for selection but as a way of recognising, encouraging and promoting learning in its widest sense (Young:1996:24).*

Grounded on the South African Qualification Act of October 1995, SAQA is tasked to develop and implement the NQF (Kraak:1999:35). Both the SAQA and NQF draw their substance from some of the principles of the Congress of South African Trade Union (COSATU) and the African National Congress (ANC). Of particular relevance to this chapter are the following:



THE COSATU EDUCATION AND TRAINING PRINCIPLES	THE ANC EDUCATION AND TRAINING PRINCIPLES
<p>1. Education and training initiatives need to be linked to programmes for economic transformation and industrial restructuring. Training should ensure employment security.</p> <p>2. There must be clear links and bridges between formal education, industrial training system and other ET systems, e.g for youth and the unemployed. Formal education must be free and compulsory to the highest level the economy can afford.</p> <p>3. Training opportunities should be available for all workers -- not just artisans. Employers and the state have the duty to train. Training should be modular and competency-based within a national framework which co-ordinates industry-wide programmes.</p>	<p>1. The ANC is committed to the establishment of a nationally integrated system of education and training. All sector-specific training...will take place within the national framework to ensure that skills acquired are nationally recognized, portable and contribute to career-pathing.</p> <p>2. Education and training policies will be integrated within the framework for economic transformation.</p> <p>3. More generally, given the importance of education for social and economic development, its provision cannot be left to the market as has been the case in the past, especially in relation to industrial training.</p>

**Figure 5.1. *The Basis of SAQA and NQF*** (Adapted from Kraak:1999:33)

The basic tenets of C2005 as it stands, reflect that the above policy statements have been collapsed into one. Unsurprisingly, COSATU and ANC are joint government of the day and these organisations crafted these policy statements prior to 1994 as a government in waiting. A quick glance at them reveals that both organisations believe that education is the vehicle through which economic transformation and industrial restructuring could be achieved. Hence training and education are integrated within the framework of transformation. The fact that the government and the industrial sector are expected to collaborate in steering education and training reflects deterministic tendencies that have the potential of depriving other sectors and also undermining the individual needs of members of the society. COSATU initiated a discussion that led to the adoption of Competency-based Education (CBE) within the labour sector. CBE serves as the instrument through which to provide and accredit training (Jansen:1999a:6). It is subsequently the focal point of

the South African version of outcome-based education, C2005.

Undoubtedly, credit should be given to the post apartheid government's educational reforms. But the potential instrumentalist tendencies inherent in C2005 leave a lot to be desired. Through this curriculum the state seems to determine the type of a learner and citizen it wants, an act that blunts the individual's potential to exercise his autonomy and express his creativity. The individual's personal exploration of the world and their outlook to life and its value is unimportant. Life is lived according to the dictum of the government. The utopian feel projected by the language used to promote C2005 conceals the potential danger it possesses. Observe the government's grand plan in action. It has stipulated what it terms critical and developmental outcomes shown in figure 5.1 below.



**Figure 5.2. *The Critical and Developmental Outcomes*** (Edwards et al:1999:27)

These are adult life roles which direct all teaching and learning (Edwards et al.1999:27). It also lists eight learning areas each with its own list of specific outcomes (Revised National Curriculum Statement Overview: 2001:1). The critical and the developmental constitution-inspired outcomes describe the kind of citizens the education and training system should try to produce (Revised National Curriculum Statements: Languages:2001:9). Each learning area contributes towards the attainment of the critical and developmental outcomes. It is thus ensured that a learner who goes through this curriculum meets the seven adult roles stipulated. Figure 5.2 sums up this scenario.

There is nothing wrong in setting out targets as is the case with C2005, but the moment these targets are projected as if nothing else can be added to them then they become restrictive.



**Figure 5.3. *Schematic Representation of C2005*** (Edwards et al:1999:33)

## **5.2 OBE TO FAIL OR SUCCEED: THE DEBATE RAVES ON**

The apocalyptic tone adopted by Jansen (1999b:145-156) in presenting reasons why OBE will fail belies the good intention of his debate. It gives the diehards of C2005 necessary



arsenals to attack and project him as a trouble maker. It is basically due to the pressure of his critique, and others', that revisions to this curriculum have been made. The 2001, 2002, 2003 and 2004 Revised National Curriculum statements bear testimony to this fact. The fact that it is still a draft implies that it is open to further public scrutiny. The South African community, Jansen included, have the responsibility to scrutinize it. With a pedigree of success in education as a scholar, a teacher-trainee educator and a professor and dean of a faculty of education at a university it is doubtful that Jansen's paper could be ill-intended.

Even Rasool (1999:172), Jansen's strongest critic, acknowledges that Jansen's presuppositions add an element of realism to curriculum debates. These presuppositions, he elaborates, highlight the fact that curriculum development cannot solve all educational and socio-economic ills of any country. The paper itself highlights the possible hurdles that need to be dealt with to ensure the overall success of C2005 and thus provides the department of education with a point of departure for curriculum implementation, he concludes. A reference to the Jansen and Rasool polemics is imperative here.

Firstly Jansen (1999:147) contends that the language of OBE is too complex, confusing and at times contradictory and the already overburdened teachers, especially in the black communities, are forced to come to terms with a barrage of complicated terminologies. As far as Rasool (1999:172) is concerned this is not a problem because it is the nature of every academic discipline to have a specialised discourse, and it therefore behoves people involved in this disciplines to come to terms with such a discourse -- thus teachers do have

the obligation to abide by the rule. This is in fact true. But the aftermath of apartheid legacy, the political, social and economical factors experienced by the society as they strive to adapt to the new changes, renders the South African educational context too fragile for an approach that adopts complicated terminologies. Juxtaposing the strict conformists mannerism cultivated and solidified by the apartheid policy for many years within the teaching and the community at large, with the often *laissez faire* attitude people wrongfully associate with the concepts of democracy and the question of human rights, engenders a confusing situation that deserves some sensitivity when it comes to adopting such an approach.

The contradictory signals given by the stacked complex terminologies further complicate issues. Things become worse the moment teachers are expected to master multitudes of concepts from the moment the curriculum is introduced. The frustration faced by the teachers careers down to the learners too. The public outcry that followed the inception of C2005 is a reflection of this dynamism. To suggest, as Rasool (1999:173) does, that coming to terms with fifty new concepts within this context is not an insurmountable task, is insensitive let alone reflecting his sheer ignorance of teaching learning environments other than his. The mere fact that he calls for the terminology of C2005 to be watered down reflects his admission that complex terminology causes problems (1999:173).

Rasool calls Jansen's assertion that there is no evidence, in almost eight years, that curriculum engineering leads to economic changes, ludicrous. Yet he fails to provide research evidence to counter Jansen's claim. Ludicrous enough, common sense is for him

a good enough barometer that indicates that curriculum, in fact, has a bearing on economic changes. This is Speculative. His reliance on common sense emanates from the conviction that the modern society researchers lack the capacity to draw correlation between curriculum and economic growth (1999:173). He ridicules the same formal education of the modern society, the fundamental substance that pioneers the selfsame C2005 he defends.

With regards to the fact that the South African government lacks the fiscal base to intervene in order to ensure the success of OBE, Jansen misses the point. It is important for the government to ensure that education financing sticks to the given monetary budget.

Rasool (1999:175) calls this “locating educational financing within the framework of realism”. After all, education is not the only sector that requires funding. By world standards South African spending on education is far too high -- 22.8% of its budget (Rasool:1999:175). Observe how inconsistent Rasool can be. He probably relied on statistics collated by the same modern society researchers he earlier claims not to trust, to conclude that the 22.8% is high by international standards. At the same time he rightfully points out that an increase in the educational monetary budget does not necessary mean that education will improve. Questions such as the relevance of the educational system, the teachers’ morale and their understanding of the curriculum, parents’ participation and the likes contribute to the successful implementation of educational innovations.

It is in fact true that the concept of stakeholder participation is too complex in the modern society. For sure not everybody could have participated in the different structures of OBE.

The system of representative participation was used to minimize possible bias (Rasool:1999:176). It appears that to call C2005 a product of a small elite, often white experts, Jansen did not consider the issue just mentioned. Granted there are elements within OBE that project curriculum content as unimportant. Undue emphasis of OBE is on the glorification of outcomes as if they could be achieved in a vacuum (Jansen:1999b:153).

The fact of the matter is that content is the vehicle through which learners can realize the outcomes. Furthermore, OBE trivializes content in another way:

*It threatens to atomise and fragment curriculum knowledge. By organising knowledge acquisition around discrete competencies, OBE overlooks the important cross-curricular and interdisciplinary demands encountered in learning a complex task. It further assumes that knowledge acquisition proceeds in a linear way such that one outcome is linked in a step-wise direction to another (Jansen:1999b:152).*

Rasool (1999:178) regards this quote as a reflection of a mere conceptual shift away from content-driven rote learning. Of course content-driven rote learning is undesirable worldwide, but that does not mean education can operate without content. If some of the goals of OBE are to help learners to discover and construct knowledge, and to learn about the relevance of the content as Rasool (1999:178) claims, then attention to the nature of the content and the manner in which this content or knowledge is to be incorporated in the whole scheme of OBE, needs to be given too. The oft cited cultivation of life skills: Ability to classify; infer; suggest; analyse and form testable hypothesis depends on a particular given content. Reference to the content of a given text is imperative for the learner to develop research skills, numeracy, writing and presentation skills. Learners are obliged to master some aspects contained in a given text so that they can learn and further refine

their research skills, for instance.

Care should be taken that phrases such as helping learners to “learn how to learn” do not imply that learners should be confronted with complex educational psychology related issues --issues that are way above their cognitive level -- lest the school is mistaken for tertiary education. Furthermore if the chief aim of OBE is to encourage teachers to construct their own teaching resources in order to augment the prescribed texts let it be said without undermining the significance of content. The OBE workshops that are run for teachers are based on the content recorded in the manuals, books, readers and journals. The curriculum drafters appointed by the National Department of Education compile national curriculum statements that signify the content that epitomises C2005. As to how content can be overlooked is not only mind boggling but sheer arrogance. It is deceitful of the ANC alliance-led government to structure its policy on outcomes whilst its politics are grounded on the notion of process (Jansen:1999:150). The concept process implies exploration, unpredictability, non-determinant and open democratic participation the essence of which are at odd with the imposition matrix denoted by the concept outcome. The outcomes themselves conjure a possible anti-democratic scenario whereby the set outcomes are imposed on schools. Rightfully, Jansen (1999b:150) points out that the policy of OBE offers “an instrumentalists view of knowledge”. Its very means-ends perspective contradicts the fundamental philosophy of the structure of certain learning areas (McKernan:1994:2). The instrumentalist drive of OBE avoids tackling the central question in the South African transition -- what education is for (Jansen:1999b:150).

It is inappropriate for Rasool (1999:179) to insinuate that Jansen's motive is against the implementation of OBE. Far from it. The relevance of Jansen's contention to the period prior and post implementation is beyond question. Without the likes of Jansen's contribution, Rasool's perceptive rubric could have not existed and the South African public could have missed some compelling clarification he made to further illuminate the essence of OBE.

### 5.3 THE IMPLICATIONS OF OBE FOR LANGUAGE EDUCATION IN SA

C2005 treats languages from a generic syllabus perspective. It groups the South African eleven languages under one umbrella called Languages Literacy and Communication learning area (LLC). The revised National Curriculum Statements refer to this as Languages Learning Area (2004:18). First, seven purposes of language are identified:



*Personal- to develop and sustain identities; to sustain relationships in family and community; and for personal development and pleasure. Communicative- to communicate appropriately and effectively in social contexts.*

*Educational- to develop tools for thinking and reasoning and provide access to information.*

*Aesthetic- to creatively and imaginatively engage with oral, visual and written literature.*

*Cultural- to understand and appreciate languages and culture and the heritage they carry.*

*Political- to assert or challenge power; persuade others of a particular point of view; to position others; to develop and sustain identities.*

*Critical- to understand the relationship between language, power and identity and challenge uses of these where necessary; to understand the dynamic nature of culture; to*

*resist persuasion and positioning where necessary* (Revised National Curriculum Statements Overview:2001:43).

Second, the unique features and scope of this learning area are outlined. These chart out how this learning area contributes to the curriculum: Develops reading and writing, the foundation for other important literacies; provides the medium through which much other learning in the curriculum, such as in mathematics and social sciences, takes place; encourage intercultural understanding, access to different world views and a critical understanding of the concept of culture; stimulate imaginative and creative activities and thus promote the goals of arts and culture; and develop the critical tools necessary to become responsible citizens in a democratic society (Revised National Curriculum Statement Overview:2001:44). The framework set by the purposes of language and the unique features and scope just mentioned engender six learning outcomes that are set as targets to be achieved through teaching or learning languages. The learning outcomes cover five basic skills of language learning namely, listening, speaking, reading, writing and viewing. The inclusion of these skills affirms the importance of metalanguage (Kilfoil:1999:50). This dispels the misconception that the teaching of grammar and vocabulary is thrown away through the classroom windows. The traditional approach to teach these is however replaced by incidental learning on language structures (Kilfoil:1999:50). Thinking and reasoning which relate to the use of language for the purpose of learning and teaching are added on as yet another learning outcome (Revised National Curriculum Statement:Overview:2001:44). The sixth learning outcome relates to what the revised national curriculum statement terms additional languages. It reads : The learner knows and is able to use the sounds, vocabulary and grammar of the additional

language (Revised National Curriculum Statement Overview:2001:45).

The problem with a generic syllabus, however, is that it ignores the function of the home language in a child's development (Kilfoil:1999:59). Besides the question of language universal, there are obviously aspects of the home language that warrant unique attention and any attempt to blur the thin line between the home language and the additional languages or between the additional languages themselves could be to the detriment of the learner's language development and his academic progress.

This study acknowledges the important changes brought about by the introduction of C2005. It further sees them as inevitable. The intention is by all means good but the execution is marred by subtle ideological manipulations that could reduce C2005 to an instrumentalist, mechanical and deterministic document that serves the interest of business and politicians at the expense of the individual member of the society. The competency-based flavour intoned within this curriculum is a potential danger to personal growth. It pushes forward a materialistic mentality within the society as if life is all about material gain. Along with that comes a situation where the society loses focus of other values of life, and is therefore oblivious of linguistic and ideological power play that turn them into unthinking masses. The responsibility of individual members of the society as citizens is reduced to a mechanical routine that perpetuates the status quo. Learners in the classroom are turned into conformists who render no challenge to what is written in black and white. Their critical potential could be curtailed and therefore knowledge and life could be projected as static. No longer is life an exploration where individuals attach different



meanings in an attempt to develop or change an existing body of knowledge. Knowledge is no longer seen as a product of a joint interpretation of the world by the society as a whole. No longer is the world a complex myriad of meanings, instead it is the profundity of the one deep meaning. It is projected as unthinkable to view the world as :

*irreducibly and irrevocably pluralistic splits into multitudes of sovereign units and sites of authority, with no horizontal or vertical order either in actuality or in potency (Usher and Edwards:1994:24).*

Only a selected few are accredited the power to manufacture knowledge. Legitimate knowledge could mean the dictum of the powerful. Such are among the sad eventualities that could befall the consumer of C2005. The issue here is to create an awareness of the potential restrictive nature of our curriculum. Instead of throwing it away based on reasons ranging from its implementation, the ones just mentioned and many more, this study sees it as a necessary fountain whose presence should engender critical debate that will refine the educational agenda which many regard as a flawed curriculum into a refined, well adjusted system of education. This education system begins a new epoch and is open to constant revisions and changes. It thus reflects a continual exploration of the world. The initial inception of this curriculum bears testimony to what is argued here. The uproar, tensions and frustrations it caused and the revisions it has undergone point to the sense of exploration -- so is the nature of life. It is never stagnant.

The conviction of the present researcher is that the seemingly restrictive boundaries set by the current South African curriculum can be transcended, better still confronted and be transformed by using some of its basic tenets. The locus of such a mission lies within the

seventh purpose of languages as recorded in the Revised National Curriculum Statement Overview: If learners are taught to use language critically and if teachers teach the critical dimension of language, then learners will understand the relationship between language and power, and power and identity. Ultimately they will be able to challenge use of these where necessary. They will understand the dynamic nature of culture, and will be able to resist persuasion and positioning where necessary (2001:43). Then to them responsible citizenry would mean to use their critical skills to engage the social taken-for-granted. They will exercise their critical language awareness whenever choices and decisions are to be made about their lives, particularly their studies. Choices such as :Do I conform because it is in my personal conviction right to do so, or because the powerful dictate? Do I challenge this knowing that an accommodative solution could emanate from the discussion? Is an accommodative solution really necessary? Who stand to benefit? What do I stand to lose? What do I do? Is my critical language use so radical to the given context that the good intentions of my motives are misconstrued as chaotic and disruptive? How do I transcend this seemingly unfortunate situation? Am I not being interpellated whilst transcending-- that is am I not unwittingly forsaking my critical edge in the moment of transcendence?

This mode of questioning epitomises the act of trying as denoted by the concept *experientia* -- experience. The *modus operandi* here is an act of trying to find possibilities. Creativity, assertiveness and intentionality are key elements that drive this quest of creating possibilities. Ostensibly, experience is by no means “made up of sense-impressions passively recorded in the retina of the eye and inscribed in the tabula rasa of the mind” (Abbs:1976:147). The underlying philosophy behind the above questions is that

a language class should reflect that education is an experience and an opening to difference, but not a reduction to sameness. By the same token, a text is a plethora of meanings that each learner make sense, individually, and shares among each other. It does not mean a thing, instead it is made to mean something. It represents a constructed “reality”, a reality that can infinitely be reconstructed. As a matter of fact, a text cannot represent reality outside of it being a text. It is through the critical reflection generated by CLA that it is recognized that truth is not a matter of correspondence with an outside reality. The same can be said with regard to the fact that truth and subject are linguistically and socially constructed. It is further realized that reading is an engagement with a text -- an experience that can be likened to cruising. The further you travel, the more you realize that the journey is all that matters. A Consequence to CLA is an understanding that the teacher’s interpretation of the text and the summaries provided by study manuals are among the possible interpretations, but not necessarily the universal truth. Both the teacher and the study manuals create a platform for a journey to begin, but the journey itself can only be made by the “assenting and autonomous individual” (Abbs:1976:148). The key point is that the individual learner plunges into an experiential route to become “more than he is now” (Abbs:1976:148). A responsible language pedagogy is marked by the cultivation of such an awareness in learners.

#### **5.4 THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHER AND MORAL RESPONSIBILITY**

*And I think that if I and other teachers truly want to provoke our students to break through the limits of the conventional and taken for granted, we ourselves have to experience breaks with what has been established in our lives ; we have to keep*

*arousing ourselves to begin again (Greene:1995:109).*

A responsible language teacher is obliged to be engaged in introspection regularly. The challenge is to keep arousing himself and to sharpen his critical edge so that the taken for granted and the fictitious boundaries created around his own life are not naturalised and transformed into unequivocal truth. As he “glides like a wise serpent underneath a sentence and below syntax to locate the possible excluded propositions” he identifies and challenges the elements that mystify reality (Abbs:1995:30). In doing so, Abbs (1982:88) reckons, the teacher pitches the fluctuating boundaries of the known. His restlessness, questioning and probing reflect a similar critical attitude he wishes to develop in his learners namely, that conclusions remain provisional and open to change. In order to teach well he should, at the same time, be a self-sustaining individual with his own alert life independent from the classrooms (Abbs:1982:88). The condition for alertness is not to live only for the class lest the level of his consciousness will drop to the class’ level and the chances of becoming a companion rather than a guide increase (Abbs:1982:88). The crucial battle is against mindless complacency. This battle can be won if the teacher obliges himself to incessantly exact strains as he cruises “ ... upwards towards infinity” (Greene:1978:31).

#### **5.4.1 WIDE-AWAKENESS**

Concomitant to the battle against mindless complacency is the concept of wide-awakeness. This concept implies a complete awareness, a full consciousness, a total attentiveness, an engagement.

*It is a plane of consciousness of highest tension originating in*

*attitude of full attention to life and its requirement. Only the performing self and especially the working self is fully interested in life and, hence, wide-awake. It lives within its acts and its attention is exclusively directed to carry its own projects into effect, to execute its plan. This attention is an active one. Passive attention is the opposite of full awareness (Schultz:1967:163).*

It denotes a life that is at once active, alert, and sensitive to restriction of paradigm on the one hand, and to the reality of change on the other. It further calls for the teacher to live with his eyes open as far as possible. It requires of him:

*A conscious endeavour to keep [himself] awake, to think about the conditions in the world, to inquire into the forces that appear to dominate [him], to interpret the experiences [he has daily]. Only as [he learns] to make sense of what is happening, can [he] feel [himself] autonomous. Only then can [he] develop the sense of agency required for living a moral life (Greene:1978:44).*

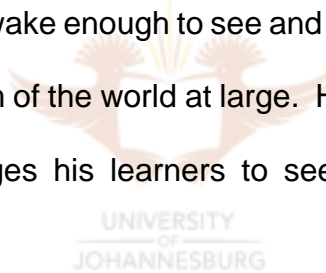
To live a moral life is antithetical to passivity, acquiescence, blind conformity, and lack of interest in life. It is incumbent upon the teacher to take a moral stance regarding his own life and the life and education of his learners. This involves an effort to “throw off sleep”, to “overcome drowsiness”, and to engage in effective intellectual exertion (Greene:1978:42). The opposite of morality is indifference -- a lack of care, an absence of concern. An indifferent teacher drifts and acts on impulses of expediency. He is never in tune with changes and therefore never learns. The moment he stops learning he is reduced to a transmission belt and a drifter who teaches by rote and consequently his lessons are turned into dry husks as the terms pass by (Abbs:1982:89). His role as a transitional, moral and non-manipulative leader is not acted upon. He deprives learners of the opportunity to exercise their independence and to engage in open process of participatory dialogue and critical reflection (Richmond:1990:82). Such a teacher is not an “agent provocateur of

liminal imagination” because he fails to stimulate the “intrinsically counter-hegemonic potentials of the self produced meaning” (Richmond:1990:86). It is this sad scenario that prompted Camus to call this indifference “the plague” (1948:48). Greene describes it as “the terrible distancing and indifference so at odds with commitment, communion and love” (1978:48).

The genesis of indifference is the modern society’s predilection to make life easier and easier as characterised by modern inventions such as telephones, railways, steamboats, buses and the like. It is this quest for easy life that blunts the individual’s sense of autonomy. It is also this dire need to simplify life that engendered an unthinking, ignorant, and complacent society. The industrial and technological age sets parameters of the teacher’s thought. The eventual consequence is the bland routinization of life. The antidote for this unfortunate turn of events, Kierkegaard (1968:163) reckons, is to project the lived reality as a difficult and dreadful enterprise. Such an outlook is sure to awaken individuals to discover their “personal mode of existence” (Greene:1978:162). Nothing rather than making life harder will ever “move individuals to what they live for arouse them from somnolence and ease” (Thoreau:1978:162). Further, the remotest chance of arousing individuals to discover in their own terms what it would mean to live deliberately, is squashed (Greene:1978:162). Making life a dreadful experience is rather too extreme a position. A scary picture indeed. However, if it means re-awakening people to be in touch with themselves and their lived reality, if it means eradicating the growing absent-mindedness in the modern society, if it means encouraging individuals to use their intelligence to the maximum, and if it means reminding individuals of their moral

responsibility then it could be a necessary route worth considering. This is a typical *via negativa* but to a positive truth (Abbs:1982:89).

A responsible language teacher should note that to be an agent of wide-awakeness, he too should be wide-awake. Most importantly, he should see teaching as an act -- a specific purposeful action which is best viewed as an interaction of people who learn from and about each other, and share the knowledge emanating from this interaction among themselves. A language class, or any other class for that matter, is therefore a place of events, of performance in which the performer is not the teacher but the world of values that take on the quality of living characters (Bakker:1985:6). Such a scenario requires a language teacher that is wide-awake enough to see and act on these classroom dynamics – the classroom is a microcosm of the world at large. His role becomes more crucial the moment his teaching encourages his learners to see and act on these linguistically constituted dynamics.



#### **5.4.2 AN INESCAPABLE PARADOX: THE CONFLICTUAL UNITY OF NORMS AND POSSIBILITIES**

To talk of a conflictual unity is inherently contradictory. The term *conflict* on the one hand suggests tension, disagreement, opposition and lack of unity. Unity on the other hand, denotes a sense of agreement, cordiality, togetherness and everything that is antithetical to the term conflict. However, the chronic tension inherent within the unity of the two constituents of the *Self*, the *I* and *Me*, and between *Norms* and *Possibilities* reflects that life itself is contradictory. As such life phenomena such as education and teaching reflect the

inherent contradictions of life. The consciousness and the quests of wide-awakeness cultivated by language teaching is characterised by the selfsame conflictual interplay between norms and possibilities -- adherence to the given norms and the creation for new possibilities. The same traits can be expressed in terms of the *I* and the *Me*. An adherence to the given norms might be a subscription to the *Me*. Any drive motivated by a need to create possibilities advances the *I*, the individual autonomy and innovation. Such a drive engenders alternative ideas thus extending, let alone breaking the existing parameters.

Greene (1978:36) defines the *I* as the spontaneity of the *Self* -- the sense of freedom and agency. The *Me* on the other hand, comprises of the internalized cultural experiences and norms, history, and the matrix in which action is carried out (Greene:1978:36). The nucleus of the *Self* is characterised by the dialogical interplay between the *I* and the *Me*. It is often the *Me* that determines, endorses and dictates a particular world view on individuals. The *I* has the potential to bring in a personal dimension, the "I-ness", individuality and the sense of agency and autonomy. The selfish spirit it espouses is by no means negative. It is a necessary vehicle that strives to accentuate the potency of the individual's need to explore the world in his own terms. The term selfish is used here to imply a sense of taking responsibility of the choices individuals make (Abbs:1982:88). A responsible language pedagogy that aims at nurturing the critical reflection of the learners should highlight that norms and rules, the product of the society and the *Me*, are necessary. But their importance should not preclude the fact that they are not God-given and therefore unchangeable. It is in fact due to the pressure exerted by the agency of the *I* that they



continuously change. So it is the *I* that is responsible for the transformation of the *Self*. To transform the *Self* “requires a conscious effort to recognise openings in one’s life situations, openings that permit some kind of action and transcendence, that allow one to go beyond what one has been” (Greene:1978:36). Thus a text is recreated every time it is read. At the same time the reader recreates himself whilst reading the text. Moreover the reader’s creative intention to engage with the text is characterised by a prior willingness to risk and a prior readiness to trust (Abbs:1982:89). Both the reader and the text condition and recondition each other, and out of this interaction a new text emerges. The direction the text takes is determined by how strong the conviction of the *I* is. This process is continual. It is therefore impossible to create a new text if the reader gives himself entirely to the text through his failure or inability to question its assumptions.



## **5.5 EDUCATION AND TRAINING DEMYSTIFIED**

Education and training are often used interchangeably and this creates an impression that the two concepts are synonymous. This tendency is a very serious concern since it has an impact on how teachers teach their learners. It has a bearing on the choice of contents, methodologies and teaching approaches adopted by teachers. The real drawback is that a teacher who sees the two terms as one can set out inappropriate goals, adopt inappropriate teaching methodologies and approaches and can ultimately contradict the essence of education. The gravest concern here is about language teaching. A language teacher might view his role as that of a trainer and therefore reduce his language class to a mechanical routine, where learners are expected to learn grammar by rote. He speaks

throughout his entire lessons. Learners are expected to commit what he teaches to memory, without question. Whatever he says has to be the truth and is final, since he projects himself as the know-all and the fountain of knowledge. His position as the teacher grants him this authority. This authoritative approach of teaching with its rote learning flavour is outmoded within a democratic context. It is imperative that the essence of education and training is clarified so that whenever an attempt is made to incorporate some elements of the two concepts the aim of teaching a given subject is not compromised. According to Abbs (1994:15) educating Rita is not training her. This is where the difference lies. First of all education can never be equated to a mass of knowledge or skills that are transmitted to the learners by the teacher. Skills are by nature functional and predetermined and therefore signify training. A set of skills is identified and individuals are trained to develop these skills. All effort is made to match these skills with a set of operations -- a kind of a one to one correspondence. However, the driving force of education is threefold: educating, releasing and liberating (Abbs:1994:15). It releases one from self-ignorance, educes one from slumber-land and emancipates one from lethargy. It is the mode of opening the world to critical judgement and transformative action (Greene:1995:57).

*It brings forth the sense of an opening out of the mind that transcends details and skills. It leads to a certain mode of consciousness, a delicate, sustained, reflective disposition towards experience, an openness towards potential truth and possible meaning though it [includes] the internalization of various skills and techniques (Abbs:1994:15).*

Education is the larger transcendental term that should not be reduced to a smaller

pragmatic one

-- skill training. Notably, within education skills do feature, but the moment undue emphasis is placed on mechanical training of skills the true essence of educating loses its substance. The element of transcendence, wide-awakeness, creation of new possibilities, critical reflection, and above all Critical Language Awareness constitute the true essence of language teaching.

This study contends that a language pedagogy that adopts CLA perspectives sees teaching as an ethical activity which is based on the view that education is an act and art of releasing a critical-ethical process the final outcome of which can never be pre-empted (Abbs:1995:18). An involvement in the CLA perspective means "...[pondering] the opening of wider and wider space of a dialogue so as to empower both learners' and teachers' voices as they reflect together to try in bringing into being an in-between" (Greene:1995:59). The possible and necessary outcome of this is the enhancement of continual renewal of the world, existence, knowledge, and life.

## **5.6 EXAMPLES OF ESL LESSONS SET WITHIN THE CLA PERSPECTIVE**

There are, of course, several possibilities in which a Critical Language Awareness perspective could be manifested in an ESL class. One such a possibility is what could be referred to as *Critical Reading*. In Critical Reading learners-readers are encouraged to enter into a dialogue with a text -- written, oral, visual forms. The starting point of dialoguing with the cartoon below is to divide the ESL class into, for instance, three groups.

Each group is given tasks as follows.

