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AN ACADEMIC SUPPORT PROGRAMME IN ENGLISH AT SENIOR PRIMARY LEVEL FOR THE TRANSKEI REGION

by

NOMSINGA CATHERINE ROLOTI

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ABSTRACT

With the use of English as a medium of instruction from senior primary upwards in the traditional schools, pupils experience problems related to lack of proficiency in English. This becomes evident when they have to express themselves, and then lack the appropriate vocabulary to use in different learning areas or subjects at school. Pupils seem to be underprepared for senior primary work.

An academic support programme which will help upgrade the standard or level of proficiency is discussed at length. Partnership and team teaching among teachers affected by this problem are discussed. If this programme succeeds, the failure rate which has already drained the South African economy will be reduced.

The study ends with recommendations that will hopefully help remedy the situation.

OPSOMMING

Leerlinge ervaar probleme met die gebruik van die voertaal wanneer hulle vanaf die einde van junior primêre vlak oorskakel na Engels as voertaal. Dit blyk duidelik wanneer hulle hulself wil uitdruk, maar nie oor die gepaste woordeskat beskik vir die verskillende leervlakke op skool nie. Leerlinge is blykbaar nie voldoende voorberei vir senior primêre werk nie.

'N Akademiese steunprogram wat help om die standaard op vlak van hulle taalvaardigheid te verbeter word in besonderhede bespreek. Samewerking en spanwerk deur onderwysers wat deur die probleem geraak word, word onder die loep geneem. As so 'n program sou slaag, sou dit die hoë druipsyfer verminder wat die Suid-Afrikaanse ekonomie reeds so nadelig raak.

Die ondersoek sluit af met aanbevelings wat hopelik tot 'n oplossing mag bydra.
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CHAPTER 1

SCOPE AND AIMS OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

There is a pressing need for academic support at senior primary school level more especially in historically African communities. Because the African mother-tongue lacks the technical terminology to cope with the various school subjects, children are forced to switch over to other languages as medium of instruction in order to cope with their educational advancement. The inadequacy is mostly caused by lack of academic and technical terminology which is not given priority. The gap is not even filled by the integration of learners in Model C schools and persists throughout the school curriculum up to and including tertiary levels. It was for this reason that learning centres like the University of Witwatersrand, Rhodes, Rand Afrikaans University and others designed academic support programmes to cater for the students at risk at tertiary level.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The situation in senior primary schools demands immediate attention. Right from lower primary school, learners show lack of appropriate vocabulary to cope with their learning. To emphasize this point Macdonald (1991 : 14-15) asserts that there is a big gap between what the children know at the end of Standard two and what they have to cope with in Standard three. The difficulty, she goes on to say, is experienced in Environmental Studies which in Standard three splits into three subjects which are very specialised and have specific vocabulary. Pupils do not seem to be ready for the change-over. To cover up their failure, some teachers feel that through reading and listening, children automatically acquire vocabulary, while others see teaching of vocabulary as an enormous and difficult task they cannot afford.
1.3 The Background of the Problem

Between 1953 when the Bantu Education Act was introduced and 1976 when Transkei attained its "independence", the historically disadvantaged schools in Transkei were deprived of the privilege of being taught by first language users of English. This type of deprivation Corder (1981: 90) argues, results in lack of acquisition of syntax and the interlanguage might be fossilized because of the withdrawal of the model. To replace these teachers, unqualified teachers and teacher aides were employed without having attended induction or any kind of in-service courses. In the Transkei region, English is not normally used, that is, it is neither learnt at home nor in the environment; so it becomes difficult for children to pick up the language easily before they attend school.

Sufficient language skills for formal education commonly referred to as Cognitive and Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) are necessary in the learner's everyday life. Its lack will prevent effective communication on topics in the various subjects. The fact that the education department makes provision for this possibility of code-switching has also prevented many teachers from improving their proficiency in English.

1.4 The Purpose of the Study

The researcher is keen to find out what the extent is of lack of communication and language skills for the subjects pupils are learning. Pupils do not understand subjects like history, mathematics, general science, geography and many others taught in English because of their inadequate academic language proficiency which is fundamental to all learning. A person who has enough language skills for formal education is able to use the language in all situations where it is required. If there is lack of sufficient language proficiency among senior primary school learners, the researcher will explore
ways of addressing the problem. She will also make recommendations based on what she has discovered.

This study will focus on a geographical region within the sphere of influence of the Cicira College of Education, and will not include the whole Eastern Cape Department of Education – hence the reference to a “Transkei region”.

1.5 Significance of the Study

After a thorough review of literature study on the subject in question, the researcher will have an overview of the ability of senior primary school learners so that her argument is based on qualitative research. The researcher will make an in-depth study of the causes of lack of communication and academic language proficiency.

1.6 Research Methodology

The type of research methodology used in this study is a literature survey that will address the following aspects:

• Vocabulary and reading comprehension skills
• Mother tongue interference
• Academic support service
• An evaluation of an Academic Support Programme.

1.7 Limitations of the study

Because of the limits imposed on a mini-dissertation in terms of length, time and spectrum to be addressed, this investigation does not include an empirical component, although an evaluation of an existing academic support programme is included.
The spectrum covered by the study is limited to only a part of a province, yet the problem affects the whole of South Africa. Distance and financial constraints prevented the researcher from extending the study elsewhere.

The study has relied on the READ project, a non-governmental organisation (NGO) that is devoted to the improvement of teaching of English. The researcher was aware of the danger that the NGO might run out of funds before the work is finished but its statistics have highlighted some of the problems.

It is unfortunate that although the aim of the READ project was to improve the disadvantaged schools, it did not do so because of bad roads. The only schools that are included in the pilot project are those that can be reached. Funders and evaluators were not going to be able to assess progress at the inaccessible schools. Vehicles could be damaged because of bad roads. The investigator was limited to schools where the READ project is operating.

1.9 An Overview of the Chapters

Chapter Two: In this chapter the researcher reviews literature related to her study. She discusses aspects like teaching of vocabulary, lack of reading comprehension skills among learners, contributions made by other researchers, and a short summary.

Chapter Three: Chapter three is also a literature review on the interference of mother tongue. Aspects on the nature of mother tongue interference, differences between learning a home and a second language, a mistake and an error, and examples where mother tongue interference occurs are also addressed.
Chapter Four: The chapter also looks at literature review on aspects like academic support service, a closer look at history textbooks, how history is taught, other subjects using language for academic purposes, contributions made by other learning centres in academic support service, such as the academic support service at RAU and a short summary.

Chapter Five: This chapter is an evaluation of an academic support programme at RAU, methods and strategies used, the Project 100, and the language service at RAU.

Chapter Six: This chapter contains findings and recommendations made in view of the literature review covered in different chapters and a short summary.

NOTE: To avoid monotony and for brevity's sake in this investigation, the researcher will refer to a teacher as she and a pupil as he.
CHAPTER 2

VOCABULARY AND READING COMPREHENSION SKILLS

2.1 Introduction

The democratic South Africa is still in the process of transformation. This change is beset with many problems, one of which is the education system. The Department of Labour (1997 : 2) is worried about the decline of the apprenticeship system. Its concern is that school leavers are not marketable because they lack the necessary skills. Forms of apprenticeship differ from one employment sector to another. It is also true that the education system is at risk unless Educational Support Services can remedy the situation.

As will emerge in the following discussion, vocabulary and reading comprehension skills are essential elements in the learners' ability to cope with the learning materials. For this reason, a survey of available literature is presented to highlight important issues under this heading.

The researcher's focus is the eastern part of the greater Eastern Cape commonly known as the Transkei Region. As a result of the recent changes in the educational system, learners have to attain competence in eight learning areas. In this dissertation, only two learning areas will be dealt with, namely Language, Literacy and Communication (LLC) and Human and Social Sciences (HSS). The fact that the language policy states that all eleven languages have equal status does not put other languages on the same footing with English and Afrikaans. English still remains the language of wider communication and is still the medium of instruction after grade 4. Almost all materials used in the schools from primary, more especially at senior primary level to tertiary, are written in English. Sub-teams of teachers who are directly involved in the learning areas already mentioned can work together for a start, to make pupils understand the world better.
2.2 Vocabulary

As early as in the 1960's, there was an outcry by teachers, examiners and other concerned individuals that the standard of proficiency in English in this part of the region was deteriorating (Cingo Commission: 1962 : 5). The new changes in education have not addressed this problem satisfactorily. During workshops and other discussions on educational affairs, it has always been emphasized that pupils must learn in the language of their choice (South African Schools Act of 1996). Many parents still feel that their children have to be exposed to different and diverse cultures where they are going to learn other people's ways of life and understand one another better (Macdonald (1991). If this could be achieved, South Africa could be a better country for them to live in. Because people want to pursue this idea, they still send their children to multi-cultural and private schools despite the high costs incurred at this critical moment.

If teachers' aim is to make learners realize their potential through the teachers' assistance (OBE in South Africa : 1997 : 17), then the children must be exposed to as many situations as possible. Language and communication are a vehicle towards every learner's destination. Because English cuts across language barriers, it is always preferred. It has become clear over the years, however, that a large majority of learners have not yet mastered the very basics of the language. This becomes evident when learners, and even school leavers, have to express themselves on everyday issues. They run short of appropriate words. This is a big challenge to educators. Teachers need to produce confident and eloquent adult citizens in the form of politicians, public speakers, poets, writers; the list is endless. One of the more immediate results of students' lack of language proficiency is the high failure rate in schools.
Allen (1983: 2-3), Carter and McCarthy (1998: 9) agree that the teaching of vocabulary has been neglected for a long time because of various reasons. To these educational linguists, vocabulary is an important aspect of language and therefore has to be given the status it deserves. They feel strongly that it is the best time to teach it because learners are faced with a situation where they have to give evidence that they have learnt. When people do not use appropriate words, communication breaks down. With adequate vocabulary, learners have access to meaning. By emphasizing the teaching of vocabulary, teachers must not revert to the traditional methods of enriching students with vocabulary where long lists with explanations had to be learnt off by heart. This type of teaching vocabulary is outdated and there is no evidence that it ever helped anybody to become fluent in whatever form of expression. Bringing materials, telling stories, exposing learners to different situations improves their vocabulary. (READ Annual Report 1995: 8-9).

According to Widdowson quoted by Selinker (ed) 1981: 3), one can be more precise if one uses specific words for specific purposes. Teachers of other subjects have always complained that English for specific purposes is limited. Pupils, they further claim, do not get a chance to explore the language. This statement is only true if teachers concerned are not open-minded. With the use of a holistic approach, the child grasps the meaning of a word in its proper context and is able to use the word in different situations where it is required.

As all teachers after Grade 4 will be teaching the medium of English, every teacher will be a language teacher - not only the teacher of English. It is advisable that teachers in each school should come together, plan together and expose learners to English for specific purposes. If, for instance, an English teacher tries to use materials that involve other learning areas, her knowledge of these areas will be limited, but if teachers are working together as a team, effective learning can be achieved because they will be exposing the learners to real authentic situations. Giving a chance to learners to
explore difficult avenues and getting different approaches from different people will equip them. Because there are very few schools that offer career guidance, team work is required to provide such situations. If English for specific purposes is used profitably, it can contribute a great deal to Curriculum 2005.

Grové and Hauptfleisch (1986: 238) are of the opinion that vocabulary which is made up of words the child understands is crucial in learning other subjects. These being inter-dependent learning areas demand that teachers have to work hard making children understand terms used in the learners' printed resource materials, starting from the very basic terms that we always take for granted. Familiar words like government, parliament, democracy may not be familiar to many learners and even if they have heard of them, they might not know their meaning - yet these words are crucial in Human and Social Sciences. So, for instance, we could take a closer look at the word "government". To an ordinary person, the word might mean the ruling party; that is, in South Africa in the past it would have meant the National Party or the ANC-led government as it is today. According to the Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English, the word "government" has at least four interpretations so the teacher has to know this and impart the knowledge to the pupils. For the teacher to be effective in implementing this, she has to be familiar with the concepts English for Academic Purposes commonly known as EAP, English for Specific Purposes (ESP), and Language Across the Curriculum (LAC) which will be discussed in Chapter 4.

Sekara (1989: 121) claims that reading becomes very difficult for a learner whose home language is not English at primary and secondary levels. In the process of learning as Macdonald (1991 : 17) maintains learners are faced with a high density of unfamiliar words and when these words are explained, they are replaced with more difficult words. It is in this vein that Van Rooyen (1990 : 4) talks about the disparity between the language of the textbook and the linguistic cognitive competence. She further states that the
disparity shows that authors are not aware of the language competence of the pupils. This again puts pressure on teachers to realize the need to prepare pupils fully for their academic learning, failing which the disparity becomes exaggerated as learners move on to higher levels of learning.

Educational linguists like Harmer (1991: 153) feel that if language structures make up the skeleton of the language, then it is the vocabulary which provides the vital organs and flesh. Taking this point further, she states that an ability to manipulate grammatical structures does not have a potential in expressing meaning unless appropriate words in certain situations are used. While pupils at primary school are still keen to learn, it is the teachers' responsibility to meet their needs. At this stage, they are still receptive and the sky is their limit. They are not afraid to take risks with the language.

At the Thirteenth Annual Conference for English Language Educational Trust (ELET) held at the University of Natal on the 5th and 6th August 1997, it transpired that only a few teachers feel that it is necessary to equip learners with adequate vocabulary to cope with their learning problems. Teachers feel that learners will acquire vocabulary as they learn to read independently. Wide reading will increase their vocabulary. One wonders if a learner with limited vocabulary will be able to understand the text and make sense out of it. Also discussed at the ELET conference already referred to was the status of vocabulary in language teaching and how it affects other subjects. It became evident from the discussion that some teachers held the opinion that vocabulary teaching is not such an essential requirement. Learners, they felt, acquire vocabulary as they read independently and this usually occurs at the junior secondary level. What these teachers failed to give a satisfactory answer to was how could the learners read widely if they have not been equipped with enough vocabulary to cope with learning problems. It was thereafter unanimously agreed that if English teachers are going to help other teachers cope with reading problems in their subjects, vocabulary teaching is necessary. The idea of having words in store for future use is advocated by
Carter and McCarthy (1990: 47-48). The process of retrieving words from memory serves to increase the background knowledge.

Taylor's (1990: 3) view on vocabulary is that word building can help learners understand better. When reading advertisements, articles or anything that attracts the reader's attention, it is noticeable that words change their form. Taking a simple word like "brother - brotherhood, brotherly", the list is endless and we notice another important aspect. The shape of the word has changed depending on the situation it might be used in. Closely related to this is the use of prefixes and suffixes which give guidance to how the word has been used. Explaining words using antonyms or opposites for example "happy - unhappy, responsible - irresponsible" and words that go together might help learners cope with learning problems.

What also helps is the suggestion by McCarthy (1990: 491). He claims that since words are restricted in terms of who says what to whom, when, why and so on, children have to know when to talk formally or informally. This point is expatiated by Kroes (1996) in Chapter 4. If teachers intentions are to have better citizens in future, proper communication skills have to be taught.

Having discussed at length how helpful vocabulary is in the children's learning, the researcher finds it appropriate to look at how beneficial this vocabulary and other language aspects can be in other learning areas. If the language teacher can work side by side with other subject teachers, much could be achieved. The suggestion that the researcher is making is what she advocated at the South African English Teaching Institute (SETI) conference which was organised by the United States Information Service (USIS) at the University of Port Elizabeth in 1993. The researcher was influenced by the summer institute she had attended the previous year (1992), which led to the conviction that in most cases reading materials, debates, dialogues, role play and other activities in the language classrooms could be taken from other
subjects, while other subject teachers might invite language teachers into their classrooms to help with reading techniques.

At face value, this integration and partnership appears more like a confusion, but in practice, this collaboration helps a great deal. Even if it is perceived as something disorganising to other teachers, if the disorganisation results in the improvement of learning, then it is good. Although at Cicira College lecturers were held up by internal problems such as timetables and fear of the unknown, a few tried this with the psychology lecturer at Cicira because he said that was what he was used to in America. External problems were teachers' and students' stay-aways before and after the elections, and mostly after the elections, threats of right-sizing and rationalisation demotivated these lecturers. What they had thought would happen did not materialise.

It would be exciting therefore for language teachers to work side by side with history teachers, for example. History teachers will be given or allowed to choose certain lessons they are interested in pertaining to language, while language teachers will choose certain units or themes which they will be comfortable to handle. If both teachers give assignments or any form of tasks, they will organise together how the work will go, that is, how far they have to include each subject in the project so that even when the work is monitored, everything is done jointly. When the task has to be assessed, again the teachers concerned work together giving feedback. The history teacher might look at the mastering of facts and other nitty gritties in her subject, whilst the language teacher will look at the arrangement of the work in terms of the topic, topic sentences, paragraphs linking words, choice of words etc.

Certain aspects relating to the importance of vocabulary are given a more detailed treatment by researchers such as Macdonald and Vorster, but these will be examined in section 2.4.
2.3 Reading

2.3.1 Introduction

In Chapter 1.2 it has been stated that learners in the Transkei region find it difficult to cope with their learning. To mention but a few things, few pupils are able to read their texts with understanding. Proficiency in the language of instruction would make pupils transfer the skills to other subjects they are taking in their curriculum. To be a good student in every subject implies that one has a very good command of English or any language of instruction. The researcher is going to look at reading closely so that an attempt can be made to include reading in an academic support programme.

2.3.2 Reading in many Primary Schools

Reading, like vocabulary teaching mentioned in Chapter 2.2, is also a neglected area. The type of reading that is popular in the traditional school setting, is oral reading. According to Vorster and Jackson (1995:12) only one person, the teacher, is in control; other members are passive listeners, or alternatively, they are reading after the teacher. In most cases, these readers just recite sounds from memory, they are not reading at all. This is humorously referred to as “barking at the page”. Apart from being time-consuming, this type of reading affects other class members in many ways. The reader calls out words accurately and precisely without making sense of their meaning. This reading retards progress because the focus is on words not on meaning. (Teacher Education 1998:182). What is noticeable in the process of oral reading is that the atmosphere is tense. The one learner who is reading is not free because the teacher is listening to him looking for mistakes and immediately interrupts the reading with prompt correction. This threatening atmosphere has negative effects on learners. They become shy to read because they are afraid to be ridiculed. Because learners are always tense, they cannot even exercise their minds. They are not free to read
as they please and they do not enjoy reading because they have to imitate good readers, an exercise which is not purposeful.

Oral reading becomes worse when traditional approaches are used, that is, when the teacher starts the reading lesson by giving a list of difficult words. It is she who has chosen these words. Having explained their meaning, the teacher asks pupils to make sentences using these words. This activity is difficult even when it is done in the learners' home language. It is a good idea to increase the learners' vocabulary, but the way this is done should not be threatening. If this were done differently, pupils would for example just underline the words they do not know or guess their meanings in context. Learners should be allowed to take risks because in real life situations, people who succeed are the ones who take risks. Reading aloud is recommended for good pronunciation, fluency and expressive speaking. Not all the learners are going to be newsreaders, ministers of religion or public speakers in their adult lives. At junior primary level where learners still need to recognise words, oral reading is good but at senior primary, this is not necessary. If reading aloud is to be enjoyed or is going to be of any purpose, only one person should read; the rest should close their books and listen. The reader, as Kilfoil and Van der Walt (1989:101) suggest, should employ paralinguistic techniques like gestures, voice variation and facial expression to express meaning. This is what the READ Project specialises in, when the story is read aloud.

2.3.3 Meaning of Reading

Unlike oral reading, silent reading is done individually and everybody in class is involved fully. Chambers (1991:29) notes that reading is an activity that has special behavioural needs. The reader, he goes further to say, has to set his mind right to do it, to concentrate on the book so that he is drawn into it and gives it his attention. The writer here emphasizes that reading should take place quietly so that the reader understands what he is reading. Since
silent reading is an individual process, the reader is free to read at his own pace, unlike oral reading where reading is standardised, that is, the fast readers are held up by the one who is reading and the slow reader has to rush in order to keep up with the reader's pace. In real life situations, people read silently in most cases, but Wallace (1992: 5) is of the opinion that the way people read depends on the purpose for which they are reading. When people read silently, they understand what they are reading about better. If pupils could be introduced to this type of reading early in their lives, they can excel even in other subjects because these subjects also require a person who understands what he is doing.

The knowledge of reading meaningfully can help learners have control over their learning instead of depending so much on teachers. To be a good and effective history student, for instance, implies that one has a very good command of the language he has gained from reading widely. A student who does well in any subject is the one who searches for meaning when he reads, and will be able to argue convincingly using certain strategies that are going to be discussed in the next heading.

2.3.4 Reading Strategies

Before discussing other alternatives for reading, it will be useful to look at what reading is. Nuttall (1982: 12) perceives reading as a psycho-linguistic guessing game. In a nutshell, when the reader is involved in the process, he uses his cognitive skills and the knowledge of the language to gain access to the meaning. This definition tends to emphasize that not everybody understands what the writer is trying to convey. Some readers enjoy reading because it takes place easily, but to poor readers, reading is a difficult task, which is why learners have to be taught how to read with understanding. Furthermore, reading is not passive as many writers like Kilfoil (1989), Grellet (1981) and others always emphasize; it is, they claim, interactive.
Using the background knowledge, the reader makes certain assumptions which are either confirmed or rejected in the process (Pumfrey 1977 : 2). If rejected, the reader modifies or replaces them so whoever interrupts reading is disturbing the process and deprives readers of an opportunity of becoming independent readers.

Goodman quoted by Kilfoil and Van der Walt (1989 : 95) sees reading as a selective and information processing skill. Gathering from what this writer is saying, not every word in the text is important. There are words that do not carry meaning, so reading every word will not only cause fatigue to the reader, but also render the reading process futile. When the information is processed, it means that the reader is not receptive, he interprets. What he gets from the text is scrutinised and juxtaposed with what the reader already knows. In this way, reading is reciprocal, that is, the reader brings the previous knowledge as Cairney (1990 : 15) puts it and takes what the writer is putting across. Reading is communication between the reader and the writer.

23.5 Silent Reading

Many writers like Grellet (1981), Murray and Johanson (1992 : 6-10), Nuttall (1982 : 34), Cretchley and Stacey (1983 : 81), Cargill (1994 : 70) and others concur that for effective reading to take place, certain strategies have to be employed. These are skimming, scanning, prediction, inferring word meanings, anticipation, questioning and many others, but in this study, only these few will be discussed. All these strategies the writers claim are possible if reading is done quickly; if done slowly, the reader tends to repeat words and fixation catches up with him.

23.5.1 Skimming

All the writers mentioned in 23.5 are unanimous that skimming is one of the most important strategies that can be employed if reading for comprehension
is to be improved. Cretchley and Stacey (1983: 81) define skimming as glossing over a text to get the gist. This implies that reading is not done in bits and pieces like many teachers sometimes do, that is, dealing with the text paragraph by paragraph, or line by line. This, according to these two writers, is not very helpful if children have to get the global understanding of what they are reading about. Skimming is a very helpful strategy when one is reading a newspaper or headlines; the first sentence or first paragraph and a few words will give the reader a clue of what the paper or any article is all about. Then, if the reader has time, he will come back and look for details. To all learners, this strategy is essential. In order to decide whether the text is relevant to what one wants to read about, skimming will be a useful strategy. When the teacher wants to acquaint the learners with this strategy, a reading purpose has to be established first. The teacher should keep time to encourage pupils to do the activity quickly and effectively. When pupils have to write assignments, this strategy saves them a lot of time and energy. As Cargill (1994: 70) points out, the learner finds out if the information needed is included in the text.

2.3.5.2 Scanning

Cretchley and Stacey (1983) maintain that this technique encourages the reader to quickly go through the text looking for specific information. They claim that scanning is the fastest kind of reading and is useful to everybody. Among the subjects that are done in primary schools, history can be more interesting and easy to learn if children are acquainted with this technique. History students need this skill for dates, names of people and places. To emphasize the importance of this reading skill in history, Cooper (1994: 11) acknowledges the scanning of history events to help students learn quickly. With these techniques in mind, reading becomes fast because the mind will always be ahead of the eye and the reader will not be bogged down by re-inspection of the text which impinges on comprehension.
2.3.5.3 Inferring Word Meanings

At senior primary schools learners display reading disabilities, they still cannot process information on their own. Reading strategies like inferring word meanings have to be introduced. When dealing with new texts, they should be encouraged to guess meanings of unfamiliar words in context. Ediger et al (1989 : 29) state that inference should be encouraged through questions. It is always advisable that teachers should grade questions, low order questions do not give any challenge to learners. Pupils have to be encouraged to use their thinking skills at all times. Open-ended questions that will require students to use their opinions should be used. Alternatively, students can be presented with synonyms, antonyms, definitions or descriptions of unfamiliar words. Multiple-choice items provide pupils with best practice to develop their inference skills. Dictionary work should only be used as a last resort, that is, after learners have tried to solve the problem independently.

2.3.5.4 Questioning

If teachers want pupils to be actively involved in the reading tasks they must encourage pupils to utilise this skill. Asking questions has always been monopolised by teachers because they fear that pupils might not be able to do so. It is these unfounded fears that have prevented pupils from being effective readers. Cargill (1992 : 85) maintains that middle order questions that require pupils to think critically and go beyond the text to find answers, are relevant reading strategies. Pupils have to learn to argue and respect other people's point of view. This is what is going to make reading a challenging and an enjoyable activity. Pupils will see reading as a rewarding task and develop love for it. As the reader's ideas develop, he will be capable of discovering new dimensions through what he makes out of the text.
2.3.5.5 Prediction

This strategy deals with encouraging pupils to guess what is going to happen next. Vorster and Jackson (1995: 26-28) suggest that when reading is going to make pupils use this skill more especially at primary schools, pupils must be provided with a picture to discuss. Using the title, ideas used during picture discussion, the child can guess what the reading is going to be about and when they read, they either confirm or reject their hypothesis, so reading becomes interesting and challenging. The READ Project uses this technique very much to activate the reader's schemata. Pupils enjoy reading and they even tell what the story is about from the picture they are discussing.

2.3.6 Increasing Reading Speed

Foss and Hakes (1978: 345) ask whether pupils can learn to read faster because of disagreement among writers about this issue. Other writers are of the opinion that reading fast causes pupils not to understand what they are reading about. This, in most cases, depends upon the purpose of the reader Wallace mentioned in 2.3.3. Reading bus timetables, newspapers and advertisements would be different from reading for an assignment. Among primary school readers, which the study is about, there are very few experienced readers because of the environmental conditions. Children's schools and homes do not provide a favourable atmosphere for reading to take place (READ Annual Report, March 1995). Parents, who are supposed to assist in reading, are not able to teach reading. Many teachers are at fault because they do not teach or help pupils during silent reading periods if there are any in the schools. If pupils showed progress at the word recognition stage, it is taken for granted that the child will still do well during silent reading. Certain reading faults like pointing with fingers, vocalisation and eye movement are not taken care of.
2.3.7  Improving Reading

What is expected from a successful reader is what is expressed by Nuttall (1982: 146) when he asks why people read. If people read to extract meaning, he argues, they should examine the way they read. According to him, the purpose of reading a foreign language is to read to learn. When people read, they want to open up a dialogue or a discussion with the writer, that is, the writer always wants to convey his message to the reader. What facilitates communication is the level of understanding between the two people involved. In most cases, more especially with inexperienced readers, the message is not received, hence the complaint about the difficulty of the text. Although it is so, many writers do not agree that the text should be simplified to reach the level of the pupils.

2.3.7.1 Intensive Reading

Having been taught reading strategies, students have to be given reading material where they are going to apply the strategies, and be able to assess if they are going to help them read better. Kilfoil and Van der Walt (1989: 101) advise reading teachers to choose authentic material: what is available in the community, what pupils are interested in, a variety of texts which will make the reading teacher choose materials from and the other subjects pupils are doing at school, will help encourage pupils improve their reading. During intensive reading, the teacher does not do much, it is the pupils who have to work hard. The teacher's role is to motivate and encourage pupils to read independently. If the teacher does not withdraw the help he is giving pupils, it becomes difficult for the pupils to become independent readers. The teacher should monitor every step the reading child is taking and should give praise where it is needed. A positive attitude will encourage pupils to feel relaxed and work better. If the teacher finds out from the pupils what they are able to do and what they are not able to, the reading progresses well. Sometimes it happens among inexperienced readers that they read what they
expect to be on the text and not what is actually there because they are not experienced in hypothesis formulation. This usually happens if pre-teaching has not been done. Guided reading always helps among primary school children, but as soon as the teacher sees that they no longer need assistance, he has to give them the opportunity to be independent.

2.3.7.2 Extensive Reading

Nuttall (1982: 167) concurs with Kilfoil and Van der Walt (1989: 116) that intensive reading prepares pupils for extensive reading. Kilfoil and Van der Walt (1989) describe extensive reading as a fluency based activity focused on meaning and it is the skill that pupils will retain for the rest of their lives. If primary school learners can be involved in this type of reading, their language competence can improve and problems that cause other students to think or be influenced by their home languages can be solved very early in their lives. During intensive reading, Kilfoil and Van der Walt further state, the individual reads as much as possible at his own pace. It is in this type of reading that pupils show whether they are mature enough to handle their own reading. Nuttall (1982: 168) feels that slow readers also have to be involved in this type of reading because there is a chance for them to improve. He emphasizes that people learn to read by reading.

2.3.7.3 A Sentence: Its importance in Intensive Reading

When the importance of reading strategies was discussed in 2.3.5, it was agreed that global understanding of the text is possible if reading is fast. On the other hand, authors of content subject areas like Orr and Schutte (1992), Durkin (1982), Allen and Widdowson (1974) and many others are of the opinion that when the learner reads for details, his attention should be drawn to the structure of the text, that is how sentences and paragraphs are organised. When describing a sentence, Durkin (1982: 115), Rose and Purkis (1981: 36) contend that it is a series of words that are related to one another in
a way that will yield meaning. Supporting this description, Roe et al (1987: 104) claim that without sentences discourse is impossible. He even suggests that if the reader has difficulty in obtaining meaning, paraphrasing is the solution. It is for this reason that Jordaan et al (undated: 69) feel that every history lesson is also a language lesson. The ideas brought up by these content area authors are very helpful because as Macdonald (1991) has claimed, senior primary pupils are not ready for the type of work they encounter in the classes they are doing. If it is taken for granted that they already know sentences, their arrangement and how to obtain meaning from a point might be missed.

Adding to what the content area authors have said, Orr et al (1992: 25) say:

*If words are units of meaning, sentences are units of thoughts.*

To expatiate on what these authors are saying, Orr et al suggest certain words in sentences that are used as signals. These are conjunctions, logical connectors and cohesive devices that link ideas to form a coherent discourse as Chapter 4 will show. Learners have to be made aware of these devices so that when they come across them in the text, they are able to utilise them effectively. To emphasize this point, Rose and Purkis (1981: 44) introduce the readers to different types of sentences, namely simple, compound and complex. If learners can have knowledge of the types of sentences and how they express meaning, readers can be taught to use the process of “chunking” as Casteel cited by Strauss (1995: 58) has suggested. Describing this chunking, Casteel says it is the grouping of words in a sentence in short, meaningful phrases that will allow more information to be perceived and processed. Without the knowledge of the text structure, it will be difficult to gain access to meaning. Attention should be drawn to headings, underlined words, bold print, tables, words written in the margin, main and supporting ideas in every paragraph.
2.3.7.4 How a Paragraph Helps the Reader to Understand

When the reader looks at the text, he discovers it is well-organised and divided into readable chunks to help the reader feel motivated and attracted to the text. These divisions are not accidental as Sullivan (1967: 20) points out:

*Sentences in a paragraph are grouped together because they deal with a single main idea. Many paragraphs express main ideas in topic sentences which state and encapsulate the main idea of a paragraph.*

He takes it a step further when he claims that topic sentences do not necessarily have to be at the beginning. What he says is important to primary school readers because if they can be introduced to these ways of looking at the text, they will find reading easier and develop love for it. To them reading is very important because all learning depends on it. The high failure and repeater rate that the READ Project (February 1998: 5-6) is battling with could be reduced.

In most cases, what makes pupils fail to read effectively is that they are not aware of the main and supporting ideas in the text. Probing questions such as what the paragraph is about or what the main idea of a paragraph is, are helpful.

2.3.7.5 Reading Across the Curriculum

This study has not limited itself to the reading of printed materials only. As Friedman and Rowls (1980: 244) assert, content areas like maths, science, geography and others always require learners to read and interpret specialised materials. Quoting Macdonald (1991), Strauss (1995: 345) feels that learners from disadvantaged societies do not have sufficient background knowledge which their counterparts have to cope with their reading. To take
their point further, the environmental conditions prevent these black children from having access to any reading material before they attend school because their parents are illiterate. Also worth mentioning is that the strategies that have been suggested earlier in this chapter cannot all be of help in reading charts, maps, graphs, diagrams, photographs and drawings. Learners have to be taught to interpret these visual materials because they help learners understand the text easier. As Van Rooyen (1990 : 19) contends, if learners have not been taught to appreciate these visual materials, comprehension is no better than with the text alone because the inexperienced readers ignore them and restrict themselves to words only.

2.3.7.6 Prior Knowledge

In this chapter, previous knowledge had just been mentioned in passing, yet it plays a vital role in making the reader understand what he is reading about. Both content area authors like Roe et al (1987), Lapp et al (1989) and linguists like Nuttall (1982), Kilfoil and Van der Walt (1989) agree that effective learning does not take place if the learner's background information is not taken cognisance of. Whenever a new lesson is taught, the teacher should find out what the learners already know so that the new knowledge is linked up with the old. If this is not done, it means learners are taken as empty vessels into which information is poured. Integration of new and old knowledge enables the learner to have a firm foundation for effective learning. A large problem is what has been stated by Macdonald (1991) that the senior primary learners are not adequately prepared for the work they are doing. In most cases, their background knowledge is full of misconceptions that sometimes impinge on their comprehension.

2.3.7.6.1 The Schemata Theory

To give a clear picture of how the existing knowledge works, Lapp et al (1989) and Roe et al (1987) talk about the schemata theory. Defining a
schemata, Lapp et al (1989 : 258-9) explain how knowledge is presented, learnt and stored in the mind. What a person knows, they argue, is organised in a hierarchical manner helping the reader remember something when the new knowledge is presented.

Taking this point further, Carnel cited by Strauss (1995 : 32) maintains that the late 1970's saw a change in the reading process. The psycho-linguistic model of reading, she claims, dominated views in first language reading, and also played a role in the views governing second language reading. Taking it a step further, Strauss quotes Goodman's theory that makes the reader an active participant in the process of reading, enabling him to either confirm or reject hypotheses from his background knowledge of the various linguistic levels. Gathering from Strauss's argument, it was the first time that the second language reader felt challenged by what he was reading about. The reader felt his background information placed him on the same footing with the author.

2.3.7.6.2 How the Schemata Works

Anderson and Pearson cited by Strauss (1995 : 35) observe that understanding depends on the interaction of the new information with the existing one. Understanding a text according to these authors implies that the information from the text has settled in the mind of the reader. This, according to Piaget quoted by Lapp et al (1989 : 20) is called assimilation. On the other hand, prior knowledge that the reader has, undergoes certain changes in order to accept the new information. This is what Piaget calls accommodation. This theory, as Strauss points out, explains that the input is mapped out against the existing knowledge and for comprehension to occur, all aspects of the schemata have to be in harmony with the input information.
2.3.7.6.3 Activating the Schemata

Not all second language learners’ schemata are always ready to receive new input. Activating is through the use of pictures, songs, brainstorming, discussion, and many other activities before the new information is added might be a good idea. Understanding might be affected because the reader’s background does not cope with the new information. According to Friedman and Rowls (1980) when the schemata are activated, the whole network of related concepts are also triggered. To second language readers, the background knowledge might be inadequate and inaccurate resulting in the disturbance of the interaction that is supposed to take place. This is what Friedman and Rowls (1980) call background knowledge interference. This interference, according to Strang (1955: 344) takes place if the reader tends to remember only those facts that support his own viewpoint, causing him to accuse the author of prejudice if their views are opposed to each other. This takes the discussion to another important point, the attitude of the reader which will not be discussed here because of time and space.

In the last paragraph of 2.2 the researcher has promised to discuss the contributions made by Vorster and Macdonald whose findings form the base of this study on the importance of vocabulary.

2.4 Contribution by Carol Macdonald

Grabe quoted by Strauss (1995: 49) identified the need for massive receptive vocabulary for effective learning. He feels that inadequate vocabulary prevents readers from gaining access to meaning. Hague, Florenz and Hadaway quoted by Van Rooyen (1990: 26) state that since vocabulary learning does not occur incidentally, thorough teaching could help remedy the situation. The young second language learners Macdonald (1990 and 1991) has constantly referred to, experience serious problems and are affected in many ways.
The early 1990's as the above paragraph shows, saw a great intervention of the concerned educators in the learning problems experienced by learners who use English as a medium of instruction. Investigations conducted by Macdonald in 1990 and 1991 had fruitful results because Curriculum 2005 that is in place today seems to be what the author referred to, had suggested. In her investigations, Macdonald (1990) and (1991: 14-15) posits that learners using English as a second language encounter problems when they pass standard two. Their inadequate vocabulary of 800 words which they have learnt, cannot cope with lexical demands in standard three where they are expected to know about 7000 words to cope with content subjects which are done in English.

Without being prepared for the traumatic situation the standard threes are approaching, they are received by the type of teachers Macdonald (Report Soling - 19 1990 : 49) has commented on. By also highlighting what is happening in content subject areas like science, Macdonald (1990 : 19) has made a tremendous contribution for the improvement of vocabulary teaching across the curriculum. Although various organisations and institutions have not acknowledged it, Macdonald’s recommendations have brought about transformation. The system of education is in the process of change with the introduction of Curriculum 2005, the changeover period is gradual because teachers are allowed to use the language learners are going to be comfortable with. Projects that aim to improve language proficiency have since changed their procedures. To mention just one, the READ Project no longer holds conferences theorising about what should be done to promote literacy. Teaching materials are provided to the schools after intensive induction courses empowering the teachers concerned. The Read Project is one of the outstanding organisations in teaching vocabulary and reading.
2.4.1 Vorster's Lexical Development

In the third paragraph of 2.2 authors like Carter and McCarthy (1988), Allen (1983) have raised their concerns about the neglect of vocabulary teaching. This point is taken further by Vorster (1990) when he mentions reasons for the neglect. First of all, he points out that vocabulary teaching defies systematic structural analysis unlike grammar and is therefore difficult to teach. Vorster also blames authors for only concentrating on language acquisition at the expense of vocabulary teaching, but he expresses wonder at the way a child between eighteen months and six years acquires vocabulary. Apart from the receptive nature of the child at this level, one of the reasons might be the environmental conditions he himself comments on in the school situation (Vorster 1990: 54).

Fearing the consequences of not implementing Macdonald’s recommendations soon, Vorster came up with what he called a “first aid” lexical development project. He introduces the use of dictionaries and visual materials that will help children improve their vocabulary in order to cope with other demands. This he maintains, is just the tip of an iceberg. This idea of using dictionary meanings and definitions does not go unchallenged by Scott and Nagy (1997: 84). They agree that pupils should be introduced to reference skills, but they are not happy with the definitions used in dictionaries. Definitions, used in conjunction with pictures they claim, give meanings to nouns but verbs are not explained well. Furthermore, they argue, using a dictionary is a special skill that requires pupils to be trained thoroughly. In addition to this, they feel that dictionary use involves subtasks like keeping the meaning of the text in mind while one searches for a word and selecting from a number of alternatives. With the conditions prevailing in primary schools, these authors do not see dictionary work yielding fruitful results.
Taking the argument further, Ooi and Kim-Seoh (1996: 56) seem to be reiterating Scott and Nagy's point of view when they say:

"Lexical comprehension implies more than just knowing what a word means. It subsumes a number of other kinds of knowledge including what differentiates one word from the other words that appear to mean the same, what other meanings a word might have, what kind of associative links it has with other items in the lexicon, how it behaves syntactically and, just as importantly, its limitations of use according to situations and functions".

What is gathered from this statement is that efforts by Vorster are greatly appreciated, but there are loopholes because people who are going to implement these projects are not competent enough as Vorster (1990: 56) has portrayed them earlier on. They need enrichment programmes first before they use the materials. Supporting lack of proficiency among teachers, Meyer (1998: 6-8) avers that they prefer to use the mother tongue or allow pupils to use mother tongue when it is not necessary.

Vorster, like Macdonald (1991) and Van Rooyen (1990) are of the opinion that too much is expected from Grade 5 learners. This he expressed by the use of words like "lexical explosion". In so far as Vorster is concerned even if this expectation was in their first language, these pupils were still going to experience problems. To help alleviate the problem, Vorster suggests a subject-based approach in which language teachers work together with content area teachers, an idea discussed in detail in Chapter 4. Vorster pointed out that these subjects standard three pupils are introduced to have special terminology which creates problems of understanding the content. If educators do not formulate programmes where English for specific purposes is emphasized, learners will not benefit from the Teaching Programmes of the school.
2.4.2 Contribution made by Publishers

It is of great importance also to note the contribution made by the publishers in an attempt to improve and facilitate learning. This they have done through publishing and selling textbooks in various learning centres. All the content materials looked at were for senior primary. These were geography, history, health education and general science and are subsidised by the government which makes things easy for each school to get a share to provide the learners with. Before discussing their usefulness to the learners, it will be beneficial to have an idea about how they are written or arranged.

2.4.2.1 Geography

The researcher took a closer look at the two standard 3 prescribed books by Yule et al (1981) and Podesta (1982). Their layout, in the form of table of contents, headings, bold type, use of italics and glossary at the end is well planned. The books help the learner predict context as Van Rooyen (1990 : 15-17) has suggested, but it depends on whether the learner is ready or is thoroughly prepared to do so. Language across the curriculum has been made use of and Podesta (1982) outperforms Yule et al (1981) by introducing communicative pictures like puppets that do not only invite the learner to read or perform any activity, but also give assurance to help the learner throughout the textbook. The pictures and activities in these books depend on the type of teacher handling the subject.

2.4.2.2 History

What is outstanding in the history book of Schoeman et al (1991) is that the power of the teacher is decentralised. It is the puppets that constantly ask questions, a technique Macdonald (1991 : 16) has complained about. Because it is not clear, she maintains, there is a lack of interaction between the teacher and the learner. Through questions, background information is retrieved and
a gap between the old and new information is bridged. The use of puppets and speech bubbles enhance meaning and the conversational style in the form of dialogues and interviews is promoted. This communicative style consolidates what the language teachers have done and it prepares learners for the outside world where they will be confronted by different audiences using special vocabulary. Other activities like sentence completion need to be improved. If teachers want learners to increase their vocabulary sentence, completion exercises should require more than one word.

2.4.2.3 Health education

Despite the fact that the book written by Nicolson (1983) was published a long time ago, it still attracts the attention of many readers. There is a very close relationship between geography, science and other subjects. Reference has been made to TV and radio programmes. What needs to be improved is the question technique. Putting almost all questions at the end of the book might not motivate pupils. They might not be encouraged to look at them or if they do, they will do so long after the part they have been dealing with has been forgotten.

2.4.2.4 General Science

Because of the challenges of the world of technology in which we are living, this subject demands a lot of concentration by both learners and educators. The irony is that only a few teachers are able to teach it effectively and for that reason, learners do not feel comfortable with the subject. To allay these fears, Van Dyk (1981) has introduced role-play so that learning takes place in a less threatening manner. There is no need to translate or make notes for pupils, an activity that is strongly criticised by Van Rooyen.

What is unfortunate about the books that have been discussed above is that they appear late on the scene, when a large amount of damage has already
been caused at the junior primary level. As Macdonald has emphasized earlier on, the learner's vocabulary cannot cope with what is written in these content subjects. It is for this reason that the researcher intends to discuss language books, namely "Wordpower" (Maskew Miller) and "Wordbuilder" (Kagiso) that have been prepared to increase the junior primary learners' vocabulary to enable them to cope with the materials used at senior primary. Time and space will not allow the researcher to give a clear picture of how helpful these books are to prepare junior primary school learners.

2.4.2.5 Language Books for Junior Primary

As it has been stated in 2.2 that even at higher levels of learning it becomes clear that students have not mastered the very basics of the target language, it is imperative that the junior primary school education has to be taken seriously. A lot of energy has to be exerted to lay a good foundation for the learners. As the policy document for the foundation phase (1997: LLC 33) emphasizes, pupils have to develop the ability to use the language as a tool for learning, and learning on the other hand is mediated through language as pupils interact with new information. The document goes further to say that language should be used as an instrument for solving problems, making decisions and creative, critical and evaluative thinking. These types of materials mentioned above, Wordpower and Wordbuilder afford children with such situations where they will use the language effectively.

2.4.3 Wordbuilder Level 1

The 7000 words that Macdonald (1990) and (1991) states will make learners competent to cope with other subjects in their curriculum, are catered for in this book and they are introduced in the form of themes. Examples of these themes expose learners to the phase organisers such as entrepreneurship in the "Shop situation" which appears on page 14 and "Buying" on page 16. Other phase organisers like Safety embraced by Transport (18) and Road
Signs (20) also widen the children's scope of learning. Learners become aware of their local environment and interaction with it so that they have a better understanding of the world in which they are living.

2.4.3.1 Wordpower Level I

This fun book tends to consolidate what has been taught using Wordbuilder Level I because topics are more or less the same. At junior primary repetition is done for the full understanding of what is taught to cater for those who might not have understood it. If the topic is dealt with differently, even those who felt they have understood at first might get a deeper understanding of what they are learning about. Apart from the introduction of word puzzles that place emphasis on spelling other complex topics like superordinates, the umbrella words like "clothes", "vegetables", "fruit", "animals", "transport" and others are introduced. The cultural aspect, though on a small scale is introduced through topics like "birthday parties".

If these books could be utilised to their fullest extent, pupils would not encounter problems at any stage of their learning. What is also noticeable about these materials is their flexibility in use. They are not limited by grade or standard. As the teacher always assesses her class, she knows the areas of weakness and the needs of her class. She can therefore take any book for any level and help learners with their problems. This means that there are no restrictions as even a grade one class can use Wordbuilder Level II or III as long as it is advanced enough to cope with the material.

2.5 Summary

This chapter has looked at how important it is for the second language users, more especially those who use English as a medium of instruction, to have enough vocabulary. This vocabulary equips them so that they participate actively in the process of reading. Reading is the key to all learning. In this
chapter again problems of the second language learners have been highlighted and discussed. It has been made clear once more that reading is not an easy task. Great effort from the readers is encouraged because reading also involves cognitive skills. Second language users have to be motivated and helped using strategies that have been discussed so that they achieve their goals.

2.6 Conclusion

To minimize the effects caused by mother tongue interference, it will be better if the problem is fought from top to bottom. In Macdonald's findings (1991: 19) it has been stated that subjects like science are taught in African languages because the teachers concerned do not feel secure to use English throughout their lessons. If in the empowerment courses teachers could be taught proper communication skills and how they affect discourse, as step towards the right direction will have been taken. Generally speaking, mother tongue interference affects teaching and this has drastic results. For the programmes of Adult Basic Education and other literary projects to succeed in Lesotho, they were announced and advertised through the mass media. To spread academic support, the mass media can be fully involved. If broadcasters, announcers and commentators could use first grade English and encourage films that would promote proficiency in English, the gap might be narrowed.
CHAPTER 3

MOTHER TONGUE INTERFERENCES

3.1 Introduction

Macdonald (1991: 42) argues that when a culture moves rapidly from an oral, non-reading, non-writing tradition to become literate, that culture will feel the strain of change. Moving into visual literacy becomes a long struggle. It is for this reason that she points out that culture can be regarded as one of the causes of language interference.

As has been stated in the previous chapters that the learners at Grade 5 Level onwards have limited vocabulary for academic purposes, it is worthwhile to talk about how their communication reveals this. Also in this chapter, it will be noted how serious the effect is of interference in the process of learning. This is why the introduction of academic support has been suggested, to remedy the situation. The origins of the learner's difficulties are going to be highlighted. English and Xhosa, the mother tongue in question, are totally different in terms of pronunciation, stress, tone and otherwise, so a Xhosa speaking child struggles to be proficient in English.

When the term "language interference" is mentioned, the implication is that there are two or more languages in place as Baker (1993: 45) puts it, so before saying much on mother tongue interference, it is better to talk a little about bilingualism. In the South African context, the term bilingualism was used to refer to the ability to speak two former official languages, namely English and Afrikaans. This meant a person who knew two African languages was not seen as bilingual. Most of South African citizens are multilinguals only to a limited degree because of their low level of proficiency. As a result of the new changes in South Africa, all the eleven languages are official. The bilingual approach in education acquires another meaning.
3.2 Interference

When Weinrich quoted by Corder (1981) looks at mother tongue interference, he describes it as an instance of deviation from the norms of either language in the linguistic performance of any person who speaks more than one language. When this interference occurs, there are many aspects of grammar that are affected as 3.7 is going to show. The interference is mostly noticeable when the speaker becomes careless or informal during communication or when the person is in any emotional state.

On the other hand, Corder (1981: 96) posits that interference is caused by learners' beliefs which might be mistaken about what they think is similar in their mother tongue and the target language. They therefore "borrow" from the first language. Sometimes Corder goes further to say, at earlier stages of learning, second language users err in regarding their mother tongue as unique than it is in fact. Newmark quoted by Corder view interference as a result of instances where a performer is called upon to perform before he has learnt the new behaviour. The learner falls back on what he knows to make up for what is not known. If this borrowing goes unchecked, fossilization occurs. Corder 1981: 87, 88) citing Bickerton describes the term as a mechanism whereby the speaker of a particular language will keep certain linguistic items, rules, subsystems in their interlanguage regardless of the amount of instruction they receive in the target language.

3.3 Interference or Transfer?

The term "interference" is strongly criticised by Baetens Beardsome (1986: 47) on the grounds that it has negative implications and is also misleading. His definition of the term is the same as Weinrich's, but the former goes on to say:
"deviation from the monoglot norms yet in many bilingual communities reflections of one language in speech in the other are perfectly acceptable and have no such connotations".

What is gathered from the author's rejection of the term is that he finds that it discriminates and undermines those groups who fail to arrive at certain set standards of achievement. The view of set standards in spoken and written communication is taken further by Engel and Whitehead (1996 : 36) when they ask which English is standard English. They feel it is not true that in countries like Britain and America, standard English dominates. What they say is correct because there are people who do not speak English well in America, hence there are programmes to help them if they want to pursue their studies; but the fact is they are very few. In the Western part of England, Welsh is more popular than English. In public places and at primary schools, children use Welsh. Although these writers argue against the use of the term "interference", they refer to the possible negative connotations, but the term as such is still being used universally to denote the phenomenon under discussion.

In so far as Baetens Beardsome (1986) is concerned, the interference is for a short time in most cases and as the learner's understanding develops, the interference disappears. If it continues, he claims, it is because of lack of monitoring. For this reason, therefore, he does not see why a person who aspires to know the language could be stigmatised, which is why he has come up with another term "transfer" to replace the heavily-laden one. In this study, the terms transfer and interference could be used interchangeably. Selinker coined the phrase "inter-language".

3.4 The Nature of Mother Tongue Interference among Transkeians

The problem of mother tongue transfer in the Transkei region just like the vocabulary learning issue referred to in Chapter one dates back to when the
Nationalist Party took over government in South Africa. The Bantu Education Act of 1953 replaced the then existing Cape Education System. Children in the schools except the Model C, were to be educated in their mother tongue from Sub A to Standard six. This sudden change made things difficult for learners because books that were previously used were written in English and there was nothing to replace them. The result was the exodus of many Native English-speaking people including black teachers who were opposed to the system. To replace these teachers, as it has been stated in Chapter 1, the government employed teacher aides (Cingo Commission) who did more harm than good. There were no induction courses before they assumed duties. The only popular method at the time was grammar translation (Richards and Rodgers 1986) where in a foreign language, English in this case, words and sentences are put side by side with the vernacular explanations. Learners were deprived of constant exposure to the target language as Kroes (1996: 6) suggests. A large majority of teaching staff in the region are a product of this period. Things did not improve even after 1976 when Transkei became “independent”. Teachers who were recruited to teach could not be placed at primary schools because of their qualifications. To try to alleviate the problem, the Transkei government relaxed the regulations of teaching. Students who had failed Course III were allowed to teach. All in all, the nature of mother tongue transfer in the region is deep-rooted and different from the other types of “interferences” talked about in other books.

3.5 Differences Between Learning the Mother Tongue and Second Languages

When learning the mother tongue, Kilfoil and Van der Walt (1989 : 2-4) mention two factors, namely; motivation and the environment. With the second language, the situation becomes different. English is learnt formally, taught by different people at a different place. All these situations are threatening to a child. For many rural Transkeians, they hear the first word of English on their first day at school. The language through which other
subjects are taught is not understood easily and when children are on their long journey towards mastering it, they make so many mistakes and errors.

3.6 A Mistake and an Error

According to Corder (1981: 10), a mistake, an error of performance is a "slip". From what he says it is clear that a mistake is less serious than an error, an error of competence which is systematic because given time, a mistake is easy to detect and thereafter to correct. He also maintains that when discussing mother tongue interference, emphasis should not be put on mistakes.

Klu (forthcoming: 85) quoting Corder maintains that an error is persistent and difficult to correct. From the descriptions given by the above writers, one is able to assume that a person who makes an error is not aware of it and it also shows that it seldom occurs among first language users. If it is a second language user phenomenon, then the implications are that it has to be dealt with as soon as possible to avoid difficulties that are encountered in an attempt to eradicate it. If good teaching is done at an early age, things might improve. That is why in the previous chapter a lot was said on creating partnerships because even among teachers, in most cases are both second language users, they might also have the same problem.

From the six causes of errors that Klu enumerates, it is clear that somewhere, somehow, a teacher is at fault. These are:

1. inaccuracy in learning
2. inadequate teaching
3. wrong guessing
4. poor memory
5. mother tongue interference; and
6. the process of learning.
Three of these causes lay the blame on teachers. That is a challenge to both English and history teachers to try their best so that when learners express themselves, these types of errors crop up less. As we shall see from one of the Academic Support Programmes, language structures are emphasized in so many different ways and there are so many stages during the activity that a child can be helped to improve his language expression.

The two languages, Xhosa and English, create problems for Xhosa speaking pupils so a closer look at where these problems stem from might help salvage the situation. Much has been said in other African languages like Zulu, Venda and many others. One of the reasons Xhosa speakers have problems in learning English might be caused by lack of equivalents. A Spaniard or a Spanish-speaking learner learning English has less problems than a Xhosa or any Nguni language speaker. The English words that end in "-ty" such as possibility, are equivalents of words ending in "-dad" or "-tad" in Spanish - posibilidad (Larsen - Freeman 1986 : 6). In other words, the languages involved are more closely related. For a Xhosa speaking child, the Zulu language provides many similarities and a few differences. The following examples will show:

Ndiya evenkileni ndiyothenga isonka neswekile - Xhosa
Ngiya esitolo ngiyothenga isinkwa noshukela - Zulu

I am going to the shop to buy bread and sugar.

Also worth mentioning is the word "death" which comes up very often in primary history books because they still talk about wars in the interior. Lanham quoted in Kroes (1996 : 14) pointed out difficulties arising from the use of the English word late. Taking one of the examples given:

My uncle is late
As Lanham puts it, to speakers of African languages, it might not be a problem because they are familiar with the similar mistakes. They will therefore understand what the speaker is saying - that the uncle has passed away. The reason for this error is culture and tradition among Xhosa speaking learners. Traditionally death was treated in a lofty and sublime manner since a person who has died has joined the ancestors. People would then try to use other moderate terms to refer to it, for example "uswelekile" or "ubhubhile" instead of "ufile". All these terms mean (he has died).

In Zulu and Siswati, there is nothing wrong when one says "ufile", even if one refers to a person. With Xhosa speakers, animals alone are said to be "file". If the word "file" is referred to a person, it means that that person was a nuisance in society, maybe that person was a thief or a criminal, so he is associated with animals because of his behaviour. They would even go further to say "Ufe kancinci" which means death was a lesser punishment for that person. He deserved something more horrible than death.

The idea of not calling things by their names (ukuhlonipha) euphemism in English, used to happen and emphasized among certain groups at certain stages among Xhosa speaking people. Only two instances where this activity would take place; a newly wedded female was not expected to call her in-laws by their names, she had to seek other alternatives. If a person's name is or was:

Sithembiso - a person's name which means - promise
Themba - a person's name which means - hope
Thembeka - a person's name which means - trustworthy

Looking at what these names mean, there is no relationship but a newly wedded female could not call out all those names because of that Themb sound.
3.7 Examples of mother tongue interference

Here the researcher is going to look at some examples where these errors occur.

3.7.1 Personal pronouns

Second language users of English also experience problems when they have to use personal pronouns like "she", "he", "her", "his" and others. The difficulty is caused by the fact that in their languages, more especially African languages, there is no distinction between masculine and feminine in the use of personal pronouns (Kroes 1996 : 11-12). He goes further to include another phenomenon, the close link required between the subject and the verb for all verb classes, for example:

*My grandmother she will come back to his house after the holidays.*

The "she" in the utterance where the personal pronoun was needed and the "his" instead of "her" is proof that African languages do not make a distinction between these personal pronouns in the context. This error requires immediate attention if the teaching of English contributes towards enabling learners to eventually meet the challenges of living in a multicultural environment. (Interim core syllabus for second language 1995 : 4). If this structure is not taught thoroughly, communication might break down. Let us assume that the child wants to comment about well-known people in his society like Winnie Madikizela-Mandela. The child will not know whether to put "she" or "he".

3.7.2 Tenses

For the purposes of this study only three tenses, that is, the simple present, the present continuous and the past will be dealt with:
I did not told her a story yesterday.
I am having a problem.
He go to church every Sunday.
Yesterday I went to the shop to bought groceries.

From the above examples it is evident that good work was done earlier in the child’s learning that he recognised the past tense form, but the child has overgeneralised certain rules (Corder 1981).

3.7.3 The impact of methodologies

Another problem emanating from the above errors is that when other approaches or methods of teaching were introduced to learners, fluency was over emphasized at the expense of accuracy (Larson-Freeman 1986). Teaching programmes like English Through Activity (ETA) also emphasized the use of present continuous tense immediate application and demonstration of the knowledge acquired was the major objective.

3.8 Cultural Differences

Another interesting aspect is that Africans show respect in many ways. When a person drops what she is carrying, the African will sow respect and sympathy by saying “sorry” or will even pick up what has been dropped as if the fault lies with her. To a person who is not familiar with the African way of doing things, he will be confused and fail to understand why the African takes it upon herself to apologise. This culture conflict is also expressed when the African uses “sorry” when she is supposed to have said “excuse me”. Time and space constraints do not allow the researcher to enumerate all the instances where this culture conflict occurs.
Macdonald (1991: 5) expands on this issue when she avers that the traditional ways children are brought up affect their thinking and contribute towards their learning. Beliefs like showing respect, she goes on to say, influence the way teachers and learners on one side, and learners and learners on the other side, relate to each other or one another at school. These beliefs and expectations affect tasks learners are asked to perform. Implementation of these beliefs have negative effects on the child's learning. In most cases learners take time to adjust to, and participate effectively in, group work because of cultural problems. If they do not receive encouragement from teachers and parents, the school situation estranges them.

3.9 Interviewing

To facilitate employment these days, applicants are subject to interviews in which their level of competency is tested. Among interviewers, there are non-African language users. If the interviewee cannot express himself well, he does not only lose the job but embarrasses the African nation. These errors compound the unemployment situation that is prevailing in South Africa. If these applicants manage to get through, these employees will not be able to write good reports. Even those who are not necessarily in the work situation will not represent their organisation well in the international world. Academic support in English must address these problems.
CHAPTER 4

ACADEMIC SUPPORT

4.1 Introduction

Academic support is, and has always been, a pressing need at all levels of learning because of the separate and unequal distribution of economic resources and linguistic diversity among the student population in South Africa. At the lower levels, more especially among the historically underprivileged learners, the problem has been caused by the inadequacy which resulted from, inter alia, the lack of vocabulary for academic purposes. The learners' home languages are only used, as has been identified in previous chapters, as languages of learning at lower primary levels. There are teachers who claim that they use the learners' mother tongue and English at lower primary school, but this allegation is disputed by Meyer (1997: 1) when he maintains that there is a vast difference between what teachers say they want, and what they actually do. If what the teachers say was true, there could have been less problems in standard three at the changeover period. Learners still experience problems in subjects like maths, science, geography, and history, to mention but a few at Grade 5 because in most cases, they study these subjects for the first time. These subjects demand a higher learners' language proficiency.

4.2 English for Specific Purposes (ESP)

Since academic support at tertiary level has always been associated with communicative needs of the racially disadvantaged students, (Kroes 1996: 282) it will be worthwhile to include it to the same group at lower levels of learning like primary schools because circumstances demand that. In 3.1 it has been stated that cultural influences do not only affect communicative competence, but also learning in its broader sense. According to the research
conducted by Jefferies (1991: 85), some English structures and phrases have never been taught among the historically black students. This point is reiterated by Valls (1991: 66) when she maintains that students have to be taught politeness strategies. Politeness, according to this writer, is a crucial determiner in which language is realised. Without these politeness strategies, she feels, learners might be regarded as rude, they might be misunderstood, or might not understand when they are talked to in a polite manner. Even in adult life, more especially in the work situation, people have to address one another politely to avoid direct confrontation.

It is for the reasons mentioned above that English for Specific Purposes, commonly known as ESP advocated by Selinker et al (1981: 3-4), Roets (1990 and 1991: 51) and Kroes (1992) come into play. When defining ESP, these writers agree that it promotes the teaching of English not as an end in itself, but as an essential means to a clearly identifiable goal. The goal in this study is learning and, in particular, using English effectively in learning other subjects in the curriculum. The English that the child is learning, must equip him to acquire other skills and knowledge. The reason that primary learners are underdeveloped, is as Macdonald (1991: 58) puts it, is that English is taught as a content subject, not as a tool for communication. To add to Macdonald's point of view, Kroes (1992: 26-27) and (1996: 288) posits that the teaching of English should include, among other things, the teaching of certain markers of formal English like personal pronouns, passives and others. Learners should know how these markers are manipulated in the construction of a meaningful discourse. If learners succeed in handling these markers, Kroes maintains, they will achieve the register of scientific writing, scientific use of style and others in which facts have to speak for themselves.

Both Selinker et al (1981: 5), Roets (1990 and 1991) and Kroes (1992: 25) are aware of criticisms people have about ESP. It is alleged that ESP is limited in many ways and contains very little of the English language. This complaint is well catered for in the definition which states the purpose of learners of
English. For further clarification, Selinker et al point out that the inclusion of ESP is effective in developing the ability to achieve the specific purpose long after teaching has been done. With ESP, learning will be relevant and effective.

A great deal has been done by concerned people quoted by Kroes (1996: 282) but this is just the tip of an iceberg compared with the vastness of the task that lies ahead and the damage that has been caused. Instances quoted by Kroes reveal that so far academic support is operating mostly at higher levels of learning. This enrichment is somehow belated. People must not wait until it is too late. The majority of learners have already given up because the problem starts far back at primary school level. Materials developed by Latti, Gouws and others for junior primary in Wordpower (Maskew Miller Longman) are not ESP oriented and therefore are not optimally efficient in trying to solve the burning problem.

As has been mentioned earlier on, the focus in the study is on the teaching of history, a component of Human and Social Science (HSS). What is noticeable among history students is that they lack linguistic competence to understand this subject when it is taught. According to Stahl et al (1996: 433),

"history students need the ability to think like historians, to evaluate materials and information in relation to their context and their resources and to integrate information into a historical discourse".

If there are such demands for a history learner, one wonders how young learners are going to cope with the situation. This matter needs to be taken up immediately to save the children. Stahl et al suggest that history students are expected to operate above sentence levels in their formal discussions, and this implies a high level of communicative competence.
4.3 A Closer Look at History Textbooks

The researcher has selected the subject history for special focus, as this is one of her specialist subjects. This will enable her to provide a more informed insight for her evaluation.

4.3.1 Marneweck and other writers

When one takes a closer look at history textbooks, one finds that these books seldom provide situations where pupils can develop communicative competence that will make them work independently. A few Grade 5/Standard 3 textbooks that were examined support this statement. Marneweck et al’s book (1991) starts every chapter with a summary and each chapter is written in point form, an exercise that encourages rote-learning. Certain words are written in bold type but meanings are not explained. It is the pupils themselves who have to practise the skill of summarizing. This implies that learning only occurs in the presence of the teacher. If the teacher did not explain meanings of these words, learners will not know their meaning. These authors did not consider the fact that not all chapters in the book can be taught in the same way. Understanding of the book takes place when it is dealt with globally instead of chapter by chapter or page by page.

What is good about the book is that it has pictures and illustrations, but these learning aids could have been utilised more by the writers. During workshops, courses and discussions that READ staff usually have with teachers who offer the project, these instructors always emphasize the use of pictures for the following reasons. They maintain that through pictures, pupils understand main ideas and relate these ideas to their own experiences. Pictures, these instructors further say, broaden the learners’ knowledge of the world and they can be used to introduce any lesson. If the introduction is good, it attracts pupils’ attention and they will have interest in what is going to be taught. It therefore serves as a link between what the learners already
know and what they are going to learn. Since this book has not utilised pictures, it has robbed the learners of the opportunities that have been discussed. The book is not good for inexperienced teachers because only a few will think of making their own drawings and design worksheets and exercises that will provide clear instructions.

The type of exercises that appear in this book are of poor quality. Pupils are expected to write only one sentence about what they have learnt in a chapter. This exercise is not only futile but does not develop the child's language ability. As early as in Standard 1 in other subjects like English, learners have already been introduced to creative writing where they are expected to write five listed sentences on a given topic. At Grade 5 in English, pupils are supposed to be introduced to paragraph writing. By writing the summary at the beginning, the writers have deprived the learners of the opportunity to acquire the summarizing skill which is essential to them.

4.3.2 New Ventures in History - Standard 3

The other Grade 5 course book to be mentioned is Matoti et al (1992). In this book, there is a shift from the traditional approach that Marneweck et al (1991) and Stander et al (1980) which will be discussed in 4.3.3. In a way the book that Matoti et al wrote helps learners with limited vocabulary by highlighting and explaining meanings of unfamiliar words. Had these writers not concentrated on dictionary meanings, their work could have been very good. Scott and Nagy (1997: 184) ask if pupils benefit from definitions. The reason why these writers discourage too much dependence on dictionary work, they claim, is that dictionaries are outdated and there has been very little change made, even to those dictionaries that have been revised. Some dictionaries, they maintain, are informal and in most cases are not helpful to the learners. What is argued by these authors holds some truth because at Grade 5, pupils do not understand meaning taken from dictionaries. Dictionary work is a skill that needs ample time and thorough preparation.
unless pupils have been introduced to dictionaries early in their lives, as it was argued in Chapter 2.

To make up for the inconvenience, Matoti et al (1992) have made use of code-mixing and code-switching as the chapters become more difficult. Basically the two terms mean alternative movement from one language to the other, but it depends on how much of home language has been included (Eldridge 1996 : 303). The writer goes further to explain that the two terms were discouraged by earlier writers because these terms were viewed as a sign of deficiency in the target language. Even so, if these terms are helpful towards the learner, that does not matter. Those linguists who were against the use of code-mixing and code-switching felt that learners were being delayed and prevent from being competent in the target language. To students of higher levels of learning, this could be true, but the book in question is for those learners who are at the threshold stage.

4.3.3 Stander and other authors

Another closer look at Stander et al (1980) will give a clear picture of what is happening at senior primary level. The date of publication, seemingly has not prevented teachers from using it because many schools still find it useful. During teaching practice, student teachers are still given copies of the book to refer to. Just like the textbook discussed in 4.3.1, words like crusade, pilgrims, merchandise, harbours, navigation, cannot just be left to the individuals to guess their meaning. The learners' environment is not conducive enough for pupils to know these words and not all teachers can cope. By the look of things, these books were meant to be reference books for teachers and not to be used by learners in their day to day learning. Pupils cannot work independently using them. What Morrow et al (1997 : 57) suggest, namely that learners have to be encouraged to read for pleasure, is not possible with this book.
4.3.4 Looking into the Past: Standard 3

Clacherty and Ludlow (1995) emerge as the best among the Standard 3 books examined. Instead of highlighting and explaining unfamiliar words, these authors made colourful and communicative pictures that enhance the meaning of what is taking place in the text. The use of maps is a valuable asset for the topics covered in the books. The illustrations could be utilised more than what occurs in the book. Pupils could be asked to draw or to make cut-outs and tell what they think about what they have drawn or cut-out. This activity encourages creativity and pupils will be able to analyse pictures effectively so that when they are asked to analyse cartoons at higher levels of learning, they find these activities interesting and challenging.

4.4 Other History Course Books used in other Provinces

4.4.1 Active History: Standard 3

The fact that integration in the education system has been successful does not mean that all problems have been solved. The political scenario has affected education. The nine provinces instead of the former five have somehow caused an imaginary rift. From the researcher's investigation, it has been clear that materials used in the Transkei region are not up to date. Very few of the textbooks used in Transkei are used in the Gauteng area. Different authors with different writing styles contribute towards the way in which a subject is handled. The difference does not only lie in the fact that the former region is rural and the latter is urban.

Schoeman and Sak's book (1991) as it has been stated in 2.2.3.1 has employed the communicative approach from the beginning to the end. Right from the start, pupils are introduced to a puppet. The use of the puppet has a great effect on the learning of the child. Because the puppet makes the child feel he has a partner interacting with him in all the activities, role play and pair work
is provided and learning can take place independently. At the same time it is less threatening. The question at the beginning of the book makes the learner feel there is a purpose for him to learn. Through effective integration of other subjects such as geography, health education and agriculture, students are taught reference skills. There are activities that make them consult dictionaries and maps, an exercise that is difficult even among very senior students.

4.5 Teaching History

The way history is taught in primary school is totally different from the way it is taught at home by parents and elders. The origins of history reside in oral literature. The atmosphere more especially during reading and story-telling should suit the situation as Chambers (1991: 29) points out. An informal arrangement of the classroom can help create an atmosphere conducive to story-telling. Standard 3 and 4 pupils are young enough to have a story-telling corner where they are going to sit on mats and cushions, or even go and sit on the grass outside. Learning does not only occur inside the classroom. It is good for them to be taken to the outside world or the outside world should be brought to them through pictures, drawings and other materials. The situation in the classroom makes learners believe that history is only limited to the textbooks.

The above statement does not seek to deride what is taking place in history classes today, but it emphasizes working together not only of the teachers involved in the subjects, but also with other interested parties like other subject teachers, writers and NGO's. It is an undesirable fact that NGO's are always ahead of teachers so it is advisable that teachers should seize the opportunity when it arises. This integration is advocated in the Reader (1998: 6) where it is said that it:
"implies a view of learning which rejects division between academic and applied knowledge and skills, theory and practice."

Although the definition is directed at what is taking place in the classroom, it is also proper to implement it among those who organise what will take place in the classroom. Integration of ideas, techniques and methods can also make a difference. NGO's and publishers must work together with teachers right through the year instead of what publishers usually do. They only visit selected schools when they want to sell books and other teaching materials.

What has been said so far is not intended to water down suggestions by OBE proponents who feel that all learning areas have to be integrated in one lesson. The integration is possible and very manageable at junior primary level. Even among junior primary educators, there are those who feel that not all learning areas can be dealt with successfully. What becomes evident during presentation of integrated lessons is that teachers are included to concentrate on their areas of specialisation. Experienced teachers also encounter problems because they have not yet mastered OBE because it has just been introduced. They have been involved in a few courses or workshops on OBE and they fall short when they have to present lessons that have not been demonstrated to them. It has to be borne in mind that at colleges of education, students are still specialising and for that reason student teachers and new teachers cannot teach other learning areas effectively. To start on a small scale in a pilot project always yields fruitful results. Combining language, literacy and communication on the one hand, and human and social sciences and history in particular on the other will be a good idea. This investigation focuses on history; other subjects like science, maths and geography regularly organise subject conferences; and there are a number of NGO's that are helping out in these subjects. History appears to be neglected. Perhaps that is why writers like Van der Merwe et al (1992: 1-2) allege that the subject is not accepted by youth. What makes things worse
as the authors claim, is that the subject is being rejected on the grounds that it is out of touch with technology.

4.6 Supporting Evidence from Personal Experience

At this point the researcher has felt it necessary and proper to bring in supporting evidence from her personal experience so that her argument is not only convincing, but will also inject a spirit of patriotism and enthusiasm to those who feel history has no place in the world of technology. History is such an interesting and enjoyable subject because it is an embodiment of the culture of every country. The three month's stay at Canterbury in 1997 with primary school teachers of English doing an advanced ELET course promoted love, interest in history and revived the spirit of patriotism. At primary school, British history emphasizes the history of England. Other countries that are mentioned like France, Italy, Spain and others are only included when their contribution promotes English supremacy. Although this observation might have a negative influence on children, that is, to look down upon other countries and their people, it succeeds in boosting children's self-esteem, making young citizens confident and loyal to their country.

Comparative education is a very good activity but if introduced at an early age, might confuse children. Looking at how advanced the other countries are, might result in young learners not valuing anything that has been done by their own people. It should be impressed upon young learners that history is not only about past events but what goes on around them, that is, current issues in the form of newspapers, articles and what will happen in future is also history in the making.

During the 1992 summer institute organised by the United States Information Service, twenty five teachers of English from South Africa and Namibia paid a visit to South Carolina in the United States. Although it was holiday time,
some teachers were attending empowerment workshops and for that reason, many resource centres were operating to help needy teachers while other teachers were busy helping borderline case students so that when schools opened, they were on a par with others. The academic support approach being discussed in this study is not something new, it is carried out in other countries. If academic support could be successful, history students in South Africa would be confident, successful and benefit like other students anywhere in the world.

4.7 Collaboration within the School System

Isolation of aspects of learning and the encouragement of individual performance by learners instead of group and pair work have always disadvantaged students. These have led to memorisation of facts and competition among students. If they do not succeed in these two alternatives, dropping out from school is their solution. Partnership between history and English teachers, if undertaken in a positive spirit, can be of great help to both students and teachers. Morrow et al (1997 : 54) advocate the interweaving of ideas from different processes and domains of human enquiry. These writers further state that the purpose of integration is to help learners realize that what they learn in one domain can be transferred to another. Compartamentalisation of ideas is unfortunately a common practice among learners. Apart from providing social interaction for teachers of the same subject and teachers from other subjects, this integration can be of help to those educators when they monitor and assess one another (OBE in South Africa). Educators will no longer be complacent with what they have, but will keep on seeking some more ideas and advice. By so doing, the culture of learning and teaching which is still a pressing issue, will be revived. Teachers, it is assumed, will not rely on outside help; they themselves will remedy the situation. This bring and share activity that can emanate from integration and partnership between English and history teaching can have amazing results. History teaching has a tradition of story-telling. Teachers of
English, through NGO's like READ, have brought the tradition back to the classroom. READATHON, a literacy awareness campaign week that is organised by READ in September every year will make history students recognise heroic events and be able to participate actively in the festivities. They can be motivated to organise cultural activities through dramatisation, public speaking where students themselves will address people instead of being addressed by their elders and political leaders.

Mathews et al (1992 : 2) hold the view that history teaching promotes the learner's intuition and inference. This is possible if the student does not only have adequate vocabulary, but is able to make use of the knowledge he already has (see 2.3.7.6). What is interesting about the writer's concern is that nowhere in their book have these ideas been taken into practice. Working with teachers of English, history teachers can employ reading strategies advocated in Chapter 2. Mathews et al seem to be good readers of English literature since in their work they have repeatedly referred to examples from Charles Dickens' "Hard Times" in which facts alone, it is argued, cannot make a human being develop effectively. This emphasizes that this partnership between English and history is belated.

4.8 Other Subjects Using Language for Academic Support

What has been stated throughout this study - that human and social sciences should work together with language, literacy and communication is already taking place in subjects like mathematics, science, engineering, geography and others. For the purposes of this study, only a few examples will be discussed. Although Van der Merwe (1991 : 2) is opposed to the integration of history with any other subjects, the situation demands that this combination be implemented. The reason why the writer has a different view is that he maintains that history has its special principles, concepts and methods which might either disappear, or might not be recognised if combined with other subjects.
The subjects that have been referred to in the paragraph above, use language and these subjects need appropriate vocabulary to put content across. As has been stated in Chapter 2, learners have to read on their own. In the process of reading, the reader has to gain access to the underlying meaning (see 2.3.3 and 2.3.7.2). It is for this reason that Murray and Johanson (1992: 6) come up with certain reading strategies that will make learners cope with unfamiliar words. Unless the whole context depends upon these words, these writers suggest they have to be ignored. If learners are aware of these strategies very early in their lives, reading comprehension will not be as problematic as it is to learners. Emphasis on how language is used in teaching science is discussed by Orr and Schutte (1992: 20) when they say the learner has to know how words are used and how they function in the context they have been used. To make their observation even clearer, they give the example of the word “light” which occurs regularly in science books. They argue that if the child does not know grammar, he will not be aware of the different situations where “light” could be used in different language structures; for example when used as a verb, noun, adjective or any other language structure. This argument is expanded by Kroes later in the chapter.

In the field of engineering, Johnson and Johnson (1990: 10-12) support the idea of the knowledge of grammar by saying:

"If words are units of meaning, sentences are units of thought".

In this statement, the knowledge of grammar is not reiterated for fun but has been emphasized for the sake of effect. The learner has to know how words are chosen to form sentences. For the words to convey meaning, they have to be meticulously chosen to avoid communication breakdown. The learner who will be able to do this, is the one who will use language effectively to express his thoughts. What is important about sentence construction is that a
child has to use linking words that will make his discourse coherent and cohesive (Kilfoil and Van der Walt).

Quoting Goodman, a proponent of reading comprehension skills, Bickmore-Brand (1990: 3,94) maintains that maths students have to understand their subject using language which will enable him to be understood when expressing his ideas. He holds the view that:

"........ during maths activities, the child has to talk ........ a child depends on language of self and others for social construction of mathematical ideas."

Simply stated, this means that gone are the days when the learner had to work alone as an individual keeping his ideas to himself so that he can compete with the others. On the contrary, the learner has to organise his ideas in a clear and understandable language that will convince his peers, who in turn will challenge these ideas during discussions. If the learner's language can be improved to that extent, co-operative learning activities would be more interesting, challenging and fulfilling. This should take place at all times.

4.9 Contribution Made by Other Learning Centres

There are centres that are already implementing academic support. To quote but a few, one could refer to the University of the Witwatersrand which is among the founders of such programmes, University of Rhodes, University of Cape Town and the Rand Afrikaans University. Even the historically black universities have followed suit, but it is doubtful whether the programme might continue because of the process of rationalisation.

Although such programmes have been in place for so long at the university, there is little or no evidence that such initiatives have ever been systematically implemented at colleges of education, high schools, or primary
schools where it is most needed. For these programmes to work well, they should begin at primary school where the damage could be more easily controlled and more children could be prevented from dropping out, and the failure rate which has disgraced the country, could be reduced.

At colleges of education, it is where student teachers are being prepared to teach all types of learners, namely the outstanding ones, the mediocres and those that are below average. The latter two groups are always in the majority and for that reason, student teachers are supposed to be equipped with all types of skills for helping these children. They need remedial support but the irony is that there are no colleges of education that offer such programmes. If such support programmes were included in the curriculum, student teachers would be better equipped and ready to face the challenges in the teaching profession.

Many of the suggestions the department of education is contemplating in COTEP (1996: 30, 32, 49, 79) are in the right direction, in preparing student teachers to be aware of academic support. In these documents, it is argued that learners should be made to apply, extend and synthesize various forms of knowledge, one of which is the use of language, more especially English since it is their medium of instruction and the teaching of reading and the development of thinking skills. COTEP (1997: 93) goes further to say that learners have to be developed to apply the principles of language across the curriculum. All in all, these two documents are preparing student teachers to face the new challenges. These students will have a better chance of implementing what they have learnt, but what about the majority of teachers who have also gone through teacher training, yet in their time, changes have not yet taken place.

Returning to those learning centres where academic support is offered, it is observed that among those educators offering university courses, there are many who do not even have teachers' certificates. At universities, there are a
few educators who have teachers' qualifications, with the exception of the Faculty of Education, but amazingly it is they who have embarked on projects like these. This poses a challenge to college of education lecturers. They have to revisit and revamp their curriculum. Something is wrong with how these colleges are operating. Instead of reducing staff members who are regarded as being in excess in colleges of education, relevant education could make the difference. Even after the latest results, (1998), have been publicised, nobody has ever made a correct diagnosis of the problem. Even if the process of rationalisation can succeed, as long as nothing has been done to make colleges provide special skills to deal with special cases in education, monies are still going to be wasted. University lecturers have not been "trained" for the type of support they are successfully and effectively providing. They lack methodologies but they have the courage to try out something that is going to be of great assistance to the needy students.

Perhaps the universities had no choice because of circumstances beyond their control and they felt compelled to provide academic support. The very high failure rate of course I students at the universities that will be discussed at length in 5.2.1.1.3 might have caused the university staff to think otherwise. Furthermore, the university staff might have envisaged that because of the political situation in South Africa, students might rise up against the university demanding that they should all pass. In primary schools, there are no such pressures and this might be the reason why primary school teachers have not done anything so far. Financial constraints might be another reason. It is easier for the universities to be financed than primary schools.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, academic support in the context of ESP will have to help decrease the flow of black children rushing for the historically white schools. Projects of this nature like the Head Start and the Follow Through in America, as Kroes (1996: 283) contends, have not been very successful. Apart
from their being expensive, the number of students get bigger every year resulting in overcrowding, a phenomenon which makes teaching and learning impossible. Going to these schools raises hopes that pupils are going to get better education. People lose sight of the cultural shock that students sometimes experience and their shock might prevent the process of learning. With academic support that is ESP oriented, learners will be proficient in English and thereby develop confidence and a sense of security. If this programme can operate successfully, students can compete with any person from any part of the world in the job market. Learning can be more meaningful and will be life long.
CHAPTER 5

AN EVALUATION OF AN ACADEMIC SUPPORT PROGRAMME AT THE RAND AFRIKAANS UNIVERSITY

5.1 Introduction

The literature supporting the assumptions the researcher made, has been surveyed in the previous chapters, but for the study to be more convincing, an evaluation of an existing programme has been included. At this stage, the broad insights offered by the reviewed literature are going to be assessed and evaluated practically. In order to capture relevant issues, it is necessary not to limit the investigation to issues that can be counted. Instead of quantitative evaluation, the researcher has therefore made use of a qualitative evaluation in which meaningful discourse will take place. This will ensure that important evidence does not escape the net of investigation.

As at senior primary level in the region in the Transkei on which the study focuses, no initiatives could be identified where academic support is implemented, it was decided to examine an existing programme (albeit at tertiary level) at the Rand Afrikaans University in order to identify aspects that could be considered for implementation in the Transkei at senior primary level.

5.2 Methods and Strategies

According to Ary et al (1979: 295) the fundamental research strategy in empirical research is descriptive. These descriptive research studies are designed to obtain information concerning the current state of the phenomenon. They also claim that these descriptive research studies are directed towards determining the nature of the situation as it exists at the time of the study. It therefore describes the status quo with respect to certain
conditions in a situation. The qualitative research uses a subjective and a personal approach to data collection techniques such as interviews and observations. These two methods of eliciting information tend to emphasize the profoundness of data collection.

5.2.1 Qualitative Research Methodology

This type of research method is common among researchers because it employs the holistic approach, that is, the whole is perceived as greater than its parts. The phenomenon under investigation is understood in its entirety so that the researcher can develop a complete understanding of a situation. Bryman and Burgess (1994 : 31) state that qualitative research implies that data are in the form of words. These words form themes that are evaluated subjectively as opposed to numbers the quantitative research makes use of. Porkinghorne quoted by Bryman and Burgess (1994 : 31) and Miles and Huberman (1994 : 6) concur when they perceive qualitative methods as useful in the generation of categories for understanding human phenomenon and the investigation of the interpretation and meaning that people give to events they experience. From what is said by these authors, it becomes clear that when one uses the qualitative research, the aim is to discover and describe something as it has been observed, unlike a situation where a person has preconceived ideas about something and then goes to prove the truth of their assumptions. In this evaluation, qualitative research has been made use of, as the following discussions will show.

5.2.1.1 Interviews

Interviews provide explanation and deeper insights into those aspects that are discussed. In most cases, unique problems and particular contexts are considered during interviews. According to Borg (1981 : 86-88), the interview method is common in descriptive research. He maintains that it involves collection of data through direct verbal interaction between individuals.
What this author is saying holds truth because other methods such as questionnaires and tests do not allow in-depth investigation. When the researcher uses them, she is at the mercy of the respondent who, in most cases, leaves gaps for very important aspects the researcher wants to find out. The information gathered through these two methods is not sufficient, whereas during interviews, questions serve as guides that cover all essential information required by the interviewer. In addition to what has been asked, the interviewer deserves the right to follow up any response in an attempt to glean some more information or to ask the interviewee to make further clarifications. Emphasizing this idea, Merriam (1988 : 72) maintains that people are interviewed to find out those things the researcher cannot find out during observation. This study has made use of semi-structured interviews.

5.2.1.1 Project 100 at RAU

The researcher has deemed it appropriate to include a "sophisticated and complicated" programme that is implemented at tertiary level for various reasons. Despite the vast difference between the type and quality of education at tertiary and primary levels, there are issues that are common to both. To mention but a few, students from both levels have learning problems that prevent them from becoming competent learners. Secondly, since there are no role models in South Africa in the field of academic support at the lower levels of learning for the researcher, it would be abstract and far-fetched to give examples from overseas schools where there are better facilities and less financial constraints. In other countries, students with learning problems are fewer than in the third world countries. However, not everything that is taking place at RAU can be implemented as it is at primary school level. Certain aspects can be adapted to suit the situation. A brief overview on the academic support programme at RAU is going to be discussed in the following pages so that the interested parties can decide what could be of help, what could be delayed for the future and what could be done away with altogether.
Before people embark on a new project, it is always advisable that they should explore thoroughly and get information from those who are already implementing it to avoid duplication of problems. From the interview with Dr. Deon van der Merwe, the co-ordinator of the academic support at RAU, the researcher got to know about Project 100. As the name indicates, the projects seeks to help students with deficiencies in special subjects like maths, science, engineering, commerce and languages so that they strive for excellence which is 100%. Although this is an exaggeration, it serves the purpose that the sky is the limit and it is never too late to mend. The project is double-pronged, that is, it works internally and externally.

5.2.1.2 Project 100 Externally

Externally, the project focuses on the empowerment of the students from academically disadvantaged schools to realize their potential. The university reaches out the neighbouring schools to ask teachers to identify the potential students from standard nine upwards. These students have to be exceptionally good in the subjects mentioned in 5.2.1.1 so that they are developed further in order to follow their relevant careers. These students are assisted by supplemental teaching, while language enrichment, study skills, cognitive development and other necessary skills students might be running short of are included. This is a good idea in that students with outstanding qualities would not be delayed by the low achievers.

5.2.1.3 Project 100 Internally

Because of the changes caused by political pressures, the Affirmative Action of the RDP forced the universities to have alternative or open admissions. The universities found themselves having additional students at risk. RAU was no exception. It was decided that for these students to cope with academic demands, they should have their degrees extended by a year. To
The university has mentors who are senior students and have been oriented in the assistance of disadvantaged students. These mentors are in turn supervised by tutors from various departments. The mentor's and tutor's major role is to give support in language enrichment, study and thought development, reading and thought development, career guidance and other skills. Language proficiency becomes the crux of the whole exercise because it influences thinking skills and academic success. To second language users, it was said the problem lies with the methods that were used in acquiring and learning the language. The approaches used at RAU seek to frame the objectives open-endedly and focus on the empowerment of the learner towards effective reading and writing.

5.2.1.1.4 The Language Service

In 5.2.1.1.1 it has been stated that to avoid duplication of the same problems, those people who want to get started with a new project must have sufficient information. RAU has also undergone many changes before arriving at the present situation. Before Dr. Deon van der Merwe initiated Project 100, the Language Service at RAU was always dedicated and concerned about language teaching. Promotion of independent learning has always been on the programme. Prof. Henk Kroes was invited to head the Language Service. This integration helped in having new disciplines being born, for instance the Department of Linguistics which was later called the Department of Applied Linguistics. These changes had an impact on the education of the learner. Because applied linguistics is more practical, it makes the learner realize the need for learning a language. It deals with the practical aspects and the social needs of the students are addressed. Even in the primary and college of education sections, the experience gained from predecessors starting up changing as a result of certain circumstances might help give direction and confidence to those who are starting up new projects.
5.2.1.1.4.1 Use of Language Laboratories

Although modern educationists do not approve of language laboratories, these laboratories can be very helpful, especially in the South African context where English is a foreign language. The repetition that educationists condemn is very helpful. The learner gets an opportunity to hear the sounds of the language. Many pupils are from rural areas as it has been stated in Chapter 1. They have never heard the language spoken by first language users. The language laboratories afford these learners that chance. Language laboratory exercises have the advantage of tutors giving individual attention to students. These tutors do not take it for granted that all learners understand simultaneously. Another important aspect of language laboratories is that they promote independent learning. Exercises are graded to cater for this. Slow learners work at their own pace. By mentioning language laboratories, the researcher is not implying that schools and colleges should go out of their way to make arrangements to buy them. They are expensive but if there are centres that already have them, they must be utilised instead of lying around in the classroom collecting dust (Kilfoil et al 1989: 11). Also worth mentioning is that some exercises in the language laboratories are outdated and therefore need to be updated. Educators can decide whether to use language laboratories that are already available or buy computers.

5.2.1.4.2 Writing Activities

Writing activities at RAU follow the process-approach format where the learner is assisted in every step in the process of writing until the tutor is satisfied that he can be an independent writer. Many teachers argue against this process, claiming that writing activities have been reduced from the standard they deserve. They feel that because the student is always working under the tutor's guidance, the progress and the chance of being independent are limited and as a result, in the absence of the tutor, the learner encounters
problems. The approach, they go further to say, gives a false sense of security. In South Africa, more especially in primary schools, this type of guidance is imperative. As was stated when reading in Chapter 2 was discussed, the facilitator withdraws as soon as she realizes that the learner has developed enough skills. The availability of a helper gives more confidence to the learner instead of being pushed to the deeper end to fend for himself. Helping learners during writing has many advantages. Writing involves a lot of other skills such as summarizing, reading, paraphrasing and many others. Some pieces of writing need special formats, procedures and special vocabulary. Drafting and proof-reading are the stages a learner cannot easily go through unless there is somebody to give guidance.

5.2.1.2 What has made the Project 100 Succeed

5.2.1.2 Collaboration

Talking to Dr. Deon van der Merwe made the researcher realize that the programme is bound to succeed because nobody is forced to be part of it. The situation is merely stated and it is the learner who decides whether the programme is good for him. At primary level, another strategy might be devised. Maybe parents have to be consulted and a lot of negotiations take place. Both students and parents have to be convinced why it will be good for them to be included in the programme. Because RAU has always worked with the neighbouring schools, some students are already familiar with the arrangement and they gladly accept the situation.

5.2.1.2.2 Finance

In other countries like the US and UK, academic support programmes have proved a failure because of financial problems. Large sums of money are put into these support services, but because learners are not dedicated, and they feel embarrassed, they stop attending the programmes. At RAU, students
themselves realize the need and are therefore dedicated and devoted. At primary level, these programmes will need patient and strong-willed educators who will not give up, but who will make sure that the programmes succeed.

5.2.1.2.3 Motivation and Success

RAU students are motivated intrinsically because they know that without the assistance, they will not finish their degrees. The reputation of these courses from those who have attended them tend to influence the new students to also follow suit. With primary school teachers, it will be advisable that the pilot schools be extremely dedicated and set up good examples to refer to.

5.3 Observations

Merriam (1988: 88) contends that an observation is a research tool which serves a formulated purpose. He goes on to explain that it has the following advantages:

- Observational techniques yield data that pertains to typical behavioural situations;
- There are topics that people may not feel free to talk about or may not want to discuss;
- Observation is the best technique to use when a situation can be observed at hand.

What is said by this author is true because during interviews, the co-ordinator did not state categorically clearly that there are two faculties offering the programme but through observation, the researcher discovered it.
The study included observation of the general classroom procedure, types of teaching materials used and the atmosphere in the classrooms. This was going to help equip the researcher with what is needed before she embarks on the project in the area of her concern. In 2.2.1, Macdonald (1991), Van Rooyen (1990), Vorster (1990) in 2.2.2 complained about the unnatural classroom atmosphere that is characterised by strict surveillance. For the researcher to have a clear picture of what is supposed to be taking place in the classroom and how the mentors and tutors relate to these students, she had to go to the classroom.

The atmosphere in the classroom arrangement is conducive to learning. Students feel relaxed and they work in groups, pairs as well as individually. They appear to be enjoying what they are doing and they do not feel shy that they are a disadvantaged group. What also motivates them to work freely is a good rapport between them and the mentors.

The teaching learning materials used are specifically designed to suit the needs of the learners. There are two course books that the language service has come up with. The larger volume is divided into fourteen modules to assist students to cope with the situation at the university. Authentic materials in the form of cut-outs from newspapers and magazines have been used. What the observer also noticed was that topics and exercises were not only authentic but also diverse and as students get used to the procedure, exercises get complicated.

5.3.1 Limitations

The interviews and observations were only limited to the university because of time and space constraints. The researcher could have been exposed to both the high school situation and the university. The high school was going to be less sophisticated and closer to the situation at the colleges of education in the area of focus.
CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY, FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Summary

At the beginning of the study in Chapter 1.1, it was argued that pupils lack appropriate vocabulary in the target language in order to cope with their learning. The study has also explored other difficulties experienced by pupils with English as a medium of instruction. The fault, it has been argued, lies with the type of teaching, culture shift, materials used and the curriculum followed at the lower levels of learning. As a result of these stumbling blocks, the presupposition was explored that academic support was required as the urgent step in seeking a solution.

6.2 Findings

6.2.1 Lack of appropriate vocabulary that will promote fluency among learners is one of the major problems.

Contributions made by some researchers like Macdonald (2.4) and others paved the way for the increase of vocabulary while others like Vorster did both, that is, they did not only show the direction but tried their best to help learners increase their vocabulary (2.4.1). Learners encounter serious problems when learning other subject areas. It is apparent that publishers in the past have been detached from what is happening in the classroom (2.4.2). The language books have also failed to prepare pupils for what they are going to encounter when they learn other subjects (2.4.2.5). Methods and techniques used by various teachers are not very helpful.
6.2.2 Lack of vocabulary referred to in 6.2.1 affects the learners' reading comprehension skills. Apart from vocabulary, it has been found that learners' reading comprehension skills have not been developed. These learners do not apply reading strategies that will help them cope with the text (2.3.2, 2.3.4, 2.3.7).

6.3.2 On top of language problems, cultural shift affects learners' transfer of thoughts from the mother tongue to the target language. Errors resulting from these problems can cause communication breakdown. They cause people who do not know their first language not to understand what they say or write (3.4, 3.5, 3.6, 3.7).

6.2.4 There is a danger in big institutions. As a result of certain demands and pressing needs, people find themselves forming up different programmes that deal with the same problem. Sometimes people do not come together to discuss these problems. What has been examined at RAU serves as a warning to those who are going to start up programmes of this nature (Chapter 5).

6.2.5 The main finding emanating from this report is that there is a dire need for academic support to help these learners to cope with their learning. Up until now, there is no institution that has thought of helping these learners. Colleges of education, technikons and universities have only tried to help their own students at tertiary level to cope with their learning, but have not extended their curricula so that the struggling primary school learners could be rescued (Chapter 4).

6.3.3 Recommendations

The in-depth investigation of this study has brought to the surface many problems among English second language users at senior primary school level. The researcher offers the following recommendations.
6.3.1 In every school there is a need to identify pupils with learning problems, not that they are going to be segregated from others, but instead grouped with those above average. To avoid a situation where slow learners retard progress of those who are above average, assistance from other centres must be sought. Conditions permitting, the clever ones could also get more assistance to develop further and not to be restricted by what is offered in the schools.

6.3.2 In every school, institution or organisation, people who are working towards the same goal should come together instead of having too many small, different teams that are ignorant of what is taking place in other teams.

6.3.3 Primary school teachers have to put some more effort in the teaching of English for specific purposes. They must provide learners with specific and appropriate vocabulary that will help them cope with other subjects other than English. Furthermore, these teachers must evaluate the materials they are using, they can even supplement them with their own depending on the needs of the pupils they are handling.

6.3.4 Teachers in general have to be empowered on specific aspects like materials development. They must work together as teachers handling the same subjects and the same level of pupils. They could also ask for assistance from other sources like NGOs.

6.3.5 The restructuring of colleges of education should accommodate academic support to train students to work effectively with students at risk. These institutions are already being discussed for implementation as revealed by the COTEP (Committee on Teacher Education Policy) documents.

6.3.6 Teamwork made up of teachers, publishers, any other empowerment programmes, parents and other interested group(s) should use
communication channels provided by the Education Department to share insights and worthwhile ideas.
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