

CHAPTER 2

ESL IN THE PRIMARY SCHOOL - AN OVERVIEW

*(Language) is at the same time a communication coding system, an integral part of the individual's identity and the most important tool of social organisation...
Dörnyei (1994:517)*

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to provide an overview of the teaching and learning of English Second Language (ESL) in the primary school. Three major variables are involved in the school (Skehan, 1989:4). These are:

- the learner;
- the context, and
- the teacher.

Variables that influence the primary school ESL learner revolve around the following two questions:

- how does the primary school pupil learn a second language?
- what are the factors that relate to the primary school ESL pupil?

A number of theories of second language learning have been advanced. These are briefly considered in this chapter as possible explanations of how a primary school learner learns a second language. The practices that are generated by these theories are also discussed.

Factors that relate to primary school learners are discussed according to Ellis's (1994:473) and Skehan's (1989:4) contention

that the following variables are involved:

- their characteristics (their beliefs about language learning, affective states and general factors);
- the learning tasks that they face, and
- the desired learning outcomes.

There are many definitions of context (cf. 2.4). Ellis (1994:197) defines context as the setting in which language learning takes place. The language that the learner hears or reads is encoded within a certain context or setting and the learner recodes the concepts in the system of the new language to fit into his own context. The question that needs to be considered regarding context is the following:

- how does the social context (outside as well as inside the classroom) relate to the primary school ESL learner?

The following aspects regarding the social context are discussed:

- the pupil's social background;
- multilingualism and multiculturalism, and
- the classroom context.

The teacher is the third important variable in the teaching-learning process. Aspects that are considered are his proficiency, role as teacher, attitude and use of materials and resources. Finally, the teacher's role in syllabus implementation is discussed.

Implications for language teaching practice are pointed out where relevant.

2.2 THE LEARNER AS VARIABLE

The first question to be considered is how the primary school pupil acquires a second language.

Some theorists emphasise environmental factors, while others emphasise innate learner characteristics. Others attempt to integrate environmental and learner factors.

2.2.1 Behaviourist theory and practice

Behaviourists ascribe the learning of language to imitation and habit formation; learners imitate behavioural skills that they learn to master through practice. The emphasis is on the correct structure of the language the speaker produces, rather than on the communication of meaning. Learners are expected to practise language structures until they are internalised. Pronunciation skills should resemble L1 models and oral productive skills are emphasised. The assumption is that language habits can be formed through 'right-sized' language doses that are practised. Diligent practice will automatically produce correct language responses. Success in the learning process is stressed. 'Correctness' in all language skills is striven for, be it in pronunciation, speaking, understanding messages or writing. Errors are corrected as soon as possible on the assumption that language learning will be impeded by any incorrect output. Errors are explained by interference of the mother-tongue. Contrastive analysis studies attempt to predict which structures will be difficult for L2 learners - structures that are similar to the L1 are expected to be mastered more easily than structures that are different (Richards & Rodgers, 1986:17; Stern, 1983:318; Ellis, 1985:128; Lightbown & Spada, 1993:3).

Exponents of behaviourist theory insist that the language that a child learns is controlled by the reinforcement it receives. The creation of new sentences that the learner has never heard before is explained as utterances formed on the analogy of similar, previously heard forms (Lorton & Walley, 1979:59; Wanner & Gleitman, 1982:4).

Rigid behaviourist models are characterised by little creative experimentation and venturing outside the parameters of the

teaching model. Models are usually linear and hierarchically ordered. Structures considered easier than others are taught first, e.g. the past indefinite tense will be taught before the past perfect tense (Howatt, 1984:239; Richards & Rodgers, 1986:67; Lightbown & Spada, 1993:23-25; Ellis, 1994:26-27).

In spite of evidence that this should be the case, behaviourist teaching models do not recognise the active involvement of the L2 learner in language creation. Although Lightbown and Spada (1993:24) point out that learners seem to display an intuitive feel for which features of the L1 are less transferable to the L2 than others, behaviourist teaching manipulates language stimuli in such a way that the correct response is always attained. Learners are viewed as fairly passive recipients of stimuli. Language accuracy is valued before fluency, because language is seen as a 'habit' that should be practised. Language drills and repetitive exercises occur frequently (Howatt, 1984:239; Littlewood, 1984:3; Richards & Rodgers, 1986:21,25). Although techniques such as Programmed Instruction and Mastery Learning produce improved reading skills, comprehension ability and creative skills for use in purposeful communication are unsatisfactory. Contrastive analysts also fail to explain why certain predicted errors do not occur and why some unexpected ones do (Cotton & Savard, 1982:12; Gersten & Carnine, 1986:70-77).

As neither experience nor research findings support rigid behaviourist views, behaviourist teaching models have become outdated.

2.2.2 Innatist theory and practice

Chomsky (1965:1-9) describes language acquisition as a creative process. An innate ability to acquire language in all humans is seated in the so-called Language Acquisition Device (LAD). Chomsky argues that the child discovers the rules of language by using small amounts of data at one time. This complex theory-

building process is relatively independent of intelligence, as illustrated by the fact that most children acquire the L1 with ease. The learner's exposure to the language is likewise relatively unimportant, as illustrated by the fact that young learners can produce complex sentences that they have never heard before. This happens in spite of the fact that learners are sometimes exposed to imperfect examples of the language. Learners hypothesise rules and test these rules (consciously or subconsciously) in new situations to see whether they apply. As a result, they develop competence in the language. Chomsky distinguishes between 'competence' as the the ideal language user's perfect knowledge of the rules of grammar, and 'performance' as the actual realisation of the language knowledge in use. Performance may be influenced by psychological, social or physical factors and is judged by appropriacy rather than grammatical accuracy (Chomsky, 1967:66; Stewig, 1983:32; Ellis, 1985:128; White, 1988:16; Lightbown & Spada, 1993:8-9; Ellis, 1994:33-35).

Ellis (1994:34-35) states that innatist theory may offer a reasonable explanation of the phenomenon that L2 learners can produce more language than that they have been exposed to. There must be sources of information other than input that help them to uncover L2 rules, because they don't get all the information they need from L2 input alone. A phenomenon that may suggest linguistic universals (i.e. common principles that govern the form that grammatical rules can take) at work in the L2 learner is the 'unlearning' of an incorrect rule. It is argued that unlearning can only take place with the aid of overt correction (Ellis, 1994:34). It is not yet clear, however, whether L2 learners have access to a universal grammar, or whether they rely on general learning processes, or on both (Ellis, 1994:35).

Language teaching models based on innatist theory favour the immersion of the language learner in situations closely resembling natural language learning. An important contribution of innatist theory to teaching practice has been an emphasis on

the importance of natural contexts. It is also assumed that internal factors in the learner will influence language development more than external factors, such as the language environment.

Critics of the innatist theory of language acquisition point out that empirical data to substantiate its claims are slender, and argue that such an approach may lead to a vague and an undefined teaching plan without any clear objectives. If teachers adhere to the idea that learners should 'pick up' language, they may indulge in a teaching plan that doesn't focus on anything in particular and there is seldom an intensive enough exposure to the target language in the classroom to facilitate 'picking it up'. If teaching activities in the ESL classroom are not focused and planned, much time may be wasted (Ellis, 1985:243). L2 learners are seldom found to be as creative as is frequently implied in generative literature, and they often need to develop an awareness of the structures of the language they learn. L2 learners' feelings about and perceptions of the rules of the language they are learning are also acutely important and should be taken into account (Lightbown & Spada, 1993:99; Ellis, 1994:659). Criticism of innatist theory has also been based on Vygotskian (cf. 4.3.4.) and Hallidayan (cf. 4.3.5) principles, namely that general learning and language learning cannot be separated (Halliday, 1994:5-17; Clark, 1996:252). The existence of a separate LAD is questioned; what does make language learning different from other learning is the fact that it is both the medium and object of study.

Innatist models underemphasise the active role of the learner. Both White (1988:45) and Tann (1991:4) point out that the innatist-based models often spiral down to 'faith in osmosis: just "bathe children in language" or "leave to discovery"'. Makoni (1994:79-84) argues that Chomskyan perspectives often hypothesise an idealised version of a mother-tongue learner, assuming that the process of learning reaches a state of completion at some stage. Makoni (1994:80-81) is of the opinion

that the process of language acquisition (be it L1 or L2) can never be said to be complete. Very few, if any, language learners reach the state where they do not acquire new vocabulary items or add new senses to 'old' words and registers.

2.2.3 Interactionist theory and practice

Proponents of interactionist models of SLA stress the importance of modified language input, and they propose that learners acquire a second language by learning how to communicate in it (Long, 1987:339-352; Lightbown & Spada, 1993:30; Ellis, 1994:27). The question of how to modify input in such a way that it aids acquisition has been addressed by researchers. Long (1987:339-352) reports as follows on research findings:

...there is also an increasing amount of evidence consistent with the input hypothesis. This stresses the importance for SLA of target language input made comprehensible to the learner chiefly through the negotiation for meaning involved in its use for communicative purposes.

Both Ellis (1985:128-152; 1992:162) and Lightbown and Spada (1993:15) credit the interactionist model (associated with Bruner) with providing a reasonable explanation for understanding how children relate form and meaning in language, as well as how they learn to conduct discourse and use language appropriately. The language learner is not simply subjected to stimuli to which he has to respond correctly, but he interacts with the speaker to negotiate comprehensible input. The modified language used by teachers to suit the capability of learners, seems to be a crucial element in language acquisition. Research by Long (1981), Sachs, Bard and Johnson (1981) and Long and Sato (1984) show that the learner provides the clues to the level of language he is capable of. The interactant frequently repeats the content of the sentence and provides grammatically correct sequences. In cases where learners do not have access to one-on-one interaction of

this kind, language acquisition does not develop normally. Meaning in language is not only derived from current utterances, but also from previous utterances and from knowledge of the situation and the participants - information that the learner gets from interaction (Ellis, 1985:128-152, 1992:162; Lightbown & Spada, 1993:15).

Tarone and Yule (1989:97) point out that interaction presupposes an understanding of the way in which factors such as the roles of the speaker, hearer and overhearer interact with the communicative setting, the topic of discourse and the purposes of the participants. Lightbown and Spada's (1993:30) research on intuitive modification by native speakers to accommodate second language learners shows that native speakers may repeat or paraphrase their utterances, check for comprehension, or request L2 speakers to clarify obscure utterances. Tann (1991:4) describes interaction as a vital support system in the language acquisition process that should take place in a natural, purposeful context to improve understanding. She proposes that intervention by an abler user improves learning.

Teaching models that subscribe to interactionist theory provide the opportunity for the interactant to manipulate and adapt language to suit the level of the learner. The learner gains new knowledge through the negotiation of meaning. Grammatical accuracy and the appropriacy of utterances are addressed. However, research to substantiate claims that modified input aids acquisition, needs to be done more extensively.

2.2.4 Cognitive theory and practice

Cognitive theorists emphasise the cognitive internal processes that govern SLA. Cognitive theory is based on the principles of general learning theory and many cognitive models emphasise the role of conscious learning (McLaughlin, 1990:113). Implicit (intuitive and subconscious) knowledge is distinguished from explicit (metalingual and conscious) knowledge. Cognitive

theorists argue that the learner internalises and stores knowledge, while consciously focusing on some aspect of the language he is trying to master. Operating principles are identified as subconscious rules that learners store to use in future. The stored knowledge can be recalled almost automatically for later use (McLaughlin, 1978:25; Lightbown & Spada, 1993:25-26; Ellis, 1994:30-33).

McNeill (1970:73) says that cognition in language development does not reflect the content of speech (as this is determined by intellectual development), but the structure of language. The readiness to produce certain linguistic structures will emerge as the learner matures.

Cognitive theory attempts to explain the phenomenon of 'restructuring'. This refers to the observation that not all things which the learners know and use may be explicable in terms of a gradual build-up of automaticity through practice. They seem rather to be based on the interaction of knowledge the learner already has, or on the acquisition of new knowledge which - without extensive practice - somehow 'fits' into an existing system and may, in fact, 'restructure' this system. This may lead to sudden bursts of progress for the learner, but it can also lead to back-sliding when a systematic aspect of learners' language incorporates the wrong things (Lightbown & Spada, 1993:25).

Cognitive models of SLA focus on the learner's form-function structures in which the form of the language and the function of the language are synthesised, e.g. -s inflection on a verb always means third person singular. Operating principles that are similar have been identified in the cognitive process at work in very different languages, like focusing on the ends of words or 'avoiding interruption and rearrangement of linguistic units' (Ellis: 1994:32).

Cook (1991:52,53) argues that cognitive processes work less

efficiently through the L2 than the L1. This is due to the L2 learners' limitations in memory (remembering L2 rules), as well as the fact that they experience difficulty with L2 syntax, vocabulary and the like. This is referred to as the L2 cognitive deficit. Fourie (1990:29) states that L2 learning is by necessity a process where cognition and metacognitive skills are involved. The L2 learner reflects from time to time on what he is busy with. The learner has knowledge and use of his cognitive resources that stem from previous experience and achieved successes in learning strategies, tasks or approaches to learning. She concludes that metacognition is implicit in all L2 learning, as the L2 learner cannot focus primarily on meaning (as he would in L1), but has to consider the means by which the message is conveyed.

Cognitive theorists are, however, neither able to predict which structures will be automatised and restructured, nor which L1 structures will be transferred to the L2. Van der Walt (1991:9) and Ellis (1994:558-559) point out that a firm theoretical basis for cognitive theory is not yet in place; too many divergent classifications under the same term still exist and taxonomies differ greatly. Implications for the L2 classroom need to be researched more thoroughly before firm conclusions can be drawn (Lightbown & Spada, 1993:25).

2.2.5 Creative Construction theory and practice

Although Chomsky does not consider the implications of his theory for second language learning, others have proposed a position which is, in some respects, similar to Chomsky's ideas on first language acquisition (Lightbown & Spada, 1993:26). Krashen's Creative Construction theory (1981) attempts to synthesise research findings from various areas. It proposes that internal processing strategies operate on language input without any direct dependence on the learner actually producing the language. Productive language is seen as an outcome of the learning process, rather than as the cause of, or even as a necessary step

in learning.

Krashen (1981:1) is one of the main proponents of an acquisition/learning distinction. He equates acquisition with implicit knowledge of the L2 and learning with explicit knowledge, stating that the one does not become the other. A second hypothesis in Krashen's theoretical paradigm is the monitor hypothesis. He argues that acquired knowledge initiates language use and guides fluency and intuitive judgement of correctness, whereas learnt knowledge monitors the acquired system and brings about minor changes. The monitor can only be used if there is sufficient time, if rules are known and if there is a focus on form rather than meaning. Gregg (1984), McLaughlin (1987) and Lightbown and Spada (1993:27) point out that empirical data to substantiate these hypotheses are not forthcoming, because it is difficult to ascertain which process is at work. The natural order hypothesis is based on morpheme studies that indicate that learners seem to master grammatical items in a predictable order, irrespective of the order in which the items are taught. Krashen furthermore emphasises the environmentally determined quality of L2 input as an important determinant of successful L2 acquisition. Comprehensible input is environmentally determined and progress depends on how much comprehensible input is available. The level of desired input is described as comprehension + 1, i.e. slightly more advanced than the present level of comprehension to sustain addition to existing knowledge. Ellis (1992:33) states in this regard:

... comprehensible input is a necessary condition for L2 acquisition, (but) its provision needs to be understood in terms of negotiation of mutuality of understanding between interactants rather than in terms of simplified input.

Krashen also acknowledges the importance of the learner's affective reaction to the acquisition process, and advocates a low affective filter or barrier. If the affective filter is too

high, learning is impeded by anxiety and negative feelings. However, like other studies pertaining to motivation, it is difficult to ascribe differences in language acquisition to affective factors (Lightbown & Spada, 1993:29).

Although Krashen's theory has been criticised by a number of authors, it has had an enormous influence on teaching practice. It has encouraged the use of communicative activities which focus on meaning, but it has also led to the neglect of formal instruction.

2.2.6 Recent research findings

Research into second language learning is continuing apace. Lightbown (1985:176-179), Collier (1989:509-531), Cook (1990:7), Pica (1994:50-79), Lightbown and Spada (1993:111-117; 1994:563-580) and Ellis (1994) report on findings of recent research that give new direction to the SLA debate.

The following generalisations about SLA can be made:

- all people (children and adults) can acquire language and internalise certain rules about the functioning of the target language (Lightbown, 1985:176).
- the learner forms subconscious hypotheses about how the rules of the second language should function (cf. 2.2.4). He practises these rules and adjusts accordingly if he receives negative feedback about the way he uses them. This theory is also accepted by proponents of cognitive and interaction theory (McLaughlin, 1985:6; Richards & Rodgers, 1986:67; Ellis, 1992:3-4; Ellis, 1994:30-31). Learners do not wilfully distort the native system, but invent a system of their own. Interference of L1 in L2 learning seems selective and more unpredictable than was anticipated. Learner errors may thus reflect their 'temporary language systems' rather than an inadequate mastery of the target language (Savignon, 1983:90; Pica, 1994:54).

- exclusive emphasis on accuracy through, for example, drill, does not automatically eliminate errors. Knowing a rule also does not necessarily guarantee mastery of the rule in a communicative situation. If drill is used in conjunction with other techniques, such as consciousness raising and metacognitive strategies (like sequencing or mapping), it is more likely to assist SLA. Drill is more beneficial to students who have limited contact with English outside the classroom than to students who live in a monolingual English society (Cook, 1990:7; Pica, 1994:49-79).
- isolated error correction serves little purpose and over-correction may have a negative effect on motivation. The causes of learner errors are manifold, but over-generalisation, overuse, omission and analogy seem to play important roles (Lightbown, 1985:178; Pica, 1994:49-79; Lightbown & Spada, 1994:575).
- exposure to the target language influences proficiency. Comprehensible input in a meaningful context produces better results in terms of receptive and productive comprehension skills. Early exposure to the L2 is desirable if native-like proficiency is striven for. Learners from minority language groups or from deprived language backgrounds may need time to develop their L1 first, as they can then transfer acquired L1 skills more readily to the L2. This transfer only happens, though, if they have reached an adequate level of L2 proficiency to cope with cognitive tasks (Collier, 1989:526-527; Lightbown & Spada, 1993:112; Lightbown & Spada, 1994:576; Pica, 1994:54).
- classroom interaction is important in SLA. Group activities, combined with individual and teacher-centred activities, promote second language development (Lightbown & Spada, 1993:115; Lightbown & Spada, 1994:566, 572). Opportunities to negotiate meaning may help the acquisition of L2 vocabulary. The process is aided by the use of authentic materials (Ellis, 1994:606).
- learners seem to have the ability to learn more than they are taught (Lightbown & Spada, 1993:115; Pica, 1994:49-79;

Lightbown & Spada, 1994:566, 572). Content should, therefore, be rich and varied, yet selected to fit the stage of learners' development.

- although learning about language seems to suit learners with high IQ's, learners of mixed ability can be successful L2 learners if language is taught for communicative purposes through interactive methods (Lightbown & Spada, 1993:112).
- understanding the target language is easier for L2 learners than producing it - probably because conceptualisation is easier than production of unfamiliar forms. Metacognitive skills are involved in restructuring, integrating and arranging new information (Lightbown & Spada, 1993:114).
- although imitation plays an important role in SLA for some learners, not all SLA can be ascribed to imitation. Pronunciation is influenced in the early stages by imitating appropriate models (Lightbown & Spada, 1993:111; Pica, 1994:72).
- motivated L2 learners fare better than unmotivated learners. Success in language learning is the most powerful incentive to succeed, and teaching practice should promote opportunities to do so (Lightbown & Spada, 1993:113).
- the early stages of L2 acquisition seem to proceed through three predictable stages, namely a silent period, formulaic speech and structural and semantic simplification. Whether the silent period provides an opportunity for the L2 to incubate and promote competence, or whether it is an attempt to avoid using a 'new' language, is not clear. Formulaic speech patterns may be whole or fragmented expressions that are used by the speakers in certain situations, e.g. 'How do you do?'. The speaker often uses the expression correctly without analysing the form or structure. Structural simplification involves the omission of grammatical functors such as inflections, e.g. 'She go there yesterday'. Semantic simplification includes leaving out verbs, nouns, pronouns, e.g. 'Me no blue' for 'I have no blue crayon' (Tough, 1977:17-27; McLaughlin, 1985:19; Ellis, 1994:89).
- there is a predictable order in the acquisition of structures,

and some must be acquired prior to the integration of others. Preliminary projections regarding the acquisition order of grammatical features seem to suggest that pupils learn in the following order:

- single words, e.g. My name is ____;
- word order formulas (such as SVO) and plural markings;
- 'do' fronting (e.g. 'Do you see?'), adverb preposing (e.g. 'Yesterday I see you'), negative + verb (e.g. 'She no see me');
- pseudo-inversion (e.g. 'Where is my bag?'), yes/no inversions (e.g. 'Have you money'), verb + to + verb (e.g. 'I want to see');
- third person -s, past indefinite of 'do';
- question tags, adverb + verb phrase (e.g. 'I can always go').

(Lightbown & Spada, 1993:92-105; Ellis, 1994:111).

- it seems that the teaching orientation may influence the rate of reproduction, i.e. how soon the learners will start producing the target language. Good language learners seem to start early with oral production and adolescent learners seem to acquire syntactical and morphological structures faster than young learners do (Ellis, 1994:81-84). Young learners, however, acquire phonological structures faster than older learners do (cf. 2.3.1.3.1).
- transfer plays a role in SLA. Pupils may generalise rules that occur in the L1 and transfer them to the L2. Positive as well as negative transfer occurs, and ESL teachers should attempt to reinforce positive transfer and discourage negative transfer through metacognitive learning strategies (Cowan, 1983:109; Lightbown & Spada, 1993:109).
- formal instruction may have beneficial effects. It results in increased accuracy and accelerates progress through developmental sequences. Its effects are, in some cases, durable. However, it is best seen as facilitating natural language development, rather than offering an alternative mode of learning. Formal instruction combined with opportunities to

experience the structures in communication, appears to bring about successful learning. There may also be a case for consciousness raising directed at helping learners to formulate explicit knowledge (Ellis, 1994:659).

McLaughlin (1985:6) points out that contemporary SLA theory and consequent teaching approaches centre around humanistic philosophy that stresses individualised, learner-based instruction. According to Campbell and Kryszewska (1992:5), the learner-based approaches are designed to tap the resources that every individual has.

As there is no single theory that adequately explains SLA, an eclectic orientation towards language teaching and learning often produces the best results (Van der Walt, 1981:128).

2.3 FACTORS THAT RELATE TO THE PRIMARY SCHOOL LEARNER

The following factors relate to the primary school learner:

- his characteristics;
- his learning tasks, and
- the desired outcomes of ESL at primary school level.

2.3.1 Characteristics of the primary school pupil

The Department of Education (1995:1) recommends a learner-centred approach to ESL in South Africa. This can only be implemented successfully if the teacher is aware of the most important factors that may influence learners.

Ellis (1994:473) describes the three main variables that characterise language learners as the following:

- beliefs about language learning;
- affective states (motivation, attitude and anxiety), and
- general factors (age, learning styles and strategies, and

personality).

2.3.1.1 Learners' beliefs about language learning

Ellis (1994:479) suggests that pupils' beliefs about why they are learning the language (e.g. mainly to speak, to use it correctly, etc.) may influence the kind of success they finally achieve. One of the most powerful influences on pupils' beliefs about language learning, is success at learning (cf. 2.2.6); a factor closely associated with motivation and attitudes towards language learning (Lightbown & Spada, 1993:112).

An important implication for primary school teaching is the fostering of a 'can do' belief among children.

2.3.1.2 Affective states

Motivation and attitude, as well as the effect of learner anxiety, are discussed in this section.

2.3.1.2.1 Motivation and attitude

Gardner and Lambert's work on The Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) (1972) contributed greatly to an understanding of motivation in the learning of a second language. A central issue is the difference between an instrumental and an integrative orientation towards the target language. Instrumental motivation means that the learner learns the language mainly because it is an instrument towards some kind of reward (job access, prestige, etc.). Integrative motivation means that learners have a desire for acculturation.

Studies by MacIntyre and Gardner (1991) illuminate certain aspects of attitude and motivation that will influence this study. Beginners generally show little anxiety, and there is little interference of anxiety with learning. Post-beginners, however, show anxiety if they have developed negative

expectations based on bad learning experiences (Ellis, 1994:483).

Dörnyei (1994:515-523) suggests that pupils' motivational levels for L2 learning can be improved by developing pupils' self-confidence and self-efficacy, decreasing their anxiety, promoting motivation-enhancing experiences, encouraging them to set attainable sub-goals and increasing the attractiveness of course content. It has been established that there is a correlation between the pupils' affective experience of ESL and exposure to English (De Villiers, 1991:99). If the teacher succeeds in increasing positive affective responses to learning, pupils may voluntarily seek more exposure to English.

The crucial role of the teacher as the affective stabiliser in the classroom can hardly be over-emphasised (Ellis, 1994:516) (cf. 2.5.3). Lemmer (1993:162) points out that the climate in the classroom is of decisive importance to especially ESL learners from deprived backgrounds. Scott and Ytreberg (1990:8-19) suggest that pupils should have classroom responsibilities; they should be taught that part of language behaviour is showing respect for other communicators, and that mistakes are, therefore, tolerated. To establish an atmosphere of trust and acceptance, Scott and Ytreberg discourage constant organised competition or rewarding 'correct' language behaviour.

The interests of the primary school learner should be reflected in the selection of language learning content in order to sustain motivation. The young child initially uses language to communicate egocentric needs to its caretakers. Later, social needs emerge and are conveyed through language. The young primary school pupil may initially be interested in situations that are known to him, such as the family environment, friends and school. Hamackek (1975:158-161) states that the young child makes use of peers to report on socially acceptable behaviour, to practise different roles and to test personality preferences such as assertiveness and rebelliousness. Themes that may be suitable for the Junior Primary Phase are, therefore, the following:

Introducing my family; learning about my body; describing my friends, etc.

The learner's innate curiosity about his environment and the desire to learn increase later on, and although his own interests remain central, he increasingly creates relationships further removed from himself (Dale, 1976:248; Cook, 1979:47-51). These interests develop to include hobbies, sport and community events. Towards the later primary school years the pre-adolescent shows increasing interest in abstract themes such as morality, the future and hypotheses that can be tested. Peer acceptance increases in importance and the roles of parents, religion, social class, gender and autonomy are likely to be of interest (Hamachek, 1975:371-412). Learner interests are also influenced by culture, social contexts and the environment. Themes that may be explored during the Senior Primary Phase (Grades 4 - 6) are the following: Finding out about health; earning pocket money; spending free time; planning special days; exploring future occupations, etc.

The primary school learner in rural areas may not share the interests of urban learners, and the ESL teacher should be in constant communication with his learners to stay in touch with their developing interests (Reynolds & Skilbeck, 1976:99-101).

2.3.1.2.2 Anxiety and the affective filter

The work of both Krashen (cf. 2.2.5) and Krashen and Terrell (1983:39) has contributed much to an understanding of how anxiety raises the affective filter in the learning situation. Ellis (1994:479) distinguishes between trait anxiety (or a general tendency to anxiety), situation-specific anxiety (or anxiety produced by a particular situation, e.g. oral testing) and state anxiety (or anxiety at a given time in response to a certain situation - this is a combination of trait and state anxiety). Anxiety is mostly the result of the pupil feeling exposed to possible ridicule.

Savignon (1983:112) points out that failure anxiety can to a large extent be controlled by the teacher. If the ESL teacher accepts errors as a natural consequence of learning, the chances of ridicule, and consequent failure anxiety, become less. Ellis (1994:262) reports that ESL learners seem to prefer self-correction over other-correction. It also appears that native speakers rarely correct L2 speakers' linguistic errors, but rather tend to correct factual or discourse errors (such as inappropriate openings or closings). A distinction can be made between on-record correction (overt correction directed at an individual) and off-record correction (ambiguous correction, sometimes in the form of confirmation checks). Ellis (1994:262) points out that learners may respond more positively to off-record repair of errors. The Junior Primary pupil, however, does not seem to be as sensitive to on-record correction as the Senior Primary pre-adolescent and adolescent.

It is clear that a feeling of success contributes to overcoming failure anxiety in the classroom, and the repair of errors should be done in such a way as to accommodate feelings of success. This increases self-esteem which, in turn, may increase motivation.

2.3.1.3 General factors that relate to the primary school learner

General factors such as age, learning styles and strategies, and personality are discussed in this section.

2.3.1.3.1 Age and the critical period hypothesis

Lenneberg (1967) provides a biological basis for the innatist theory of the influence of age on language learning, viz. his 'critical period' hypothesis. According to this hypothesis, it is assumed that children pass a critical time (at around twelve years of age) after which they learn an L2 with more difficulty than before. As children of twelve years are still in the primary school, the hypothesis is relevant to this study. Lenneberg's

research indicates that adults who had lost speech through damage to the left brain hemisphere, which controls language behaviour, had more trouble to regain language than children. This led Lenneberg to believe that the 'plasticity' needed to learn language is lost at puberty (Ellis, 1985:106-110; Lightbown & Spada, 1993:11; Ellis, 1994:35-36).

There seems to be ample evidence, however, that young children are not necessarily better ESL learners than older children, as is claimed by proponents of the critical age hypothesis (McLaughlin, 1985:175; Ellis, 1994:485). Both McLaughlin (1985:175) and Ellis (1994:485) report that young children acquire L2 phonology more quickly than older learners, while adolescents score better in morphological and syntactical tests (cf. 2.2.6). Ellis points out that the younger-is-better theory only holds true in naturalistic settings. The classroom setting can never be fully naturalistic, but a communicative approach can assist in imitating a naturalistic context in the classroom.

The aims of L2 instruction will determine when the language is introduced (Lightbown & Spada, 1993:112-113). If the aim is to achieve native-like proficiency, the sooner a programme is implemented, the better. If cultural considerations weigh in favour of preserving the mother-tongue and only a basic communicative competence is desired of L2 learners, the L2 programme can commence at a later stage. It seems to be difficult to achieve native-like proficiency in English and retain a strong emphasis on the mother-tongue at the same time. If pupils are expected to learn through the medium of English, Stribling and Thurstone (1993:30) suggest that near-native proficiency be reached no later than Grade 7.

2.3.1.3.2 Learning styles and strategies

Learning styles reflect characteristic ways of perceiving phenomena, conceptualising and recalling information. They reflect the pupil's cognitive, affective and physiological

reaction to the learning environment (Ellis, 1994:499; Dreyer, 1996:294). Learning strategies, on the other hand, are considered conscious actions that learners use to organise learning or using the L2 (Ellis, 1994:696, 712; Van der Walt & Dreyer, 1995:308).

McLaughlin (1985:170) reports three main styles in the language classroom, namely, beading, braiding and orchestrating. Beaders learn individual words before they string them together to make meaning, while braiders use an integrative strategy based on the syntax of the L2. Orchestrators respond to phonological patterns and an understanding of meaning implied in intonation.

A distinction between field-dependent and field-independent learners is often made. Skehan (1989:111-115) proposes that field-dependent learners prefer interaction with other people, engaging in verbal communication and interpersonal interaction. Field-independent learners are more analytically inclined, capable of restructuring and developing interlanguage systems. Ellis (1994:508) and McLaughlin (1985:170) both point out, however, the nigh impossible task of disentangling all the variables involved in empirical studies to establish a clear distinction between field-dependent and field-independent learners..

Oxford (1990:37) and Dreyer (1996:294) add the following style dimensions that are significant for ESL, namely:

- tolerance of ambiguity;
- perceptual strengths (visual, auditory or hands-on);
- intuitive-random and concrete-sequential;
- closure-oriented and open, and
- global and analytic.

Tolerance of ambiguity encompasses the (in)ability to tolerate anything that is not clear, e.g. information or situations that the learner does not fully understand. Dreyer (1996:295) reports that L2 learners who are tolerant of ambiguity are willing to

take risks and are receptive of change. Perceptual strengths relate to the sensory channels that learners use best to absorb and retain new information. Vernon (1973:42) reports evidence that suggests that black pupils rely more on auditory than visual perceptual skills; a view that is challenged by Dreyer (cf. 6.2.3.2). According to Dreyer (1996:296), the intuitive-random learner enjoys random discussions that veer off the assigned topic of a lesson, whereas the concrete-sequential learner may be threatened by such an action, and demand complete information on the specific topic being discussed. Closure-oriented learners benefit by traditional classroom settings that are highly structured. They want lesson directions and explicit explanations of grammar rules. Open learners, however, fare better in fluency activities and situations that require unpredictable discourse. Global learners prefer learning that is aimed at and takes place through communication. They are effective in situations that require collaboration and social relationships for achievement, whereas analytic learners prefer formal language learning aimed at accuracy.

Hamachek (1975:462) suggests that learning styles should be identified as early as possible as this will not only facilitate encouragement of how best to use the existing style, but also allow the learner to experience other modes of learning. The Language Projects' Review (1989:2) suggests an environment that facilitates multi-dimensional learning through the use of all the senses, especially for younger learners.

O'Malley and Chamot (1988) distinguish three major types of learning strategies, namely:

- cognitive;
- metacognitive, and
- social/affective strategies.

Cognitive strategies refer to the learner's use of steps that involve analysis, transformation or synthesis of learning mate-

rial. Repetition (either the overt or covert imitation of a language model), note-taking (writing down orally presented information) and elaboration (relating new concepts to other information in memory) are included among these cognitive strategies (Stern, 1993:261-268; Ellis, 1994:536). Oxford (1990:37) classifies cognitive strategies as part of the strategies that directly involve the L2, and she says that strategies of memory and compensation are also cognitive strategies. These direct strategies require mental processing of the L2, but Ellis (1994:538) points out that she makes no distinction between strategies directed at learning the L2, and those directed at using it.

Metacognitive strategies make use of knowledge about cognitive processes, such as planning, monitoring and evaluating the language learning process. Consciously directing attention to the learning process or self-management through time-tabling specific language learning opportunities are also included among the metacognitive strategies (Ellis, 1994:537; Dreyer, 1996:297).

Social/affective strategies are applied in social situations and are meant to improve learning. Chamot (1987) gives the following examples: cooperation (e.g. peer cooperation in order to obtain feedback, pool information or model a language activity), and requests for clarification (through repetition, paraphrase or examples) (Ellis, 1994:538).

Oxford (1990:37) classifies metacognitive and social/affective strategies as indirect strategies which lend indirect support to language learning.

Naiman, Fröhlich, Todesco and Stern (1978) refer to the 'Good Language Learner' (GLL) that describes learning strategies that a good language learner possesses. Although much more research is needed to establish GLL profiles, it seems that successful L2 learners show concern for language form, functional use of language, an active task approach, metacognitive awareness of the

learning process and flexibility in strategy application according to task requirements (Stern, 1993:261-268; Ellis, 1994:546).

The primary school pupil is in the concrete operational stage or in the formal operational stage (Hamachek, 1975:139). Involving pupils in tasks that promote learning strategies, such as seriation, classification, reversibility, etc., through concretised activities (like mind-mapping, drafting or problem-solving), may promote learning through the favoured style, but also flex other styles.

An important finding for this study suggests that younger L2 learners prefer social and interactional strategies (Ellis, 1994:556), whereas older pupils seem to use more functional practice strategies. Older classroom learners use social/affective strategies in the classroom mostly for clarification. Learners who value learning above language use tend to employ more learning strategies, and instrumentally motivated learners employ more cognitive strategies than integratively motivated learners (Ellis, 1994:542-543).

Ellis (1994:544) points out that the type of learning task influences the choice of strategy; for example, vocabulary tasks may be aided by mnemonic association strategies. Young learners seem to learn vocabulary best by listing items, while older pupils seem to prefer contextualising vocabulary items. Stern (1993:261-268) and Ellis (1994:554-555) suggest that young learners initially use mainly receptive and self-contained strategies, like memorisation and formulaic speech. These are followed by strategies based on interpersonal interaction, like requests to assist or clarify, and later still, metacognitive strategies. It appears that strategies reflecting the use of chunks of language precede close attention to single words or metacognitive strategies.

Van der Walt and Dreyer (1995:314-315) state that learning

strategies can be taught. For example, cognitive strategies can be taught through practising, receiving and sending messages, and creating structure for input and output; compensation strategies can be taught through guessing intelligently and overcoming limitations in speaking and writing; metacognitive strategies can be taught through arranging, planning and evaluating learning, and social strategies can be taught through tasks that require learning with others.

The implications of the integration of learning styles and strategies in the teaching-learning process are the following:

- the teacher should create and promote integrated learning opportunities for pupils to flex existing styles and strategies;
- outcomes for learning strategies should be planned in the teaching cycle;
- learning styles involving the senses seem to promote learning in young children;
- interactional and social learning strategies are preferred by younger pupils;
- receptive and self-contained strategies are used before interpersonal or metacognitive ones, and
- the type of learning task seems to influence the selected strategy.

2.3.1.3.3 Personality

Personality traits such as extroversion and introversion, the willingness to take risks and competitiveness also influence ESL acquisition. It seems that extroverts (because of their disposition towards interpersonal communication) acquire communicative skills more readily than introverts. Introverts, however, seem to progress more than sociable pupils in a teacher-oriented and structured environment (McLaughlin, 1985:171-172; Skehan, 1989:101-012; Ellis, 1994:521). Dreyer (1996:296) warns, however, against assumptions that are not always true, such as

that extroverts are always talkative.

Although research is still fine-tuning the effect of personality on SLA, the ESL teacher needs to check constantly that certain personality types are not isolated by the teaching-learning methodology which is employed.

2.3.2 The learning tasks of the primary school pupil

The learning tasks that the primary school pupil faces are discussed in this section.

According to McLaughlin (1978:30-37), the primary school pupil faces the tasks of acquiring the phonological, semantic, syntactic and communicative systems of the target language.

2.3.2.1 Phonological tasks

The pupil has to recognise that the sound patterns of the second language may differ from those of his mother-tongue. Apart from the phonemic characteristics, the target language has phonological structures unique to it. Phonemic (single sound) tasks seem to be easier to learn than phonological (system of sound) tasks. Stress and slur patterns are also part of the pupil's phonological task. McLaughlin (1978:31) says that these patterns are only gradually mastered by most learners, and he stresses the need for an adequate model that pupils can emulate early in the learning programme (cf. 2.3.1.3.1). Pronunciation patterns established during the early L2 learning programme are likely to persist. Seliger (1978) and Long (1990:251-285) report that perfect pronunciation seems unattainable for learners who start learning an L2 after puberty, unless aided by specialist intervention (Michel, 1967:300; Ellis, 1994:35-36; MacDonald, Yule & Powers, 1994:75-99).

Apart from the sounds and sound patterns, the pupil has to learn to link the recognised sounds to concepts if comprehension is to

be achieved. The young second language learner may need active assistance in creating the concepts that are linked to certain sound systems. Dale (1976:195) reports that children seem to master sound and word simultaneously, whereas most adult L2 learners construct words after mastering sounds in the L2.

The implications of the phonological learning task for the primary school pupil are significant. If he doesn't acquire the desired model during the primary school years, specialist intervention (through, for example, tuition in a language laboratory) may be needed to change his existing pronunciation. Providing a desirable pronunciation model in the primary school is, therefore, important.

2.3.2.2 Semantic tasks

The pupil's semantic tasks involve the complex process of giving meaning to the sound patterns he hears and learns. This process includes cognition and feelings, as illustrated by the individualised semantic meanings pupils may award to words such as 'learning' or 'love'. McLaughlin (1978:32) calls this feature the creation of a dictionary of meanings, and points out that little empirical research has been done on how semantic tasks are mastered by pupils. It is, therefore, impossible to say whether learners select the best prototype for the word they know and attach that meaning to it, or whether they use words without knowing the 'adult' and generalised meanings. Cook (1979:26-35) reports that a primary school child connects meanings, other than adults who tend to group meanings. A primary school child is more likely to associate 'blue' with 'sky', whereas an adult may associate 'blue' with 'red'. Kgame (1990:1-3) also points out that abstract concepts rarely have one word in black languages but are, instead, circumscribed. Teachers who have black learners in the classroom should not only be aware of these differences, but assist learners to form the necessary concepts by presenting visual or other stimuli to establish comprehension.

Apart from the dictionary of meanings, the learner also has to acquire a set of semantic relations or an understanding of how words stand in relation to one another in sentences. Although research seems to indicate that all people process and code non-linguistic experiences in a similar way, this is difficult to prove, as children cannot verify from what they say which underlying relations are expressed (McLaughlin, 1978:32-35). Clark and Clark (1977:411) argue the existence of a mental encyclopedia that stores all the facts and generalisations of objects, events and states in the learners' world.

Vygotsky (1967) and Halliday (1981) maintain that thought and language are intertwined to such an extent that to study them separately may lead to inadequate explanations of both. Their views are more fully discussed in Chapter 4 (cf. 4.3.4 and 4.3.5).

The development of semantic tasks during the primary school years seems crucial for successful learning. Semantics, thought and learning seem inextricably linked, and the influence of the development of an adequate semantic system to cope with the purposes of language use can hardly be over-emphasised. If the pupil is also expected to learn through English as MOI, the semantic learning task is even more pronounced.

2.3.2.3 Syntactic tasks

The pupil must use acquired words and patterns in sentences so that these sentences adhere to the standards of proficiency. Clark and Clark (1977:489) argue that children develop semantic and syntactic awareness as a result of a functional attitude towards language. A child may equate 'The car hit the boy' with 'The boy was hit by the car', because the two sentences are functional alternatives in English. Gradually a grammar is developed as the pupil grows more aware of syntactic information. As the learner's cognitive grasp develops and an understanding of the interrelationship between words increases, so the learner

is able to form more complex syntactic structures. Complex thought processes do, however, already occur at a young age. All types of cognitive learning can be consciously stimulated; thus learners can be required to memorise simple rhymes and practise the techniques for solving simple problems from an early age (McLaughlin, 1978:111).

Syntactic tasks relate especially to accuracy, which is in turn, related to acquisition order (cf. 2.2.6). Formal instruction should assist in the acquisition of a more sophisticated syntactic system, which will in turn allow the pupil to express himself in increasingly sophisticated terms.

2.3.2.4 Developing a communicative system

The acquisition of a communicative system implies that the language user has a certain amount of knowledge about the context in which language is used. Thus the meaning of an utterance may be implied rather than explicitly stated. A sentence like 'Is your father home?' may carry the intended meaning that the speaker wishes to see the father. Pupils seem to employ the technique of implied meaning early in the acquisition process. They also acquire code switching in which they indicate a sensitivity to using separate registers for different people; these are formal or polite codes, colloquial codes and slang codes (McLaughlin, 1978:37).

Exposure to a variety of registers, contexts, audiences, purposes and the like influences the development of a communicative system, as the child learns what is appropriate under different circumstances. The acquisition of a communicative system is also related to cultural factors, because the learning of concepts is culturally imbedded (Clark, 1996:253). The primary school pupil needs to learn that what is appropriate in one language system may not be appropriate in another.

The final learner variable that has to be considered is what the

learner should be able to do with English when he leaves primary school, i.e. the learning outcomes at primary school level.

2.3.3 LEARNING OUTCOMES

The teacher must know what he wants to achieve in the teaching and learning process, i.e. what the pupils must be able to do after a period of teaching (Brindley, 1994:73). This is often stated in terms of ability. The following questions are, therefore, relevant to the discussion of learning outcomes for ESL:

- what is meant by proficiency?
- how are learning outcomes described and achieved?

2.3.3.1 Proficiency

Proficiency has sometimes been used as a synonym for competence, and the two terms are often used interchangeably (Stern, 1983:345). The problem of defining what proficiency in language encompasses has a long-standing history, because 'knowing a language' defies easy definition. Savignon (1983:53) points out that even though mother-tongue proficiency may be well developed, the term remains relative, as users differ in vocabulary range, articulation, critical thinking, penmanship and persuasiveness (to name but a few aspects of proficiency).

Corder (1973:197) and Van Els et al. (1984:230) point out that a definition of L2 proficiency is an even more nebulous entity, as teaching an L2 must not only focus on linguistic competence but also on communicative competence that will satisfy the needs of specific learners. Rivers (1983:14-15) points out that the modern utilitarian approach to learning demands the use of knowledge in practical domains, as well as a contribution to personal development and citizenship.

Canale and Swain's (1980:1-47) model of proficiency has been an

influential one. They interpret proficiency abstractly as communicative competence and analyse it into grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic competence. Bachman (1990:87; 1991:684) has refined Canale and Swain's model into a comprehensive model of communicative language ability. He suggests that language competence comprises the following areas:

- organisational knowledge. This includes grammatical and textual knowledge - the knowledge employed in creating or recognising grammatically correct utterances; in comprehending their propositional content, and in organising them to form oral and written texts.
- pragmatic knowledge. This includes the types of knowledge which, in addition to organisational competence, are employed in the contextualised performance and interpretation of socially appropriate elocutionary acts in discourse. These competencies include the knowledge of language functions, of sociolinguistic rules of appropriateness, and of cultural references and figurative language.

Rivers (1983:14), Judd (1987:3-4) and Strevens (1987:11-23) point out that any definition of proficiency is closely related to the function of the acquired language in the socio-political and economic environment of the learner. It, therefore, depends on what the learner needs to do with the language. Cummins (1983) distinguishes between 'basic interpersonal communicational skills' (BICS) and 'cognitive/academic language proficiency' (CALP). The relevance of BICS or CALP for the primary school lies in the difference between schools that offer English as subject only and schools that use English as medium of instruction (MOI). Pupils who attend the former probably need BICS (and CALP in places where English is the passport to further study), and pupils who attend English MOI schools need BICS as well as CALP.

What is clear from the models mentioned above, is that language knowledge can neither be described in terms of the four language skills only, nor in terms of knowledge of the subject only. A

model for language knowledge needs to describe knowledge in terms of the language skills, as well as purposes of use (Kilfoil, 1996:1).

Clark (1996) proposes a comprehensive model for proficiency based on Vygotskian principles. Vygotsky argues that there is no final attainment of proficiency, and the language learner should develop to the 'proximal zone of development'. Clark regards language learning as an integral part of learning and using knowledge as a whole. There is no state of final achievement, and the aim of language teaching should be an ever-increasing capability to use English for various purposes.

Clark's model consists of the following dimensions of knowledge, namely:

- conceptual knowledge (knowledge about things);
- procedural knowledge (knowledge how to do things and the ability to do them);
- representational knowledge (how to represent our knowledge of the world in our minds and share it with others through language), and
- metacognitive knowledge (executive knowledge of how to go about the tasks we engage in everyday).

Each of these aspects are described in terms of three dimensions (or purposes of language use), namely knowledge, interpersonal and experience dimensions (cf. 2.3.3.2). This model is discussed in detail in Chapter 5.

In conclusion, it seems that proficiency cannot be described in terms that are universally acceptable in every situation. The primary school pupil is hardly expected to be proficient by the time he leaves primary school, but he is expected to be equipped with the necessary skills and attitudes to realise his maximal potential for acquiring English. The basic foundation for further development must, therefore, be laid during the primary school.

years.

2.3.3.2 The description of learning outcomes for English

Learning outcomes are currently employed in many language syllabuses, and will in future also be used in South African ones (Department of Education, 1996:1).

The definition of language learning outcomes stems from the definition of proficiency. The Department of Education (1996:1) defines outcomes as the results of a learning process whether formal, non-formal or informal. In Outcomes-based education and training, curriculum developers work backwards from agreed desired outcomes. Kilfoil (1996:1) says that the learner should be able to demonstrate practical skills and knowledge within a particular context at a variety of determined levels. Eberlein (1996:14) calls outcomes 'credible end results', and Visagie (1996:53) refers to an outcome as, 'that segment of a unit standard which is a statement of the required learner capabilities that must be demonstrated'.

Clark (1994:16) uses the term 'target' to describe longer-term behavioural aims or outcomes to work towards (what the learner is to learn to do better and better). Learning targets are always holistic in the sense that they do not describe part-skills or isolated units of learning. He uses the term 'learning objectives' to cover discrete items of learning. Through engaging in learning tasks (what learners do in order to learn), learners progress towards the learning targets. The term 'target' implies process as well as product, and Clark emphasises the integration of context and purpose in the parameters of the description of learning.

From the above definitions of outcomes, the following emerge:

- outcomes reflect learning for a reason, i.e. purposeful learning;

- outcomes reflect knowledge and skill in applying such knowledge;
- there is no final end product or end outcome, as the learning horizon always moves further for life-long learning;
- although 'outcome' implies product only, both the learning process and the learning product should be emphasised;
- learning outcomes are contextualised, and
- the aims and objectives of learning are inherently part of learning outcomes.

Outcomes should be described for different stages of learning during the primary school. For example, the Grade 2 pupil cannot be expected to demonstrate the same learning outcomes as a pupil in Grade 6. Therefore, outcomes need to be delineated into stages. These stages can be described in terms of years, or learning stages, such as the Junior Primary Phase or the Senior Primary Phase. Further delineations can be made to reflect typical progress more accurately, and Bands of Performance (BoP) are used by Clark, Scarino and Brownell (1994:60) to indicate parameters of typical achievement within a stage. Pupils can be assessed against the descriptions in the BoPs with a view to finding the best fitting Band for each particular individual, and a Profile of Performance can then be drawn up indicating in which Band the pupil is. The profile indicates strengths, weaknesses and other particular characteristics. A BoP describes what a pupil can do, to what extent and in what context, and how and how well he can do it. This is discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

In the formulation of outcomes (or targets), the purposes of learning must be considered. Three major purposes for the use of English can be identified that should not be regarded as separate, but intertwinable (Clark, 1996:256). The purposes for using English are:

- using English to communicate with other people;
- finding out, constructing, expressing and using knowledge, and

- using English for responding to personal experience (real or imagined) and giving expression to this.

These Clark (1996:257) calls the interpersonal dimension, the knowledge dimension and the experience dimension (cf. 2.3.3.1). They form a framework of macro-purposes for which English is used.

Learning targets or broad outcomes are then formulated for each dimension. The outcome for the interpersonal dimension, for example, as described by Clark, Scarino and Brownell (1994:37), is:

- to develop an ever-improving capability to use English
- to establish, maintain and develop relationships;
- to exchange ideas and information;
- to get things done.

Targets for determined levels within the dimensions are then described. Learning targets for the interpersonal dimension at the end of Key Stage 2 include, for example:

- to establish and maintain relationships and routines in school and other familiar situations;
- to converse about likes, feelings, interests, preferences, ideas, experiences and plans.

The processes of learning (such as the skills and strategies of inquiring, problem-solving, mapping, referencing, study skills, etc.) also need to be reflected in the descriptions of outcomes. Skill descriptors in the interpersonal dimension for roughly the end of the primary school career may include:

Pupils can

- '(follow) and (act) on a range of routine requests and instructions' (listening);
- (use) appropriate conversational strategies to maintain

- relationships and to participate in planning and carrying out events with support and in familiar situations (speaking);
- (understand) requests and instructions including some on less familiar matters (reading), and
 - (produce) instructions for familiar procedures in which the stages are properly sequenced (writing).

The expected affective development (such as increasing confidence to execute tasks) should also be demonstrated by the learner as he progresses from one stage to another.

McKay and Scarino (1993:9), who are involved in the development of the Australian Language Levels (ALL) project (cf. Chapter 5), point out that expected outcomes for different stages are usually based on a consensus of teacher experience. For this reason, experienced teachers should provide input in the description of outcomes.

Clark (1996:255) points out that the establishment of outcomes or targets necessitates regular reviewing of the curriculum to make sure that the changing demands of the context, teachers and learners are met. This will involve the design of a set of explicit educational targets, and a programme of appropriate learning experiences through which pupils can work towards them.

2.3.3.3 Means for achieving targets: the four language skills

The four language skills, listening, speaking, reading and writing, are the means for achieving the specified outcomes. Clark (1996:256) points out that we do not use English to listen or to read; we use English to listen to something or to read something for some purpose.

2.3.3.3.1 Listening

Tann (1991:43) says that listening does not just imply an understanding of the spoken word, but also the capacity to

express oneself effectively in a variety of speaking and listening activities. This implies that style and response should be matched to audience and purpose.

Krouse (1990:15) argues that listening is an important stage of language learning, as it not only enables learners to eventually speak, but also lays the foundation for reading and writing. She points out that the pupil can only start using L2 sounds after hearing enough of the sounds and practising them.

Torrey (1971:253) says that the primary school ESL learner needs to listen to language which is conceptually reconcilable with his cognitive level. In order to assist the creation of new concepts, or the expansion of existing ones, stimuli suited to the young child (such as visual or tactile ones) should be used extensively. Richards (1987:161-176) and Porter and Roberts (1987:177-190) suggest that the teaching of listening should employ specifically content-based, purposeful tasks. Van der Walt and Combrink (1988:69) state that listening should be seen as an active process that should be taught explicitly. Listening tasks should form an integral part of the course. Van der Geest and Swüste (1973:4) point out that the ability to listen carefully is necessary to participate in any meaningful communication, and they suggest the use of games for young learners to practise the ability to listen.

2.3.3.3.2 Speaking

Krouse (1990:47-178) and Tann (1991:47-94) suggest a structured programme centred around purposeful oracy for the primary school. The typical situations in which pupils need to participate should be analysed and accommodated in a number of tasks. The ability to transmit information and instructions may be developed in young learners by making use of show-and-tell activities or word games such as 'Telephone messages'. Discourse strategies can be addressed through collaborative group discussions and drama

(Scarcella, 1987:208-217). Interpersonal communicative skills can be developed through tasks like storycrafting and peer involvement in editing tasks. An awareness of language can be promoted through games that lead to the discovery of sounds, rhythms and spelling. As poetry often embraces the natural rhythm of language, it is an important contributor to the development of oracy.

Pronunciation targets should not be unrealistic; mutual intelligibility between communication partners remains the minimum requirement of acceptable pronunciation.

2.3.3.3.3 Reading

Concerns about reading proficiency levels have been expressed over the past decade, as visual media like television and computers have increasingly replaced books for leisure and entertainment (Packard, 1983:97; Van der Merwe, 1988:43). There is evidence that the young learner's positive attitude towards reading is one of the most powerful incentives to read, and it is best established during the years at primary school (Lorton & Walley, 1979:152-159, 329). Many authors, e.g. Carrell and Eisterhold (1987:218-231), refer to the schema or existing knowledge of the world that the young child brings with him to the reading experience. They point out that the ESL teacher should provide culturally relevant information to minimise reading difficulties.

The child not only needs to recognise a word by connecting the symbol to the sound, but he also needs to connect the symbol and sound to an existing concept in his mind. If the concepts don't exist or are contradictory to what the child understands, the reading material is experienced as difficult. Added to these tasks is the need to recognise the value that words and sentences have in relation to each other as elements of discourse. In this way the reader not only works out what has preceded, but also predicts what is to come (Widdowson, 1978:63). According to Tann

(1991:105), the approximately 211 different sounds represented by 26 letters and their combinations in English may cause a perception that English is difficult. Some pupils find it difficult to master the sub-skills of analysis (identifying separate sounds, symbols and segments of words) and synthesis (integrating each sound into a word). Apart from the mechanical skills of reading, Tann (1991:107-108) stresses the importance of understanding as the basis of good reading, e.g. the linking of sound to concepts should be taught before inter-textual skills are taught. Word-attack skills (such as the meaning of morphemes) should be actively taught to the young reader, as well as skills like skimming and scanning. Long periods of uninterrupted and sustained silent reading are necessary to develop fluency. Listening to expressive reading by models also promotes fluency. Cloze exercises can be used to assist pupils who are reluctant to confront 'difficult' words. The cloze exercise encourages pupils to read on to ascertain what the missing word should be (Tann, 1991:109-110).

Widdowson (1978:65) says that both reciprocal and non-reciprocal reading skills should be taught. Reciprocal reading involves interaction with other people, like reading to an audience or interpreting and representing interpreted material. Non-reciprocal reading involves a psychological activity during which the learner interprets the information according to his own schema, and accommodates the newly acquired information into the existing schema.

Tann (1991:102-170) emphasises the active role even a young reader plays in his own progress. She advocates an interactive approach to reading; one in which the reader, author and text are involved in a dynamic process in which the reader generates his own meaning through the medium of the text.

Tann (1991:118) suggests that books be selected for literary merit, quality of storyline, interest level of illustrations and their popularity with children. This should be coupled with the

teacher's classroom experience and criteria for the readability of books for an individualised approach to reading. She suggests that teachers select books that reflect the following stages in the child's development:

- 7-9 years: conformity and socionomy. Children understand mutual reciprocity and they are sensitive to the social environments they move in. They develop a desire to conform and be like most of the other members of their society.
- 9-11 years: justice and fairness. Children develop insight into motives and circumstance and what is just and fair.
- 12+ years: autonomy. Children develop the ability to argue, reason, hypothesise and integrate others' views. They become increasingly independent.

Tann (1991:153-159) says that information retrieval strategies should be taught to bring about learning outcomes for reading. Strategies that pupils use, for example, to retrieve detail (such as skimming and scanning), differ from those used for thematic exploration (such as predicting what the topic sentence signals).

2.3.3.3.4 Writing

Writing often presents the culmination of previous learning. The younger the child, the greater the writing task, as he has to integrate the physical process (forming recognisable letters and words), the linguistic process (conforming to rules of grammar and usage) and the psychological process (organised thoughts that convey meaning).

The function of writing should be fine-tuned to purpose and audience. Storying, for example, is typically serial, whereas transactional writing is causal, analytical and hierarchical. 'Knowledge-telling' and 'knowledge-transforming' refer to the demands made on the knowledge structures of the child. The latter is regarded to be more cognitively taxing, as self-regulation and reflection are needed. Owing to the absence of a partner who can

challenge ambiguous communication, the young child's writing is often characterised by context-bound implicitness (Tann, 1991: 176-177).

According to Tann (1991:180-182), writing forms to be taught to the primary school child can be divided into two categories, namely chronological and non-chronological writing. The first category includes diaries, stories, letters, accounts of completed tasks, personal experience, instructions and records of observations. The second category includes lists, captions, labels, invitations, greeting cards, notices, posters, diagrams and plans, descriptions and notes. Young children should also be encouraged to write 'fun' texts such as rhymes, poetry, jingles and word games.

Progression in the quality of writing outcomes is characterised by the following:

- increasing control over the structure and organisation of different types of text;
- a widening range of syntactic structures and an expanding vocabulary;
- using punctuation to help the reader identify the units of structure and meaning that the writer has constructed;
- increasing proficiency in revising text, and an ability to reflect on and talk about the writing process;
- using the conventions of spelling patterns and a legible hand (Tann, 1991:189).

The way errors are treated (cf. 2.2.6) may not only influence the learners' attitude and motivation towards the L2 writing task, but also learners' attitudes about the nature and function of writing. Tann (1991:253) suggests that evaluatory comments alone are not sufficient for shaping writing, and says that such comments should be followed by specific advice.

In the recent shift from product to process approaches towards

writing, learners are increasingly encouraged to participate in editing, improving one another's efforts through group discussion, and joint writing tasks, such as reports. The child has to learn that he should be critical of his own writing, rather than await a mark from a teacher (Tann, 1991:256-257; Geyser, 1996:1-30).

Not only should the unique constitution of every learner be considered, but the influence of the language learning context has to be considered as well.

2.4 CONTEXT AS VARIABLE IN THE PRIMARY SCHOOL

The learner does not only learn in a situation; he also comes from a situation that influences his language learning. The two situational contexts that are involved are the informal situation outside the school and the formal learning situation in school.

The social setting or context outside the classroom influences the learner in that he brings a certain schema (obtained outside the classroom) into the classroom. The teacher has to elaborate on the child's existing knowledge before any learning can take place. The issues that are considered regarding social setting outside the classroom are the following:

- the pupil's social background, and
- the influence of a multilingual (and multicultural) society.

The issues regarding classroom setting can be summarised by the question:

- are pupils taught in a 'traditional' classroom setting or in a 'communicative' classroom setting?

2.4.1 The pupil's social background

Krouse (1990:5) points out that the young learner comes to school

influenced by his socio-economic background, home life, cultural grouping and exposure to language (including the L2).

It is generally accepted that the socio-economic status of families is related to education, and factors associated with poverty almost always retard educational growth, including language development (Vernon, 1973:46-62; Schmidt, 1973:36-42). Ellis (1994:240) reports that there is evidence that pupils from middle class homes are more successful at L2 acquisition than pupils from working class families, but there are exceptions.

The home life of pupils influences their attitudes towards learning and motivation. The home environment should initiate the process of learning that is continued at school. In unstable societies or homes, the learning environment is disturbed and this invariably influences the learners' achievement.

Pupils' L2 learning is also influenced by the attitudes they hold towards acculturation and their own ethnicity; the greater the ethnolinguistic emphasis in their society, the less likely pupils are to be motivated to acquire the L2 (Ellis, 1994:240).

McLaughlin (1985:200) sees a direct link between language proficiency and the influence of sociocultural factors. Although the nature or process of SLA does not seem to be influenced by societal factors, the ultimate proficiency of the learner seems to be affected by the society in which the learner functions. The role of society is more an indirect than a direct one, but certain contexts seem to promote L2 proficiency.

A distinction is sometimes made between the terms English Second Language and English Foreign Language. The basis for the difference is mainly ascribed to the difference in contact with English in the community, and the opportunities that learners have to use English. If the learner uses English often and freely and is able to acquire it without the assistance of formal education, this is referred to as a second language situation

(Ringbom, 1987:26). English acquired as a foreign language implies exposure to English mainly in the classroom. English monolingualistic societies present far more opportunities to the ESL learner for using English than a multilingualistic society (cf. 2.4.2). McLaughlin (1985:17) points out that if pupils have little or no contact with mother-tongue speakers, they are more likely to pidginise to such an extent that they may have difficulty communicating with a mother-tongue speaker.

2.4.2 Multilingualism and multiculturalism

Multilingualism and multiculturalism in society also influence the teaching-learning process. Pupils from different language groups and cultures meet in the classroom. If the pupils' society values and emphasises the L1 to the extent that English is only heard at school, the level of proficiency expected cannot be the same as that expected from pupils who are frequently exposed to English outside the classroom. An effective multilingual policy necessitates reciprocal respect for different languages and equal status for all languages.

Although the multicultural classroom warrants more attention than this study can provide, a few issues regarding the multicultural ESL classroom are briefly discussed here. McLaughlin (1985:191) comments that pupils from minority ethnic groups (i.e. the smaller ethnic grouping of pupils in a classroom) may have different expectations from the ESL course than do pupils from the majority or larger ethnic group in the same classroom. He stresses the teacher's contribution to promote feelings of efficacy and self-worth among the groups who are perceived as being linguistically inferior. This is essential, as repeated failure leads to helplessness - failure that will transmit to the teaching-learning situation. However, there is also the danger that the teacher may expect too little of traditionally disadvantaged children, because there is a misconception about their innate ability. The teacher has to ascertain whether the learners from different contexts (especially with regard to the

learning processes that they employ) share enough similarities to create a teaching pattern that develops every pupil's potential to use English successfully for his own purposes. Atmore (1993:166) suggests an interactive-collaborative approach as the most compatible in a culturally diverse group. Different cultural groups should not only interact with each other, but also work together towards an attitude of mutual respect for each one's traditions, values and languages.

The teacher should also be aware of the fact that conceptual differences may exist among learners. A word like 'transport' may be understood by the black child to mean buses, trains or taxis, and the white pupil may think of the family car. Frequent checking must be done to establish what the pupils call to mind, so that opportunities for cross-cultural awareness and respect can be cultivated.

2.4.3 ESL in classroom context

The classroom context may be divided into the 'traditional' classroom and the 'communicative' classroom.

2.4.3.1 The traditional language classroom

The traditional language classroom is defined in this study as the classroom where the emphasis is on audiolingual principles, such as the following:

- structural aspects take precedence over all other areas of language learning;
- dialogues form the nucleus of the teaching-learning process;
- behaviourist principles of overlearning the language are prominent;
- the teacher is the central orchestrator of events, and
- imitation, repetition and drills characterise learning.

(Larsen-Freeman, 1986:31-50; Richards & Rodgers, 1986:44-63).

Despite the advent of communicative practices, teachers still widely employ these principles (especially if their own proficiency is suspect), because audiolingual teaching allows little deviation from the model and teachers need not cope with unpredictable responses. Pupil responses are controlled and the sequence of events is prescribed and predictable.

McLaughlin (1985:17) points out that a classroom setting often encourages certain teaching and learning practices, such as the use of cognitive and mnemonic devices that are at the disposal of the child. There is more emphasis on rules and language drills in the classroom, and the language used in most classrooms is more decontextualised and abstracted from context than language outside the classroom. He says that more transfer from L1 to L2 seems to occur in the classroom than in an informal setting and that errors associated with L1 interference are more likely to occur than in informal contexts.

Cook (1991:132-153) says that the traditional classroom tends to be academic: the second language is treated as an academic subject, and is analysed and cognitively focused on. The classroom tends to be teacher-dominated. Cook regards the traditional language classroom as unsuitable for young learners. Krouse (1990:4) states that the audiolingual classroom context may lead to memorised language-like behaviour, instead of the creative use of language.

Lightbown and Spada (1993:72) describe SLA in the traditional classroom environment as follows:

- accuracy is the overriding concern at the expense of meaningful interaction and errors are corrected frequently;
- input is structurally simplified and presented in 'bite-sized' doses;
- there is limited time for L2 learning and it is mostly confined to the L2 classroom only;
- contact with native speakers is limited. The teacher is often

- the only L2 model the learner has contact with;
- there is a limited repertoire of language discourse types, and the learner is not expected to negotiate meaning;
- pressure for accurate productive language is exerted soon, and
- the language used by teachers to conduct classroom management is often modified to ensure compliance and comprehension.

In a predominantly traditional language classroom pupils often do not get enough learning opportunities to ensure language development. It is almost impossible to integrate cross-curricular content in the lesson content, pupils easily become bored with drill activities, and they are seldom equipped to meet the language demands of their school careers.

2.4.3.2 The communicative language classroom

Savignon (1983), Lightbown and Spada (1993:69-71) and Ellis (1994:82) describe the communicative classroom as a learning context that imitates naturalistic settings. The communicative classroom is characterised by the following:

- language is not structured step by step. Most language forms occur spontaneously and are not graded in terms of considered difficulty;
- a focus on communicative functions. These are often used as units of organisation in the syllabus and in lessons. The inventory provided by Wilkins (1976:41-54) has proved to be the most popular one;
- the language learner is exposed to much language - some directed at him, some just overheard;
- the L2 learner may be exposed to proficient users of the target language;
- various types of language events (depending on the goals of the activity) occur in the learning process, i.e. various settings, contexts, registers and the like are used;
- learners are expected to use the limited L2 resources they have to negotiate meaning;

- modified input is often volunteered by teachers and learners alike, although native speakers may present language the L2 learner has difficulty accessing;
- meaning is emphasised over form, errors are often tolerated, and error correction is limited;
- contextual clues are preferred to structural ones to aid comprehension;
- although learners are exposed to much more interaction in the classroom, the interaction is in the form of other L2 learner output;
- discourse types are varied and teaching materials are authentic, and
- learners are not pressurised to produce accurate language during the early stages, and comprehension takes precedence over accuracy during the early period.

Tann (1991:10) and Campbell and Kryszewska (1992:6) emphasise that the teacher is the facilitator of interaction rather than the sole orchestrator of classroom events (cf. 2.5.2). Ellis (1994:568) warns that the teacher can dominate interactions to such an extent that natural discourse is distorted.

Allwright and Bailey (1991) point out that the learners should ideally be part of the decision-making process in a communicative classroom context. Interaction should lead to opportunities for pupils to provide input, opportunities to practise the language, and a receptiveness to more learning.

Cook (1991:141-145) distinguishes between the social communicative language classroom and the information communicative language classroom. The former is organised in such a way that pupils participate in groups and pairs. They are not expected to produce error-free utterances and use any communicative resources (such as code-switching) to solve a communicative problem. These utterances may, however, be highly deviant from the native form. The teacher provides some feedback and correction, but this does not play a pivotal role in the classroom. Communication is

practised in the classroom as it would be used outside the classroom. Cook (1991:141) cautions that the social communicative classroom can trivialise content, if any activity that will get the students talking is accepted.

The information communicative classroom is organised to accommodate the pupil who does not necessarily want to speak, but learns through code-breaking or understanding. Comprehension is equated with learning and the process of learning is deemed less important than the nature of the input. Cook's main criticism (1991:145) against this practice is the narrowness of language components and processes dealt with in classroom interaction which does not prepare the pupil adequately for non-classroom interaction. A synthesis of social and information communicative tasks seems to prepare the pupil best for the multiple language demands he needs to fulfil.

It is obvious that better results are achieved in the communicative classroom than in the traditional classroom. Prabhu (1987:27) reports on the Madras project and claims that activities focusing on meaning, i.e. purposeful communication, seem to contribute significantly to improved capability. He says:

... learners are occupied in understanding, extending (e.g. through reasoning), or conveying meaning, and cope with language forms as demanded by that process. Attention to language forms is thus not intentional but incidental to perceiving, expressing, and organising meaning.

All such interaction in class requires mental effort by the pupils. Teachers' questions invite learners to demonstrate their ability regarding the task at hand through the medium of the target language. The results of the Madras project support the hypothesis that there is a difference between language abilities arising from form-focused teaching and meaning-focused teaching, and that structures acquired without focus on form are more

readily accessible for deployment than structures acquired with a focus on form (Prabhu, 1987:149).

However, Ellis (1994:659) points out that formal instruction (i.e. form-focused activities or grammar instruction) results in increased accuracy and accelerated progress through developmental phases (cf. 2.2.6). Formal instruction in the classroom should be structured to facilitate natural language development, but focusing learners' attention on both form and meaning (in the context of communicative activity) increases successful acquisition. This argument is supported by research results obtained by Lightbown and Spada (1993:103). They state that increasing evidence exists that L2 learners have difficulty with language structures where no form-focused instruction is provided in the language programmes. To expose learners to input alone is not sufficient to master the L2, but to focus on form alone is not sufficient either. The implications are, therefore, that meaning-focused activities should be used, but that attention also be paid to form-focused activities during the teaching-learning process. Scott and Ytreberg (1990:6) state that primary school ESL pupils are likely to question the teacher about grammatical phenomena. This displays a readiness to learn grammar. They reiterate Prabhu's emphasis on purposeful tasks and stress that especially young ESL learners benefit by a variety of activities that include sensory learning. They add that 'playing' with the L2, testing sound patterns, rhymes and rhythm will enhance language skills.

Empirical findings seem to support theoretical assumptions that pupils benefit from a system of instructional practices that allow active interaction in the classroom. Ellis (1994:606) summarises empirical findings regarding classroom contexts since 1977 as follows:

1. Opportunities to negotiate meaning may help the acquisition of L2 vocabulary.
2. Pushing learners to reformulate their utterances to make

them more target-like may lead to greater grammatical accuracy in the long term.

3. Teacher-controlled 'pedagogic discourse' may contribute to the acquisition of formal language skills, while learner-controlled 'natural discourse' may help the development of oral language skills.
4. Learners need access to well-formed input that is tailored to their own level of understanding. This can be achieved in teacher-directed lessons with a clearly-defined structure and by well-adjusted teacher-talk.
5. Listening to other students in teacher-led lessons may be more important for learning than direct learner participation.

2.4.4 The implementation of medium of instruction programmes

Different models for English medium of instruction (MOI) schools have been proposed over the years. Ellis (1994:229) reports that L2 immersion programmes for majority language learners (i.e. learners who belong to the largest language group) improve L2 functional proficiency, although grammatical proficiency remains suspect. When minority language speakers (i.e. learners who belong to smaller language groups) are immersed in L2 programmes, high levels of L2 proficiency are reported if the L1 literacy programme is developed simultaneously and much comprehensible L2 input is provided. If the L2 is learnt as an additional language (subject) only, different levels of proficiency such as pidgin varieties and localised standards are reported.

It seems that pupils who prefer English MOI schools (cf. Chapter 6) should be immersed in ESL programmes as soon as possible (cf. 2.2.6), but care should be taken to ensure that grammatical proficiency does not lag behind functional proficiency.

The teacher is the last variable in the triangular model for ESL classroom learning and is the key factor in the manipulation of the classroom context.

2.5 THE ESL PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHER AS VARIABLE

The aspects regarding the teacher that are dealt with in this section are the teacher's proficiency in the target language, his role and attitude, his use of materials and resources, and syllabus implementation.

2.5.1 The teacher's proficiency

Many primary school pupils come into contact with English for the first time when they go to school, and the first L2 model they hear is the L2 teacher (Van Dyk, 1993:190; Lemmer, 1993:155). According to Van Dyk (1993:189), the language model is of particular importance to the young learner and shouldn't just be a good, but the best possible model, because the pupil will emulate this model. If the model is deficient, the pupil imprints wrong, deviant and pidginised forms that fossilise over years.

Van der Walt (1990:193-194) states that the teacher who is himself a non-native speaker of English needs a high level of linguistic sophistication in the communicative approach to teaching. This approach requires the teacher to function in the unpredictable interaction of the context and, therefore, requires a high level of proficiency. Van der Walt (1990:194) cites an overdependence on textbooks by teachers whose proficiency is suspect. The ESL teacher in the communicative classroom should instigate, regulate and participate in communication which is difficult if the teacher is not proficient.

Clark (1996:257) states that the teacher should not only be proficient, but should be an expert user of knowledge and language, as the pupil is an 'apprentice' user of knowledge and language. The pupil observes teachers carrying out authentic activities in their field of expertise and he gains insight in how an expert thinks, plans, acts, monitors and adjusts action. Clark (1996:260) partly ascribes the failure of pupils in English

MOI schools in Hong Kong to reach high levels of proficiency to teachers who are not proficient themselves.

2.5.2 The role of the teacher

Allwright and Bailey (1991:25) stress the role of the teacher as planner. Planning is crucial for ensuring opportunities for the purposeful use of English through an emulation of naturalistic settings which may benefit acquisition (Van der Walt, 1990:193; Lightbown & Spada, 1993:115; Ellis, 1994:606; Clark, 1996:261).

According to Clark (1996:259), pupils learn what they do; if the teacher emphasises linguistic structures, pupils may be good at grammar, but nothing else. The types of input the learners are exposed to in a teacher-dominated classroom produces practice that is likely to be stilted, unnatural and contrived, and the receptivity of learners for rich and varied content may diminish (Van der Walt, 1990:193; Allwright & Bailey, 1991:25; Ellis, 1994:573).

The teacher should be a life-long learner himself, aware of the trends in ESL teaching and learning, willing to facilitate rather than dominate learning opportunities, and he should inspire self-confidence and a willingness to take risks in the L2 in the pupils. He can probably only succeed if he is confident and comfortable with his role as classroom manager.

Van der Walt (1990:194) mentions that the teacher's own learning style also influences his teaching style. The field-dependent (FD) teacher is more likely to respond to communication opportunities and he probably favours learner participation and interaction in class, whereas the field-independent (FI) teacher leans towards greater autonomy when interacting with others. The FI teacher favours analytical approaches to language learning and isolates grammar items to which he is more sensitive. Van der Walt (1990:194) states that the FD teacher will probably be more comfortable with the communicative approach than the FI teacher.

For this reason ESL teachers may need to learn how to flex their preferred learning and teaching styles to accommodate all pupils.

Clark (1996:252) considers the role of the teacher in a task-based classroom. When pupils are engaged in a task, the teacher's role is to provide an appropriate level of support or scaffolding through talk and demonstration. Part of this scaffolding may be provided in the rubrics or instructions which the pupils receive prior to doing the task. Before pupils engage in a task, the teacher may wish to see whether the pupils have sufficient topical and language knowledge needed for the task. During the task, the teacher's role is to provide further support through talk to those who need it. At the end of the task it is the teacher's role to bring about a certain degree of reflection. Teacher and pupils consider what was done and how it could have been done better (this may serve to improve metacognitive strategies). In addition, teachers can help learners through reflective talk to see patterns, make connections between today's new knowledge and yesterday's, and help them to build useful theories and generalisations.

2.5.3 The teacher's attitude

Each ESL teacher has a specific attitude towards SLA, the teaching-learning process and the learning environment that will influence his teaching, and ultimately the learning that takes place in his classroom.

McLaughlin (1985:190) mentions that the teacher's attitude towards SLA is an important social factor in the classroom. This attitude, as perceived by the pupils, influences successful teaching and learning. Meerkotter (1994:29) points out that the teacher is an especially powerful agent as regards influence on black learners' attitudes, because learning western languages may be associated with the political dominance of western rulers. Savignon (1983:114-116), Alatis (1983:10), Gaderer (1983:204), Stern (1983:308) and Corstanje (1986:16) emphasise the need for

the L2 teacher to be empathetic and enthusiastic. The ESL teacher who prompts the young learner to take risks in the language helps him to develop a positive attitude towards L2 learning that may last a lifetime. The teacher must create opportunities for success, and this can only be done if the ESL teacher has a positive attitude, and recognises and accepts his role in the learning process.

Stolz (1981), Nelson (1983:21) and Tedick and Walker (1994:300-312) report attitudinal obstacles that teachers often experience, such as disinterest, lethargy, demotivation and aggression. Nelson (1983:22) reports that teachers who are well-qualified, who majored in English (unlike many ESL teachers who teach English but majored in other subjects), who applied for English posts and expected to teach English, are motivated, well-read and innovative and do not experience interpretation problems with the syllabus are enthusiastic and successful. If the ESL teacher does not fit this profile, attitudinal and motivational problems occur. Tedick and Walker (1994:302) ascribe many of the ESL teacher's problems to an inability to understand the relation between language and culture and subsequent ignorance of the cultural implications inherent in L2 acquisition.

Van der Walt (1990:196) concludes that ESL teachers who are unable to make considerable adjustments to uncompromising attitudes, may short-circuit the implementation and execution of a communicative teaching and learning programme. This conclusion is relevant for primary school teachers, who are in a position to instil in their pupils a life-long orientation towards learning, language learning and respect for diverse cultures.

2.5.4 The use of materials and resources

A spin-off of the communicative approach is a lesser dependence on textbooks than in the traditional classroom. Swales (1993:290) reports that a wealth of new materials has been developed over the last decade, but funds to buy new materials are often

restricted. Materials can be developed from everyday texts such as newspapers, advertisements, brochures and other mass media materials. Not only do these materials reflect known subject matter and a familiar environment, but teaching based on these materials prepare pupils for real-life skills (Van der Geest & Süste, 1973:4; Lorton & Walley, 1979:142-173; Krouse, 1990:6).

Lightbown and Spada (1993:115) state that to expose pupils predominantly or exclusively to dull, predictable and narrowly focused materials not only demotivates them, but doesn't 'push' them towards more sophisticated input.

Stribling and Thurstone (1993:30) argue that materials should promote cognitive academic skills (cf. 2.4.4) if pupils are expected to function in English, both academically and socially. This implies that the same materials can often not be used for pupils who use English as medium of instruction and pupils who study English as subject only. It is important in MOI schools that language is taught across the curriculum and that materials are designed to present vocabulary and structures necessary for other subjects. Stribling and Thurstone (1993:31-32) state:

.. while it (is) helpful for ESL students to know certain core-content items, it would be even more helpful for ESL students to learn the syntax and key terms for problem solving and critical thinking.

According to Krouse (1990:5-19), primary school pupils are particularly susceptible to sensory stimulants, such as materials they can see, hear, touch, smell, taste or feel. As these pupils are essentially egocentric and have a short attention span, materials should stimulate them, yet be uncomplicated. Curiosity and play are forceful allies in the ESL teacher's quest to involve the pupil, and Krouse (1990:7, 327-368) advocates a selection of mainly visual and auditory media in the Junior Primary Phase.

2.5.5 Syllabus implementation

The ESL teacher is the main agent in the successful implementation of the syllabus. Three levels of course design, namely macro (national/regional), meso (school) and micro (classroom) level are distinguished by Van der Walt (1986:47-57). On the macro level, the teacher receives a national/provincial syllabus, designed by the education department. The teacher has considerable freedom to interpret and apply the syllabus on meso (school) and micro (grade) levels. Teachers are supposed to possess the necessary skills to do so. Nelson (1983:21) reports that this is not always the case, and he suggests that preservice training should specifically address the skill of syllabus interpretation.

On the meso level, the syllabus has to be interpreted to fit the particular circumstances of a school. Rural and urban conditions may differ and, therefore, certain differences in interpretation may occur. Exposure to English may differ from area to area, and the teachers of a school may need to take compensatory measures if the pupils are exposed to English mainly in the classroom (Van der Walt, 1990:196).

On the micro level, the teacher plans and executes a course for a particular year group. This also involves the teacher in decisions regarding content selection and methodology for particular groups. He has to keep the interests, ability, experience and context of pupils in mind when selecting content or teaching-learning activities.

Tedick and Swales (1993:306) maintain that an overemphasis on the selection of the 'best' methodology for ESL has had a paralysing effect on education. Teaching and learning should be seen as an integrated, generative process in which the learner has a major role to play if proficiency levels are to improve. They state:

It is appropriate to talk about methods, but we argue that this discussion must always occur within a

framework of a critical examination of the theory underlying the approach, with attention to the social context in which and content for which the approach might be successful.

The selection of a singular 'best' method leads to the exclusion of other appropriate methods, or an eclectic approach.

Teachers must be adequately informed of, prepared for and supported in the process of syllabus implementation. Education has become pupil-centred (Van der Walt, 1990:192-193), and its focus has also shifted from preparing pupils for a society in need of manufacturers or producers, to a society that needs people who can access and apply information. Language skills lie at the heart of the demands on modern education, and the ability to access the information pool is needed to empower pupils (Clark, 1994:6-7).

2.6 CONCLUSION

It is clear that learning a second language is a complex process. It is neither possible to write the final word on language acquisition, nor to present a cohesive model that satisfies all variables in the language acquisition process. The various theories of L2 acquisition indicate that some behaviourist principles (like the emphasis of structural patterns) are not without merit. Some aspects of ESL, such as formulaic expressions, can be overtly learnt. Innatist theorists have contributed to an understanding of SLA through their emphasis of the learner's internal mechanisms which requires exposure to the target language in order for the principles of Universal Grammar to operate. Research findings, however, increasingly suggest that there is need for the formal teaching of grammar, especially as the ESL learner becomes older. Raising the learners' awareness of language structure seems to aid L2 acquisition. Interactionists propose purposeful communication and the negotiation of meaning between communicators (human or text). Implicit, explicit

and metacognitive knowledge of the L2 on which the learner can draw through cognitive processes also seem to contribute to SLA, but more research is needed to determine what cognitive processes are involved and how they operate. The importance of the affective filter and exposure to and comprehension of input is generally acknowledged.

The following conclusions can be made regarding the characteristics of the primary school pupil:

- the younger the ESL learner, the more egocentric his interests.
- older learners are increasingly interested in the establishment of interpersonal relationships, especially with peers.
- all learners will grow weary of learning if errors are treated as unnatural phenomena. Older learners are particularly sensitive about the treatment of their errors.
- young ESL learners benefit greatly from native models for the establishment of near-native pronunciation.
- all learning styles should be accommodated in a variety of tasks (Spolsky, 1989:104-108). Young learners seem to prefer hands-on learning strategies, whilst older primary school learners can employ interpersonal and metacognitive strategies.
- personality traits such as introversion or a reluctance to take risks, may be accommodated through group or pair activities that do not expose the child to possible ridicule.

The learning tasks with which the pupil is confronted are daunting. The phonological learning task may require deliberate intervention by the teacher. The semantic learning task is crucial to further learning and language development. The creation of concepts through the use of pictures, gestures, experiences or other concretised approaches may aid learning. In addition to this stimulation, the pupil has to be exposed to a rich and varied repertoire of meaning-focused activities, such as pairing, listing, mapping and the like. Pupils who attend

English MOI schools should be exposed to a structured programme that deliberately introduces and teaches concepts that they need in other subjects. The syntactic task of the primary school pupil is assisted by formal instruction. The development of a communicative system not only necessitates a sensitivity towards the culturally shaded function of language, but also exposure to a variety of purposes, registers, and audiences.

The definition of 'proficiency' depends largely on the perceived needs for the use of English that any group has. Clark's model of proficiency is the most cohesive description of the interrelated knowledge and skills necessary at any level. Outcomes for language learning should reflect the purposes, processes and products of learning. The language skills in the primary school classroom should be taught around purposeful communicative tasks. The pupil should be able to ~~do~~ things with the language he learns, i.e. he should feel that he can immediately use the acquired knowledge and skills to, e.g. listen to a news bulletin, ask the price of a toy, read instructions on a can of soup or write a note to a friend. At the same time, the pupil should master tasks that may not be of immediate use, but which are important stepping stones on the way to further learning. Examples of such skills include: to identify main points, convince interactants of a point of view, read for supporting ideas, or writing a report.

The quality and quantity of exposure to English outside the classroom influences acquisition. The socially disadvantaged learner needs compensatory measures like homework or reading to improve exposure to language. When pupils find themselves in a multilingualistic and multicultural society, every child brings a unique culturally determined schema into the classroom. The learning content presented in the classroom should, therefore, harmonise with the learner's existing knowledge.

A communicative classroom can be expected to aid SLA. It should present opportunities for the child to be involved in interaction

with teacher, peers, texts or other media, such as television.

The teacher manipulates, exploits, facilitates, directs, and channels all the variables that are involved in ESL. The ESL teacher should constantly improve and refine his own skills, such as his own proficiency, so that he can act confidently in the classroom. The teacher who is motivated and enthusiastic about ESL emanates a positive attitude that is likely to influence his pupils. The selection and development of resources and materials form an important part of the ESL teacher's planning. Primary school pupils learn well in response to sensory stimuli and the teacher should exploit this to create new concepts and expand existing concepts.

As the syllabus is at the heart of teaching activities, it is the single most important document the teacher uses. The teacher has to interpret and apply the syllabus within the policy framework, and his training should empower him to do so.

Chapter 3 explores approaches to syllabus design and the implications of these approaches for the ESL primary school syllabus.