

## CHAPTER 3

### APPROACHES TO SYLLABUS DESIGN

*...the syllabus is simply a framework within which activities can be carried out: a teaching device to facilitate learning.*

*Widdowson, 1984:26*

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

The syllabus is the primary document that guides and directs teaching. In this chapter the terms 'curriculum' and 'syllabus' are defined. An overview of ideological trends in curriculum design is given in order to provide a theoretical framework for a proposed syllabus. Various models for syllabus design and the process of syllabus design are discussed. Finally, syllabus renewal and constraints regarding syllabus design are discussed.

#### 3.2 THE TERMS 'CURRICULUM' AND 'SYLLABUS'

##### 3.2.1 Curriculum

Kruger (1978:9-17) describes 'curriculum' as the content of all subjects that learners follow during a particular course. Warwick (1976:8-9) says:

Curriculum consists in the planned structuring of the educational ideals of a school in accordance with the psychological needs of the pupils, the facilities that are available, and the cultural requirements of the time.

Klein (1990:46) defines curriculum as a public, political statement of the vision and intentions of teaching. Stern

(1993:19-21) points out that 'curriculum' is used to indicate either a programme of studies of an institution, or to indicate the substance of what is taught in a given subject. For the latter the defining of objectives, determining of content and some indication of progress are included. Stern (1993:21) indicates that the term 'syllabus' is used in Britain to indicate 'curriculum' in the more restricted sense. This is also the case in South Africa (cf. 3.2.2).

White (1988:4) says that if a curriculum is 'future directed towards an objective yet to be realized', it is synonymous with syllabus.

Du Plessis (1993:53-56) says that a curriculum is understood to mean one of the following:

- units of knowledge that have to be mastered before a qualification can be achieved;
- what has to be taught;
- a selection of content in order to reach certain objectives;
- intended learning outcomes;
- planned learning experiences;
- all learning experiences (including the hidden curriculum of unplanned learning experiences) and
- an encompassing description of the officially organised and prescribed career of the learner, which includes content; methods; techniques; materials and activities.

In the light of the preceding definitions and statements, the curriculum is viewed in this study as the total proposal of what learners should learn during their school career. A curriculum statement leads to the delineation of certain areas of experience (or curriculum areas, e.g. language and literacy) which in turn may lead to subjects. This is done to maintain the integrative nature of what is done, and it may provide guidance as to the kind of English that is appropriate to relate English to the rest of the curriculum and prepare for later English MOI.

### 3.2.2 Syllabus

Steyn (1984:21; 1985:9; 1988:7) and Calitz (1982:2-3) see 'subject curriculum' as synonymous with 'syllabus'.

Warwick (1976:22) regards the syllabus as the academic content in a subject. Nunan (1988:10) defines 'syllabus' as the specification of what is to be taught in a language programme and the order in which it is taught. Steyn, Badenhorst and Yule (1987:65) describe the syllabus as the structuring of content for a specific subject that is organised in subsections, providing an idea of the work that should be done during the course of a year. Van der Walt and Combrink (1988:34) describe 'syllabus' as a statement of what has to be learnt during a particular period. Herbst (1988:18) sees the syllabus as a description of the following; the policy of ESL teaching, the aims, the objectives and content. White (1988:3-4) summarises the consensus of the commonalities that occur in the definitions of 'syllabus' as follows:

- it specifies the work of a department and the subsections of work done by specific groups;
- the sequencing of content is either intrinsic to the theory of language learning or the structure of specified material that is relatable to language acquisition, but restraints may also influence sequencing;
- it is linked to time;
- it is a document that directs administration;
- it is negotiable, because it is only partly justified on theoretical grounds;
- it is a public document that expresses accountability, and
- it can only state what is taught, but cannot organise what is learnt.

White (1988:3-5) says, however, that theoretical bases for and approaches to syllabus design differ. Not all syllabus designers, for example, describe only what is taught; many current syllab-

buses also describe what the intended learning outcomes should be (cf. 2.3.3.2). Some syllabus models emphasise objectives and content; some add methods to the model and some add assessment.

White (1988:109) states that policy, rather than principle, determines the definition of what a syllabus is, and he says that the successful introduction of a new syllabus depends on the compatibility of the syllabus with current practices. The implications are that policy and current practices determine the definition of 'syllabus'.

In the light of the above statements, the syllabus is defined in this study in the following way:

- it is a document that briefly states the theoretical basis and the approach that form the framework for the organisation of the subject-based work to be done;
- it guides and directs teaching as an accountable act for a particular context or situation;
- it is negotiable and adjustable;
- it specifies aims and objectives;
- it suggests content;
- it provides for the grading of content;
- it indicates teaching-learning opportunities, and
- it states implications for assessment.

Models for syllabus design are discussed next.

### 3.3 MODELS FOR SYLLABUS DESIGN

The syllabus is an integral part of the curriculum process and is invariably influenced by developments in curriculum design. White (1988:27) says that the traditional curriculum model is designed on macro level by a few policy makers and presented to teachers and learners. The model is based on the means-ends or objectives model associated with Tyler (1949) as well as Taba's refinement (1962) of Tyler's model. A flow chart of the Taba-

Tyler model as presented by White (1988:26) is given in Figure 1.

Johnson (1967:132) proposes a model for syllabus design that takes into account the source of the syllabus, the selection of syllabus items, instruction, and syllabus evaluation. He sees the source of the syllabus as the total available culture that determines the intended learning outcomes projected by designers. Pope (1985:21) presents a model that involves the aims of education and subject matter, objectives and outcomes, teaching and learning methods and assessment that are subservient to the aims.

Steyn (1981:4), Calitz (1982:5) and Du Plessis (1993:57) are among the authors who propose a cyclic syllabus design model involving the following steps:

- a situation analysis;
- aims and objectives formulation;
- the choice and structuring of learning content;
- presenting learning experiences and opportunities;
- assessment, and
- syllabus evaluation.

Kruger (1978:11) prefers a spiral syllabus that not only uses the circular design, but also indicates the progression of the learning act. Malan and du Toit (1991:7) combine the cyclic and spiral design on macro-, meso- and micro level. Learning content is recycled continuously on a more sophisticated level.

The Australian Language Level Project (cf. 5.6) is based on Clark's work in Lothian, Scotland (1987) and adopts a cyclic model that includes planning on macro level (theory and syllabus planning), meso level (programme planning) and micro level (classroom practice). This model (represented in Figure 2), offers a comprehensive exposition of its theoretical viewpoint on language and language learning, the learners for whom the syllabus is intended, the aims that are pursued in the language

programme, the objectives, activities (or tasks), assessment and programme evaluation.

Syllabus design is also influenced by certain ideological paradigms.

### **3.4 IDEOLOGICAL APPROACHES TO SYLLABUS DESIGN**

According to Skilbeck (1982:7-18), three ideological approaches influence education, namely:

- the classical humanist,
- the reconstructionist, and
- the progressivist approaches.

The influence of these ideologies on language syllabus design is applied and summarised by Clark (1987:93-99) and White (1988:24-26), and is discussed in the next section.

#### **3.4.1 The classical humanist approach**

The classical humanist approach is characterised by the promotion of generalisable intellectual knowledge that is transmitted from one generation to the next. An elitist group guards the culture, knowledge and standards. Syllabuses are subject-centered and content is central to the syllabus. The content is selected from an analysis of the subject matter into its constituent elements of knowledge. What is regarded as simple subject matter is graded prior to what is regarded as complex.

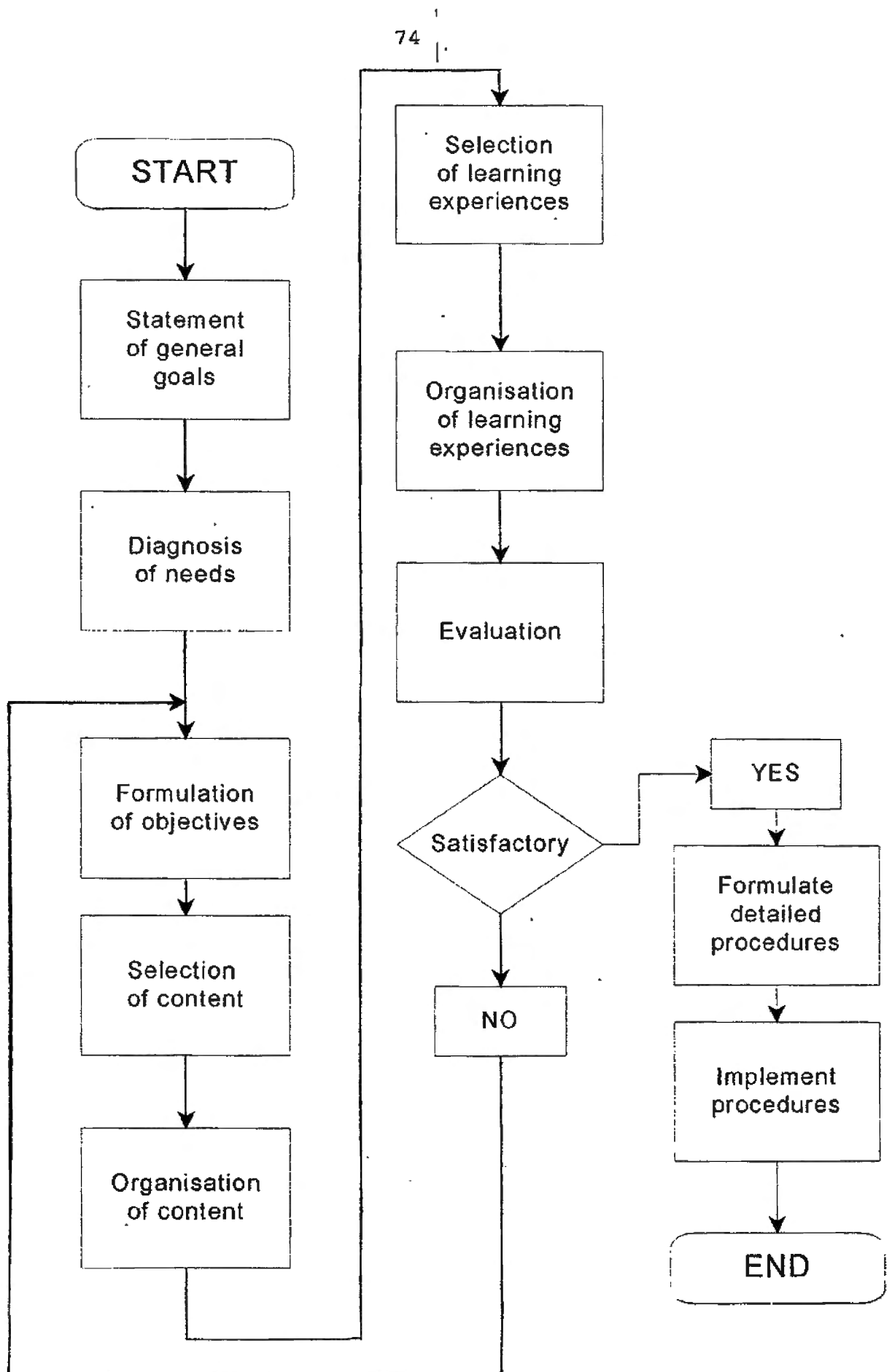


FIGURE 1: White's representation of the Taba-Tyler curriculum development model

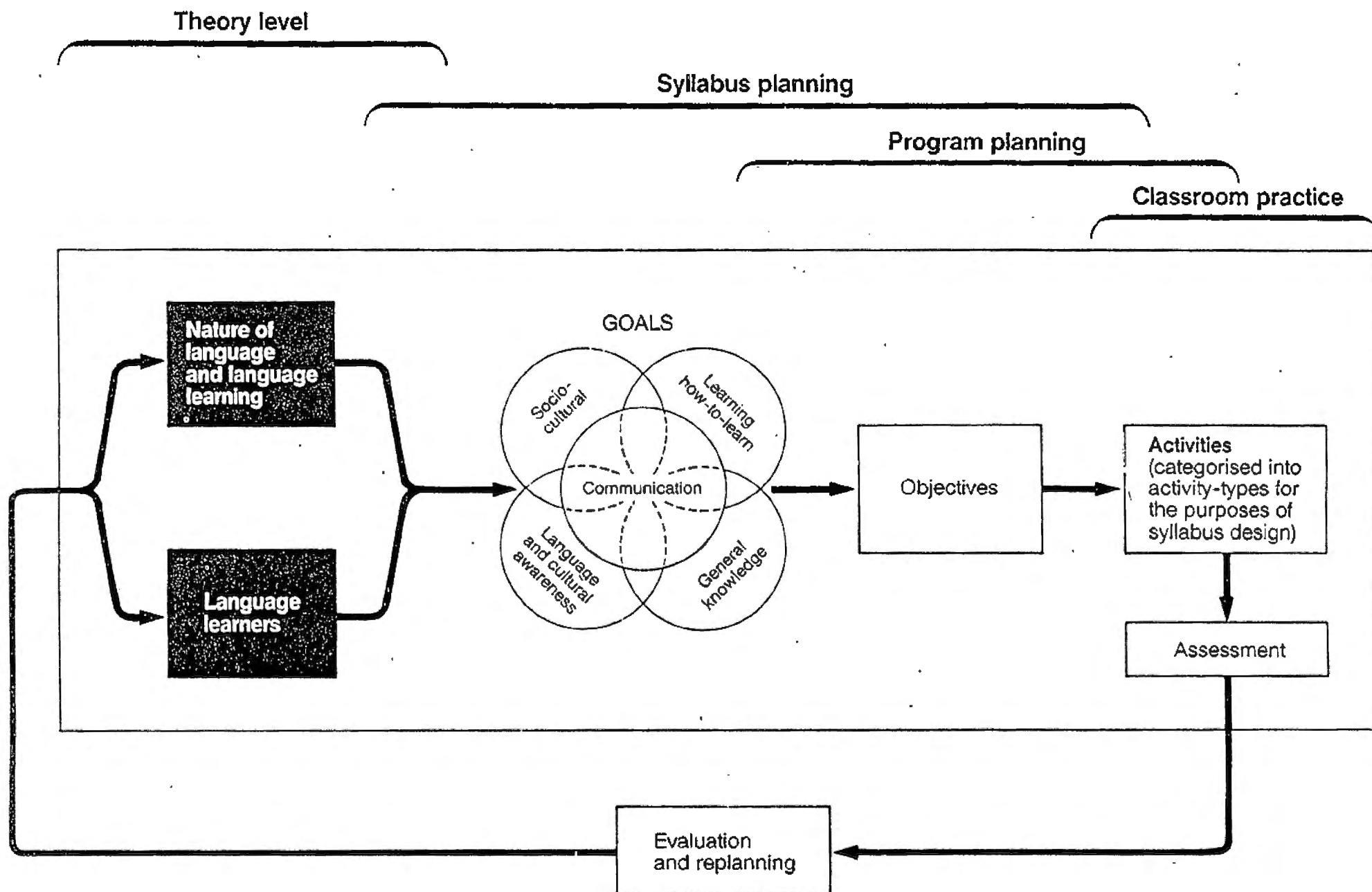


FIGURE 2: The Australian Language Levels - a model for syllabus design

The methodology is transmissive and the teacher is the central disseminator of knowledge and corrector of errors. Rules underlying the knowledge have to be understood and reapplied to new contexts. Individual differences are dealt with by streaming pupils into roughly tuned homogeneous groups (based on ability and achievement) that are taught in units. Assessment is norm-referenced and universities and inspectorates direct research and conduct the evaluation of the worth of the curriculum (Skilbeck, 1982:7-18; Clark, 1987:93-99; White, 1988:24).

The grammar-translation syllabus is an example of the classical humanist-dominated syllabus that characterised second language teaching until 1940 (Richards & Rodgers, 1986:4). The grammar-translation syllabus describes the broad aims of school language learning as the development of general intellectual capacities such as analysis, judgement and memorisation. Languages with cultural prestige are taught. Syllabus content selection is done by means of a structural analysis of the languages. Semantic, phonological, lexical and grammatical elements are determined prior to course presentation. Linear advancement from predetermined simple to complex forms indicate grading procedures.

Consciously understanding the rules governing the various language systems, applying those rules to new language and practice and control of those rules are emphasised in language methodology (Clark, 1987:93-99). Classroom activities are characterised by practice, translation exercises and the study and evaluation of mostly classical literary texts. Students are expected to cumulatively master grammatical structures and vocabulary, which they should apply accurately to new contexts. Some knowledge of literary texts has to be displayed.

Assessment is done in order to rank learners according to achievement, identify the elite group for the next stage of education and stream the learners into homogeneous groups. Summative or end-of-year tests and examinations are mostly made

up of grammatical problems and translations, representing general intellectual capacities. The assessment report constitutes a total aggregate mark for each pupil on the basis of the normal distribution curve, ranking learners according to merit (Richards & Rodgers, 1986:3-5; Clark, 1987:95-99).

The grammar-translation syllabus is meritorious in that it involves the learner in the application of cognitive knowledge and accuracy skills. Texts that are selected for translation purposes need to be intrinsically interesting, and few demands are made on the teacher (Richards & Rodgers, 1986:4). In a world that demands effective communication, however, the grammar-translation syllabus has become outdated (Widdowson, 1984:83, 86).

#### **3.4.2 The reconstructionist approach**

Change in curriculum development is brought about by social reform. Reconstructionists agree upon certain goals that satisfy social needs prior to the design of the language curriculum. Elitist groups are regarded with suspicion and egalitarian values permeate educational goals. The practical and social goals of society are emphasised. Goals and ends-means approaches are visible in syllabuses based on objectives that are derived from an analysis of the behavioural needs of learners. Part-skills may be graded for mastery before global activities.

Mastery comes about through correct habit-forming practices of part-skills, after which rehearsal of the behavioural skills occur. Mastery learning programmes are examples of a reconstructionist approach and predetermined streaming of pupils used to cope with individual learner differences. Predetermined criteria that could occur in graded stages form the basis of criterion-referenced assessment (Skilbeck, 1982:7-18; Clark, 1987:93-99).

\* The structural syllabus is an example of a reconstructionist

syllabus. It is classified by Nunan (1988:3-9, 27) as a synthetic syllabus, i.e. the learner masters separate parts in a step-by-step fashion and integrates or synthesises the parts into a meaningful and usable whole. Behaviourist learning theory (cf. 2.2.1) dominates the structural syllabus, and the approach to syllabus design is linguistically structured. Key items of phonology, morphology and syntax are arranged in order of presentation. Breen (1987:85-86) points out that the grammatical syllabus has a proven record of at least some success. It presents learners with subject-matter which is systematic and rule-governed. In mastering one rule, the learner can see the rule operating in other instances and can get access to a great deal by knowing a relatively limited amount. A further assumption to justify the use of a grammatically structured syllabus is that the linguistic system is analysable in certain ways, and the analytical categories can be incorporated relatively easily into a teaching system. The system may in turn assist the learner to discover how the new language works, and it is assumed that learners behave in metalinguistic ways to think about languages and how they are learnt and used (Breen, 1987:87; Nunan, 1988:29).

Dialogues and drill form the basis of classroom practice. Drill is typically controlled through a dialogue that contains the desired language structures, cultural aspects of the target language and a given context. Pattern practice is based on the selected language structures that occur in the model dialogue. As the avoidance of errors is paramount in the audiolingual classroom, neither the learners nor the teacher is encouraged to move outside the prescribed parameters, because errors may occur. Interaction between teacher and learner is encouraged as long as it is controlled, dominated and directed by the teacher who presents the model that has to be imitated correctly. Immediate and accurate speech is demanded and the 'mim-mem' (mimicry/memorisation) model is applied at every opportunity (Titone, 1968:98-99, 109; Rivers, 1983:3-4; Richards & Rodgers, 1986:44-63).

Critics of the structural syllabus point out that the type of interaction in the classroom is contrived and forced, and only a narrow scope of language is dealt with. Effective drill of grammatical forms needs careful planning and innovative execution to sustain interest. Long and Crookes (1993:15) say that the unit of analysis employed in the structural syllabus, namely 'full native-like target language structure', is inadequate, as L2 learners have repeatedly been found to display developmental stages that they pass through, irrespective of teaching.

The methodology employed for a structural syllabus often leads to a loss of interest by the learners due to the repetitive nature of the learning task. For the primary school learner in particular, affective experiences with ESL may be influenced by classes that are experienced as boring. Another factor that may influence attitudes is the insistence on accuracy at a time when the spontaneity of the younger learner should be exploited. Young learners may feel inhibited by the regulated drilling, and while learners remember the memorised material for a while, they are often unable to use the same chunks of language in similar situations (Krashen, 1982:129-131; Lightbown, 1985:177; Lightbown & Spada, 1993:111-117).

Long and Crookes (1993:13) say that the structural syllabus is still the one that is most widely used in ESL classrooms.

The functional-notional syllabus is another example of a syllabus influenced by reconstructionist principles (White, 1988:25). Breen (1987:81-92) and Nunan (1988:10-26) see the functional-notional syllabus as a product-oriented syllabus, concerned with propositional plans of language of what is to be achieved through teaching and learning language as formal statements. It is also a synthetic syllabus (Long & Crookes, 1993:11).

The functional-notional syllabus lists the functions and notions (concepts) that learners are to learn. The most common functions of language are developed in a cyclic fashion to refined or more

particular functions. The language learner gradually refines the available repertoire of language functions available to him by returning to these previously acquired functions, but by moving to a more sophisticated level. The syllabus is based on the current and future language needs of learners. Authentic language use is modelled more closely than in the case of the structural syllabus (Van Ek, 1972:5-9; Hymes, 1987:1-48; Richards & Rodgers, 1986:64-86; Clark, 1987:95; Long & Crookes, 1993:16).

It is assumed that the language learner will behave in a meta-communicative fashion and will perceive, ponder and develop categories of language use. Good habits are formed through practice and rehearsal in role-play (Breen, 1987:85). Deliberate practice of chunks of language that are deemed useful, as well as the rehearsal of target activities through role-play, take place in the classroom (Clark, 1987:95).

Tests and examinations contain predetermined criteria or a scale of grade-related criteria, reflecting the goals and objectives of the course. A hybrid mixture of structures, functions, vocabulary and situational activities are usually tested through the language skills.

Although the functional-notional syllabus has done much to harmonise the needs of the learners and other stakeholders like the community and educationalists, it has not been without critics. The syllabus is still sometimes characterised by structural grading, as functions and notions are difficult to grade. It is also difficult to integrate form and function in a syllabus, and to determine the level of sophistication in language use required. Brindley (1985:87-136) criticises the model for failing to accommodate individual learner differences adequately, and of being devoid of a clear link between methodology and syllabus. Stratton (1977:135-137) argues that the syllabus demands too much from the learner, while the notion of communicative competence is often ill-defined and, therefore, difficult to plan for. The contextualisation of speech acts (such

as 'warning') and the inherent cultural clashes born from the culture-specific nature of communicative functions, are also seen as problematic. Long and Crookes (1993:15-24) point out that the selection of notions (a concept that is ill-defined) and functions is done intuitively. The assumption that notions or functions are acquired singularly and are later synthesised, is criticised, because functions co-occur in discourse. Later syllabuses show a hybrid of functions, notions, situations, topics, etc., but Long and Crookes (1993:18-24) argue that these units of analysis remain stilted and unnatural. The overriding difficulties in the design of such syllabuses include the use of sub-situations (such as the number of interlocutors that are involved and the stages when they are involved), the delineation of situations and topics so that they don't overlap, and the assessment of progress. The use of language in a situation is largely unpredictable, unless the situation is very tightly controlled and specified - an exercise that is counter-productive for emulating natural communication. Widdowson (1984:216) states that, unless the functions and notions are used for communicative purposes in class, they remain sentence patterns.

Although the aims of the functional-notional syllabus are laudable, its implementation doesn't seem to improve learner proficiency as much as its proponents claim. Ten years after its implementation in South African schools, the results of ESL at primary school level still seem discouraging (cf. Chapter 6).

### 3.4.3 The progressivist approach

An increased awareness of individual needs and the development of individual learners characterise progressivist value systems. Learner responsibility is increasingly stressed and the ability to learn is emphasised.

Progressivist syllabus designers favour a process rather than a product approach and, therefore, the emphasis is on methodology and principles of procedure. A study of the learning process

provides the principles of procedure. Broad goals are sequenced in the form of tasks.

In this approach, methodology is learner-centred, and experiential learning is favoured above practice or memorisation. Learners are assisted in developing learning-how-to-learn strategies to develop the life-long learner. Individual differences are dealt with by allowing each learner to develop at his own pace and at his own level, while assignments are negotiated.

The process-oriented syllabuses (subdivided into process, procedural and task-based syllabuses) (cf. 4.4.1) are examples of the progressionist emphasis on the development of the learner as a whole person. In these syllabuses, intellectual, emotional, social and physical skills are promoted consciously.

Breen (1987:157-174) points out that the syllabus is not so much learner-centred as learning centred. Clark (1987:95-99) sees the broad aims of the process language syllabus as follows: to develop individual learners, to encourage learning-how-to-learn strategies (including how to learn languages), and to promote the creation of a wider range of personal relationships for the learner. Language that reflects the learners' interests and aspirations is presented. Tasks and activities of a real communicative nature are often selected in consultation with the learners; these may be stored in a bank. As the language programme progresses the needs are reassessed and the tasks may be adapted accordingly. Grading, based on learners' experience and knowledge, may occur prior to task presentation. The learners are in control, however, of the sequence of task completion and every learner is allowed to select the tasks he wants to complete. There is a cyclical progression, providing previously introduced material in new contexts that lead to a gradual accumulation of knowledge.

The methodological emphasis has moved from learning content to the creation of conditions that activate spontaneous learning by

stimulating the appropriate mental processes, i.e. content and methodology merge and are conceptualised at one and the same time. Errors are accepted as developmental indicators and evidence of the existence of interlanguage. The learners are involved in problem-solving activities that require the negotiation and creation of meaning in various situations. Mediation for the extraction of meaning is evident and as the learners grow in confidence and experience, they become gradually more fluent, more capable and more likely to engage in new communicative situations. Awareness of languages, language learning and errors is part of the development of the learners who progress through interlanguage to increasingly eliminate errors.

Assessment serves as an opportunity for learners to reflect upon their own learning and to promote strategies for self-evaluation. In this approach, assessment is not characterised by form-driven items, but is negotiated in terms of process activities that have end products. These end-products are not prescribed, however, but simply described in terms of individual development. Learners are expected to reflect upon these end-products, deliberating with the teacher on how they may be improved and they are asked to reflect upon and describe the learning process - often through journals. Each individual learner is then issued with an individual report of progress, describing process and product (Clark, 1987:95-99).

Currently, task-based syllabuses hold more promise for better SLA results than other models (Van der Walt, 1996:74-82). Representative models of this approach are discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

### **3.5 THE PROCESS OF SYLLABUS DESIGN**

The process of syllabus design is discussed next according to the generally accepted model for syllabus design which includes the following aspects:

- a situation analysis;
- aims and objectives formulation;
- the selection and structuring of learning content;
- presenting learning experiences and opportunities (methodology);
- assessment, and
- syllabus evaluation.

### 3.5.1 The situation analysis

The first stage in syllabus design is an analysis of all the variables that may influence it (Van der Walt, 1996:74). A situation analysis provides information on purposes, context, motivation, learner characteristics, etc. Yalden (1987:101) points out that current practices define target levels of communicative competence, based on analyses of the target situation. A survey of the situation is often used to determine what needs to be included in learning in order to reach the target situation. This may be done objectively or subjectively. Yalden (1987:103) says in this regard

(Potential communicative requirements) could include both classroom needs (classroom language) and those which may come in future vocational or recreational pursuits. The needs survey can also include the learner's own desires and wants, seen more subjectively in terms of self-expression and less in terms of purposeful or transactional communicative behavior.

Needs analysis is extensively used in the field of English for Specific Purposes, where it is relatively easy to determine learners' language needs. The ESL course in the primary school is of necessity a general one (cf. 3.7.1), and it is, therefore, difficult to identify learners' needs in great detail. At best, a common core of language needs can be identified.

A question which has to be considered in a survey of needs deals with the decision-making process involved.

### 3.5.1.1. Decision-making

Decision-making can be traditional, consultational or a combination of both.

Rodgers (1989:26-18) says that traditional syllabuses are characterised by formal and quantitative decisions made by administrators and policy-makers on behalf of the learner. Wilkinson (1971:73) suggests that planning for syllabuses should be approached from what the addressor has to say to the addressee and in what context, but Rodgers is of the opinion that contemporary analysts should be involved in informal and qualitative consultational decision-making processes - a view echoed by West (1994) and Berwick (1989:49). Corder (1977:13) also says that successful language teaching-learning is dependent upon the willing cooperation of the participants in the interaction and an agreement between them as to the aims of their interaction. Cooperation cannot be imposed and must be negotiated. According to West (1994:6), most contemporary analysts agree that a triangular process for decision-making, involving teachers, learners and communities is necessary.

Consultation of learners is a somewhat controversial issue. Berwick (1989:73) reports that many teachers feel that learners are not always capable of verbalising their language needs. Learners from certain social backgrounds may be ill-equipped to participate in decision-making, because rigidly defined roles of learner and teacher keep them from expressing their views. ESL respondents also have difficulty in communicating any language needs other than vague specifications of language skills ('I need speaking'), or commonly encountered situations ('I need English for going doctor'). Although several authors (e.g. Graves, 1991:2-3; West, 1994:6) recommend participation by learners, the learners in this study are regarded as too young (ranging from

6-13 years) to verbalise specific needs.

Clark (1995:3) says that all groups who contribute to the forging of a syllabus have their own perceptions, their own feelings and their own agendas for change, based on their own necessities or needs. He points out that what often prevails is the official government-sanctioned policy of what should be taught.

### **3.5.1.2 A typology of ESL needs**

Tarone and Yule (1989:21) describe the generalised character of needs analysis in language learning. Considerations of demography, socioeconomic factors, the educational history of institutions and individuals, the current educational structure and other relevant factors are taken into account. They propagate a narrowly focused investigation of needs that ESL teachers can conduct on micro-level in their classrooms, because the intuitive adaptations that many ESL teachers make to accommodate certain groups of learners are often more accurate than is recognised by experts.

According to Van der Walt (1988:8-9), three types of needs may be identified for ESL learning:

- short-term or instrumental needs e.g. ordering a meal in a restaurant;
- potential needs that include vocational, academic and social needs, and
- educational needs, especially for English MOI schools.

West (1994:1) maintains that the needs of the ESL learner were traditionally conceived to be centred around future occupations, but in recent years ESL learners have increasingly indicated the need to have access to language that will assist them in any learning activity. The current focus on needs has thus shifted to include general learning and to reflect an awareness of metacognitive skills. This increasing awareness of educational

needs has led to a holistic approach of teaching a language as part of the language arts (Clark, 1995b:3). West (1994:1) says that since the 1970's the emphasis has been on the analysis of the target situation, or the expected end result of teaching, i.e. learning outcomes. Van der Walt (1988:8) also describes needs analysis as a process of tailoring the course to what the learner needs to do at the end of the course with the knowledge that he has gained.

Curriculum renewal arises from various influences, like contextual, experiential, state-of-the-art progress elsewhere, ideology and the like, and Clark (1995:4) advocates 'bottom-up' teacher-based renewal within a broad system-based framework ('top-down').

West (1994:8) points out that the commonest point of departure in needs analysis is the requirements of the situation that the learner is prepared for. Tarone and Yule (1989:37) refer to this type of analysis as global analysis, i.e. 'What will the pupils need to use the language for?' Berwick (1989:49) classifies this type of needs analysis as a design based on an organised body of knowledge.

At certain exit points, pupils are expected to show certain capabilities as far as the four language skills are concerned. These capabilities need to be conveyed to syllabus or course designers, and questionnaires are often used to do this. Teaching-learning activities are developed to bring about these capabilities. Munby (1978:32-40) proposes an elaborate system, termed the communicative needs processor, to arrive at a profile of the communicative participant. The Munby model has, however, come under attack as it does not take methodology into consideration (West, 1994:11), and teachers and learners are not adequately represented (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987:1; Tarone & Yule, 1989:36; Strevens, 1980:27).

West (1994:9) points out that a deficiency of the target-

situation approach is that the information gathered doesn't reflect the needs of the learner first-hand. A further problem is that school ESL syllabuses are general core syllabuses that prepare the learner for potential situations that are not clearly identified. The outcomes need to be of a general kind, yet specific enough to facilitate focused teaching and learning.

West (1994:4) points out that subjective needs are what the learners feel they want, whilst this may be in conflict with necessities as perceived by teachers (objective needs). Brindley (1989:64) argues that subjective needs are so individual and unforeseeable that they are almost indefinable. He says that an objective needs analysis (as described by people other than the learners) is the only way to start a process of needs analysis. Objective needs analysis focuses on factual information about learners. Both Brindley (1989:64) and West (1994:4-8) point out that an objective needs analysis presupposes that frequent analyses are done during the instruction process to monitor changing personal and language needs.

This thesis employs an objective needs survey to determine how the present syllabus is implemented in some South African primary schools. The survey concentrates on the themes and topics (from which vocabulary, language forms and communicative functions are derived) and the methodology used in classrooms. Pupils can be observed directly and conclusions can be reached about their participation and enjoyment in the classroom.

### **3.6 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

#### **3.6.1 Aims**

Van der Walt and Combrink (1988:46-54) say that aims refer to the 'philosophically expressed long-term' aims that describe the end-product of the course. They distinguish between ultimate and general aims, from which objectives are derived. The ultimate aims indicate the long-term learning outcomes to be reached after

following a course. Clark (1996:256) sets out an integrative target system made up of curriculum-as-a-whole learning targets, curriculum area targets, subject-as-a-whole targets and dimension (within subjects) targets. All of these are holistic expressions of what learners are to learn to do during the course of a learning programme. They represent longer-term aspirations or aims (cf. 2.3.3.2).

Aims are described in terms of 'dimension targets' in the proposed syllabus (cf. Chapter 8).

### 3.6.2 Objectives

Kaufman and English (1979:213) say that many objectives for language learning are vaguely formulated and in the form of non-measurable statements like: 'Develop each child according to his/her own capacity'. The only clear deduction to be made from such formulations is that behaviour is to be changed.

Most writers agree that 'objectives' refer to the final and detailed descriptors of desired behaviour at the end of an instructional cycle, i.e. short-term expectations. An important prerequisite is that objectives should be measurable (Gagné & Briggs, 1974:36; Posner & Rudnitsky, 1978:148-162; Berwick, 1989:51).

Van der Walt and Combrink (1988:48-49) point out that a distinction should be made between behavioural and behaviourist objectives. The former refers to desired language behaviour and does not imply subscription to Behaviourist learning theory. The latter implies subscription to Behaviourist learning theory.

In spite of criticism regarding the atomising of behavioural objectives (Atkin, 1968:28), they are currently widely used in syllabuses to describe desired language behaviour. Bachman (1989:248) says a rigid view of language teaching that focuses only on preset objectives may lead to the neglect or ignorance

of unanticipated outcomes.

According to Gagné and Briggs (1974:49-51) and Posner and Rudnitsky (1978:53-77), categories of objectives should contain descriptions in terms of the following:

- intellectual skills (learning how to do);
- cognitive strategies (the capabilities that govern the individual's learning and remembering);
- verbal information (information stored in the memory, such as the names of people or the gist of a paragraph);
- motor skills (such as writing), and
- attitudes (the individual's feelings towards a learning task stored in the affective domain).

Objectives are defined as short-term statements of expected behaviour or learning outcomes. These learning outcomes should reflect measurable outcomes in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes at different stages of the learning process. Johnson (1989:3) emphasises that outcomes should describe **what** learners should do and **how** they should master the process, as these are inextricably interwoven.

Describing outcomes to reflect what pupils should master in terms of knowledge and desired performance has led to a current preference of criterion-referencing rather than norm-referencing. Bachman (1989:243) points out that norm-referencing has proved to be inadequate in evaluating language programme success due to an inadequate definition of what language proficiency is, and the unsatisfactory nature of norm-referencing that reflects the position or rank of the individual as assessed against the group. Norm-referencing reflects how well an individual fares compared to the rest of a group. What the teacher still does not know accurately, is to what extent the individual can or cannot master the given objective.

Target-oriented teaching and learning approaches favour the

description of outcomes in terms of the targets that learners are expected to reach. Bachman (1989:254), however, points out that some aspects of language teaching are not an exact science and thus, there is no 'zero' or 'perfect' point score for communicative competence. This may explain the tendency of language teachers to favour linguistic outcomes, as these can reflect 'zero' or 'perfect' scores. When communicative competence is the target, language users never know nothing or everything - thus the described outcome will not reflect a 'zero' or 'perfect' performance. Bachman (1989:246) reaches the conclusion that criterion-referencing can only be done in abstract terms. He postulates:

...it is virtually impossible to define criterion levels of language proficiency in terms of actual individuals or actual performance. Rather, such levels must be defined abstractly, in terms of the relative presence or absence of the abilities that constitute the domain.

Posner and Rudnitsky (1978:62-65) emphasise the need to use verbs that reflect measurable and attainable behaviour and describe conditions under which outcomes should be reached. An outcome such as 'pupils should know the difference in the homophones there/their' would, therefore, be judged as a bad example of a criterion-referenced outcome. The verb 'know' is inappropriate; they can only demonstrate knowing by applying the homophones correctly in sentences. The outcome should, therefore, be described in those terms.

The term 'skill outcomes' is used for the proposed syllabus in this thesis (cf. Chapter 8). Outcomes are described in terms of criterion-referenced statements, i.e. verbs that are measurable (e.g. analyse, compare, memorise, list) and that describe the knowledge, skills and attitudes that a pupil has to demonstrate at different stages of the learning process.

The next step in syllabus design is the selection and grading of content.

### 3.7 SELECTION AND GRADING OF CONTENT

#### 3.7.1 Selecting content for ESL

The term 'content' is often used ambiguously in references to language syllabuses. For some it means the language items that are included in the syllabus, and for others it means the subject matter of linguistic interaction or the topics that are included in the language skills. For some others, the learning process (cf. 3.4.3) is also part of content (Brumfit, 1984:88). Nunan (1988:85-95) and White (1988:46) point out that language syllabuses can be organised according to content, skill or method. White (1988:46) subdivides syllabuses in which content is used as units of analysis into one of the following: language form (structural focus); topic (informational focus); situation (contextual focus) and functional (notional/functional focus). Syllabuses that use language skills as organising units focus either on language (receptive and productive skills) or on learning (where the focus is on the acquisition of skills). Syllabuses that also take into consideration teaching-learning methodology are process syllabuses (cf.3.4.3).

Brumfit (1984:95) identifies two approaches to content specification: product analysis and process analysis. Product analysis includes the categories of formal analysis (linguistic issues), interactional analysis (situational/functional categories) and content/topic (socially/educationally or language directed) analysis. The analysis of process includes communicative abilities (discourse, writing), orientation (fluency and accuracy) and pedagogical (individual, small group or public group interaction) mode. The selection of content for a language syllabus is also increasingly recognised as culturally directive (Bassett, 1995:319). The cultural values and ideals of a community should also be reflected in learning content.

The general factors according to which learning content for language courses is selected are summarised by Steyn (1981:6-9) and Dippenaar (1993:29) as follows:

- the cultural values and entrance levels of pupils;
- the aims and objectives of the language course;
- the short- and long-term usefulness of the content to the pupil;
- the relevance, significance and appeal of the content and
- the compatibility of content to the teacher's approach and attitude.

Cunningsworth (1984:24) points to the importance of selecting ESL content that is meaningful to the learner, as the commitment, sense of ownership and enthusiasm generated by such content is invaluablely motivating. Cox (1994:30) warns against fossilisation in content selection and a nostalgic reliving of past eras in the prescription of content unrelated to the modern learner. Phillips and Shettlesworth (1987:105-115) suggest that content and subsequent classroom interaction and discourse do not bring about the target learning objectives. Widdowson (1990:138), on the other hand, points out that content (such as problem-solving) need not always aspire towards natural or 'authentic' communicative purposefulness, as pupils accept and learn through tasks that are educationally intent on teaching overt issues.

Johnstone (1993:137) proposes affective content for the young language learner that reflects the multilinguistic, multicultural and multidimensional reality of the young learner. The assumption is that attitudes are shaped primarily during the early years and the young child is, therefore, particularly suited for global education.

Dippenaar (1993:62,76) recommends a hybrid selection of content that satisfies specific outcomes implied in the target of communicative competence. Thus structures, topics, situations, skills, literature, vocabulary, functions, notions and tasks may

all form part of the teaching cycle, depending on what outcome the teacher wants to focus on in each period.

In this study, content is defined as subject matter which is expressed in terms of learning tasks, but which integrates learning products and learning processes.

Once a decision has been taken on what should be included in the syllabus, the next decision concerns the sequencing or ordering of selected items. This is known as grading.

### **3.7.2 The grading of content for ESL**

Bloom's taxonomy of cognitive skills may be used to grade content. Posner and Runitsky (1978:58) and Malan and du Toit (1991:37-42) state that learning content should be distributed across the various cognitive categories. Bloom's taxonomy categorises cognitive skills from a low to a high order: memorisation or recognition or recall, insight or comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation. Fowler (1992:17) adds the categories of problem-solving and problem-drafting as cognitive skills of the highest order. Examples of the types of teaching, assessment and questions that may be used within each category of cognitive thought are suggested by De Villiers (1993:21). These are provided in Table 1.

A spread of lower and higher order cognitive skills should be selected for the primary school child. This will prevent stagnation and boredom. If this is not done, vital skills for further learning may be neglected or under-utilised. The cognitive skills exercised should range from memorisation to analysis, synthesis and problem-solving.

TYPES OF TEACHING	TYPES OF COGNITIVE LEARNING	TEST TYPES	QUESTION TYPES
Experiential learning/role play/projects/ assignments/group techniques	PROBLEM-SOLVING	Case studies/practical work/role play	Find/recommend/solve/define/state/ascertain
	EVALUATION	Mini dissertation/assignment	Confirm/evaluate/compare/critisise/defend (a qualitative pronouncement)
Group techniques/projects/essays/reports	SYNTHESIS	Essay/assignment	Plan/design/organise/interpret/generalise/summarise/write précis
Practical demonstrations/case studies/ assignments/reports/role play/case studies	ANALYSIS	Paragraph/essay/practical work	Discuss/differentiate/identify
	APPLICATION	Paragraph/practical work/demonstration/role play/simulation	Distinguish/explain/practise/use/apply/find/state/demonstrate
Question-answer	INSIGHT	Paragraph/short test items	Why/how/calculate/compare
Lecture	MEMORISE/RECALL/RECOGNISE	Short items	Who/what/when/where/name/list/recognise

**TABLE 1: A schematic representation of cognitive levels, teaching methods, assessment and questions**

White (1988:47-59) summarises the criteria for selecting and grading content that focuses on structures, topics and functions

of language. These are:

STRUCTURES	TOPICS	FUNCTIONS
frequency	interest and	need: immediate and
coverage	affectivity	long-term
availability	need	utility
simplicity/	pedagogic merit	coverage/
complexity	relevance	generalisability
learnability/	depth of treatment	interest
teachability	practicability	complexity of form
combinability	utility	
contrast		
productiveness/		
generalisability		
natural order of		
acquisition		

Malan and du Toit (1991:41-42) grade affective levels from the lowest order to the highest. The lowest level is reception and indicates the learner's willingness to receive new information. The next level is response. It indicates an active decision by the learner to react intellectually, affectively or actively to input. The third level is valuation, during which the learner awards a degree of importance to the learning content - he exercises certain priorities and accepts responsibility for his learning. The penultimate level is organisation - the learner sorts out discrepancies and irregularities in order to create an internal value system. The final level in the affective domain is characterisation - the learner is characterised by a stable and predictable behavioural pattern; he has control over his actions and acts responsibly.

The criteria for deciding whether one item is more difficult than another, are elusive if hierarchical taxonomies are not used. Although there are guidelines for the grading of cognitive and attitudinal levels of development, grading language items is not easy. Grading is usually described as passing from the known to

the unknown in easy stages. In practical terms, structural grading means that high frequency words will be taught before low frequency ones. In grammatical terms the tenses presumed to be easy (e.g. the continuous forms) will be taught prior to the perfect forms, and a simple statement like 'I am tired' will be taught before the conditionals. Situationalised grading can be achieved by selecting situations deemed to occur frequently (like greeting someone) before less frequent ones (like discussing preferences). However, there are many variations in situationalised grading (Richards, 1985:70; Nunan, 1988:89-95; Alexander, 1990:44-47).

Stern (1983:483) comments on attempts to grade content for ESL learners. He points out that linguistic grading was done in terms of frequency, range, availability, coverage and learnability of items, but he says that the grading of content is not adequately guided by theoretical criteria. He proposes that the following factors be taken into account when grading:

- content criteria (linguistic, cultural and communicative criteria);
- what is known about language learning as developmental process (issues like: 'Is language learnt in chunks or in linear step-by-step mastery?');
- a definition of mastery levels (what is defined as 'proficiency' or 'competence');
- an ordered arrangement justified by principles derived from the subject matter, learning objectives, language learning and learners (language courses that are structured in a planned and scientifically sound manner), and
- an empirical testing of grading according to these categories and modifications as a result of empirical testing.

Dippenaar (1993:31-36) suggests that grading depends more on the learner than the content, but the principles of continuity, sequence and integration of content should be kept in mind. The suggested spiral design of a syllabus (cf. 3.3) is an example of

content that emerges again, but is presented on a higher niveau, as the learner indicates a readiness for more sophisticated content.

Once the learning content has been selected and graded, the creation of teaching/learning opportunities or methodology can be considered.

### 3.8 TEACHING-LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

The word 'methodology' is traditionally used to refer to the teaching-learning opportunities created in the classroom. Brumfit (1984:22) sees 'methodology' as the process of adapting teaching and learning opportunities in relation to the educational objectives; 'methodology' in broad terms can be interpreted to include the language approach and the various factors influencing a learner group, whereas a 'method' indicates a more rigid reference to the planned presentation of learning content. Brumfit (1984:19) points out that the complex interactions of the teaching-learning situation defy generalisations about methods. One method cannot hope to intercept all the variables involved in language learning, and a search for the 'best' method may lead to a paralysing focus on one aspect of teaching and learning (Nunan, 1991:3; Tedick & Walker, 1994:306).

Methodology influences learning in that it determines to what extent the pupil becomes involved in the learning task in the classroom (White, 1988:110). It is currently widely accepted that language learning is an active process. The more involved a learner is, the greater the chances that his capabilities will improve (Rivers, 1983:134) (cf. 2.2.6).

Marton (1988:44) identifies two important functions of language teaching within the framework of the communicative classroom, and shows how these functions can be realised through methodology. The functions of language teaching are:

- organising interactional activities and providing meaningful input, and
- providing feedback related to learners' responses in the L2.

He proposes that the first function be realised through games and recreation activities (centring around enjoyment), content activities (functionally communicative and inherently interesting), humanistic-affective activities (development of interpersonal skills and social interaction), and information and problem-solving activities. The second function can be realised through positive feedback when the message is comprehensible, negative feedback when there is a block in communication, and expansions of comprehensible but formally incorrect utterances. Marton's proposals preserve the balance between fluency and accuracy, while focusing primarily on meaning - thus optimising the involvement of learners.

Weaver (1990:22-27) suggests that primary school pupils learn best if they actively pursue their own learning by engaging in the learning process, taking risks and making decisions in consultation with peers, and through social engagement. Legutke and Thomas (1991:229) emphasise the importance of negotiation with peers in meaningful and interesting activities that are self-directed. They rate problem-solving and experimentation tasks highly as educational and exciting tasks. Tarone and Yule (1989:123) propose that information-gap activities be structured so as to limit the discourse, yet be interesting enough to stimulate participation. Krouse (1990:7) emphasises the role of imagination, play-acting, games and enjoyable activities in the early learning Phases.

The emphasis on one 'method' is declining and language practitioners increasingly suggest an 'approach' to language teaching that employs relevant and applicable aspects from different methods; hence the reference to 'teaching-learning opportunities' rather than 'methodology' or 'method'. Teaching-learning opportunities have to be structured around the learning

targets, the outcomes, and the tasks that are selected. These opportunities have to be presented in an integrated manner according to some structured plan (White, 1988:78; Skehan, 1996:51).

Melrose (1991:167) warns that an outcomes-based syllabus shouldn't be interpreted to mean that discrete outcomes should be taught in a linear fashion, but that teaching-learning opportunities should be approached in a holistic fashion. Savignon (1983:72) calls this 'not how to do (a language), but how to do things *in* (a language)'.

The development of resource materials is also part of the teaching-learning cycle. Combrink's (1994:213) suggestions can be mentioned. Materials should be:

- accessible to learners;
- interesting;
- representative of different registers;
- representative of authentic language use;
- rich and varied, and
- presented at a fairly brisk pace.

Cunningsworth (1984:5-6) mentions that the teaching materials should:

- relate to the aims and objectives;
- assist pupils in learning the language for their purposes;
- be structured with learning needs (especially MOI schools) in mind, and
- consider the relationship between language, learning and the learner, i.e. accommodate more than one learning strategy.

### 3.9 ASSESSMENT

Assessment is often perceived by teachers and pupils as one of the most important stages of the teaching-learning process, as

it reflects the progress pupils make in their learning (Hughes, 1989:10). In spite of a move to criterion rather than norm-referenced assessment (cf. 3.6.3), pupils often await assessment with trepidation, as grades seem to reflect what pupils cannot do, rather than what they can do.

Assessment is closely linked to the description of learning targets and outcomes (Hughes, 1989:11) (cf. 3.7). Criterion-referenced outcomes become assessment items after the teaching-learning process (Brindley, 1994:75).

Brumfit (1984:64) points out that language learners need time to restructure existing knowledge systems to accommodate new knowledge, and testing too early may test unassimilated language items. Bachman (1991:689) says that situational and interactional authenticity should be increased in assessment. He emphasises that assessment in itself is foreign to natural language acquisition environments, and the teacher should know pupils well in order to establish authentic situations and interaction.

Current assessment techniques emphasise formative as well as summative assessment that enables pupils to keep track of their own progress. They should have the opportunity to volunteer for peer- and teacher assessment once they feel they can successfully complete assessment tasks (Clark, Scarino & Brownell, 1994:52).

### **3.10 SYLLABUS EVALUATION**

Du Plessis (1993:60-61) emphasises the involvement of all major stakeholders in the evaluation of a syllabus. In order for this to occur, communication between the government, the organised teaching profession, teachers, learners, teacher educators, parents and other possible stakeholders from the community (like publishers) is necessary.

Unilateral decisions are bound to be met with resistance, and the cooperation of everyone is necessary to succeed in new

developments in education. Clark, Sacirino and Brownell (1994:67) recommend the development of an evaluation plan under the auspices of the national department of education. They suggest that a number of evaluation techniques be employed, such as questionnaires, case studies and perception surveys to ensure feedback about quantitative and qualitative issues of syllabus implementation. Active research regarding syllabus evaluation should include the following:

- identifying weaknesses;
- exploring the parameters of a weakness in order to understand the origin, nature and scope of such a problem;
- searching for possible solutions through think scrums, research or reflection;
- identifying solutions most likely to succeed in solving the problem;
- developing resources and plans to implement the solution(s);
- trying out the solution;
- re-evaluating the process and products with the view to bringing about ever-improving practices.

An important aspect to consider is that syllabus evaluation can only be done after a reasonable length of time has been given for the digestion and full implementation thereof. Teachers must be empowered to understand exactly what is expected of them, and they should be given the opportunity to contribute to the process through regular workshops. A follow-up network through, for example, template materials, a phone-in service and Internet information should be available.

From the preceding discussion it is clear that there are certain constraints on syllabus design which have to be planned for.

### **3.11 CONSTRAINTS ON RENEWAL IN SYLLABUS DESIGN**

There are a number of constraints that influence syllabus design. These constraints have to be acknowledged and taken into account

when planning, lest the aims and objectives of the course are frustrated (Gagné & Briggs, 1974:26-27).

Johnson (1989:13-18) distinguishes between policy constraints and pragmatic constraints.

### **3.11.1 Policy constraints**

Policy reflects what is desirable in the opinion of policy makers. Walker (1987:104) points out that it is possible to design either the syllabus or materials for a course by starting at the product end (mostly identified as behavioural outcomes), or with the process (the desired theoretical foundation).

Johnson (1989:14-16) distinguishes between constraints of 'specialist' and 'learner-centred' syllabuses. A purely 'specialist' designed syllabus has the advantage that the specialists in the field of expertise involved (such as needs analysts, methodologists, materials writers, teacher trainers and teachers) have a clear chain of command. The decisions of one group are formulated clearly and unequivocally so that the next recipients in the line of command understand them clearly. The syllabus is easy to evaluate due to the linear command. The parties who are responsible for decisions are clearly identified and held to account (Johnson, 1989:14).

The disadvantages of the specialist model are, however, significant. Because decision-making is in one direction only, the recipients lowest in the chain of command (usually the teachers) may view the decisions with suspicion, and teacher motivation consequently declines. Commitment to the process may be uncertain and marred by attitudinal obstacles. The National Education Crisis Committee (NECC) document of 1986/1987 underlines the fact that those ESL teachers involved in the drafting of the document view participatory decision-making as imperative (Peirce, 1989:412).

Designers of a purely 'learner-centred' syllabus, on the other hand, have a unified view on policy. Consensus decisions determine the process of syllabus design. There is interaction, cooperation and consultation at every stage of the process, and participants are committed to the process and motivated. As there is no line of command, however, responsibility lies with the learners themselves. Due to the lack of specialists there may be serious flaws in the grasp of potential problems. As new role players enter the process, it is difficult to involve them without interrupting the continuity of the process, e.g. previous decisions may be revoked and revisited all the time.

Non-curricular policy constraints that influence the process of decision-making such as social, political and financial constraints are to be taken into account and planned for during decision-making. Policy constraints not only influence the process of decision-making but also the products. If the official policy documents for ESL learning should prescribe certain procedures (e.g. examination procedures) and the relevant role players are not equipped to deal with the situation (due to insufficient training or other factors) the final learning outcome will be influenced by the weak link in the chain.

### **3.11.2 Pragmatic constraints**

The characteristics of teachers and learners, the availability of human and material resources and inefficient bureaucratic channels are pragmatic constraints that may occur in the process of syllabus development (Johnson, 1989:15). As mentioned above (cf. 3.5.1.1), it is often difficult to determine learners' needs. Fox and Allen (1983:385) point out, for example, that the needs of pupils will extend to social, cultural and language needs; something that may not be recognised. Another constraint is the inability of young learners to participate adequately in determining their needs. As a result, many ESL syllabuses for young learners seem to adopt a structural basis.

If pragmatic constraints such as time or money are beyond the control of teachers, there is little chance of realising the full potential of a syllabus. The hidden curriculum that reflects the values, morals and opinions within a community are also relevant in this regard, as language cannot be separated from its socio-cultural context (Appel & Lantolf, 1994:437).

Slimani (1993:209) distinguishes between 'syllabus as plan' (the predicted learning that takes place after a planned learning event), and 'syllabus as reality' (what actually happens in interactive teaching). Pragmatic constraints include all the people involved in the chain, i.e. the teachers, materials designers, syllabus writers and learners. The level of proficiency of any group, previous experience, attitudes, learning styles and cognitive strategies may constrain the participants from fulfilling their roles.

Clark (1995:6) warns against one-dimensional renewal attempts:

Effective systematic curriculum renewal across all schools cannot be brought about from the top down by policy-makers hiring experts to produce ready-made packages to be implemented in schools, without the involvement, expertise and sense of ownership of teachers and other contributors to the curriculum renewal process; nor can it be achieved from the bottom up by the inspiration, creativity and hard work of a few individual schools and teachers, without a shared sense of direction and common action across all schools. It is to an integration of bottom-up initiatives within a top-down framework of broadly agreed directions and ways to move forward that we must look for effective system-wide curriculum renewal. We must find ways to create structures that bring about partnerships and involvement.

### 3.12 CONCLUSION

The aim of this chapter was to examine approaches to syllabus design in order to propose an approach that may be suitable for ESL in the South African primary school. As a syllabus provides a framework for the organisation of teaching content, and guides and supports the teacher in classroom practice, it is an influential document.

The model for syllabus design that is adopted in this study includes a situation analysis; the formulation of aims and objectives; the selection and grading of learning content, the development of appropriate teaching and learning opportunities and assessment. The process is repeated at a higher level of sophistication throughout the school years, i.e. the quality of learning improves continuously.

Although the three philosophical or ideological paradigms discussed relate to education as a whole, they have been influential in syllabus design. The classical humanist approach establishes a structured framework that emphasises the need to provide ample scaffolding for teachers who must implement the syllabus. The reconstructionist approach emphasises that language should be used for communicative purposes, but the structural (or audiolingual) syllabus does not, however, equip learners to use language in situations where natural discourse is required. The functional-notional syllabus emphasises authentic language use, but it remains a synthetic approach to language and language learning.

The progressivist approach places the learner at the centre of learning. It has the following advantages:

- it addresses cognitive learning processes, and uses tasks to develop these processes;
- the restructuring of knowledge is a priority and metacognitive learning strategies are employed to promote such restructuring;

- the task-based language syllabus holds most promise of providing learners with language learning, not as an end in itself, but as part of a holistic learning process.

The following conclusions regarding syllabus design can be stated:

- aims are long-term indicators of behaviour and they can be described in terms of dimension targets;
- objectives should be described in terms of measurable and attainable behaviour which reflects learning purposes, processes and products;
- the selection and grading of content should reflect the pupils' interests and levels of emotional, cognitive and social maturity;
- teaching-learning opportunities can be grouped around central organisational features, such as topics, themes, concepts, etc.
- methodology is interpreted in terms of 'approach', rather than the use of one particular 'method'. Teaching-learning opportunities for the primary school ESL learner may centre around problem-solving, information-gap, decision-making and consultational tasks;
- a variety of assessment techniques should be employed, especially those that chart continuous progress and promote self-assessment.

Non-curricular policy constraints (such as political or financial restraints) are ususally known and can be planned for in advance. Curricular restraints such as insufficient teacher training may emerge during the programme implementation and should be underpinned by regular and frequent communication with teachers.

Syllabus renewal is a necessity to keep education relevant to the changing world. As the conclusion indicates that the task-based syllabus may be a more desirable model than the current functional-notional ESL syllabus in the primary school, Chapter

4 is devoted to an investigation of this syllabus type.