

**CHAPTER 2**

**ESTABLISHING THE SOCIOLINGUISTIC PROFILE OF THE TARGET  
READER IN THE SECOND-LANGUAGE CLASSROOM**



<b><i>READER</i></b>	<b>READING</b>	<b>RESPONSE</b>	<b>TEXT</b>	<b>AUTHOR</b>
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## 2.1 Introduction

The senior primary school South African reader is caught up in an intricately woven educational web of influences that moulds and hones his/her concept of learning and reading in the school environment. The position in South Africa with regard to English medium primary schools is one of multicultural representation and reading takes place in most multicultural schools through the medium of English, thus a second language. Readers of a second language have to face the obstacle of learning and communicating through a network of second-language speech patterns and concepts. This brings us to the important issue of sociolinguistic influences. In the first place, the sociolinguistic variables playing a pivotal role in determining the reader's profile will be identified. The concepts of bilingualism, multilingualism and politics involving the reader as subject of consideration will be dealt with, because bilingualism involves two different cultures, while in the case of multilingualism this problem is exacerbated with the addition of more than two cultures and the involvement of a distinct political orientation where the second or even the third language can be regarded as the languages of the oppressor. English as target language of the bilingual reader will therefore be motivated and politically justified. Secondly, the sense of cultural awareness that embraces ethnicity will be covered. Status and socio-economic issues are interrelated and cannot be excluded from an investigation of the target learners. Falling within this category is also the state of affairs current in schools and the effect this has on the learners, since the physical condition of the learning environment can directly be linked with financial provision and social class in the educational department, learner opportunities and learner motivation.

Affective and cognitive development at a certain age are central to the compilation of the profile of the learners. The matter of attitude will be addressed when discussing age, cognitive and affective development, since attitude can be explained in terms of biological, psychological and cognitive changes of the reader as learner on his way to becoming an adult. Identification with and finding a role model follow directly after

personality development, since parents, teachers and peers play an important role in motivation and achievement as well as in sex-typing.

## 2.2 Sociolinguistic variables and the reader profile

A: I am especially scared when I face the Blackboard. You don't know what is happening behind you (a teacher).

B: To whom it may concern: this is to inform you all that things worth stealing in this school have already been stolen (a principal).

C: Here I am a nurse, a priest, a social worker and a policewoman. As a principal in a squatter camp you wear all these hats (a principal).

D: Often students ask to stay at school because it is unsafe to go home (a teacher).

E: The Standard 6 (Grade 8) students are a problem. They smoke dagga and carry knives or guns. If they don't use them against us we don't mind. They are protecting themselves (a teacher) (Montanyane, 1999:9).

The above extracts are quite alarming considering the fact that they portray a most disconcerting picture of circumstances many, especially Black learners (readers) have to face daily. This is the actual teaching environment and the destructively upsetting life circumstances of many a learner whose profile is under discussion. They are learners taught through the medium of English, which in the majority of cases is their second language (a situation which thus involves bilingualism). From extract A the issue of attitude is clear, because antagonism as a force to instil fear stems from unresolved problems that cause the opposite party involved to have a certain attitude. Extracts B and C refer to the appalling crime rate caused by the invidious socio-economic situation in our country. It points out the unquestionably pivotal influence of parents, teachers and peers. D and E tell a story of lives bristling with difficulties, where many learners have to battle simply to survive circumstances which are quite simply far beyond what can be described as reasonable, leaving the purpose of

teaching and the aim of encouraging literacy in our country as subordinate to mere coping under tremendous pressure at school.

In an effort to detect areas of relevance to the reader's profile in our South African schools, the following aspects could be observed from the extracts: adolescents, attitudes, socio-economic circumstances, influence of teachers, parents and peers. These factors all constitute part of the field of study covered by sociolinguistics.

When trying to establish a linguistic profile in order to investigate the learner's preferences for books at a certain age group, sociolinguistic variables can therefore serve as themes for the profile. Sociolinguistic variables are factors embracing age, attitude, religion, culture, ethnicity, intellectual abilities, education, status and sex (Piotrowsky, 1989:72). According to Edwards (1994:ix), a study of languages and multilingualism forms an integral part of sociolinguistics. Sociolinguistics implies the study of linguistic variation in various contexts. The reader or learner of the second language at school is thus engaged in a process of linguistic variation. Bell (1976:24) asserts that sociolinguists tend to focus on social groups and linguistic variables such as age, sex, socio-economic class membership, regional grouping and status. Spolsky (1998:7) asserts that the discrete and related phenomena associated with the field of sociolinguistics embrace aspects such as language and gender, social stratification, language planning, language and power, language and ethnicity and language and nationalism. Apart from the parent disciplines sociology and linguistics, sociolinguistics is also forced to broaden its scope to include fields such as psychology, political science and even history. Whereas ethnographers study speech behaviour among speakers belonging to one culture, sociologists are involved in statistically determinable tendencies that can be gained from analysing larger quantities of data. When analysing data elicited from speakers, the characteristics of the speaker which are of relevance are age, gender, education, place of birth and domicile, the nature of the speech encounter and even role relations of the speakers (Spolsky, 1998:9).

In the field of education in this country, English language teaching is essential, for it is through a certain medium that the child acquires certain knowledge and skills to guide him to his eventual choice of occupation after school. Edwards (1994:11) recognises the school as the venue where sociolinguistics feature:

One setting that obviously requires special attention is the school. It is, first of all, a powerful and visible instrument of the state and one expects that officially sanctioned practices will be reflected in its curriculum and policies. Second, it can be understood as an arena in which interactions among groups (parents, teachers, children, speech communities) reflect wider social currents. Policies of cultural-linguistic assimilation or pluralism, for example, can be examined in detail here. Third, many more specific sociolinguistic issues are susceptible to interpretation in educational terms, issues including the acceptance of dialect and language variation, and the relationship between language and identity.

Sociolinguistic issues comprise the influences on the reader's horizon of expectations when interpreting the semiotics or signs embedded within the text, influenced by his personal ideology or the ideology of the author. Ideology is defined as the mask that distorts or hides reality, a false consciousness affecting our ideas (CD:102). In summary it can be pointed out that readers are influenced by repertoire and experience and whether they go along with the author's ideology and whether their own ideology will allow them to enjoy the reading material. Eco (1981:22) maintains that children often tend to counteract the text, and their reading preferences will as a result be influenced by their ideology. Ideology and cultural concerns go hand in hand and that is why authors for children's literature must bear in mind the sociolinguistic factors mentioned above when establishing a reader profile, as these factors form an integral part of the reader's ideology.

### **2.3 Our rainbow nation – English as target language of the bilingual and multilingual reader in South Africa**

Bilingualism (or more correctly, in most instances, multilingualism) forms an integral part of the reader's communication network at the multiracial schools in South Africa.

Communicating in a second language implies bilingualism, for the learner acquires a second language, apart from his mother tongue, as a need to be made known and to be understood meaningfully across speech communities. A bilingual person is defined as a person "having two official languages; able to speak two languages" (AEUD:73). Compare the following comment by Spolsky (1998:45-46) on bilingualism:

While it is the case that even speakers of a single language (putative monolinguals) control various styles and levels of that language, it is very common that people develop some knowledge and ability in a second language and so become **bilingual**. The simplest definition of a bilingual is a person who has some functional ability in a second language. This may vary from a limited ability in one or more domains, to very strong command of both languages (which is sometimes called **balanced bilingualism**).

It is also according to Edwards (1994:1) no aberration to attempt to communicate across various speech communities, but a rather normal and natural necessity. The language involved for purposes of this study is English as a second language in South Africa. English is a language spoken all over the world and used by educationalists, health practitioners and businessmen (Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991:1).

Stubbs (1986:67) discusses English as a world language and its profound importance in a modern world. He identifies a number of pressures on English. They are

an unprecedented number of speakers; its use as an international language with a very large number of speakers of English as a foreign language; mass literacy and the associated massive printing and publishing technology; the mass media; the proliferation of institutionalized varieties of English; the use of English against a background of enormous linguistic diversity; and social developments, including urbanization, social-class stratification, and geographical and social mobility.

English is used as native language by up to 400 million people in Britain, the USA, Australia and elsewhere. Furthermore, it is used as a second language for everyday purposes in India and West Africa and in the third place there are millions who have learnt English as a foreign language (Stubbs, 1986:67). Pennycook (1995:41) asserts that English is the major language by means of which social, political and economic

inequalities are maintained in many countries and that it acts as gatekeeper for communication between different countries.

The predominance of English is, however, also at the heart of the problem in South Africa in the sense that most of the available English textbooks present an English cultural reality that is not always accessible (in fact, at times downright puzzling) to the Black learners. Pennycook (1995:42) confirms this statement:

A large proportion of textbooks in the world are published in English and designed either for the internal English-speaking market (United Kingdom, United States, Australia, and so forth) or for an international market. In both cases, students around the world are not only obliged to reach a high level of competence in English to pursue their studies, but they are also dependent on forms of Western knowledge that are often of limited value and extreme inappropriacy to the local context.

In South Africa, English should also be viewed from a heritage language perspective. It was primarily introduced to South Africans by the British Settlers and the Afrikaans-speaking inhabitants (descendants of early Dutch settlers) have long regarded English as the language of the oppressor. Language has been employed as a convenient political tool by means of which the country has been divided, governed and oppressed under various political dispensations. Linguicism (ideologies and structures used to legitimatise inequality of power) is the direct outcome of linguistic imperialism (Pennycook, 1995:43; see Beukes, 1993:3).

This tendency to involve politics stems from our deeper insecurity and prejudice that our heritage language is in fact the superior language to use as means of communication (Campbell, 1996:42). The initial enforcement of English as language of government and education in South Africa was known as linguistic imperialism, but after many years this changed and we may probably now speak of an internal language diffusion policy (altered unplanned language intervention where converted or commercialized populations learn and use the national language (Spolsky, 1998:75).

Language learning in South Africa has been a contentious issue for a number of years because of the history of the country as a colonial prize. Generally speaking, English has over time become the one preferred language in South Africa to be spoken at schools apart from learners' mother tongues. The central position that English holds in our country can be ascribed to British colonialism and English missionaries who believed in teaching through English as medium of instruction. In 1910 both Dutch and English became official languages of the Union of South Africa. From the early 1940s onwards the Hertzog-Smuts approach on the one hand included bilingualism and on the other hand there was a strong emphasis on English as first language. There was, however, a strong emphasis on Afrikaans as first language in White schools as an integral part of the aim of acquiring political and economic power. Nationalist politicians were insistent about Afrikaans becoming a symbol of political superiority, and various strong measures were taken to ensure that Afrikaans would be the dominant language - even in African education. This, as is well-known, culminated in part in the political uprisings in Soweto and elsewhere in 1976 when learners called a strike in order to voice their dissatisfaction with the language enforcement policy. The upshot of this was that Black people opted to be taught through the medium of English in most of the cases in the senior primary and secondary schools. This was part political expediency and part a rejection of Afrikaans as a medium of teaching and learning. Wessels (1996:183) asserts that: "Past policies and practices, as well as the devastating effect of the Sowetan riots, have led to a situation where specifically African children are at a great disadvantage today".

Thomasson (1999:8) remarks that the bulk of government funds was channelled to White schools and universities in the past while Black educational institutions had to stand at the back of the line, having to make do with poorly-equipped schools and grossly overcrowded classrooms. The enforced use of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction that sparked off the bloody uprising aimed at "liberation before education" in the 1976 riots will not easily be forgotten and the scars are not easy to eradicate.

English has grown to become the current language by means of which all the various



nations in South Africa with their wide variety of people and cultural diversity can communicate. English was appropriated in South Africa in the late nineties to effect democracy so that neither the Afrikaans-speaking people nor the Black language speakers can feel that their political position because of language favouritism is being promoted. Apart from English which is used as second and first language in South Africa, all the other languages used are indigenous, with Afrikaans originating from 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Germanic dialects used by the Dutch settlers, which eventually developed into standard Afrikaans. The other languages spoken in South Africa comprise the nine main Black languages viz. Nguni (isiNdebele, siSwati, isiXhosa, isiZulu), Sotho (Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana), Tsonga and Venda (Wessels, 1996:73).

According to Campbell (1996:144), the formerly marginalised African languages are gaining their rightful ground not only constitutionally, but also socially and Act 200 of 1993 (RSA) has as its prime aim the accommodation of eleven languages. The General Notice 537 of 1995 states that the diversity of languages should receive recognition, which in fact implies multilingualism apart from bilingualism in South Africa. Joubert (1999:14) reports that Thabo Mbeki made mention of the room left for mother-tongue teaching in the government's educational policy in South Africa. Joubert (1999:14) further asserts that Edwards, principal of Afrikaanse Hoër Seunskool, in Pretoria claims that mother-tongue teaching is the preferred option when it comes to an ideal medium of instruction.

Lund (1998:8) reports that South African linguists say that South Africans do not exert themselves to learn each other's languages and therefore it is an illusion to even think that South Africa is a democracy. More than half of the country's 22 000 schools use English as medium of instruction while 70% of the population do not speak English as their mother tongue. Praesa (Project for the Study of Alternative Education in South Africa), a non-governmental organization of Cape Town, has also stressed the importance of mother-tongue teaching especially for the earlier grades. They also ascribe the high failure rate to a language problem in South Africa, arguing that the teachers who have to guide the learners to learn English do not speak English as a first

language. According to Praesa only 44% of the South African population understand English. South Africa has to wake up if it does not want to tread the same linguistic path as the rest of post-colonial Africa - and start learning various languages (Lund, 1998:8).

Despite the fact that Praesa is actually speaking the truth and also states that it is so difficult for a country to reach a competitive stage in a third and second language where various countries can communicate and achieve across the world, English is the solution to our racial problems and educational multicultural classroom in South Africa. It emphasises the critical responsibility of the reading teacher teaching English as second language even more.

## **2.4 Cultural awareness in education**

### *2.4.1 Definitions and cultural concepts*

Our cultural make-up, such as our choice of food, our manner of eating, using sticks like the Chinese or knives and forks like western cultures, preferring braaivleis to minced meat and pap and sheba to bread, our kimonos or sarongs all speak long before we have even opened our mouths. Generally speaking, by way of easy stereotype, White South Africans prefer rugby and Black South Africans prefer soccer. Who will not recognise the word **laduma!** shouted in jubilation after a goal is scored in soccer and who will not celebrate with the **blou bulle** (if they are supporters of this rugby team!). All these small differences link us to a distinctive cultural group within our rainbow nation in South Africa. The vehement and enthusiastic reaction on cultural celebrations is a living proof of our emotional bondage with our culture that gives us a sense of belonging.

The large majority of us are not aware of the subliminal influences playing a role in our socialisation into our native cultures. Our subjective involvement such as gender, class, religion and nation are shaped long before we become aware of these influences

(Buttjes & Byram, 1990:3). Because of the high social context of language, second-language learning is often defined as **second-culture learning**. This process to become adapted to a new culture is often referred to as **acculturation** (Douglas Brown, 1986:33). There exists an intricately interwoven relationship between language and culture. Culture is a deeply-ingrained part of our very being and language is regarded as the expression of that culture the individual belongs to. It follows as no surprise that a person belonging to one culture experiences a **culture shock** when learning a second language. Culture shock is described as the “Phenomenon ranging from mild irritability to deep psychological panic and crisis. Generally culture shock will be experienced only in the first of the second language contexts”. Emotions characteristic of culture shock are: estrangement, anger, hostility, indecision, frustration, unhappiness, loneliness and even physical illness (Douglas Brown, 1986:35).

Culture shock is described in terms of four stages:

- 1) Excitement and euphoria over the novelty of the unknown surroundings,
- 2) The individual feels threatened and being intruded upon as his security is affected,
- 3) A stage of tentative recovery, and
- 4) The final stage when the individual adapts and accepts the new elements as part of his new identity (Douglas Brown, 1986:36).

Hearne (1993:34) additionally identifies the phenomenon of **cultural authority** and maintains that an author should determine common values, facts and beliefs before embarking on writing for a specific audience, since these common values may also differ individually. Cultural values are also constantly changing, complicating the whole process of providing suitable reading material for a specific target group. **Cultural filtering**, according to which certain values are excluded from the material provided to the second language learner, is therefore also imperative in order to ensure reader involvement (Mo & Shen, 1997:90).

Culture learning should be viewed as a cross cultural learning experience in which the teacher can play a therapeutic role in aiding learners to move through the stages of acculturation as smoothly as possible. Social distance involves the cognitive and affective proximity of two cultures in contact with one another within an individual. According to Lado (1986:52), it is problematic for the individual to describe his own culture and maintain cultural objectivity since he has become so much an integral part of his native culture unnoticed. Culture also manifests itself in various patterns. Meaning ascribed to patterns is sometimes culturally modified or determined, for example, in Iran a White license plate signifies a taxi and in America a taxi is characterised by being mostly yellow and having a light on the roof. This is a clear example of the same meaning ascribed to different forms (Lado, 1986:58). Cultural groups can also decide that their way of doing is the correct way, for example, with the result that if other cultures use other forms or meanings it is regarded as wrong, for example, when foreigners visit America they claim that the coffee there is too strong and black. When Americans visit other countries, they too are dissatisfied with the other countries' coffee.

It stands to reason that if the learners subjected to the preference tests come from various cultural groups, they would respond to literature differently because of **acculturation**. Valdes (1986:137) claims that literature is generally accepted as a way of teaching language because it serves as a medium to transmit the culture of the people who speak the language in which it is written. Although literature is regarded as culture in action, many more benefits can be gained from studying the reading books than concentrating on cultural aspects alone. Valdes (1986:138) claims that despite the fact that different values are held to be supreme by certain cultural groups, certain concepts carry general consensus such as, for example, the ten commandments, as no cultural group condones stealing and killing and honouring one's parents would seem to be a common rule. Learners should therefore be taught to respect their own as well as **cultural values** of other groups. The teachers' task is then to teach the values that underlie the behaviour of the characters and points of view of the authors. Valdes is of the opinion that the teacher should, rather than

choosing a literary work for its cultural values, select one that is of interest to the learners (Valdes, 1986:140).

Guillory (1995:38-39) identifies the characteristic culture of a specific educational institution which also plays a role in influencing the culture of the learners at school or university level, acknowledging the fact that sharing cultural opinions do not necessarily unify the various linguistic speech groups within the school: each has its own cultural stance:

While the debate over the canon concerns what texts should be taught in the school, what remains invisible within this debate – too large to be seen at all – is the school itself. The absence of reflection on the school as an institution is the condition for the most deluded assumption of the debate, that the school is the vehicle of transmission for some thing like national culture. What is transmitted by the school is, to be sure, a kind of culture; but it is the culture of the school. School culture does not unify the nation culturally so much as it projects out of a curriculum of artefact-based knowledge an imaginary culture unity never actually coincident with the culture of the nation state. In this way the educational system – the dissemination of a supposedly national culture – remains ignorant of what the right hand is doing – the differential tracking of students according to class or the possession of cultural capital. If the structure of the system, its multiple levels and its division between public and private institutions, divides the population in this way, the culture the university produces can only be ‘national’ for the plurality that acquires this level of education.

Shum (1997:80) then points out that the focus should not so much be on the various cultures as on the subject formation which is the crucial issue in the classroom. He also further points out that democracy should form an integral part of the cultural educational perspective, for it enforces even distribution and also implies equality among all learners. The difficulty of creating real equalities and commonalities of interest, where the global norm is the installation of operational efficiency, debilitates the possibility of nation building and a specific common culture (Shum, 1997:10).

He further asserts that culture building and provenance of culture are closely related to

the continuing effort made by the government. He is of the opinion that the solution to our cultural problems lie in pragmatics, facing the conditions under which we live, addressing the hard facts, i.e. that we have a society driven by an appalling crime rate and the lack of social civility (Shum, 1997:12).

Maake (1997:24) reflects on the South African situation in terms of the Jewish **diaspora** that is explained as the scattering of a nation with specific reference to Jewish history. In the South African context the notion of diaspora is of relevance if one considers, according to Maake, that apart from the many thousands of political dissidents who went into exile across the world, many African leaders were captured and imprisoned on Robben Island well into the twentieth century - causing a dispersion among the African people, adding to the displacements caused by the provisions of the Land Acts and other laws. According to Maake (1997:25), the African cultural situation cannot be separated from the retrieval of own land as was the case with the Jewish people whose cultural values and language remained recalcitrant until their own land was restored. The Jews succeeded in carrying with them their own culture throughout their diaspora and survived the brutalisation. There are, however, certain elements of European culture that have taken firm root in Africa and that do play a role in our cultural perceptions and manifestations.

Maake (1997:26) lists a number of **African cultural characteristics** mentioned by Wiredu:

They comprise:

1. The stress or importance that is attached to group life;
2. The importance of kinship as represented in the institutional form of the extended family system irrespective of the differences in descent;
3. Chieftainship and its symbolic significance;
4. The pervasiveness and stress on ceremony and ritual in many aspects of social life;

5. The idea of beauty of speech, thought, action and appearance as a prerequisite for appointment to high office; and
6. The tendency to stress, in all forms of art, the quality of significance as a criterion of beauty and virtue.

Despite the fact that some of the proponents of democracy encourage an educational approach that would focus on the subject matter rather than on cultural differences, it is, however, true that we are all part of a certain culture.

The conclusion reached then is that one should strive for a situation where there can be a supply of reading material to second language learners that would stimulate their interest and therefore reading material close to the learner's mother culture, for example reading material to a particular target group would involve using names and customs typical of the mother culture. Learners may also, however, occasionally be exposed to other cultures so that they can become informed about other people and their cultures and learn to tolerate group customs. Teachers should also employ cultural filtering in such a way as to facilitate learning among the different cultural groups in a multicultural classroom and to diminish hostility. South Africa as a whole is in fact recovering from cultural shock and will have to gradually adapt to the post-apartheid era.

#### *2.4.2 Culture and the South African classroom*

The school is an arena in which various ethnic groups meet in an environment of cultural diversity. Learners from all cultural groups are attending schools in South Africa and heterogeneous cultural representation is no extraordinary phenomenon in a new South Africa where the country is no longer governed by a White minority group but the full population is properly represented by duly-elected members of parliament.

When teaching a second language like English that has acclaimed international status, the idea is not to focus on ethnicity and national group differences, but rather to use

the language as a means of inter-cultural communication.

To understand the learners in the South African second-language classroom one should investigate the various ethnic groups' cultures and make a prediction about what will be of interest to these learners in order to facilitate reading and learning the second language. The idea is not to put pressure on group boundaries in order to achieve a forced amalgamation and a new emergent culture, but only to improve mutual understanding of the individual learners belonging to various ethnic groups. Education can therefore to a great extent be seen as a progressive and liberalising force, allowing learners from various groups to learn a language of a different ethnic identity for the purposes of development and communication. It has what Edwards (1994:187) calls a motherhood quality of a life-giving force, dynamic and progressive and for sure has the ability of protection and comfort.

Edwards (1994:189) discusses two broad approaches of multicultural teaching. Approach number one entails a programme in which a narrow ethnic show-and-tell approach is followed where ethnic characteristics are paraded in a self-conscious and trivial fashion. These lessons will focus on old-fashioned commonalities reflecting citizenship and cultural religious approaches. The second approach involves a broader and less superficial perspective on multicultural teaching where a teacher, for example, will concentrate on the historical processes shaping each individual, diverting the attention from the own ethnic characteristics to a more common experience of life itself achieving the idea of possible collective change. This approach gives some indication of the power of schools to achieve social change. The valued and systematic context for change at school is embedded in the subjects themselves taught at school. History taught to the learners should reflect the multicultural approach that promotes multicultural awareness, but also tolerance of individual group customs. **Cultural respect** should be part of multicultural education and proper value systems should be encouraged despite the fact that it also has its vociferous opposition from certain quarters.



Edwards (1994:190) maintains that:

School is traditionally a strong arm of culture, and central to its aims has always been a strong emphasis on language. On the one hand, school has attempted to refine and develop communicative skills with the language or languages of its constituency; on the other, it has been the centre for foreign-language acquisition.

In South Africa the virtual single language of communication is English, and therefore English language teaching in South African schools has become even more important than during the past, when it was more formally balanced by Afrikaans as the other official language during the years of apartheid. In the view of this somewhat undemocratic application of the multilingual language policy of the country, it is also essential to learn more about how other countries deal with their cultural problems in order to arrive at the most appropriate approach of handling cultural problems associated with the language situation.

In order to participate in classroom events, learners have to face the obstacle of not only learning a new language in the second language classroom, but also assimilating the cognitive, cultural linguistic and paralinguistic knowledge of the new language.

#### *2.4.3 Culture and the Japanese and American classroom*

Johnson (1995:59) asserts that development of **communicative style** (the way that language is used and understood in a particular culture) reflects cultural beliefs. Communicative style is therefore associated and equated with one's worldview.

In **Japan** the cultural communicative connotation is to value the **group's interest** rather than the individual's. Therefore a high value is placed on silence in the classroom and the overwhelming imperative not to offend classmates. This tendency to be quiet in a class can be traced to mother-child interaction where the Japanese mothers teach their children to treat others with empathy. The Japanese endorse an education in which behavioural patterns which reflect **conformity** as opposed to

individualistic expression is reinforced. Japanese children are taught how to deal with social and verbal formulas in interactive situations and are not encouraged to express individual feelings and ways. These learners become accustomed to a means of communication that relies on social context for communication rather than on verbal communication (Johnson, 1995:60).

The Japanese approach to communication within a specific cultural group serves as a good example for illustrating the fact that students and learners acquire different learnt ways from what they are accustomed to at home. This is what is termed the discontinuity hypothesis that claims that the home background and cultural behaviour differ from the behaviour at school and teachers have to focus on these cultural differences when teaching. Sometimes even subtle differences can hamper communication such as touching, distance between speakers, gesturing and speaking rights (Johnson, 1995:65).

One can distinguish between primary and secondary discontinuities. **Primary discontinuities** refer to the cultural differences that exist between speakers within a specific cultural group before contact with the new culture, whereas **secondary discontinuities** can be defined as differences that develop after two populations have been in contact for an extended period of time. It would seem that the Japanese view their instructional activities over the flow of an entire day. They also view the world of the child as separate from that of the adult and the result is more support to these children over a longer period of time (Johnson, 1995:148). In order to understand the culture of the second-language learners, the teacher has to take stock of a number of cultural concerns that are often referred to as reflective cultural analysis. One of the basic methods of reflective cultural analysis is to do **cross-cultural interviewing**. Teachers should try not to interpret cultural settings through their own cultural frames of reference. In an experiment, Japanese and American teachers tend to interpret practices through their own cultural frames of references too. Japanese teachers tend to cause their learners to become very dependent while the Americans tend to guide their children to become more self-sufficient, acting only as supervisors and facilitators (Johnson, 1995:148).

A second technique used to enable teachers to become aware of their own cultural assumptions is the **instrumental activities inventory**, which points out contrasts between cultural values and discontinuities, because a culture tends to change over a period due to its dynamic structure. **Pictures** are used to be reflected on by teachers and learners in order to identify cultural differences. Americans as opposed to Germans regard the students' needs as the end goal of teaching and learning whereas the Germans regard the individuals as members of groups. Americans also regard their input as merely reinforcing instructional activities whereas the Germans claimed to have full control and responsibility over the learning process.

**Personal journals** kept by teachers are also a valuable means of keeping an eye on reflections on teaching and academic progress. Another method is teachers' support groups according to which teachers compare their own and other teachers' cultural assumptions by comparing their own culture with that of the culture underlying the other language involved. **Videotaping** lessons in which teachers then give a running commentary of their own efforts is another viable approach of monitoring cultural differences (Johnson, 1995:150).

At the beginning of the twentieth century Roosevelt supported the assimilation of foreign immigrants into the United States and Canada. All immigrants were cast into the "melting-pot" through a process that has subsequently become known as **cultural pluralism**. In 1915 Horace Kallen wrote extensively on the collection of distinct groups and expressed the ideal of achieving a stable harmonious cultural diversity. He also made provision for **cultural assimilation** while emphasizing pluralism with the introduction of incidental English language learning as part of his ideal. Robert Park, a member of the Chicago School of Sociology, felt that assimilation had to be allowed to happen naturally and gradually and that immigrants should not have been added to a **melting-pot**. He opted for an approach accommodating the principle of full participation in national life as a means to accept the immigrants. Park and his followers continued progressively and pragmatically to incorporate smaller group

values in the broader society. They struggled to acquire unity and experienced quite a number of problems with racial integration. Glazer and Moynihan, however, claimed that the melting-pot ideal was no success at all and asserted that although some ethnic markers had succumbed to the notion many group manifestations had remained intact (Edwards, 1994:178-180).

In Canada there exist two major languages, hence two dominant cultural groups, viz. French and English. It is a multicultural community in which the British numbers have gradually decreased and French and other cultures have increased considerably. The general concern in Canada is, however, one of groups over others. The dominant point of view in Canada is one of tolerance as long as it does not affect their own lives and the socio-cultural institutions in which they participate. A survey made during 1976 as well as 1987 showed that the majority of people have an attitude of goodwill and tolerance for diversity (Edwards, 1994:186).

Kirby (1998:75) reflects on the position of teaching English in California and identifies the so-called **Ebonics** that is derived from two words viz. Ebony or Black and Phonics, referring to sounds and symbols. According to her, Ebonics has strongly affected American society and has caused divergent views about the notion to emerge. One the one hand, Ebonics means ignorant – on the other, Ebonics refers to Afro-Americans trying to re-assert their former cultural values. Kirby recognises the reality of cultural differences, but claims that students should not be academically abused because of it. She advocates an approach that would identify Ebonics, but Ebonics should not be afforded the position of becoming a universal language. According to Kirby (1998:76) it remains a challenge to be met to bridge the gap between teachers and learners, finding the ideal standard usage which children need who reject standard usage.

Sorace (1998:76) puts a high premium on oral communication as the most prevalent form of communication to operate within the American society. She maintains that children's attitudes should be taken into account when teaching them English at

school level as language often becomes an assault on the child and the culture s/he belongs to. Teachers must find ways outside the mainstream to approach learners effectively. She posits the idea that Black English cannot be separated from Black culture or the Black experience. Sociolinguistic conflict arises when speech communities clash and cross-cultural communication takes place within the classroom. The fact that different groups operate within one system should not be overlooked. Teachers' attitudes towards the children's culture should therefore be tolerant to avoid the child being alienated from the school. The learners should be allowed to maintain their own sense of identity. Sorace claims that American society is becoming even more diverse. It is a moot point whether the school is overwhelming the learner with different cultural values or not, but by using more humane non-damaging pedagogy aimed at enabling learners to develop a wide coping repertoire, the school will enable learners to choose for their own use a language that is most appropriate to their needs (1998:77).

Finally it should be noted that **intercultural communication** involves the understanding of similarities and commonalities between two cultures. Valdes (1986:49) warns against the pitfall of going for generalities that would seek to imply that nobody can learn everything about his/her own culture or the second-language culture. Although such generalities can serve as a basis for the teacher to try and better his understanding of the second language speakers' culture, the individual cannot be seen as representative of a whole group's preferences. Although it remains a risky business to explain a member's reading behaviour in terms of the whole group, it is, however, true that it can serve as a guideline of what the individual will prefer. After having studied other countries' cultural and racial contact, it becomes apparent that cultural concerns cannot be ignored and various cultural groups cannot be forced to amalgamate. The melting-pot experiment in America was no success, why should it fare any better in South Africa with its much more recent history of divisions?

Mkondo (1998:16) comments on the slow death of mandatory school integration in cities across the United States. The forced busing of Black students to White suburbs

was a resounding and ultimately (in political and social terms) an expensive failure.

The policy of desegregation remains a pipe dream denied. Mkondo asserts that:

Across America busing produced a devastating flight of middle-class people, leaving many cities with an ever-dwindling number of Whites available for mixing and no improvement in test scores. Many White families who did not move from their homes responded to busing by enrolling their children in private schools... They are tired of the implication that Black children need to sit next to White children to be properly educated ... For Black and White Americans the dream of a future integrated society lies not in counting racial groups but in balancing funding and resources.

Focusing on general subject matter that will involve all learners should be supplemented by a process of allowing learners to maintain their cultural identification and teaching them to remain tolerant of one another. South Africans can learn from the Americans that the needs of the learners should be the prime focus, and this should include allowing space for inculcating tolerance in terms of cultural differences. The Japanese can serve as an example in that they warn teachers not to teach through their own cultural frames of reference, but rather to focus on tolerance of various cultures, and careful, reflective cultural analyses should be made before any attempt is made to approach the learner. It is important to note, however, the concomitant reality that the Japanese educational approach, however, keeps learners more dependent on parents whereas the American approach tends to encourage more independent critical thinking.

## **2.5 What is your skin colour? Race, culture, ethnicity and nationalism**

Skin colour has through the ages been a poignantly sensitive issue in South Africa where apartheid has been practised on the basis of a strict racial divide between Black and White. All South Africans of the previous millennium can still remember the **Whites only** signs in parks and at public toilets. It is also a fact of South African social reality that skin colour will often be an advance signal of the language that a speaker will use, for example, a Black person's mother tongue will be most probably a

Black language in South Africa, a speaker with a White skin a native English or Afrikaans speaker and a darker-skinned person with Black straight hair will be an Indian. Skin colour is thus stereotypically linked with expectations of cultural groups and languages spoken.

Skin colour is a term often associated with **racial conflict** between two different linguistic groups. In South Africa racial diversity poses a problem to learners who do not always know how to deal with these differences. Ntshakala (1997:5) is of the opinion that although hailed as a roaring success, putatively desegregated schools can still expect to have tremendous obstacles to overcome. Parents feel that cultural alienation, discrimination and harsh treatment are some of the most crucial factors to address in integrated schools. It is also unavoidable that mother-tongue teaching would be affected by the fashion of opting for English as medium of instruction in most Black schools. A plethora of other related problems can also upset the apple cart of incipient racial problems. Many Black parents claim that their children are seeing psychologists as a result of these upsetting circumstances. Janet Swart, head of Guidance at Jeppe Girls' High School claims that ignorance on the part of teachers can cause problems in multiracial schools. Those teachers who are denying that they discriminate even covertly between Black and White learners are indeed also negating their cultural heritage (Ntshakala, 1997:5).

White children on the other hand tend to put across the message that they have inherited their parents' problems and have to deal with obstacles they are not personally responsible for. White learners have to deal with ethnically and racially mixed classes, something their parents didn't have to do. Hoërskool Vryburg and Mondeor High School had their own racial conflict that caused the schools to be closed down temporarily. One incident involved a fight between Black and White learners that led to rioting by the Black students. While dynamics around racial tension does not express itself openly, the underlying forces are clear. Anxiety about the apartheid past and a feeling of powerlessness to deal with the problem seem to paralyse students and negate efforts at effecting positive cultural interchange.

Extremists who are not willing to meet the others halfway cause serious **ethnic and racial problems**. To many of the White boys whose parents lose jobs because of affirmative action, it remains a problem felt very deeply (Grey, 1997:4).

Thomasson (1999:8) asserts that the rainbow nation harmony appears to be more possible as a phenomenon in integrated cities than in the rural countryside. Cape Town High is an example of successful integration where segregation has been quite successfully obviated. The principal has admitted, however, that despite the fact that learners are developing multicultural friendships, race still tends to divide learners who still tend to socialise in their separate language groups during breaks.

The term **race** is also linked with specific ethnic markers and is seen to be intertwined with other cultural aspects of life that imply a certain group identity. It is therefore also important to consider ethnic and national affiliations when establishing the profile of the learner, reader or language user. The readers involved are all members of different ethnic groups. Ethnicity is generally seen as a sense of group identity deriving from common bounds. The term **ethnicity** is derived from the Greek word *ethnos* that means nation, but is also a word associated with barbarians and outsiders. According to Edwards (1994:126) it is a fallacy to regard ethnicity as a minority phenomenon, because dominant groups can also be conceived of as ethnic groups. Frederick Barth, a most influential contemporary scholar, maintains that **group boundaries** should be the focal point when considering ethnicity. The cultural content within the various groups is essentially important when studying ethnicity. He also regards language usage as characteristic of group boundaries for as long as a certain language is used within a group their boundaries will exist since the language use contribute to the maintenance of the specific group boundaries (Edwards, 1994:126).

A further characteristic of a certain ethnic group is its socialisation and historical **inheritance** that distinguishes it from other social groups, and it is further viewed as a matter of **belief** that brings into play the subjective perspective. Both the objective



and the subjective perspective should be considered when trying to establish a working definition of ethnicity. Edwards (1994:128) also regards ethnic symbolism as forming an integral part of group identity. The following definition then embraces all the factors playing a role in arriving at a definition of ethnicity:

Ethnic identity is allegiance to a group – large or small, socially dominant or subordinate – with which one has ancestral links. There is no necessity for a continuation, over generations, of the same socialization or cultural patterns, but some sense of a group boundary must persist. This can be sustained by shared objective characteristics (language, religion, etc), or by more subjective contributions to a sense of “groupness” or by some combination of both. Symbolic or subjective attachments must relate, at however distant a remove, to an observably real past (Edwards, 1994:128).

In this study various ethnic groups will be involved by way of being subjects as multilingual speakers form part of the second language classroom involved. In South Africa, the following ethnic groups form the subject of the groups in question, viz. Tswana, Xhosa, Afrikaans, Indian and even English mother-tongue speakers participated in the empirical study.

When studying ethnicity, it becomes evident that nationalism is a concomitant of ethnicity but with a more covert political dimension attached. Edwards defines **nationalism** as “an extension of ethnicity in that it adds to the belief in shared characteristics as a desire for political autonomy, the feeling that the only legitimate type of government is national self-government” (1994:129). Language is also associated, for example, with the nationalism that exploded in 1789 during the French revolution. Nationalism found forceful expression during this revolution as national loyalty, the belief in unity, autonomy and an own fatherland (Edwards, 1994:130).

In 1807 Gotlieb Fichte emphasised the crucial linguistic criterion of nationhood. He regarded his own language as being of the utmost importance. He pointed out that the Germans spoke a language very much alive since the beginning of recorded history and stressed that the Teutons spoke a language that according to him that was already

dead at the root (Edwards, 1994:131).

Nationalism is described in terms of common sentiments, sympathies, aims and will. Three important aspects of nationalism can be distinguished, viz. firstly the natural division of humanity into nations; secondly the fact that these nations can be identified by common characteristics and the only legitimate form of government is self-government. Thirdly, there is the fact that nationalism embraces religion, race and language. Edwards points out that nationalism does not require a common language per se (Edwards, 1994:132), but that the specific need of belonging to a common group is immutable. If the desire to group together disappears, so do the boundaries. **Language** can, however, serve as a distinctive **group marker** and remains a potent force. Nationalism carries with it the desire to change but not without the nostalgic romanticism of past elements.

## **2.6 Socio-economic factors and class**

### *2.6.1 Born into fame or poverty, rags or riches?*

It is generally accepted that one is born into a distinctive family embedded in a certain social class and it is part of destiny to be born into a family of riches and wealth or born into a family of rags and poverty. It can be argued that the more money one has, the more reading books one can buy. It is also not of necessity the case that wealthy people who have the advantage of lots of money will focus on education and the provision of reading material in their homes. Money can in many cases be linked with time. If we have the money and the time to think what to do with it, better decisions might be made. One can even, in a joint effort, co-operate to help eradicate inequalities where unfair practices are the order of the day, but inequality and social stratification are bound to remain with the human race.

Sorokin (1964:11) defines social stratification as follows:

Social stratification means the differentiation of a given population into hierarchically superposed classes. It is manifested in the existence of upper and lower social layers. Its basis and very essence consist in an unequal distribution of rights and privileges, duties and responsibilities, social values and privations, social power and influences among members of a society. Concrete forms of social stratification are different and numerous. If the economic status of the members of a society is unequal, if among them are both wealthy and poor, the society is economically stratified, regardless of whether in its organization is communistic or capitalistic, whether in its constitution it is styled "the society of equal individuals" or not.

Stratification can be reduced to the following three forms, viz. **economic, political and occupational** stratification. These groups are also interrelated in that the people belonging to the upper economic class will also dwell in the upper political and occupational strata. There are, however, always the exceptions to the rule and the ideal is to look at the three forms separately (Sorokin, 1964:23).

Economic stratification basically deals with the fluctuation between the two opposed poles of prosperity and impoverishment. Whether a group is rising or falling economically can be linked directly with its per capita wealth and income as measured in monetary units. Wealth is also seen to show fluctuation and economic ups and downs characterise the economic profile in most instances (Sorokin, 1964:23).

Concerning political stratification it is essential to note that the political trend is towards the annihilation of inequality and political and social hierarchy. The height of political inequality is said to fluctuate from time to time. The enlargement of the size of a body politic and its heterogeneity plays an important role in political stratification. It is also known that political levelling and struggling between political forces continue permanently and it will show an increase or decrease in power (Sorokin, 1964:94).

It is generally accepted that the occupational group comprising unskilled manual workers has always been at the bottom of the occupational cone. They metaphorically still represent the slaves and serfs of societies. They are poorly paid and enjoy the

least prestige and exercise the least controlling power in society. The manual occupational groups have always been less esteemed and influential than the intellectual occupations (Sorokin, 1964:102).

Trudgill (1995: 23-24) links **social stratification** with dialect and claims that relative social stratification can be estimated solely by listening to speakers' **dialects**. He illustrates this by mentioning the example of geographical barriers separating local speakers from one another such as mountains and rivers, for example people living in Britain north of the river Humber use a distinctive dialect and their dialect differs from the people living south of the river. He compares social stratification to hierarchical ordering. Each country is said to have its own class distinction on the basis of dialects. In India the social class dialects are easily recognised since Indian society is very rigidly divided into castes and caste dialects from which a member cannot readily move (if at all). Caste dialects are therefore also said to be more easily studied. In the class situation in England the position of social class distinctions is more fluid and therefore also more difficult to pinpoint (Trudgill, 1995:24-25).

Trudgill (1995:27) mentions the success of Labov in having studied dialects in America by interviewing citizens with a tape recorder and by involving 340 informants. His random sampling methods were a breakthrough and many linguists have followed in his footsteps using random sampling as method of analysis. Trudgill (1995:42) also links dialects with ethnic group membership. Different ethnic groups maintain their separateness and identity as much through language as through anything else.

### *2.6.2 Facing the music with regard to the South African situation*

Social inequality is part of society whether it be American, British, Indian or even African. Compare the following statistics according to occupational stratification and per capita income of males and females having jobs in South Africa (information derived from the 1996 census). Bear in mind that females are more numerous than

males and that the Blacks are more numerous than all the other population groups:

Less than 30% of all Black males earn a salary of less than R500, Coloureds less than 20%, Indians less than 10% and Whites also less than 10%. For females the picture looks as follows: Less than 45% of Blacks earn less than R500, Coloureds less than 30%, Indians less than 10%, and Whites less than 10% (Ferreira, 1998:2).

The fact of the matter is that there is still an uneven distribution of economic income among Blacks and Whites, a harsh reality that is often laid at the door of the apartheid government and their former policy of segregation. This is also one of the major causes for problems in education, because many parents earn too low a salary to be able to pay school fees and the low income also affects the provision of educational material by parents who struggle to eke out an existence and who have to provide the necessary reading material at home. Compare the following extract from an article appearing in *The Star* of 12 June 1999:

All learners need to experience success and enjoyment in their early reading efforts or they will develop a block against reading. It is important to create a classroom in which learners feel happy and relaxed and which provides them with opportunities to talk and read (Anon, 1999:4).

Looking at the South African educational situation it becomes clear that a lot of **economical inequality still exists**, a situation which can only be remedied through a better distribution of opportunities among all. Black schools have consistently tended to be at the bottom end of the economic cone, causing Black education to lie at the bottom layer so far as stratification is concerned.

Thomasson (1999:8) reports about a principal of the primary school in Guguletu who describes a moving scene of learners who had to collect snack packets to raise money for the children's only hot meal to be cooked at school because of the **poor socio-economic circumstances** at home. She comments that the teacher wage bill takes up 90% of the educational money expenditure per year and that the rest must be divided

on resources and capital expenditure.

**A few hard facts are as follows:**

Most of the schools in South Africa show the sign of the former government's criminally inadequate provision of equal educational amenities across the country. A survey, the first kind done in South Africa, has revealed appalling statistics with regard to basic facilities and the physical conditions obtaining at schools. The survey covered 32 000 education institutions, 27 864 of which are primary and secondary schools. It was conducted in 1996 by the HSRC, the Education Foundation and the research institute for educational planning at the University of the Free State. The survey revealed the following statistics with regard to the overall South African situation:

<b>Toilets</b>	<b>Pit latrines</b>	<b>No toilets</b>
47%	34%	13%

Toilets were regarded as the most neglected area of provision. The survey worked on 1 toilet per 20 learners, with the shocking number of a shortage of 270 000 toilets in schools countrywide. Concerning the various provinces the following statistics were mentioned with regard to the number of toilets needed:

<b>KwaZulu-Natal</b>	<b>Northern Province</b>	<b>Eastern Cape</b>
66 921	51 324	46 785

Concerning the most basic need, namely water, 41% of the schools do not have access to on-site water and about 6687 of the 27 864 primary and secondary schools have no water available within walking distance from the schools.

Electricity supplies are even more shocking. Less than half of the schools (43%) nationally have an electricity supply. Compare the following statistics:

<b>Northern Province</b>	<b>Eastern Cape</b>	<b>Kwazulu-Natal</b>
79%	77%	61%

This effectively means no heating during cold winter weather, creating unreasonable physical conditions, gravely impairing the efficacy of the learning environment.

An even more invidious picture follows when one studies the communications network. In an advanced era where computers form an integral part of an information explosion, several schools do not even have that most basic means of communication, a telephone. Compare the following statistics with regard to provision of telephone lines:

<b>Eastern Cape</b>	<b>Free State</b>	<b>Northern Province</b>
19%	25%	32%

Regarding laboratories, acute shortages were recorded. In the Eastern Cape 911 students share one laboratory, Mpumalanga 746, North-West 670, KwaZulu-Natal 648 and the Free State 451.

There is an estimated shortage of 1 167 881 student desks and chairs, 103 615 teacher chairs and 102 441 cupboards. Regarding physical learning space, there was a shortage of 57 499 classrooms nationally in 1996. Overall the condition of school buildings was bearable except for the North West Province where 41% were identified as rickety. Only a significant if not dramatic change in the national budget can improve these harsh conditions which are supposed to enhance and facilitate learning and create lifelong readers (Vusi, 1997:3).

The problem South Africa is experiencing at the moment with regard to the socio-economic background of our target learners is one of a shortage in finances. Duvenhage (1999:4) maintains that only 21,6% of the country's population is

employed in the formal sector, and the problem we have is thus one of poverty and a lack of jobs. Schussler, the economic consultant for FBC Merchant Bank, says that 50% of South Africa's inhabitants must live on less than R12 per day. These people belong to the lower income group and have no houses and are often forced to resort to the humiliating last resort of begging.

Although teachers are fighting for more money, among other things, their per capita salaries would seem to be quite sufficient if all the hungry and jobless people in the country are taken into account. People in the private sector still earn the highest salaries (Duvenhage, 1999:4).

## **2.7 What age has to do with it**

### *2.7.1 Cognitive and affective development and attitude*

The target group investigated in this study represents learners of a variety of ages ranging more or less from eleven to fourteen, and the question that arises is whether these learners can be regarded as adolescents. Lambert *et al.* (1978:2) assert that the usual definition of adolescents pinned it down to an age span varying from ten to thirteen concluding the stage at nineteen to twenty-one. They go on to say that it is rather difficult to connect a specific age group to the term as many adults aged 35 or 40 manifest behaviour typically characteristic of adolescents. They prefer to see it as a developmental process starting with puberty that is the forerunner of dramatic changes in the person's life, until they reach maturity. The age of relevance to this study involves learners aged 11–14.



Piaget describes how children construct and acquire knowledge according to their various age groups. He is widely recognised for his theory of cognitive development among educators and child psychologists as laying the groundwork for improving the understanding of children's development. Piaget (1928:246) distinguishes four stages of development in a child's growth of reasoning:

Four stages can be picked out in the evolution of modality. The first lasts till the age of 2-3, the second extends from 2-3 to 7-8, the third from 7-8 to 11-12, and the fourth begins at this age. During the first stage, reality may be said to be simply and solely what is desired. Freud's 'pleasure principle' deforms and refashions the world to its liking. The second stage marks the appearance of two heterogeneous but equal realities – the world of play and the world of observation. The third marks the beginning of hierarchical arrangement, and the fourth marks the completion of this hierarchy, thanks to the introduction of a new plane- that of formal thought and logical assumptions.

Piaget (1928:251) continues to say about the target group of this study (ages eleven and older) that

[at] the age of 11-12, on the contrary, modality in the thought of the child becomes more or less what it is with us, or at least, with the uneducated adult. The various planes of reality – play, verbal reality, observation - are set in a hierarchy that is defined in relation to a single criterion-experience. And this hierarchy is possible thanks to the notions of necessity and possibility which are now extended to verbal thought.

The assumption that we learn by experience is often referred to as the clean slate approach. The environment impresses itself on us and ideas come from experience. This approach places a tremendous responsibility on teachers and regards the learner as a clean slate written upon by the teachers, absorbing all that is presented. Students are seen as passive consumers (Cowan, 1978:18-19).

Piaget explains the child's intellectual development in terms of schemata (intellectual structures that organise events as they are perceived and classified into groups according to common characteristic which never stops changing due to assimilation which is the integration of new conceptual matter). Hand in hand with assimilation

goes accommodation (the creation of new schemata or the modification of old schemata and the balance between assimilation and accommodation which he terms the equilibrium (Wadsworth, 1978:144-146).

Cowan (1978:22) explains assimilation as the process of adding those extra elements into an existing structure with the result that new elements are not simply changed but also transformed in profound ways. Food is altered when it is ingested and its structure is changed during digestion. In the same way assimilation is applied to language and thought. Some existing structure is thus always changed by existing cognitive behaviour. Eight year-olds are said to be conceptually egocentric and assimilate the world to fit their own point of view. The child is seen in terms of a flowering seed, incorporating new knowledge and events and not a mere clean slate written upon. But because we also learn new information it of necessity involves accommodation, a process during which information is added and processed. When one ingests food, the structure of the food changes, but energy is also released and chemicals are absorbed so that the body constantly adjusts, changing itself according to the nature of the food ingested.

Piaget's theory holds that cognitive development consists of a coherent process of qualitative change of the cognitive structures by means of successive qualitative changes. New schemata do not replace the older ones but the latest ones are accommodated in various complex ways, resulting in constant reconstruction. The processes known as accommodation and assimilation are said to function jointly in order to create an equilibrium that is a more integrated and logical structure (Cowan, 1978:24).

Wadsworth (1978:15) supplies a summary of Piaget's developmental stages:

1. *The stage of sensori-motor intelligence (0-2 years)*

During this stage behaviour is essentially motor, but schemata are constructed as the child thinks conceptually.

2. *The stage of pre-operational thought (2-7 years)*

Rapid conceptual development takes place and the child develops language rapidly. Reasoning is, however, still prelogical and semilogical.

3. *The stage of concrete operations (7-11 years)*

The child develops the ability to think logically.

4. *The stage of formal operations (11-15 years)*

Cognitive structures reach their greatest level of development and the child can start reasoning logically. It should be noted that each step builds upon the other and becomes integrated with them. These age group divisions are normative and denote the typical behaviour and reasoning of an average child. One aspect that remains unaltered about Piaget's theory is the fact that the **order of cognitive development is fixed.**

The stage of relevance to this study is the stage of adolescence and thus **formal operations** as the age group of the **target learners** subjected to the preference tests in this empirical study are all between the ages 11-14 years, with a few up to the age of 15 years (because of the various ages grouped within one grade).

The child's cognitive structures reach maturity during this stage and the potential quality of reasoning is reached. The adolescent with fully-developed structural equipment has the potential to think as well as adults do, but not necessarily as sophisticatedly as adults. Assimilation and accommodation take place in order to deal

with the disequilibrium and in order ultimately to change the schemata. The child falling within this age group can start to solve problems and **reason effectively** independent of past and current experiences. Both children and adults spend a great deal of time in a disequilibrated state where imbalances persist (sometimes in short bursts and sometimes for longer periods) when, for example, accommodation predominates and minds may be temporarily accommodating more than assimilating (Cowan, 1978:26-27).

The child develops various intellectual structures during the formal operational stage. The child becomes capable of thinking logically. This does not, however, mean that the adolescent thinks logically at all times. It should be noted that people do acquire new knowledge and elaborate on old content even after the phase of formal operations. The adolescent is said to be logical but egocentric - thus not always fully realistic. The child must respond to the environment for development to occur through the processes of accommodation and assimilation. Development is thus a form of ongoing adaptation (Wadsworth, 1978:20-21).

McNally (1974:69) postulates that basically all psychologists agree to the fact that language contributes to the development of thought, but they differ in terms of the exact stage where it does happen. Piaget's theory holds that language only starts contributing effectively to the development of thought at the formal operational stage. The development of logical operations is linked to the stage of formal operations.

The difference in manner of reasoning between the six, eleven and fourteen year-olds can be elucidated by means of the following answers to the question as to whether King Alfred could cook (in the story written by Peel) since Alfred burnt the cakes. The six year-old replied that King Alfred could cook because kings are strong. The eleven year-old argued that he couldn't because otherwise he wouldn't have burnt the cakes. The fourteen year-old said that he could probably cook, but possibly had something on his mind. This story illustrates the difference in reasoning at various developmental stages. The qualitative difference in answers can be interpreted in

terms of Piaget's theory that there is a difference between operational knowing and logical structure. The six year-old operates at a low operative level and is unable to connect cause and effect. The eleven year-old advances to the stage of logical operations, but is tied to the information given in the text. The fourteen year-old is said to have taken into account possible extenuating circumstances and this represents looking beyond the data supplied and looking for other logical explanations and relationships (McNally, 1974:72).

Critics opposing Piaget's theory interpret his stages as discrete, as they maintain that Piaget intended the theory to be seen as separate distinguishable stages as the child is moving from one discrete stage to another, not accounting for how the processes operate to advance development and lacking explanations for how the development from lower to higher stages occurs, but researchers have also recently realised that he intended the **cognitive process** to be seen as a **flowing process** in which knowledge is built layer upon layer and not in a linear way.

Theories on cognitive development impact on writing by different authors to a very large extent. When a reader is aiming at a target group, these aspects will have to be taken into account. Piaget's distinctive developmental phases must be carefully borne in mind by authors of children's literature. The formal operational readers will look for the logical strand and connecting relationships. They can comprehend issues going beyond the observable and reason in an abstract manner - which will cause them to look for reading material imbuing the story with these challenges to reason reflectively, otherwise the reader will not take the hook and read the book. Pienaar (1989:60) maintains that stories for children are supposed to be simpler in characterisation and plot. The younger the readers, the more shorn the style should be and the less complicated the story line. The crucial caveat, however, remains to guard against "writing down" to the audience. Language should match the level of readers' cognitive development and for children it should be simple and direct. Compound sentences should be reduced to the minimum. Dialogue is crucially important, as it can "brisk up unity and splice the story together" (Pienaar 1989:60). He also reminds

those who are writing for children that children's authors are addressing the child in every adult as well.

Wadsworth (1978:144-145) recognises important implications of Piaget's theory of cognitive development for reading. Compare the following set of principles:

1. Reading, writing and spelling should not be separated from one another as they need to occur together.
2. Children need to realize that graphic symbols represent written words in order to construct meaning.
3. Written language is a form of social knowledge and should be done in interaction with others. The child must spontaneously be able to construct a social approved use of the written language.
4. The child must have assimilated the objects in his frame of reference-individualising reading.
5. Piaget emphasises the importance of motivation in reading. The focus should be on the child's code breaking rather than on the mechanics

It stands to reason that reading and cognitive processes are interrelated and the issue of reading as cognitive process will be covered in more detail in chapter 3.

### 2.7.2 *The South African context and age*

Note the following heading in the *Sunday Times*:

**Age: The R15bn crisis**

***Cost of older pupils cripples SA's schools,  
cheats kids of equipment and books***

Compare the following heading next to a woman's picture in the newspaper:

***GRADUATE OF HARD KNOCKS:***

***Ntombekhaya Blom's schooling has been disrupted by epileptic seizures. Now she has been told at 25 she is too old for Grade 10 (Pretorius, 1998:7).***

One of the dilemmas the reading teacher has to put up with is the fact that apart from cultural problems encountered in multicultural classroom, s/he also has to deal with the problem of how to handle learners belonging to **diverse age groups** in one classroom in South Africa and especially in Black schools that have the largest age differences in one grade. Pupils who are over-age are encouraged to attend technical colleges and adult education centres. According to Pretorius (1998:7) South Africa is spending a third of its education budget on **over-age pupils** and lamentably on drop-outs (an activity which amounted to the staggering sum of R15-billion for 1998). The average learner takes about fifteen years to make it to matric. The problem that arises is when learners falling within the appropriate age group for a grade must be turned away because older ones are taking up space. The objection raised to tertiary institutions and colleges is that parents do not have money to finance expensive education.

Equally alarming statistics are:

- ◆ Fifteen percent (1,8 million) of all pupils are three or more years older than their peers;
- ◆ Twenty-five percent (three million) are two or more years older than they should be;
- ◆ Sixty percent of the 585 254 matrics are over-age;
- ◆ Only half of all Grade 8 pupils are the age they should be; and
- ◆ Thirty-eight percent of Grade 1 pupils repeat the year (Pretorius, 1998:7).

A very crucial reason for grouping learners together according to their ages is the reality that is more effective to teach in a situation where cognitive and affective

developmental levels of children are more or less similar because they are of roughly the same age. It becomes an almost impossible task for a teacher to cater for a large number of learners all of different age groups, as their emotional and intellectual abilities will vary and the teacher will have to look at various levels of difficulty in, for example, reading books and various levels of emotional development, for example the type of story that will be suitable reading material for a specific age group.

During adolescence, affective development is characterised by two major factors, viz. the development of idealistic feelings and the formation of the personality. Idealistic feelings involve the ability to reason about the future and to think about thinking. Adolescents will not accept what is not logical and can reason as logically as adults, with the difference that adolescents do not yet dispose of a true notion of what the real world is like. They have this idealistic view of the real world that results in egocentrism, which is in fact a constant companion of cognitive development. According to adolescents, what is logical is always right and what is illogical is always wrong. Adolescents are often involved in idealistic crises. They also tend to egocentrically try and reform the world and society and become severe critics of society and institutions.

Their behaviour is often seen by adults as rebellious, antisocial, thoughtless, ungrateful and generally wrong. The idealistic reformer stage is necessary for the higher more mature stage that the adolescent will reach later. When shaping personality the adolescent constructs a certain codification of rules according to which he she would function. They still argue very egocentrically and believe rules are there for their own sake. Adolescents also determine what is a lie and believe that any form of lying is done intentionally. They also believe in justice and punishment being dispensed equally. Adolescents are also often recognised for having a bleak sense of isolation and loneliness. The question that now arises is whether the learner or reader in question has a specific attitude towards the material and the language he is reading on the basis of being a member from a different language identity and of belonging to a specific age group. At a general level, attitude is defined as:



a disposition to react favourably or unfavourably to a class of objects. This disposition is often taken to comprise three components: feelings (affective element), thoughts (cognitive element) and, following upon these, predispositions to act in a certain way (behavioural element) (Edwards, 1994:97).

The original meaning of the word **attitude** was posture or pose in drama and painting. The word is derived from the Latin word “aptitude” and the Italian word “atto” and its root meaning of “aptitude for action”, thus having a tendency towards action. Language attitudes are also constructed through inspecting one’s own attitude (Baker, 1992:11).

Baker (1992:12) recognises Plato’s distinction of various action parts of attitude. These comprise cognitive, affective components and readiness for action. The cognitive component is said to include concerns on thought and belief, the affective component concerns the feeling towards the attitude object and overtly stated attitudes may conceal covert beliefs and it should be noted that sometimes one should delve deeper in order to arrive at the true cause of attitude. Surface evaluations are not always sufficient. The cognitive and affective attitudes will result in behaviour when an individual is ready to take a decision or to make certain choices. It should also be noted that ideology is regarded as a global attitude, referring to broad perspectives, whereas attitude tends to be linked with objects. A further distinction is made between motives and attitude where attitude is described as more object-specific and motives more goal-specific. Motives are also said to have existing drives whereas attitudes may produce drives (Baker, 1992:15).

Palardy (1997:68) asserts that concomitant attitudes that youngsters develop are critical in order to develop life-long readers. The opportunity for readers to choose among a variety of trade books in lieu of working only with one selected basal will whet the appetite and keep attention riveted to reading books. Not only does attitude influence successful reading, but it also exerts a powerful influence on the classroom atmosphere.

Attitude involves the top-down approach, which is dealt with in Chapter 3 in explaining reading, because the experience which includes the affective, cognitive and behavioural elements is taken into account when evaluating the reading process and establishing the reader's profile. Auerbach and Paxton (1997:14) researched reading habits and attitudes and found that the readers' metacognitive awareness of the readers' reading process and strategies exerts a definite influence on reading proficiency and instils an enjoyment of reading.

## 2.8 Personality development

When considering all the plausible factors considered to be able to exert an influence on the reader at a specific age engaged in reading, the question that arises is also whether personality can be linked with reading enthusiasm. The introvert with a less social character may probably be more inclined to read extensively than the extrovert with a more social personality.

According to Cohen (1976:16) personality development goes hand in hand with psychological development. Personality development is influenced by biological, psychological and social experiences and basically originates from biological structure and social experiences. Personality, according to psychoanalytic theory, is organized according to the following structures: the **id**, the **ego** and the **superego**. According to Freud these three entities operate in an integrative fashion. The id forms an integral part of the early childhood and fulfils basic biological needs and functions. It is responsible for self-interest and the gratification of pleasure and avoidance of pain. The pursuit of self-pleasure may entail the dependence on the caretaker and the tendency of rejecting independent skills. The caretaker will then force the child to start taking responsibility for himself and he has to deal with a world of interests and own wishes. Ego means behaviour and it helps the id to allow personal adaptation through meaningful cognitive behaviour. The child develops strategies of interpersonal interaction. The third structure of personality is the superego that forms

the cultural and social legacy of the person. The person may accept the standards of excellence and experience feelings of disfavour because of personal failure. Both the superego and the ego make little distinction between subjective and objective experience. Both are oppressive and uncompromising in their demands on the individual and are in fact irrational. Each of the three structures (id, ego and superego) develops through interaction with the environment. A major influence on development ensues when the person meets various challenges with the advent of physical maturity. Decision-making leads to conflict management and personality begins to form (Cohen, 1976:24-29).

Cohen (1976:42-43) points out that the cognitive developmental theories involve thought as a central element and all the stages of development, follow a unitary-integrative perspective of human adaptation, form parallel accomplishments and differ in approach from psychoanalytic theories in that they emphasise cognitive or intellectual factors as mediators of experience and focus attention on age-related dynamics.

It can therefore be conceived as possible that if reading were to be encouraged from the early childhood stages onward and the reading experience brought pleasant associations and experiences, reading would be associated with a pleasurable action and be done more often than would be the case with a child less exposed to reading books.

## **2.9 Social development**

### *2.9.1 Friends - peer group pressure*

A friend in need is a friend indeed and that is exactly what adolescents turn out to be for one another during this stage of development. Lerner and Spanier (1980:45) contend that during this phase of transition adolescents need all the support they can get and therefore they also rely heavily on one another for support and guidance. Peer

groups have a marked influence on adolescents. Relationships with friends during adolescence are often referred to as intra-generational relationships, because peers are born within the same generation. The intra-generational relationships are said to hold the key to popularity or rejection. The peer group will act as a sounding board and ultimately gives feedback or provides legitimising behaviour. Peers determine (informally) the way in which adolescents dress and how they act and will also consequently influence what they read. If a book becomes a fad, everybody will read it. If the in-group or clique should approve of it, it will be acceptable.

According to Pillari (1988:202) social relationships with peers assume their peak once learners reach the stage of adolescence. From peers, the target learners receive signs of belonging and of being successful. The function of peer relations can also be positive in that adolescents become more independent and peers help adolescents to break away from their parents to participate in healthy competition and to promote heterosexual attachment. Conformity to the core of common values is also reputedly of great importance and those who spurn the group's values are often rejected, at times quite ignominiously.

Adolescents are regarded as conformists to their peers and seek acceptable behaviour patterns. Money is seen to be of serious importance for the adolescent and for the lower-income peer group, the group becomes the determiner of status and the binding factor to such an extent that the peer group's values and goals become the ultimate lodestar. This is often a cause of gangsterism and delinquency (Pillari, 1988:204).

Krappmann (1985:156-157) identifies the following modes of integration in a peer group society: The mode of friendship, choosing friends according to their personality make-up, sharing pleasant and unpleasant experiences, counting on each other in emergencies, the mode of partnership where the common pursuit of activities such as sport is important, the mode of comradeship where they are regarded as equals in conforming to rules and values, the mode of rambling which is a mode often associated with risky games and exploitation for selfish fun, and the mode of isolation

where the person is an outsider yearning to be accepted by a group.

Socially approved reading will thus also have to reflect peer group values and the circumstances under which these learners live. Adolescents are often seen to share certain values and the most problematic of all might be peer group pressure. It is common knowledge that gun-toting pupils, gangsterism and rape all form part of the adolescent's ordinary school day in South Africa, especially in Black schools (according to a survey for the drama series *Yizo Yizo*). Pretorius (1998:5) maintains that the survey paints a rather depressing scenario of schools in the grips of knives, drinking, taking drugs and raping.

Friends and peer group pressure have as a result led to a culture of fear in many schools. Unwanted pregnancies also form part of this rather gloomy picture and schoolgirls do not know where to go for abortions. Even male teachers are involved in sexual relationships with learners and on Mondays many teachers arrive rather tired because of a hangover. The report states that teachers feel numbed by circumstances - paralysed, not able to act. Learners who are acquiring high marks are also subjected to the PHD syndrome namely the "pull him/her down" syndrome (Pretorius, 1997:5).

Emotional development and the target reader's physical change in the process of becoming a grown-up can also be linked with peer group pressure – in this instance, pressure to share in experimentation with sexual activities. The target learners aged 11-13 share a classroom in many schools with learners up to sixteen years of age. A serious need in South African schools is the need for children to be appropriately sexually educated. Learners who are literate will be able to read about how to handle their own sexual and emotional development, as the taboo approach of head-in-the-sand is totally unacceptable. A study in Kwazulu Natal revealed that 20% of adolescents are sexually active, learners aged 11–12 were already sexually active and the average age according to the HSRC for a first sexual experience was fourteen (Garson & Mtshali, 1998:6).

Statistics on HIV-infected adolescents are quite shattering. Adolescents are vulnerable in that they believe themselves to be almost immortal and think that it will not happen to them. Twelve per cent of girls who visit antenatal clinics are HIV positive, fifteen million babies annually in the world are born to mothers aged 15-19 and 60% of all new infections occur among people aged between 15 and 24 (Garson & Mtshali, 1998:6).

Another major problem gullible and curious youngsters have to face is drug abuse. According to Debbie Fox (1999:10), Edgar Lennitch, a social worker from the South African National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (SANCA) at Mitchell's Plain reported that cases of bubble-gum laced with LSD were a grim reality just like in *Yizo Yizo*. Drug abuse has exploded onto the school scene since economic sanctions were lifted. Dagga and Mandrax top the list in specifically Mitchell's Plain schools while Ecstasy and LSD are popular at raves. Alcohol abuse is rare among learners in comparison with drugs which is a problem snowballing out of control. The debilitating effect of substance abuse on families and friends is horrifying. Compare the following statistics from *The Teacher's* pull-out:

People working with teenage drug users say that this year at least 3,8 million South African schoolchildren will experiment with drugs, and of those, one in six will become dependent.

A survey conducted in 1997 in the Western Cape estimated that Cape Town's grade 11 pupils attending government schools spend about R22-million a year on alcohol, drugs and cigarettes (Montanyane, 1999:1).

Montanyane (1999:9) reflects head-on on the problems endemic to our educational circumstances with regard to adolescents and peer group pressure. She asserts that the high incidence of drug and alcohol abuse, attitudes condoning rape and sexual abuse and the helplessness of teachers to deal with discipline problems since the abolition of corporal punishment have all contributed to inculcate a culture of hopelessness.

Like the hard-hitting new series *Yizo Yizo*, reading books should also reflect the real world so that learners can identify with the content.

### 2.9.2 *Guidance: the role of teachers and parents*

Kerishnie Naicker, a former Miss South Africa on her favourite teacher:

Without offending any of my many other wonderful teachers, it has to be Brian Josiah, my Mathematics teacher from grade 10-12. At that point in my life he was a strong and positive role model for me and other students. He was an absolute perfectionist who was meticulous in the way he talked, walked and dressed. He was truly professional, a great confidante as well as someone who always encouraged us to aim high and to strive to attain our goals (Bridgraj, 1998:11).

A message by Shado Twala, radio and television personality to other teachers out there. Teachers must be:

..friendly with their pupils- they'll be surprised what they can get out of youngsters that way.

When you are scared as a child, then you can't perform because you don't experience yourself the way you like to, you lose confidence. They should be friends with the kids and let kids explore. That can only happen if teachers are dealing with fewer children (Diseko, 1999:16).

- ◆ Cohen (1976:92-98) asserts that the primary characteristic of interpersonal relationships is reciprocity. This involves stimulus interchange and as a result involves the role of the parents, teachers in performance. These forces all shape sociocultural values. Social adaptation is associated with and founded upon distinct psychological, biological and social accomplishments. Parents can influence their children's social behaviour in that they can focus on their offsprings' increasing competence and start training their children for life and its ever-increasing demands by teaching them important social and life skills. The social bond thus constituted is seen as an interpersonal union that derives its identity from emergent dyadic communication. Motivation is of paramount

importance when assessing performance and measuring achievement. Achievement is based on motives learned in the course of development that reflects values and aspirations of interpersonal and socio-cultural experiences. Achievement is associated with competencies and the performance as outcome in order to attain approval as opposed to disapproval. The young child learns gradually that his behaviour is monitored in terms of performance criteria.

- ◆ A second factor that influences achievement is the nature and quality of response.
- ◆ Thirdly the adolescent's behaviour is evaluated in terms of the situation or circumstances surrounding its display.

Achievement is also equated with personality and intellectual attributes, for example, high achievers often have a high self-esteem, accept authority, have good relations with their peers and set academically realistic goals for themselves. Achievement is also said to enhance intellectual growth and competitiveness and independence are also of relevance to performance. Cultural influences are again seen to be of central importance to the understanding of social achievement. Cohen (1976:141) claims that:

In general, cultural group membership and social affiliations have been found to correlate with achievement goals and activity. Regarding the influence of culture as a general dimension, the nature of cultural life characteristic of a given society (e.g., competitive versus non-competitive orientation) serves to outline both social values and interpersonal dynamics instrumental in the perpetuation of achievement-related behaviors.

No social institution can exert a more powerful influence on the adolescent than the social unit of the family. Although the family units may vary, basically all children form part of a unit of related individuals in which children are reared. Children and adolescents may become part of more than one family during their development because of divorce and remarriage (Lerner & Spanier, 1980:49).

Parents are regarded as the most salient force to motivate children to perform and achieve. Cohen (1976:144) maintains that:



Parent-child relations have been viewed as among the most- significant factors associated with the development of achievement in children. Parents, principally as primary socialization agents, have been considered to assume roles highly commensurate with definitions of achievement and to encourage the stability of striving behavior. The parent is regarded as a major impetus to achievement motivation through his approval of the child's behavior. First, he serves a critical function in the inception of achievement-oriented aspirations through his control of contingent reinforcement. Second, it has been noted that the parent may provide through modeling both viable and pervasive (rather than transitory or situation-specific) demonstrations of competence that the child may emulate. By his employment of various skills, the parent offers distinct behavioral cues allowing for imitation and subsequent practice leading to proficiency. Third, the parent serves as a major referent for the evaluation of behavioral achievements through his provision of standards of excellence.

What is happening at our schools undeniably impacts on what is happening at home. The current changes in our South African educational system also have far-reaching consequences for the parents at home. The parents' role in their children's education is more important than ever in the past. In a country that is watched by the rest of the world as a ground-breaker on more than one front, escalating changes bring about more stress and confusion than ever.

Knowles (1999:1) asserts that parents have to be open minded and be willing to learn new approaches in order to set the example of accepting novel concepts and ideas. He warns against demands and interrogations that will cause negativity and stress. In order to encourage high interest levels, a genuine concern with the children about new concepts and support which will contribute to high interest levels, curiosity must always be stimulated and a constant awareness of the child's self-image is born in mind. The more dogmatic parents are, the less creative the children will be. Providing children with a safe home and offering security and care, accompanied by a fixed routine at home will influence learners to try their level best.

Educational psychologists around the world agree that just about every child can be

successful at school if the parents motivate the child sufficiently. Motivation starts at home where parents must try and answer the basic needs of their children in a relaxed and happy family. The basic needs of children comprise the following:

- ◆ The **more-care less candy** method seems to be apt in showing the child that you care.
- ◆ The child should know what is allowed and what not and he needs to learn how to solve conflict constructively in a safe environment.
- ◆ Listen appreciatively to what your child has to say and communicate with him by making conversation with him every day.
- ◆ Give your child plenty of recognition and when criticising, criticise the issue and not the person.
- ◆ Providing your child's basic needs will help making him a winner (Erasmus-Kritzinger, 1999:1).

Pillari (1988:199) remarks that parents have an enormous responsibility towards their children with regard to staying together, supplying a stable learning environment at home. Many learners find themselves in more than one family during their socialisation and it is reported that two out of five marriages are expected to end up in the divorce court. Forty-five per cent of adolescents can expect to live without one of their parents for a period of time before they reach adulthood. For a child to become an autonomous individual and simultaneously maintain the continuity of parental and family relationships is quite a complicated task. The adolescent is constantly hovering between the extremes of compliance and conformity and alienation and rejection of social groups.

Apart from nurturing a haven delicately feathered with security, parents also take forceful action when involved in educational affairs and choosing an educational institution according to their own value systems, appropriate for their offspring. The education reporter for the *Star*, Jacqui Reeves (1998:7) comments on parents opting out of South African education lately by conducting a "chicken run" in order to get

their children enrolled in independent schools at exorbitant costs, where they maintain that their children will receive individual attention and proper discipline. They are trying to escape the unknown fate of South Africa's education system. Parents will of necessity also carry over to their children their own value systems and cultural assumptions. They influence their children to take certain stances, which will also be picked up by the teachers and fellow peers in the reading class.

Smith (1978:186) sees the role of the teacher not as that of a ringmaster or dispenser of instructional routines, but as a facilitator and organiser guiding the learners while developing the intuition, understanding and insight into the work dealt with. Teachers must approach learners sympathetically and develop a sense of awareness for particularly the individual in need of special attention. The reading teacher should have as his/her primary aim the provision of models when learners do not see the relevance of reading. They should help and assist the learners not to fear failure to such an extent that they do not engage in reading at all. Teachers should determine the degree of difficulty of texts and should leave the learners to choose for themselves and to learn by their own mistakes.

Teachers must have an understanding of what makes reading difficult e.g. concentration on visual detail which may cause tunnel vision if the words are not studied properly in combination with the visual pictures and sketches. The child's fund of knowledge should be constantly developed and the teacher should facilitate the use of non-visual information too. Teachers should focus on "good" reading by teaching word-drills and pointing out that reading can only become successful if words appear in meaningful sequences (Smith, 1978:190).

Palardy (1997:67-69) identifies the following characteristics as forming part of literature-based instruction that should be followed by the teacher:

1. Teachers must remain in touch with the vast growing number of children's books. There are 60 000 children's trade books currently in print and the number is still increasing, but it is lamentable to note that only one-quarter of these books is

regarded as suitable reading material in the classroom.

2. Teachers must have good organisational skills and plan effectively from an instructional as well as a curriculum point of view.

An adequate supply of the materials needed is essential.

Mbeki (1998:23) comments on the behaviour of some of the teachers in the South African context who are in fact responsible for enormous problems, for example, specifically Black teachers taking food from learners. They, according to Mbeki live by the rules of traitors and criminals. He is worried about unprofessional behaviour of teachers who collect salaries of phantom teachers and teachers who are drunk at school. He is also concerned about teachers coming late to school and he links results at school directly with teacher motivation and behaviour.

## **2.10 Motor cars and Barbie dolls - sex role development**

Boys are bought racing cars and girls plastic Barbie dolls with pink outfits simulating living in a world of imagination. Girls dress their dolls in fantastic dresses, brush their hair and are taken everywhere by Ken, Barbie's dazzling male friend racing off in his car. It is also recorded that boys and girls start behaving differently from the very beginning of their lives, and it is not only crass consumerism that persuades them to join the cult of owning a Barbie doll and playing out the fantasy fully.

Grobler (1988:126) asserts that sex stereotyping happens as soon as the child is born. The jubilant exclamations of "It's a girl" or "It's a boy" are soon followed by pink or blue outfits and suitable toys and décor. Gender identification is adopted during early socialisation by means of channelling, which takes place with sex-differentiated toys such as cars for boys and dolls for girls and manipulation by dressing the girls in overtly feminine clothes.

All the variables discussed so far could in fact in some or other way be linked with

cultural orientation and it thus comes as no surprise that the role of sex in influencing the reader profile is indeed also determined by cultural aspects. Cohen (1976:185) asserts that:

The manner in which different societies socialize their youth in acceptance and performance of traditional folkways falls most properly within the province of cultural theory. Findings in this area, however, are nevertheless instructive in terms of their general implications for an understanding of social processes. Among different cultures the task of teaching social adaptation is rudimentary to survival. Irrespective of variations in child-rearing practices and rites of social initiation, each society creates parameters leading to behavioral definitions that perpetuate its way of life. Of significance, in each culture, gender appears to serve a primary function in discriminating between social roles initially accorded to boys and girls entering society and those roles assumed by men and women in the performance of advanced social accomplishments.

Between the ages of one and three years the child develops a sense of distinction between male and female. He further learns about this matter through sex-role attributes, leading to the development of a particular sex-role preference. Boys learn to imitate behaviour of men and girls seek roles of feminine orientation. Parents serve as models for the child's behaviour. Peers, media models, parents and teachers all serve as role models to the young developing child. A male child may adopt non-competitive attitudes via his parental orientation, but he will of necessity (have to) become competitive when he is interacting with his peer group. Public criteria serve as the basis for gender distinctions. Role selection is also influenced by choices made by the individual as well as feeling. Sex-role adoption includes effects of orientation and preference upon actual behaviour. Certain sex-role standards associated with cultural assumptions of specific groups may, for example, teach girls to become affectionate and caring to prepare them for their later female role of taking care of children whereas boys are taught not to show their emotions easily and to be aggressive towards others (Cohen, 1976:192-193).

Cohen (1976:198) identifies the following three factors as of prime importance in

influencing sex-role development, parent-child relations, parent absence and family interaction.

Parents play the most important role in the child's sex typing, since they act as an early and continuing source of learning. Father-son pairings where the son is more likely to adopt the male role emanates from a relationship where the father is more likely to be the dispenser of punishment and reward, with the result that the son will accept the father as salient model for identification. Studies have also revealed that sex typing and the effect of parental dominance are more critical for boys than for girls. In summary it has become evident that in case of a low level of warmth at home, the tendency of the child is to imitate the dominant parent, but in case the less dominant parent is warm and affective, the effect is neutralised (Cohen, 1976:199).

Female role development takes place differently from that of males. Parental dominance seems to have a more profound influence on sex typing than is recorded for males. Maternal nurturance is positively linked with imitation among daughters. In conclusion one can say that power is closely linked with sex role- identification in males and nurturance between the female mother and daughter have same consequences for sex typing among females (Cohen, 1976:201).

For boys, paternal presence serves the dual function of providing for the acquisition of sex-typed attributes through modelling and reinforcing the child's performance of sex-appropriate behaviour. For girls, in contrast, fathers do not play an instructional part in sex-role development, but appear to aid primarily in facilitating the girl's refinement of previously acquired behavioural patterns. In the young boy sex-role orientation is particularly influenced by the father in the pre-school years. Father absence is seen to play a major role in the male sex-typing. For girls falling within the age group of pre-school years, presence of the father seems to be less important for sex -typing as the girls mainly form their concept of their role by imitating their mothers. After early childhood, the father's role upon female sex-typing becomes more important (Cohen, 1976:201).

Pillari (1988:191) comments on the emotional oscillation between the poles of confusion and depression, self-preoccupation and isolation and positive identification temporarily. Even positive identification brings about moments of role confusion and persistent fears that he/she is losing hold of himself. The process of identification entails the integration of a new self-image. Differences in male and female patterns are also influenced by upbringing and the pressures of society to perform certain tasks according to male and female roles that are also culturally determined. For most girls adolescence is not all stress and storm, but is admittedly a period of dependence and independence conflict, with friendships to steer them through the period of establishing identity (Pillari, 1988:194).

It is imperative to investigate identification and the disturbance of the possibility of sex-typing especially among children coming from environments where parents are separated because of socio-economic problems or separation and divorce, as these children 's preferences for certain reading material may be influenced by their socio-economic background as well as their positive or negative identification with parents or role models.

Grobler (1988:127) is of the opinion that children's books are an important influential factor when it comes to sex typing. She argues that one cannot say whether the structure of society is simply reflected in books, or whether the reading books are simply supposed to represent some kind of reality to the children. The child will unconsciously absorb sexism from reading books and this emphasises the vital role authors play in the lives of the growing child who has to decide on his role and sex typing. Books on the shelves of school libraries are often selected by educators who follow culturally traditional socialisation. Many of the books bought at school are selected for their educative purposes and are bought with state money and should therefore be "responsibly" acquired. Adults tend in overt and covert ways to determine the roles the boys and girls should adopt and play an important role in the reinforcement of the roles thus imprinted.

## 2.11 Religion

Scientists have recently claimed to have found physical evidence of the G-spot in the human brain. Dr. Persinger has done some relevant research on activating certain brain tissue in order to determine the existence of the so-called other G-spot in the human body. . By applying a brain magnetic stimulator, it was possible for Dr Persinger to “see God”. Thus, it is maintained, apart from IQ (intellectual intelligence) and EQ (emotional intelligence), there also exists the SQ or spiritual intelligence. They claim that research has shown that 40% of all people in western culture have told about their spiritual experiences, telling of an experience of contact with a deity. Professor Danie Louw of the Stellenbosch says that a religious spot is nothing new and claims that we all have an awareness of the existence of a god, which is referred to in Hebrew as Nefesh (Anon, 2000a:62).

It stands to reason then that if scientists, distinct from religious orientation and stances, maintain that mankind can never separate itself from God or a god, this is an issue that should merit serious attention. When authors write, this G-spot will thus also feature in some or other way as man has only a limited number of years influenced by time that he can live to read and write because of his transitory nature, a fact that many existentialists have struggled with, as death sets the boundaries of life and prescribes the goal towards which we move (Glicksberg, 1960:44). Whatever, whether a Christian and part of half the population on earth converted to the Christian faith (Anon, 2000b:1) or whether converted to another faith, man cannot escape his religious attachment.

Religion is also intricately interwoven with the considerations of this study, for as Glicksberg (1960:242-243) maintains, religion is culturally determined. The way man sees the world is culturally shaped. He claims that:

The poet cannot throw off the intellectual influence of his age, the scientific values of the twentieth century; these make up an integral and



inescapable part of his culture.

Glicksberg (1960:10) writes about the universal implication of religion for authors. He is of the opinion that:

No age can continue to live fruitfully without a sustaining sense of faith that it believes to be true and universal in its implications. But if there are no collectively sanctioned "religious" values to which the writer can confidently refer and to which he can give his assent, then he is bound to feel "lost", for his very means of communication seem to be cut off.

Nietzsche's life is an example of an author who experienced this loss of the sense of meaning that resulted in his aimlessness and confinement in a madhouse where he struggled with the yawning abyss of nothingness. He claimed that God was dead and that he couldn't allow the twentieth century to happen as if He were real (Glicksberg, 1960:32-33).

Glicksberg makes the point in case that man will border on the brink of vertigo should he not accept the reality of being religiously linked and that the writer will struggle with the dizzying metaphysical dread that will cause him to view life as a useless passion. Religion thus shields us from the force that would drive us to feel utterly lost and useless, floundering in a dark swamp of uncertainty and solitude (Glicksberg, 1960:10).

Against the background of the consideration of religious issues, Maifair (1998) contends in a cautionary sense that the basic plot of stories consisting of character, situation, conflict, action and resolution all form part of writing for children. The main thing, however, in getting the story published, is to overcome the problem of focusing on the moral lesson to be preached. It is essential that the story should come first. Maifair (1998) warns against the tendency to preach:

But suppose you're writing for the Christian market. For this specialized field, most writers don't begin with character or situation or

conflict; they begin with message, with a strong and very specific truth or lesson they want to convey to the young readers. The problem—and often their biggest stumbling block to getting published – is that many of these writers never get beyond that truth or “lesson”. They need to remember what a senior editor at a major Evangelical publishing house once told me: the single, most important key to getting Children’s fiction published in the Christian market is making sure the story comes first.

Maifair (1998) proposes the following tips when writing for Christian readers:

1. A central character kids can relate to, in other words not a flawless, perfect central character.
2. Showing the result of learning a lesson in portraying it in changed behaviour of characters
3. Be careful of adults peopling the stories to preach the sermon.
4. Do not allow adult characters to force the children to change behaviour.

It is also an inescapable fact that despite the existence of a variety of religions in South Africa and thus also in schools, schools do choose to support (even if covertly) certain religious principles which serve as the religion to be followed such as, for example, the Jewish school Yeshiva College in Johannesburg that maintains that the Jewish religion is self-preservation. The principal is of the opinion that learners must be versed in their own religions first and openly expresses his favouring of the Jewish religion (Grey, 2000a).

The Shree Bharat Sharda Mandir School in Lenasia near Johannesburg is a school following the religious principles of praying to Mother Saraswati, the female manifestation of god that represents wisdom and learning. Another picture appearing in the school on the wall is a picture of Ghandi. The principal Nadarajan Pillay says that they promote the Hindu religion and they take Gujerati as a compulsory subject in school. Hinduism is given a place in the school curriculum as a cultural subject (Grey, 2000b:11).

It is also a fact that the Christian faith is being practised in many schools, although not all the learners hold the views of the devout. The learners of Trinity House College outside Johannesburg have decided to exercise tolerance when it comes to religious concerns and listen to the various viewpoints, each having their own principles to follow. The head boy of the school admits that despite coming from a Jewish family that supports the Jewish religion, he supports the Christian faith and he knows that his Israeli relatives would reject him for it, but that is the faith that he upholds. The school has a policy of religious tolerance even in their subject matter when it comes to Biology and Natural sciences and the consideration of the highly contentious subject of evolution (Grey, 2000c:10).

O'Connor and Grey (2000:10) relate how they investigated many gods in schools and what the true picture at schools concerning religious orientation is. The learners attending Florida Park High worship deities as diverse as Allah and Yahweh. The school programme makes room for practising religious principles and they have a three-hour break each week to offer opportunities to practise the different religions. Forty per cent of the learners are actively involved in participating in religious practices during these periods set aside. The various religious groups enjoy good reciprocal relations and it is only near Christmas that Christian songs are allowed to be sung in the school by all. Students are also allowed to read from their own scriptures during assemblies whatever faith they follow. The general assumption is that "an education system, which excludes the religious dimension of life, its convictions, experience, traditions and ethical values, is incomplete" (O'Connor & Grey, 2000:10).

## **2.12 Summary**

The target reader's profile is constituted of sociolinguistic variables such as speech variation and bilingualism. The target language under discussion is English as medium of instruction and as choice of communication because of its more a-political and clearly more pragmatically useful status in a country of diverse multilingual

speakers. Language also involves culture as the two variables are intimately interrelated and cultural differences should not be highlighted, but rather taken cognisance of in order to effect cultural tolerance and democracy. The target group for the study involves learners from age eleven to more or less fifteen, as the learners in the South African especially Black classroom are often, due to a variety of good and/or bad reasons, older than the expected age for the grades. Therefore the target readers can to a great extent be regarded as adolescents as the formal operational stage of Piaget includes learners from the ages of 11–13. Having studied the real-life situation of many of the readers, one is struck by the pressing need to promote literacy in South Africa, and the role of social influences such as peers, parents and teachers are also seen to be of paramount importance when determining the profile of the readers catered for. Sex-typing and role development in identification is also socially influenced. Religion is seen to be inseparable from culture and the underlying G-spot will be present in reading material, which causes parents to be involved with what their children read.

In the following chapter the emphasis will be on the act of reading, and cognisance will be taken of its importance, definitions of the act of reading, reading processes and methods.