

**THE SELECTION OF CONTENT IN ENGLISH SECOND
LANGUAGE**

by
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by

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The problem defined

The teacher of English Second Language faces the problem of selecting appropriate and valid content to present to the pupils as part of the teaching-learning situation. Brumfit (1979:184) says in this regard:

Any process of presentation by the teacher (given that in the limited time available he cannot wait for foreign language to crop up accidentally) must involve him in judgements about selection, and these judgements will only be possible to evaluate if the teacher is aware of categories on which to base the identification of items to be selected.

There is a variety of possible content in language teaching as well as various guidelines on selection of content, which may lead to teachers being daunted by the prospect of selecting any content. Brumfit (1984:88) describes this problem as follows:

Language teaching has no obvious content in the sense that history or physics teaching may be said to have. Indeed, the term 'content' is frequently ambiguous in discussions of language teaching, for it can refer simultaneously to the items of language that may be selected for the syllabus or curriculum design, or to the topics which may be included in reading, writing, or speaking - the subject matter of linguistic interactions.

Brumfit (1979:47) also states that selection of content has not been fully developed by language teachers, and deserves more consideration than it has so far received.

An additional problem, especially to the beginner teacher, is that the prescribed syllabus does not provide specific guidelines for the content of a scheme of work but rather provides minimum objectives to be reached. Selection of content is left to textbook writers and teachers. Kilfoil and Van der Walt (1989:225) explain that syllabus designers rely on textbook writers to include appropriate materials and activities, instead of compiling a too long and detailed syllabus.

Various textbooks provide ideas on methodology without specifying what to include in a scheme of work. Teachers adapt existing schemes of work by only adding a few communicative activities to an existing traditional scheme of work, which are often in reality only entertaining pastimes to lower the affective filter. At the same time, the inherent traditional content matter stays the same, despite modern trends.

The teacher has to select appropriate content that would meet the requirements set by the prescribed syllabus. This is very important since the selection of appropriate content will ensure pupil motivation. De Villiers (1991:115) found the following in an investigation on motivation among ESL learners:

Die subskaal wat die meeste negatiewe reaksie uitgelok het, is die subskaal wat vakinhoud ondersoek het. Leerlinge het grotendeels aangedui dat Engels oninteressant is, dat hulle die voorgeskrewe letterkunde nie geniet nie en dat hulle nie graag in die klas luister nie.

While the teacher has to select content according to a prescribed syllabus, he should at the same time pay attention to all aspects of the teaching-learning situation. He is also faced with the problem of differentiation, as the syllabus does not always provide sufficient, if any, differentiation between different levels of teaching and between individual pupils.

The TED syllabus states as its aim "communicative competence for personal, social, educational, occupational and academic purposes" (TED syllabus, English Second Language, 1986), an aim which covers numerous possibilities for content selection. The teacher is faced with the problem of planning the course in such a way that a

growing level of competence would be expected every year, while at the same time differentiating between pupils taking the subject on higher grade (HG), standard grade (SG), and lower grade (LG).

Content has to be organised and graded. According to Lee (1963:107) grading should make the learner's progress more rapid and easier as the content is then ordered. Grading is essential and various sets of contradicting criteria on how to implement this practically are available.

The questions that arise in this regard are:

1. What content should be selected for the teaching of ESL in the secondary school?
2. How should content be graded?
3. How can this content be applied in the teaching-learning situation?

1.2 The aims of this study

The aims of this study are to investigate different approaches to content selection and grading in ESL, and to suggest how content can be applied in the teaching-learning situation, with particular reference to a cycle of lessons.

1.3 Method of research

A survey of the relevant literature will be done. The following aspects will be discussed: the teaching-learning situation, the history of content selection, content selection and grading in ESL, and the cycle and scheme of work as essential elements in planning. These aspects will be applied to design a proposed model for the planning of a cycle.

1.4 Programme of study

In Chapter 2 the teaching-learning situation will be the focus of attention, with special reference to the place of content.

In Chapter 3 a brief historical overview of content selection in language teaching will be given.

Chapter 4 will look at possible ways to select and grade content in general.

Chapter 5 will specifically discuss selection and grading of content in ESL.

Chapter 6 will focus on the design of a cycle of lessons as part of the scheme of work. A proposed model for designing the cycle will be suggested.

Chapter 7 will conclude the study and present recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER 2

THE PLACE OF CONTENT IN THE TEACHING-LEARNING SITUATION

2.1 Introduction

The central issue to be addressed in this chapter is the place of content in the teaching-learning situation. The components of the teaching-learning situation will be analysed and discussed. The relation between these components and the selection of content will receive specific attention.

The teaching-learning situation is influenced by factors such as the type of learners, the social and political climate, the country, the background of the learners, the teaching materials and the aims and objectives set. These factors all influence the teaching-learning situation and will be discussed in detail in this chapter (see 2.3.1). Teachers select content according to the conclusions they draw after all these variables have been considered (Brumfit & Roberts, 1983:77), and they then draw up a scheme of work based on the prescribed syllabus.

This chapter argues that the teaching-learning situation forms an integrated process, with content selection and grading as essential elements.

2.2 Levels of teaching

Van der Walt (1985) points out that many countries in the world have state school systems where teachers are not directly involved in syllabus design. For example, in South Africa the teacher is provided with a syllabus which has to be implemented. It is therefore important to distinguish between the macro, meso and micro levels of teaching, as pointed out by Hauptfleisch (1989:15), to determine where the authority of the teacher starts.

The macro level refers to the Department of Education, where the planning, design, production and distribution of the syllabus are done.

The meso level refers to the principal, the head of the department of the specific subject, and the teachers. They interpret this document and implement it. Van der Walt (1985) suggests that the meso level is a much neglected area of planning, and that it should form the basis for planning at the micro level. This implies that the course should be planned as a whole, from Std 6 to 10. This will ensure continuity in the course and teachers, having the scope of the course outlined to them, will be able to improve their implementation of the syllabus. Van Aswegen (1988:48) points out that meso level planning will eliminate fruitless repetition and ensure relevant revision, without expecting too much from pupils.

The micro level concerns planning done by the individual teacher. He is free to implement his own teaching-learning strategies. Every teacher draws up a scheme of work as an essential part of his planning and preparation. In larger schools more than one teacher teaches a subject to different classes in the same standard. All these teachers should take part in the planning of that specific course to ensure that subject matter presented to the pupils is the same. Van der Walt (1985:47-48) says that an important development in present-day language teaching is a shift of the main focus of decision-making to the school. The teacher is regarded as a professional and is given the freedom to interpret the syllabus to suit the needs of his pupils. This means that selection of content, although based on the syllabus, is entirely the teacher's responsibility. In addition the teacher can decide between different textbooks and can supplement these according to the requirements of the specific syllabus and teaching-learning situation.

Not many teachers, as pointed out by Johnson (1983:55), are at ease with a syllabus that does not prescribe the selection of items and the order in which they are to be presented. The teacher has to realize the importance of careful planning and analysis before he can teach. According to Kilfoil and Van der Walt (1989:34) the teacher is responsible for selecting materials that are interesting and he should be

able to modify materials and supplement the textbook by adding interesting materials.

2.3 The syllabus, the scheme of work, and the cycle

For the purpose of this study it is important to determine the relation between the syllabus, scheme of work and the cycle.

Nunan (1988:5) and Brumfit and Roberts (1983:147) define syllabus as a statement of content, which is used as the basis for planning courses of various kinds and which leads towards a specific goal. There is a starting point and a goal point, with enough movement in between. The syllabus is a practical instrument, and is judged by the success or failure of the pupils to achieve the aims and objectives set in it. It involves generalizations about learners but cannot predict how a student will learn what is offered under all circumstances. A syllabus is a statement of the organization of materials to be taught. As pointed out, the teacher is free to interpret the syllabus as he sees fit, before devising his own scheme of work.

In South Africa the syllabus is an official document provided by the departments of education which basically describes the aims, content and organisation of work to be done in a specific standard during that year. Van der Walt (1988:52) points out that a syllabus does not describe in detail to the teacher what to teach but leaves him the freedom to create his own teaching-learning situation. As pointed out by Kilfoil and Van der Walt (1989:221), all departments of education in South Africa work from the same core syllabus which prescribes minimum requirements in each standard.

The scheme of work is drawn up by the teacher himself and is an application of the syllabus, after the syllabus as well as the teaching-learning situation has been interpreted. Kilfoil and Van der Walt (1989:228) define scheme of work as the "outline which shows how the teacher intends to implement the syllabus for a specific standard during the course of the year". When the teacher draws up a scheme of work, the syllabus provides only the necessary guidelines. The teacher has

to decide what content will be selected to teach and explain the specific items in the syllabus, using the periods allocated to him. Content selected for a scheme of work will be more than the sum of the syllabus and textbook, and will involve selection and grading. Kilfoil and Van der Walt (1989:228) describe the scheme of work as the "amalgam" of the teacher's knowledge of his subject, teaching techniques, the school timetable, his pupils, syllabus requirements and available material.

The scheme of work consists of cycles, each cycle usually consisting of 10 to 12 lessons. Hollingworth (1984:244) suggests that a cycle be covered in a fortnight. A lesson may last for one or more periods of about 30 minutes each, depending on the division of the schoolday into periods in the school (Kilfoil & Van der Walt, 1989:229). Some schools have periods of 30 minutes while others use 40-minute periods.

2.4 The teaching-learning situation

There are various theories describing elements of the teaching-learning situation. They all seem to stress similar components and an interaction among them. A number of curriculum models can be applied to the teaching-learning situation. These models can be divided into two main categories: linear and circular. Examples of the linear models are those of Posner and Rudinsky (1978), Dick and Reiser (1989), Tyler (1970) and Oliva (1982). The circular models are more popular because they stress the integration of all elements as well as the cyclical nature of the teaching-learning situation. Examples are the models of Steyn (1982), Wheeler (1979), White (1988) and Nicholls and Nicholls (1978a). When one considers all existing models, it is clear that selection of content forms an integral part of all models of curriculum design and of the teaching-learning situation.

Steyn's (1982:21) model has been designed specifically for the teaching-learning situation. This model is representative of recent models and will be used to illustrate the components of the teaching-learning situation (Figure 1).

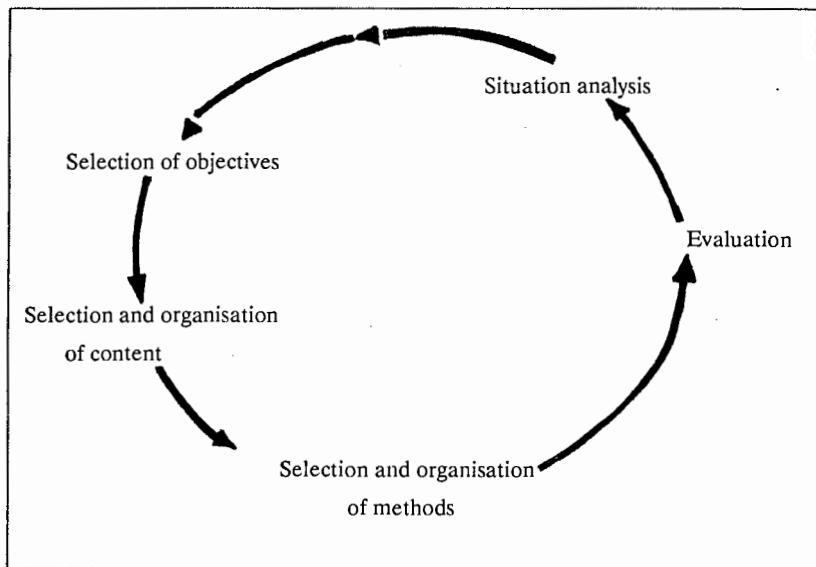


Figure 1. The Steyn model

In this chapter, the elements of the teaching-learning situation will be separated and analysed, but it must be borne in mind that the teaching-learning situation is an integrated process and in practice these elements cannot be seen as separate entities.

2.4.1 Situation analysis

It is generally accepted that the first step in a teaching-learning programme is a situation analysis. The situation analysis is the starting point of any planning, be it year, cycle or lesson planning. This analysis can be based on information gathered by means of, for example, questionnaires given to pupils, interviews with pupils and discussions with fellow teachers and researchers. Aims and objectives for a course are derived from the results of the situation analysis.

The situation analysis takes the whole spectrum of the teaching-learning situation into account. This includes the pupil, the teacher, the environment, society, the classroom and learning matter. One should also consider the differences between the cultures of the mother tongue speaker and the speaker of the target language (Lado, 1964:56). Yalden (1983:86; 1987) refers to all these factors as "extra-linguistic factors", which involve the educational setting to be taught in, the characteristics of the learners, the circumstances of the educational institution, and the society in which the learners live. She states that teachers have to consider a large number of components to ensure that pupils acquire the ability to communicate in an appropriate and efficient way.

During the situation analysis the teacher also establishes the extent of diversity in the foreknowledge of the pupils, especially in Std 6, as pupils in secondary schools come from different primary schools. This process should be continued throughout the course to avoid endless repetition which can only serve to demotivate pupils.

A needs analysis can help the teacher to do a detailed situation analysis. Yalden (1983:90) describes needs analysis as the identification of the communication requirements, personal needs, motivations, relevant characteristics and resources of the learner. There are, however, contradicting ideas on the relevance of a needs analysis. According to Nunan (1988:79) one of the purposes of a needs analysis is to involve learners and teachers in exchanging information. On the other hand, Brumfit (1981:46) feels that needs of pupils are very difficult to predict, implying that a needs analysis does not serve much of a purpose. He admits, however, that it helps the teacher to make procedural choices in the classroom when it is known why the language is being learned. Oliva (1982:229) describes the objectives of a needs analysis as identifying needs of learners not being met by the existing syllabus, and forming a basis for revising the syllabus to meet needs not met before. The process of needs analysis is seen as a continuing process which is never finished. A needs analysis can be conducted in various ways, such as group discussions or interviews. The most common way to do a needs analysis is by questionnaires. Needs can be

limited to those perceived by teachers, by students themselves or by parents (Oliva, 1982:229) and will guide the teacher when finalising the situation analysis.

There is no set procedure for analysing the teaching-learning situation. The more the teacher can gather applicable information to help him analyse the situation, the better. The choice of not only content, but also approach and method will be determined by the situation analysis. Nunan (1988:14) supports this view when he says all information, "not only on why learners want to learn the target language, but also about such things as societal expectations and constraints and the resources available for implementing the syllabus" is important and has to be collected.

2.4.2 Aims and objectives

Aims and objectives are the most important step in any planning as they guide activities in the classroom and determine the success of teaching (Nicholls & Nicholls, 1978b:23). Wheeler (1979:79) stresses the importance of aims and objectives when he says the educator should always go back to his aims and objectives when selecting content.

Aims or goals are the educative purpose to be reached at the end of a certain time span and are focused on long-term results. Examples of aims are the aim of educating a child or teaching a specific subject, or to teach communicative competence.

Objectives, on the other hand, are more precise and to the point and focused on immediate results. No learning can take place without the necessary objectives. The teacher has to know what he wants to accomplish by teaching a certain piece of work. There is no purpose in teaching something just because the pupils enjoy it or the teacher likes the topic.

Everything in the class-situation has to lead somewhere. A lot of time is wasted in the classroom when teachers have not established their objectives clearly. Nunan

(1988:68) emphasizes that objectives make it far easier for educators to attend to "important instructional outcomes by exposing the trivial which is so often lurking below the high-flown".

Objectives are set after an interpretation of the situation analysis has been done. This analysis will indicate many suitable objectives, which will serve as a basis for selection of content, materials and methods (Nicholls & Nicholls, 1978b:36).

Even those who criticize precise demarcation of objectives acknowledge the importance of setting objectives. Van Ek (1976:5), who points out that language learning objectives can never be defined with absolute explicitness because language use is neither fully predictable nor fully describable, still acknowledges the importance of establishing objectives as a starting point.

According to Tyler's (1986:1) behavioural approach there are four ways of stating objectives:

- * specify the actions of the teacher or instructor;
- * specify the content;
- * specify patterns of behaviour (e.g. to develop critical thinking); and
- * specify the kinds of behaviour which learners will be able to exhibit after instruction.

He feels the ideal way of stating objectives is to suggest what the learner should be able to do as a result. Steyn (1982:52) suggests the following criteria for the setting of objectives:

- * The intention of the teacher should be clearly stated.
- * Objectives should be specified by using specific verbs. Verbs such as "know" or "understand" are too vague and should be replaced by verbs such as "fill in", "identify", "answer", "compare" and "name".
- * Content to be covered in that specific lesson should be clearly specified.

- Preconditions for reaching the objective have to be specified. Pupils must know which sources may be used or which information will be given to them. The pupil has to know what would be expected from him at the end of the lesson, based on the work he has just been taught.
- Minimum requirements that the pupil has to reach should be set. Time limits should be set in which these requirements have to be reached.

An example of an objective would be the following: "At the end of the period, pupils must be able to introduce themselves to a person, male or female, in an informal situation".

Nicholls and Nicholls (1978b:29) describe the setting of objectives as the most important stage in any planning and an exercise which "requires skill, effort and time", but which "provides a rational base from which further curriculum decisions can be made". They warn that without such a base, curriculum decisions are likely to be made on the basis of "whim, fancy, fashion, expediency or personal preference".

When the scheme of work is drawn up, the aims and objectives of every cycle as well as every lesson have to be indicated. In any teaching-learning situation the teacher must work towards a specific goal. Setting aims and objectives are the most important aspect of any planning.

2.4.3 Selection of content

After the aims and objectives have been established, content is selected. Content cannot be selected on any grounds other than its functionality to aims and objectives. The problem is that different content can be selected to reach the same aims and objectives. Nicholls and Nicholls (1978b:50) warn that selection of content tends to be a "haphazard procedure" which tends to be "biased in one way or another".

Selection of content will be influenced by the viewpoints of the teacher. Some teachers believe that content should have intrinsic value, and that it should be learned for its own sake, others believe it should be taught for its usefulness, while some see it merely as the vehicle for the development of intellectual abilities and skills (Nicholls & Nicholls, 1978b:48). The teacher has to use his own initiative, combine that with his interpretation of the situation analysis and aims, and select his content accordingly (Cook, 1983:229).

The teacher should take care not to rely on content only and should keep in mind that the process of classroom interaction is as important as the content. This emphasizes the integrated process of the teaching-learning situation and the relevant place of content in this process as a whole. Content selection is the central focus of this study, and will be discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

2.4.4 Selection of teaching-learning activities

Teaching-learning activities refer to the methods used to facilitate achievement of aims and objectives. The type of content selected will determine the possibilities of different learning activities and the methodology to be implemented in a certain lesson. This is becoming increasingly important, as the latest trend in language teaching is to combine content and methodology in what is called "process syllabus types" (White, 1988:94).

It is important to remember that there is no one definitive method, but that a variety of methods should be used (Nicholls & Nicholls, 1978b:56). Different methods may serve the same objectives. The method used is an indication of the approach which is implemented in the classroom. For example, a traditional syllabus can be made communicative by applying the appropriate method. There is no need to discard existing materials on account of their not being communicative (Widdowson, 1978:25).

The method will be determined by the following factors: the relevance to the aim and objectives, development of the pupil's personality as a whole, variety, continuity, relevance to life, type of content, time and circumstances, size of class, facilities that are available and the personality of the teacher (Steyn, 1982:95). Some of these aspects will already have been considered in the situation analysis, again pointing to the intricate relationship between all elements of the teaching-learning situation.

2.4.5. Evaluation

Evaluation will always be a very important aspect of any teaching-learning situation as it determines if learning has taken place. It is essential in determining whether objectives, especially behavioural objectives, have been reached.

Steyn (1982:104) distinguishes the following functions of evaluation: it determines the amount of learning and whether or not the teacher has to adapt his planning; it enables the teacher to evaluate and grade pupils; it can be used as a basis for requirements to pass; it creates opportunities for individual teaching and shows whether or not the subject curriculum and the scheme of work were appropriate. Evaluation ties the teaching-learning situation together and enables the teacher to determine objectives for the following lessons.

A variety of devices are available to assess pupils, such as rating scales, teacher observations, diaries, written reports, pupils' records, role-play, interviews, questionnaires, written essays, tests and written examinations. There is an integrated bond between evaluation and objectives; any device which shows evidence of the behaviour indicated in the objective, is an appropriate means of assessment (Nicholls & Nicholls, 1978b:104). Evaluation influences the situation analysis (cf. figure 1) and is part of the cyclic process of the teaching-learning situation because it points out what the pupil already knows and what not.

2.5 Conclusion

The teaching-learning situation is an integrated process and one cannot plan content separate from it. Nicholls and Nicholls (1978b:97) indicate that one does not move directly from one aspect of the teaching-learning situation to the next, until one reaches evaluation. There is a constant moving backwards and forwards. It is a process that never stands still, and need not even start with a situation analysis but can start at any other stage, as long as all stages are covered.

It is clear that the selection of content, although influenced by other factors, remains an integral part of the teaching-learning situation, and thus of the whole process of learning. The teacher has to plan the teaching-learning situation by drawing up appropriate cycles to form a scheme of work.

CHAPTER 3

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF CONTENT SELECTION IN LANGUAGE TEACHING

3.1 Introduction

Most questions asked by language teachers today are not new. Through the years teachers have tried different approaches and methods to solve problems encountered in language teaching. Richards and Rodgers (1986:1) point out that controversies of today reflect contemporary responses to questions that have been asked often throughout the history of language teaching. Today's new approaches developed from earlier approaches and reflect ideas of the past as well as the present. At any one time language teaching will include elements from various traditions (Finocchiaro & Brumfit, 1983:3). The language teacher must be aware of methods and approaches that have been successful and must understand why others were unsuccessful.

This chapter will take a brief look at the history of content selection in language teaching. This will enable the teacher to avoid errors made in the past and guide him in making choices concerning content selection.

3.2 Language Teaching before 1600

Before 1600, Latin was the only language formally taught to pupils in Europe (Richards & Rodgers, 1986:1). Grammar was learnt through rote-learning and the writing of sample sentences. Content selection was based on collections of dialogues for the traveller to foreign countries.

An important figure at the time was Joseph Webbe (1560 - 1633), who believed that languages should never be taught by learning language rules, but by use and custom.

To him the proper starting point was practice. Webbe also stressed communicative abilities, but his ideas which were not very popular at the time, died with him (Howatt, 1984:19).

Another prominent figure of the time was a Latin teacher, Comenius (1592-1670), who believed that language was merely the means whereby one understands the world. He believed that content was more important than form and based his Latin teaching on the *Janua*-texts which he himself wrote. Content was selected according to specific topics which he arranged in the form of a hundred texts, starting from the creation and ending with salvation, covering every part of human life in between. His topics included the natural world, elements, trees, animals, earth, man, parts of the body, senses, everyday work and activities, e.g. baking, hunting, trading, navigation, building, the church and moral issues such as wisdom, prudence, friendship, fortitude, death, God and angels (Howatt, 1984:23).

When teaching, Comenius went through the text, starting with the topic, discussed it, then moved on to the language as soon as the children understood the topic. He brought pictures or real objects to class which he used before moving to the text, thus implementing the first audio-visual aids (Howatt, 1984:24).

According to Howatt (1984:31) and Kelly (1971:124), the first manuals for language teaching were meant for traders only and were short contextual books of dialogues. The content was based on traders' circumstances and needs, and covered topics such as the wool trade, agriculture, greetings, household equipment, servants, family relations, shopping, buying and selling and finding and paying for lodgings.

In the early sixteenth century, immigrants fled to England from Spain, France, and Italy, and needed tuition in English as a second language. At this time, dictionaries and phrase books were very popular for acquiring a survival knowledge of English. Howatt (1984:21) mentions two important immigrants to England at the time: Jacques Bellot and John Florio. Both continued the traditional bilingual method and selected content which would ensure a basic literacy and fluency in everyday

conversation. They also distinguished between words easily confused. John Florio (1553 - 1625) made use of the substitution table and dialogues.

3.3 Language Teaching 1600 - 1900

During the 17th and beginning of the 18th centuries Latin was still the only language officially taught and this was done through rote learning of grammar rules, translation and writing of sample sentences.

3.3.1 Grammar-Translation

During the 18th century, teachers still made use of translation and the teaching of grammar rules. The basic idea was to approach the language first through a detailed analysis of its grammar rules and then to apply this knowledge to the translation of sentences. Pupils started with sentences and only later moved on to texts. Language learning was viewed as memorizing rules and facts of the foreign language to be able to understand the syntax and morphology. Reading and writing were the prime concerns. No attention was paid to speaking or listening. Vocabulary was selected from reading texts and was taught through bilingual lists. This approach became known as grammar-translation. A typical grammar-translation text would present the grammar rules and illustrate them, followed by a vocabulary list and then some translation exercises. Grammar-translation considered the sentence as the basic unit of teaching and practice. Sentences had to be translated into and out of the foreign language (Finocchiaro & Brumfit, 1983:4).

Some of the leaders in the field were the Germans Karl Plotz, H.S. Ollendorf and Johann Seidenstucker (Richards & Rodgers, 1986:3). Lessons consisted of sections of grammar, a paradigm and some new words to add to the vocabulary. After that there were sentences to translate into the mother tongue and sentences to translate into the foreign tongue. These courses were very useful and practical, but also very dull. An important feature was the fact that linguistic items were graded (Howatt, 1984:31).

In the latter half of the nineteenth century, teachers and pupils started to reject grammar-translation as increased opportunities for communication among Europeans created a demand for oral proficiency in foreign languages. Richards and Rodgers (1986:5) point out that new approaches to language teaching were developed by individual language teaching specialists in Germany, England, France, and other parts of Europe. Some specialists tried out these new ideas but none really had far-reaching consequences. The most important of these specialists were C. Marcel (1793-1896), a Frenchman who emphasized meaning and reading, T. Prendergast (1806-1886), an Englishman who proposed the first "structural syllabus", and F. Gouin (1831-1896), a Frenchman who stressed language usage. Gouin used situations and themes to present language (Richards & Rodgers, 1986:5-6).

3.3.2 The Reform Movement

Reformist ideas developed in the 1880s under prominent figures such as Henry Sweet (1845-1912) in England, Wilhelm Viëtor in Germany and Paul Passy in France (Richards & Rodgers, 1986:7). Their ideas, and those of others at the time, led to the Reform Movement, which lasted for about twenty years, from 1882 onwards.

Followers of the Reform Movement believed that the sentences used in the grammar-translation method were absurd and not very useful. They stressed the use of spoken language. Learners had to hear the text before seeing it and grammar was taught inductively. The selection of a useful contextual text was stressed and the use of translation discouraged as it would cause incorrect associations. It was agreed that selecting an appropriate text was problematic and had to be based on worthwhile topics which were carefully selected. The four skills, reading, writing, speaking and listening, were introduced and learners had to be taught accordingly.

Sweet believed that natural texts had to be used, not texts selected to include specific grammatical aspects. He realised however, that texts chosen at random might not include the specific linguistic items that the teacher would like to teach.

Sweet graded texts from simple to complex; descriptive ones were to be studied first as they were grammatically the easiest. Then the pupils had to study narrative texts, and only then dialogues. He preferred to start with descriptive texts as they were direct, clear, simple and familiar. They were also more interesting than dialogues. His topics covered factual themes such as nature, the sea, the sun, the seasons, mankind, houses and foods. Sweet felt that factual texts had to be studied first as they were grammatically the easiest. Factual texts are usually in the present tense, which is easier to teach, while narrative texts are written in the past and perfect tenses which are more difficult to the learner. He believed dialogues to be the most difficult as a variety of tenses are used in a dialogue and a good command of the language is needed (Howatt, 1984:180).

Sweet pointed out that the natural method was only used for learning the mother-tongue as an infant. He proclaimed five stages in language teaching. The first was the mechanical stage where the pupils had to practise good pronunciation and become familiar with phonetic transcription. When the pupils were able to do this, the grammatical stage followed, where the pupils worked with the text, gradually building up knowledge of grammar and vocabulary. Third was the idiomatic stage where learners' lexical development was most important. This was the basic course, after which followed stages four and five where the pupils were taught literature. Sweet is described by Howatt (1984:188) as the "perfect teacher with the perfect learner in an entirely rational world", an ideal situation which hardly ever occurs in ESL.

Most of the followers of the Reform movement believed in an inductive acquisition of the target language, although this did not mean that the child had to invent the rules himself. The teacher had to collect examples of the new grammar in the text, demonstrate and explain it, so that pupils could draw the appropriate conclusion. No rules were taught without a context. The Reform Movement stressed the importance of speech, an appropriate, applicable text as starting point, and an oral methodology in class. Content selection had to be based on spoken language with little if any written homework (Richards & Rodgers, 1986:8).

3.3.3 The Natural Approach

At the same time, and parallel to the ideas of the Reform movement, an interest developed in naturalistic principles of language learning, such as seen in first language acquisition, which led to the development of the Direct Method (Richards & Rodgers, 1986:8).

The basic idea was that a language could not be learned step by step, but that it was an intuitive process that needed three conditions, namely someone to talk to, something to talk about, and the desire to make one understood and to understand. Followers of this approach believed that no teaching of the language was to be conducted in the mother tongue. Content comprised everyday vocabulary and correct pronunciation was stressed. Speech and listening comprehension were taught throughout.

One of the fathers of this approach was Lambert Sauveur (1826 - 1907) (Howatt, 1984:43). His basic concept of teaching the foreign language was "coherence", today known as "discourse". His enthusiasm and persistence convinced his pupils that they could speak and understand the language from the moment they entered the classroom. The natural approach does not try to recreate mother-tongue learning, although it is based on the same concept. The trivial content of ordinary conversation was not very popular among teachers of that time, but provided the basis for the Direct Method.

3.4 The 20th Century

3.4.1 The Direct Method

At the beginning of the century, grammar-translation was still in wide use, pupils were not taught how to communicate in the target language and rote learning of grammar was overemphasized. The result was that most pupils were not very motivated. Content selection in ESL was based on a systematic analysis of rules and

morphology. Teaching of the target language consisted of line-by-line translation into the mother tongue, sometimes back into the target language as well, with little or no pronunciation. It was difficult to determine which language to teach at which stage and sequencing of content was difficult. The criteria set for selection and organising of content were simplicity, regularity, frequency and contrastive difficulty. Grammar-translation helped pupils to acquire a good reading knowledge of the language as they had to understand a passage before they were able to translate. However, not all learners of a language wanted to become translators and there was no oral fluency or spontaneity.

Harold Palmer, one of the teachers at the Berlitz school, implemented important methodological principles, of which habit formation was considered central. Palmer made use of the "sentence pattern" which was presented in the form of model sentences and substitution tables. He did not believe in a trial-and-error method, as pupils were likely to think that "bad" English was the natural preliminary stage for "good" English. Palmer was very interested in vocabulary and compiled a vocabulary list of 3000 words for schools. The natural acquisition approach originated, and this resulted in the Direct Method (Howatt, 1984:203).

The Direct Method advocated that attention be paid to the acquisition of new habits and thought-patterns. Translation as teaching method was rejected as totally new thought patterns had to be formed. The Direct Method stressed oral work, phonetics and pronunciation, and reading and writing were only taught after the spoken language had been mastered (Finocchiaro & Brumfit, 1983:5).

Grammar was to be taught inductively, not by rules, but by situation and association. There was much repetition, until the pupil had acquired a certain grammar pattern. Pupils were not allowed to use their mother tongue in class.

Although the Direct Method is an old method, it has continually been rediscovered by teachers who used to be taught by grammar-translation. This ensured that it retained something of a "modern" image.

3.4.2 Audio-lingualism

In the 1940s the United States entered the Second World War and authorities were very much in need of people who could speak foreign languages. The solution to their problem was to teach aural-oral skills intensively in many parts of the U.S.A. The work of Bloomfield and Fries rose to prominence at the time, and led to the development of audio-lingualism.

Audio-lingualism was inspired by mimicry-memorisation, where a structure is presented without any context. Lessons started with a short but unimportant dialogue and drill. The rest of the lesson consisted of pattern sentences and structure drill. Much emphasis was placed on repetitive drills and pattern practice. Spoken language still had primacy, but translation was rejected. The language laboratory made its appearance to ensure phonological accuracy (Stern, 1984:462).

White (1988:15) believes there was more to audiolingualism than structure drilling and says that the most prominent features of this approach were controlled guidance, the avoidance of error and practising correct forms. Four types of drill were used: simple repetition, substitution, transformation (e.g. negatives, questions) and sometimes translation. Another trademark tool of this approach was contrastive analysis, which meant that efficient learning was based on a comparison of the two languages concerned. The differences between the languages were stressed in teaching.

At the same time that this American approach was developed by structuralists who concentrated on form, British linguists under the influence of J.R. Firth were more interested in the context of the situation, which led to situational approaches and later to the idea of communicative competence.

3.4.3 Cognitive-code

Chomsky's ideas gave rise to a new approach, called cognitive-code learning, which resembled grammar-translation. Whereas the goal with the latter was basically to read literature in the target language, all four skills were applied in the cognitive-code method. Pupils were allowed to use their mother tongue, but learning was overemphasized. Strevens (1977:5) points out:

At the level of psychological learning theory, the cognitive-code method signals a rejection of stimulus-response models; at the level of linguistic theory, it signals rejection of the view that language is external to the mind of the individual; and at the level of teaching techniques, it signals the encouragement of deliberate grammar teaching as an aid to learning.

Content was organised around grammar, while allowing for meaningful practice and use of the language. Although these ideas were very popular during the seventies, no methodological guidelines or particular method developed from them (Richards & Rodgers, 1986:60).

3.4.4 The communicative approach

As a result of the audiolingual method's focus on form, pupils could use the grammar of the language correctly, but were not able to communicate. D.A. Wilkins (1972) proposed a functional definition of language to serve as a basis for the communicative syllabi which developed. His ideas are described in his book "Notional Syllabuses" (1976). Applied linguists such as Widdowson (1978), Brumfit (1979) and Johnson (1981), elaborated on this and laid the basis for a communicative approach to language teaching.

Communicative syllabi appeared, aiming not so much at grammar, but at meaning and interaction. Examples of these are the functional, notional and functional-notional syllabi, which are discussed in Chapter 4.

The aims of communicative language teaching are to

make communicative competence the goal and to develop procedures for the teaching of the four language skills that acknowledge the interdependence of language and communication.

(Richards & Rodgers, 1986:66).

In 1978 Munby published his "Communicative Syllabus Design". By 1980 almost every course on teaching English had a communicative element. Richards and Rodgers (1986:69) say that all versions of communicative language teaching are based on a theory of language teaching

that starts from a communicative model of language and language use, and seeks to translate this into a design for an instructional system, for materials, for teacher and learner roles and behaviours, and for classroom activities and techniques.

Content in communicative language teaching is based on communicative functions and usefulness to the pupils. Communicative language teaching has proved popular as it provides many possibilities for individual interpretation and initiative. There are, however, many problems concerning communicative language teaching which are as yet unsolved, such as teacher training, materials, methodology, testing, evaluation and selection of content (Richards & Rodgers, 1986:83).

3.5 Conclusion

Throughout history, various types of content have been used. These form the basis for several modern approaches to content selection. Today most language teaching theories have elements of traditional approaches to content selection.

Language teaching before 1600 was functional and based on the needs of the pupils. Content consisted of dialogues which the pupils could use practically. Topics were

selected for communication purposes. These topics were based on everyday events such as trading, good manners and farming.

The fact that grammar-translation reigned for such a long period of time, with so many teachers firmly believing in it, indicates that grammar rules should not be totally disregarded in favour of communication. Even though pupils found content selected for grammar-translation rigid, out of context and boring, they were able to translate sentences successfully from one language into another.

The reform movement stressed an appropriate text and functional and useful topics, which could lead to an inductive acquisition of the language. Spoken language was considered very important and written work did not receive much attention.

The ideas of the reform movement coincided with the natural approach which stressed discourse and the use of dialogues. The direct method which developed from the natural approach, was very functional and stressed oral work and habit-formation.

Audiolingualism consisted mainly of drillwork and pattern practice with too little contextualisation. At this stage the language laboratory appeared. The ideal of audiolingualism was to progress from pattern drill to communication (Kilfoil & Van der Walt, 1989:26).

Through the centuries, much attention has been paid to functionality and communication. The purpose of acquiring a language is to communicate and use the language successfully and competently. These aims may be achieved by the communicative approach. As communicative competence is dependant on grammatical competence, the teacher has to include both when planning a cycle (cf. chapter 6).

CHAPTER 4

SELECTION AND GRADING OF CONTENT

4.1 Introduction

This chapter contains a brief overview of selection and grading of content in general. Selection and grading will be defined and existing criteria for each will be reviewed and evaluated. This chapter will then identify the different content types which exist in ESL.

4.2 Selection of content

4.2.1 Defining "selection of content"

Selection of content means to choose the most appropriate content for a specific subject, target group and specific teaching-learning situation. As pointed out in chapter 2, this selection is guided by the syllabus and guidelines which are provided by the specific Department of Education (cf. 2.3). The teacher selects content from the syllabus and sets up a scheme of work. The scheme of work forms the basis for planning lessons and selection of materials and can be organised in the form of cycles. This process can be illustrated as follows:

syllabus --> scheme of work --> textbooks, teaching materials --> cycle --> lesson.

4.2.2 The need for selection

The need for the selection of content has already been pointed out in Chapter 2 (cf. 2.4.3) where it was concluded that selection of content is an inseparable element of the teaching-learning situation as a whole. It is not possible to teach everything

about a specific field and some selection from the totality that can be provided is inevitable (Corder, 1975:201).

4.2.3 Criteria for the selection of content

Content must be selected according to certain criteria, which should be scientifically-based and which can serve as a standard to evaluate possible content. Various criteria for the selection of content have been proposed. Steyn (1982:70) points out that the first two aspects to consider when selecting content, are the situation analysis and the aims and objectives of the course (cf. 2.4.1. and 2.4.2).

Kelly (1971:121), Lee (1977:249), Zais (1976:326), Nicholls and Nicholls (1978b:49) and Wheeler (1979:38) suggest the following criteria for considering any content or teaching-materials:

- * **Realistic and useful** to teachers and learners; teachers and learners should have easy access to it. Content must be authentic, recent and abreast of changes.
- * **Relevant** to that specific group of learners.
- * **Encouraging** and not too difficult, as the learner has to feel he is making progress. He must be able to understand the content.
- * **Compatible with the teacher's approach** and attitude.
- * **Significant.** Content should never consist of too many facts, but content selection should be based on carefully selected ideas. Facts should only serve to illustrate these ideas. Selection should not cover such a wide area that there is no depth. There should be a balance between breadth of coverage and depth of understanding and the content selected should have significance to the pupil as human being.

- * **Interesting.** Content should be varied and intellectually satisfying. Interest should be considered cautiously as it can be restricting. Content should not be selected only because pupils might find it interesting as the interests of pupils can be broadened by adding new stimulating content. White (1988:50) describes interests of pupils as "a notoriously difficult area of study and always a slippery basis for organising a syllabus". Pupils should be consulted on their interests or answer questionnaires to determine interests. By letting pupils take part in this decision making, they will feel positive about the teaching-learning process. Van der Walt (1988:53) stresses the importance of variety and flexibility when planning a course as these will ensure interest and motivation.

From the above, it is clear that content should be **realistic and useful, relevant and significant, encouraging and interesting**, and that selection will be influenced by the **approach of the teacher, the situation analysis and the aims and objectives of the course.**

4.3 Grading of content

4.3.1 Defining "grading of content".

Grading refers to the way in which selected content is organised. It is also termed sequencing or ordering and is defined by Taba (1962:292) as "putting the content and materials into some sort of order of succession". She says that planning such sequences creates several as yet unsolved problems, because little is known about developmental sequences of concept formation, attitude development, and thought processes.

4.3.2 The need for grading

Steyn (1982:72) points out that any content has to be ordered. Grading is influenced by the type of content presented. In a subject such as history, grading will be done according to the chronological order of historical events.

Nunan (1988) stresses the importance of grading and points out that some form of grading is a universal requirement in teaching. According to Nunan (1988:55) grading has various purposes. It helps to select content, to assign pupils to different class groupings and to modify the syllabus and methodology. Grading aids the teacher to differentiate between pupils of different abilities and to organise his scheme of work.

4.3.3 Criteria for the grading of content

As with selection of content, there are various criteria for the grading of content. Grading can be based on a particular view of learning, such as learning any content from the easiest to that which is considered most difficult, or from that which is familiar to the student to that which is unknown. Grading can be based on the situation in the classroom, taking into consideration which content is easiest to teach and explain and which is most difficult to teach and learn.

The criteria for grading suggested by Tyler (1986:84) are continuity, sequence and integration.

- * **Continuity** refers to the same kinds of skills which are brought into continuing operation and which are dealt with again and again, such as reading. Over time these skills will be continued and practised. When teaching any subject, there should be a continual revisitor of content matter, especially content which is most useful to the pupil. There should, however, be an increasing level of difficulty. This will be done by varying the complexity of content being introduced. A pupil in Std 6 should be given an

article from a magazine such as "You" or a teenage magazine, while a Std 10 pupil can be exposed to articles which are on a higher level, such as those from "Time" or "National Geographic". Pupils can be given the same tasks or topics, but the difficulty will vary.

- * **Sequence** stresses the importance of experiences building on previous ones and implies increasingly more difficult skills by understanding these in greater breadth and depth. Tyler (1986:85) points out that sequence does not imply duplication, but rather "higher levels of treatment with each successive learning experience".
- * **Integration** refers to a unified view overall towards other curriculum experiences. Some skills can be applied to other areas as well when content is graded in relation to other subject fields.

Palmer (1964:53) as well as Breen and Candlin (1980:102) feel that grading is determined by the ability of the pupil to cope with the content, rather than by the degree of difficulty. Breen and Candlin (1980:102) suggest that no step-by-step or cumulative grading of content is necessary and that grading is influenced more by the learner than by the content. What is easy for one learner is not necessarily so for another. They feel that grading is therefore likely to be a cyclic process where learners are continually developing related frameworks knowledge and ability, rather than accumulating separable blocks of knowledge (Breen & Candlin, 1980:103). They point out that one cannot really predict content as learners develop their own sequencing of learning.

Corder (1975:297) and Finocchiaro and Brumfit (1983:58) suggest a spiral approach, where the same sociocultural theme, structural category or language function is studied in greater depth at successive levels of learning. They suggest that the teacher revise content one or two months after its initial presentation. A spiral ordering of content would require the learner to return again and again to some

aspect of the subject with the reappearance of items in new contexts (Corder, 1975:297).

According to Posner and Rudinsky (1982:109) grading will be influenced by situational factors such as materials available, time schedules, weather and climate, location of school, transportation needs and teachers' interests and competence. Grading of content will be determined after analysing the abilities and potential of the pupils as part of the situation analysis. Pupils who live in a rural area will find a topic such as "A day in the city" much more difficult than a pupil who lives in the city.

Considering the above, **difficulty, continuity, sequence, integration** and a thorough study of the **situation analysis** are essential when grading content.

4.4 Selection and grading of content in ESL

It has been pointed out that the selection and grading of content in ESL is problematic (cf. par 1.1). Nunan (1988:10) points out if teachers had consensus on what to teach in order for learners to develop proficiency in a second or foreign language; if it were possible to teach the totality of a given language, and if teachers had complete descriptions of the target language, problems associated with selecting and sequencing content would be straightforward, but there is not agreement within the teaching profession on the nature of language and language learning. However, the teacher is faced with the problem of "what to teach".

4.4.1 Selection of content in ESL

Corder (1975:202) says that language teaching is most successful if a match is achieved between the objectives of teaching and the needs or demands of the learners and point out that content is only important in so far as it helps to bring about intended outcomes. He describes the task of content selection as having to

meet all possible demands of the learner. Content should cover everyday situations, the interests of the pupils, and should be easy to learn and to teach.

The objectives of the course will determine the criteria. If the main objective is comprehension, criteria such as frequency and range will be dominant. If the main objective is expression, criteria such as coverage and availability will be more important (Mackey, 1965:189).

4.4.2 Grading of content in ESL

Important studies carried out in the 1970s by Dulay and Burt (1973) and Bailey, Madden and Krashen (1974) show that grammatical items are acquired in a specific order which is similar among all learners and that formal instruction will have no influence on this. Two possible inferences can be made from this: one is that grading of grammatical items should be done according to this order, and the other that grading will have no influence on acquisition whatsoever and should not be considered, as this will be done by the pupil's own "inbuilt syllabus" (Nunan, 1988:32).

Critics such as Howatt (1979) and Lightbown (1985) claim that grading of grammatical items is not particularly important as the selection of one sequence of items rather than another cannot help much in making difficult concepts any clearer, nor can it help the pupil to classify new items if each one has to be classified separately (Howatt, 1979:16; Lightbown, 1985:174). Krashen (1981) and Howatt (1979) take this further and suggest that grading should not be done at all.

According to McDonough (1980:311) the order in which to teach content is determined by the complexity of the target language and the differences between the target language and the mother tongue. When the teacher orders content in ESL he should realize that people do not learn language as additive linear elements, but as parts of "complex mappings of groups of form-function relationships" (Long & Crookes, 1992:20).

In spite of various contradicting opinions on grading the teacher has to organise content in a certain way before it can be presented to the pupils. A spiral approach is considered to be the most appropriate when teaching a second or foreign language (Finocchiaro & Brumfit, 1983) (cf. 6.6).

4.4.3 Types of content in ESL.

There are different content types to choose from when selecting content. White (1988) distinguishes Type A (content-based) and Type B (process-based) syllabi, with skills a "halfway-house" between A and B. Each type suggests various forms of content for an ESL course.

Type A consists of lists of linguistic elements to be learnt, which provide the pupil with an analytic knowledge of the target language and its rules and organization. All Type A content types focus on objectives to be achieved and content to be learned. The types categorized by White as Type A content, are structures, situations, topics, and functions and notions. To this can be added vocabulary, as vocabulary can also be organised in the form of lists of items.

Type B content types are contextual and attempt to prepare the pupil for spontaneous communication. Type B content provides the opportunity for the use of tasks and may include situations and topics as well. Content is subordinate to the learning process and pedagogical procedure and focuses rather on the "how" than the "what" (White, 1988:46). Type B syllabi suggest a learner-centred view which White calls "methods-based" with little or no selection, ordering and presentation of language items.

White describes skills as the half-way house between Type A and Type B content. He distinguishes between receptive and productive skills on the one hand, and language and skilled behaviour on the other (White, 1988:68). However, skills constitute but one aspect of a syllabus and should be taught in relation to all the other content types (cf. chapter 5).

Even though White categorises literature as a variation of topic-based content, literature will be discussed separately in this study. Literature is taught not only for language purposes, but also for its educational and aesthetic value.

4.5 Conclusion

Content in ESL can be selected in terms of vocabulary, structures, situations, topics, literature, skills, functions and notions and tasks. In chapter 5, the selection and grading of each type will be discussed in detail, and each type will be evaluated.

According to White (1988:109) a Type A syllabus cannot be combined with a Type B syllabus due to their incompatible basic principles. However, the different content types distinguished in each type, can be combined to form a hybrid syllabus, which will be discussed in chapter 6.

It remains clear that any teaching-learning situation will require both selection and grading of different content types. Whether all these types should be included in every cycle, will be debated in chapter 5. This chapter has only aimed at pointing out that selection and grading of content are two important aspects of the teaching-learning situation and of any planning in ESL.

CHAPTER 5

SELECTION AND GRADING OF CONTENT IN ESL

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter the possible types of content identified in chapter 4 (vocabulary, structures, situations, topics, literature, skills, functions and notions, and tasks) will be defined, and criteria for selection and grading of each type will be examined. The importance and relevance of each type will be evaluated. Vocabulary is discussed first, as the criteria used for the selection and grading of vocabulary provides a good starting point for discussing criteria for selection and grading of the other content types (White, 1988:48).

5.2 Content types

5.2.1 Vocabulary

5.2.1.1 Definition

Vocabulary has always been considered an important aspect of language teaching. Long and Crookes (1992:36) point out that words or collocations may be the most likely candidates of any targetlike linguistic items to be learnt separately and completely.

Van der Walt (1981:138) points out that in the 1930s and 1940s vocabulary selection (word frequency counts) and the resultant word lists were regarded as very important in teaching. The aim was to find the most useful words for the learner and teach these. Two important word lists appeared; one by Laurence Faucett, H.E. Palmer, Thorndike and Michael West, which was called the "Carnegie Interim Report on Vocabulary Selection for the Teaching of English as a Foreign Language"

(1936), and the other by West, which summarised the essential vocabulary of English in 2000 words (1953) (Van der Walt, 1981:138).

5.2.1.2 Selection of vocabulary

In 1926 West stressed the importance of appropriate vocabulary for making a course successful and functional (White, 1988:13). The criteria suggested by White (1988:49), Howatt (1979:8) and Mackey (1965:176-188) for the selection of vocabulary are **frequency, coverage, range, availability, and learnability**.

Frequency suggests words which occur most frequently and implies that the teacher will teach the pupil "cup" and "saucer" rather than "skylark" and "daffodil". Frequency is determined by word counts and these words are then taught to pupils. Howatt (1979:9) points out that word counts can, however, create problems as some words have a higher score because they are ambiguous, which makes them more difficult to learn. Another problem is that the most frequent words are few in number and according to White (1988:49) make up about 95 per cent of the total number of words in any randomly chosen material.

Coverage suggests the number of things which can be expressed by that one item. If there are two possible words of similar frequency, the one which covers the greatest number of uses is preferable, e.g. "go" has more coverage than "travel".

Range has to do with the number of texts in which a word appears. If a word appears often and in a variety of texts, such a word has a large range. Range should be taken into account to ensure that items selected are representative of a large number of texts.

Availability deals with the readiness with which a word is remembered and used by native speakers. Words such as "salt" and "pepper", rank differently in terms of frequency but are equally available to an English speaker (White, 1988:49).

Learnability is influenced by several factors, namely similarity of the word in L2 to its equivalent in L1, the demonstrability of a word, the length of a word, the regularity of form, and whether parts of the word are already familiar to the pupil, such as "hand" + "bag" to create the word "handbag".

Mackey (1965:176-188) further suggests that selection can also be based on criteria such as communicative potential, usefulness and interest. The needs of the pupils and the aims and objectives of the teacher will determine these.

It is clear from the above that the most important criteria to consider when selecting vocabulary would be **usefulness** (frequency / coverage / range) **difficulty**, (learnability / teachability) and **communicative potential** (availability / interest).

Vocabulary may be taught in three different ways. Difficult words which are come across in the context of, for example, a reading passage, may be explained and discussed. Vocabulary may also be "picked up" in the normal discourse of the classroom situation, and when pupils read. New words may also be specifically taught to pupils, such as the sounds made by animals, or plurals. These may be presented in the form of word lists.

The teacher should aim to teach the pupils as many new words as possible when passages and literary works are discussed.

5.2.1.3 Grading of vocabulary

Grading will be influenced by the pupils' foreknowledge and new words will be presented gradually, the rate determined by the abilities and successes of the pupils. Texts should consist of familiar as well as unknown words so that the pupil is not presented with a page where he cannot decipher any words.

5.2.1.4 Vocabulary as content: an evaluation.

Long and Crookes (1992:41) criticise the use of vocabulary as content when selection is only based on frequency counts, as these counts are not always valid. They also feel that content selected in terms of vocabulary only, does not meet the communicative needs of the pupil. This problem is however solved if all new communicative expressions are taught with familiar vocabulary items which have appeared in preceding work and new vocabulary items presented with known communicative expressions and structures (Finocchiaro & Brumfit, 1983:127). It is important that vocabulary be taught in context of the whole language. Vocabulary should be presented in a text or dialogue and never as a decontextualised list of words without any function.

Vocabulary cannot be separated from language and should be taught incidentally and constantly as it is an integral part of the teaching-learning situation in ESL.

5.2.2 Structures

5.2.2.1 Definition

A structure is a linguistic item such as a pronoun, a verb or a preposition. In a structural approach, learning of the second language suggests the mastery of a set of grammatical systems which would lead to a knowledge of the linguistic grammar of the language. The sentence is used as the basic teaching unit.

5.2.2.2 Selection of structures

Although structures can be systematically defined, selection is problematic as it is not possible to teach a whole language and there is no time to do so (Corder, 1975:201; Van der Walt, 1981:142).

As with the selection of vocabulary, Mackey (1965:166-184) suggests frequency, range, coverage, availability and learnability as the most important criteria for selection of structures. Lado suggested in 1957 that structures be selected by means of contrastive analysis and error analysis, an idea which was received with much enthusiasm in the 1960s. Contrastive analysis is the process of comparing the native language and the target language. Teaching is especially focused on the differences between the two languages. Contrastive analysis has been criticized, as not all areas of difference are equally difficult to learn. Halliday, McIntosh and Stevens (1964:113) point out that there can be no overall comparative statement accounting for the differences between two languages, as each language is a "complex of a large number of patterns at different levels and at different degrees of delicacy". The only level of possible comparison between two languages is semantic structure and phonology (Corder, 1975:254).

An error analysis is an analysis of the errors that the pupil makes. Corder (1975:25) says that these errors refer to "the systematic errors of the learner from which we are able to reconstruct his knowledge of the language to date". Errors can provide helpful information when doing remedial work and help the teacher to evaluate his teaching techniques and materials. An error analysis can indicate problems that pupils have with different aspects of the language such as grammatical structures, and these aspects can then be revised and discussed. Errors guide the teacher when he has to select grammatical items for the next group of students doing the same course.

Grammatical forms must be selected according to grammatical complexity, transparency with respect to the communicative function of an utterance, generalizability to other communicative functions, the role of a given form in facilitating acquisition of another form, acceptability in terms of perceptual strategies, linguistic and grammatical usefulness and degree of markedness in terms of social and geographical dialects (Canale & Swain, 1980:21). Selection is possible as grammatical structures are concrete and can be listed. White (1988:82) states that the selection of structures is determined by the needs of the learners in the

classroom and in the real world, with regard to usefulness, coverage or generalizability, interest or relevance, and complexity of form.

From the above, it is clear that **usefulness** of the structure for the pupil (frequency / range / coverage / availability / interest) and **difficulty** (learnability / grammatical complexity) of the structure are the most important criteria for the selection of structures. These criteria will determine which structures to select for a specific teaching-learning situation.

5.2.2.3 Grading of structures

Grading of structures is complicated by the learners' individual acquisition of the language. Not all learners will be at the same stage of acquisition at the same time (Nunan, 1988:35). However, grading has to be done before the planning of the course can be finalised.

Canale and Swain (1980:44) point out that complexity, generalizability, transparency, frequency, range and availability all are important criteria for sequencing grammatical forms. Some tenses such as the "simple present" are more frequently used than the "present perfect continuous", and this has to be taken into account. Coverage, learnability and teachability are also regarded as important criteria (White, 1988:51). Structures that cover a wider area are considered more important and are graded before structures with a low coverage. An example is the teaching of questions and negatives before the teaching of passives. When teachers select structures, those that are easier to teach and to learn receive preference, such as teaching indefinite tenses before perfect tenses (Palmer, 1964).

Mackey (1965:208) and White (1988:48) suggest the following criteria for grading structures:

- * **Frequency of occurrence:** Structures that are most frequently used, such as present tenses, will be taught first, whereas tenses with a low frequency such as the perfect continuous tenses will be taught last.
- * **Simplicity:** Simple structures will be taught first, such as simple sentences, and will be taught before e.g. conjunctions.
- * **Regularity:** Regular verbs will be taught before irregular verbs.
- * **Contrastive difficulty:** Where structures are the same as in the motherlanguage, they will be taught first, whereas those which are different are taught later.

White (1988:55) suggests that grading of structures remains difficult as there is an ambivalence between what is structurally "easier" and what is psychologically easier. Johnson (1983:29) and McDonough (1980:318) point out that structures are selected and graded intuitively by the pupils, regardless of the order of the structures taught to them. Not enough data is available on the influence of natural order on grading as only a limited number of structures have been investigated to determine the order in which they are acquired.

In the light of the above, the most important criteria for the grading of structures are **relative difficulty** (complexity / learnability / teachability / simplicity / contrastive difficulty / regularity) and **relative usefulness** (Van der Walt, 1981:134) (generalizability / frequency / coverage / range).

5.2.2.4 Structures as content: an evaluation.

Content in terms of structures has been severely criticised as knowledge of the structures does not enable a pupil to communicate (Allwright, 1976:2; Krashen, 1982). Wilkins (1974:84) points out that structures provide little motivation for pupils, as they do not see the immediate practical return of the grammatical system

that they have to learn. Wilkins (1974:85) points out that the bringing together of sentences which are grammatically identical is artificial, since real communication consists of sentences similar in meaning and not in form. One way suggested to overcome this problem is to combine situations and structures, or functions and structures (Finocchiaro & Brumfit, 1983:104).

Many teachers feel that structures are essential to language teaching. Opperman (1983:49) points out that pupils are expected to learn the structural forms in English in order to acquire grammatical competence, which is an integral part of communicative competence (Allwright, 1976:3). Brumfit (1984:50) feels that syntax is the only generative system described in English so far, and should thus be used as basis for content selection. He says (ibid.:50) that such a system would be more economical than a random selection of items such as notions or situations, and argues that the contextualising of grammatical items would eventually lead to a variety of language functions being used.

Finocchiaro and Brumfit (1983:124) stress the need for grammar, but suggest a "communicative grammar". When teaching "communicative grammar" authentic speech as recorded from spontaneous speech acts is used and grammar is taught in a social context. This would prevent what Yalden (1983:7) describes as "meaningless repetition of correct forms".

The inclusion of structures remains essential in the cycle in ESL as structures illustrate to pupils the linguistic coherence of the language. The pupil needs a basic knowledge of the language as a prerequisite to language use. The teaching of structures cannot be separated from meaningful communication. The structures which are selected should be useful and applicable to real communicative needs.

5.2.3 Situations

5.2.3.1 Definition

Content can be selected in terms of situations. A situation such as "At the Supermarket" is selected and pupils are taught how to express themselves in such circumstances. As has been pointed out in the historical overview in Chapter 3, situations have always been a means of teaching a second or foreign language. When teachers select content in terms of situations, the language is presented and taught in a certain context (Corder, 1975:61) and pupils learn how to react in a specific situation, e.g. "At the Post Office" or "Asking directions".

5.2.3.2 Selection of situations

According to Wilkins (1976:16) selection will be determined by a prediction of all possible situations in which the learner might find himself and where he would need the language.

Yalden (1983:18) and White (1988:63) point out that there are three elements to consider in any situation: the setting (where?), the participants (who?) and the relevant objects in the setting (what?).

The following will serve to illustrate:

Setting	:	at the Post Office
Participants	:	Post Office clerk, customer
Relevant objects	:	money, Post Office forms, stamps

White points out that pupils are taught how to get things done rather than teaching them the language system. The teacher has to determine the needs of the pupils by means of a needs analysis (cf. 2.3.1) and then select situations based on their usefulness to the pupil. To be really useful the situation must be specified and not cover a wide general area. It should be "At the bank" rather than "Going to town" as

the latter can include a variety of situations, such as "Going to the dentist", "Shopping", or "Going to the butcher's". "At the Post Office" can include different situations, such as "Buying stamps", "Paying your telephone account" or "Sending a telegram". When selecting a situation, the teacher has to specify exactly which situation is taught, and how the situation can be applied to other new situations.

It is clear from the criteria above that situations are selected according to **the needs of the pupils**. In an ESP course the needs of the pupils are easier to determine, but in a general course needs are varied and it is difficult to cover all the possible situations that every pupil might encounter. However, there are situations which are useful to every pupil, such as "Greeting people" and these should be selected and implemented in the cycle.

5.2.3.3 Grading of situations

Grading is usually done by arranging the actual situations in which language is used along a scale of increasing difficulty (Widdowson,1968:138). Long and Crookes (1992:32) point out that grading of situations differs from grading of structures as communicative function is more important here than linguistic relationships or learning difficulty. Thus grading is done according to the context and not the structures. Van der Walt (1981:145) points out that the teacher should first teach situations which the pupil is most likely to find himself in, before teaching situations which are less frequently encountered, in order to maintain the students' interest.

White (1988:65) suggests a chronological grading based on the logical sequence of events such as arriving, greeting, departing. Grading can also be based on similarities, e.g. service encounters, cultural activities, or even a structural grading and is influenced by the social needs of the learner at a specific time (White,1988:66).

Communicative functionality (frequency / usefulness / needs of pupils) and **interest** are the most important criteria to consider when grading of situations.

5.2.3.4 Situations as content: an evaluation.

Content selected in terms of situations is very useful as language is always used in a social context. The needs of the learners receive priority as the teacher tries to predict the situations in which the learner will need language and communication skills and only teaches those. This leads to efficient teaching, and as only relevant matter is taught to the pupils, they are likely to be motivated.

As pointed out in this chapter (cf. 5.2.3.2), two problems arise from selecting content in terms of situations. One of the problems is that situations cannot always be predicted for general language courses, such as for secondary school pupils, because of the variety of situations such a large group of pupils will encounter. The second problem is that language is not necessarily related to place and topic; one can go to the Post Office for numerous reasons such as to buy stamps, to complain, to make a telephone call or ask the way (Wilkins, 1976:34). This approach may be more useful in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses, where a specific language area has to be learned rather than general language.

Yalden (1983:9) criticises the use of situations as pupils do not always know how to apply a familiar structure or expression in a new situation. The learner is not prepared for something out of the ordinary. Long and Crookes (1992:33) point out that topics and situations tend to overlap, to be vague, and to serve merely as carriers for linguistic items. Canale and Swaine (1980:19) feel too little is known about the rules of language use and the manner in which and the extent to which semantic aspects of utterances are determined and grammatical forms selected, in a social context.

However, when selected according to the needs and interests of the pupils, situations remain a very functional and useful way of selecting content and motivating pupils. In chapter 6 it will be pointed out how situations could be incorporated into a cycle.

5.2.4 Topics

5.2.4.1 Definition

White (1988:65) points out that topics are defined by meaning and not form. The term "topic" should be distinguished from the term "theme". A theme would cover a wide field such as "Travel" or "Nature" while a topic would be more specific e.g. "The Airport" or "Pollution". It is possible to repeat a theme in consecutive years during a course, without repetition of materials, as different topics could be discussed every year.

5.2.4.2 Selection of topics

Topics should be academically relevant to as many students as possible, they should be stimulating and interesting, and teaching material should be easily found. Material would be academically relevant if it relates to other areas of the school curriculum. The topic should not require simplification, the teacher should use a variety of sources and points of view and the topic as well as the selected pieces should not be too long or too technical.

White (1988:66) suggests interest, need, utility and relevance as important criteria for selecting topics. Both White (1988:67) and Van der Walt (1981:173) stress the importance of the interests and communication needs of the pupil as well as the interests of the teacher. The teacher can make use of a needs analysis (cf. 2.3.1) to determine the interests and needs of pupils.

The most prominent criteria for the selection of topics are **interests and needs of the pupils** and **availability** (relevance), **usefulness** (utility) and **difficulty of the material**.

5.2.4.3 Grading of topics

Grading is to a large extent determined by the content of the topic and cannot only be determined theoretically, as it will also be influenced by the learners and their abilities. The background of the learners, and their knowledge of topics, will also influence the grading of topics. For example, boys that come from farms will find a topic on agriculture easier than boys from the city. The teacher has to analyse the situation before finalising grading.

White (1988:67) suggests the following criteria for the grading of topics: general to highly specific, length of texts, familiarity of the field to learners and the difficulty and complexity of the textual material. In addition, he (ibid.:48) suggests that teachers consider the interests and needs of the pupils. Topics should be relevant, practical and should prove useful to the pupils. It is clear that the grading of topics would be influenced by an analysis of the **pupils** and their **specific situation** and the **difficulty** and **familiarity** of the topic.

5.2.4.4 Topics as content: an evaluation

The basic reason for using topics is motivational. The student's interests can be accommodated, for example, if the student wants to talk about football, marriage, or parts of a car; he is also taught the structures and vocabulary needed to do so.

However, if content is selected in terms of topics, language exposure would be at random (White, 1988:68) which may or may not lead to successful language learning. In a general course selection of content in terms of topics is problematic as no selection will comply with all the communicative needs of every pupil. Determining levels of difficulty of these topics may also provide problems due to differences among learners.

Despite these problems topics motivate and interest pupils and are used by most teachers as the starting point of the cycle because topics provide meaningful and

relevant content which stimulate motivation and lead to discussions (Kilfoil & Van der Walt, 1989:228).

5.2.5 Literature

5.2.5.1 Definition

White (1988:67) points out that the use of literature in language teaching is merely a topic-based approach. The importance of literature as source for language teaching has been pointed out by researchers such as Arthur (1968), Widdowson (1978), Brumfit (1984) and White (1988). In literary texts the focus need not only be on the literary canon or on the study of literary forms, genres and criticism, but also on linguistic aspects such as grammar and topics embodied in the literary text (White, 1988:67). Literature can be presented in the form of poetry, novels, short stories or dramas (Van der Walt, 1981:261) and creates opportunities for both intensive and extensive reading.

5.2.5.2 Selection of literature

According to Gillis (1977:3) and Arthur (1968:198) selection of literature is usually based on student interest and needs as this would ensure a positive response. Teachers should be aware of the type of literature that would interest a pupil of a specific age group and should consult librarians in this regard.

Arthur (1968:199) points out that the pupils' response to the selected book or poem is a very important criterion. Pupils must be able to understand the content even though they may be unfamiliar with specific words.

Selection is also determined by the text itself. Accessibility, style and aesthetic importance of the text should be considered. Kilfoil and Van der Walt (1989:135) point out that the text should be appealing, the dialogue lively and the ideas challenging. The text should be well written and should have literary merit. If a

novel, short story or drama is selected, there should be a strong plot line. Characters should be clearly defined and not be too simplistic. The pace should be swift and the text as a whole should not be too long and daunting.

It is clear that the **pupils' interest and abilities** as well as the **text itself** will determine selection.

5.2.5.3 Grading of literature

The teacher may decide to teach narrative literature before abstract literature as narrative literature, such as a short story, has a straightforward story-line and does not have too many difficult stylistic features. Difficulty of words and grammatical structures will also determine grading. Then the teacher will progress to more difficult language, and texts that will make demands on the learner's ability to comprehend abstract ideas. Adapted or simplified versions of masterpieces can be used in the lower classes (Finocchiaro & Brumfit, 1983:131).

It appears that **difficulty**, based on the vocabulary, grammar and style of the literature, is the most important aspect to consider when grading literature.

5.2.5.4 Literature as content: an evaluation

Literature has always been considered an important part of the teaching of a language as it provides useful information on the foreign culture that the pupil has to understand, illustrates the people's customs, beliefs and background, and provides authentic use of language register, dialects and idiolects (Finocchiaro & Brumfit, 1983:131). A language cannot be separated from its literature, "which is its most expressive manifestation" (Van der Walt, 1981:260).

Arthur (1968:200) points out that the use of literature can change a language learning experience into a source of immediate pleasure and satisfaction for the student. The use of literature encourages vocabulary expansion and stories received

as literary experiences are repeatable and do not bore pupils quickly. Literature provides examples of the language in real life, encourages reading (Van der Walt, 1981:261) and has the advantage that the same work can be studied for literary appreciation as well as language study.

Kilfoil and Van der Walt (1989:153) point out that the incorporation of literature in the planning of a course provides opportunity for several additional activities and presents the chance to foster enjoyment and appreciation. The use of audio-visual material will create a positive attitude and enthusiasm among pupils. The teaching of literature presents the pupil with language that is well-written and appealing. The imagination and creativity of the pupils are stimulated. Literature is a vehicle for language enrichment and vocabulary acquisition and provides the reader with new insights. The teaching of literature leads to the natural integration of all four skills (Kilfoil & Van der Walt, 1989:133).

However, literature should not be the only source of content as pupils may find it restricting and boring because it does not provide enough opportunity for communication. Literature is only one aspect of the cycle, which should be varied and flexible. It is however clear from the above that literature has an essential place in the teaching of a language and should be incorporated in every cycle.

5.2.6 Skills

5.2.6.1 Definition

When content is selected in terms of skills, it means that the teacher selects material to enforce the use of a specific skill. There are two ways of looking at skills (White, 1988:68): firstly in terms of receptive and productive skills, and secondly in terms of skilled behaviour.

Traditionally, "four skills" are identified (listening, reading, writing and speaking), which are given more or less equal importance in any general syllabus. The TED syllabus for the teaching of ESL (1986) is an example of a syllabus based on skills.

The second way of looking at skills concerns skills psychology and includes numerous skills other than linguistic ones, such as cognitive skills, composition skills, and study skills (White, 1988:73). Activities can be broken down into several sub-skills. An example is the taxonomy of language skills provided by Munby where each skill is stated in terms of a verb such as "understanding" and "expressing" (Munby, 1978).

Because behavioural skills can be incorporated in the cycle in the form of functions and notions, and tasks, this dissertation will use skills in the traditional sense of the "four skills" which have to be taught. When a cycle is planned, all four skills should receive attention. Content will always be taught in terms of one or more of the "four skills".

5.2.6.2 Selection of skills

In any course other than a general one, specific skills will receive attention. For example, pupils studying a specific course, such as law, may be required to have a reading knowledge of Latin. The selection of skills will be determined by the needs of the learner. White (1988:69) states that importance is nowadays given to listening and speaking skills and these are selected more often than was traditionally the case because listening and speaking skills are essential for communication.

In a general course it would not be a question of selecting which skill to teach, but making sure that all skills are taught constantly. The specific **situation analysis**, the **needs of the pupils** and the **objectives of the lesson** determine which skill will receive priority.

5.2.6.3 Grading of skills

It is difficult to grade skills as one skill is not more complex than another, or more difficult to learn. The taxonomy suggested by Munby (1978) is not organised hierarchically and does not help the teacher to decide on the order of skills to be taught.

White (1988:72) suggests concreteness versus abstractness of skills as a way to grade skills, but admits that these are difficult to measure. When teaching all four skills to pupils as in a general course, one skill would not be considered more important than another. There would be a **continuous integration of all the skills**. The skills need to be integrated in such a way that they develop equally without one being emphasized to the detriment of another (Kilfoil & Van der Walt, 1989:23) Listening or speaking is not a prerequisite for e.g. writing or reading. Content which is selected in terms of skills will be graded according to the objectives of a specific lesson or cycle. If it is the objective of a lesson to teach the pupil to greet people, speaking will receive priority.

5.2.6.4 Skills as content: an evaluation

White (1988:69) suggests a coming together of the traditional "four skills" and behavioural skills but argues that the teaching of skills is only one aspect of a complete syllabus.

It is important that all four skills be integrated in every cycle. The teaching of skills is realized through the teaching of all the other content types discussed in this cycle. The teacher cannot plan a lesson based on skills only, but will have to teach e.g. oral skills by applying the skill to a specific situation or function. Skills are, however, important and fundamental elements to consider when planning the scheme of work because the ability to use a language is evaluated by the ability of the pupil to use the language in terms of all four skills. Only then would a pupil be proficient in a

language. When planning the scheme of work, the teacher has to ensure that all four skills are taught.

5.2.7 Functions and notions

5.2.7.1 Definition

The concepts of functions and notions originated with the Council of Europe. It was pointed out that selection of content based on functions and notions contributes to the "goal of communication and interaction" (Yalden, 1983:10).

Nunan (1988:35) describes functions as the communicative purposes for which language is used, while notions are the conceptual meanings (objects, entities, states of affairs, logical relationships) expressed through language. An example of a function is "reporting events" or "greeting people" while notions are concerned with concepts such as time, space, movement, cause and effect (White, 1988:75). Functions depend on the purpose of the speaker, while notions depend on the functions, the elements in the situation and the topic which is being discussed (Yalden, 1983:15).

Functions and notions cannot be seen as separate categories as the one presupposes the other; the function describing the purpose in using the language and the notion describing the semantic field of reference (Kilfoil & Van der Walt, 1989:222). For the purpose of this dissertation functions will receive priority, as notions, which are abstract, are of limited value as an element of the scheme of work. It is very difficult to integrate notions in a syllabus because the relationship between grammatical form and grammatical meaning is very complex. The category of time, for example, covers time in relation to present, past, future, duration, frequency and sequence (Van der Walt, 1981:167). Functions are popular and provide opportunities to communicate, but notions are difficult to integrate with functions. Notions do not provide enough opportunity for contextualization as they deal with the components of discourse, not with discourse itself (Widdowson, 1978:253). This study will not include notions in content selection.

According to Long and Crookes (1992:29) functions and notions are still linguistic units, the only difference being that exercises practising "requests" or "apologies" replace language exercises such as "present tense" or "relative clauses".

5.2.7.2 Selection of functions

According to Finocchiaro and Brumfit (1983:60) and Johnson (1981:6), teaching a language in the form of functions is based on the needs of the pupils and situations that they might encounter. These needs are determined by means of a needs analysis (cf. 2.3.1).

Peck (1976:88) and White (1988:48) suggest that the most important criteria for the selection of functions are the immediate and long term needs and interests of the pupils, generalizability and usefulness of the functions, complexity of form within the function and the teacher's intuition.

Functions can be used in combination with other content types in the cycle. Littlewood (1981:79) suggests a combination of structures and functions, where the course would be organised into units, based on important communicative functions, without abandoning structures of the language that is taught.

A diversity of typologies consisting of lists of functions and notions have been published. Examples are Van Ek (1976), Wilkins (1976) and Finocchiaro and Brumfit (1983). Nunan (1988:86) points out that these typologies are based on intuition as there is no theoretical reason for any specific selection of these items.

When selecting content in terms of functions for a general course, the teacher should look at the **needs and interests of the pupils**, as well as the **difficulty of the structures** incorporated in the function.

5.2.7.3 Grading of functions

Canale and Swain (1980:25) point out that it is not clear how sequencing of communicative items should be determined. They suggest that functions which are more universal or at least more similar to those of the pupil's native language, be introduced first. Other important factors to consider are the generalizability of functions from one communicative event to another, the complexity of the grammatical forms appropriate to express the functions, the range of sociolinguistic variables crucially involved in a function, and the interrelationships among these sociolinguistic variables that must be known.

Opperman (1983:64) suggests that as the grading of functions is problematic, existing theories on child psychology may be used to order and grade functions. He suggests that beginners' classes be focused on functions which deal with the child himself, his physical appearance, and his immediate surroundings. Thereafter functions can be selected which are based on the world around him. This would imply that a function such as "greeting people" would be taught before a function such as "buying a ticket at the airport".

It is clear from the above that the most important criteria for grading functions are **familiarity** of the pupils with the items, the **needs and immediate surroundings** of the pupils, and **difficulty**.

5.2.7.4 Functions as content: an evaluation.

Wilkins (1976:19) says that functions take the communicative facts of language into account without losing sight of the grammatical and situational factors. He points out (1976:90) that the value of functions lies in the fact that the teacher is forced to consider the communicative value of everything that is taught. The problem is that functions are still separate units that are isolated. The teaching of these functions does not necessarily lead to communicative competence. Nunan (1988:37) feels that

teachers need to include content which will help learners to carry out the communicative purposes for which they need the language.

Kilfoil and Van der Walt (1989:224) point out that a functional-notional syllabus would be a "formidable document" and that the needs of the pupils would first have to be ascertained and analysed. This would lead to a syllabus that would have to cover all possible situations that the pupil may encounter. Such an elaborate syllabus would be impractical for a general language course at school level and would be more appropriate for an ESP course. Brumfit (1981:101) and Widdowson (1978:45) point out that lists of functions and notions do not necessarily reflect the way languages are learned any more than lists of grammatical and lexical items because dividing language into units of whatever type misrepresents the nature of language as communication. Brumfit (1981:101) suggests "a syntactic basis, bargaining with a spiralling sequence of notions" (cf. 4.3.3) as a good model for any language syllabus.

Even though the inclusion of functions in the cycle will mean a list of items, selection and grading have to be restricted in some way. The problem is that there are many possible functions to teach, especially in a general course. The inclusion of functions, will, however, stimulate communication. When content is selected in terms of functions, the teacher has the opportunity to consider the specific needs and interests of his pupils.

5.2.8 Tasks

5.2.8.1 Definition

Tasks are differentiated sequences of problem-solving activities, consisting of units or frameworks of activity where each unit outlines an activity and range of appropriate tasks within the activity. When given a task, learners are required to arrive at an outcome, using given information, through some process of thought which is controlled and regulated by the teacher (Nunan, 1988:42). Examples of

tasks are constructing a map from given descriptions, listening to stories and completing them with appropriate solutions or constructing a curriculum vitae from personal information (Prabhu, 1987).

Nunan (1988:10) states that all definitions of task imply communicative language use in which the user's attention is focused on meaning rather than linguistic structures. He points out that a task as a piece of meaning-focused work involving learners in comprehending, producing and/or interacting in the target language, and says that tasks are analysed according to their goals, input data, activities, settings and roles.

Prabhu (1987:25) suggests that the basis of each lesson be a task, and that there be no preselection of language items for any given lesson or activity and no practice of language items. When the teacher uses tasks to teach ESL, the pupil focuses on completing a specific task rather than learning language, which is likely to lead to communicative competence.

5.2.8.2 Selection of tasks

According to Long and Crookes (1992:39), the selection of tasks will be based on a needs identification in terms of the real-life tasks learners would need, e.g. buying a train ticket, renting an apartment, reading a technical manual or taking lecture notes. Once these have been established, they are ordered into task-types. From these "pedagogic tasks" are then developed, which would be worked on in the class. The needs identification or needs analysis could be done by means of questionnaires, interviews, and discussions with teachers (cf. 2.4.1).

Tasks should be balanced, motivating and should be an application of existing and new knowledge. The teacher should use authentic sources and select activities in which learners are required to negotiate meaning. Tasks should relate to the learners' communicative needs and creative language use should always be encouraged (Nunan, 1988:132).

Nunan (1988:44) distinguishes between real-world and pedagogic tasks. Real-world tasks require learners to behave as would be expected from them in the outside world, while pedagogic tasks require things that are highly unlikely to be encountered outside the classroom. An example of a real-world task would be to listen to a newscast and comment on events, while a pedagogic task would be to listen to a text and answer true or false questions on it afterwards.

It is clear that the **interest and needs of pupils** should receive priority when tasks are selected. This can be realized by selecting **real-life** tasks in and out of the classroom and by exposing pupils to as much language as possible.

5.2.8.3 Grading of tasks

Both Nunan (1988:116) and Long and Cookes (1992:45) point out that the issue of grading tasks is very complex and is determined by difficulty, which can be increased by setting activities that require different learner responses, by varying the amount and kind of language required, or varying the intellectual challenge provided. According to Breen (1987:23), cognitive and linguistic difficulty are the main criteria for the grading of tasks. Tasks can range from simple and brief exercise types, to more complex and lengthy activities such as problem solving or simulations and decision-making.

Nunan (1988:42) suggests that grading be determined by the communicative needs of the pupils inside the classroom and also in the outside world. He also says (1988:48) that there are different factors which will determine the level of difficulty, including "the degree of contextual support provided to the learner, the cognitive difficulty of the task, the amount of assistance provided to the learner, the complexity of the language which the learner is required to process and produce, the psychological stress involved in carrying out the task, and the amount and type of background knowledge required".

Nunan (1988:59) believes that the easiest task is straight descriptions, then instruction, then story telling and most difficult would be providing and justifying opinions. With each, difficulty will further be determined by the number of elements, properties, relationships and characters.

Grading of tasks will be influenced by the pupils as they impose their own automatic order of difficulty by doing what they can and not doing what they cannot (Nunan, 1988:116). If learners are not able to complete a task, the teacher can give it again at a later stage until they are able to complete it. However, when the teacher grades tasks, the criteria to consider are linguistic as well as cognitive difficulty, and the communicative needs of the pupils.

5.2.8.4 Tasks as content: an evaluation

Kilfoil and Van der Walt (1989:235) point out that contemporary research points to an activity-based or task-based syllabus, focusing on meaning and completing tasks instead of on accuracy and form. Tasks activate an immediate need to understand and express meaning. Pupils engaged in task-based activities are consciously conveying meaning, yet unconsciously developing a grammatical system, even though there may be some ungrammatical expressions at first (Prabhu,1987).

Long and Crookes (1992:88) argue that various tasks, in the same way as topic and situation, tend to overlap, for example, "doing shopping" includes "catching the bus", "paying a fare", or "choosing purchases". These tasks could be broken up into subtasks, such as "paying for purchases", and even further broken down into "counting money" and "checking change". Selection has to be limited and this poses a problem as it is difficult to decide which tasks to choose and almost impossible to determine how many tasks there are.

However, when the pupil has to complete tasks, he is forced to communicate and convey meaning, which is why the language is being learned.

5.3 Conclusion

The content types discussed above all have their rightful place in the cycle. It has been pointed out in the evaluation of each type, that each contributes to the successful teaching of a language. Vocabulary is necessary as the pupil has to know words, before he can use a language. Vocabulary can be seen as the bricks to build the wall with. Structures are needed as linguistic competence is an integral part of communicative competence. Situations point out the importance of providing a social context when teaching a language. Topics stimulate the interests of the pupils and help with the organisation of the cycle. Functions and tasks provide in the communicative needs of the pupils and teach them how to use the language in real-life situations. Literature teaches the pupil more about the culture of the language he is studying and has educational and aesthetic value. All language learning should be done in terms of the four skills.

Researchers have suggested different combinations of content types. Brumfit (1981:50) suggests a "cross-fertilisation" between functional and grammatical categories where the syllabus can be conceived as a grammatical ladder with a functional-notional spiral around it. Pienemann (1985:45) suggests a combination of traditional structures with functions and notions while Batstone (1988:34) suggests a modular course design with a functional, structural and notional component. Roets (1990:79) proposes that functions and notions, situations, topics and tasks and activities be combined. A combination of all content types is the only way to ensure adequate language learning. Littlewood (1981:82) comments that it is possible to use different kinds of organisation as a basis for different units according to which perspective offers the most convenient way of approaching a particular area of language.

White (1988:110) points out that a hybrid selection of content is the most appropriate one and says that it will satisfy most interest groups. A hybrid selection of content can be done by designing a cycle which includes all the content types discussed in 5.2 namely structures, topics, situations, skills, literature, vocabulary,

functions and notions and tasks. The design of such a cycle will be discussed in chapter 6. By using a spiral approach to teaching, each aspect will continually be stressed and revised which will ensure an adequate acquisition of the language as a whole.

Johnson (1981:9) suggests that one type be selected as the "organising principle". The teacher might decide that each cycle of the course should cover one function. The function is then the "unit of organisation" for the cycle. Such a cycle would be function-based. Instead of selecting functions as the organising principle, the teacher might decide on topics or situations. A syllabus or a scheme of work with a specific unit of organisation is called "unidimensional" It is suggested by Johnson that this might lead to multidimensional syllabuses where the unit of organisation is varied during the course. Here the focus (topic/situation/structure) is allowed to change as the course develops.

Content should always be informative, educational and stimulating. By monitoring students closely, content selection and grading will be a flexible process of continuous change, using the different content types according to what is needed at that specific stage. The teacher should be flexible and need not necessarily stick to one way of selecting or organising content but vary this according to his needs and those of his pupils.

CHAPTER 6

THE APPLICATION OF ESL CONTENT TYPES TO THE DESIGN OF A CYCLE

6.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to illustrate how the various content types can be accommodated in the teaching-learning situation. A theoretical framework for the design of a cycle of lessons will be suggested. Content selection for the cycle will be based on an integration of the different content types identified in chapter 4 and discussed in chapter 5, namely vocabulary, structures, situations, topics, literature, skills, functions and tasks. These content types will all be accommodated in a proposed cycle.

6.2 The scheme of work

A scheme of work as defined in Chapter 2 is the planning done by the teacher, based on the prescribed syllabus. Cohen and Manion (1987:45) suggest that a scheme of work should include an outline of the subject matter and content, information on the children, organisational matters, previous knowledge and experience of the class on the subject, number and duration of lessons, aims and objectives, methods, sources of information, evaluative procedures and aids and equipment to be used. He stresses that a scheme should not be seen as fixed and rigid but should be changed continuously. Kilfoil and Van der Walt (1989:228) suggest that the scheme of work be updated and revised every three years.

The scheme can contain a checklist which indicates the components of the syllabus that should be covered. Such a list should be compiled after careful study of the syllabus. The scheme of work would then also act as a record of work (Kilfoil & Van der Walt, 1989:230).

6.3 The cycle of lessons.

Most schemes are based on a cyclic division of work, each cycle of lessons taking more or less two weeks to cover (cf. 2.3) which on average means about 16 cycles per year, including tests written in test periods. The planning done by the teacher will be influenced by the number of cycles and the length of periods of the specific school.

The planning of content for these periods will vary from cycle to cycle, as the situation analysis for each cycle is likely to differ. If the teacher keeps the principles of variety and flexibility in mind (Harmer, 1983:220), every cycle will have similar elements, without two cycles being exactly identical in form (cf. 5.3).

6.4 Designing the cycle: existing models

Various models have been proposed for the design of a cycle. Each model outlines elements of a cycle. The models which will be discussed are those suggested by Van der Walt (1988), Harmer (1983), Kilfoil and Van der Walt (1989) and Finocchiaro and Brumfit (1983).

6.4.1 The Van der Walt model

Van der Walt (1988:57) points out that any planning of content in ESL should include activities, topics, situations, language type and skills. He suggests the following model for the planning of a cycle:

PRESENTATION, PRACTICE, COMMUNICATIVE ACTIVITIES, RT INPUT

Listening/ Speaking/ Reading/ Writing

(Van der Walt, 1988:53).

In a general language course, the cycle will aim to cover the following areas: presentation of language, controlled practice, roughly-tuned input and communicative activities. Van der Walt (1988:51) distinguishes between finely-tuned (FT) input and roughly-tuned (RT) input: finely-tuned input is language that has

been selected by the teacher for presentation to the pupil, while roughly-tuned input is language which is at a slightly higher level than the learner is capable of producing, but at a level that he can understand.

- * Presentation

This is usually the first step. FT input is provided. The elements presented should include grammatical items, functions, vocabulary and pronunciation (Van der Walt, 1988:53). New language can be introduced or previous language revised by means of a dialogue, pictures or a passage. During the presentation phase, accuracy is considered very important, and repetition and drills are commonly used. The context should be as interesting as possible. This can be ensured by associating content with a specific situation.

- * Practice

This is the controlled-practice phase. Pupils have to answer questions and do exercises orally and in writing.

- * Communicative activities

Communicative activities provide the pupil with the opportunity to practise what he has learned. Examples are role play, problem solving, puzzles and tasks to complete.

- * RT input

During RT input familiar and unfamiliar items are presented to pupils. The teacher can help the pupil to understand by means of pictures and demonstrations. Here the pupil must listen to and read a lot of English. Listening exercises should be given frequently, and extensive as well as intensive reading should receive priority. Literature is important here and should be planned as part of RT input.

All the phases should be presented in terms of the four skills (Van der Walt, 1988:54). The teacher should make sure that each cycle follows this pattern.

6.4.2 The Harmer model

Harmer (1983:43) points out that good cycle planning is the art of mixing techniques, activities and materials in a balanced-activities approach. He suggests (1983:227) that a pre-plan should be drawn up before the actual planning takes place. He distinguishes four major areas: activities, language skills, language type and subject and content.

* Activities

These are activities that will take place in class; not items of language, but what the pupils are going to do. These activities include games, simulations, the introduction of new language, parallel writing, story construction, listening, doing information gap tasks, social talk, oral composition, singing songs, doing controlled language work and so on. Activities include everything that the teacher plans to do in class with the pupils. After determining these the teacher decides which skills will be involved. Harmer suggests that these activities be planned regardless of the language or language skills that the teacher has to teach. The teacher has to know the pupils and the syllabus well enough to be able to decide what kind of lesson would be appropriate for that specific group of students on that specific day. This will ensure motivation. The teacher has to know his pupils and their circumstances. Harmer describes the planning of activities as a vital first stage in the planning process as it forces the teacher to sit and think what would be most beneficial and motivating to the pupils.

The teacher has to decide how the activities he planned are going to work in practice, e.g. whether the system at the school provides enough opportunity for the specific activities, whether he has access to the relevant equipment

needed, and how will he organise things in the classroom to ensure order and a learning opportunity.

- * Language skills

The teacher then has to decide which language skills to include in the class. This might already have been determined when planning the activity, as the teacher might have decided to do e.g. a listening exercise. The teacher has to decide if he is going to concentrate on one skill or on a combination of skills.

- * Language type

The teacher has to decide what language is to be focused on during the lesson. His decision will depend largely on the prescribed language in the syllabus. The decision of the teacher can vary from completely free language (e.g. a simulation) to completely controlled (e.g. yes/no questions). He might decide to limit the language use to the use of a structure such as the past tense or the continuous tense, or to a function such as "inviting" which will stimulate the use of various tenses. Harmer points out that this should not be the first decision that the teacher makes, but only one of the four major areas of planning. If the choice of language type is considered more important than the rest, lessons may be too monotonous.

- * Subject and Content

Harmer describes content as very important, although he puts it last (1983:229). The content selected will entail e.g. the selection of a passage for the listening exercise that is planned. Pupils' interest in the topic is essential here. When planning a simulation the subject has to interest the pupils. The teacher has to know his pupils very well to be able to make these kinds of judgements. Harmer points out that the main function of teaching a language is to communicate.

These four areas form the pre-plan, and the teacher should take special care to interest and motivate the pupils. This leads to the detailed plan which is sometimes considered unnecessary by the experienced teacher. It does, however, force the teacher to consider aspects of planning which may easily be neglected. This detailed plan suggested by Harmer consists of five major components (Harmer, 1983:230). These are a description of the class, recent work done, objectives, contents and additional possibilities. The plan suggested by Harmer is similar to the teaching-learning situation discussed in Chapter 2. The most detailed part of the plan is the content where the teacher describes exactly what he is going to do. This consists of the context, organisation of activities, class organisation, aids, language, possible problems and additional activities. Additional activities include extra games or timefillers, should there be time. Context is the exact situation or subject of learning such as a flight timetable.

Harmer (1983:219) suggests that planning be based on a good textbook although this doesn't always allow for enough variety, which is essential. The textbook needs to be supplemented.

6.4.3 The Kilfoil and Van der Walt model

The model proposed by Kilfoil and Van der Walt (1989:229) suggests a cycle aimed at achieving linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic competence. They explain that linguistic competence can be achieved by language study (1 to 2 periods), sociolinguistic competence by integrated communicative activities (2 periods), discourse competence by listening comprehension (1 period), intensive reading (1 to 2 periods), prescribed networks (4 to 6 periods), extensive reading (feedback) (1 period) and writing (2 to 4 periods), and strategic competence by oral and written communicative activities (1 to 2 periods). They argue that listening comprehension is neglected and should be done in different ways several times during a cycle.

Kilfoil and Van der Walt (1989:56) suggest the following criteria for any communicative activities or exercises:

Firstly there must be an information gap to be satisfied. This forces the pupil to use certain structures to obtain information and prevents mechanical transformation of sentences. The pupil thus focuses on meaning and not form. The second criterion is choice. The pupil must be able to say what he wants, and this can be achieved through open-ended exercises. The third is feedback. This should be done in the teaching of language structures. Fourth is variation in the types of exercises and the last criterion is multi-media.

6.4.4 The Finocchiaro and Brumfit model

Finocchiaro and Brumfit (1983) point out that any planning should consist of the aims and objectives of the teacher, a progression of units to guide the teacher, a list of items (functions, notions and grammatical items) to be studied in each unit, a description of the situations, tasks and activities through which these language items would be introduced and practised, suggestions for evaluation and sources for teacher references and pupils' texts.

They suggest a cycle consisting of 10 units which can each make up one or more lessons. They point out that every teacher can implement a unit differently, while still using the same components. What is important is that the same essential functions, structures, and notions are presented and practised in a variety of social situations with different topics (Figure 2).

A unit such as this is then divided into sessions (lessons) which can be varied according to the needs of the teacher and the pupils (Finocchiaro & Brumfit, 1983:85).

These sessions will include lessons such as the introduction of the function in a situation (dialogue), learning the dialogue, questions and answers on the dialogue itself and on new dialogues, pronunciation practice, a communicative expression (presentation, "rule generalisation and oral practice), pair/groupwork, tasks, games and activities, language items (notions or structures), exercises, listening comprehension, role-playing and dramatisation, reading, and evaluation.

Unit	Function	People	Situation Setting	Topic	Communicative expressions and/or exponents
1	<p>Reacting to an emergency</p> <p>Reporting the circumstances</p> <p>Asking and answering questions about treatment</p>	<p>Patient, Relative, Doctor, Nurse</p>	<p>Doctor's office or emergency room of a hospital</p>	<p>Illness or accident</p>	<p>Where's a hospital?</p> <p>What's wrong? (informal)</p> <p>Tell me where you feel the pain.</p> <p>How did it happen?</p> <p>Does it hurt when I touch you here?</p> <p>Could I</p> <p>I'm sorry. You have</p> <p>We'll have to put you in a plaster cast.</p> <p>I'd like to call ..</p> <p>Nurse, please prepare the patient.</p> <p>How long before I can move?</p> <p>Get this prescription filled</p> <p>Take these pills three times daily.</p> <p>Call me in a week or before if the pain gets worse.</p>

Figure 2: A Unit as suggested by Finocchiaro and Brumfit (1983:86)

6.5 A proposed model for the design of a cycle of lessons

Three important elements can be identified in all the models discussed, namely activities, skills and content types. Each cycle should therefore contain these components.

6.5.1 Activities

All the models discussed have in common an emphasis on activities. These activities make up the major elements of the cycle, e.g. oral composition and comprehension, listening activities, controlled work, language study (presentation and practice), parallel writing, extensive reading and communicative activities. Figure 3 provides an outline of typical cycle elements in a cycle and the periods which should be allocated to each (cf. figure 3).

Cycle elements	Periods
1. Introduction and Comprehension	1
2. Listening	1
3. Presentation/revision of language	1
4. Practice	1
5. Communicative activities	2
6. Poetry	1
7. Intensive reading	1
8. Extensive reading	1
9. Creative writing	2
10. Evaluation	1
Total	12

Figure 3: Example of typical cycle elements

The order in which these cycle elements appear can and should be varied. The periods allocated to each are also subject to variation. In one cycle two periods may be allocated to the presentation, while it may take only one period in the next cycle. Any of the elements may take longer or shorter than in the suggested cycle. Teachers must, however, be careful that the cycle does not become longer than 12 periods. They should be able to adapt to unforeseen circumstances and be able to prevent monotony (Harmer, 1983:220).

These cycle elements consist of a number of possible activities which are organised into lessons (cf. figure 4).

Lesson	Cycle element	Activity
1	Reading and comprehension	class discussion, reading a passage.
2	Listening comprehension	listening exercise.
3	Presentation of language	dialogue, reading passage.
4	Practice	language exercises, oral/written.
5+6	Communicative activities	role play, puzzles, games, problem-solving activities.
7	Poetry	dramatisation.
8	Prose	novel, short stories, dramas, class discussions.

9	Extensive reading	reading, book reports.
10+ 11	Creative writing	write paragraphs, letters, diaries, posters, greeting cards, essays.
12	Evaluation	revision, written, oral assessment.

Figure 4: Example of cycle elements and activities

6.5.2 Skills

The models discussed all include the four basic skills. The cycle should provide enough opportunity for integrating and using all four skills. At any stage of the cycle, any skill can be applied by varying the tasks given. When introducing a topic, pupils can read a passage, talk about it, do listening exercises on related passages and write a paragraph on it. The teacher should allocate enough time to each skill and should not spend too much time on e.g. only writing. A balance between all four skills should be maintained (cf. 5.2.6.3).

6.5.3 Content types

Content is another indispensable element mentioned by Kilfoil and Van der Walt, as well as Van der Walt. Harmer refers to language type, subject and content, while Finocchiaro and Brumfit emphasize content in terms of functions, situations, topics and communicative expressions which contain structures. As pointed out in Chapter 5, all the content types, namely structures, situations, skills, functions and notions, topics, tasks, literature and vocabulary, are relevant when teaching ESL to the pupils and should ideally be accommodated in a cycle.

6.5.4 A proposed model for the design of a cycle

As has been pointed out, a proposed model should consist of **the elements of the cycle**, **activities**, the **skills** involved and the **content type** (cf. 6.5). It was pointed out in chapter 2 that **aims and objectives** are the starting point for any planning and both should therefore be accommodated in the cycle (cf. 2.4.2). An indication of appropriate **methods** and **media** should be included (cf. 2.4.4). Kilfoil and Van der Walt (1989:34) point out that teaching media and technology are increasingly important in the second language classroom. An outline of the methodology and media would assist the teacher in planning and organising his lessons (Harmer, 1983:231). As the overall **theme** influences all content in the cycle, it should be indicated at the beginning of the cycle. All these aspects are incorporated in the proposed model (cf. figure 5).

Std	:	CYCLE
Level	:	
Theme	:	
Aim	:	
CYCLE ELEMENT :		
Period	:	
Objective	:	
Activities	:	
Content type	:	
Vocabulary	:	
Structure	:	
Situation	:	
Topic	:	
Literature	:	
Skills	:	
Function	:	
Task	:	
Method	:	
Media	:	

Figure 5: A proposed model for drawing up a cycle of lessons

6.5.5 An example of a cycle based on the proposed model

An example of a typical cycle is now given, to illustrate how the different elements are combined into a cycle. The proposed cycle illustrates how the various content types identified in chapter 5 can all be accommodated. It was pointed out in chapter 5 that different combinations of content types are suggested (cf.5.3). This study proposes a hybrid selection of content types as suggested by White (1988:110) and Johnson (1981:9) (cf.5.3). After the example a discussion of each period will follow.

CYCLE 1

Std	: 6
Level	: HG
Theme	: Nature
Aim	: The aim of this cycle is to develop in pupils the ability to communicate in English as correctly, fluently and appropriately as possible.

CYCLE ELEMENT 1: Introduction and reading comprehension

Period 1

Objective	: At the end of the period, pupils must be able to answer questions on the topic and reading passage correctly.
Activities	: Class discussion on dinosaurs Reading of informative passage Answering questions
Content type	: Vocabulary : Words occurring in the passage are explained
	: Structure : The present and past indefinite tenses will be highlighted
	: Situation : -
	: Topic : Dinosaurs
	: Literature : -
	: Skills : Speaking, Listening, Reading, Writing
	: Function : Giving/asking for information
	: Task : Problem-solving task - pupils have to answer questions in pairs

Method	: Pupils are shown a video on dinosaurs, which would lead to a class discussion. The reading passage is read by the pupils individually, and then by the teacher and then by pupils again, in pairs, to practise pronunciation. Difficult vocabulary is pointed out and discussed. Pupils then answer some questions orally on the passage in pairs, and some in writing in their scripts.
Media	: Video on Dinosaurs, transparency of difficult vocabulary

CYCLE ELEMENT 2: Listening comprehension

Period 2

Objective	: At the end of the period pupils must be able to answer questions on a passage to which they have listened.
Activities	: Listening exercise Answering questions
Content types:	Vocabulary : Words occurring in the passage are explained Structure : - Situation : - Topic : Protecting our Wildlife Skills : Listening, writing Function : Listening to information Task : Pupils have to answer questions on the passage
Method	: A recording of the passage is played and pupils are then given questions to answer orally and in writing.
Media	: A tape recorder

CYCLE ELEMENT 3: Presentation of language**Period 3**

- Objective** : At the end of the period pupils should be able to write their own dialogue between a journalist and an archeologist or scientist.
- Activities** : Memorise a dialogue
Role-play
Create own dialogue
- Content type** : Vocabulary : Vocabulary items appearing in the dialogue are explained
Structures : The past and present indefinite tenses are explained in context
Situation : A journalist interviews an archeologist
Topic : Animals that become extinct
Literature : -
Skills : Speaking, listening, reading, writing
Functions : Initiating, conducting and closing a conversation / interview
Task : Pupils have to conduct an interview in pairs
- Method** : Pupils memorise a given dialogue between a journalist and archeologist by acting it in pairs. Thereafter, pupils create their own dialogues in pairs and dramatise these dialogues in front of the class.
- Media** : Puppets, transparency

CYCLE ELEMENT 4: Practice**Period 4**

- Objective** : At the end of the period, pupils must be able to invite someone on an outing / accept or decline an invitation
- Activities** : Dramatisation
Write a dialogue
- Content type** : Vocabulary : -
Structure : The present and past indefinite tenses
Situation : A pupil invites a friend to the zoo
Topic : An invitation to the zoo
Literature : -
Skills : Speaking, listening
Function : Inviting someone to the zoo / accepting / declining
Task : Pupils have to complete a discourse chain.
- Method** : Worksheets are handed out to pupils. On these worksheets is a discourse chain that has to be completed by the pupils in pairs. Their dialogue is then dramatised in front of the class.
- Media** : Blackboard

CYCLE ELEMENT 5: Communicative activities**Periods 5 and 6:**

- Objective** : At the end of the period pupils should be able to prove who was guilty of an accident that they witnessed at the lion park.
- Activities** : Role play
- Content type** : Vocabulary : New vocabulary in the given accident report is discussed
 Structure : The past indefinite tense will be highlighted
 Situation : The scene of an accident at the lion park
 Topic : The protection of wild animals
 Literature : -
 Skills : Speaking, listening
 Function : Giving an account of events
 Task : Pupils have to decide who is to blame for the accident
- Method** : A report by the police on a man that was killed by a lion in a lion park is read to pupils. The report provides the background to the situation and relevant vocabulary. Pupils are handed out role cards which provide details on the characters who witnessed the event. A problem is presented to the pupils: whether the lion has to be put down, or whether the accident was the fault of the man or the owner of the park. Pupils are given sufficient time to prepare and are put into groups of four. The role play is then acted out in groups. Each group must reach a conclusion to the problem. These conclusions are compared and discussed by the whole class.
- Media** : Transparency with police report
 Role cards

CYCLE ELEMENT 6: Poetry**Period 7**

- Objective** : At the end of the period pupils must be able to answer questions on the poem "Our World", and be able to identify metaphor and alliteration.
- Activities** : Read and discuss poem
- Content type** :
Vocabulary : Difficult words in the poem are explained
Structure : The present indefinite tense occurring in the poem is highlighted
Situation : -
Topic : Protecting our world
Literature : Poem "Our World"
Skills : Reading, listening, speaking, writing
Function : Expressing opinions, participating in group discussions
Task : Pupils discuss and evaluate the poem
- Method** : Pupils are given the poem "Our World" which they read individually, and then in groups. The poem is discussed and explained by the teacher and poetic devices are pointed out. Questions are answered on the poem.
- Media** : Magazine, pictures

CYCLE ELEMENT 7: Prose**Period 8**

- Objective** : At the end of the period, pupils must be able to answer questions on specific incidents in chapter 3 of the prescribed setbook "Jonty's first term"
- Activities** : Reading of chapter 3 of "Jonty's first term" in groups.
- Content type** :
- Vocabulary** : From "Jonty's first term"
 - Structure** : The past indefinite tense is highlighted
 - Situation** : -
 - Topic** : Schooldays
 - Literature** : Jonty's first term
 - Skills** : Reading, writing
 - Function** : -
 - Task** : Pupils have to answer questions on the book in writing
- Method** : Pupils read chapter 3 in groups while the teacher moves from one group to another and helps with pronunciation and vocabulary. The chapter is discussed by the teacher with special reference to characterisation and the development of plot.
- Media** : Setbook

CYCLE ELEMENT 8: Extensive reading**Period 9**

- Objective** : At the end of the period pupils must present book reports on books that they have read.
- Activities** : Fill in book reports
- Content type** : Vocabulary : Pupils "pick up" new words from reading a book of their own choice
- Structures : -
- Situation : -
- Topic : Own choice
- Literature : Individual reading
- Skills : Reading, writing
- Functions : Reporting, expressing opinions
- Tasks : Pupils have to read books and fill in book reports
- Method** : Pupils are advised on books to read. Examples from the class library are used to illustrate different types of books and magazines. They use the rest of the period to read books or magazines and fill in book reports.
- Media** : Books and magazines from the class library

CYCLE ELEMENT 9: Creative writing**Periods 10 and 11**

- Objective** : At the end of two periods, pupils have to hand in an essay of at least three paragraphs.
- Activities** : Essay writing, editing and revision
- Content type** : Vocabulary : Vocabulary that can be used in the essay will be discussed
 Structure : The past indefinite tense
 Situation : -
 Topic : Close encounters with a dangerous animal
 Literature : -
 Skills : Writing
 Function : Narrating events
 Task : Pupils have to write their own essay
- Method** : A process approach is followed: The topic is discussed and pictures are shown to the class. A scheme for the essay is discussed. Pupils draw up their own schemes and write their essays. Essays are edited and revised.
- Media** : Pictures, blackboard

CYCLE ELEMENT 10: Evaluation**Period 12**

- Objective** : At the end of the period pupils must be able to pass a test on the grammar and vocabulary of the cycle.
- Activities** : A test on the grammar and vocabulary of the cycle
- Content type** : Vocabulary : As in cycle
 Structure : The present and past indefinite tenses
 Situation : -
 Topic : As in cycle
 Literature : -
 Skills : Writing
 Function : As in cycle
 Task : Pupils have to complete a written test
- Method** : A written test on the grammar and vocabulary of the cycle is given to pupils to complete.
- Media** : None

6.5.6 A discussion of the cycle based on the proposed model

Period 1:

The cycle is based on a central theme (Nature). All elements and activities are centred around this theme. The theme will include different, yet related topics such as Dinosaurs (period 1) and Protecting our Wildlife (period 3). The topic indicates the central subject of the specific lesson (cf. 5.2.4.1). The topic can be introduced in the form of a reading passage, a real-life situation such as a dialogue, or by pictures and class discussions, as determined by the objective of the lesson. The content for each lesson is selected according to the criteria identified in chapter 5. A synopsis of the criteria is provided in figure 6.

Content type	Criteria
Vocabulary:	usefulness (frequency, coverage, range) difficulty (learnability, teachability) communicative potential (availability, interest)
Structures:	usefulness (frequency, range, coverage, availability, interest) difficulty (learnability, grammatical complexity)
Situations:	needs of the pupils
Topics:	interests and needs of pupils, availability (relevance) usefulness (utility) difficulty of material
Literature:	interests of pupils abilities of pupils the text itself
Skills:	situation analysis needs of the pupils objectives of the lesson
Functions:	needs and interests of pupils difficulty of structures incorporated in function
Tasks:	interests of pupils needs of pupils balance between real-life and pedagogic tasks

Figure 6 : A synopsis of the criteria for the selection of content types (cf. chapter 5)

In the given example, the cycle starts off with reading and/or listening activities (Kilfoil & Van der Walt, 1989:230). In period 1, the topic (Dinosaurs) is introduced by using stimulating media, such as slides, videos or pictures and songs. The topic is selected according to the interests of the pupils (cf. figure 6). This would be contemporary in view of recent movies such as "Jurassic Park" and the attention given to Dinosaurs world-wide at the moment. The teacher has to be aware of such trends as they can be implemented fruitfully.

The teacher shows the video to stimulate free conversation and a class discussion on dinosaurs. Thereafter pupils are given a comprehension passage where they have to answer questions in writing. The comprehension passage is selected according to difficulty level (cf. figure 6).

Vocabulary has to be authentic and is therefore presented as part of the whole cycle. Vocabulary is taught incidentally (words from the video or passage which are explained and discussed) and/or by presenting specific lists of words to the pupils (cf. 5.2.1.2).

The structures in the cycle are selected according to the criteria of usefulness and difficulty (cf. figure 6). As these are two of the easiest structures in English, they are appropriate for the first cycle of Std 6 pupils.

All the skills will be integrated here, according to the objectives of the lesson. The function and the task are selected according to the needs and interests of the pupils, and are not too difficult (cf. figure 6). Throughout the cycle, the teacher should pay attention to real-life as well as pedagogic tasks (cf. 5.2.6).

Period 2:

Listening exercises are given to develop the listening skill. In a listening exercise, pupils are not provided with the text, but have to rely on what they hear. The passage is read to them by the teacher, or played on a tape recorder. The text can be

provided later. Pupils are then given a task to complete (answering questions based on the passage, orally or in writing).

In the example, the topic of the listening passage (Protecting our Wildlife) is selected in accordance with the overall theme of the cycle (Nature) and the interests of the pupils (cf. figure 6). The function as well as the task is selected to suit the needs of the pupils and is within their abilities and not too difficult (cf. figure 6). During this period the listening and writing skills will be highlighted, according to the objectives of the lesson (cf. figure 6).

Period 3:

During period 3 the pupils are introduced to the language structure/s planned for this specific cycle. In the example the present and past indefinite tenses are combined with the function "doing an interview" (real-life task). By presenting a dialogue to the pupils, a real-life situation is created, which complies with the needs of the pupils. The situation, function and task are selected according to the criteria of need and interest (cf. figure 6). Pupils act the dialogue in groups and then write their own dialogues.

Period 4:

By completing language exercises orally and in writing, the new or revised structure is practised. These exercises need not consist of monotonous lists of drills or sentences. The teacher can make use of information gap tasks (cf. 6.4.3) or discourse chains (cf. figure 6).

Exercises can also be made meaningful. Kilfoil and Van der Walt (1989:55) suggest the following method for teaching passives: instead of mere transformation of sentences (South Africa exports gold - Gold is exported), one half of the class is given a list of countries and the other half names of various products. When a pupil names the country, the pupil with the relevant product says the sentence. This can also be done in the form of a quiz (a pedagogic task). Pupils can be given an article

on Dinosaurs, written by a journalist, to proofread and correct the tenses in the article (a real-life task).

In the example, a discourse chain (figure 7) is used to help pupils create their own dialogue. Speaking and listening skills are highlighted.

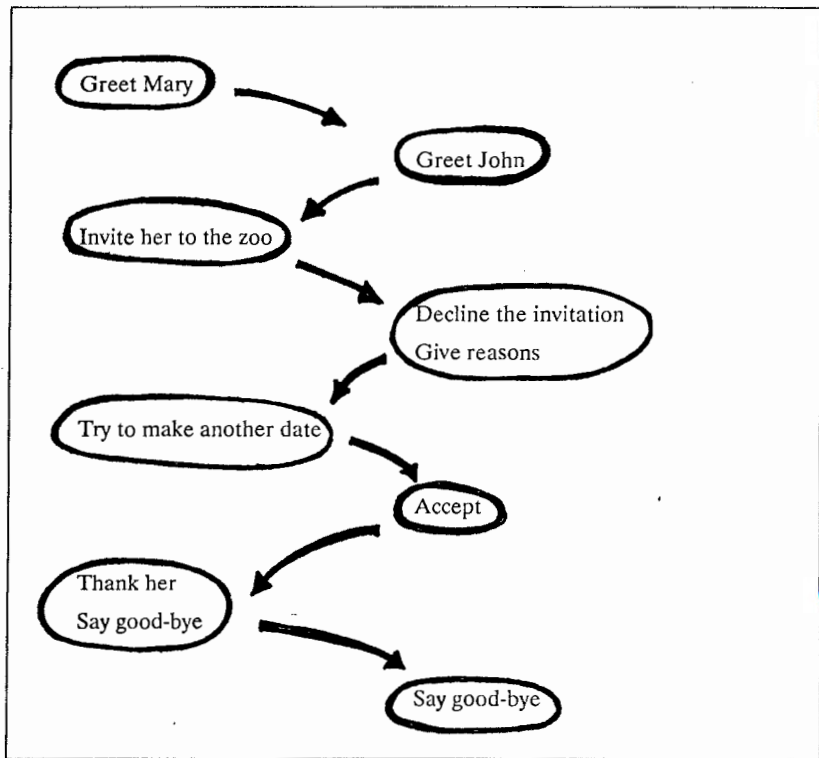


Figure 7: Example of a discourse chain

Periods 5 and 6:

Communicative activities promote fluency and the use of the language. Pair or group work is suggested. There are various books available on games and activities. Teachers should compile a file with activities which can be used whenever there is

time. Communicative activities such as role play, problem-solving and puzzles address all four skills constantly and enable pupils to use new structures and vocabulary in real-life situations.

In the given example, a police report on the accident is read to the pupils to sketch the situation. Additional language preparation can also be done. Pupils are handed role cards on the characters and are given sufficient time to prepare for role play. Pupils have to determine who is responsible for the death of a man in a lion park. The topic is selected according to the interests of the pupils (cf. figure 6).

Period 7:

Intensive reading is done in period 1 when the comprehension passage is read. In period 7 literature is used as input to practise intensive reading. An example is the study of a relevant poem. Literature is an essential part of the cycle and is included to ensure interest in the target language and for aesthetic and educational purposes (cf. 5.2.5). It contributes to the pupil's knowledge of the language and should be selected carefully. The teacher selects a poem which would enhance the theme covered throughout the cycle, and which would not be too difficult (cf. figure 6).

Period 8:

This period is used for prescribed literature setbooks such as the novel, drama or short stories. These texts can be presented in various ways, such as group or pair reading, acting or problem-solving tasks. The teacher may use part of the period for reading in class and the rest of the period for discussing literary aspects such as characterisation, plot and imagery. These setbooks should be selected according to difficulty level and the interests of the pupils (cf. figure 6). Pupils find "Jonty's first term" enjoyable as they can identify with the life of a Std 6 pupil in a new school. The events are interesting to pupils and the language in the book is not too difficult.

Period 9:

The teacher should encourage extensive reading, as it serves to provide roughly-tuned input. Pupils can complete and present book reports on books that they have read to ensure extra reading. The teacher can also, for example, initiate a class discussion on a relevant movie to motivate pupils to read film reviews. He can work out a system to encourage pupils to read, such as giving stars or sweets for every completed book report.

Periods 10 and 11:

Pupils write their own essays according to the process approach. Pictures are shown to pupils and the topic is written on the blackboard. Pupils discuss vocabulary on the topic which the teacher writes on the blackboard. By using different colours of chalk, the teacher indicates to the pupils how these words can be connected, to form logical paragraphs. The teacher suggests a scheme for the essay. Pupils write a rough draft, which is corrected in groups by fellow-pupils, under the supervision of the teacher. They then rewrite their essay and it is again evaluated by peers and discussed in groups. Pupils rewrite their essays as correctly as possible in the class, complete them at home and hand in the next period. Language structures and vocabulary taught in the cycle can be used. Creative writing may take one to three periods, depending on the tasks given to the pupils. Pupils will be able to write a paragraph in one period, while an essay of one page may take up to two periods.

The topic is selected to suit the interests of Std 6 pupils. In the example, the narrative essay will promote the use of the past indefinite tense (cf. figure 6).

Period 12:

It was pointed out in chapter 2 that evaluation is an essential part of the teaching-learning situation. Pupils can be given a class test on the whole of the cycle or only on a specific aspect, to determine the success of learning in the cycle. In the example pupils have to write a test on the grammar and vocabulary of the cycle.

This proposed cycle is an example of how the different lessons can be combined into a cycle and should be varied according to the specific teaching-learning situation. It is clear that speaking and listening skills receive priority.

6.6 Grading

The criteria for the grading of content should be applied to the design of consecutive cycles. This will ensure that development takes place and that revision is provided for.

Grading may be done according to a spiral approach (Finocchiaro & Brumfit, 1983) (cf. 4.4.2). The criteria discussed in chapters 4 and 5 are summarised in figure 8.

Vocabulary:	pupils' foreknowledge abilities of the pupils successes of pupils
Structures:	relative difficulty (complexity, learnability, teachability, simplicity, contrastive difficulty, regularity) relative usefulness (frequency, generalizability, coverage, range)
Situations:	communicative functionality (frequency, usefulness, needs of the pupils)
Topics:	analysis of pupils / situation difficulty familiarity with topic
Literature:	difficulty (vocabulary, grammar, style)
Skills:	balanced integration of all skills
Functions:	familiarity needs of pupils difficulty
Tasks:	linguistic difficulty cognitive difficulty communicative needs of pupils

Figure 8 : A synopsis of the criteria for the grading of content types (cf. ch 5)

The way content may be graded will now be illustrated briefly. The spiral approach suggests that the same structural category or language function is revised in consecutive cycles, but in greater depth at successive levels of learning. Material which has already been studied is recalled, reviewed and integrated with the new learning, e.g. the same functions will be presented, but in different sociocultural situations (Finocchiaro & Brumfit, 1983:35). This approach will mean that the learner returns to a topic, a functional category, or a structural category later (e.g. one or two months or even longer after its initial presentation) (cf. 5.2.7.2). When reviewing it, it is studied in greater depth and additional aspects are added (cf. figure 9).

High-frequency content which is required in actual communicative situations should be presented before content which would be of less use to the student. Continuous revision of previous work would help learners to internalize rules of grammar and use as pupils are expected to restructure and integrate linguistic forms in longer and longer stretches of speech, so that grading would be a cyclic process (Finocchiaro & Brumfit, 1983:99). The spiral approach would enable the teacher to do continuous revision (cf. figure 9).

Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3	Cycle 4	Cycle 5	Cycle 6	Cycle 7
Structures:						
Indefinite tenses	Continuous tenses Indefinite tenses	Perfect tenses	Indefinite tenses Perfect tenses Indirect Speech	Continuous tenses Adjectives	Perfect tenses Auxiliaries	All tenses Conjunctions Indirect speech

Functions:						
Greeting people	Giving directions	Buying and selling	Introducing people	Buying a house	Travelling	Giving advice

Figure 9: The spiral approach and grading.

By returning to, for example, the present indefinite tense, in cycles 2, 4 and 7, the structure is revised. By teaching the pupils the function "buying and selling" in cycle 3 and then returning to a similar function, namely "buying a house" in cycle 5, the function is also revised and practised.

6.7 Conclusion

This chapter proposes a model for the design of a cycle. It is apparent that all the content types which have been distinguished can feature at any stage in the cycle. For example, structures are presented in the first stage, practised in the second stage and used in the communicative activities. The same principle applies to the other content types.

As this type of cycle is so varied, it requires thorough planning on the part of the teacher. The key words are flexibility and variety: the student must never know what to expect. Different techniques should be used constantly and no activity should be repeated too often. Harmer (1983:221) suggests a variety of activities in a short time, as pupils cannot concentrate on one thing for very long.

Before planning a cycle, the teacher has to consider the aims and objectives of every cycle and lesson before anything else. The success of a lesson cannot be determined if the teacher does not know what he was aiming for. Van der Walt (1990:33) points out that language teaching is most successful when it follows a well-worked out, specific and concrete plan which directs and organizes what the teacher does and which the teacher finds logical and is comfortable with. Teachers should steer away from having pupils perform lists of sentence transformations to practise structures

such as passives, reported speech and tenses, because pupils usually find these monotonous. Exercises should be made as meaningful as possible. By using checklists based on the syllabus, the teacher can draw up an interesting and a stimulating series of lessons which pupils will experience as motivating and interesting.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

7.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to conclude the study and present recommendations for further research. As stated by Kilfoil and Van der Walt (1989:234), the problem of selection and grading of content in ESL remains a difficult one, and it has been pointed out in this study that the only solution to the problem lies in careful planning by the teacher.

7.2 Proposals for selection and grading of content

As stated in chapter 1, the aims of this study were to investigate the various content types that can be selected for ESL and to suggest how these can be applied in the teaching-learning situation. Selection and grading are essential for any teaching-learning situation, and criteria were identified for the selection and grading of any content and specifically for ESL. Different types of content can be selected for ESL: vocabulary, structures, situations, topics, literature, skills, functions and tasks. Each content type has its rightful place in a cycle and can contribute to the successful teaching and learning of a language. The criteria for the grading of content are applied to successive cycles. It is recommended that it be done according to the spiral approach. This would lead to continuous development and revision of the work.

It is clear from this study that the teacher cannot concentrate on the selection of content only, as this is but one aspect of the teaching-learning situation. The teaching-learning situation is an integrated process and all its aspects (situation analysis, aims and objectives, selection of content, methodology and evaluation) need to be considered. The teaching-learning situation is a cyclic process, with a

constant moving backwards and forwards between the different aspects. The prerequisite of any planning by the teacher is an initial analysis of the teaching-learning situation. Planning is further influenced by the teacher's experience, knowledge of his subject, teaching techniques, the syllabus, the materials available in the school and the needs of the specific target group.

After an analysis of the teaching-learning situation and all other relevant information, the teacher draws up a scheme of work, which consists of a number of cycles. The ideal cycle is built around a specific theme and contains a hybrid selection of content. Every cycle element has its own topic related to the overall theme. Some topics may coincide, or they may all differ, depending on the selected material. Ten elements have been identified in this study as typical of a cycle, namely **introduction and comprehension, listening, presentation or revision of language, practice, communicative activities, poetry, intensive and extensive reading, creative writing and evaluation**. Each cycle element can be taught by means of various possible activities such as dialogues, exercises, role-play, writing tasks, problem-solving tasks and so on.

In this study a cycle model is proposed which consists of the **cycle element, aim and objectives, activities, content types, methods and media**, which are all centred around a specific **theme**. Provision is made within the cycle to address all four **skills**.

The cycles (more or less 16 per year) form the scheme of work. Each cycle takes more or less 12 periods to complete.

7.3 Recommendations for further research

Contemporary research shows that the ideal type of cycle is task- or activity-based, with the focus on meaning and completion of the task not on accuracy or form (Kilfoil & Van der Walt, 1989:235). As problem-solving tasks stimulate and interest pupils, teachers should aim to implement such tasks continuously in the cycle and in the classroom. The proposed model and example make provision for tasks, yet this

should be researched further to result in a scheme of work that is totally process-orientated. Research on the way to evaluate pupils according to the process-approach will also have to be conducted.

Differentiation should also be researched. The needs of pupils differ as some pupils need English for further studies, while some would find an ESP course in commerce or industry more appropriate. The development of such courses should also be investigated.

7.4 Final conclusion

Planning is an essential part of the teacher's task. The teacher should remember, however, that the most important aspect in the teaching-learning situation is still the teacher himself and he should never underestimate his influence and motivation on the pupil and on the outcome of learning and education. The ESL teacher should be flexible in his planning and introduce sufficient variety, so as to prevent stagnation and boredom.

The teaching of ESL provides a constant challenge to the creativity of both teachers and pupils. There is no other subject that provides so much opportunity to the teacher to use his own initiative. This fact distinguishes ESL from any other ordinary teaching situation, and makes the teaching of ESL an art rather than an ordinary teaching job.

Abstract

Language teaching has no obvious content in the sense that history or physics may be said to have. The teacher of ESL faces the problem of selecting appropriate and valid content to present to pupils as part of the teaching-learning situation. Selection of content is only one aspect of the teaching-learning situation and cannot be separated from the integrated nature of the teaching-learning situation as a whole. An analysis of the teaching-learning situation is a prerequisite to any planning.

Content has to be organised and graded. Criteria for selection and grading of content are identified in this dissertation. Various content types for English Second Language, as well as criteria for the selection and grading of each, are discussed and evaluated. The content types investigated are: vocabulary, structures, situations, topics, literature, skills, functions and tasks.

A model for the design of a cycle of lessons is proposed. The model contains the aim and objectives, the theme, the cycle elements, activities, content types, methods and media. The dissertation illustrates how the various content types can be accommodated in a typical cycle of lessons. A hybrid design is suggested which includes all the content types.

Opsomming

Taalonderrig het geen voor-die-hand-liggende inhoude soos byvoorbeeld geskiedenis of fisika het nie. Die onderwyser van Engels Tweede Taal moet toepaslike inhoud selekteer as deel van die onderrig-leer situasie. Die seleksie van inhoud is slegs een aspek van die onderrig-leer situasie, en 'n analise van die onderrig-leer situasie as geheel is 'n voorvereiste vir enige beplanning.

Inhoud wat geselekteer word moet georden word. Kriteria vir die seleksie en ordening van inhoud word in die verhandeling geidentifiseer. Verskillende inhoudstipes word bespreek en evalueer. Dit sluit in: woordeskat, strukture, situasies, onderwerpe, letterkunde, vaardighede, funksies en take. Kriteria vir die seleksie en ordening van elk word ook bespreek.

'n Model vir die ontwerp van 'n siklus van lesse word voor gestel. Die model sluit in die doelstelling en doelwitte, tema, siklus-elemente, aktiwiteite, inhoude, metodes en media. Die verhandeling illustreer hoe die verskillende inhoudstipes in 'n lessiklus ingesluit kan word. 'n Ontwerp word voorgestel wat wat al-die inhoudstipes kan insluit.

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