

CHAPTER 3

A PERSPECTIVE ON SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHING

3.1	Introduction	35
3.2	Approach and method	35
3.3	Traditional approaches	36
3.4	Communicative language teaching	38
3.4.1	Theory of language as communication	39
3.4.2	Information gap technique	41
3.4.2.1	Jigsaw tasks	43
3.4.2.2	Reasoning-gap tasks	43
3.4.3	Active participation of learners	43
3.5	Interpretations of CLT	45
3.5.1	Authentic texts	46
3.5.2	Communicative language teaching: the mainstream	49
3.5.3	Psychological emphases	54
3.5.4	Natural approach	56
3.5.4.1	The Affective Filter hypothesis	57
3.5.4.2	The Total Physical Response technique	59
3.6	Conclusion	61

CHAPTER 3 A PERSPECTIVE ON SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHING**3.1 INTRODUCTION**

The main concern of this study, viz. determining the criteria for developing materials in order to develop the proficiency in Afrikaans of Grade 12 additional language learners, is tied up with the question of the kind of language teaching necessary to achieve that proficiency.

This chapter sets out to review a number of traditional approaches in language teaching to serve as background, before considering the current orthodoxy, viz. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), along with its practical implementations. The purpose of reflecting on the history of Communicative Language Teaching is that it may provide insight into its different directions and interpretations. This chapter also sets out to identify four directions in CLT identified in the literature, their characteristics, and how each contributes or fails to contribute to language learning goals. In addition, this literature review will reflect upon a number of controversies in and responses to current issues in language teaching.

A brief survey of a number of language teaching concepts, namely ‘method’, ‘approach’, ‘style’ and ‘technique’ will be undertaken first, in order to understand their fundamental nature, and to establish some of the concepts appropriate to the context of this study.

3.2 APPROACH AND METHOD

The study of teaching methods and procedures in language teaching has always been a central feature of applied linguistic discussions, and various attempts have been made, for example, to clarify the relationship between the concepts of ‘approach’ and ‘method’.

What is a method and when is it an approach? A method of language teaching is defined by Weideman (2001: 1), as “a style of instruction that expresses the

professional commitment of the teacher in support of an assumption of how language is learned”. Brown (1994: 48), following Richards & Rodgers (1986), defines a method as

an umbrella term for the specification and interrelation of theory and practice. An approach defines assumptions, beliefs, and theories about the nature of language and language learning. Designs specify the relationship of those theories to classroom materials and activities. Procedures are the techniques and practices that are derived from one’s approach and design.

In line with Brown’s definition, the term ‘approach’ will in this study refer to the underlying assumptions, beliefs, and theories of second language and second language learning. The term ‘method’ is then viewed as the *expression* of beliefs about language learning, and ‘method’ and ‘style’ will be used as synonyms. The concept ‘techniques’ includes a wide variety of language procedures in the form of tasks, exercises, activities, or devices used in the language classroom to achieve the lesson and learning objectives.

A number of traditional approaches to language teaching are reviewed next, since, as we shall note below, these provide a background for the discussion of Communicative Language Teaching.

3.3 TRADITIONAL APPROACHES

The term ‘traditional’ approaches is often used to refer to various methods of language teaching. Table 3.1 below gives a brief overview of the three ‘traditional’ methods, namely the Grammar-translation method, the Direct method, and the Audio-lingual method, and what they entail.

Table 3.1 Overview of three traditional approaches

TRADITIONAL APPROACHES	MAIN FEATURE(S)	LANGUAGE LEARNING
Grammar-translation method	Translation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Memorisation • Emphasis on writing and reading
Direct method	‘Oral’ practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No translation allowed • Memorisation • Emphasis on speaking and listening

Audio-lingual method	Repetition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grammatical structures • Emphasis on listening, speaking, reading and writing
----------------------	------------	--

The oldest of the ‘traditional’ approaches being referred to here is the Grammar-translation method, which, as its name indicates, focuses on translation, especially translation into and from the target language (cf. Richards & Rodgers, 1986: 3-5; Weideman, 2002a: 10-15). Memory plays a very important role here, because the learner needs to memorise vocabulary lists and word formation. In the Grammar-translation method the emphasis is on writing and reading, and speaking and listening skills are generally disregarded. According to Weideman (2002a: 15), the restricted view taken by the Grammar-translation method is probably the reason why it was replaced by methods that emphasised all four skills. Brown (1994: 53) states that the Grammar-translation method “does virtually nothing to enhance a student’s communicative ability in the language”.

As seen in Table 3.1, in contrast to the Grammar-translation method, no translation is allowed in the Direct method. Instead, the importance of conversation or ‘oral’ practice is highlighted. The emphasis is thus no longer on reading and writing, but on speaking and listening. Usually ‘oral’ communication comprises a short talk or speech about a certain topic and therefore it entails very little, or no interaction or communication between the learners (cf. Weideman, 2002a: 16-19). The Direct method also relies on memory, as well as on association between form and meaning (cf. Richards & Rodgers, 1986: 9-12).

The Audio-lingual method (ALM) is “linked to behaviourist psychology” in its orientation (Weideman, 2002a: 20), and a prominent technical feature is the use of repetition. Drilling grammatical structures forms the backbone of the Audio-lingual method. Language is viewed as a habit, and language learning is thus seen as the learning of a set of habits. Repetition is necessary as reinforcement and to assist in forming habits (Richards & Rodgers, 1986: 49-52; Weideman, 2002a: 20-25). To master a language, the learner must acquire a “set of appropriate language stimulus response chains” (Richards & Rodgers, 1986: 50). Although the Audio-lingual method focuses on a mastery of all four skills, the emphasis is firstly on listening, then

speaking, reading and writing, and in that order. Materials in the form of teacher's guides, learners' books and audiotapes generally support this kind of language teaching. Even today, materials based on audio-lingual principles are still widely used.

Over time, the popularity of the Audio-lingual method has declined, as, amongst other things, practitioners found that learners are unable to use the skills taught in the real world outside the classroom. Furthermore, many learners found Audio-lingual study methods boring and unsatisfying (Richards & Rodgers, 1986: 59). Indeed, as Brown (1994: 74) remarks, the 'traditional' methods are

an interesting if not insightful contribution to our professional repertoire, but few practitioners look to any one of them, or their predecessors, for a final answer on how to teach a foreign language.

By the end of the 1970s a new trend in language teaching came to the fore, and is generally captured in the term Communicative Language Teaching.

3.4 COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING

The communicative approach to language teaching, or Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), came into fashion at least in part as a "reaction against traditional methods" (Weideman, 2002a: 28). Communicative Language Teaching can be justified with reference to a theory of language as communication and is best considered an approach rather than a method (Richards & Rodgers, 1986: 66; Lewis, 1999: 49). Necessarily, the history of the communicative approach to language teaching needs to be reflected upon to gain a better understanding of why this approach is "today probably regarded as the reigning orthodoxy in language teaching" (Weideman, 2002a: 28). That it is the orthodoxy is not in doubt. In the recent literature, Wesche and Skehan (2002: 227) comment that over the past twenty-five years CLT was characterised as the most interesting development in language teaching, but has "continually had to measure itself with evidence". Therefore, researchers and teachers should acknowledge that CLT is "not a panacea that can achieve success whatever the circumstances" (Wesche and Skehan, 2002: 227). Rather, it entails proper teacher training, as well as prudent introduction, implementation, and adaptation to specific situations.

The origins of Communicative Language Teaching are to be found in the mid-1960s, when British applied linguists began to question the theoretical assumptions underlying Situational Language Teaching (Richards & Rodgers, 1986: 64). This was partly in response to the criticism of the American linguist, Noam Chomsky, on structural linguistics, as well as the fact that they saw the need to “focus in language teaching on communicative proficiency rather than on mere mastery of structures” (Richards & Rodgers, 1986: 64).

The work of the Council of Europe, the contributions of Wilkins, Widdowson, Brumfit, Johnson, and other British linguists to the communicative approach to language teaching, and the speed with which it gained ground among British language teaching specialists, gave the approach prominence nationally and internationally. It became known as the Communicative Approach, or Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) (Richards & Rodgers, 1986: 65).

Weideman (2002a: 43) indicates that as an approach, CLT “remains one that stimulates the pedagogical imagination and tolerates far more idiosyncrasies than a more rigorously defined method would”. CLT does, however, not form one monolithic whole, but is a broad church that has various directions and interpretations. Before we examine the interpretations of CLT in section 3.5, however, let us first consider the theory of language as communication that is frequently used to justify CLT.

3.4.1 Theory of language as communication

A common characteristic of all the directions in Communicative Language Teaching that will be discussed below is the claim that they have a theory of language as communication as their common starting point. All of CLT can probably be related to Hymes’s (1971) definition of communicative competence. According to Richards & Rodgers (1986: 69), this kind of language teaching aims to develop ‘communicative competence’ – the term adopted by Hymes “to contrast a communicative view of language and Chomsky’s theory of competence”. In this respect, Habermas (1970: 138; 147) views ‘communicative competence’ as “mastery of an ideal speech situation”. According to Weideman (2002a: 29), ‘communicative competence’ and its

influence is currently more prominent in language teaching than any other linguistic notion. Various teaching methods have developed under the label of CLT, and these methods suggest that communicative competence can be acquired by using “language as medium rather than studying it as an object” (Byran, 2003: 69). The advantage of this principle is that it narrows the gap between classrooms and the real world.

Over the last twenty years ‘communication’ has indeed been the catchword of language teaching. Cook (1996: 149) is correct in arguing that communication entails having “something to communicate” and that learning language means that the learner practices communication within the classroom – “the learner learns to talk to people by actually talking to them”. Language teaching that aims at communication has made us notice the inadequacies of previous approaches: learners who totally master the content of an audio-lingual course, for example, would still lack the ability to function in a real-life situation (Cook, 1996: 183). This is a practical weakness of ALM, and might explain, as we have noted above, why it was abandoned in favour of a communicative approach. As the emphasis in CLT is on meaningful communication in the classroom, Brown (1994: 77) takes the view that

... we are trying to get our learners to develop linguistic fluency, not just the accuracy that has so consumed our historical journey. We are equipping our students with tools for generating unrehearsed language performance ‘out there’ when they leave the womb of our classrooms. We are looking at learners as partners in a cooperative venture. And our classroom practices seek to draw on whatever intrinsically sparks learners to reach their fullest potential.

The kind of interaction that is referred to above, of course, gives a powerful rationale for using CLT in additional language learning and teaching. Also of importance to us is the distinction between a restrictive view and an open perspective on language and language learning and teaching made by Weideman (2003: 38) that we briefly turn to.

Arguing that the task or materials writer’s view or theory of language is of paramount importance in materials development, Weideman (2003: 38) asserts that an open perspective which goes beyond the restrictive view of language is another significant parameter of a CLT approach. A major difference between the two views is that a restrictive view of language limits language to elements of sound, form, grammar and meaning, while an open perspective which is broader than the conventional structural

features, maintains that language allows human interaction through expression, communication, mediation and negotiation (Weideman, 2003: 38). In addition, Weidman (2003: 41) argues that the broader framework assumes that learners independently need to seek, process, and produce new information in authentic and realistic ways (reflecting authenticity as an important feature in CLT, which will be discussed below in section 3.5.1). A further distinction is tied up with opportunities to produce language and error correction. Apart from giving learners as many opportunities as possible to use the target language, a richer, broader perspective also encourages learners to correct themselves, rather than being corrected by the teacher (cf. Truscott, 1996: 327-369; Nunan, 1991a: 289; Celce-Murcia & Olshtain, 2000: 220; Lightbown, 2000: 446; Weideman, 2002a: 2-3; Weideman, 2003: 41). The considerations discussed above all came into focus during the intervention (see Chapter 6). The relevance of error correction in additional language teaching and learning is discussed more closely in Chapter 4 (section 4.7.2)

Another basic characteristic of communicative teaching which gives coherence to CLT is the information gap technique.

3.4.2 Information gap technique

The “information gap” technique is viewed as a criterion for identifying communicative language teaching (cf. Johnson, 1982: 151; Richards & Rodgers, 1986: 22; Prabhu, 1987: 46; Greyling, 1989: 36-51; McDonough & Shaw, 1993: 164; Cook, 1996: 187; Habte, 2001: 19-20; Liao, 2001: 38-41). According to Weideman (2002a: 32) “language teaching that claims to be communicative is always characterized by the employment of this one basic technique: the (lingual bridging of an) information gap”. Thus, if information gap techniques are not employed in textbooks or in language courses, the latter are “simply not communicative” (Weideman, 2002a: 32).

Prabhu (1987: 46) defines the information gap technique as an activity which

involves a transfer of given information from one person to another, or from one form to another, or from one place to another – generally calling for the decoding or encoding of information from or into language.

It is salutary to note that information gap tasks cover a remarkable variety of techniques in which the goal is to communicate or to ask for information (Brown, 1994: 181). Learners work on the same task, but when an information gap technique is used, each learner normally needs different information to complete the task (cf. Johnson, 1982: 151; Richards & Rodgers, 1986: 22; Parry, 2000: 91; Habte, 2001: 19-20). Johnson's (1998: 70) observation that when learners convey information that others do not already have, there is a degree of message-focus, as the learners will naturally concentrate on getting the message across, is a clear indication of how this technique ties in with the theory of language as communication (see discussion above). According to Brown (1994: 181), information gap techniques focus on the following two aspects: attention primarily to information and not to language forms, and secondly, the necessity of communicative interaction in order to reach the objective.

There are several examples in the literature of the practical uses of information gap tasks. The diversity of tasks that utilise information gap techniques enables the teacher to employ anything from very simple tasks, suitable for beginners, to more complex tasks for advanced learners (Brown, 1994: 181). The relevance of the technique for this study is evident: the materials used or designed should provide opportunities for interaction which can be achieved by including information or opinion gap activities, and require learners to "communicate with each other and/or the teacher in order to close the gap" (Tomlinson, 1998b: 15).

There is a second reason for the relevance of the technique in this study. Cook (1996: 187) claims that the benefits of information gap techniques and role play techniques is that they

imitate what happens in the world outside the classroom in a controlled form, rather than being special activities peculiar to language learning.

For additional language learning, in this case the learning of Afrikaans as an additional language, the ability to use the language one is learning beyond the classroom is critical.

We turn now to two task types which differ because of the unique features built into them.

3.4.2.1 Jigsaw tasks

The jigsaw task is an extension of the information gap principle. The learners work in pairs in order to complete a task and need to exchange the necessary information each partner possesses (cf. Johnson, 1982: 167-170; Brown, 1994: 182; Habte, 2001: 20-21; Parry, 2000: 91). As jigsaw tasks do not allow the learners to be passive, they are viewed as one of the more effective task types in CLT. Brown (1994: 182) observes that there are a variety of jigsaw techniques available to the teacher to suit beginners and advanced learners alike, and remarks that learners find most of the techniques enjoyable and challenging. Moreover, if learners engage in tasks such as “jigsaw reading, or assembling an object from a set of instructions”, these activities may have the additional advantage that they resemble more the ‘real world’, or what most people do in their first language (McDonough & Shaw, 1993: 124). This resemblance is essentially the same point made by Cook (1996) that we referred to above.

3.4.2.2 Reasoning-gap tasks

Prabhu (1987: 46-51) favours what he calls ‘reasoning-gap’ tasks. Reasoning-gap activities involve comprehending and conveying information (as in information gap tasks), but in addition the learner needs to figure out the meaning of one piece of information from another through “processes of inference, deduction, practical reasoning, or a perception of relationships or patterns” (Prabhu, 1987: 48; cf. also Greyling, 1989: 36; McDonough & Shaw, 1993: 60). The relevance here is that, in addition to the other benefits of using information gap tasks, one here has cognitive processes and development.

3.4.3 Active participation of learners

In addition to being characterised by a basic technique, a further tenet of the communicative approach is its emphasis on the active participation by learners in classrooms. According to Richards and Rodgers (1986: 68) this view of “direct rather than delayed practice of communicative acts is central to most CLT interpretations”. Criticism of the predecessor of CLT, the Audio-lingual method, arose from the limited

role that the learner has in the learning process, as learning was seen as repetitive practice.

The term “learner-centered” therefore came to the fore with Communicative Language Teaching together with an awareness of the different roles of the learners and the teacher in comparison with traditional methods (Weideman, 2002a: 26). There is general agreement amongst researchers today on the importance of learner-centered and experience-based approaches in second language teaching (cf. Ryuko, 1998: 395; Nassaji, 1999: 386-403; Weideman, 2002a: 26; Weideman, 2002b: 1-11).

Curry (1996: 29) views a learner-centered approach as one that provides learners with the opportunity to apply their individual experiences related to the learning situation as a “springboard for developing ideas and writing”. The learner is at the center of the learning process as “an active and responsible partner” (Celce-Murcia & Olshtain, 2000: 229). When learners take on a more positive role in the learning situation, learning becomes a “self-generating process by the learners themselves” and not “conformity to the conditions of transmission controlled by the teacher” (Widdowson, 1990: 121). For many, CLT is, in fact, one of the most effective antidotes to transmission teaching. I am noting this here, since there is, in this respect, congruence with the action research methodology that I will be adopting to investigate the implementation of CLT tasks in the classroom (see Chapters 5 and 6). Action research is equally sensitive to power relations in the classroom, and to the pedagogical implications of authoritarian and anti-authoritarian approaches to teaching. In transmission teaching both CLT and action research find a theoretical adversary.

Curry (1996: 28) argues that a learner-centered approach has much to offer, because it “seeks to find or create shared ground between students’ knowledge and experience, and the course material and requirements”. Celce-Murcia and Olshtain (2000: 231), in terms that once more echo the basic concepts of action research, in turn suggest that a learner-centered language classroom becomes

a special type of discourse community in which teachers ideally become reflective classroom researchers who evaluate and rethink their approach, their attitudes, and their methods of presentation.

In this respect, too, Cook (1996: 129) states that a key difference from other approaches is that communicative methods “emphasise the learners’ dual roles as listeners and as speakers”. In order to accomplish this, Cook (1996: 187) suggests that the teacher must “play the role of equal and helper rather than the wise person of the academic style or the martinet of the audiolingual”. In CLT, therefore, the inequalities of the conventional classroom have yielded to the more participative styles of instruction in current approaches. The emphasis on the different roles of both the learners and the teacher has relevance also for the intervention programme, and this aspect will be examined further in Chapter 4 (section 4.7.2) and Chapter 7 (section 7.2.4). As is clear from the above, learner involvement and participation in CLT are imperative. My preference for a learner-centered approach during the intervention will be addressed in Chapter 7 (section 7.2.1.1).

The views given above give us a sample of what lies behind CLT in respect of its pedagogic orientation. To give this concept more meaning, we turn now to a number of different interpretations of CLT.

3.5 INTERPRETATIONS OF CLT

Though widely accepted, Communicative Language Teaching is understood and interpreted differently. Richards and Rodgers (1986: 68) suggest that the recognition of the communicative approach and the various interpretations of CLT can be attributed to the fact that practitioners can identify with it, and therefore interpret and apply it in different ways.

For the sake of this study, four main interpretations of CLT will be discussed: authentic texts, mainstream CLT, psychological emphases and the Natural approach. According to Weideman (2003: 30) each of the four distinguishable directions in Communicative Language Teaching comprises features that can contribute to the goals of teaching an additional language, and assist in task and course design.

These four interpretations are summarised in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2 Overview of four interpretations (Weideman, 2003: 6)

DIRECTION/INTERPRETATION	CHARACTERISTIC
Authentic texts	'Real-life' language; authenticity
Mainstream CLT / 'British' school	Emphasis on language ('L') needs of students in terms of functions of language use
Humanistic	Emphasis on emotional ('P' for psychological) barriers to learning
Combinations of 'L' and 'P'	Promote 'natural' learning

The four interpretations will be discussed in turn below.

3.5.1 Authentic texts

I have already stated earlier that authenticity is associated with Communicative Language Teaching and that researchers view the use of authentic texts in the learning situation as an important feature of the communicative approach (cf. Johnson, 1982: 19-22; Nunan, 1991a: 279; Van Lier, 1996: 13-14; Tomlinson, 1998b: 13; Habte, 2001: 15-16; Han, 2001: 13; Parry, 2002: 96; Weideman, 2002a: 29-32).

In CLT realism plays a significant role, and this explains its emphasis on authentic texts (Weideman, 2002a: 95; Weideman, 2003: 6). Therefore, language teaching must always have "at least a spark of authenticity and actuality" (Weideman, 2002a: 95; Weideman, 2003: 6). In line with this, Cook (1996: 193) suggests that 'real' content based on actual information about the 'real' world ensures a meaningful lesson where learners acquire information through language, whereas "imaginary content trivializes language learning".

It is apparent that there is more than one interpretation regarding the use of authentic texts for classroom purposes. There are proponents of using 'real language' as authentic texts for instruction (cf. Johnson, 1982: 23-31; Cook, 1996: 193). On the other hand, Bachman (1990: 9-10, 316) advocates the importance of the authenticity of the interaction between learners, the material, and the context.

In defining authenticity, Ur (1984: 23) distinguishes between “genuine authentic” and “imitation authentic”. The former refers to “unadapted, natural interaction” and the latter to “an approximation of real speech that takes into account the learners’ level of ability”. Furthermore, Ur argues that the classroom situation is not similar to the real world and therefore activities and tasks “must pass the classroom authenticity test” to be relevant and appropriate for learning. In this respect, too, Widdowson (1990: 44-45) views authenticity of language in the classroom to be “an illusion”, because it does not “depend on the source from which the language as an object is drawn but on the learners’ engagement with it”. Van Lier (1996: 128) suggests that authenticity is “the result of acts of authentication” which involves the learners and their teacher, the learning process and the language used. These views are congruent with those of Bachman (1990) referred to above.

Celce-Murcia and Olshtain (2000: 195) indicate that authenticity includes at least two aspects, namely the type of language used in the classroom, and the use of tasks to assist with learning the language. With reference to the first aspect, Brown (1994: 105) argues that the language used by the teacher, especially when teaching beginning levels of the second or foreign language, should be authentic language, and not “stilted just because students are beginners”. He claims that if the utterances of the teacher are authentic (e.g. simple greetings and introductions; short, simple and manageable phrases) it offers the learners the opportunity to practice the target language. To enhance the authenticity of the learning process, classroom activities should include more “natural, true-to-life situations” (Celce-Murcia & Olshtain, 2000: 196).

Melvin and Stout (1987: 55) advance the argument that the teacher using authentic material allows learners to experience early in the learning programme the “rewards of learning a language”. They suggest, furthermore, that the use of authentic texts also benefits the teacher in the sense that the learners are motivated and goal-oriented and the learning programme is stimulating to learners and teachers alike. In the literature one often encounters the argument of authentic materials enhancing the motivation of learners to acquire the language.

Nunan (1991a: 279) suggests that the introduction of authentic texts into the learning situation is one of the five features that characterise CLT. Nunan's list also comprises: communication through interaction in the target language; focus on language and the learning process; inclusion of the learners' experiences, and linking classroom learning with language activities outside the classroom. It is in the latter, especially, that authentic materials come into play most prominently.

Like Nunan, Lynch (1991: 202-204) states that language classes should reflect the real world outside the classroom. His argument for a communicative classroom is based on linguistic, interactional and psycholinguistic arguments. Linguistically, he notes that the teacher should not deny the learner the opportunity to use and learn language communicatively (Lynch, 1991: 203). Lynch suggests that the teacher should change the traditional classroom question pattern to maximise interaction among learners. Thus, to enhance the opportunity to use the target language, it means "less teacher talk and more pupil talk" in the classroom (Weideman, 1998: 19).

The interactional aspect mentioned by Lynch rests on the argument that the classroom should provide activities to promote different kinds of social interaction, and he argues that "well-rounded proficiency in a foreign language involves being able to take on a variety of roles in social interaction in the target language" (Lynch, 1991: 203). Similarly, Conteh-Morgan (2002: 192) states that curricula based on the interactionist theory emphasise the use of authentic real-life language materials in the classroom to create situations through which meaningful interaction enhances learning. Lynch also argues for sensitivity to the importance of psycholinguistic aspects of foreign language learning, which involve the mental processes in foreign language comprehension. He states that in face-to-face interaction learners often resort to strategies such as to ask the other speaker directly if he/she encounters difficulty in comprehending the text.

Authenticity as an important criterion for CLT tasks and materials design comes into focus in Chapter 5. Furthermore, in view of the particular teaching and learning setting in the study, the relevance of authenticity is evident: the difficulty to produce authentic texts came to the fore many times during the implementation of the developed materials. This phenomenon will be discussed more closely in Chapter 6.

We turn now to the features of mainstream CLT, the second direction indicated in Table 3.2.

3.5.2 Communicative language teaching: the mainstream

Although CLT began as a British movement, it gained momentum all over the world among language teachers who wished to give priority to the interactive processes of communication (Richards & Rodgers, 1986: 83). The British school, or mainstream CLT, is probably the most well-known interpretation of the approach.

One cannot discuss mainstream CLT without reference to the work of the Council of Europe and their attempt to develop a system for foreign language learning by adults in Europe. A committee (comprising of Trim, Van Ek, Richterich and Wilkins) was formed to investigate the minimum level needed for communication in a foreign language. This resulted in a publication in 1975 in which a level of linguistic proficiency was termed the ‘threshold level’ (or ‘T-level’) (Van Ek, 1976: 2; Van Els, Bongaerts, Extra, Van Os & Janssen-van Dieten, 1984: 179-186). In 1976 Van Ek published a version of the ‘T-level’ for secondary education, *The threshold level for modern language learning in schools*, with only marginal changes from the original model, and described the components of this model as “helpful tools” for use in foreign language teaching (Van Ek, 1976: 165).

Mainstream Communicative Language Teaching is possibly the most influential direction, and has remained an important interpretation of CLT (Weideman, 2002a: 35-45). The focus here is on the various uses or functions of language, that relate to the real language (‘L’) needs of learners (Weideman, 2002a: 45; Weideman, 2003: 8). Thus, the “emphasis is ... not on structures that are learned and filled with meaning only afterwards; the emphasis is on meaning right from the start” (Weideman, 1988: 93; Weideman, 2002a: 35). This approach gained popularity among teachers and learners through its emphasis not being on knowledge about the language, but rather on the ability to use the target language in different situations. McDonough (2001: 293) views this notion as a

paradigm shift that drove foreign language instruction toward a proficiency-based language learning model, with a focus on what students could do with the language rather than what they knew about it.

Central to this kind of teaching are the various uses or functions of language, and the emphasis is on the appropriateness of the language used (Weideman, 1988: 93; Weideman, 2002a: 35-36). Learners need to realise that functions such as greeting, arguing, persuading, requesting, apologising, accepting, refusing, and so forth, may each have different grammatical realisations. Thus, a learner needs to consider the appropriate use in each case, and this requires identifying the different grammatical realisations (Weideman, 1988: 93; Weideman, 2002a: 35-36).

Initially no specific theory of language learning dominated in justifications of CLT as an approach, but since the 1980s, an interactionist model of language learning has been more widely applied to this kind of teaching (Conteh-Morgan, 2002: 191). CLT aims at making the learner communicatively competent in the second or foreign language. In developing communicative competence, the focus is on the ability to communicate in the target language in various life contexts (cf. McDonough, 2001: 294; Weideman, 2002a: 36). In South Africa the interactionist model of language learning found support in constructivism, where acquiring language is viewed as “understanding it, and such understanding is collaboratively constructed in interaction with others” (Weideman, 2002a: 36). Current language teaching techniques require communication or interaction between learners, and this requirement reflects one of Nunan’s (1991a: 279) five features that characterise CLT that was referred to in the previous section. The basic techniques of the communicative approach (information-gap activities, role-play tasks and group information gathering techniques) allow the learner to “build a language in interaction with others” (Weideman, 1999: 85). Account of the employment of some of these types of techniques during the intervention is given in the discussion of the implementation of the developed material (see Chapter 6).

The priority given to the language needs of the learner in mainstream CLT explains its emphasis on syllabus design (Weideman, 1988: 94; Weideman, 2002a: 37). Syllabus design is traditionally defined as “concern with the selection and grading of content” (Nunan, 1991a: 283). In this regard, Littlewood (1981: 82-84) suggests that a language

syllabus be based on the language needs of the learners after consideration has been given to five aspects:

- The different situations in which the learner needs to use the target language;
- The various topics relevant to the learning situation;
- The different media (telephone, letter) and/or skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) to facilitate communication in the learning situation;
- The language functions (e.g. greeting, thanking, requesting, etc.) that have the most prominence in the learner's use of the target language;
- The grammatical forms relating to the communicative functions in the different situations.

Proponents of Communicative Language Teaching advocate the use of activities that involve a meaningful exchange of information (cf. Johnson, 1982: 151; Lynch, 1991: 202; Celce-Murcia & Olshtain, 2000: 197). Thus, in order to enhance communication in the classroom, the teacher must design tasks, as well as use pair or group work and other techniques, so that they reflect real communication. In line with this, Bourke (2001: 71) comments on the significance of a clear understanding of a task-based approach, as well as a sound knowledge of implementing interactive techniques. Foster's research (1998: 11-18) stresses the importance of designing tasks in such a way as to force learners to exchange information, to communicate, as well as to negotiate meaning.

Task-based additional language teaching has been almost a natural outflow of mainstream CLT. Nunan (1991a: 293) states that task-based teaching has a powerful influence in promoting meaning-focused tasks in the classroom. Skehan (2003: 3) offers a core definition of negotiation of meaning tasks, by indicating that

negotiation of meaning concerns the way learners encounter communicational difficulties while completing tasks, and how they do something about those difficulties.

It follows, in fact, that language teaching which is based on an information gap technique may be ideal for allowing tasks that require the negotiation of meaning. The same applies to group or pair work, since working across an information gap requires at least a pair of learners. Brumfit (1984: 77) indicates, for example, that group work

in language teaching is in fact “more than an intensive way of organising classroom practice. We have to see it as linguistically necessary”. Group work also has an affective motivation: Curry (1996: 32) emphasises that group work in foreign language teaching provides a less threatening environment for the shy or reluctant learner than in the whole class situation. Pair work and group work mark a clear break from ALM, because communication is viewed as a “dynamic social activity” and requires the learners to take part actively (Cook, 1996: 189). According to Bourke (2001: 71) the emphasis is on “learning by doing rather than by being told”, and this implies less intervention by teachers, and more active participation and cooperation in pair and group work by learners. This kind of teaching requires commitment from teachers to “enable learners to grow in language, to provide a rich and stress-free linguistic environment, to make provision for genuine interaction, and to adopt a task-based methodology and materials” (Bourke, 2001: 72). These considerations all came into focus during the intervention classes (see Chapter 6).

In contrast to the Grammar-translation method and the Direct method, all four skills (reading, writing, speaking and listening) are recognised in the communicative approach. As communication refers not only to the spoken medium, but also occurs in other media, not one of the four skills should, “without good reason, receive preferred treatment over any other” (Weideman, 2002a: 96; Weideman, 2003: 7; cf. also Kumaravadivelu, 2003: 225-231). According to Weideman (2003: 7) there are still some teachers who interpret the communicative approach as a type of oral approach or even a “hyped-up Direct method, which requires lots of oral communication” (Weideman, 2002b: 2). The relevance of tasks with integrated language skills proposed and investigated in this study as one of the criteria for materials development will be dealt with in detail in Chapter 5 and during the implementation of the developed material in Chapter 6.

Focusing on language and the learning process also calls for paying attention to the dilemma of teaching grammar. The question of teaching grammar has at times been a controversial issue in CLT. Nassaji (1999: 386-387) comments that with the introduction of the communicative approach in second language teaching and learning, a strong tendency has emerged not to focus on linguistic forms, thereby downplaying

grammar teaching. Some language professionals do not consider grammar to be an important element in second or foreign language learning or teaching, as they believe language can be learned “holistically through the context without explicit instruction in grammar” (Zhongganggao, 2001: 330).

Widdowson (1990: 95) argues that communication is driven by words and not by grammar, and that grammar therefore should be put at the service of lexis. He suggests (1990: 95) that it is essential for learners to know how “grammar functions in alliance with words and contexts for the achievement of meaning”.

Others view grammar as the focal point in second or foreign language teaching, and this belief reflects the preconceptions and prejudices of the traditional grammar-translation method. However, Zhongganggao (2001: 331) warns against concentrating only on grammar teaching as this “will definitely lead to the old path of teaching about the language”. This suggestion is particularly relevant to this study, and one I had to take to heart during the implementation of the developed materials, as we shall note from the discussion in Chapter 6.

Let us consider briefly a few problems that hinder the application of this direction of communicative teaching. Firstly, communicative teaching necessitates “skilful and competent teachers”, since the course of communication is generally unpredictable (Weideman, 2002a: 43). Furthermore, decisions on course content at certain stages are more difficult than in a grammar-based course, as it is not so easy to grade language functions (Weideman, 2002a: 43). Thirdly, in adopting a communicative approach the teacher should be wary of “again falling prey to a teaching ideology” (Weideman, 2002a: 43), as was the case with, for example, when teachers followed the behaviourist foundations of ALM.

Mainstream CLT has often been criticised for having “too technical and narrow an interpretation of the concept of learners’ needs” (Weideman, 1988: 94-95; Weideman, 2002a: 43-45). Certainly, both authentic text and mainstream CLT focus on the learners’ language needs, but there are other directions within CLT that interpret learners’ needs differently, such as the third direction that is discussed below.

3.5.3 Psychological emphases

The emotional emphasis in language teaching comes to the fore especially in humanistic techniques and methods such as the Silent Way, Suggestopedia, and Counseling-Learning (cf. Richards & Rodgers, 1986; Stevick, 1990: 26-28; Brown, 1994). During the 1970s the importance of the affective domain was increasingly recognised, and Community Language Learning is a classic example of an affectively based method (Richards & Rodgers, 1986: 113), and has also had an effect on CLT.

Psychological emphases accentuate the emotional aspects of the teaching and learning situation (Weideman, 2002a: 46). Some proponents of CLT view individual learners as possessing unique interests, styles, needs, and goals, and argue that these therefore should be reflected in the methods of instruction. In this respect, Richards and Rodgers (1986: 78) observe that the CLT teacher needs to take the learners' emotional needs into consideration in the planning of group and individual teaching. Similarly, McDonough (2001: 293) argues that with the demands of a changing society, foreign language teaching has become "more user-friendly in responding to the needs of contemporary students".

A humanistic approach focuses primarily on the conditions necessary for successful learning, and focuses on the "whole learner, and on the personality of the student in its fullest sense" (Weideman, 2002a: 47). The atmosphere in the classroom is viewed as a crucial factor, as the teacher seeks methods and techniques to limit feelings of intimidation, insecurity and anxiety that many learners may experience in the second or foreign language class situation (cf. Richards & Rodgers, 1986; Brown, 1994; Weideman, 2002a: 97-103). Therefore, teachers need to consider methods and techniques, as well as appropriate materials, which strongly emphasise the emotional aspects of the teaching and learning situation, and that prevent anxiety and embarrassment. The considerations discussed above relate in a number of ways to the teaching during the intervention programme (see Chapter 6).

The methods and techniques within CLT which emphasise emotional aspects may be labelled as 'P' methods (for psychological), in contrast to the 'L' methods (for

language) in mainstream communicative teaching (Weideman, 2002a: 46-47; Weideman, 2003: 8). The 'P' approach is specifically manifested in the use of play and drama techniques in the learning situation, as these techniques not only raise the learners' interest, but also reduce anxiety and stress levels (Weideman, 2002a: 46-47). Discussions and debates stimulate communication and teachers may employ them to encourage learners to interact verbally. Teachers often use discussions at the beginning of a language class as "ice-breakers" to relieve tension among learners (Weideman, 2002a: 53). Discussion exercises can also be modified into a variety of imaginary situations and are "guaranteed to produce a good amount of uninhibited talk" (Weideman, 2002a: 53). In a similar way, the goal of interviews could at beginners' level be limited to request functions, learning vocabulary to express personal data, and to produce questions (Brown, 1994: 181). These considerations all came into focus during the initial stages of the intervention (see Chapter 6).

Weideman (2002a: 49) classifies the variety of interesting ideas for games and exercises in which language plays a fundamental part, and where an information gap is present, as part of the 'P' interpretation of CLT. These techniques offer the learners sufficient opportunity to practice the target language, while at the same time they lessen the focus on the target language. Thus, the anxious learner's stress is reduced, more so than with conventional teaching (Weideman, 2002a: 47-51).

In this interpretation of CLT, one often finds that teachers use stories, rhymes, songs and chants in their language classes. When the teacher reads a story, or tells the story orally, the learners are exposed to the target language. However, as there is no pressure on the learners to speak, they are "sheltered from embarrassment" (Weideman, 2002a: 58). The main concern may be to find an appropriate story that is pitched slightly beyond the comprehension level of the learners. The same goes for rhymes, songs and chants, as they create a stress-free learning environment, and allow learners to practice vocabulary (Weideman, 2002a: 58-60). The above considerations were particularly relevant to the intervention, in order to establish an environment conducive to teaching and learning Afrikaans (see Chapter 6).

In respect of materials development, Tomlinson (1998b: 18-19) argues that the materials developer needs to take into account aspects like the learners' motivation, emotions, and attitudes about the language, the teacher, fellow learners and learning material. However, he warns that it is impossible for the materials developer to cater for all these affective variables. The relevance here is that in addition to the criteria for materials development (see Chapter 5), a thorough understanding of the learners in the study was necessary to ensure the development of appropriate materials for the intervention (see Chapters 4 and 5).

Finally, we consider the Natural approach as a fourth direction in CLT.

3.5.4 Natural approach

Krashen and Terrell presented a new approach to the teaching of a second or foreign language in their book, *The natural approach* (cf. Krashen & Terrell, 1995). They based the Natural approach on a theory that language acquisition occurs by understanding messages. Thus, the goal of classroom practice in the Natural approach is to provide comprehensible input for acquisition (Krashen & Terrell, 1995: 18) (see below, section 3.5.4.1).

The Natural approach contrasts with the Direct method, as less emphasis is placed on teacher monologues, direct repetition, and formal questions and answers, and less focus on accurate production of target language sentences (Richards & Rodgers, 1986: 129).

The Natural approach is based on four basic principles:

- Comprehension precedes production. Comprehension is necessary to promote acquisition and therefore should precede speech production.
- Production emerges in stages. Speech and writing emerge in stages from gestures to communication.
- The syllabus consists of communicative goals. In the comprehension and production stages communicative ability is the goal, with focus on the message. Grammatical accuracy is not emphasised, and no error-correction occurs during acquisition activities.

- Teachers employ activities to lower the affective filter. The teacher must create a learning environment conducive to learning and provide comprehensible input by utilising interesting and relevant classroom activities.

(Terrell, 1985: 476; Krashen & Terrell, 1995: 20-21).

Krashen's influential input hypothesis in second language learning merits some further consideration.

3.5.4.1 The Affective Filter hypothesis

Krashen's 'Affective Filter' is perhaps the best-known hypothesis in second language learning theory. It entails a specific view on the impact of attitudes and emotion on learning effectiveness (Krashen, 1987: 30-32; Krashen & Terrell, 1995: 37-39).

Krashen views the learner's attitude as an "adjustable filter that freely passes, impedes, or blocks input necessary to acquisition" (Richards & Rodgers, 1986: 133). The Affective Filter is described by Lightbown and Spada (1993: 28) as an "imaginary barrier which prevents learners from using input which is available in the environment". The functioning of the Affective Filter is illustrated in Figure 3.1.

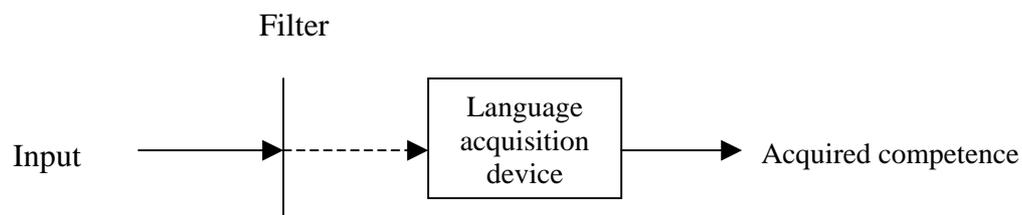


Figure 3.1 Functioning of Affective Filter (Krashen, 1987: 32)

Learners whose attitudes are not optimal for second language acquisition are believed to have a high Affective Filter, and they tend to seek less input. It is argued that even if the learner understands the message, a high Affective Filter limits input, and the "input will not reach that part of the brain responsible for language acquisition, or the language acquisition device" (Krashen, 1987: 31). Hence, a learner with high Affective Filter will attain less of the target language, as "less input is allowed in to the language acquisition device" (Krashen, 1988: 22). Anxiety, as one of the identified

affective variables, obstructs the necessary input, and therefore a learner with a high anxiety level will have a high Affective Filter (Richards & Rodgers, 1986: 133).

On the other hand, learners with attitudes conducive to second language acquisition have a low or weaker Affective Filter, seek and receive more input, and are more receptive to the input (Krashen, 1987: 31). Thus, a low Affective Filter assists in determining success in learning (Conteh-Morgan, 2002: 173).

Krashen's Affective Filter hypothesis has not escaped critique. Mitchell and Myles (1998: 170) view the Affective Filter hypothesis as "insufficiently flexible and asocial". They criticise Krashen's Affective Filter hypothesis by stating that it "remains vague and unexplored" and warn against inaccurate assumptions (Mitchell & Myles, 1998: 39) that can be made on these foundations. For example, because many adolescents suffer from low self-esteem, the assumption is made that they have a high filter and therefore are bad language learners. Then again, confident extrovert adult learners are believed to have low filters, and therefore thought to be good language learners. Despite their criticism, Mitchell and Myles (1998: 39) agree that Krashen's research has been influential in our understanding of second language acquisition.

The Affective Filter hypothesis entails that the teacher should not only supply comprehensible input, but also encourage a low filter by creating a low anxiety situation in the classroom (Krashen, 1987: 32). In this respect, Richards & Rodgers (1986: 134) advise that in order to lower the affective filter and create a relaxed classroom atmosphere, the emphasis should be on meaningful communication and interesting input. In a similar vein, Conteh-Morgan (2002: 173) suggests that the social context in which teaching takes place should provide a low Affective Filter, and advises that the moment the learners enter the class they must experience a non-threatening atmosphere. Moreover, the ideal would be that the filter becomes lower as the class progresses. Therefore, she recommends that the "welcoming smile, the introduction, the allaying of fears, and appropriate ice-breaker activities will all help lower the filter and effect the smooth intake of new information" (Conteh-Morgan, 2002: 173). The relevance of this to the intervention proposed and investigated in this study will be dealt with in detail below (Chapter 4).

According to Richards and Rodgers, (1986: 137-138) the Natural approach teacher fulfils three roles. Firstly, by providing input for acquisition, the teacher is the “primary generator” of comprehensible input in the target language. Furthermore, the teacher needs to generate a “constant flow of language input while providing a multiplicity of non-linguistic clues to assist students in interpreting the input” (Richards & Rodgers, 1986: 138). Secondly, the teacher creates a classroom conducive to learning: a friendly, interesting atmosphere with a low Affective Filter. This is essentially the same point made by Conteh-Morgan (2002) that we referred to above. Finally, the teacher must choose and apply a variety of classroom activities, involving different group sizes, content, and contexts. Therefore, the teacher is responsible for collecting appropriate materials and designing their use.

Combinations of ‘L’ and ‘P’ methods and techniques are manifested in the Natural approach and its techniques, and promote ‘natural learning’. Consideration is given to both “functional language needs and the emotional needs of learners” (Weideman, 2002c: 8). As a direction in CLT, the Natural approach contributes to our understanding of second and foreign language teaching by accentuating the psychological dimensions of language learning, and thereby highlighting that learning is enhanced “in a supportive, collaborative and non-threatening environment” (Weideman, 2002a: 61; for a survey, see also Stevick, 1990). Thus, the atmosphere in the classroom is crucial and the use of different methods and techniques can assist the teacher to make classrooms “places of joy and energy, free from embarrassment, fear and anxiety” (Weideman, 2002a: 61). The aforementioned aspects were taken into consideration in Chapter 4 below, as well as during the intervention itself (see Chapter 6).

3.5.4.2 The Total Physical Response technique

The Total Physical Response technique merits some attention in its own right within a discussion of the Natural Approach, since it is an important component of the latter. According to Krashen and Terrell (1995: 76-78) the Total Physical Response technique (TPR) is useful in the Natural approach, since this technique is designed to create a favourable condition in the classroom to reduce anxiety and stress. Although

TPR is most often used for young beginners in a second or foreign language, it is also appropriate for adult learners who start a new language course (Weideman, 2002a: 55-58).

The Total Physical Response technique is based on an information gap and when the TPR technique is used, the learners are given simple commands, or a series of instructions, and by carrying out the required non-verbal action they indicate their understanding. A verbal response is not necessary (cf. Terrell, 1985: 469-471; Krashen, 1987: 140; Krashen & Terrell, 1995: 76-78; Weideman, 2002a: 56). Although learners demonstrate their learning of the target language in TPR, they are not obliged to communicate verbally, thereby reducing stress.

It must be noted that TPR is not limited to commands and instructions, since several other techniques can also provide comprehensible input (Terrell, 1985: 470; Krashen & Terrell, 1995: 76-77). For instance, one of the TPR techniques that can be used requires a response from a learner who is required, to identify the physical characteristics and clothing of other learners in the class. The use of visuals (e.g. pictures) is another TPR technique in which the teacher shows the learners pictures and they must choose between them according to a description given by the teacher. (Cook, 1996: 129). However, in all these activities the aim is to maintain a constant flow of comprehensible input.

The input hypothesis of second language acquisition supports TPR. Therefore, a teacher should use language just slightly beyond the learners' understanding, in order to develop their understanding (Nunan, 1991a: 289; Weideman, 2002a: 57). A second or additional language teacher displaying patience and a supportive attitude towards the learners in the learning situation, and making very few demands on them, till they are ready, can assist learners to feel more at ease, and to reduce anxiety and stress. From the above discussion it is evident that the teacher should take notice of the anxiety and stress that learners experience in second, additional or foreign language classes. This phenomenon will be discussed further in Chapter 4.

3.6 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the reflection on the origin and history of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has provided some insight into its different interpretations and directions, as well as into a number of its practical implementations.

Reviewing the four directions in CLT has emphasised the kind of teaching necessary to develop proficiency in an additional language, and has highlighted the more appropriate techniques and methods to accomplish that. As the study is concerned with determining criteria for developing appropriate materials to be used in the intervention process, the literature review on CLT has generated valuable insight into a number of general considerations that influence materials development.

In the next chapter we turn to the role of social context and attitudinal factors in second language teaching and learning, as these factors also have a direct bearing on determining the criteria for the development of materials in this study.