CHAPTER 5

DESIGN CRITERIA FOR MATERIALS DEVELOPMENT

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5.1   INTRODUCTION

In the preceding chapters, the background of the study was discussed (Chapter 1), the framework of the research process and the methods employed in this study were described (Chapter 2), the literature review undertaken gave insight into Communicative Language Teaching (Chapter 3), and the influence of various factors on additional language learning were explored (Chapter 4). The current chapter focuses on the design and development of appropriate materials, in order to enhance proficiency in additional language learning. With the purpose of the study in mind, two vital questions arise: What materials should be used in the intervention process, and what can be done with these materials to promote language learning?

In view of the information presented in the previous chapters, it is evident that for the optimal enhancement of learning the ideal would be to develop an appropriate learning programme based on the diagnostic report of the test, as well as the analysis of the affective questionnaire. Thus, the starting point in this chapter is to examine the need for materials development by reflecting on the results of the diagnostic assessment of the proficiency in Afrikaans of the Grade 12 learners, followed by a schematic representation of the learners' profile.

Next, the rationale for the process of materials writing, reflecting an action research cycle, will be discussed. After this we move on to examine design considerations, and to establish the criteria for developing the relevant learning material to be used in this project. However, we shall first set the scene by considering the need for materials development in this study.

5.2   THE NEED FOR MATERIALS DEVELOPMENT

The identification of the need for materials development in this study involves fact-finding and analysis of the learners' proficiency in Afrikaans, as well as knowledge about the resources and the time available. We will consider these variables in turn.

5.2.1   Learners' proficiency in Afrikaans

The envisaged intervention prompted a number of questions as outlined in Chapter 1, section 1.2. Chief among those questions is: how proficient are the learners in Afrikaans as an additional language? Naturally, since the learners are in Grade 12, there would be justification in assuming that their proficiency and functional Afrikaans literacy would correspond approximately with their grade level. However, such a supposition would have been wrong in this case, since the pre-intervention test indicated that the learners' proficiency level in Afrikaans in fact averaged at the level of Grade 4. An understanding of the actual proficiency level of the learners is a vital factor in deciding on the remedies to be instituted during the intervention. The results of the diagnostic report are captured in Figure 5.1.
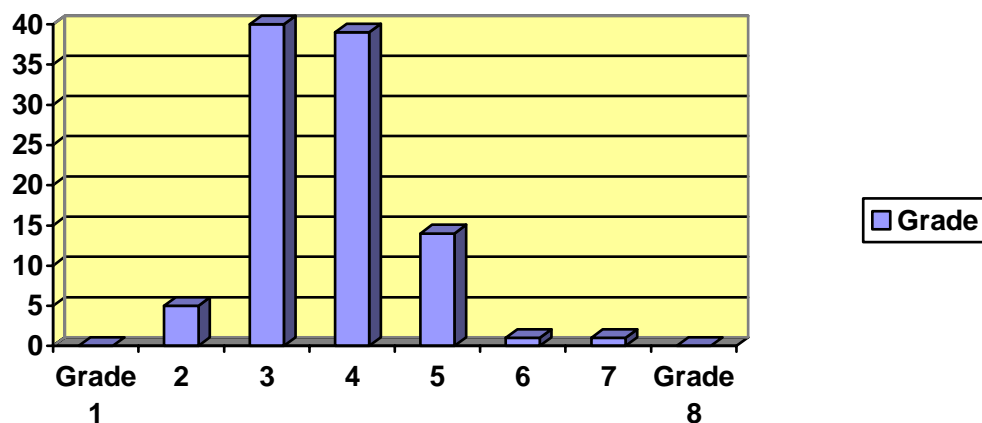

Figure 5.1   Learners' proficiency in Afrikaans

The results emphasise the magnitude of the proficiency dilemma in this study. It is obvious that the situation needed some radical measures, since the proficiency levels ranged from Grade 2 to Grade 7. The percentage of learners in each Grade is shown in parentheses: Grade 2 (5%); Grade 3 (40%); Grade 4 (39%), Grade 5 (14%), Grade 6 and Grade 7 (1% each). The average score of the learners' proficiency levels was 23%, and the average grade of the Grade 12 learners' proficiency in Afrikaans was, according to the norms of the test employed, only Grade 4.

In addition, knowledge about the learners' proficiency levels in reading, writing, speaking and listening skills directly affects the planning of the intervention lessons,

and evidently the use of appropriate materials and methods. A more specified indication of the problem areas is encapsulated in Figure 5.2
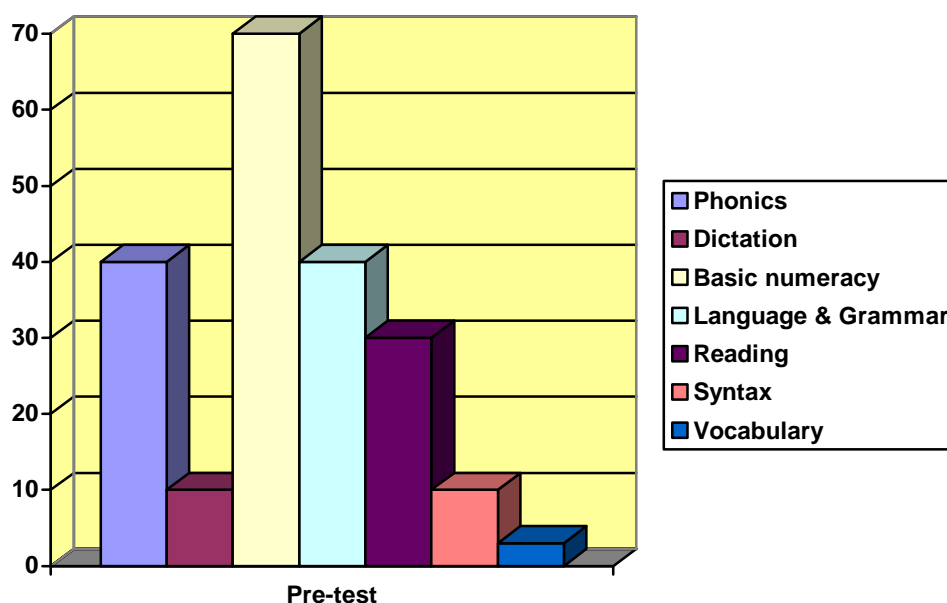

Figure 5.2   Pre-test: Proficiency profile of learners

Figure 5.2 shows the problem areas relative to each other: the learners' vocabulary in context had the lowest average score of only 3%, then syntax (10%) and dictation (10%), followed by reading at 30%; and both phonics, as well as language and grammar (spatial awareness) at 40%. Basic numeracy was the highest, at 70%. Moreover, the evaluators rated all of these proficiency elements poor and inadequate for Grade 12 learners. In addition, in the diagnostic report, the evaluators indicated that the learners' functional Afrikaans literacy was poor, and according to them, results also indicated that learners guessed the answers, probably reflecting a 'guessing the answer' test practice they may be employing in difficult tests. Incidentally, the evaluators requested that the diagnostic results should be made known only to the principal, and not to the teacher or the learners, as they would have been demoralising to both.

If we consider the diagnostic results of the pre-intervention test, it is obvious that the situation requires the employment of a range of appropriate and relevant learning materials, as well as measures to maximise intake during the short intervention programme to address the specified problem areas. I set out to use an approach based

on Communicative Language Teaching along with its practical implementations (Chapter 3) during the lessons. In this respect, Nunan (1991b: 67) points out that introducing a new teaching approach is "inherently risky", since either the situation can unfold in an unexpected way, or there is the possibility that the learners could react differently than predicted. However, as a consolation, he also states that "no teaching plan can be completely controlled", because circumstances are unpredictable and therefore teachers should bear in mind that at times plans need to be changed. In the discussion of the implementation of the materials in the learning setting in Chapter 6, the learners' reactions to the CLT approach, as well as my decisions to change plans, will be addressed in more detail.

I must admit that the magnitude of the proficiency dilemma, the characteristics of the learners, as well as the educational and social contextual factors were overwhelming and contributed to a feeling of despair on my part at the start of the intervention programme. Nonetheless, my predicament made me realise that I was not working alone with the research problem. As Gebhard (1999: 71) indicates, the "collaborative nature of action research is thought-provoking and stress-reducing". My approach and efforts in the classroom resulted in the principal, as well as other teachers and learners, showing an interest in what was happening in the Afrikaans class. This support made me realise that the intervention programme was not an isolated endeavour, but that it was viewed as an integral part of the school setting.

Hence, when teachers engage in action research they need not feel that they have failed if a problem is not resolved. They can "simply restate the goal and redesign the plan using their acquired knowledge and experience to continue in their efforts to resolve the problem" (Gebhard, 1999: 71). Action research provided me with an opportunity to take a closer look at the remedies to be instituted, to reflect systematically on the actions taken in the classroom, to be critical about my teaching practice, and to be prepared to change it.

This brings the question on the effectiveness of the methods and materials employed during the intervention to the fore. The results of the diagnostic post-test assessment are captured in Figure 5.3.
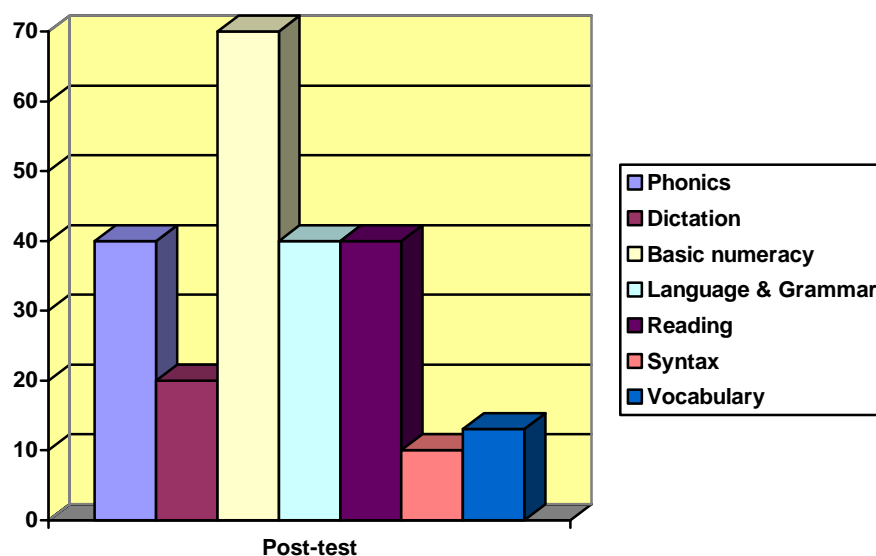
Figure 5.3   Post-test: Proficiency profile of learners

Figure 5.3 shows that there was indeed an improvement in three of the problem areas (average scores), viz. vocabulary, which improved from 3% to 13%, dictation from 10% to 20%, and reading from 30% to 40%. Interesting is the fact that in each of these three problem areas the improvement was 10%, while the other identified areas remained exactly the same as in the pre-test.

A comparison between the average scores of the pre-test and the post-test diagnostic assessments is shown in Figure 5.4. Basic numeracy remains at 70%, phonics at 40%, and language and grammar at 40%, but reading improved to 40%, dictation also improved to 20%, vocabulary went up to 13%, while syntax remained at 10% and is the lowest percentage. It appears that the materials and methods employed during the intervention had a greater impact on the learners' proficiency in vocabulary, dictation and reading. In addition, the importance of teacher talk in the process of acquisition (Chapter 4, section 4.4.1.2) should also be taken into account, since I limited code switching, and rather opted to maximise the use of Afrikaans by frequent self-repeat and rephrasing when explaining or giving instructions. The fact that I am a native speaker of Afrikaans also brought the learners into contact with 'real' Afrikaans, since they have limited opportunities to communicate with target language speakers.
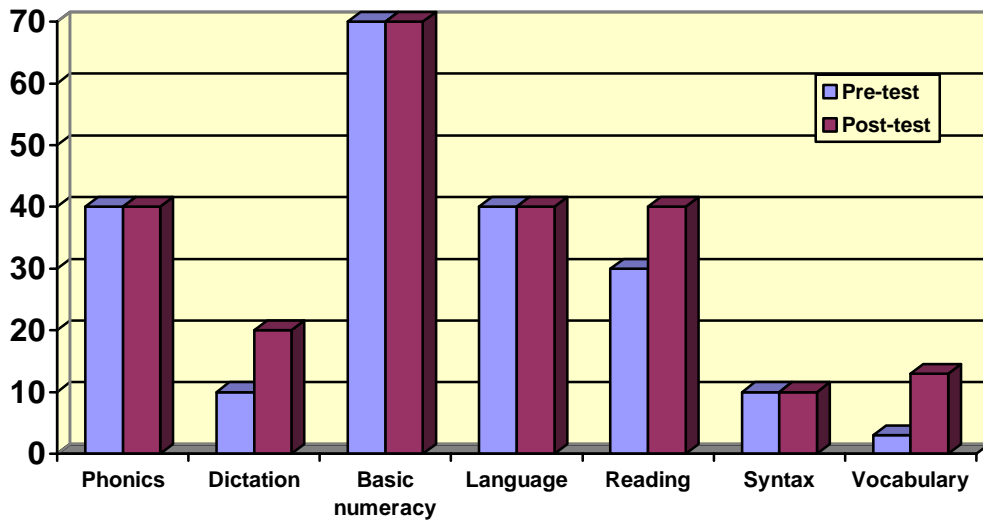
Figure 5.4   Comparison between pre-test and post-test results

Taking the aim of the study into account, two other questions arise. How successful was the intervention project that I undertook, and did the learners' proficiency in Afrikaans improve through the use of appropriate materials? At the beginning, the learners' proficiency level in Afrikaans averaged Grade 4, but a comparison between the learners' grades in the pre-test and post-test (illustrated in Figure 5.5) could, in addition, give more insight into the effectiveness of the intervention process.
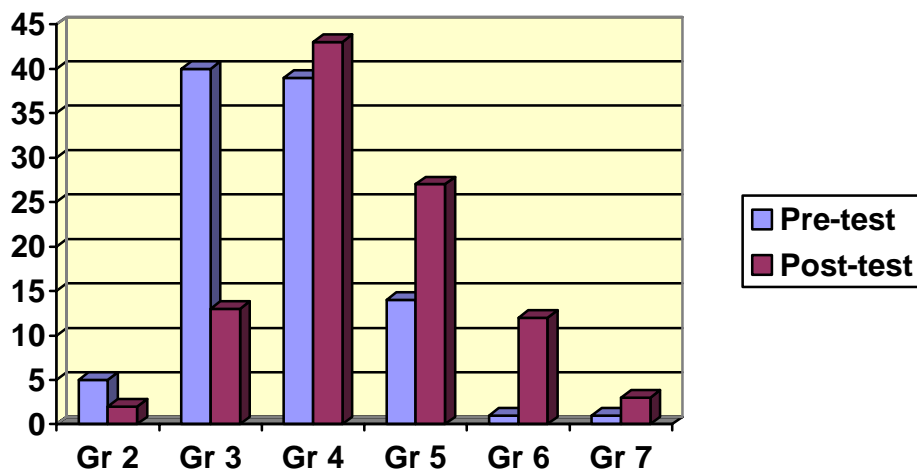
Figure 5.5   Proficiency Grade levels: Comparison between pre-test and post-test

According to Figure 5.5 there is an overall improvement in the learners' proficiency grade levels (average scores): the number of learners at Grade 2 level decreased from 5% to 2%, and those at Grade 3 from 40% to 13%, while Grade 4 increased from 39% to 43%, Grade 5 from 14% to 27%, while Grade 6 showed a more marked improvement from only 1% to 12%, with 3% of learners now averaging at Grade 7, compared to 1 % previously. The average score of the learners' proficiency levels was initially 23%, but improved to 29%, resulting in a slight improvement of the average grade from Grade 4 to Grade 4/5. This drift towards greater proficiency is heartening.

It must be noted that, although the majority of the learners apparently benefited from the intervention, one should also acknowledge that there were five learners whose proficiency levels tested lower than during the pre-intervention assessment. The reasons for this can only be speculated upon, but possible explanations could include not feeling well during the post-test, varying affective variables, problems at home, a dislike of the intervention, poor attendance, not actually attending the lessons, or a combination of some or all of these factors. Nonetheless, despite the substantial improvement, the learners' proficiency in Afrikaans remains deplorable, and raises the question how they fared during the matriculation examination.

According to the examination results of 2003, there was a 73% pass rate in Afrikaans, and one male learner even received a symbol C in Afrikaans. These results pleased the principal immensely and represented a significant improvement over the results of previous years. Most of the learners (53%) received a symbol F in Afrikaans, 11% of the learners a symbol E, while 28% obtained a symbol GG and 7% a symbol H. Figure 5.6 depicts the distribution of the Afrikaans symbols achieved by the Grade 12 learners for the matriculation examination.
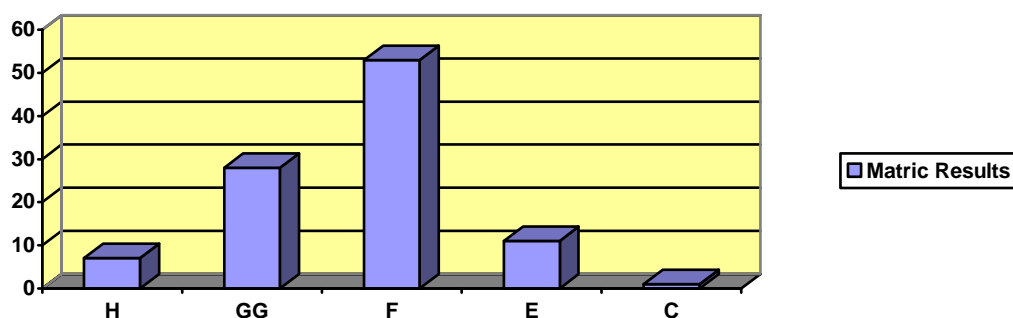

Figure 5.6   Matriculation results in Afrikaans

A brief look at the distribution of results in the matriculation examination in the different subjects at the school (Figure 5.7) provides an insight into the state of teaching and learning in this particular school at the Grade 12 level. The pass rate of all the other language subjects (Zulu, Sotho and English) was 100%, followed by Economics (88%), Afrikaans (73%), Biology (67%), Accounting (62%), Business Economics (50%), Geography (45%), Physical Science (44%), History (24%), and Mathematics (19%). The percentage of Grade 12 learners who passed the entire matriculation examination was 44%, and those who failed 56%. The 73% pass rate of Afrikaans as an additional language subject is somewhat surprising as well as disturbing, considering their poor proficiency levels. The low pass rate of basic learning subjects is also appalling. As mentioned above, the principal was delighted with the Afrikaans pass rate, and stated that the results would have been less favourable had it not been for the intervention programme.
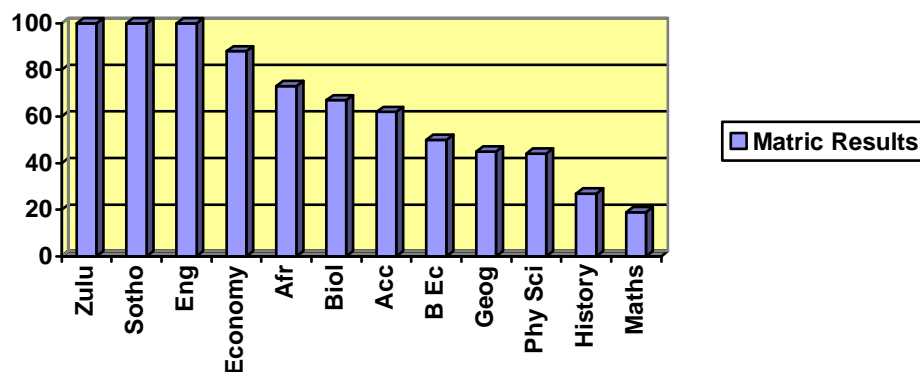
Figure 5.7   Matriculation results in the different subjects

We now turn to another consideration for the materials writer which involves learner variables.

5.2.2   Profile of learners

Jolly and Bolitho (1998: 111) indicate that a thorough understanding of learners' needs ensures a learning-centred approach to materials writing and results in developing the most effective materials. The importance of knowledge about the learners was also highlighted in the preceding chapters, and it was the main focus in Chapter 4. The number of significant learner variables which we have suggested

influence planning decisions, and the design of appropriate and relevant materials which suit the particular learners at hand.

The following schematic representation of the learners' profile (illustrated in Figure 5.8) proved helpful in designing appropriate materials for the intervention.
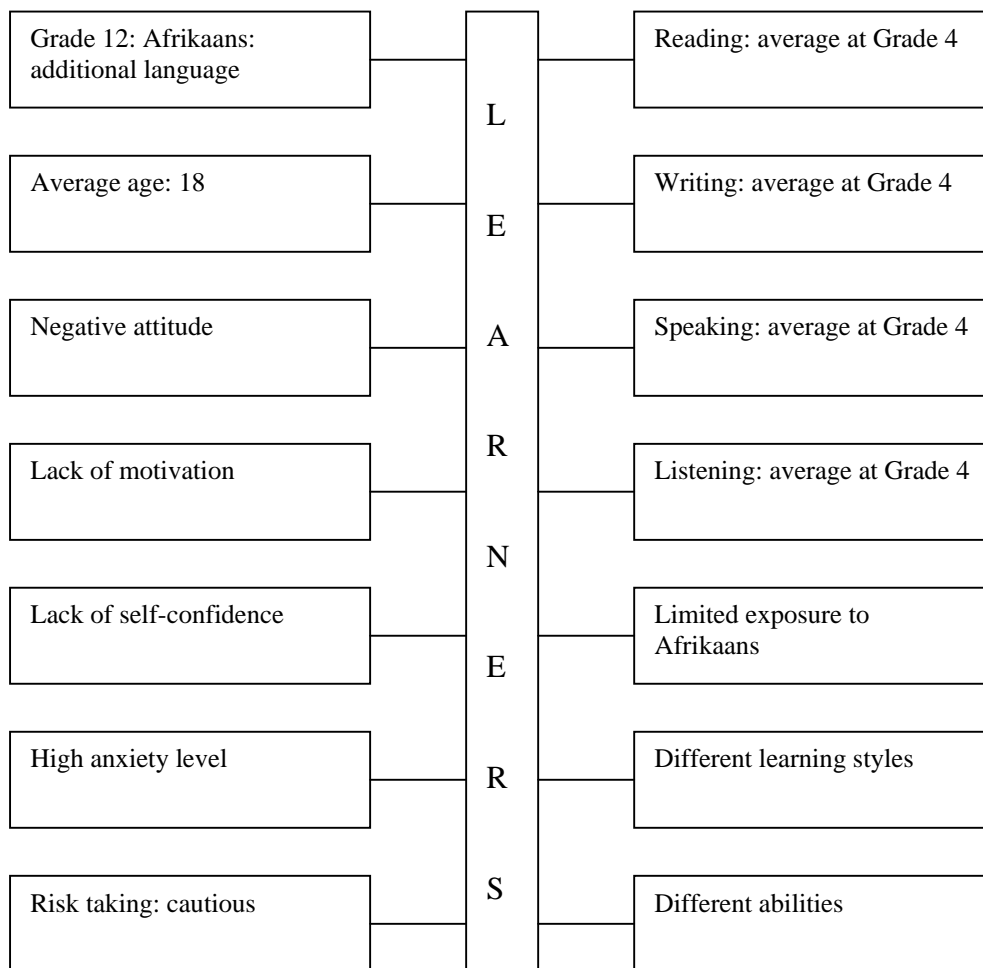
Grade 12: Afrikaans: additional language	L E A R N E R S	Reading: average at Grade 4
Average age: 18		Writing: average at Grade 4
Negative attitude		Speaking: average at Grade 4
Lack of motivation		Listening: average at Grade 4
Lack of self-confidence		Limited exposure to Afrikaans
High anxiety level		Different learning styles
Risk taking: cautious		Different abilities

Figure 5.8   Profile of learners in study

The above profile of the learners that contains demographic, cognitive, affective, and learning factors alerts us to the necessity of catering for diversity among the learners, and to considerations that influence the choice of materials (cf. McDonough & Shaw, 1993: 7-8; Rowntree, 1994: 42-43).

Since the different characteristics in the profile of the learners, as outlined in Figure 5.8, were discussed previously in Chapter 4, only a few further comments are needed

in this regard. Some of these characteristics represent the whole group of learners; others may be more individual and less open to generalisation. Since some of these characteristics are known in advance, they can be incorporated into the initial stage of planning, whereas others may only be assessed in the educational setting, the latter, naturally, being understood as the whole teaching environment in a wide sense, including factors pertaining to the educational and social context (Figure 4.1). In combination, and with varying degrees of significance, these characteristics will influence selection, adaptation, and development of appropriate materials in the given learning and teaching setting during the intervention, and will receive more attention in Chapter 6.

5.2.3   Resources and time available

A more detailed background of the learning situation was already sketched in Chapter 4, sections 4.4.1.1 and 4.4.1.3. However, the two main constraints, viz. the limited time available for teaching, and the physical arrangement of the desks and chairs in the classroom will provide additional justification for choices of materials and techniques employed during the intervention, and will be highlighted during the discussion of the implementation of the developed materials.

5.3   MATERIALS DEVELOPMENT

According to Tomlinson (1998b: 2), a pragmatic concept of materials assists materials developers to make use of as many sources of input as possible, and furthermore highlights the fact that teachers are also materials developers, and that they are thus responsible for the materials that their learners use. Hence, it must be noted that in this chapter the terms 'materials writer' and 'teacher' will be used interchangeably.

Maley (1998: 279) comments on the dilemma of designing and developing appropriate materials by stressing that in a classroom there is a "complex trade-off between the three major elements in the equation: the materials, the teacher and the learners". In a learning situation where learners have an essentially limited functional communicative ability, the teacher, the techniques employed, and the materials "become a central determiner in whether or not students accomplish their goals"

(Brown, 1994: 101). As materials writers, teachers therefore need to exercise their professional judgement about the choices to be made regarding the selection, adaptation, development, and use of suitable materials for their learners in a specific learning setting. Van Lier (1996: 8) also comments that teachers need to improve their ability to make "principled decisions and choices in a wide range of pedagogical activities, ranging from the choice of materials to the conduct of activities in lessons". In reality, the teacher "will probably juggle topic, text and task elements in creating materials" (Nunan, 1991b: 216).

In light of the learners' poor functional Afrikaans literacy, my role as the teacher responsible for the intervention indeed required the actions as described by the researchers above. I had to rely on my own judgement to employ appropriate methods and techniques, as well as to select, adapt, and develop relevant and authentic materials for the intervention lessons.

Researchers caution teachers against rushing into the preparation of new materials without first considering existing materials, since most commercially produced materials can be adapted to fit the teacher's need for materials (cf. Nunan, 1991b: 219; Rowntree, 1994: 77; Rust & Wisdom, 1996: 41). In this regard teachers should also recognise the value of newspapers and magazines, since these media are often under-utilised in the classroom and offer learners a means to establish contact with the real world in the target language (Savignon, 1987: 241). Moreover, they provide teachers with affordable materials in a scarce resource environment. Often teachers argue that within their context the available materials are not appropriate for their specific purpose and therefore won't work. Rust and Wisdom (1996: 41) refer to this argument as the "not invented here syndrome", and warn that in their reluctance to use materials which they themselves have not created, teachers may fall prey to reinventing the wheel.

Admittedly, at the start of the intervention programme I felt that in light of the discouraging results of the diagnostic report and the learners' profile, the only solution would be to design new materials, since existing materials would not be appropriate for this unique learning setting. However, I soon discovered that with a few adaptations many of the existing materials were appropriate for the intervention

programme. Furthermore, since the teaching and learning situation in the classroom was less than favourable, I realised that my role as teacher required not only the establishment of an interactive classroom through the use of relevant materials, but also that I should strive to establish a classroom atmosphere that was conducive to learning. Thus, my actions as a language teacher should "supplement" materials used in the classroom, in order to put a CLT approach into practice (Parry, 2000: 96). This interaction between a teacher's approach and his/her classroom practice is described by Brown (1994: 67-68) as a "key to dynamic teaching". To be a dynamic teacher was obviously also an aspiration of mine during the intervention.

The process of materials selection, collection, reproduction, adaptation, or development is a daunting task, and may place a considerable burden on teachers, especially if they are inexperienced (Richards & Rodgers, 1986: 138). Therefore, an understanding of the process of materials development is essential, and will be discussed next.

5.4   THE PROCESS OF MATERIALS WRITING

The process of materials writing involves various steps, which Jolly and Bolitho (1998: 96-97) have arranged into a simple sequence of activities. I decided to use these steps in a similar way, but with a few adaptations and with an angle that reflects an action research cycle, as illustrated in Figure 5.9.

The rationale for this is tied up with the aim of this study (Chapter 1, section 1.3), viz. the need to develop appropriate and relevant learning materials (Chapter 1, section 1.2.6; Chapter 5, section 5.2), and the decision to use action research as a research method (Chapter 2, section 2.4.1). If one considers the essence of action research (Chapter 2, section 2.4), it is not difficult to see the usefulness of engaging in action research when materials need to be developed. Action research allows teachers to study their teaching, to identify and address issues or concerns related to the problem experienced, with a possibility to resolve this problem by creating and initiating a plan of action, as well as reflecting on its effectiveness (cf. Carr & Kemmis, 1986: 185; Brown, 1994: 68; Davidoff & Van den Berg, 1990:28-29; Weideman, 1998: 29; Gebhard, 1999: 61; Habte, 2001: 49).

The stages in the process of materials development entail the whole scope of planning and production of relevant materials, followed by their use in the classroom, in order to observe and monitor the implementation, and finally the evaluation of the materials which would inform the teacher about changes for the following intervention cycle.
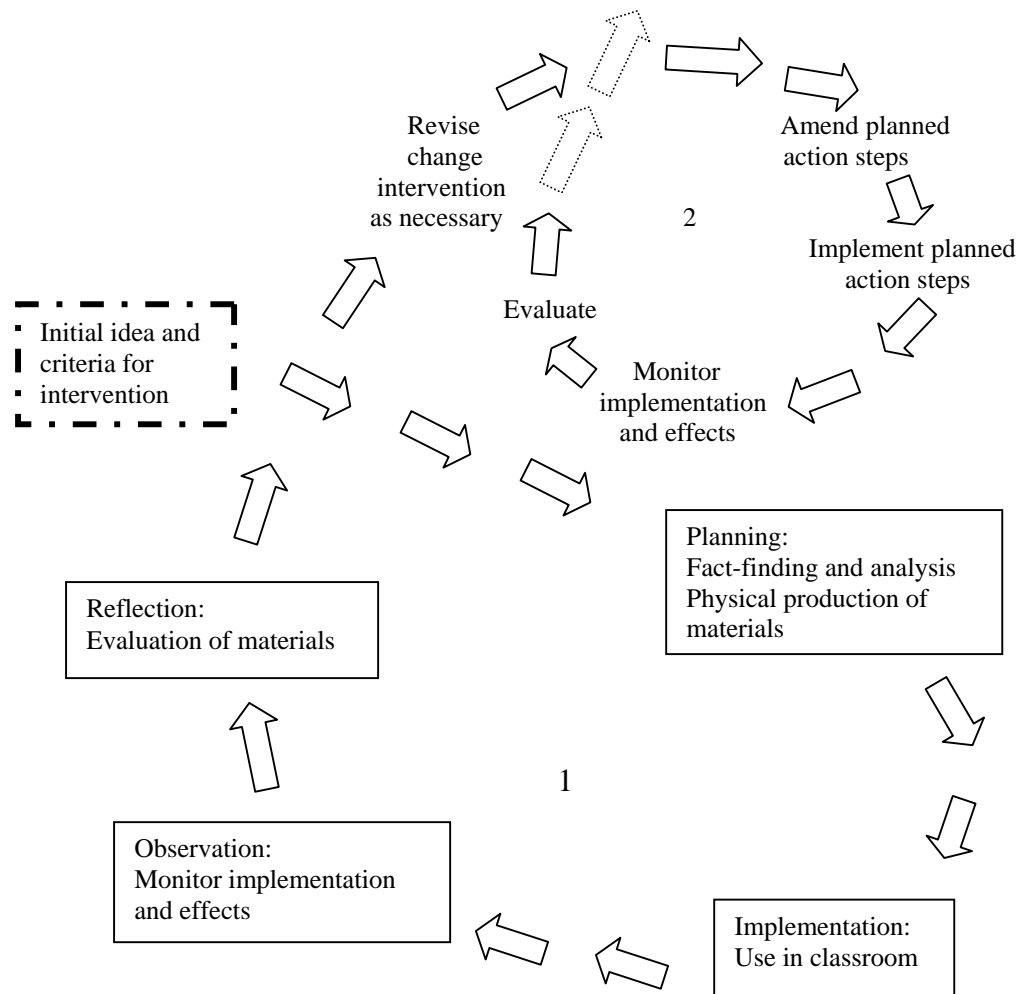

Figure 5.9   The process of materials writing reflecting the action research cycle

The planning stage or pedagogical realisation may be seen as the core of materials writing. The materials writer is actually designing appropriate materials, and careful and practical planning is vital. The starting point in the process is recognising a need for particular kinds of materials, followed by exploring the language or the area to meet the need identified. Identification of one need necessarily influences subsequent aspects that need to be anticipated and catered for. Rust and Wisdom (1996: 39), for

example, emphasise that even the slightest change in a learning programme can have "considerable knock-on effects" or consequences. For example, the need to introduce communicative activities in the classroom is tied up with learners' experience of such activities, their familiarity with pair and group work, and is inevitably influenced by the perception of teachers and learners of the traditional silent language classroom.

The planning stage also comprises consideration of the physical format, and a search for relevant and meaningful activities, examples, or pictures, guided by a set of key principles. The materials writer needs to consider the physical appearance and production of materials, and should strive to use materials which would "achieve impact through novelty, variety, attractive presentation and appealing content" (Tomlinson, 1998b: 7-8), since these aspects are vital to enhance learners' interest and motivation (cf. Rowntree, 1994: 129). Similarly, Nunan (1991b: 210) points out that matters such as the types of content and activities, the layout, as well as the way in which materials are presented, may assist to "shape the learners' view of language". For materials to be valuable, the main objectives of materials development should be to provide learners with meaningful experiences of language, and therefore materials writers should ensure that these language production activities have intended outcomes other than just practising language (Tomlinson, 1998b: 22). Thus, in materials development the "key variable is the amount of initiative and control which learners are allowed to exercise and the extent to which they are active participants in the language process" (Nunan, 1991b: 210).

When the first draft is completed, the materials are ready to be implemented and observed in the classroom. The pilot stage, or "developmental testing" can be seen as the opportunity for the materials writer to "write it, try it out, and improve it" (Rowntree, 1994: 157). Although evaluation of materials is essential to make pertinent judgements on their appropriateness, it is a complex process. A decision cannot be reached without piloting in a real classroom set-up, and the subsequent analysis of the feedback (McDonough & Shaw, 1993: 78-79). Since the learners are the users of materials, and an integral part of the action research, teachers need to pay attention to their opinions and feedback during the use of the materials in the classroom (Jolly & Bolitho, 1998: 112; Gebhard, 1999: 62).

The following stage, observation, includes monitoring the implementation and effects of the new materials, and is necessary in order to be able to reflect critically on what has happened in the classroom. Thus, continuous monitoring provides "feedback throughout the life of materials" (Rowntree, 1994: 157), since it enlightens the materials writer on whether the materials may be used again, or need to be rewritten, or even totally discarded, and in addition, pinpoints the steps which require attention in the subsequent process of revision (cf. Rowntree, 1994: 157; Jolly & Bolitho, 1998: 97; Habte, 2001: 48-49).

The most crucial stage is the evaluation of the developed materials, since this reflection stage provides an opportunity to plan the next phase of the action research spiral. Gebhard (1999: 68) remarks that reflection is "retrospective" since the action that has been recorded during observation is recalled. The final analysis of the efficacy of materials is vital to supply the teacher with information regarding the attainment of objectives and outcomes. Reflection on what has happened in the class involves asking a number of questions: Were the outcomes met? Were the materials effective, relevant and appropriate? Did the materials achieve impact? Should the materials be adapted, rewritten or discarded? Furthermore, the very nature of action research requires that this basic cycle be repeated to allow refinement and amendment of the teacher's activities in the classroom.

In the following section, design considerations and requirements for a communicative approach in materials development will be examined in more detail.

5.5   DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

In order to enhance the Grade 12 learners' proficiency in Afrikaans, I had to consider the employment of appropriate and relevant learning material in line with a CLT approach during the short intervention process. Given the learners' low proficiency levels as indicated in section 5.2, and the learners' anxiety levels, negative attitude and lack of motivation (Figure 5.8; Chapter 4, section 4.6), as well as a less than favourable educational setting (Chapter 4, section 4.4), I realised that these unique circumstances required the use of 'tailor made' materials. However, designing and

developing quality 'tailor made' materials is not a straightforward undertaking, since the materials writer must take into account a number of design considerations.

Tomlinson (1998b: 6) warns that teachers should not only rely on their intuitions, but should rather "combine anecdotal and the empirical evidence available to formulate criteria which could contribute to the development of successful materials". Bearing in mind the disagreement amongst researchers about some of the main issues relating to language teaching and learning, Tomlinson (1998b: 6-7) argues that a "compilation of learning principles and procedures" which contribute to successful learning, could provide an "informative base for the formulation of criteria for the teaching of languages". Consequently, in order to determine criteria for the development of materials, it is necessary to relate learning principles and procedures to theory, research, methods and classroom practice. Compiling a list of principles for materials development in this study has indeed followed a process of reviewing and refining all of these different parameters. According to Tomlinson (1998b: 6), a compilation of learning principles and procedures, recommended by second language acquisition (SLA) researchers and teachers, is beneficial for materials development, because of the acknowledgement of findings of SLA research. We focus now on criteria for materials development.

5.5.1   Criteria for materials development

The following schematic representation of a number of general considerations that influence materials design in communicative language teaching could provide a materials writer with a set of key principles. Figure 5.10 lists the nine criteria for materials development.

In the first instance, as illustrated in Figure 5.10 below, a materials writer's view or theory of language lies at the heart of the rationale for the language teaching design (Weideman, 2003: 38-39). Of central importance in designing appropriate and relevant materials is to "provide justification for the designed solution to the language problem", and therefore a materials writer needs to make choices regarding the employment of certain tasks and techniques, and whether their use is in congruence with his/her beliefs about language learning (Weideman, 2003: 29). Thus, teachers

should first establish their own beliefs about language learning (e.g. within the CLT approach), and then strive to design language materials in "alignment between their beliefs about how language is learned, and the way that they teach" (Weideman, 2003: 44).
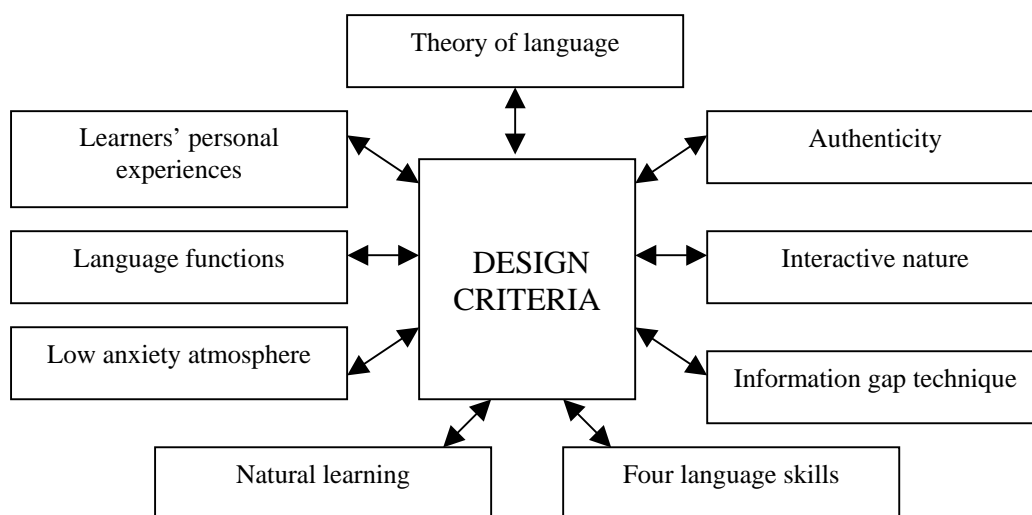
Figure 5.10   Criteria for materials development

A second important criterion for CLT tasks and materials design is authenticity. Authentic texts were discussed at length in Chapter 3, section 3.5.1, but in this section authenticity needs some consideration as a problematic issue in materials design. Although many of the communicative tasks and activities may involve the real life of learners, and will consequently be considered as meaningful, Parry (2000: 96) argues that some of the activities, or occupational roles (in role plays) may be remote from the lives of other learners in the same class, and therefore not attached to reality. Cook (1996: 80) is in agreement with this view and points out that task-based exercises are often about trivial topics, or irrelevant to learners' lives, and thus their content lacks educational value. According to this point of view then, it is vital that a teacher gives careful consideration to the relevance of given scenarios to the group of learners (cf. Cook, 1996: 193; Tomlinson, 1998b: 13; Han, 2001: 13; Parry, 2002: 96), in order to achieve at least a hint of authenticity and reality (Weideman, 2002a: 95; Weideman, 2003: 31).

Another critical consideration is the interactive nature of CLT. Communicative language teaching requires the involvement of learners in a "dynamic and interactive

process of communication" (Savignon, 1987: 237), and for that reason the primary goal of materials in CLT is to promote comprehension and communication among learners by employing meaningful classroom activities (cf. Johnson, 1982: 151; Lynch, 1991: 202; Nunan, 1991a: 293; Tomlinson, 1998b: 14-15; Celce-Murcia & Olshtain, 2000: 197). The role of instructional materials within a functional communicative methodology might be specified in the following terms, quoted from Richards and Rodgers (1986: 25):

- Materials will focus on the communicative abilities of interpretation, expression, and negotiation
- Materials will focus on understandable, relevant, and interesting exchanges of information, rather than on the presentation of grammatical form
- Materials will involve different kinds of texts and different media, which the learners can use to develop their competence through a variety of different activities and tasks.

If we consider the importance of the information gap technique in CLT, and the thorough justification that research has provided for using this technique, it is not surprising that many materials start from the premise that a communicative purpose can be established in the classroom by means of employing this technique (cf. Johnson, 1982: 151; Richards & Rodgers, 1986: 22; Prabhu, 1987: 46; McDonough & Shaw, 1993: 164; Cook, 1996: 187; Habte, 2001: 19-20; Liao, 2001: 38-41; Weideman, 2003: 29). The diversity of information gap activities (role play, jigsaw tasks, reasoning gap tasks) provides a materials writer with a whole array of different techniques for making deliberate choices on task selection. Consequently, teachers should thoughtfully prepare materials that reflect real life language use, combined with information gap techniques that promote genuine, valuable communication in the classroom.

A fifth design feature involves the use of all four skills (reading, writing, speaking, and listening). The emphasis on communication in CLT often results in a widespread misconception among teachers that CLT typifies "some kind of perfected oral approach" (Weideman, 2003: 31). Conversely, in daily life language skills are rarely used in isolation, and working with integrated language skills materials provides learners with valuable opportunities to use the four skills with a "measure of appropriacy" (cf. McDonough & Shaw, 1993: 204; see also Kumaravadivelu, 2003: 225-231). Therefore, if teachers expose learners to tasks with integrated language skills, the advantage is that learners will possibly

> gain a deeper understanding of how communication works … as well as becoming more motivated when they see the value of performing meaningful tasks and activities in the classroom (McDonough and Shaw, 1993: 202).

The sixth criterion is derived from what have been called the 'L' (for language) and the 'P' (for psychological) directions within CLT, which make us aware of both the learners' functional language needs, as well as their emotional needs (cf. Roberts, 1982: 186; Weideman, 2003: 32). The combination of these two criteria to promote natural learning, manifested perhaps particularly in the Natural approach, has led to many initiatives in materials design. One such initiative, pertinent to this study, is the focus on pedagogic techniques, in order to "create and exploit classroom situations" and to use "*ad hoc* materials" rather than materials which "largely predetermine the course of events" (Roberts, 1982: 186-187).

In addition to the above considerations, and deriving from the 'P' emphases in CLT, there is the challenge to create a learning setting that encourages a low anxiety atmosphere in the classroom. This would require a materials writer to make deliberate choices in the design and application of a variety of classroom activities (story telling, songs and rhymes, warm-up exercises, TPR, silent way, and information gap) in order to reduce learners' anxiety in the classroom (cf. Krashen, 1987: 32; Richards & Rodgers, 1986: 134; Krashen & Terrell, 1995: 76-78; Conteh-Morgan, 2002: 173; Weideman, 2002a: 55-58; Weideman, 2003: 32-37).

The eighth criterion in materials design is described by Nunan (1991a: 279) as the "provision of opportunities for learners to focus, not only on language, but also on the language process itself". Regardless of the variety of communicative activities in the classroom, the fact remains that the "classroom is but a rehearsal" (Savignon, 1987: 240) and therefore learners should "think of their whole day as a language class" to maximise their opportunities to practise the target language (Weideman, 2003: 42). In addition, there are certain exercises in which learners "articulate, and are subsequently provided with the opportunity to investigate and critique, their own preconceptions about language learning and the language learning strategies that flow from these" (Weideman, 2003: 42).

Finally, a materials writer should consider using learners' personal experiences as the starting point for various tasks. Nunan (1991a: 279) views the "enhancement" of learners' experiences as a vital contributory component to classroom learning. Hence, by embedding learners' personal experiences and interests in materials, learners are exposed to activities that will naturally elicit their curiosity and desire for understanding (Wlodkowski, 1993: 158).

To summarise, the above discussion of the nine design considerations highlights the importance of integrating these principles into tasks and materials design, since "good materials are those which are consistently informed by the same set of believed-in principles" (Tomlinson, 1998c: 148). However, Tomlinson (1998c: 148) argues that a materials writer should always be aware of the danger of inflexible procedures, and should instead be open to "procedural compromises which cater for differing preferences, providing they are driven by one or more of the established principles".

5.6   CONCLUSION

This chapter has focused on the design and development of appropriate materials for the enhancement of proficiency in additional language learning. Consideration was given to the critical concern with materials development in this study, followed by a practical overview of different aspects of the process of materials writing. Finally, the process of materials development reflecting an action research cycle was discussed, which culminated in the articulation of criteria for developing relevant learning materials to be used in the intervention.

How does the intervention project that I undertook fare in light of these design considerations? In the following chapter, Chapter 6, the developed materials, the modifications tried out, and the success and effect of their implementation in the classroom will be discussed.