

CHAPTER 6

IMPLEMENTATION OF DEVELOPED MATERIALS

6.1	Introduction	115
6.2	Learning environment	115
6.3	Implementation of materials	118
6.4	Action research cycle	119
6.4.1	Intervention, Lesson 1	119
6.4.2	Cycle two: Intervention, Lesson 2	124
6.4.3	Cycle three: Intervention, Lesson 3	131
6.4.4	Cycle four: Intervention, Lesson 4	137
6.4.5	Cycle five: Intervention, Lesson 5	143
6.4.6	Cycle six: Intervention, Lesson 6	152
6.4.7	Cycle seven: Intervention, Lesson 7	160
6.4.8	Cycle eight: Intervention, Lesson 8	166
6.4.9	Cycle nine: Intervention, Lesson 9	172
6.4.10	Intervention, Lesson 10	177
6.4.11	Intervention, Lesson 11	177
6.4.12	Intervention, Lesson 12	181
6.5	Conclusion	183

CHAPTER 6 IMPLEMENTATION OF DEVELOPED MATERIALS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The main concern of Chapter 5 has been to examine the principles on which the teaching materials and classroom methodology in this study are built. Chapter 6 looks at the implementation of the developed materials in the classroom. There is clearly a direct relationship between developing and evaluating materials, both in terms of the reasons for doing so and the criteria used. This chapter can therefore usefully be seen as running parallel to the discussion in Chapter 5. Chapter 6 also attempts to describe the issues involved in piloting the materials, and contains the narrative of the action research project I carried out. Rather than trying to arrive at a final, definitive decision on the effectiveness of the materials, it is essential, first, to consider and evaluate their use in the classroom. Second, the evaluation of the implemented materials is vital to shed more light on their appropriateness to the needs and interests of the learners, as well as to the learning process.

The detailed discussion of the implementation of the materials in the learning setting will be guided by the criteria set for materials development (Chapter 5, section 5.5.1), with emphasis on the evaluation stage of the action research process. The general purpose will be to see how far the materials in question succeeded in meeting the identified needs, as well as the aims and objectives of the given intervention programme. Finally, I shall try to enumerate some difficulties, and constraints experienced, or reasons why these materials need to be adapted further for possible future use.

However, before we turn to the report of the intervention project I undertook, we first set the scene by explaining in more detail the particular learning environment in this study.

6.2 LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

An appreciation of the situation at the school will help to understand the outcome of the intervention programme, and help to identify the barriers that prevented proper

implementation of the communicative approach, and its associated teaching technique, namely pair work.

A week before the intervention commenced, the two Technikon SA (TSA) researchers introduced me to the principal at the school as the fieldworker responsible for the teaching in their research project. During this meeting the arrangements for the intervention programme were spelt out. All the Grade 12 learners (86) would form one group for the teaching, and the accounting classroom would be used. Although the designated classroom was larger than the other classrooms, the floor space available for 86 learners was inadequate, and the fact that a number of learners were left without chairs and/or desks was unsatisfactory. There was a blackboard in the classroom, but no chalk or duster. Although I had anticipated that this might be the case and came prepared with chalk and duster, I rarely was able to use the blackboard, since the accountancy teacher made full use of all the space and requested that his writing should not be erased.

The twenty envisaged teaching lessons were scheduled for Thursdays for one hour (08:00-09:00). However, the expected lessons did not materialise as planned, since the school holidays were not taken into consideration in the initial planning, and other unforeseen factors as discussed in Chapter 4 (section 4.4.1.1) also limited the available time. In addition, factors such as poor attendance and the habit of arriving late for school (section 4.4.1.1) also had a negative effect on the teaching and learning setting.

When I undertook the responsibility as fieldworker in this project, the two TSA researchers gave me the assurance that all the relevant and appropriate materials would be provided for the intervention programme. In addition, they assured me that they would arrange that a number of *Beeld* newspapers would be delivered each week for use in the classroom. Unfortunately, these undertakings did not really materialise, and they supplied me only with a copy of the newly released *Afrikaans handbook & study guide* by Beryl Lutrin (1999). Since the book contains only Afrikaans language rules (explained in English) it is meant to be used in conjunction with other materials. Consequently, as the intervention project teacher, I had to exercise my own judgement

about the choices of materials, and the development of new learning materials to be employed during the intervention.

The principal was enthusiastic about the envisaged intervention programme, and pledged his full support for the project. I was requested to report to his office when I arrived at the school, and after assembly the Afrikaans teacher would escort me to the classroom. The principal also asked me to inform him after each lesson about the learning situation, the learners' behaviour and their co-operation. These regular conversations with the principal provided me with an opportunity to obtain valuable information regarding the learners and the school setting. He insisted talking to me in Afrikaans, and whenever I was in the vicinity he addressed the staff and the learners in Afrikaans. This resulted in a humorous incident when a learner who was sent to his office because of a misdemeanour during assembly, was leaning against the wall with his hands in his pockets. As the principal approached his office, he saw me and immediately disciplined the learner in Afrikaans: "*Haal uit. Man, haal uit ...*". Since he could not find the right words to complete his sentence, the learner was left bewildered and baffled.

During the intervention programme it became quite clear that the principal advocated discipline, assuring me on numerous occasions that he would not allow learners to misbehave and that they should value the assistance they were receiving with the lessons I was teaching. In fact, on a few occasions he felt the need to reprimand the learners to behave, especially after he received the discouraging results of the pre-intervention assessment and became aware of the learners' poor proficiency levels in Afrikaans.

All the staff at the school were friendly and helpful. The other teachers responsible for Afrikaans viewed me as a source of information, and often asked for help regarding problems they experienced with teaching Afrikaans. Even the lady responsible for serving tea made a point to turn up at the principals' office for a quick chat, and to invite me for tea after the lesson. Since the regular Afrikaans teacher was going to attend the classes, it would be useful for reflection on the action implemented in the classroom if she fulfilled the role of observer. After each session we therefore had informal discussions about what she had observed during the lesson. I also used the

time during which the teacher and I were walking to the class to have informal discussions about the Afrikaans teaching and learning environment at the school and the problems she experienced (Chapter 4, section 4.4.1.2). I found that she was a staunch believer in silence in the classroom, and therefore disliked the communicative approach and pair work. She indicated that strict discipline should prevail at all times, and felt strongly that it was necessary for a teacher to remain in charge in the classroom. Because of her perception and resentment of CLT, it is quite possible that she might have criticised my approach of teaching Afrikaans in class to restore her dignity. Although she expressed her amazement about the learners' willingness to speak Afrikaans during the lessons I taught, it remains questionable whether she really will see any need to attempt to change her own teaching practice.

I found the keeping of a diary useful to keep account of my teaching experiences, and as a means to explore my teaching beliefs and practices, as well as to plan and evaluate my lessons. Moreover, I am in agreement with Gebhard's view (1999: 79) that a journal or diary provides an opportunity for a teacher to "confront the affective aspects of being a teacher, including what annoys, disconcerts, frustrates, encourages, influences, motivates, and inspires us". Many of these feelings, which are expressed in my diary (Appendix D), I experienced regularly during the intervention programme.

The preceding paragraphs have sketched the milieu for the implementation of the materials during the intervention, a discussion of which follows next.

6.3 IMPLEMENTATION OF MATERIALS

This discussion of the implementation of the developed materials during the intervention lessons will illustrate how the different steps in the process of materials development (Chapter 5, Figure 5.9) were taken into account in actual samples of materials. Since the design of the materials is the core of this project, attention will be given to justify their design and to articulate the reasons for my choice of employing one kind of task over another. Not all the examples of the developed materials are reported in this section, but they are set out in detail in Appendices H and I.

In the case of each lesson referred to below, I discuss the implementation of the developed materials in the classroom, from identifying the need, and reflecting on the rationale behind the choice and application of the activities, to the observations made, and, finally, to the evaluation stage of the action research process as discussed in Chapter 2, section 2.4.2, and illustrated in Figure 5.9. Since action research is carried out as a cyclical process that follows a series of repeated steps (Figure 5.9), the discussion of each day of the intervention follows a similar pattern. Since the attendance of learners varied (as discussed in Chapter 4, section 4.4.1.1), the number of learners attending every lesson will also be indicated.

The sources of my observation were mainly my expressions, thoughts, feelings and perceptions as expressed in my diary (Appendix D), the planning for the lessons, the reports on lessons to the TSA researchers (Appendix E), my field notes made during the teaching, as well as the remarks, statements, and information obtained through informal discussions with the teacher/observer.

In order to establish the effectiveness of the intervention lesson and the materials employed, a number of aspects will be highlighted during the discussion of the evaluation stage. How the designed materials used in the lesson and the implemented affective strategies relate to the stipulated criteria for materials development (Chapter 5, section 5.5.1) are a vital facet of the reflection stage. Therefore these two aspects, as well as the perceived progression and coherence, the constraints experienced in the classroom setting, and the overall rating of the lesson as indicated in a table are utilized to inform me about future actions to be taken.

We turn now to the action research cycle undertaken in the study.

6.4 ACTION RESEARCH CYCLE

6.4.1 Intervention, Lesson 1

PLANNING

Since this was the start of the intervention, there was an obvious need to obtain more information about the learners, as well as about the learning and teaching setting. A

decision on the exact contents of the programme was not yet possible, since the results of the diagnostic assessment were not yet available. Furthermore, the learners were unknown to me, and since they are the most prominent variable in the instructional situation, I realised that I needed to gather information about a whole range of personal, social, and affective aspects. I therefore decided to use a questionnaire to elicit the necessary information on the learners' backgrounds, needs and interests.

To start the intervention, the topic 'Applying for a job' and the completion of a Curriculum Vitae (CV) were chosen. The rationale for choosing an authentic activity is twofold. Firstly, it provided an opportunity to obtain more information about the learners. Secondly, it offered the learners a relevant and meaningful activity, in view of the fact that they were in Grade 12, and were aware of the importance of having a CV in the near future.

In designing the CV and the questionnaire, care was taken not to overwhelm learners during the first lesson with materials that were too advanced. The CV (Appendix G) was a simplified version with headings and the provision of space to fill in the required information. In designing the questionnaire (Appendix A), careful consideration was given to the requirements for questionnaires (as discussed in Chapter 2, section 2.4.3.1) necessary for obtaining the information. The questionnaire contained short questions and simple phrasing to make it understandable. The questionnaire also provided an opportunity to assess at first hand the proficiency of the learners in Afrikaans.

The CV and the questionnaire were photocopied back to back to minimise expenses. Since I was not sure about the availability of a blackboard in the classroom, I decided to take some flipchart paper along to be able to supply explanations of words in the CV.

IMPLEMENTATION

Since it was the start of the intervention, it was the first time all learners were grouped together in one classroom, and seating arrangements were immediately problematic. Eighty-four Grade 12 learners attended the first lesson. Learners were unsure what to

expect and were unruly and noisy. After introducing myself and briefly explaining my role in the intervention programme, the topic of applying for a job was addressed, as well as the necessity of having a CV. Then the learners had to complete the CV as well as the questionnaire.

To highlight the different degrees of proficiency of the learners in Afrikaans, extracts from two learners' CVs serve as examples.

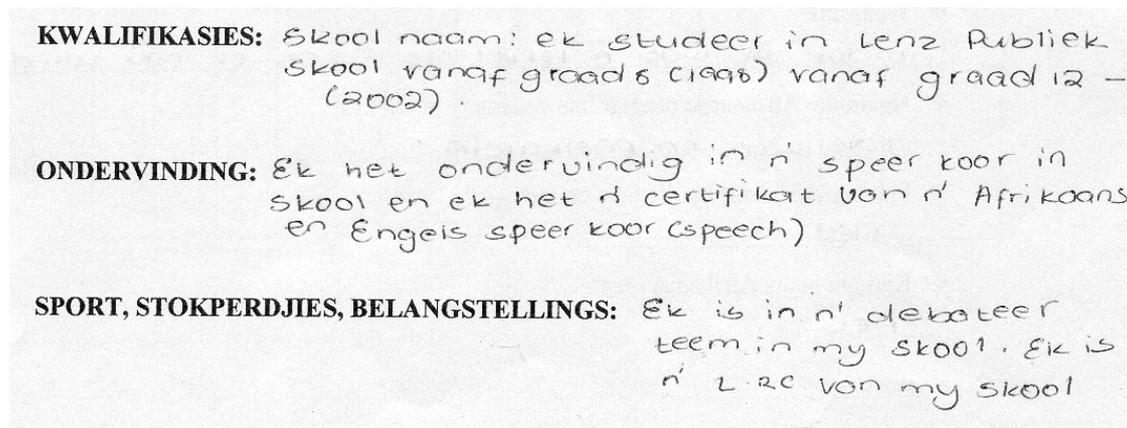


Figure 6.1 CV example: A

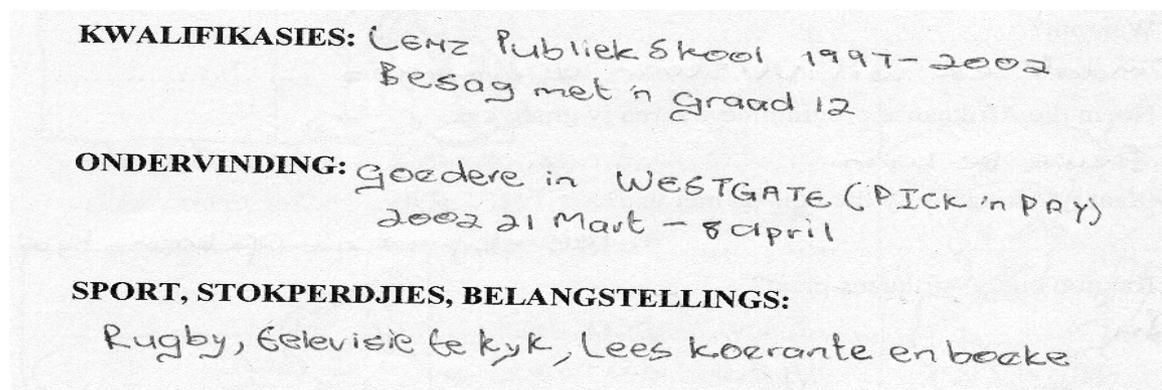


Figure 6.2 CV: example B

In example A (Figure 6.1), the learner (proficiency level Grade 4 at first; improved to matriculate with symbol E) was one of only a few learners who gave a more detailed, although not faultless description of her experience, hobbies and interests. It is obvious that in Example B (Figure 6.2) the learner (proficiency level Grade 2; matriculated with symbol F) tried to convey the message that he had some experience in part-time work, but found it difficult to express himself clearly.

I decided that from the start I would try to establish a communicative classroom by encouraging learners to become active participants. Therefore, after completion of the CV and questionnaire, learners were asked to explain to a friend next to him/her in Afrikaans what a CV is, and what information should be included.

OBSERVATION

As recorded in my diary (Appendix D) it became clear to me that the learners had mixed feelings about this venture. Some were immediately enthusiastic and willing to participate, while others were apprehensive and sceptical. Furthermore, I indicated in the diary that the learners actually found it very strange to communicate with a friend in Afrikaans in class, and I observed that some learners were amused, while others were anxious, because they found it difficult to express themselves in Afrikaans. There were a few who did not even attempt to speak in Afrikaans, and instead resorted to their vernacular. During my informal discussion with her after class, the teacher who acted as an observer in the classroom informed me that the learners dislike Afrikaans and are reluctant to speak Afrikaans. However, in our discussion it became apparent that with their teacher's authoritarian teaching approach, the learners have limited opportunities to speak Afrikaans, because speaking in class was restricted to answering questions. She told me that she found the CV an interesting activity, although she made it clear that she is not in favour of communicative activities, because she views them as too noisy.

I also recorded in my diary, as well in the report (Appendix E), that it was obvious that the learners' proficiency in Afrikaans was very poor, and that they found it difficult to follow Afrikaans instructions. Learners took approximately 45 minutes to complete the CV and questionnaire. At first learners were reluctant to ask questions, but later the situation began to change as they started to request the translation of certain words into English. However, as indicated in my diary and the report, my ability to move between the learners to assist or pay individual attention was restricted.

REFLECTION

The reflection stage allowed me to consider how the designed materials used in this lesson related to the stipulated criteria for materials development, as set out in Chapter

5, section 5.5.1. At the start of the intervention process I made specific decisions regarding the employment of certain tasks and techniques in line with my beliefs about language learning. According to my assessment of lesson 1 (Table 6.1), the CV and questionnaire probably constituted a novel and interactive introduction to the instruction, and also provided the necessary information to compile a profile of the learners (Chapter 5, Figure 5.8). The learners no doubt viewed completing a CV as a relevant and interesting activity, reflecting that **authenticity** as a criterion for materials development was met. One learner commented at the end of the lesson: “Thanks, I can write a C.V. in Afrikaans now. You did a very good job”.

Table 6.1 Lesson 1: Assessment

	Criterion	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	No
MATERIALS				
Provide additional information		x		
Choice of materials	Beliefs: language learning	x		
Tasks	Personal experience	x		
Exposure to reading, writing, speaking and listening	Integrate all four language skills		x	
Realism	Authenticity	x		
Vocabulary development	Language use	x		
Communicative	Information gap	x		
Language functions	L	x		
AFFECTIVE STRATEGIES				
Achieve impact	Novelty	x		
Reduce anxiety	P		x	
Boost self-confidence	P		x	
Encourage risk-taking	P		x	
Enhance motivation	P	x		
Attitude change	P		x	
CONSTRAINTS				
Pair and group work	Interactive		x	
Understanding of instructions			x	
Instruction time			x	
Physical arrangement			x	
REFLECTION ON LESSON				
Reflect stipulated criteria		x		
Overall rating of lesson		x		

The materials afforded learners with an opportunity for valuable vocabulary development (language use). During the lesson learners also had the opportunity to practise basic language functions (‘L’, criterion). Although all four language skills were integrated in the lesson (for a recent discussion of the impossibility of separating the four ‘skills’, cf. Kumaravadivelu, 2003: 225-238), the speaking activity was less

successful and would have to be rated as unsatisfactory. Thus, it was clear that in the following lessons more attention should be given to the learners' proficiency in all four language skills, and learners should be provided with more opportunities to communicate in Afrikaans through the spoken word.

My suspicions about the learners' high affective filter were confirmed during the first lesson, and it was apparent that affective instructional strategies should be instituted. In addition, since learners were not used to communicative activities, they needed some coaching in pair and group work. The crowded classroom and limited space were a huge disadvantage, and would definitely have to influence my choice of methods and techniques to be employed. Occasional brief switching into English was necessary to explain and to enhance learners' understanding. Furthermore, I realised that speech modification, rephrasing, and frequent self-repeat would be vital to enhance understanding.

Although the first lesson may be rated as satisfactory overall, I realised that, due to the unique circumstances, the intervention would not be an easy endeavour, as the entry in my diary reflects: "*Dit is 'n enorme taak wat op my wag! Dit sal vasbyt kos om enigsins 'n verandering te kan maak!*"

6.4.2 Cycle two: Intervention, Lesson 2

PLANNING

After the first lesson, I received the results of the diagnostic assessment and together with the information I myself had gathered about the learners, the situation called for viewing the remedies to be instituted with more circumspection. It would be necessary to pay particular attention to the following aspects: all four language skills needed to be integrated in the materials, opportunities for communicative tasks should be provided, and since the learners had no experience of pair work, it would be necessary to prepare them for this technique. In addition, attention should be given to affective variables as highlighted by the learners' profile (Chapter 5, Figure 5.8).

I decided to start the lesson with a listening comprehension approach in which the learners listen to a story, and then have to respond orally to a few questions in order to

develop comprehension, listening and speaking skills. In light of the learners' poor proficiency in Afrikaans I had to adapt a story, *Kappie die houtkapper*, and prepared six questions to test the aforementioned skills (Appendix H, Task 1).

Following the story and comprehension activity as an ice-breaker, the topic of applying for a job (introduced during lesson 1) was expanded to include, firstly, an advertisement, and secondly, an interview to incorporate speaking skills. I wrote the advertisement for a job (Figure 6.3, Task 2a) on flipchart paper, as well as explanations of the requirements for both vacancies (Appendix H, Task 2a).

SONSKYN HANDELAARS

- BOEKHOUER
- VERTEENWOORDIGER

Sonskyn Handelaars, 'n dinamiese kettingroep aan die Wes-Rand, is op soek na geskikte gekwalifiseerde persone vir bogenoemde poste.

Aanvangsdatum: 24 Julie 2002
 Sluitingsdatum: 12 Mei 2002
 Pos of faks ? volledige CV na:
 Sonskyn Handelaars
 Posbus 211
 KRUGERSDORP
 3003

Figure 6.3 Advertisement: Task 2a

In addition, interview cards (Figure 6.4, Task 2b) were developed to assist learners to conduct an interview, and to coach them into pair work. In order to reduce the learners' anxiety about speaking in Afrikaans during the interview activity, relevant questions to guide the whole process were supplied on the interview cards. However, provision was also made on the interview card whereby one learner (filling the role of 'interviewer') needed to act on the information given by another learner (the 'applicant'), thereby using dialogue as a technique to improve communicative competence, as described by Roberts (1986: 84).

<p>GROET:</p> <p>Stel die aansoeker op sy/haar gemak:</p> <p>.....</p> <p>In watter pos stel u belang?</p> <p>Waarom stel u in die pos as</p> <p>..... belang?</p> <p>Wat is u kwalifikasies?</p> <p>Beskik u oor ondervinding vir die pos?</p> <p>Waar het u voorheen gewerk?</p> <p>Vertel my iets meer omtrent uself.</p> <p>Het u enige vrae?</p> <p>ANTWOORD :</p> <p>GROET:.....</p>
--

Figure 6.4 Interview card: Task 2b

IMPLEMENTATION

Before the lesson started, the principal decided to have a pep talk with the Grade 12 learners, and to emphasise that he would not tolerate misbehaviour. At the beginning of the lesson I explained to the learners that I would tell them a story and that they should listen attentively, because afterwards they have to answer a few questions. While I was telling the story a few learners arrived late, casually climbing through the missing panel of the door, probably a habit they were accustomed to. As yet another male learner attempted to step through the panel, the principal appeared from behind, and without any further ado pulled him back and reprimanded him for this misbehaviour. After the scolding, the learner tried to enter the class again the same way, upon which the principal again pulled him back, but now disciplined him by insisting that he should first knock before entering. Needless to say, that at this time, all attention shifted to this commotion and after the learner eventually sat down, I had to tell the story a second time.

During the comprehension activity I did not ask any particular learner to answer the different comprehension questions, but allowed answering by the group. In doing so, I tried to encourage risk-taking by reducing learners' fear and anxiety, and the possibility of embarrassment if they were not able to answer the question correctly. In addition, the use of the slogan "Shine, shine, shine" to praise the learners' contributions encouraged them even more to participate. Later during this lesson, I changed the slogan to an Afrikaans encouragement phrase: *Goed, beter, beste!* The

learners liked this phrase and they used it profusely and with great enthusiasm. The following remark a female learner (Grade 4 proficiency level, matriculated with symbol GG) wrote on her questionnaire at the end of the intervention programme serves as an example:

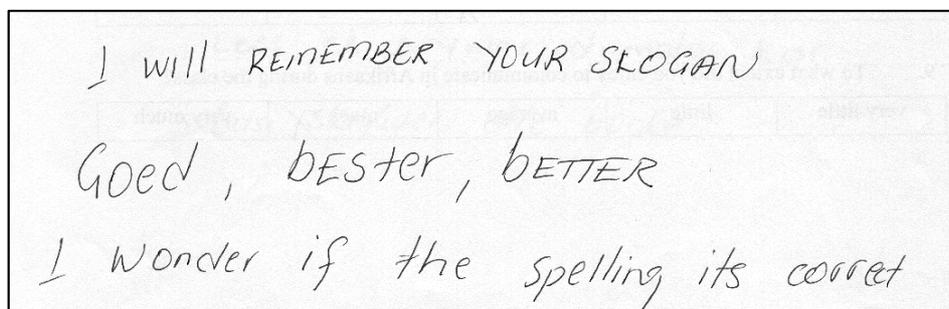


Figure 6.5 Learner's comment: Example A

The way in which the learners answered the comprehension questions about *Kappie*, *die houtkapper*, and their poor understanding of Afrikaans, called for more explanation, translation and attention to the correct spelling of words, as well as to pronunciation. I also felt it necessary to briefly highlight the correct placement of a verb in a sentence.

For the next activity I prepared the learners by showing them a page of a newspaper with advertisements for jobs, and reviewed briefly the procedures that must be followed when one applies for a job. After that, I placed the prepared advertisement (written on flipchart paper) on the blackboard and asked the learners to read it silently. A few minutes later, however, a good number of learners started to ask me to explain some of the words they found difficult. I had to indicate to the learners, for example, that in the 'advertisement' there were two positions available and that they have to choose one whose requirements are closely in line with their vocational interests (Figure 6.3). The requirements and duties for both posts (written on flip chart paper) were discussed briefly. Learners were told that the following activity would involve pair work with one participant as the interviewer and the other as the applicant, and that roles would then be reversed. The observer (teacher) and I demonstrated how the interview should be conducted. The observer was very nervous during the role play, and her command of Afrikaans also appeared to be poor. Since

the preceding activities took up more time than I had expected, I was compelled to drop handing out the interview cards, and to reschedule the interview task.

In the remaining minutes, I opted to conclude the lesson with a brief discussion of two idioms (*Aanhouer wen; Tou opgooi*), to the amusement of the learners. I noticed a few learners making notes.

OBSERVATION

I indicated in my diary (Appendix D) and report (Appendix E) that the learners were better behaved (perhaps as a result of the principal's reprimand before the lesson, and the incident with the latecomer), and definitely more willing to participate. The story of *Kappie die houtkapper* amused the learners, and as an ice-breaker it worked well. At first only a few learners attempted to answer questions, but the situation improved, and with time, they also were more willing to ask for help. The learners liked the praise phrase, and more of them deliberately attempted to use Afrikaans. The observer remarked that she was amazed that learners were willing to use Afrikaans in the classroom. The limited time for teaching remained a problem, though. I was too ambitious in thinking that it would be possible to fit in all the envisaged activities during the lesson, and apart from the slow progress, the principal's pep talk to the learners at the start of the lesson had limited the available time even more.

REFLECTION

My main concern during the whole of the intervention was to design materials in line with the CLT approach, but at this stage I found that the unique circumstances in which the intervention programme took place also necessitated further consideration of affective variables, and their influence on additional language learning. The story, *Kappie die houtkapper*, worked well to reduce anxiety in the classroom at the start of the lesson (criterion 'P'), but failed to integrate all four language skills, described as a fifth design feature. It might have been a better option if the learners had been instructed to write the answers down.

I felt that the learners' responses to the comprehension questions called for paying some attention to the correct placing of the verb in Afrikaans, as well as the spelling of difficult words, reflecting language use as a criterion. It must be noted that

whenever learners' attention was drawn to correct spelling, grammatical forms or pronunciation, I constantly bore affective strategies in mind, so as not to increase the learners' anxiety. This view of awareness of the learners' needs in error correction is in congruence with the views of Nunan (1991b: 195), Roos (1992: 59), Brown (1994: 106), Agnihotri (1995: 7), Celce-Murcia and Olshtain (2000: 220).

Nonetheless, the question about the significance of grammar correction comes to the fore. In an article on grammar correction, Truscott (1996: 327-369) does not deny the value of grammatical accuracy, nor does he reject feedback as a teaching method. However, he does argue a strong case against the effectiveness of grammar correction. Truscott (1996: 354) views grammar correction as inefficient, which is what other researchers claim too (cf. Lightbown, 2000: 446; Weideman, 2002a: 2-3). According to Truscott (1996: 342) there is little connection between correction and learning, because "acquisition of a grammatical structure is a gradual process, not a sudden discovery as the intuitive view of correction would imply". Thus, critical reflection on my teaching practice raises the question: Did I have valid reasons for continuing with error correction? In hindsight, the answer seems clear: I should have dropped grammar correction in favour of providing the learners with more opportunities to experience the target language, which would probably have improved accuracy, and fluency.

The advertisement, as well as the discussion on the requirements of the two positions, were employed as a preface to the interview, and focused on the 'L' and 'P' criteria respectively. Learners were provided with necessary information to enable them to engage in more constructive dialogues ('L'), while consideration was also given to reduce the learners' anxiety, thereby attending to the learners' emotional needs ('P'). Again, authenticity as a criterion for materials development remained problematic, due to the unlikelihood of learners applying for jobs advertised in Afrikaans newspapers. But at least the action of applying for a job was an authentic (future) event that was relevant to the learners.

The exposure to idiomatic expressions, although inadequate, relates to language usage in general and the use of the language outside the classroom, and reflects alignment with the 'L' criterion. Generally, the use of idiomatic expressions is tied up with the

view that “idiomatic competence means possessing knowledge of the irregular and unsystematic features of the language” (Roberts, 1986: 56). Moreover, the inclusion of idiomatic expressions in lessons could provide learners with the opportunity to recognise their meaning, to create an awareness of the nuances they convey, as well as the possibility of correct and appropriate use. Although these justifications are valid, the uniqueness of the intervention setting suggests, however, that their use in this instance may have been ill-advised. My decision to explain idiomatic expressions was simply based on the prolific and humorous use of idioms by one of the characters in the Afrikaans TV programme *Sewende laan*, which 63% of the learners enjoyed watching, as indicated in their responses to the first questionnaire (Chapter 4, section 4.7.1). The idiomatic expressions thus reflect “genuine instances of language use” (Johnson, 1982: 24) and may be viewed as authentic texts. But the question should probably not be about their authenticity, but about whether explanations given by the teacher can be equated with learning by the learners. Does an explanation immediately convert into learning? Probably not.

The different tasks no doubt did afford learners with valuable opportunities for vocabulary development. Although provision was made for the implementation of a communicative task (interview), and its associated information gap technique, limited time prevented their proper execution during this lesson. Therefore, the rating of the information gap principle in Table 6.2 below is unsatisfactory.

Table 6.2 Lesson 2: Assessment

	Criterion	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	No
MATERIALS				
Choice of materials	Beliefs: language learning	x		
Tasks	Personal experience	x		
Exposure to reading, writing, speaking & listening	Integrate all four language skills		x	
Realism	Authenticity	x		
Vocabulary development	Language use	x		
Grammar	Language use	x		
Communicative	Information gap		x	
Language functions	L	x		
AFFECTIVE STRATEGIES				
Achieve impact	Variety & novelty	x		
Reduce anxiety	P	x		
Boost self-confidence	P	x		
Encourage risk-taking	P	x		
Enhance motivation	P	x		
Attitude change	P	x		
CONSTRAINTS				
Pair and group work	Interactive		x	
Understanding of instructions			x	
Instruction time			x	
Physical arrangement			x	
REFLECTION ON LESSON				
Reflect stipulated criteria		x		
Overall rating of lesson			x	

Although learners reacted fairly positively to the relatively new way of teaching Afrikaans, the influence of affective factors on their learning needed to be recognised further and catered for during the following intervention lessons. I was satisfied that the materials achieved impact through variety and novelty. My assessment of lesson 2, as reflected in Table 6.2, highlighted that more attention should be given to writing and speaking skills, the use of authentic texts, and to provide more opportunities for engaging in communicative tasks.

In the next cycle I needed to change my plans, and reschedule the tasks, in order to refine and amend the activities of the second lesson.

6.4.3 Cycle three: Intervention, Lesson 3

PLANNING

How does the reflection on lesson 2 influence the planning of the subsequent lesson? First, I concluded that the interview activity should again be included in this lesson to make provision for communicative tasks, as well as the introduction of information gap techniques. I also realised that in order to perform interviews, learners should have a better understanding of greeting forms in Afrikaans, and these therefore needed to be included in this lesson. In order to refresh the learners' memories, the interview procedures would have to be revised, and the same interview cards that were prepared for the previous lesson would be distributed.

Story telling would again be used as an ice-breaker, but now learners should rather write down their answers. The story of *Paul en Fred kampeer* was taken from *Nuwe Afrikaans sonder Grense, Graad 9* (Lätti, Gouws, Jooste, Kroes & van der Merwe,

2001: 160) and adapted, since the original story would probably have been too advanced for the learners' understanding (Appendix H, Task 3a).

Since learners had to be provided with more interaction tasks as well as information gap activities, I decided against using only the interview activity, but to design an additional picture game. A number of picture cards (Figure 6.6, Task 3b) were designed and photocopied. A few examples are illustrated below:

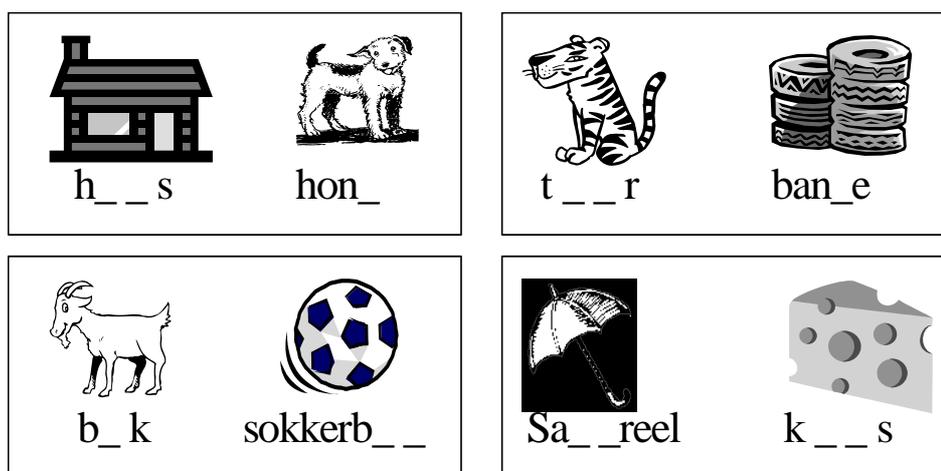


Figure 6.6 Picture cards: Task 3b

The purpose of this game was to give the learners the opportunity to explain to their partners what is depicted on their cards, without actually using the word on the card. The partner may ask questions, or request more explanations. When a correct answer is given, it is the turn of the other partner to describe the pictures on his/her card.

Awareness of learners' affective filter remained a crucial element in classroom practice, and needed constant consideration throughout all the lessons.

IMPLEMENTATION

Due to Ascension Day, only half of the learners and staff attended school, and that left me with 24 learners. From the start of the lessons, I tried to establish a communicative classroom by encouraging learners to become active participants, and strived to create a friendly and welcoming environment, conducive for learning Afrikaans. Therefore I made a point of greeting each learner as they entered the class and making

conversation about the weather. It was interesting to note that more learners started to greet me in Afrikaans, and a few even attempted some remarks about the cold weather.

Once again, the lesson started with a story to permit a silent period at the beginning. Although there were no interruptions while I was telling the story, one learner requested me to repeat it. I obliged, and then they had to answer the questions in writing. Afterwards, the answers were discussed, explanations of some words were given, and attention was paid to pronunciation, especially the ‘tjie’ sound in Afrikaans (e.g. *vuurtjie* and *vuurhoutjie*). In addition, I thought that the situation called for explaining the use of the double negative in Afrikaans. Afterwards the learners had to orally complete a few exercises written on flipchart paper.

While the interview cards were being distributed, I reminded the learners about the interview task that had been discussed in the previous lesson. Since the observer (teacher) was also absent, it was not possible to demonstrate the interview again, but the whole procedure was reviewed briefly. Different greeting forms, as well as the distinction between informal versus polite distance in Afrikaans, were explained. Since it was an interview, I requested learners to work in pairs, facing one another. Straight away, one learner (an ‘interviewer’) stood up and greeted the ‘applicant’ in Afrikaans, accompanied with a handshake. This gesture amused the other learners, and immediately others followed this example. Learners relied heavily on the interview cards to conduct the role play and followed the prompts to the letter. An interesting situation arose when an ‘applicant’ said he was interested in a ‘teacher’ position, which caught the ‘interviewer’ off guard and resulted in the latter protesting (*Ish, Nee man!*) about the wrong direction the interview was taking. I was called to their desk to resolve the matter. The ‘applicant’ complained that he wanted to become a teacher, and therefore did not wish to apply for the jobs advertised. Clearly not accustomed to role play activities, it took some time for me to explain (eventually code switching into English was necessary) before the learner understood the scenario. I also noticed that two learners used dictionaries to find appropriate words during the interview activity. However, one female learner was quite adamant that her partner should rather talk, than try to find the correct word in the dictionary.

After the interview activity I felt the scene was set for another type of information gap task, and to maintain some sort of momentum, I decided against switching partners at this stage. I explained the rules to the learners and emphasised that they must not show their cards to their partners. Learners immediately engaged in the picture game. After the explanation of the picture game, learners had to fill in the missing letters to complete the word on their cards, and then use two words on their cards to construct two sentences.

The picture game also provided some interesting moments. A disagreement between two learners about the correct pronunciation of the Afrikaans word for cheese drew me to observe them closely. It was found that one thought the Afrikaans for cheese was 'naas'. At one stage another learner came from the back of the class to ask me whether his picture was that of a 'wiel' or a 'tyre'.

After the picture game I congratulated the learners on their active participation. One learner's remark that this activity was not too difficult gave me the opportunity to relate their efforts to the idiom *Bokant my vuurmaakplek*, and once again I used the last few minutes to explain the idiom.

OBSERVATION

I indicated in my diary (Appendix D) that although the story about Paul and Fred was fairly simple, some of the questions were answered incorrectly, highlighting again the learners' poor proficiency level of Afrikaans. In my report (Appendix E) I indicated that the learners' vocabulary, spelling and reading skills were below par.

I also recorded in my diary that learners enjoyed the picture game, and generated much noise in the classroom at times, especially when someone provided a correct answer. Although the words on the cards were very elementary, some learners were unsure about the correct spelling and quite often asked for help. In addition, it was obvious that sentence construction was problematic and only a few managed to write a fairly simple sentence.

According to my observation in class, and as recorded in my diary, the atmosphere in class was to a certain extent more relaxed, and it was also noticeable that learners

were more willing to speak Afrikaans than during the previous lesson (perhaps as a result of fewer learners in the class, those learners who did bother to come being more motivated, fewer distractions, and the implementation of affective strategies). I was also able to move around in class with more ease to pay attention to individuals.

REFLECTION

There was a gradual progression in the materials employed in lesson 3, and they were more in line with the design considerations as stipulated in Chapter 5, section 5.5.1. The interview cards reduced learners' anxiety, since they gave them some kind of direction during the interview, but still allowed a meaningful interactive task based on the information gap principle. The introduction of greeting forms in Afrikaans and the provision of opportunities to use them in the interview task assisted learners in practising the target language. These activities, as well as the brief discussion of the idiomatic expression (*Bokant my vuurmaakplek*) relate to language usage, or the 'L' criterion.

In line with the discussion on corrective feedback (Chapter 4, section 4.7.2) I concentrated only on relevant errors (pronunciation, spelling and the use of the double negative), in order to be sensitive to the learners' needs and to allow them to practise Afrikaans more freely. However, in retrospect, as stated in the reflection stage in lesson 2 (section 6.4.2), I should perhaps have considered how and whether correction would contribute to learning.

The limited choice of occupations in the advertisement did not cater for the learners' different experiences and interests, but in view of their poor functional command of Afrikaans it would have been impossible for them to engage meaningfully in dialogue without any guidelines. I decided that the following lesson should focus more on the use of authentic materials, with even more emphasis on the information gap technique.

The fact that only 24 learners were in the class gave me the opportunity to introduce pair work with more ease in the learning setting, and the learners participated with enthusiasm, although not always in Afrikaans, and especially not when they thought I

was out of earshot. Nonetheless, the lesson progressed satisfactorily, as illustrated in Table 6.3:

Table 6.3 Lesson 3: Assessment

	Criterion	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	No
MATERIALS				
Choice of materials	Beliefs: language learning	x		
Tasks	Personal experience		x	
Exposure to reading, writing, speaking & listening	Integrate all four language skills	x		
Realism	Authenticity	x		
Vocabulary development	Language use	x		
Grammar	Language use	x		
Communicative	Information gap	x		
Language functions	L	x		
AFFECTIVE STRATEGIES				
Achieve impact	Variety & novelty	x		
Reduce anxiety	P	x		
Boost self-confidence	P	x		
Encourage risk-taking	P	x		
Enhance motivation	P	x		
Attitude change	P	x		
CONSTRAINTS				
Pair and group work	Interactive	x		
Understanding of instructions			x	
Instruction time		x		
Physical arrangement		x		
REFLECTION ON LESSON				
Reflect stipulated criteria		x		
Overall rating of lesson		x		

The picture game was more successful than the interview as a communicative task, and also addressed the 'L' and 'P' criteria. Both of the tasks offered the learners opportunities for valuable development of the basic language functions (e.g. describing, explaining, checking, requesting, interrupting, greeting, seeking information, stating information). As indicated in Table 6.3, the rating of the affective strategies was satisfactory. I felt satisfied with the progression because the learners were less anxious, more willing to speak Afrikaans, and more co-operative.

The interview was a valuable start to coach learners to become active participants and it served, to a considerable degree, to introduce the information gap principle. The picture game generated much more talk than the interview, and learners participated eagerly, and most learners tackled the task successfully. It must be noted that, although the picture card game was not related to the interview topic, or vice versa,

the rationale for employing the former was tied up with affective variables. Conversely, the lack of internal consistency may be seen as a limitation and will be explored further in Chapter 8.

6.4.4 Cycle four: Intervention: Lesson 4

PLANNING

Reflection on the third action research cycle suggested that learners should be given more frequent exposure to authentic input which is rich and varied. To address this need, I considered the use of newspapers in the classroom, and envisaged the employment of various methods and techniques. I requested the TSA researchers to make special arrangements for the delivery of newspapers, in order to use them during this lesson (as discussed in section 6.2).

Researchers and teachers have mentioned the advantages of using newspapers and magazines as valuable resources in the classroom, since they provide a variety of relevant material with the very latest news, reinforce what learners hear from other media (e.g. TV), and may broaden learners' horizons in the process. In addition, the use of these materials may serve to "bridge the gap between classes and the real world", and moreover the "interest level can push learners beyond their reading level" (Land: 1994: v). All of the above reasons, as well as the benefits discussed in Chapter 5, section 5.3, consequently justify the decision to use newspapers in class.

I decided to use a story depicting an article in a newspaper as a comprehension task, and simultaneously to expose learners to authentic input. I decided to adapt the story of *Fikele staan vir geen man terug nie* (Appendix H, task 4a), and prepared six questions to test the learners' comprehension. The aim was to find a new angle on a topic that would accommodate the learners' experiences and interests, and to apply this in such a way as to generate language use, but also to motivate learners to speak Afrikaans in class.

Land (1994: iv) recommends that the introduction of working with newspapers in the classroom should be undertaken gradually and in a non-threatening way to "systematically unlock" the information that the newspapers contain. In order to

familiarise myself with working with newspapers in the classroom, I explored different guides on newspapers in education (*Beeld, Koerant in die onderwys*, 1994; Sowetan Learner, 1994; *Die Burger. Koerant in die klaskamer*, 1995) which provided me with valuable examples. I realised that newspapers and magazines could provide learners with a wealth of interesting opportunities to explore vowels, consonants and linguistic functions, a further need I had observed during the previous lessons. I designed the newspaper activity to address these aspects (Figure 6.7, Task 4b). The task was written on flipchart paper.

ONDER DIE VERGROOTGLAS

Soek in die koerant die volgende:

- ❖ 'n hoofskrif
- ❖ voorbeelde van verskillende leestekens
- ❖ kruideniersware wat begin met konsonante
- ❖ 'n bedrag
- ❖ name van dorpe wat eindig op vokale
- ❖ 'n tienletter woord
- ❖ name van mense wat die vokale a, e, of u bevat
- ❖ 'n adres
- ❖ 'n getal hoër as vyftig
- ❖ woorde met dubbel konsonante
- ❖ voorbeelde van figuurlike taalgebruik



Figure 6.7 Newspaper activity: Task 4b

In order to achieve impact with the written instruction of the newspaper activity, I used the heading *Onder die vergrootglas* and a picture of a magnifying glass. Obviously the concept '*ver groot glas*' would have to be explained and this would serve as vocabulary development. I decided that the different questions would be shown to learners successively, so as not to overwhelm them with too much information. The learners then needed to act upon my instructions. I envisaged that the method of implementing this task would vary depending on the atmosphere in class (learners' anxiety), as well as the learners' progression. Thus, depending on my observations, suitable adjustments to the instructions or tasks would be made. For instance, to start the task, the learners would need to search for a major heading in the newspaper and underline it. Then, examples of different punctuation marks would have to be circled, after which learners would have to search for words representing groceries which start with consonants, and write them down, followed by the other remaining instructions given in Task 4b (Figure 6.7).

IMPLEMENTATION

Eighty-two learners attended class. In contrast to the previous lesson, the learners were restless and noisy. Assembly took longer than usual and learners arrived twenty minutes after the scheduled time. To make matters worse, there was barely any furniture in the classroom, and learners had to fetch extra tables and chairs. I also established that the learners would write a test after the lesson, which explained why so many were clearly not interested in the lesson, and preferred to study instead. I issued each learner with a folder in which to keep all the Afrikaans learning material (Chapter 4, section 4.4.1.4). The learners were surprised with this arrangement, but also queried the absence of clean writing paper.

The story about *Fikile* was read to the learners, and this time they were instructed to make notes while listening. Afterwards, they had to tell a friend what the story was about, but they struggled with this task. The observer (teacher) came to their rescue by requesting me to read the story once more, because she felt they had not listened properly. I obliged, and while reading it again, I noticed that more learners were taking down notes than during the first time. This time around, the re-telling improved a little bit, but it was clear that their functional command of Afrikaans was really inadequate for this task. When it came to completing the six questions in writing, it was interesting to note that some learners wanted to answer the questions orally. To the learners' enjoyment, the discussion of the correct answers resulted once again in the use of the now familiar praise phrase.

Unfortunately there was a hitch with the delivery of the newspapers that morning, and I had to revise my planning. I must admit that the disorganised situation at the school that day, as well as my dissatisfaction with the non-delivery of the newspapers, influenced my decision to revert to traditional grammar teaching. I decided to start with some revision of the alphabet with attention to pronunciation which I had identified as a weakness during the previous lessons. Since I had envisaged vowel and consonant exercises with the newspaper activity, I opted to employ vowel and consonant exercises from a slightly different angle. Thus, in the following exercise learners had to provide the missing vowels and consonants, on a sketch I drew on the blackboard (Figure 6.8). Luckily the blackboard was available (it was presumably cleared because accounting tests had been written the previous day).

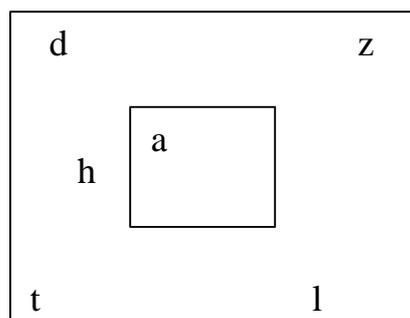


Figure 6.8 Sketch: missing vowels and consonants

Following this activity, the letters p, s, a, v were written on the blackboard. Learners had to supply five words starting with each of the given letters. Once again some learners got carried away and opted to supply the words orally, instead of writing them down. During the discussion of their examples learners participated enthusiastically. This was followed by a similar activity, but now double (long) vowels aa, oe, ie, uu were used. It was remarkable that the learners used largely three to four letter words in both activities, and that only two compound words were given (*personeelkamer* and *velkaros*). Incidentally, most of the learners had no idea what *velkaros* meant. These activities also provided an opportunity to pay attention to pronunciation matters, dictation, and vocabulary development.

OBSERVATION

My sentiments regarding the chaotic situation at the start of the lesson, and my dismay about the whole learning setting are reflected in my diary (Appendix D) with the remark '*Ek wonder of dit nie 'n hopelose saak is nie!*' However, although the learners were apprehensive at the start of the lesson, I observed during the remaining instruction time, as indicated in my diary and the report (Appendix E), that the atmosphere in the class improved gradually, and at the end of the lesson even those who had been reluctant to participate engaged actively in providing answers. Hence, my initial pessimism gave way to a more positive outlook as the following inscription in the diary reflects: '*Ek skep weer moed!*'

As recorded in my diary, I observed during the storytelling that the learners, especially the female learners, were fascinated with the fact that Fikile, a girl, was playing soccer. However, I also indicated that learners struggled with comprehension

and the re-telling of the story. The observer (the learners' regular Afrikaans teacher) again mentioned that she disliked the fact that learners are given the opportunity to "talk so much in the class", because she preferred a quiet set-up where she is in control all the time.

I indicated in my diary that the mishap with the delivery of the newspapers, and the disorder at the school affected my initial planning, and therefore I had to amend my plans and decided to revert to traditional grammar teaching. On the other hand, I also indicated in the diary that the grammar exercises undertaken proved to be valuable for vocabulary and dictation development, as well as to enhance the atmosphere in the classroom, and to trigger the learners' motivation to participate more spontaneously in Afrikaans.

REFLECTION

Overall assessment of this lesson, as indicated in Table 6.4, is satisfactory, despite the limited time, and the mishap with the newspapers which directly influenced my decision to revert to traditional grammar teaching. It is perhaps salutary to note that CLT is not averse to grammar teaching. Weideman (2002a: 44) suggests that some role plays tasks are designed exactly for this purpose (for a wide range of examples, see also Van Jaarsveld & Weideman, 1985). Thus, I may have focused more on employing similar kinds of exercises, in order to become a "beneficiary" of current approaches (Weideman, 2002a: 27). Even so, the challenge would be to stay clear of too many concessions to traditional ways of teaching during the intervention.

The comprehension activity was designed to integrate listening, writing and speaking skills and provided a challenge for the learners' to improve their proficiency. However, the task excluded reading skills (since the report was merely read to the learners) and therefore it is necessary to revise this task to include attention to reading skills. The comprehension task thus failed to reflect the integration of all four language skills as a stipulated criterion. Although a relevant and authentic topic was chosen to elicit the learners' interest, use in the classroom appeared to be less successful, probably because of the learners' poor proficiency in Afrikaans, and the reigning disorder at the school that morning, both of which may have influenced the learners negatively.

Table 6.4 Lesson 4: Assessment

	Criterion	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	No
MATERIALS				
Choice of materials	Beliefs: language learning		x	
Tasks	Personal experience	x		
Exposure to reading, writing, speaking a& listening	Integrate all four language skills		x	
Realism	Authenticity	x		
Vocabulary development	Language use	x		
Grammar	Language use	x		
Communicative	Information gap			x
Language functions	L		x	
AFFECTIVE STRATEGIES				
Achieve impact	Variety and novelty	x		
Reduce anxiety	P	x		
Boost self-confidence	P	x		
Encourage risk-taking	P	x		
Enhance motivation	P	x		
Attitude change	P	x		
CONSTRAINTS				
Pair and group work	Interactive		x	
Understanding of instructions			x	
Instruction time		x		
Physical arrangement		x		
REFLECTION ON LESSON				
Reflect stipulated criteria		x		
Overall rating of lesson		x		

Unfortunately, the intention to work with newspapers in the classroom did not materialise, and therefore judgement about the effectiveness of the planned task (Figure 6.7, Task 4b) and its evaluation against the stipulated criteria are not entirely feasible. Nevertheless, in retrospect, my initial plan to include tasks which explore vowels and consonants, did materialise (despite the lack of newspapers), and provided some potentially valuable vocabulary and dictation development. Yet, the learners' proficiency in Afrikaans remained below par at this stage.

Consideration was also given to affective strategies (reflecting the 'P' criterion) during the lesson. Since the grammar exercises undertaken were not too difficult, the learners enjoyed the activities, anxiety was reduced and the learners' desire to participate more spontaneously in Afrikaans was triggered. However, one must see the improvement in context, because whether the learners' attitudes and motivation improved to the extent where they could engage effectively in pair work, remained uncertain. Thus, future intervention lessons should call for revising exercises to

include reading and speaking skills and, in particular, information gap tasks. Although there was slight progress in the learners' understanding of instructions in Afrikaans, occasional brief switching into English was still necessary. Time available for the teaching and the physical arrangements in the classroom remained a problem.

6.4.5 Cycle five: Intervention, Lesson 5

PLANNING

After the fiasco of the non-delivery of the newspapers I was reluctant to plan another lesson on working with newspapers in the classroom, since the TSA researchers (responsible for the arrangements) had by now informed me that the delivery of newspapers was not a certainty. However, they informed me that there would be a special edition of *Beeld* newspaper with a supplementary issue on revision of all the Grade 12 subjects, and they assured me that they would try their best to obtain copies of it.

The planning of this lesson thus follows directly from the evaluation of the previous lesson where it was concluded that attention should be given to speaking and reading skills. Furthermore, I was interested in the learners' proficiency in reading and their comprehension of the written text. I therefore also decided to give them the opportunity to engage in dialogue work, in line with Roberts' suggestion that dialogue can be used as a "pedagogic device aimed at improving communicative competence and transactional effectiveness" (Roberts, 1086: 84).

Firstly, it was necessary to find a relevant authentic reading task, but also to consider a different angle in order to accommodate a wider range of language skills. Because learners often view reading as tedious, I decided that it would be valuable to get the learners to interact with the reading text (a story) by including various techniques in this task. To tackle the planning of such a task, I looked for an interesting story which would elicit the learners' interest. The story should not have an over-familiar content, and should be in line with the learners' proficiency in Afrikaans. The story would be used as a reading and comprehension exercise, as well as to help the learners to engage in self-assessment of their vocabulary. In addition, to obtain maximum benefit

from the written text, the task (story) would be used as an opportunity for communicative purposes.

The story about Luzuko which came from *Nuwe Afrikaans sonder grense* (Lätti *et al.*, 2001: 41-42) was adapted (Figure 6.9, Task 5a) to bring it more into line with the learners' proficiency in Afrikaans.

LUZUKO DIE SWAELTJIE															
<p>Met sy klein lyfie lyk Luzuko Maseko soos 'n swaeltjie tussen die groot en swaar lywe van sy mededingers. Luzuko is die eerste swart Suid-Afrikaner wat aan 'n Suid-Afrikaanse duikkampioenskap deelneem. Die skamerige seun het skaars 15 maande gelede begin duik en is reeds een van die top nege junior seuns in Suid-Afrika. Die senior groep duikers is ouer as 16. Wanneer Luzuko op die drie meter hoë duikplank klim, lyk hy baie klein daar bo. Dan duik hy met 'n sierlike boog soos 'n swaeltjie deur die lug. Sy tone is gepunt, sy hande reguit voor hom en sy lyf is gestrek. Byna sonder 'n druppeltjie water wat plons, tref hy die water se oppervlak. Luzuko is baie pligsgetrou en oefen elke middag na skool - van halfdrie tot halfses. Volgens mev. Keet, sy afrigter van die oos-Londense Duikklub, het hy werklik groot talent om so vinnig te vorder. (Adapted from Lätti <i>et al.</i>, 2001:41-42)</p>															
✓															
x															
1.															
2.															

Figure 6.9 Task 5a

I envisaged that the learners should first read the story silently and in order to include communicative activities, the learners would be instructed to tell a partner what the story is about. Then the partner would ask the 'story-teller' three questions about the story, after which they would switch roles.

Furthermore, at the bottom of the page a grid was provided, with an 'I know' (✓) and an 'I don't know' (✗) row for the self-assessment activity (Figure 6.9, Task 5a). During the self-assessment activity each learner would have to place a square of paper (which would be issued) anywhere over the written text, and draw the outline of the square. The learners would then have to look at the words in that specific square, assess whether they 'know' or 'don't know' the words, and indicate this on the grid at the bottom of the page. The rationale for this was to provide the learners with the opportunity to self-assess their understanding of vocabulary in the story.

In addition, in accordance with the problem areas identified during the diagnostic assessment (Chapter 5, Figure 5.2), I decided that it was time to provide the learners with more opportunities to construct their own sentences. Therefore, provision was made at the bottom of the page for the learners to write sentences which they had to construct using words from their 'I know' row.

Finally, the learners should read the story once more, and then answer the comprehension questions which were photocopied at the back of the story (see Figure 6.13, which gives the seven questions and an example of answers obtained). The completed tasks would be collected for evaluation of the learners' progress.

IMPLEMENTATION

Since learners were writing tests during this week, they were noisy, preoccupied and really not motivated for the lesson, and only 74 learners attended class. When the reading material was distributed, I noticed quite a number of learners who were far more interested in learning for the tests than in engaging with the material. After a reprimand, the learners were again asked to read the story carefully and told not to turn the page. It became clear that the learners struggled with reading the story, and they became anxious and negative. Then, as soon as the learners engaged in the story-telling activity, their stress levels rose even more, and they became very agitated. It was clear that the learners found it difficult to formulate sentences when telling the story and asking questions about it.

I decided to change tactics and distributed the squares for the self-assessment activity. The placement of the square and the drawing of the outline were explained. After a

demonstration on the blackboard, they were curious and tackled the task with more enthusiasm. Learners were then requested to look closely at the words in the square and assess whether they ‘knew’ the word or ‘didn’t know’ the word, and then indicate this on the grid at the bottom of the page. This strategy paid off, since they were now more relaxed, willing to participate, and keen to ask for help. I noticed that learners did not hesitate to write words in the ‘don’t know’ row, and a number of learners called me to their desks to have a look at their lists.

After that, learners had to construct two sentences by using any of the words in their ‘know’ row. One female learner was pleased with her effort and called me to her desk, because she managed to use three of the words in one sentence. This encouraged many other learners to show their efforts to me as well.

Some examples of the learners’ self-assessment and sentences are given below.

X	swaeltjie	oppervlak	lyf	lyk	halfelrie.	duikplank				
✓	skool	middag	baie	sy	is	van	deur	se	na	

1 my skool is baie skoen.

2 ~~Die~~ my pa het die van.

plank klim, lyk hy baie
 os ‘n swaeltjie deur die
 sy lyf is gestrek. Byna
 se oppervlak.
 ldag na skool – van hal

Figure 6.10 Comprehension: Example A

X	tussen	swaeltjie	duik	Suid-Afrikers	reeds	en	swemmers	is	deelnem			
✓	die	groot	swart	Suid-Afrikers	reeds	en	is	groep	senior	begin		

1 my pa het in groot huis

2 Ek het in swart kar.

ltjie tussen die groot e
 ste swart Suid-Afrikers
 neem.
 ggin duik en is reeds ee
 nior groep duikers is

Figure 6.11 Comprehension: Example B

X	Luzuko	duikkampioenskap	Gelede	Skaars	Miedingers							
✓	Luzuko	Maseko	is	soos	Suid-Afrika	seuns	in	Maande	die	in	Aprikaanse	

1. Ek lyk Suid-Afrika

2. Die seuns in my klas is baie

Luzuko Maseko soos 'n
ledingers. Luzuko is di
anse duikkampioenska
t skaars 15 maande gele
seuns in Suid-Afrika. I

Figure 6.12 Comprehension: Example C

In all of the above examples the simple sentence construction and spelling mistakes are noticeable. Evident also is the learners' limited vocabulary. In Figure 6.10 (Example A), the learner (proficiency level Grade 3, matriculated with symbol F) used incorrect double vowels which resulted in using *sko^oen* (shoe) to explain that the school was clean (*sko^{oo}n*). In Figure 6.11 (Example B) the simple sentence construction matched the learners' proficiency level (Grade 3; matriculated with symbol GG). In the last example (Figure 6.12) the learner (proficiency level Grade 4; matriculated with symbol F) clearly tried to translate 'like' directly and ended up with *lyk*, making the sentence somewhat confusing.

With the atmosphere restored to reflect a more positive feeling, it was time for the learners to take up the challenge of answering the comprehension questions on the back of the page. However, they first had to read the story again, and as soon as they attempted to answer the comprehension questions a problem arose. I realised that they did not understand the instructions of the comprehension exercise (e.g. *omkring*, *nie korrek nie*, and *teenoorgesteld*), and these had to be explained. I encouraged the learners to do their best, and afterwards I collected their answers. It was clear that the learners were not used to this type of questioning and had no real understanding of the story. A typical example of answers received is given in Figure 6.13 (Example A). It is obvious that the learner (proficiency Grade 4; improved to Grade 6; matriculated with symbol F) did not comprehend the text, and answered only questions 5 and 6 correctly.

Beantwoord nou die volgende vrae:

- Wat is die korrekte afkorting vir Suid-Afrika? Suid-Afrika
- Hoe lank duik Luzuko al? **OMKRING** die regte antwoord.
 - 'n Jaar en drie maande
 - Van sy sesde jaar af.
 - Minder as 'n jaar.
- Watter **EEN** woord in die leesstuk vertel vir jou dat Luzuko teruggetrokke en stillerig is?

Twee impulsiewe
- Drie van die volgende woorde beskryf Luzuko korrek. **OMKRING** die woord wat **NIE KORREK IS NIE**.
 - pligsgetrou ✓
 - klein
 - swaar
- Hoe hoog is die duikplank waarvan Luzuko duik? Drie meter
- Soek die woord in die leesstuk wat die **teenoorgestelde** is van **junior**.

Senior
- Wat is 'n swaeltjie?

'n swaeltjie is 'n soort vogel

Figure 6.13 Comprehension: Example A

OBSERVATION

Once again I recorded in my diary (Appendix D) and report (Appendix E) that because the Twee learners were busy writing tests, they were restless, noisy, preoccupied, and preferred to busy themselves with studying for the tests. In our discussion after class, the observer remarked that she quite often needed to reprimand the learners (especially those sitting in the corners of the class) to refrain from studying for other tests during the Afrikaans lessons. I realised that as long as the learners were allowed to keep their bags next to them on the floor, they would have an opportunity to study. Furthermore, the bags restricted my movements in between the desks and chairs in the crowded classroom. I decided it was time to take action and seek a solution to the problem.

My diary also gives an account of my observation of the learners' prevailing attitude during the reading and communicative tasks. As reflected in the report (Appendix E) it became clear that the learners struggled with comprehension during the reading activity, and they became anxious and negative. The observer told me that this was typical of how she experienced the learners' attitude during reading activities,

confirming the results of the pre-test (Chapter 5, Figure 5.2), as well as my impression of their reading abilities as observed during the previous lessons. I observed that the communicative task caused even more anxiety, since the learners found it difficult to formulate sentences in both telling the story, and asking questions.

As reflected in my diary and the report, the learners perceived the self-assessment as interesting and thus engaged enthusiastically in this activity. Although the learners undertook the construction of sentences with eagerness, their efforts illustrated the simplicity of their sentences, their limited vocabulary and lack of spelling ability. Furthermore, I noticed that the completion of the comprehension questions caused the learners to become even more anxious, probably because of their poor proficiency in Afrikaans.

My diary reveals my surprise that eventually the TSA researchers managed to get hold of *Beeld* newspapers. This enabled me to distribute a copy of the special edition to every learner at the end of the class. The newspapers were received with great enthusiasm. In addition, the keen interest some male learners showed in an alcohol advertisement page provided me with an opportunity to engage in conversation with them. They enjoyed this attention and tried to respond in Afrikaans.

REFLECTION

Reflection on the progression and coherence of the activities attempted during lesson 5 indicated that the learners were provided with opportunities to engage in dialogue work, to experience interpretation, expression and negotiation, and to become interactive partners in the learning situation. The story about *Luzuko*, though slightly beyond the learners' understanding, nonetheless offered valuable opportunities for reading and vocabulary development. In addition, the different techniques (story-telling, self-assessment, sentence construction and comprehension test) employed during the lesson gave the learners the opportunity to develop their competence in language use. In general I found the learners understood my instructions in Afrikaans better and less occasional switching to English was necessary.

contributing to my evaluation of the lesson as below par were the learners' poor proficiency in reading and speaking skills in Afrikaans, as well as the fact that they had no experience of pair and group work. A further point worthy of note is that the crowded classroom restricted the back to back technique employed during the communicative tasks. Even allowing learners to sit side by side, as an option, was not always possible because of the physical limitations of the classroom. Another unsatisfactory aspect was that learners were allowed to choose their own partners, chiefly because of the peculiar circumstances of the intervention (limited time, large class; absenteeism, my inadequate knowledge of the learners). Yet, in certain cases when I observed that pairing patterns affected the outcomes of the task, I managed to effect a change in partners.

As reflected in Table 6.5, the different tasks employed during the lesson, although designed to cover a number of the stipulated criteria for materials design (authenticity, integration of language skills, interactive nature, information gap, provision to focus on language functions), only inadequately managed to achieve this goal. The communicative activity embedded in the task generated much anxiety, and therefore did not reflect the 'P' criterion. In itself, this is not a problem. One accepts that certain activities are more stressful than others, as illustrated in the stress index for language methods proposed by Weideman (2002a: 102-103, and discussed in Chapter 4, section 4.3.1.3). In this particular context however, it is clear that one needs to remain alert to affective factors if one wishes to ensure that learning takes place. In any event, the use of the self-assessment technique redressed the situation and endorsed functional language, as well as emotional needs ('L' and 'P' criteria). Although the learners in all probability perceived the reading task as reasonably interesting, it proved to be slightly beyond their comprehension ability, and generated stress and anxiety. It also became apparent that the storyline and topic (diving, as a sport) was a little remote from the experience of some learners. Nevertheless, the story may or should have helped to bridge the gap between the class and the real world and to broaden the learners' horizons.

Table 6.5 Lesson 5: Assessment

	Criterion	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	No
MATERIALS				
Choice of materials	Beliefs: language learning	x		
Tasks	Personal experience		x	
Exposure to reading, writing, speaking & listening	Integrate all four language skills	x		
Realism	Authenticity	x		
Vocabulary development	Language use	x		
Grammar	Language use		x	
Communicative	Information gap	x		
Language functions	L	x		
AFFECTIVE STRATEGIES				
Achieve impact	Variety and novelty	x		
Reduce anxiety	P		x	
Boost self-confidence	P		x	
Encourage risk-taking	P		x	
Enhance motivation	P		x	
Attitude change	P		x	
CONSTRAINTS				
Pair and group work	Interactive		x	
Understanding of instructions		x		
Instruction time		x		
Physical arrangement			x	
REFLECTION ON LESSON				
Reflect stipulated criteria		x		
Overall rating of lesson			x	

The crux of the matter remains that the learners had no experience of communicative tasks, and therefore struggled with these activities. The learners' negative reaction to the reading and communicative activity highlighted once more that if learners are not familiar with communicative exercises, and their proficiency levels in Afrikaans are low, they find it extremely difficult to engage spontaneously in these type of activities. It once again became clear that learners needed to be coached on how to ask a classmate to repeat something, how to let others know they have not been understood, and how to request explanations. In fact, in two-way communication it is vital to know how to communicate and interact with one another, but also how to respond and reply appropriately when called upon or expected to do so (Weideman, 1985: 1). In hindsight, I should perhaps have provided the learners with opportunities and means to meet these rudimentary CLT classroom needs from the very beginning of instruction.

Reflection on lesson 5 highlights, too, the necessity to revise certain actions. In the first instance, since the learners had experienced problems to comprehend a number of concepts (e.g. *duikplank*; *duikkampioenskap*; *swaeltjie*; *oppervlak*; *afrigter*) these concepts needed to be clarified during the following lesson, and the correct comprehension answers discussed. Secondly, learners should be assisted to become interactive participants in the language classroom, and more communicative tasks should be implemented.

Regarding the limited space in the classroom, some alternative actions may have to be considered. A solution would be to ask the observer (the regular Afrikaans teacher) to assist me by ensuring that the learners' bags were put in the front of the class and that only Afrikaans teaching materials would be allowed at the desks. This would allow me to move between the desks, and reduce the chances of learners studying for other tests during the lesson. Finally, continuous consideration should be given to affective strategies, since affective variables would remain a vital factor in the effort to enhance the outcomes of the intervention programme.

6.4.6 Cycle six: Intervention, Lesson 6

PLANNING

Reflection on lesson 5 revealed that it was necessary to clarify the meaning of some of the unfamiliar words in the story during the previous lesson, and to supply and discuss the right answers in the comprehension task. These aspects would therefore be addressed at the start of the lesson. Secondly, since the learners encountered problems with basic functions such as asking for help, and requesting explanations in Afrikaans, I decided that these functions needed to be addressed as well.

In view of the learners' inadequate vocabulary, I decided to focus on lexis during this lesson. The rationale behind this decision was twofold: to provide the learners with more exposure to vocabulary learning which might be helpful in future communicative tasks, and to reduce anxiety, stress and tension in the classroom by employing different methods and techniques. One such strategy is mentioned by Ehrman (1996: 146), who recommends the use of prudently selected and limited bits

of authentic material which are inherently interesting. Being able to complete a certain task successfully would enhance the learners' self-confidence, would reduce anxiety, and might also increase motivation and willingness to take learning risks. Once again, I explored the guides on newspapers in education, as well as other media (*Newspapers: a teaching tool*, Janse van Rensburg, 1983; *Afrikaans handbook & study guide*, Lutrin, 1999; *Uitnemende Afrikaans*, Hofmeyr, 2001) for guidelines and examples. I chose different activities (Figure 6.14, Tasks 6a; 6b; 6c; 6d & 6e) to elicit curiosity and interest, and paid attention to the layout to ensure that the materials would be user friendly.

Task 6a

Kort die woorde 'n **d** of 'n **t** ?

lan...	kaar...	mon...
gron...	gel...	goe...
woor	kan...	vyan...
be...	broo...	draa...

Task 6b

Kort die woorde 'n **f** of 'n **v** ?

oli...ant	skry...	...ertel
...luks	gaarolik
...ies	doo...	...ark
...rons	...ol	onbesko...

Task 6c

Kort die woorde 'n **ei**, **y** of **ui** ?

kl.....nskas	komb....s
dr....we	v....l	v....lig
aarb....	konf....t	kr....e
skr....f	maagp....nna

Task 6d

Gebruik **t**, **d**, **f** of **v** om die woorde in die blokraaisel te voltooi :

1			2		3			4
			5					
6		7			8			
		9						

(Adapted from Hofmeyr, 2001: 45)

Leidrade Af:

1. Kom na vier
2. Familie van 'n muis
3. Waterdier met skubbe
4. As jy iemand dood maak, pleeg jy
6. As koffie nie sterk is nie, is dit
7. Die manlik van niggie
8. Iets wat deel is van 'n tafel en van 'n dier

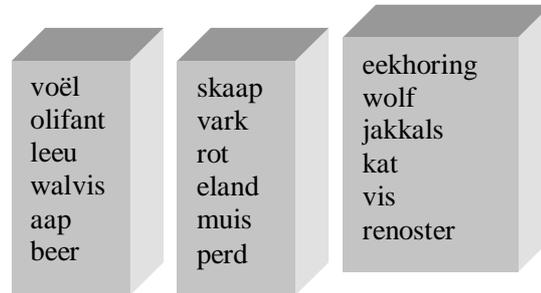
Dwars:

1. Maak sodat ons kan braai
3. Die kers brand met 'n
5. Jy pak jou boeke en klere daarin
6. Rym met klein
8. Dier waarop jy kan ry
9. As jy iets verkeerd doen, maak jy 'n

Task 6e

v	o	e	l	n	r	b	f	s	o
e	v	x	e	e	z	l	l	l	m
e	r	q	e	w	o	a	i	y	u
k	e	b	u	w	k	f	x	k	i
h	n	k	s	k	a	a	p	r	s
o	o	l	a	n	t	l	h	a	n
r	s	j	t	o	b	g	v	v	t
i	t	r	r	e	f	a	r	i	g
n	e	s	i	v	d	r	e	p	s
g	r	e	l	a	n	d	b	n	m

Soek en omkring hierdie diere in die woordblok langsaaan:



(Adapted from Hofmeyr, 2001: 43)

Figure 6.14: Tasks 6a; 6b; 6c; 6d; 6e

IMPLEMENTATION

Although I had expected otherwise, there were once again very few desks and chairs in the classroom, and it took nearly twenty minutes to resolve the problem. Only 74 learners were in class and I learned that the other missing Grade 12 learners had to write an English test during this lesson. In the meantime, the observer sorted out the bag problem by ensuring that they were put down at the front of the class. I noticed that a male learner brought an alcohol advertisement to class and he and a group of friends were once again pre-occupied with this. I asked him whether he bought any liquor, upon which he answered “*Nee, Mevrou!*” His friend laughingly added “*Ja, ek dink so, Mevrou!*” When I asked him about his age he replied “*Sewentien*”. The group enjoyed my remark that at his age he fortunately would not be able to buy alcohol. Some of the other learners in the vicinity followed the conversation with immense interest.

Learners were interested to review their comprehension questions, and much to their delight, I showed them pictures of a diving board, of somebody diving and of a swallow, in order to clarify these concepts.

The learners received the new handouts with enthusiasm and a positive attitude. After the completion of Task 6a (*d* or *t*) the correct spelling was revised, and the meaning of some words was explained. I wrote the correct spelling, which the learners provided

orally with great eagerness, on flipchart paper (the blackboard was again not available). Special attention was paid to pronunciation. The same procedure was followed with Task 6b (*f* or *v*). The correct spelling was met with the praise slogan, while the class did not hesitate to show their disapproval when an incorrect answer was given. Admittedly, this resulted in more noise than usual. However, the positive atmosphere in the classroom encouraged one and all to participate. I noticed that the more proficient learners began completing the subsequent exercises in advance. The completion of the following exercise, Task 6c (*ei*, *y*, *ui*) took a bit longer than the previous tasks, and the learners made more spelling mistakes here than previously. In the discussion of the correct spelling, I made sentences using the words in that exercise (e.g. *As ek te veel druiwe en aarbeie geëet het, kry ek maagpyn en dan is dit eina*). Learners liked this sentence and even used body language to indicate the meaning of *eina*! It is no doubt one Afrikaans word with wide currency among speakers of other languages. Learners were also given the opportunity to construct their own sentences. A few were willing to take the risk, and shared their efforts with the class, upon which their fellow learners immediately acknowledged their efforts with approval.

For the completion of the crossword puzzle (Task 6d) another strategy was followed. The learners were given an opportunity to practise some basic functions in Afrikaans. Working in pairs, they were allowed to deliberate on the correct answer in order to complete the puzzle (e.g. *Wat dink jy? Hoe word die woord gespel?*). I wanted to develop the learners' skills to negotiate – to ask and to clarify. Thus, in order to engage effectively in this task, the learners needed to communicate and interact, and had to know how to apply basic language functions such as arguing, persuading, requesting, accepting, refusing, disapproving, suggesting (for a more comprehensive list of language functions, see Weideman, 1985: 81-83). The emphasis in such a case is not on knowledge about the language, but rather on the ability to use the target language in different situations (Weideman, 1988: 93; McDonough, 2001: 293; Weideman, 2002a: 35). Indeed, the various uses or functions of language are central to Mainstream Communicative Language Teaching, and relate to what is perceived in this interpretation to be the real language ('L') needs of learners (Weideman, 2002a: 45; Weideman, 2003: 32). It was gratifying to note that although learners were not used to communicative tasks, this time they engaged immediately and spontaneously

in deliberations, because their attention was on completing the puzzle before others did. This camaraderie was carried through to the discussion of the correct answers.

With only ten minutes of teaching time left, the learners were asked to complete the last activity (Task 6e), which they took to with keenness. The task posed no real problems for the learners, and some called me to their desks to look at their answers. I overheard a male learner correcting his friend with “it is the other way around”. When I supplied him with the Afrikaans translation of his remark, he immediately repeated the remark to his friend. In the discussion of the correct answers, a male learner volunteered to give the answers and even came to the front of the class to indicate where the correct words were hidden in the exercise. In the word identification I paid special attention to the correct spelling of words such as *voël* and *sê*, as well as to the correct pronunciation of certain words (e.g. *jakkals*, *olifant*, *eekhorning*). It must be noted that for feedback I used “recast” as a feedback technique. **Recast** is defined by Lightbown (2000: 446) as an “utterance by a teacher ... which rephrases the utterance of a learner, preserving the original meaning, but correcting the error(s) that occurred in the original utterance”. The case argued against error correction as mentioned in the reflection stage of lesson 2 (section 6.4.2), may also to some extent be applicable here, but recasting nonetheless represents a form of correction that is more likely to result in learning, since it uses the learner’s own words. It has the additional advantage of presenting the correction covertly, which is non-threatening and in line with attention to the affective factors that influence language learning that, on more than one occasion, I found to be so important in the particular context of this intervention. A final benefit of recasting is that it presents an immediate comparison between what has just been uttered and has subsequently been corrected, giving a criterion for the language used.

OBSERVATION

I recorded in my diary (Appendix D) and in the report (Appendix E) that the atmosphere in class was much more conducive to learning than during the previous lesson. The learners participated with enthusiasm, often asked for help, and eagerly shared newly gained knowledge with a friend. I observed that the learners were also more willing to take risks. Evidence of this was when one male learner at the back of the class asked me (verbatim) ‘*Wat ons nou moet doen?*’ Other learners quickly

followed his example to seek my help in Afrikaans. During this lesson much more noise was generated, once again to the obvious dismay of the teacher (observer). However, she told me after class that she found the exercises interesting and asked for copies.

As indicated in my diary, the approach in the completion of the crossword puzzle was different from the other tasks in the lesson, and was intended to be more challenging, because I wanted to test the learners' comprehension as well as their skills to negotiate. The learners did well with this task, and I felt satisfied about the verbal interaction that took place during the completion of this task. It is likely that, since they viewed the activity as a competition, they tried their best to deliberate in Afrikaans, because they were not only compelled to read the question in Afrikaans, but also had to come up with an Afrikaans word. However, it must be stated that some learners could not resist the temptation to use English, or their mother tongue, and probably thought that the noise in the classroom would prevent me from hearing that they were not using Afrikaans.

As indicated in my diary and the report, the strategy to allow only Afrikaans teaching material on the desks, and having the learners' bags in front of the class, paid off. My satisfaction with the improvement is captured in my diary with the remark '*Dit is stukke beter!*' Not only were the learners paying attention to what was going on in class, I was also able to move with a little more ease between them to pay individual attention.

REFLECTION

The materials provided valuable vocabulary and dictation development, and, together with the attention given to these aspects during the previous lessons, probably contributed to the improvement thereof, as reflected in the post-test results. As indicated in Figure 5.3 and Figure 5.4 the learners' performance here rose respectively from 3% to 13%, and from 10% to 20%. It was also noticeable that the learners followed my instructions more readily than in the previous lessons. However, the learners' sentence construction was still substandard. The lack of time remained a problem, especially when much of it was squandered because of insufficient desks and chairs in the classroom.

The activities employed during this lesson reflected a number of the stipulated criteria given in Table 6.6, and contributed to the establishment of an interactive classroom, reduced anxiety, as well as focusing on functional language needs and emotional needs. A further point worthy of note is that with the establishment of an enjoyable atmosphere, free from anxiety, fear and embarrassment, the learners were more willing to take risks. As I have remarked above, my use of recast as a feedback technique may also have contributed to easing the strain that is normally associated with the correction of errors. The fact that some of the learners began to venture into Afrikaans when requesting information from the teacher is another indication of success.

Since the first two tasks (Task 6a & 6b) were fairly easy, and the following activity (Task 6c) was slightly more challenging, the progression set the scene for the more stimulating crossword puzzle (Task 6d). The puzzle activity integrated all four language skills, since the learners had to engage in a decision-making process. Kumaravadivelu (2003: 230) makes the point that during a decision-making process language skills can be “profitably integrated”, because learners are given the opportunity to “use the collected information and proceed with the activity”. Furthermore, the puzzle activity achieved impact through the inclusion of negotiating skills, and gave the learners a chance to practise Afrikaans. Task 6e proved to be relatively easy and contributed to important reading, dictation and vocabulary development.

The materials, however, were perhaps not adequately authentic, nor did the information gap principle function prominently anywhere else than in the crossword. These two criteria would have to become the focus of following lessons. Despite these limitations, the activities employed during this lesson were effective and I was satisfied with the results. I was left with the feeling that I had accomplished what I had set out to do. The lesson was evaluated as satisfactory, as indicated in Table 6.6 below.

Table 6.6 Lesson 6: Assessment

	Criterion	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	No
MATERIALS				
Choice of materials	Beliefs: language learning	x		
Tasks	Personal experience	x		
Exposure to reading, writing, speaking & listening	Integrate all four language skills	x		
Realism	Authenticity		x	
Vocabulary development	Language use	x		
Grammar	Language use	x		
Sentence construction	Language use		x	
Communicative	Information gap		x	
Language functions	L	x		
AFFECTIVE STRATEGIES				
Achieve impact	Variety & novelty	x		
Reduce anxiety	P	x		
Boost self-confidence	P	x		
Encourage risk-taking	P	x		
Enhance motivation	P	x		
Attitude change	P	x		
CONSTRAINTS				
Pair and group work	Interactive	x		
Understanding of instructions		x		
Instruction time		x		
Physical arrangement		x		
REFLECTION ON LESSON				
Reflect stipulated criteria		x		
Overall rating of lesson		x		

SUMMARY

During lessons 4 and 5 the use of newspapers in the classroom did not actually materialise, although the tasks were based on information found in newspapers, and the exercises were designed to be similar to those that would have been used if newspapers had been available. The unavailability of newspapers was unfortunate. However, the intention in these cycles was to focus on reading, and this was reflected in the materials and task design.

We have learned from the post-test results (Figure 5.3 and Figure 5.4) that the learners' reading skills improved to a 40% average score, from a low of 30%. This brings us to the question: Did the learners feel that their reading skills had improved and to what extent? Their answers to this question on the questionnaire, which they had completed at the end of the intervention programme, are illustrated in Figure 6.15.

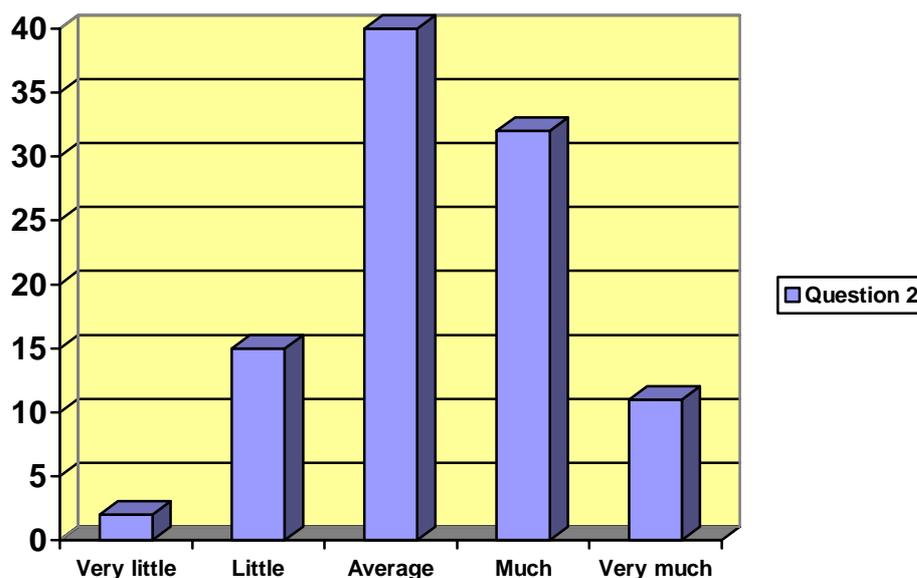


Figure 6.15 Improvement of reading: learners' perceptions

The learners were actually realistic in their feelings about the improvement in their reading abilities. Only 11% (average score) of the learners indicated that their reading improved *very much*, 32% of the learners said that there was *much* improvement, while 40% of the learners perceived the improvement was only *average*. Fifteen per cent of the learners viewed their improvement as *little*, with only 2% of the learners indicating that there was *very little* improvement.

This brings us to the seventh action research cycle undertaken.

6.4.7 Cycle seven: Intervention: Lesson 7

The focus during this cycle was to provide the learners with choices, and to give them the opportunity to get more emotionally involved with the material by engaging in learner-centered discovery activities. Hence, I assumed that if a task could elicit the learners' interest and creativity, this would be extremely useful to get them to tackle the interactive activity with more confidence and motivation.

PLANNING

Since I felt happy about the verbal interaction during the previous lesson, I wanted to build on the progress that was made, and decided that learners should attempt another type of communicative task. The planning of the task was based on the experience I had gained during the previous cycles. In light of the fact that the learners had little experience of communicative activities, I realised that it would be to their benefit if they had a guideline to structure their dialogues, and in addition this might help to reduce anxiety. I decided to use a telephone activity (Figure 6.16, Task 7a) where a learner's mother phones and requests him or her to buy a few items at the supermarket or shop. Provision was made on the handout to write down the conversation, and space was provided to make notes of the items to be bought.

Jou ma bel jou en vra dat jy asseblief 'n paar artikels by die supermark gaan koop.

ÿ Telefoon lui

Jy antwoord:

Ma:

Jy:

Ma:

Jy:

Ma:

Jy:

ě Notaboek :

Figure 6.16 Dialogue: Task 7a

In the follow-up task (Figure 6.17, Task 7b) the learner takes his/her dog along to the shop to buy the goods, but lands in trouble with the manager because he/she did not notice the warning outside the shop about dogs not being allowed inside. The learners may choose the content of the manager's warning, and the outcome of the incident. Provision was made on the handout for writing down the dialogue between the manager and the shopper.

IMPLEMENTATION

Fortunately, I did not have to wait in the principal's office during the assembly, but was escorted to the classroom earlier. This gave me the opportunity to try and re-arrange the desks and chairs to resemble a conference seating arrangement (U-shape). The physical restrictions of the small classroom again provided an obstacle. However, although the re-arrangement was far from perfect, it was going to allow a little more movement between the learners. Seventy-eight learners attended the lesson.

The photocopied tasks were distributed, and I explained briefly what the exercise was about. I asked the observer to act in a brief role play with me. Although the learners looked at the handouts with interest, many difficulties cropped up right from the beginning, in fact, due to the re-arrangement of the furniture in the classroom. The learners were restless. Presumably some felt more anxious because they were moved from their comfort zones and had to pair up with someone else. In addition, learners were quite worried that they would make mistakes and enquired constantly about the correctness of their actions. The fact that they were given the opportunity to choose the direction of the conversation caught them by surprise, and it took a while before they actually got started with the task.

After a few minutes two male learners called me to their desk and volunteered to demonstrate their telephone conversation in front of the class. When I asked permission to record their conversation they had no objections and were keen to proceed. Their conversation started with the normal greeting. But let us take a look at the request, the remarks that followed, and the slightly mangled greeting at the end:

- B: *Hallo.*
 A: *Hallo, dis jou Ma.*
 B: *Ja. Ja Ma, ek hoor.*
 A: *Koop my 'n paar aaitems, uh melk, uh pap.*
 B: *Ja Ma, ek sal. Ek sal daai..... daai... daai ding... Ek sal daai ding gekoop daar by die supermarket gegaan.*
 A: *Dankie, my kind.*
 B: *Okay, Ma. Altyd sortiens! [tot siens]*

Their poor proficiency level is obvious, yet, although they struggled to speak and put their thoughts into words, their classmates spontaneously acknowledged their enthusiasm and effort by using the praise phase. Their endeavour resulted in a flurry of participation by other classmates, and suddenly a number of learners took out their

cell phones to act out the task in a more realistic way. The following pair who volunteered to demonstrate their telephone conversation was more proficient than the rest, although not faultless, and actually engaged in a meaningful conversation:

- C: *Hallo, Suzi* wat praat. Kan ek jou help?* (* Name changed)
 D: *Suzi, dis jou Ma wat praat.*
 C: *Ja, wat soek Ma nou?*
 D: *Ek wil hê dat jy vir my winkel toe gaan.*
 C: *Wat moet ek by die winkel gaan doen, Ma?*
 D: *Uh, het jy 'n pen?*
 C: *Wag, uh, ja, ja ek het dit nou.*
 D: *Ek wil hê dat jy vir my moet brood, kaas, ...*
 C: *Haai Ma, moet nie so vinnig gaat nie, praat stadig.*
 D: *Ek wil hê dat jy vir my moet brood,*
 C: *Ja,*
 D: *kaas,*
 C: *Ja,*
 D: *tamaties,*
 C: *Ja,*
 D: *en eiers koop.*
 C: *Okay, is dit al Ma?*
 D: *Het jy geld?*
 C: *Ja, ek het geld. Okay, Good bye.*
 D: *Bye.*

It was interesting that in all the conversations that followed, the learners who acted as the 'mother' asked whether a pencil was available to allow the 'child' to make notes, and even indicated where the 'child' would find the money for the purchase. Two remarks serve as examples: *In my kamer onder die bed* and *By my kamer by die tafel*. One learner acting as the child enquired about the paying method: *As ek het nie als die geld gekry het nie, is die tjek right?* Some of the male learners even changed the dialogue and pretended that it was the father who was calling, and then in most cases brandy was on the shopping list.

The first task took up much more time than I expected, and I was compelled to drop the second activity (Figure 6.17, Task7b) for this lesson.

OBSERVATION

As recorded in my diary (Appendix D) the teacher's (observer's) poor command of Afrikaans once again came to light. During our role play she struggled with sentence

construction, pronunciation, and made quite a few grammar mistakes (e.g. placing the verb in a sentence incorrectly; ignoring the double negative in Afrikaans).

According to the observations in my diary (Appendix D), the task was both stimulating and challenging to the learners. It is likely that the activity created some stress, which learners opted to overcome by using English or their first language. At first the learners struggled with the task, and I noticed that they were quite worried about the correctness of their actions. However, again as indicated in my diary and the report (Appendix E), the two initial volunteers changed the atmosphere and encouraged others to follow their example. At the end of the lesson, the learners were motivated and the classroom atmosphere was one of participation and enjoyment.

I recorded in my diary and the report that I was delighted with the learners' participation and the fact that they had agreed to the recording of their dialogues. In our discussion, the observer expressed her amazement about the learners' willingness to actually engage in communicative activities and that they were prepared to talk Afrikaans in front of their classmates. She also showed me a test (a Kwazulu-Natal examination paper) she had used without any adjustments the previous week. I thought it was very difficult and way beyond the learners' proficiency levels, and that the poor results would certainly influence their motivation and attitude negatively.

REFLECTION

I was satisfied with the important progress that had been made during lesson 7. Therefore my evaluation of the lesson was satisfactory, as reflected in Table 6.7. I felt that the learning material stood up to the test since it achieved impact through the unusual approach to the topic and had attracted the learners' interest and attention. In addition, it helped the learners to develop confidence through a process of simplification, since they were allowed to plan their conversation, and write it down first. The task encouraged the learners to speak and thereby enhanced their speaking skills. Considering it was a new type of task, the learners did well. The learners were 'pushed' slightly beyond their existing proficiency, in line with the input hypothesis of second language acquisition (cf. Krashen, 1987: 30-32; Nunan, 1991a: 289; Weideman, 2002a: 57), and their willingness to speak Afrikaans increased. The learners also followed instructions in Afrikaans with more ease than previously, and I

hardly ever needed to switch to English. Some learners even attempted to formulate their questions in Afrikaans when they sought help.

Table 6.7 Lesson 7: Assessment

	Criterion	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	No
MATERIALS				
Choice of materials	Beliefs: language learning	x		
Tasks	Personal experience	x		
Exposure to reading, writing, speaking & listening	Integrate all four language skills	x		
Realism	Authenticity	x		
Vocabulary development	Language use	x		
Grammar	Language use	x		
Sentence construction	Language use	x		
Communicative	Information gap	x		
Language functions	L	x		
AFFECTIVE STRATEGIES				
Achieve impact	Variety & novelty	x		
Reduce anxiety	P	x		
Boost self-confidence	P	x		
Encourage risk-taking	P	x		
Enhance motivation	P	x		
Attitude change	P	x		
CONSTRAINTS				
Pair and group work	Interactive	x		
Understanding of instructions		x		
Instruction time		x		
Physical arrangement		x		
REFLECTION ON LESSON				
Reflect stipulated criteria		x		
Overall rating of lesson		x		

In planning this task (Figure 6.16), consideration was given to select an appropriate topic reflecting the real world. It also needed to be a task which would integrate all four language skills. Regarding the aspect of authenticity, it must be noted that the possibility that their mothers would speak Afrikaans to them would be relatively exceptional, something which makes the task's authenticity questionable. This lack of authenticity would also have applied to the following task (Task 7b), since it is most unlikely that the manager of a supermarket in that area would be speaking in Afrikaans. The unusual circumstances of the educational environment, where Afrikaans is rarely spoken in the community, and the absence of Afrikaans-speaking friends, highlight the authenticity dilemma in this study. I found it difficult and extremely challenging to base the content of tasks on the 'real' world. In my view it

would be best to interpret authenticity in this study as the interaction between the learners, the material and the context, as well as my use of Afrikaans in the classroom. This view of authenticity agrees with the views of Bachman (1990: 9-10, 316), Widdowson (1990: 44-45), Van Lier (1996: 128), and Celce-Murcia and Olshtain (2000: 195).

Although the re-arrangement of the desks and chairs initially unsettled the learners, it provided an opportunity to pair up learners with different partners, and also allowed me to move between the learners with a little more ease. Thus, the “pro’s” outweighed the “cons”, but the physical arrangement of the furniture in class still remained problematic.

Though I was pleased with the materials used and the progress made, reflection on lesson 7 suggested that in planning future lessons, I should consider exposing the learners to more communicative tasks. In addition, one has to be aware of the learners’ anxiety levels and therefore affective strategies should constantly be kept in mind and included. Finally, because the first task (Task 7a) took up more time than expected, due to the learners’ unfamiliarity with the task and their anxiety, the follow-up activity (Figure 6.17, Task 7b) was delayed and should therefore be introduced in lesson 8.

6.4.8 Cycle eight: Intervention, Lesson 8

PLANNING

Motivated by the positive outcome of the previous lesson, I decided to use Task 7b during this lesson, and since the learners had gained some understanding of communicative activities and pair work, I decided it would be useful to continue along the same route. Thus, the rescheduled task (Task 7b) would be introduced first, followed by another task to expand the current topic, as a last part of a number of successive communicative tasks.

Jy gaan nou na die supermark om die goed te koop soos jou ma jou gevra het. Jy besluit om jou hond saam te neem.

By die winkel sien jy nie die volgende waarskuwing nie:

GEEN HONDE WORD TOEGELAAT NIE!

Die bestuurder is baie kwaad en neem jou na sy kantoor.
 Besluit jy en jou maat nou hoe die gesprek sal verloop en skryf dit neer.
 Besluit of die bestuurder jou verskoning gaan aanvaar of nie.

Die bestuurder: Verskoon my, maar

Jy: Ek is jammer, ek

Bestuurder:

Jy:

Bestuurder:

Jy:



Figure 6.17 Dialogue: Task 7b

In task 8 (Figure 6.18) the learner meets a friend at the shop and asks whether he/she would look after the dog, in order for him/her to proceed to do the necessary shopping. Afterwards, the learner must express his or her thanks. Provision is made for writing, although this time the space provided is limited in order to force learners to keep their notes brief.

'n Maat van jou kom die winkel binne en jy besluit om hom/haar te vra om jou 'n guns te bewys. Jy verduidelik kortliks jou penarie en vra of hy/sy asseblief jou hond buite die winkel sal oppas, terwyl jy gou die inkopies afhandel.

Jy: Haai, hallo

Maat: Hallo

Jy:.....

Jou inkopies is afgehandel. Bedank nou jou maat en groet.

Jy:.....

Maat:.....

Jy:.....

Maat:.....

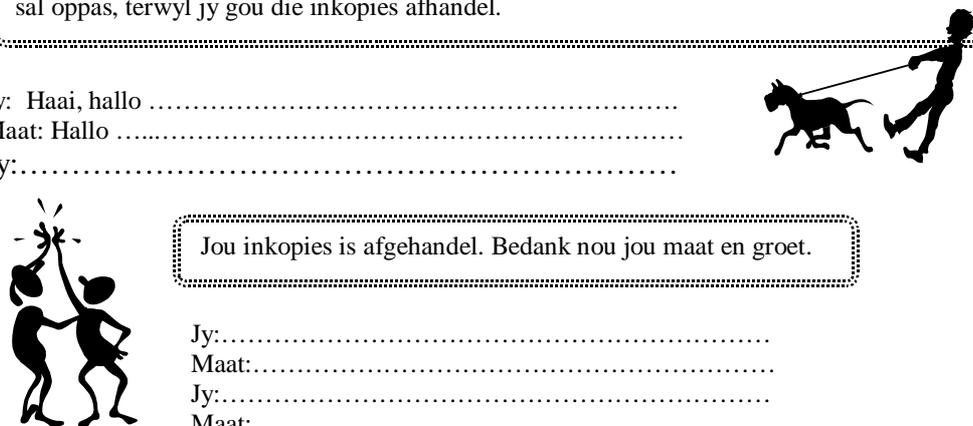


Figure 6.18 Dialogue: Task 8

When learners engage in a communicative task, they transfer and receive information. Embedded in real communication are the skills of seeking help, or expression of thanks: hence, task 8 was designed in such a way as to include these conversational features and strategies in an attempt to enable learners to engage in some real conversation.

IMPLEMENTATION

The principal's absence from the school (he was attending a meeting in the district) was immediately evident. The whole school setting was in disarray: the learners were boisterous; only 51 learners turned up for class, with ten learners arriving late for class; a number of learners from other classes preferred to bask in the sun rather than to attend their classes, and even the observer was absent (she had an appointment with the dentist). Moreover, desks and chairs were stacked at the back of the class. I used the opportunity to arrange only the chairs in rows to allow us to do the back to back technique for the envisaged communicative tasks. This seating arrangement confused the learners, and despite my efforts to explain the rationale behind this, it did not take long for them to re-arrange the classroom into total chaos.

As soon as the learners then reluctantly engaged in the first task (Task 7b), it was evident that the whole atmosphere at the school that day was not conducive to teaching and learning. On my enquiry, the learners informed me that they felt sad because the Bafana Bafana (National) soccer team had lost a major game. Furthermore, I was told that many learners had flu, which explained why so many were absent. At the start of the activity the learners were reluctant to ask what some words meant, but this improved slightly during the lesson. To avoid unsuccessful task completion, I was compelled to ask some of the female learners to move and to pair them with other, more motivated learners. When I overheard two female learners speaking in their mother tongue, I told them to use Afrikaans. One enquired, perplexed, "Not even English?"

Despite the problems, a number of learners managed some verbal interaction during this task. Since on this occasion the learners were not keen that I record their efforts, I decided against doing so. Task 8 (Figure 6.18) was distributed and I explained briefly the setting for the conversation, highlighting language functions such as the

expression of thanks in Afrikaans. Learners were also instructed to use the space provided to make short notes that would assist them with their conversations. After a number of learners started to enquire about the meaning of certain words such as *guns bewys*, *penarie*, *inkopies*, *afhandel*, *bedank*, I realised that these unfamiliar words needed to be clarified. This would assist the learners with the planning of their dialogues, reduce their anxiety, and provide vocabulary development.

OBSERVATION

I indicated in my diary (Appendix D) that the disorganised situation at the school that day highlighted the interaction between learner and environment and the influence of affective variables on the learning situation, and thus supported the beliefs of various researchers, as discussed in Chapter 4, section 4.2.

The initial negative atmosphere in the classroom threatened to frustrate the communicative purpose of the first task (Task 7b), since the learners slipped into English or their mother tongue at the merest hint of difficulty. It is also likely that the learners experienced difficulty to choose the direction the conversation between the manager and the customer should take because of their poor proficiency level in Afrikaans. Then again, I might have confused effect with cause, or cause with effect. Another explanation may be that learners' proficiency levels are so low, because they have never had to practise Afrikaans conversation (cf. Shaalukeni, 2000).

Nonetheless, I indicated in my diary and the report (Appendix E) that once the learners had settled down, they tackled task 8 with more interest, resulting in slightly more acceptable task performance, but definitely not as good as in the previous dialogues in lesson 7. Although learners were not allowed to prepare the whole interaction in task 8 (other than was the case previously in task 7b), there was actually a slight improvement in their dialogues.

I recorded in my diary that I was quite surprised that a number of learners attempted a conversation with me in Afrikaans after class, as I had experienced the lesson as difficult and disappointing. My feelings about the lesson are captured in my diary: '*Ek is skoon moeg en moedeloos gespook vandag!*' On their way out I praised a female and male learner on their dialogue. Immediately, a male learner remarked that he

liked Afrikaans, and that he speaks Afrikaans to his Grandfather at home (this was confirmed by his answers on the questionnaire). Three female learners enquired whether I was going to have some tea, and two male learners tried to persuade me to buy a box of Quality Street chocolates from them, even attempting to negotiate the deal in Afrikaans.

REFLECTION

In order to evaluate the materials employed during the lesson against the criteria, one should guard against being influenced by the discouraging learning setting. This lesson suffered mainly because of the negative school setting, which affected the learners' attitude and motivation. Again valuable teaching time was lost due to unforeseen circumstances and the disorganised school set-up.

I must admit that the unsettled atmosphere during the lesson also had an effect on me, and I struggled with feelings of dismay and despair. How can it be that the mere absence of a principal can bring this degree of disruption to a school? Or was this merely a normal reaction to an otherwise authoritarian setting? And what should be the appropriate reaction on the part of an individual teacher who intended to act responsibly and with the welfare of the learners at heart? What did this mean for me? Were there also authoritarian tendencies still present in my own teaching, even though I was trying my best to become a facilitator of learning? I somehow felt that this self-reflection was a useful tool not only for guiding my efforts in putting together the intervention programme and the development of appropriate materials, but also to serve as basis for the improvement of my own teaching practice.

Both Tasks 7b and 8 provided interactive opportunities, and included the information gap principle. Provision was made for the learners to deal with language functions and to practise the target language. All four language skills were integrated in both tasks. Authenticity as a criterion again proved to be problematic, as discussed in lesson 7. Although the first communicative task (Task 7b) was disappointing, the learners improved slightly in the second task (Task 8). The fact that the conversation with the friend was more successful than the scenario with the shop manager can probably be attributed to the fact that the learners could relate more to talking to a friend than to a person who is their senior, i.e. that the former appeared a little more realistic to them.

Nonetheless, some learners were merely following instructions and engaged in the tasks because they were compelled to do so, and not because they were motivated to learn from them. Consequently, my evaluation of this lesson is fairly unsatisfactory, as reflected in Table 6.8, mainly due to the unsettling atmosphere at the school that day.

Table 6.8 Lesson 8: Assessment

	Criterion	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	No
MATERIALS				
Choice of materials	Beliefs: language learning	x		
Tasks	Personal experience		x	
Exposure to reading, writing, speaking & listening	Integrate all four language skills	x		
Realism	Authenticity		x	
Vocabulary development	Language use	x		
Grammar	Language use	x		
Sentence construction	Language use		x	
Communicative	Information gap		x	
Language functions	L	x		
AFFECTIVE STRATEGIES				
Achieve impact	Variety & novelty	x		
Reduce anxiety	P	x		
Boost self-confidence	P	x		
Encourage risk-taking	P	x		
Enhance motivation	P	x		
Attitude change	P	x		
CONSTRAINTS				
Pair and group work	Interactive	x		
Understanding of instructions		x		
Instruction time			x	
Physical arrangement			x	
REFLECTION ON LESSON				
Reflect stipulated criteria		x		
Overall rating of lesson		x		

It was unfortunate that after the positive outcome of lesson 7, the implementation of communicative tasks during lesson 8 did not meet my expectations. Since I viewed the materials, which had been designed to reflect the stipulated criteria, as appropriate, and the experience the learners gained with these types of tasks as useful, I had anticipated a similar positive outcome and evidence of progress. But, again the significance of learner variables and the context in which language teaching takes place were eminently evident.

6.4.9 Cycle nine: Intervention, Lesson 9

PLANNING

The very nature of action research requires that one should always refine and amend one's activities in the classroom. In addition, one should also consider all factors that affect classroom conditions, and should explore alternative ways of teaching that engage learners actively (Weideman, 1998: 27). Given the positive outcome and evidence of progress with dialogues, it would be appropriate to continue along the same route. However, since the school holidays were due to start the following day, I anticipated that the learners may be in a lighter mood and perhaps not eager to concentrate in class, which in turn might affect the learning setting negatively. Therefore, I contemplated starting the lesson with a type of activity that would probably suit the situation better. Hence, I decided to change my strategy and to start the lesson with the singing of Afrikaans songs, as a non-threatening, low-stress activity, in the hope of eliciting a more positive attitude among the learners, and raising their motivation, before concluding the lesson with a more stressful natural conversation.

My decision to use songs in this lesson was based on research findings. Research has emphasised the place of music and chants in periphery learning and their role in the language class in establishing an enjoyable and stress-free environment, while vocabulary is practised (Woodward, 2001: 116; Weideman, 2002a: 58-60). Additional benefits mentioned by Mongiat (1993: 56) are that pronunciation, functional language use and concentration are enhanced in a pleasurable way.

I decided to include typically uncomplicated, enjoyable Afrikaans songs. These songs included *Koffie, koffie*, *Ek soek na my Dina*, *Jan Pierewiet* and *My hartjie, my liefie*. A special effort was also made to achieve impact with the materials, because they would provide unconscious exposure to text. The developed materials are not reported here, for lack of space, but are presented in Appendix H, Task 9.

To conclude the lesson, the learners would engage in a role play between a television reporter and a concertgoer about his/her thoughts on the 'concert' they had attended. Since both the 'reporter' and the 'concertgoer' would not know in advance what the

other person's comments would be, this activity would make provision for the information gap principle.

IMPLEMENTATION

Once again assembly took longer than usual and only thirty minutes were left for the lesson. My husband accompanied me and we took a video camera to capture the learners' responses. The learners (only 53 of whom attended) received their materials with enthusiasm and immediately started to read the songs, and it seems likely that the presence of the video camera motivated them to perform. As soon as I started to read the first song, the learners started to read along. The meaning of some words was explained before the singing commenced. The learners participated with zest, and the melodies did not prove too difficult. Surprisingly, one male learner indicated that he wanted to sing a solo (*Ek soek na my Dina*), and after his performance his classmates gave him a round of applause. After another bout of singing, another male learner persuaded some of his friends to perform with him in a group, and then two female learners also volunteered to sing a duet. All of these performances were met with the now familiar praise phrase *Goed, beter, beste!*

With a few minutes left, the lesson was concluded with the role play depicting a television reporter and a concertgoer. After my husband and I did a role play, the learners engaged immediately in the interview activity and a few learners used a rolled up paper as microphone. The interviews went rather well, considering the fact that learners were pushed for time and had no time to prepare their verbal interactions. This situation created the conditions for real communication, since it required those communicating to impart and receive information. When the learners left the class at the end of the period, a male learner spontaneously began singing *Ek soek na my Dina*, and the rest of the class sang along merrily.

OBSERVATION

My diary (Appendix D) and the report (Appendix E) reflect my satisfaction with the most enjoyable lesson so far, and the fact that the learners participated eagerly. Once again the observer was not impressed and watched the activities with resentment. In contrast, some of the other teachers responsible for Afrikaans in the lower grades at

the school came along to observe the merriment. One even asked me to visit her class afterwards to observe her learners' recitals.

I indicated in my diary and the report that I felt the interviews at the end of the lesson went rather well, considering the fact that learners still struggled to express themselves in Afrikaans. I believe that the positive atmosphere in the classroom encouraged the learners to be more willing to attempt the communicative task and negated their fear of losing face.

REFLECTION

The nature of this lesson contributed to restore a healthy atmosphere in the classroom and I was satisfied that the objectives were met successfully, as reflected in Table 6.9.

Table 6.9 Lesson 9: Assessment

	Criterion	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	No
MATERIALS				
Choice of materials	Beliefs: language learning	x		
Tasks	Personal experience	x		
Exposure to reading, writing, speaking & listening	Integrate all four language skills		x	
Realism	Authenticity	x		
Vocabulary development	Language use	x		
Grammar	Language use	x		
Sentence construction	Language use	x		
Communicative	Information gap	x		
Language functions	L	x		
AFFECTIVE STRATEGIES				
Achieve impact	Variety & novelty	x		
Reduce anxiety	P	x		
Boost self-confidence	P	x		
Encourage risk-taking	P	x		
Enhance motivation	P	x		
Attitude change	P	x		
CONSTRAINTS				
Pair and group work	Interactive	x		
Understanding of instructions		x		
Instruction time			x	
Physical arrangement		x		
REFLECTION ON LESSON				
Reflect stipulated criteria		x		
Overall rating of lesson		x		

The materials achieved impact through novelty, attractive presentation, and appealing content. Furthermore, the materials (songs and interview) covered most of the stipulated criteria (excluding writing skills), as indicated in Table 6.9. I was pleased that the singing influenced the atmosphere in class positively and that the learners once again displayed a more positive attitude. Actions to be revised, however, included attention to integrate all four language skills and provision for further information gap activities.

Once more, time was lost due to unforeseen circumstances, and proved to be a constraint in this intervention. Despite careful planning, the limited teaching time nearly caused the lesson to become only a singing lesson, instead of a dialogue activity introduced with singing.

But what was the learners' perception about the singing during the lesson? From the learners' point of view, they liked the singing immensely, as illustrated in Figure 6.19.

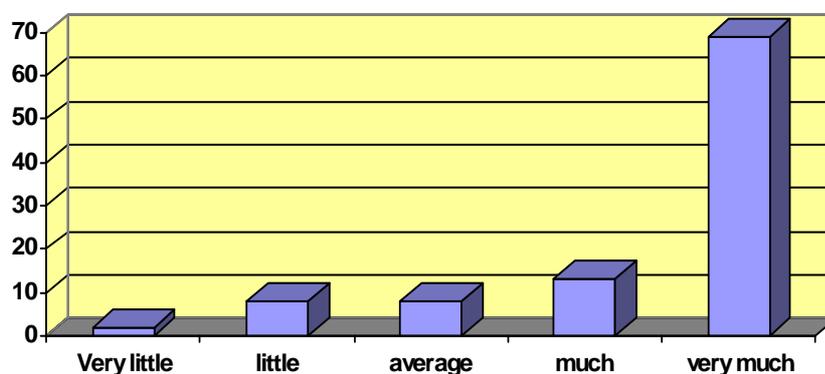


Figure 6.19 Evaluation of singing lesson

Sixty nine percent of the learners indicated in the questionnaire that they liked the singing *very much*, in sharp contrast to *much* (13%), and the 8% of *average* and *little*. Only 2% learners indicated that they *did not like* the singing.

SUMMARY

Considering the progress that was made to introduce communicative tasks during the lessons, especially during lessons 7-9, an interesting picture unfolds.

In the questionnaire at the end of the intervention programme (Appendix F) the learners were asked to air their feelings about their improvement in speaking skills (question 3), how they had enjoyed the dialogues between themselves and a friend (question 8), as well as to what extent they had enjoyed communicating in Afrikaans during the classes (question 9). Figure 6.20 shows the learners' answers (average scores) to these questions.

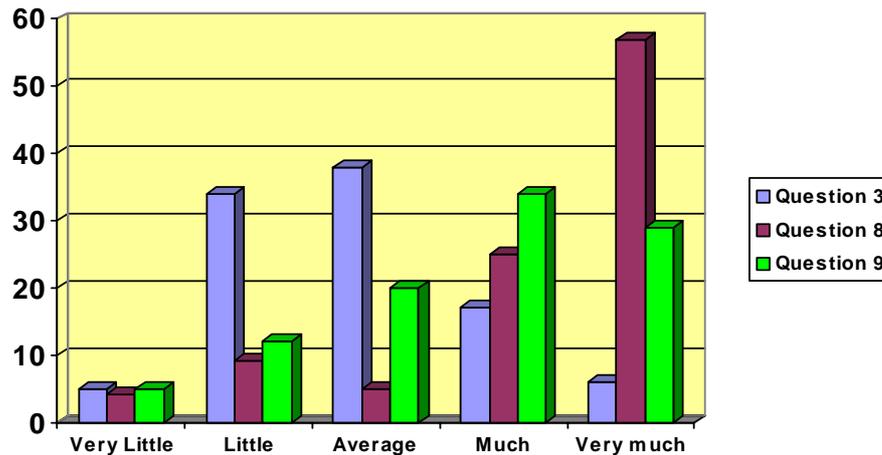


Figure 6.20 Communicative improvement: learners' perceptions

Most of the learners indicated that they liked the dialogues *very much* (57%), with 25% of the learners enjoying them *much*, and 5% indicating *average*, while 9% of the learners enjoyed them *little*, and only 4% mentioning *very little*. In comparison, when asked about the extent to which they enjoyed the communicative nature of the classes, 29% of learners mentioned that they enjoyed them *very much*, 34% of learners enjoyed them *much*, *average* as a response was 20%, *little* 12%, while only 5% of the learners indicated that they enjoyed these activities *very little*.

The learners were also quite realistic about the improvement of their speaking skills: only 6% of the learners indicated *very much*, 17% *much*, 38% of the learners viewed that their improvement was *average*, whereas 34% of the learners mentioned that there was only *little* improvement, and 5% of the learners pointed to *very little* progress. In other words, although the learners enjoyed the communicative nature of the classes, they acknowledged the fact that their ability to speak Afrikaans did not improve dramatically.

Unfortunately the following lessons did not match my expectations, since unforeseen circumstances necessitated the cancellation of a number of the classes, and left me with the feeling that I was not able to complete the intervention programme as I had planned.

6.4.10 Intervention: Lesson 10

The first scheduled intervention after the school holidays was cancelled, because of riots in the vicinity of the school. Since the lesson did not take place, I will in this section not discuss the planned communicative task that emphasised the information gap principle. I have, nonetheless, included it in Appendix I.

6.4.11 Intervention: Lesson 11

The Afrikaans teacher called the classes off, since the learners’ portfolios needed to be finalised. However, she inquired about the possibility of getting some materials which learners could complete if time allowed. I decided to provide her with materials which the learners could complete on their own (Task 11a, Task 11b & Task 11c). Special arrangements were made to deliver the photocopied materials to her at the school, and a few learners did manage to complete these tasks.



SOEK DIE WOORDE
Omkring die onderstaande woorde in die raaisel

S	P	A	G	H	E	T	T	I	I
K	A	A	S	Y	N	O	W	Y	N
A	S	R	O	O	I	K	O	O	L
A	T	T	U	I	E	B	R	L	E
P	A	A	S	P	E	R	S	I	E
V	A	P	O	T	S	O	I	E	I
L	R	P	A	M	P	O	E	N	E
E	B	E	E	N	E	D	S	T	R
I	E	L	E	K	K	E	R	S	S
S	I	S	P	I	N	A	S	I	E

- * SPAGHETTI
- * BROOD
- * ROOIKOOL
- * OLIE
- * UIE
- * SPEK
- * POT

- * AARTAPPELS
- * ASPERSIE
- * SKAAPVLEIS
- * PAMPOENE
- * PASTA
- * LEKKERS
- * SPINASIE

- * BEEN
- * WORSIES
- * WYN
- * SOUS
- * KAAS
- * AARBEI
- * ASYN

Figure 6.21 Word puzzle: Task 11a

Since I was not actively involved in the completion of these tasks, the implementation, observation and evaluation of the materials were not possible. However, a few examples of learners' answers are given to highlight their command of Afrikaans.

In Task 11a (Figure 6.21), the learners had to circle the words in the puzzle, as well as identify the two words supplied in the grid, but not written underneath. Even this simple exercise was not performed faultlessly. One learner (Grade 3, improved to Grade 4, and matriculated with symbol F), for example, wrote 'eierse' instead of 'eiers', and another learner (Grade 3, improved to Grade 4, matriculated with symbol F) was not able to recognise the word 'vleis', but thought 'lientsi' was the appropriate missing word.

In Task 11b, the learners had to follow the instructions to discover what the man says.

TREK DOOD EN ONTDEK DIE BOODSKAP

Wat dink die vet man? Lees die instruksies en vind uit.
Skrap (trek dood) die volgende in die blokke hieronder:

- 5 beroepe (occupations)
- 5 dinge om te doen (things you can do)

SLAGTER	LOOP	EK
LEES	VLIEëNIER	IS
SLAAP	NOG	TIKSTER
BAIE	RY	SKRYWER
DRYWER	HONGER	SPRING



.....

Kies twee of meer woorde in die blokke hierbo en maak twee sinne met die woorde wat jy gekies het.

1.....

2.....

This activity also proved to be difficult, since only two learners were able to give the correct answer (*Ek is nog baie honger*). Most of the learners wrote '*Ek is baie honger*' because they did not read the instructions properly (or probably failed to understand them), so the word '*nog*' was also scratched out along with the other words. The sentence constructions were once again unsatisfactory, as illustrated by the following

two examples. In Example A the poor comprehension and vocabulary of the female learner (Grade 4, matriculated with symbol GG) are obvious, while in Example B the learner (Grade 4, improved to Grade 6, matriculated with symbol E) performed better, except for the incorrect spelling of 'boeke'.

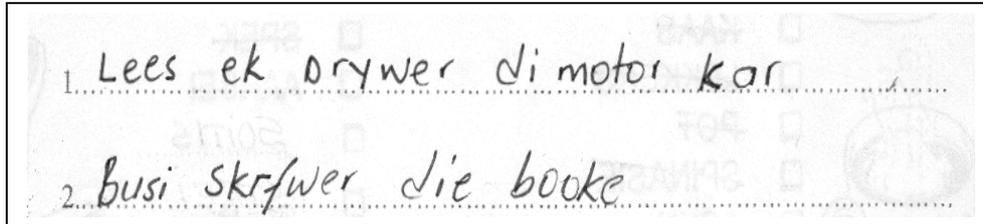


Figure 6.23 Task 11b: Example A

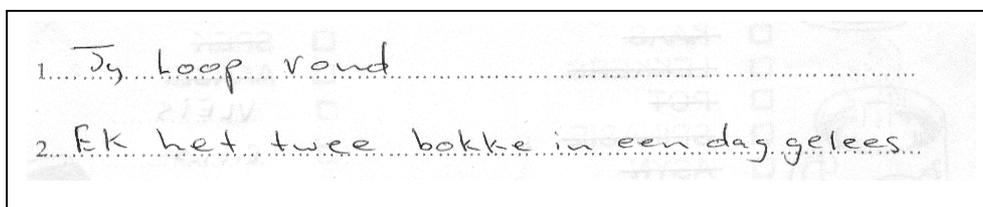


Figure 6.24 Task 11b: Example B

Task 11c was a little bit more challenging, since the learners had to supply the dialogues in the different pictures (shown in Appendix I). In all of the examples it is clear that the learners' sentence constructions are inadequate for Grade 12. Some interesting answers depicting typical mistakes made by many learners follow:

Most of the learners made spelling mistakes similar to those of the learner in Example A (Grade 3, improved to Grade 4, matriculated with symbol F): 'as' (*is*) and 'leker' (*lekker*)

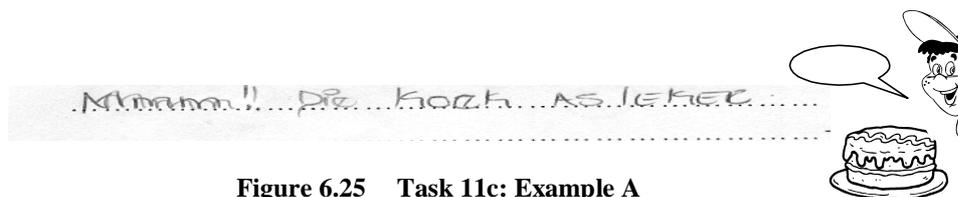


Figure 6.25 Task 11c: Example A

Although Example B came from the learner (Grade 6, improved to Grade 7) who received a symbol C for Afrikaans in matric, his poor sentence construction is obvious, as well as his incorrect use of 'kyk' instead of *lyk*.

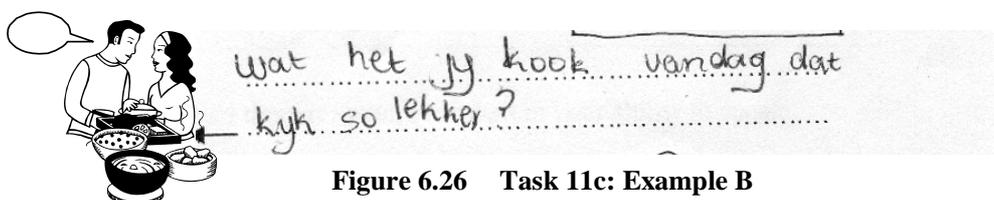


Figure 6.26 Task 11c: Example B

The learner (Grade 3, improved to Grade 4, matriculated with symbol F) in Example C tried to convey the message that food makes you grow, but struggled with the spelling of 'jelle' (*julle*); and 'et' (*eet*).

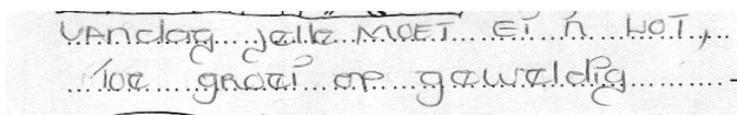


Figure 6.27 Task 11c: Example C



In Example D, the female learner (Grade 5, improved to Grade 6, matriculated with symbol E) did rather well, although her effort was not faultless. Interesting is the correct use of the double negative form in Afrikaans 'Ek het nie geld nie'.

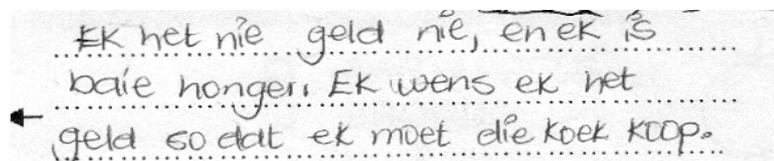


Figure 6.28 Task 11c: Example D

In example E the learner (Grade 4, improved to Grade 5, matriculated with symbol F) made similar mistakes as the other learners with the following words: 'as' (*is*); 'koos' (*kos*) and 'maal' (*mal*).

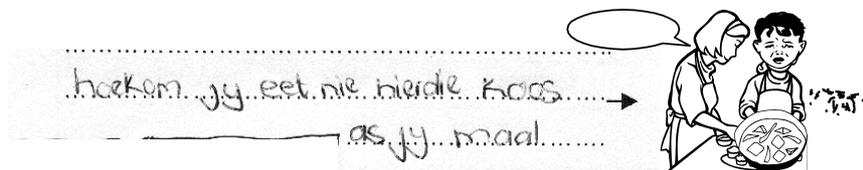


Figure 6.29 Task 11c: Example E

Although the proficiency level of the learner in Example F was only average at Grade 2 level (matriculated with symbol F), his effort is better than those of the other learners with higher proficiency levels. The use of the word 'bewus' is rather remarkable, considering his poor proficiency level. It was interesting to note that most of the learners indicated that there was soup in the bowl and all learners spelled 'soep' (*sop*) in the same way.

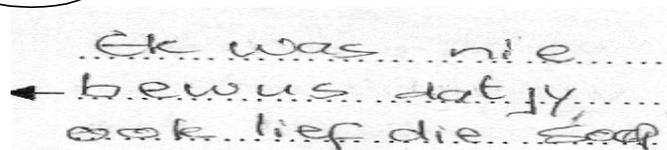


Figure 6.30 Task 11c: Example F

6.4.12 Intervention: Lesson 12

With the length of time that had elapsed between the last lesson and this one, it was going to be difficult to continue where we left off, and to add to this difficulty, the two researchers of TSA responsible for this project had arranged for photographs to be taken on the day that this lesson was scheduled. Since I was not sure whether there would be any time available for teaching, I approached this lesson differently. Therefore this discussion will also be different from those of the previous intervention lessons.

I decided on an interview, since the learners were familiar with this type of task, and decided on the topic of a newspaper reporter's interview with a man/woman who had been stranded on an island for a time. Three pictures would be shown to the learners (Figure 6.31, Task 12a; 12b and 12c), and they then would have to choose one picture they could best relate to. After the interviews, and time permitting, each learner would have to write a short newspaper article to practise his/her writing skills, especially sentence construction.

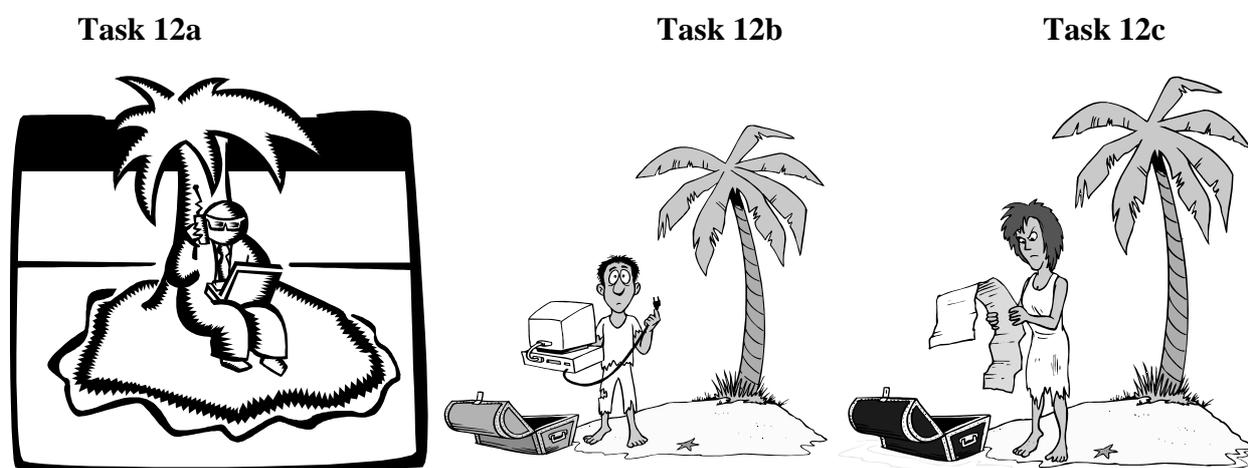


Figure 6.31 Tasks 12a; 12b; 12c

Time constraints were yet again the major issue. Besides the envisaged photo shoot, assembly took twenty minutes. As soon as the lesson commenced, the photographer and his assistant arrived to set up their equipment. With all the activity going on in the classroom it was understandable that the learners were distracted and that the class activity of interviews was not priority number one. However, a few learners did

manage some sort of verbal interaction, but regrettably the writing of the article had to be dropped. Although the topic of the pictures might have been far-fetched, the learners came up with interesting and humorous remarks, probably based on television and movie storylines. Admittedly, the conversations were a combination of English, a few Afrikaans words and mimicry. In contrast to the disappointing lesson, the photo shoot went very well and the learners' enjoyment with the latter event was for them a positive experience.

This lesson concluded the intervention programme, since the following week's lesson had to be cancelled, because the English teacher was taking the learners on an excursion. Furthermore, the aggregate examination was due to start the following week, and the *EVAT* post-test to ascertain the success of the programme was also scheduled during that week.

SUMMARY

To conclude the discussion of the implementation of the developed materials, and the action research undertaken, it is vital to reflect on the structure or organisation of the syllabus for the intervention programme. Critical reflection on the structuring of the learning programme revealed some explicable, but apparently haphazard choices of materials.

Firstly, it is evident that the required proficiency level for the materials developed and activities implemented during the lessons varied constantly: some tasks might have been too easy, while others turned out to be too demanding and probably too advanced for the learners' proficiency levels. I must admit that the magnitude of the proficiency dilemma (as discussed in Chapter 5, section 5.2.1), the learners' negative attitude and lack of motivation (as indicated in Chapter 4, section 4.6 and Figure 5.8), as well as the educational and social contextual factors (Chapter 4, sections 4.4 and 4.5) were overwhelming, and directly influenced and affected the planning of the intervention lessons, and also the use of appropriate materials and methods.

Consequently, the rationale for employing one kind of task over another was mostly tied up with affective variables (to reduce learners' anxiety levels, to elicit a more

positive attitude among the learners, and to raise their motivation). In addition, the less than favourable educational setting (seating arrangements, crowded classroom, time constraints), and the fact that the learners had no experience with communicative tasks, contributed to my decision to introduce pair and group work more gradually.

Secondly, reflection on my teaching raises the question whether, in adopting a communicative approach during the intervention programme, I have not perhaps fallen victim to conflicting approaches. Although most of my deliberate choices of materials, methods and techniques were backed up by valid arguments, as well as by practical and theoretical considerations, I must admit that there were situations where I mixed traditional styles of teaching with current methods. Thus, adopting an eclectic approach occasionally, may have led to results contrary to those I was striving for. Weideman (2002a: 64-67) argues that one of the dangers associated with an eclectic approach is that the effect of an innovative technique is diluted when “mixed with other (potentially contradictory) ones”, and advises that one should rather “push the method to its limits”, than “diluting the new”. In hindsight, it would have been better to follow a more structured organisation of the syllabus and to exploit the communicative tasks to their full potential by introducing pair and group work earlier in the programme. All of these issues will be explored in greater depth in the next chapter.

6.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter contains the narrative of the action research which was carried out in this study. This cyclical process informed me about the future actions I would have to take. The chapter focussed on the implementation of the developed materials, the modifications tried out, and the effect of their implementation in the classroom, their success, and their appropriateness to the learners’ needs, as well as to the learning process. All materials have been evaluated in terms of the listed theoretical criteria as set out in Chapter 5, and all lessons have been evaluated by using an assessment table developed for the purpose of this study.

In addition, the particular learning environment in the study was examined, and this offered a better understanding of the situation at the school, which illuminated the

barriers that prevented proper implementation of the communicative approach during the intervention programme. Consideration was also given to remedies to be instituted, and to the specific decisions I made regarding the employment of certain tasks and techniques.

Chapter 7 will deal with reflection on the results of the intervention programme, and the baseline investigation, aimed at self-reflection, will be discussed. The learners' perceptions of the intervention instruction will also be examined and analysed.